



HEARTBREAK FALLS

TEASER CHAPTER

Come inside if you dare. You may find passion or mystery, but in the end it will leave you wanting more!!

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About the Author

Jennifer Westecott was born in 1978 in a small town. She spends her spare time with her family and friends when she's not working. Jennifer began writing her first novel as a short story that quickly bloomed into so much more. Her love for writing drove her to share her writing talents with the world. She gains her inspiration for her passion from the great outdoors.

Chapter Four

Emily then made her way up the stairs to her boudoir and went into her adjoining lavatory, where she ran herself a gentle bubble bath to help relax and alleviate some of her worries. She carefully disrobed in front of the mirror and could not help but notice that her stomach was a little bloated. When she saw that a new worry had crossed her mind, she quickly let it diminish when she stepped into the claw-foot bathtub. Emily sank deep into the water until the bubbles reached her chin, and she lay there, closed her eyes, and waited for what seemed like a few minutes, when she heard a knock at her door. She opened her eyes, climbed out of the bathtub, put on her bathrobe, and went to answer the door.

Before she opened the door, she asked, "Who's there?"

"It is Camille, I am here for our chat, Emily," she said.

"Oh, right, sorry, I must have fallen asleep in the bathtub and forgotten," Emily replied as she opened the door.

"No problem, Emily, I just wanted to give you a little time to yourself before I came up to see you," Camille said as she hugged her sister.

"Okay, come in and I will put my evening gown on, and then we shall begin having our discussion, because I need your help figuring out if I am just being inane or if there is something to what I am feeling," Emily said.

Camille then walked into the boudoir and sat on Emily's bed while she waited for her to get dressed. A short time later, Emily entered her boudoir and went and sat next to her sister on the bed. They had begun with idle chatter about how Camille's trip was and what Gustav's parents were like to meet for the first time. They had continued on that subject until Camille had decided that

they needed to solve the problem of what was going on with Emily, as she was to be married at the end of the week to her long-time love, Vincent LaRouge.

“Okay, Emily, what is going on that has got you so upset and frustrated?” Camille asked her.

“Well, Camille, I just cannot help but feel that Vincent went off to be with another woman this evening, instead of staying here with me and the family,” she stated as a tear ran down her soft cheek.

“I am sure that he is not seeing anyone else, Emily. This is probably just a slight case of wedding jitters. I mean, your wedding is Saturday afternoon, and problems can seem so much greater due to the stress of soon being married,” Camille stated.

“I am sure that you are right, Camille, but I cannot help but feel that there is someone else. Vincent’s behaviour lately has changed so drastically. He does not even hold my hand or kiss me the way he used to, and I am so confused by his behaviour as well,” Emily said with a shake in her voice.

“I will tell you what, Emily, this evening I will stay with you in your room, and tomorrow morning we will get up with Father and see him off to the office for the day. We will then dress and go downtown, and have you fitted for your gown and make a day of spending time with each other,” Camille said to her.

“That sounds like so much fun and excitement, but I do not want to take you away from your time with Gustav tomorrow,” Emily said.

“Do not worry, he is a very understanding man, and besides, he has to go into the office tomorrow with father, so that will give us the day to spend together as sisters,” Camille said as she hugged Emily.

“I hope you are right about Vincent, because I do not know what I would do if I lost him now, so close to the wedding,” Emily said.

“I assure you, Emily, what you are experiencing is what they like to call the Wedding Jitters, or cold feet. Everything will be fine once the wedding is finally over,” Camille said.

“I hope you are right that there is no other woman in his life. I could not bear the thought of not being enough for him, that he had to go out and find someone else,” Emily said.

“Tell you what, Emily, after the wedding is over, things will go back to normal, the way they were before the wedding. Now let us go to bed, we have a busy day ahead of us tomorrow,” Camille said as she patted the pillow next to her.

The two sisters were soon fast asleep, lying next to each other for an evening of peaceful sleep before their big day in town tomorrow. While the girls were upstairs getting ready for bed, everyone was in the living room discussing how excited they were that Camille and Gustav were getting married. Gustav had also decided to retire for the evening; he made his way to the spare boudoir just past the kitchen. He entered the small boudoir and sat on the bed, where he began to remove his boots and trousers. Just then, a knock came to the door.

“Yes, how can I help you?” Gustav asked.

“Sir, it is I, Alfredo. I have towels for you in the morning to clean up before you go into the office with Master Bradley. Shall I wait for your clothes so that I can have them cleaned and pressed for you in the morning?” asked Alfredo.

“Thank you for the towels, Alfredo. That was so kind of you. As for my clothes, that would be wonderful if you would wait outside the door or maybe come back in about ten minutes to collect them just outside the door,” Gustav replied.

“Very well, sir, I shall return in ten minutes to collect your things. By the way, sir, where would you like me to put them once I have them cleaned and pressed for you?” Alfredo asked.

“Ah, yes, please place them just inside the door on the chair that I will have placed next to the door for them,” Gustav said.

“Very well, sir, I shall do that for you. Is there anything else I might get for you when I return?” asked Alfredo.

“A tall glass of ice water, please, and then that will be all. Thank you so much for your kindness, Alfredo,” Gustav said to the aging man.

“You are most welcome, sir. Have a good sleep, and I shall return with that glass of ice water for you in just a moment,” he said to Gustav.

With that, Alfredo turned on his heel and left the small room that Gustav had now occupied for the evening. The aging man walked down the hallway past the kitchen, where Jonathan was putting leftovers away for the staff’s lunch the next day. As he continued walking, he noticed the most beautiful woman standing in the doorway to the kitchen. She was so elegantly dressed; every feature on her face was lightly defined, with a hint of powdered makeup, not too much, just enough to enhance her already beautiful face. When she looked up at him for a brief moment, he noticed that her eyes shone like two diamonds in the sunlight, and they were the most brilliant blue that he had ever seen. He kept walking past the kitchen and headed to the laundry room, as he did not want to stop and chat with her, fearing he would make a fool of himself. As he made his way down to the laundry room, he could hear faint footsteps behind him. The sound sent an eerie feeling up his spine, as he did not know who was following him. Though the sound was eerie, Alfredo continued on his way to the laundry room to do the laundry for Gustav and the rest of the family. As he entered the laundry room, the footsteps stopped at the door behind him. Alfredo quickly turned around to see who was behind him and saw Mrs. Downy standing there looking as lovely as ever.

“Why are you following me, Mrs. Downy? Is there something that I can do for you?” he asked her.

“No, there is nothing that I need you to do for me, Alfredo. I just wanted to chat with you and get to know you a little more than what I do,” she replied.

“I see. What would you like to know then?” he asked Mrs. Downy.

“I was wondering if you would like to go for a coffee in town and chat?” She asked Alfredo.

“I would like that very much, but as the head butler, I am rather busy every day,” Alfredo replied.

Mrs. Downy hung her head in disappointment and turned to walk away when Alfredo had suggested that she come to the house tomorrow afternoon for tea instead of going into town.

“I would like that very much, and I am sure that Mr. Bradley would give me the time off to come over to visit with you,” she said to him.

“Very well then, Mrs. Downy, I shall see you tomorrow afternoon,” Alfredo replied.

“Sounds very nice, I will see you tomorrow afternoon, and you can call me Carmen,” she said to him.

As she turned to walk away from Alfredo in the laundry room, he could not help but wonder what made her decide to get to know him more than she already did. It was interesting to him and intrigued him as well. He noticed that she smelled of wild lilacs in the summer rain, one of the most intoxicating scents that a woman could wear. Alfredo stood in the laundry room for a moment before he remembered that he was there to do Gustav’s and the Bradley family laundry while everyone slept. As Alfredo worked endlessly on the laundry, thoughts of Carmen invaded his every thought process. Before long, he found himself wondering what it would be like to hold her close to his body, matching her every movement and caress. As he stood there wondering what she felt like, he could sense that he was being watched from the doorway, but he wasn’t sure who was watching him. He slowly turned around to see who was standing there and saw that Gustav was observing him from the doorway.

“Alfredo, what are you thinking about that has you smiling like that and whistling that tune?” Gustav asked.

“I was just chatting with Mrs. Downy. We are going to meet here tomorrow afternoon for coffee and conversation,” Alfredo replied.

“That sounds wonderful, my good man. And how did this meeting come into play for you two this evening?” Gustav asked cautiously.

“Well, you see, sir, I had just left your room with your laundry and headed down here when I heard footsteps behind me. It was a little spine-chilling at first until I got down here and slowly turned to see this breathtakingly beautiful woman standing in the doorway,” Alfredo said.

“Wow, that sounds exciting, Alfredo. She is a charming woman, but I thought she was married?” Gustav questioned him.

“She was married many years ago, but her husband was taken from her in a senseless mugging in downtown Fort George when they had gone there for a vacation,” Alfredo responded.

“Oh my goodness, that is terrible. So, why may I ask, have you never asked her to coffee before now, Alfredo?” Gustav asked.

“Well, I guess it all stems from being hurt by certain women one too many times, and I just never thought of myself as remarrying and leaving the Bradley family,” Alfredo replied.

“Alfredo, just because you go out on a few dates with a woman does not mean that you must marry her right afterwards,” Gustav had said as he walked across the laundry room and sat down next to Alfredo.

“I realize that it has been a long time since my wife passed away, but I still feel like I would be betraying our love by seeing another woman,” Alfredo said in a sullen voice.

“Alfredo, I am quite sure that your wife would want you to move on with your life and not act as though your heart and love that you have died with her,” Gustav said in a comforting tone.

“You make a very valid point, sir. Perhaps I should do this and see where it leads me, I mean, what is the worst that could happen?” Alfredo asked him.

“Precisely, my good man, you need to live a little and experience new things and new people. Perhaps one day we will be celebrating your wedding,” Gustav remarked.

“Well, since you put it that way, I shall have her over for coffee and some friendly discussions. What could it possibly hurt, after all? I could be making a very good friend if it does not work out between us,” Alfredo replied.

“That’s smart thinking, Alfredo, because in the end, we all need friends and family in our lives,” Gustav said.

“Well, I guess I should get your trousers washed and pressed and then get the rest of the family’s laundry done as well. Would you still like me to bring you a glass of water, sir?” Alfredo asked Gustav.

“No, that’s alright. I went into the kitchen and got a glass of water myself when you did not return right away,” Gustav said.

“I am so sorry, sir. I did not forget about you, I guess I just lost track of time while I was chatting with Carmen,” the older fellow replied.

“Do not worry about it, Alfredo, I understand all too well. After all, look at me; I am getting married soon, and I had not planned on meeting or falling in love with anyone while I was here working. It just happened that I met my soul mate here on the first day I was in town to work for Mr. Bradley,” Gustav replied.

“I am thrilled that you and Miss Camille have found each other. I know it took a lot for her to trust another man after what her ex-fiancée did to her just days before the wedding,” Alfredo said.

“I know it was a risk on her part, but I had to show her that I was not that man and that if she gave me a chance, I would show her what love was truly supposed to be like,” Gustav said to Alfredo.

“Well, once again, I should get this laundry finished for everyone before I lose my job with the family,” Alfredo replied.

“Very well, I shall go back to my room and get some rest. If you need to talk to someone about what you are feeling for Carmen, my shoulder and ears are always available for you, Alfredo,” Gustav said as he turned to walk back to his room.

“Thank you very much, sir, I appreciate that a lot,” Alfredo replied.

Gustav turned and started walking back to his boudoir to go back to bed when he noticed that his door was slightly ajar. He slowly walked into the room and saw that someone was in his bed, and a smile slowly stretched across his face when he realized that it was Camille in his bed. He walked across the floor and slowly climbed into the bed so as not to wake Camille from the deep sleep that she was in. Gustav pulled the covers over his naked body and wrapped his arm over her body, pulling himself closer to her so that he was able to smell the soft scent of her hair. Camille stirred slightly when he cuddled next to her warm body, especially when she realized that he was lying there naked next to her. She slowly rolled over and kissed his soft lips and ran her hands over his chest, and could feel his manhood growing against her thighs. As she felt his rising excitement, Camille moaned ever so softly into his ear and asked him to make love to her.

“Are you sure that you want me to make love to you this evening, sweetheart? I would not want you to do anything like that in your parents’ home if it makes you feel uncomfortable,” Gustav said to her in a whisper.

“I would not have asked you to if I were not sure of it, my love. We have not made love in a while, and I want to make you happy,” she said.

“We do not need to make love for you to make me happy, my darling. Just you showing me that you love me the way you do made me extraordinarily happy,” Gustav replied.

“I want you to make love to me, honey. That is why I have come down the stairs to your boudoir, so that we could spend a little quality time together before we make the plunge into marriage next month,” Camille said to him as she reached down to stroke his ever-growing excitement.

“Oh, sweetheart, what are you doing to me? I feel strange about you wanting to do this under your family’s roof. We can wait until tomorrow when I get off work and go on a picnic,” Gustav replied as he moaned softly while she caressed his hard body with her soft hands and lips.

“I want this, sweetheart, more than you could ever know. I cannot possibly wait until tomorrow evening, it seems like an eternity since the last time we made love, darling,” she responded as she nibbled Gustav’s earlobe.

“Very well, my dear, I will do this to please you, but I do think that we should hold off on any more lovemaking until we have said ‘I do’, just in case something should result from it,” Gustav replied.

“I can deal with that, my love, but even if something should result from our lovemaking, it would not matter because I love you with my whole heart and soul,” she replied.

Gustav pulled her in closer to him and ran his hand down to the small of her back and held her close to his body as he rose a little more. She moaned ever so softly as she felt his hand cup her buttocks and lightly squeeze, and then his hand slowly ran up the front of her body until it reached her breast and cupped it while he suckled the soft pink peak. Gustav pushed her beautiful auburn hair back over her shoulder so that he could nuzzle in and kiss her neck, and as he kissed her neck, he gently rolled her over on her back and traced the lines of her body with his fingertips and tongue,

which set her body on fire within. Gustav slowly worked his way down, kissing her body until he reached her gentle pink flower between her thighs, and lovingly kissed it before he sat up on his knees and slowly entered her softness within.

Camille let out a soft moan as they began to make love, and within a few seconds, she was matching his every movement as they continued to make love. As he held her in his arms, making passionate love to her, he whispered into her ear that he would always love her from now through eternity. She began to cry from his loving words and then wrapped her arms even tighter around his neck and pulled him in closer to her. They lay there and made love until they both had fallen asleep in each other's arms. Suddenly, Camille woke up and realized where she was. She then leaned over and gently kissed Gustav goodbye before returning to her boudoir, ensuring no one would notice that she had visited Gustav's boudoir in the middle of the night.

After Camille reached the top of the stairs, she tiptoed to her boudoir and quietly opened and closed her door so as not to wake anyone up on the upper floor. Camille slowly walked across the floor to her bed and climbed in, thinking about Gustav sleeping downstairs. She lay there for the longest time thinking before she finally drifted off to sleep. As she slept, Camille dreamt of the days that would soon follow when she and Gustav would finally be married and able to make love every evening in their matrimonial bed. Meanwhile, Gustav lay in bed thinking about Camille and the passionate lovemaking that they had just shared when he had found her in his bed. He listened to the sound of the rain beating against the roof and could not wait to see his beautiful fiancée again in the morning.

The sun rose in the morning, shining beautiful golden streaks across the floors of every room in the mansion. As the sun shone through the windows, it cast small rainbows on the floor as it came through. Everyone rose and met in the dining room for breakfast. Camille was the last to join the family downstairs and walked across the floor and sat next to Gustav at the table. Just as she sat down, Alfredo walked into the dining room to serve the family their breakfasts.

"Good morning, Camille. How did you sleep last night, my dear?" asked Robert.

"Quite well, thank you for asking, father," she replied.

"That's wonderful, I thought for sure that the thunder would keep you awake all night," he said.

"I never heard the thunder at all, Father. I had a peaceful sleep all night," she said.

"That is terrific. I was so worried about you last night. As I know you do not like the sound of thunder when it is raining," Robert replied.

"I am okay, Father. I am getting used to the sound of thunder as long as I am inside the house when it strikes," she said.

"Did anybody hear someone walking around the house last night?" Elizabeth asked.

"No, I did not, mother, maybe it was Alfredo walking around doing his evening chores while we were in bed for the night," Emily replied.

Alfredo walked back into the dining room with more coffee for everyone, and Elizabeth asked him if he was walking about the house during the evening.

“Why, yes, I was, ma’am. I was doing laundry and ironing for the family during the night, and I placed it all in everyone’s rooms for them,” Alfredo replied.

“Very well then, I was not sure if it was you or someone else who could not sleep during the storm,” she said.

“Is there anything else that I can assist you with, ma’am?” Alfredo asked before he departed the dining room.

“No, that will be all, Alfredo. Thank you for being honest with me about the situation,” Elizabeth replied.

Everyone continued to eat their breakfast before heading off into town to complete the errands and finish the final plans for Emily’s wedding. Robert rose from the table and walked over, and gave Elizabeth a good-bye kiss before leaving for the office. Gustav took that as his cue to go to the office as well and leaned over and kissed Camille on the cheek before leaving with Robert. Shortly after Robert and Gustav left for the office, Elizabeth and her daughters left to go in for the final fitting of Emily’s gown and to pick up Camille’s gown as well. While in town, Elizabeth had decided that there were a few other things that she needed to pick up for the wedding as well. She made a list of things to do while in town and then walked up the stairs to get dressed for her trip to town with her daughters. Before long, Elizabeth and her daughters were loaded into the carriage and on their way into town for the day to get the last-minute things ready for the wedding on Saturday.

“What are you thinking about, mother?” Emily asked her.

“Oh dear, I am just thinking about all the things we need to do in town today to get you ready for your wedding this weekend,” Elizabeth replied.

“No need to worry yourself so endlessly about it, mother, just enjoy your day out of the house while you can,” Camille said.

“I am not worried about anything, dear; we just have a lot to do today while we are in town,” Elizabeth replied.

“Well, that is good, because I think that we should go to the beauty parlour and have our hair and nails done for the wedding,” Camille said.

“That sounds like it could be fun, and then we could all go to lunch at the little bistro that you like so much, mother,” Emily said.

“Okay, my girls, we will do all that after we get the list done that I have, and while we go to lunch and the beauty parlour, I will have Stewart bring everything back to the house and then come back for us. How does that sound to you girls?” Elizabeth asked.

“That sounds perfect, mother, and we will have a wonderful time today while we get your list completed,” Emily and Camille replied.

The three women continued on their way into town, sitting in the carriage in silence, wondering what they would do and hoping that everything would run smoothly so as not to upset anyone. Elizabeth sat in her seat, reviewing her list of things to buy and do, ensuring that everything was written down so that nothing would be forgotten by accident. When they reached the town limits, they gathered their handbags and got ready to be dropped off at Ms. Marple's dress boutique to get Emily and Camille's fittings done and over with so that they could continue on their way. Moments later, they pulled up in front of the little dress boutique and got out, heading into the boutique.

"Good Morning, ladies, and how can I help you today?" asked Ms. Marple.

"I am here for my final fitting of my wedding gown and to show my mother the design and fabric that you used for it," Emily said.

"Perfect, I have it already for you in the back room. I will get you to follow me back, Emily, and then when we get it on you, we will have your mother come back and have a look," she said.

"Wonderful, that would please me most of all, to be wearing it when mother comes in to see it," Emily replied.

"How is Camille's gown coming along?" asked Elizabeth.

"I think we have a couple of adjustments to make today, and then it will be finished.

"Camille, if you follow Kathy to the back room, she will get that fitting done so that your mother can see it on you as well," Ms. Marple replied.

"Oh, wonderful, I cannot wait to see what you have done with it since last week. Did you do what I asked you to?" Camille asked.

"Yes, we have, we just need you to try it on and make sure that we have the sizing correct before we send you home with it today," replied Ms. Marple.

"Well, sounds like my girls have everything under control when it comes to their gowns," Elizabeth said.

"That they do. They knew what they wanted, and Emily had sketches of the design that she wanted, and we went by that after she chose the fabric she wanted," she answered.

"Well, I suppose while I am here, I should pick up my gown and by the looks of it, you have one on the rack in just the colour and size that I am looking for," Elizabeth said.

"That's wonderful. Would you like to go into the fitting room and try it on to be sure that it will work for you, Mrs. Bradley?" Ms. Marple asked her.

"Yes, that would be wonderful. I will go over and pick it off the rack, and I will be right in there," Elizabeth said.

Elizabeth walked over to the rack where the gown was hanging and then took it into the fitting room, waiting for Kathy to come in to ensure that it fit correctly over her robust figure. She stepped into the fitting room and began to undress, and then stepped into the gown she had

chosen. It had seemed to fit perfectly until Kathy came in to see what needed to be done and noticed a small tear in the back of the gown.

“Oh my goodness, ma’am, could I please get you to take the gown off, and I will repair the small tear in the back for you?” Kathy asked.

“Oh my, yes, I will change back into my other dress while you fix this one. Other than the small tear, how did everything fit in the back over my robust backside?” Elizabeth asked.

“Yes, other than the small tear, everything fits beautifully on you, ma’am,” Kathy replied.

“Wonderful, I am glad to hear that it fit alright. Usually, I have to have everything altered just to fit my backside, and then it does not fit anywhere else,” Elizabeth replied.

“Unfortunately, ma’am, you are not the only one with a robust backside, so we have been stocking gowns to fit all shapes and sizes lately,” Kathy said as she helped Elizabeth out of the gown and showed her the small tear in the back.

“Oh goodness, I hope that I did not do that when I was trying the gown on?” Elizabeth asked the young woman named Kathy.

“No ma’am, this looks like a manufacturer’s defect. It had nothing to do with you trying it on,” Kathy replied.

Kathy then took the gown into another room, where she was able to mend the tear in the dress without it affecting how the gown would fit Elizabeth after she was done fixing it. When she was done repairing the tear, she walked back to the fitting room, where Elizabeth sat waiting for her, and then put the gown back on. It fit just as well as it had before the repair. Elizabeth commended Kathy on her repair job, noting that it did not look like she had mended the small tear at all, but rather that she had taken a new gown off the rack.

“You do amazing work, Kathy; it does not even look like it had been torn at all. It looks like a whole new gown,” Elizabeth had remarked to the young woman.

“Thank you very much, Mrs. Bradley. I take great pride in my work, and I love to see the look and smiles on women’s faces when I do repair work for them,” Kathy had said with a slight hint of shyness in her tiny voice.

“You are very welcome; it is not very often that you come across someone who takes such pride in their work as you do. You have impressed me with your abilities, and I will be returning here if I ever need anything repaired again,” Elizabeth remarked and then handed the young woman an extra fifty cents for the time she put into the repair.

“Mrs. Bradley, Emily is ready to show you the gown that we have made for her. She is very excited for you to see it on her. Can you please follow me into the back room where we have another seamstress waiting to see if there are any other alterations that you would like done to it,” Ms. Marple said to Elizabeth as she led her to where her daughter was waiting for her.

They walked into the room, and Elizabeth was amazed by the gown her daughter had designed. She had chosen the perfect combinations of satin and lace accented by sequins. Elizabeth wiped a tear from her eye when she saw how beautiful Emily looked in her wedding gown.

“My dear daughter, you look just beautiful. You have done amazing with the design of this gown, you are going to be so stunning on your special day this Saturday,” Elizabeth said with tears caught in her throat.

“Thank you, mother, that means so much to me. My inspiration comes from your loving support and all the lovely gowns you have worn over the years. I love you, mother,” Emily said to Elizabeth as she walked over to hug her mother.

“I love the hint of blue that you have in the fabric. What made you go with that choice, Emily?” Elizabeth asked her.

“I went with this choice because you need something blue for good luck on your special day, and I felt that doing this, I would not need anything else in blue,” she replied.

“Well, I think you made the perfect choice for your fabrics, they mesh together quite well, and the colour is just stunning on you, my dear,” Elizabeth said.

“Ma’am, Camille is ready for you to come in and see her gown and fabric choice now,” Ms. Marple stated.

“Very well, I will be right there after I help Emily out of her gown and get it ready to be packaged to take home today,” Elizabeth said.

“I will take your gown into the back, ma’am, and I will have it boxed and wrapped for you. Is there anything else that I can help you with?” Kathy asked Elizabeth.

“Thank you very much, Kathy, but I do not think there will be anything else that I will need today,” Elizabeth said as she made her way into the small room where Camille was waiting to show her the gown she had chosen.

Elizabeth was very pleased with the gown that her daughter Emily had designed and the fabrics she had chosen for it. To Elizabeth, it seemed that her children had grown up overnight, and all she wanted was to know that all her children were happy with their lives and potential significant others. She made her way to the fitting room where Camille was waiting for her, and when she walked into the room, she could not believe her eyes. Camille’s gown was made from the most delicate dusty rose satin with a bit of lace trim, and the design that she had chosen accentuated her beautiful figure, and the colour set her hair aflame.

“Oh my goodness, my dear, you look stunning in that colour and style. You did very well choosing your gown, the colour and fabric type,” Elizabeth said as a tear rolled down her porcelain face.

“Thank you, mother, I was hoping that you would like it, but I think Emily’s gown is brilliant,” Camille stated.

“You are right, her gown is gorgeous. You both have done very well, and you both will look stunning this Saturday on her wedding day,” Elizabeth replied.

Elizabeth helped Camille out of her gown, had Kathy box it, and tied a ribbon around the box. Then, she had Stewart place them in the carriage and take them back to the Bradley estate while they went to lunch at a quaint little bistro down the street.

“Stewart, would you please take these packages back to the estate and then come back for us in about two hours, and we should be finished with everything that we need to do by then,” Elizabeth said to her carriage driver.

“Yes, ma’am. Would you like me to place them in their respective boudoirs, or would you rather have Mrs. Wolfe do that for you?” he asked.

“Please have Mrs. Wolfe place the packages in our boudoirs. I do not think that it would be appropriate to have you walking into our boudoirs with the packages,” she stated.

“Very well, Mrs. Bradley. I shall take the packages back to the estate and have Mrs. Wolfe take them to their appropriate boudoirs, then for you,” he said.

With that said, Stewart loaded the carriage with the packages and told the women that he would return in two hours to return them to the estate. Elizabeth told him that when he returned for them, he would find them at the Eagle’s Nest Bistro about two blocks down the street. After Stewart had the carriage loaded, he climbed aboard the carriage, pulled away from the curb, and headed back towards the Bradleys’ estate. When he pulled up to the mansion, he was greeted by Mrs. Wolfe, who had asked if she might be able to help him with anything.

“Well, yes, you may. Mrs. Bradley has asked me that you please take these packages upstairs to her and her daughter's boudoirs for them,” he said.

“Very good, I shall do that, but which box goes where?” she asked.

“The one with the blue ribbon is Mrs. Bradley’s, the pink is her daughter Camille’s, and the other is Emily’s,” he said to the aging woman.

“Thank you, Stewart, for clarifying that for me. That makes it easier when they have colour-coded ribbons on the boxes,” Mrs. Wolfe said to Stewart.

Stewart unloaded the packages and handed them to Mrs. Wolfe, who turned on her heels and proceeded to go into the mansion to place them in their respective boudoirs upstairs. While the women were in town, dining for lunch and shopping, Mr. Bradley and Gustav were hard at work at the toy factory, going over the past year's financial reports and statements. They worked tirelessly to get everything in order before the auditors were due to arrive the following week, ensuring that there was no tax evasion and that all necessary claims were being made.

As Gustav entered everything into the ledgers, Robert searched the filing cabinets for all receipts and statements to ensure they would not forget any entries.

“Robert, may I ask who was doing your books before I came along?” Gustav asked him.

“George Brown, the man I fired when it was found out that he was pilfering from the company accounts,” Robert said.

“How did you find out that he was doing that, because from the looks of the books, everything had been entered and accounted for,” Gustav said.

“To tell you the truth, I am not sure how he was doing it. He was quite crafty and very thorough about it, and covered all his tracks. Until the day that he slipped up and went into the bank, and then I got a telegram a couple of days later explaining what he was doing there on that particular day,” Robert said.

“May I ask what he was doing that nobody contacted you before that day?” Gustav asked.

“As it turned out, he had gone into the bank and set up a fraudulent company account and was transferring small amounts of money from one to the other. No one had thought it was strange until the day when he had gone in to do a final transfer and let it slip that he was trying to make the toy factory close its doors for good, so that he could open his own business,” Robert stated dryly.

“My god, some people, I tell you, they will try anything to make themselves superior to someone else, even if that means they have to destroy their company or reputation,” Gustav said.

“Exactly, well enough about that unpleasant bastard, let us get back to work and get this finished so that we might be on time for dinner with our lovely ladies this evening,” Robert said.

“That sounds like a plan, Robert. From the looks of things, we are almost ready for the auditor next week. Now that the hard part is over with, it will be much easier for me to keep the ledgers straight to keep the auditors off your back for a while,” Gustav said.

“See, I knew I hired you for a good reason. That did not take you very long to straighten out and get into order. I wonder what the ladies are doing right now, never mind, they are probably out for lunch at Elizabeth’s favourite bistro downtown and spending all my money,” Robert said with a chuckle.

“Well, if we finish up here in the next few minutes, we could meet them at the bistro as a surprise,” Gustav said to Robert.

“That sounds like a great idea, they will be surprised to see us, and I know that you are having withdrawals about seeing my daughter,” Robert said.

“Am I really that obvious about my love for Camille?” Gustav asked Robert.

“You are, and I am pleased to tell you that I am delighted that you make her as happy as you do. I have not seen her happy in a very long time, and it looks good on her, and you two are terrific for each other,” Robert said as he put his hand on Gustav’s shoulder.

Robert and Gustav finished up the ledgers and put everything back into the safe so that no one could break into the office and steal his financial records to try and destroy him or the company. Once they had everything locked in the safe, they left the office, closed the door behind them and headed down to the awaiting carriage.

“Stewart, will you please take us to the Eagles’ Nest Bistro downtown, and make it quick, as we do not want to miss seeing my wife and daughter’s for lunch,” Robert said.

“Yes, sir, I will get you gentlemen there as fast as I can,” Stewart said.

“Thank you, Stewart, and once you drop us at the bistro, you may take the rest of the day off to spend with your family,” Robert said to the driver.

“Thank you, sir, you are a very kind man,” Stewart replied, a smile spreading across his small face.

Stewart took Robert and Gustav downtown to the Eagles’ Nest Bistro so that they could sit and have lunch with the Bradley women. As they pulled up to the bistro, Elizabeth noticed Robert getting out of the carriage first and was stunned to see her husband walking into the bistro, wondering why he was there. Just as Robert rounded the front of the carriage, Gustav walked up behind and then detoured to the little flower boutique next door to the bistro.

“Robert, I will meet you there. I want to go next door and pick up some roses for Camille as a surprise,” Gustav said to him and walked away.

“Okay then, I will see you back at the bistro when you are done, and I will be sure not to tell Camille what you are up to,” Robert said with a chuckle.

“Sounds good, I will see you back at the bistro then,” Gustav said to him.

Robert walked into the bistro and asked to be seated with his wife, and that there would be one more joining them for lunch. Gustav continued on his way over to the flower boutique and picked out two dozen of the most delicate red roses for his beloved fiancée.

“Where did Gustav run off to, Father?” Camille asked Robert.

“Oh, he just had an errand to run, and he will be right here, dear,” Robert replied.

“I hope he does not take too long. I cannot wait to see him today,” she said.

“That’s wonderful, because he cannot wait to see you either, my dear daughter,” Robert said to Camille as he reached over and squeezed her hand.

Before too long, Gustav was walking in the front door of the bistro with the roses in his hand and a smile that stretched across his handsome face. Camille spotted Gustav walking across the floor towards her with a beautiful bouquet of roses in his hand. As Gustav reached Camille, she stood up to greet him with a hug and a kiss. He reached her, grabbed her by the waist, wrapped his arms around her, kissed her passionately, and then stood back and held out the roses to her.

“These are for you, my love. I wanted to surprise you with these roses that represent how much I love you, and how much I will continue to love you,” he said as he kissed her again.

“Oh, thank you, my love, I love them just as much as I love you and continue to fall deeper and deeper in love with you every day,” she said as she took the roses from him and placed them on the table so she could hold him closer to her without crushing the roses.

Gustav sat down next to her, placed his hand on her knee, and ordered his lunch from the hostess when she came around to the table. Emily sat there quietly thinking to herself that it had been a very long time since Vincent had bought her any flowers for absolutely no reason at all, other than just because he loved her. It brought a tear to her eye when she thought about it, and she secretly hoped that it would never change for Camille, and that one day soon, Vincent would surprise her again like that.

“Emily, what is wrong, my dear?” Robert asked his eldest daughter.

“Oh, I was just thinking about how long it had been since Vincent had surprised me like that with a beautiful bouquet,” she said to her father.

Before long, the hostess had returned to the table with Robert and Gustav’s drinks and refills of coffee for the three women at the table. They all sat there and chatted amongst themselves about the upcoming wedding that was taking place this Saturday, and how much more they had to do to get ready for it. As they chatted, the hostess returned with their orders and placed them in front of them, asking if they would like refills on their drinks and coffee. While Emily sat there eating her lunch, she realized that she had not spoken to or seen Vincent at all that day and wondered why.

“What are you thinking about, Emily?” Camille asked her.

“I was just thinking that I had not seen or spoken to Vincent at all today, and he was supposed to stop by the mansion this morning before he left for work,” she said.

“I imagine he wanted to get to work this morning and let you get your rest as he knew that you were coming to town today for your final fitting. He will probably stop by this evening after work, my dear,” Elizabeth said with a hint of concern in her voice.

“You are right, mother, he just may do that instead,” Emily replied.

Just as she said that, Camille looked up and noticed that Vincent was walking down the street with Emily’s best friend, Melody, and they looked rather cozy with each other. She did not want to say anything to her sister, who was to get married to this man in just a few short days, so she just pretended not to see him and continued to finish her meal.

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