

# A Mystery's No Problem

A Novel

Lou Rowan



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Composed in Baskerville, designed in 1757 by John Baskerville.

like everything, *for Andrea*: lol, lom!



A problem is something which I meet, which I find completely before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and initial validity.

— Gabriel Marcel



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# 1

## MY PLEDGE TO YOU

Books let me down.

I go to a party. I know no one. I measure myself against the perfect outfit, the resplendent gestures of the financial star near the crudités – his smooth ways with women, with everyone. He’s the ultimate New Yorker, a phoenix risen from Gotham’s combustible grime to dazzle and triumph.

I must not lose this occasion to convince him my firm can help his firm. What an opportunity! If we connect tonight I can assure the handlers at his office he “knows” me, he’s awaiting my call. But how to detach him from the bejeweled glamour of his bedazzled audience? How to shine, sing, impress?

No passage, no slogan in any book has dissipated my tension, or unlocked my tongue at moments like this.

But I am a Californian: I’ll never abandon my quest for messages of healing, for a faith that works.

In these pages I distill my personal and business lives to intense moments shining like beacons, to adventures impelling me to quantum leaps. I ponder these stories for meaning. I am there for you.

I got the account from the financial star, and I’ll tell you how.

I’ve labored over this book for 6 years, interrupted only by life’s demands. The business career is done, and I write full-time.

I hesitate to tell you how old I am; I have experienced five-to-ten-year periods that went by in a blur: each of them I had plotted to lead to something – a career improvement, a better school system for my children, a safer retirement – only to realize when goals materialized they were but steps, plateaus, not the resting-places that would afford the

meaning and permanence I've sought for decades. We are all trying to go home.

I wish I'd never known most of the people in this book.

A New Yorker for 33 years, I thought I would be as likely to live in Washington State as Mississippi or Mongolia. But when the tawdry magic of leverage and derivatives made representing Bankers Trust Company intolerable, I began to take calls from headhunters. Soon I was doing sales and customer service work for the George NuzzleTrust Company from a midtown office building affording fine views of the club where Christie Brinkley worked out and the building sharing a Playboy Club with Imelda Marcos's thousands of shoes.

After two busy years finding my way around the new territory and the new client base I moved West to become the Managing Director of Institutional Sales at Nuzzle's historic Tacoma headquarters.

The Pacific Northwest is known for its good nature – some would say its naïve good nature. I will always maintain that civility, while no antidote to humanity's dark depths, is to be prized, and I considered my decades suffering the aggressions of Boston and New York a barbaric exile from my youth, however troubled, in a golden California whose postwar conflicts between sprawl and splendor the Northwest mimics now.

I was to experience all too quickly the sinister elements dominating greater Tacoma's development. But let me assure you, dear reader, my adventures in this tarnished paradise yield crucial lessons for us all.