



Dry as Rain

Gina Holmes

*He'd give anything to forget
the one thing she can't remember*

Praise for Gina Holmes's debut novel,
Crossing Oceans

"[A] haunting tale that packs an emotional wallop. Keep tissues near."

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

"Holmes's characters are so real they pop from the pages. . . . [A] dramatic, emotional, faith-based novel."

BOOKLIST

"Debut novelist Holmes pulls heartstrings in this sweet testimony about love and family."

ROMANTIC TIMES

"Poignant and unforgettable, this book will break your heart—and then put the pieces back together again. An uplifting and inspiring tale that reminds us to live every day as if it's our last."

TESS GERRITSEN, *New York Times*–bestselling author

"Gina Holmes has crafted a poignant, emotional story that explores family dynamics and the power of love. When the last page is turned, you'll wish there were more. Set your tissue box close by, readers. This one will grab you hard."

CROSSWALK.COM

"A stunning debut. . . . Rarely does a book grab me and turn my emotions upside down. *Crossing Oceans* is one that did just that."

MINNEAPOLIS EXAMINER

“This novel is absolutely amazing. The characters are quirky, relatable, and incredibly realistic. Everything—from characters to plot twists—is original and unique, demonstrating Holmes’s refreshingly strong and distinct voice.”

CHRISTIANBOOKPREVIEWS.COM

“*Crossing Oceans* gripped me from the get-go. If you’re a reader who shuns a tearjerker, this isn’t for you. But for everyone else, you’ll cherish it. It overflows with themes such as hope, restoration, and beating the odds.”

TITLETRAKK.COM

“Gina Holmes pens a brilliant story of love and sacrifice.”

CHRISTIANPULSE.COM

“I was unable to put this book down.”

HOPE FOR WOMEN **MAGAZINE**

A large, intricate decorative flourish in a light gray color. It features a central vertical stem with several large, stylized leaves or petals on the left side. From the top and bottom of the stem, the design branches out into elegant, swirling lines and smaller leaf-like shapes. The overall style is reminiscent of classic book ornamentation.

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Dry as Rain

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Designed by Beth Sparkman

Edited by Kathryn S. Olson

The author is represented by Chip MacGregor of MacGregor Literary, 2373 NW 185th Avenue, Suite 165, Hillsboro, OR 97124.

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For Adam, my oasis.

*He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west.*

PSALM 103:12

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Above all, thank You to my Father in heaven. Please take my words and make them more.

ONE



WHEN I FIRST became a Christian, I read what Adam and Eve had done in the Garden of Eden and it really ticked me off. Until that fateful moment, humanity had it made. If Eve hadn't allowed emotion to overwhelm logic, and Adam hadn't been so whipped, everyone would be living in Paradise right now.

If God Himself directly tells you not to do something, do you really think you'll get away with doing it anyway? Did they honestly think they could hide from the Creator of the universe? I mean, come on.

I don't know why the Garden of Eden should pop into

my mind again on that January evening except that my toes were freezing inside my dress shoes as I trudged along the slushy sidewalk, and if sin had never entered the world, then probably neither would have bitter cold. If Adam had been there with me, I'd have shown him what I thought about his shortcomings with a snowball to the head.

Maybe blind dates were also the product of sin. It made a certain amount of sense. The trepidation I felt about my upcoming one certainly felt like punishment. Maybe I was the one who needed a good snowball pelting. What was I thinking agreeing to spend an evening with a woman I'd never so much as exchanged a smile with? I'd always said blind dates smacked of desperation, but here I was on my way to meet my coworker's sister.

Bobby showed me a photograph of her earlier in the week. Long hair, long legs . . . long shot. If the picture wasn't old or doctored, she was an easy ten. The way I figured it, I was an eight—nine at best. Now, as I hurried under the light of the streetlamp on my way to Sophia's to meet her, I'd have given anything to turn back the clock and undo the mismatched arrangement.

Digging my hands deep into the pockets of my wool coat, I hurried from the parking lot toward the restaurant. The brittle night air burned my lungs as plumes of white rose from my chattering teeth. More to stall than to warm myself, I cupped my hands over my mouth, puffed onto

my palms, and glanced at the canopy arched over the restaurant entrance. It looked like a big, red eyebrow raised in my direction. On it was stenciled the restaurant's name in gold calligraphy. Ivy, browned from winter, crawled up bricks on both sides of the entryway.

I'd been warned that the place was every bit as pricey as it looked. The fact that my date had chosen it should have been my first clue of what kind of woman she was—or at least what kind of man she was looking for. With a sigh, I grabbed the cold brass door handle and pulled.

When I stepped inside, the first thing I noticed was the immediate warmth; the second, the darkness. Other than strings of white lights winding around strategically placed artificial trees, the only illumination came from globe candles centered on each table.

The jewel-toned lighting seemed almost magical in the way it made everyone and everything look rich and attractive. I could only hope it had the same effect on me. The instant I laid eyes on Bobby's sister standing by the podium, I knew it was going to be a long night. She was just as hot as her picture, but one glance down her perfectly sculpted nose at me set my high-maintenance chick detector squalling like a siren.

Everything from her diamond earrings to the designer purse she carried was too fat for my wallet. I had always been the Mary Ann type, but this one was definitely a

Ginger. I could tell by the twisted pucker of her heart-shaped mouth that I wasn't exactly her dream date either. I wondered if her brother bothered to inform her I was half-Japanese.

When the hostess told us there was a wait, I moved Bobby's sister over to the bar. I figured this girl was going to be a lobster and champagne type, so I ordered the cheapest draft they had so maybe she'd get the idea early that I wasn't Mr. Howell. Not taking my hint, she ordered a top-shelf martini.

I glanced at the wall of mirrors hanging behind the penguin-dressed bartender. That's when I first noticed the baby grand behind me . . . and the redhead making it sing. I listened to her play against the backdrop of laughter, clanking wineglasses, and couples stealing kisses over ravioli.

Her hair was the color of spun sunshine, her skin as creamy and flawless as a porcelain doll, and her beautiful fingers flew over those ivory keys with such grace I couldn't help but be infatuated.

I've never been one to believe in love at first sight, but I just knew in the smoky reflection of that bar mirror that we were going to have one heck of a romance. Well, maybe I just hoped we would. She played "Fly Me to the Moon" as a waiter passed by with an oval tray perched atop his fingertips. The air filled with steam and the scent of beef and marsala cooking wine.

Something told me if I didn't make a move then, I might never get another chance. Having my date and her brother mad at me was something I could live with. Not finding out if the piano player was my soul mate was not. I turned to Bobby's sister to apologize for what I was about to do, but she'd already started flirting with the man on the other side of her.

I made my way from one end of the bar to the other and leaned between a middle-aged couple toasting something or other. After a few rounds of lighthearted negotiations, I'd purchased the rosebud the man had been wearing on his lapel.

When I walked over to my date holding the flower, I'm sure she thought it was hers. Instead of smiling, she looked embarrassed. I told her I had met the woman I was going to marry. She was so relieved to find out it wasn't her that she laughed, threw a look over her shoulder at Kyra, and grabbed her purse.

Feeling suddenly emboldened, rose in hand, I turned around on my stool and made no secret of studying her. Sophia's was warm with so many bodies confined to such a small area, but with my gaze fixed on the pianist, I felt like I was baking in a thermonuclear reactor. When she stood to take a break, some mafia type stuck a fifty in her jar and told her when she got back, he'd appreciate it if she'd play anything but Frank Sinatra.

She walked to the far end of the bar where the waiters picked up their patrons' drinks and the bartender gave her a bottle of water. I strolled right up to her and handed her that rose.

"Thanks," she said, holding the stem, which had been clipped short. "Where's the rest of it?"

I felt my throat close in until she laughed. It was the most beautiful laugh I'd ever heard. We had dinner the next night—and every night leading up to our wedding reception.

If you had told me that twenty years later she'd be divorcing me, I wouldn't believe it. I loved her so much. I still do. But one person in love does not a marriage make.