

Rita, in her late 30's, has dedicated her working life to being a New York banker. Determined to succeed and be the best in a male dominated world, Rita is ruthless in her work, rising fast through the ranks to one of the top positions in the bank.

But, when Rita receives news that her mother has been hospitalized, she travels to South Florida to be with her. Maia, her mother is a hard-working woman who immigrated to South Florida from Brazil in the 1980's and is all Rita has of a family. She passes away shortly after, leaving Rita a red box full of documents and letters sent from Rio de Janeiro, from her long-time friend, Elizabeth. Faced with evidence of a past in Brazil she never knew she had, Rita returns to her job, hoping that her hectic lifestyle will make her forget. But back in New York, she discovers that her subordinate has replaced her and she is fired.

Without her mother and her job, she contacts Elizabeth and decides to go to Rio de Janeiro to discover her past. On the flight over, Rita has a brief encounter with an intriguing man called Gabriel, although she didn't realize at the time, their paths would cross again.

In Rio, Rita lives with Elizabeth, who reveals her mother's story, unbeknownst to her before.

Rita's mother came from a very humble background. She had worked for Elizabeth's parents while she studied to become a history teacher. While at university, Rita's mother meets Antonio, a student of a privileged background whom finally seduces her after months of courtship and she gets pregnant. But then things changed, Antonio becomes abusive and violent, until one night she flees from the house with Rita in tow and goes into hiding out in the countryside. Antonio discovers their whereabouts, with the intent to kill them, so they take the plunge and fly to America.

Whilst Rita is listening to her mother's story, it triggers the memory of when she too was once pregnant and had her heart broken by an abusive man. However, unlike her mother, she lost her child and was unable to ever have children.

Unexpectedly, Rita runs into Gabriel at his restaurant in Rio. They develop a friendship and discover the hidden secrets of the city together. She starts to lose her inhibitions and relaxes into the "Marvelous" City's soul and rhythm.

During this time Rita decided to search for her father and as times goes on she discovers more and more dark secrets, until finally just as she expects to see him, she discovers that he took his own life after murdering a pregnant woman. If anything good had come out of this tragedy it was a girl (Mariana), now 10 years old, survived.

Rita searches every orphanage, every church, and every home that an orphan girl could live, it is virtually impossible to find her, until someone thinks that they know where she is. When Rita and Mariana finally meet, they both know that they have found someone special in their lives forever. Rita knows that she has found true happiness and contentment in her life and after a legal process she becomes Mariana's legal guardian.

