

ENCHANTED

ONE: THE MEETING

Some marriages survive while others fall apart. Loss, betrayal, death, even attempted murder could not loosen something so profound, which appeared impenetrable in this couple, but why? Bumps and dips in the road created pain and fear; but at the end perseverance, combined with commitment, allowed this couple's incredible love to endure. Why was their love unending?

My name is Dorothy George. Never did I subscribe to the title "maid or housekeeper." Mr. and Mrs. Harry Grover called me, "Miss Dottie," until the day they died. It never occurred to me, way back at the beginning that I might witness the death of my beloved Mrs. Grover. The day they buried her, I also died; at least, I wanted that because I loved her so deeply. Edwina Grover was like my daughter. Not every domestic employee can state that with honesty.

When I look back at the beginning, it makes a smile cover these old lips which have laughed and cried way too much. The second Mrs. Grover came as a young woman to live in the house, which the first Mrs. Grover built with her husband. My reaction to number two was not exactly kind; not in the beginning, but I warmed up to her easily. How could I not love the most beautiful, and most thoughtful woman, whom I ever encountered?

The first wife was great, but God saved, "The best until last." That's what Mr. Grover always said. His words were not as a comparison. He loved his first wife with a steadfast love. When she died, he became angry at God. Edwina Grover, wife number one, committed suicide the day her death sentence, of an inoperable brain tumor, became known. I didn't blame her, but Mr. Grover was furious that she stripped him of the ability to nurse her. He wanted to take care of her, just as she cared for him, all of the years after their marriage. Their union was blessed and happy from the beginning to the end. Flowers, laughter, and music filled their grand home.

Each morning, Ms. Edwina insisted that I depose the old flowers, and then I selected a new vase to contain her prizes. That was one of my jobs. She didn't nitpick the small

things. I would rotate the vases because each one possessed a different beauty. Ms. Edwina visited the garden each morning to select her flowers. She loved to pick and arrange flowers. No one could arrange flowers like she. Some of her displays were huge but the small ones, which she chose for dinner parties, delighted all of their friends. Guests said they looked forward to the table setting as much as the food. That was a real compliment; since our cook, Ester, was the best in New York.

Ester arrived straight from Budapest. Her credentials were impressive. One, of Mrs. Grover's family friends, employed her for a summer at their home in Hungary. Ester's meals were legendary. Each day brought smells to our kitchen, which I still dream of encountering. Ester died three days after Ms. Edwina. Mr. Grover said she died of a broken heart; when she lost her best friend. Family associates remarked how strange that Edwina developed a strong relationship with a household employee. Even Mr. Grover remarked that he never understood their friendship. Maybe it was the music. The Grover home played background music from morning until bedtime. Even I grew fond of Bach, Mozart, and Verdi. Ester could sing beautiful opera. Ms. Edwina would sit in the kitchen, by the window, and just listen to gilded sounds from the throat of a songbird; who should have stood on stage instead of peeling carrots in our kitchen.

Since working for this family, I never encountered a happier residence. Sometimes, I deliver various gifts to some of the friends of my employers. These friends open their ornate doors with a look of anxiousness. In my home, the joy is present all day, each day. My idea is that Mr. Grover is such an easy man. After living with two different wives, I can say that he seems to be the happy one. Life is comfortable, and even problems do not overwhelm in his presence. Wife Number Two said it was his faith; it kept everything so steady. I believe that to be true. When Edwina died, even in the early days, he always had time for others. Now, I may be prejudiced, but he just had a way.

Ms. Edwina didn't confide in me very much. Her belief that household help should not be confidantes did not bother me. I was told that by Mother, who also was a domestic employee. The only thing, which I ever was privy to hear from Ms. Edwina, was that she and Mr. Grover married while attending Washington and Lee University. The rest that I knew was what I witnessed each day; an incredible love shrouded their lives. It never came to mind that one of them would leave before me.

That horrible day, when Ms. Edwina put a handgun into her mouth and pulled the trigger, will haunt me forever. Mr. Grover just checked on her, while she was supposed to be napping. When we heard the loud boom, we both knew. We ran into her room. Never will I forget that horrible sight. His screams surely were heard in the City. The police had to pull him away so that they could remove her body. For nights, he refused to sleep in the house. He dozed by the pool in a chaise lounge. Each evening, I covered him with a

blanket. It was a terrible time. I suppose that she could not live her last days without the joy, which surrounded her earlier. She told me that she couldn't bear for him to see her suffer. She seemed to possess a fear that she may not be heroic. I know that he would have loved her no matter, but I guess that she didn't understand the depth of his love for her.

After her death, he became somewhat angry and uninterested in life. Retirement from his law practice occurred at about the same time as Ms. Edwina's death. Too much happened so quickly. Several of his dearest friends encouraged involvement with the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This step resulted in a great love for the Met, as he soon became a major Patron. A little of that shine returned to those tired chocolatey brown eyes. Once again, he joked each day with me, and his appetite returned, but he was never quite the same. Not until She came. The day I arrived, and found him cooking for a strange younger woman, I knew our world would never be the same. I fought this change, out of reverence for Ms. Edwina, until I realized that my actions were unfair. Ms. Edwina loved him deeply. His happiness drove her each day. Soon, I stopped fighting his new love and embraced her. What a story of love I'm about to tell you. Wife Number two said all of this. This story is her story.

FIRST SIGHT

Surrounded by charming people, she felt slightly intimidated. It wasn't that her dress fell short compared to others, but something appeared very wrong with her mind. Looking down, at her brown dress covered with a sheer gold shine and matching shoes; it was her mental state, which frightened her. Something appeared wrong with her thoughts. The perfect gold evening purse was held in damp hands, a little too tightly. When she opened this bag of perfection, it contained only a ticket for admittance to the Metropolitan and a tube of Lancome L'Rouge Lipstick. The beautiful color was Coquette. Her choice of color pleased her. This single thing may sound preposterous that the color of lipstick mattered, but that was a connection with her past. The only connection to provide a sense of sanity in a desperate situation. Calmly, she realized those were the only two pieces of information, which she possessed concerning herself. Her plan to attend a gala at the Met and the color of lipstick.

Every word, uttered by people around her, shattered the semblance of peace; she fought to maintain. Each individual, who passed her, was studied. Surely someone would soon return to her side with an explanation, as to this strange predicament. Who was she?

Much too slowly, the line crept forward into the opulence that is the Metropolitan. The night air felt cool, and comforting when the door opened. Fall of the year greeted everyone. Conversations around her took on great importance. Perhaps, one of the

surrounding attendees may know this stranger. Soon it was apparent that she waited alone. Upon entrance, there was only a feeling that she knew this place; she loved it. Lovingly, she stroked a marble column. Smiles greeted her from faces thrilled to attend, whatever it was that waited. This woman entered as fear grew deep from within. There was no joy at enjoying a night of splendor.

All evening, she remained with her new friend, a hard marble column. Fearfully, she studied the polished floors and opulence of the beautiful Metropolitan Museum of Art. The grandness and largeness of this huge building only reinforced her feeling of smallness and unworthiness. Refusal, to accept this uncertain status as mentally impaired, cost her hours. Denial of her circumstance only postponed the inevitable. This woman was alone; she appeared different from the others. She stood in the same spot. Her tired eyes surveyed the shiny marble floors with a hope that soon someone might approach with answers. Together, they would leave arm-in-arm laughing at the predicament, she suffered. That never happened. Soon, the same people as before strolled happily back into the grand marble entrance. What popping sounds or enlightening speech inspired them? Why had she chosen this night to attend? Only a few cursory nods greeted the beautiful, sad woman. It was at that moment; the fear became panic.

An attendant stood in the center of the hall. Hesitantly, she approached, as calmly as allowed.

“Excuse me. Do you know me?”

His great smile evaporated from his face. “Madame, you are well? What was your question? I don’t understand.”

“I don’t understand either. I do not have memory. You must know me?”

“Madame, you need to move on. I will phone the police, but that is the only service available to you.”

Quickly, she walked away. Thoughts of spending her night, dressed elegantly on a cot in prison, did not appeal to her. As she walked to the side of the vast hall, she assumed a stride of assurance and confidence, so that the watching attendant would not intervene. Quickly, she turned her head to see if the attendant was watching. He was not. She hurried out of his sight. Tucked into the side of the gigantic building, she noticed a set of stairs. Hastily, she climbed them without interruption.

A long hall sadly greeted her. Dimly lighted, the doors were mostly closed. Thick carpet, the color of sea foam, gave a sense of peace. She felt no peace. The long carpeted halls contained a loneliness. In fact, they were eerie. The sconces provided a soft, yellow light.

This glumness only added to the moroseness, which she felt at her predicament. Glumly, she slumped into a chair with no idea how to proceed. Many moments passed until the sound of laughter met her ears. She stood. Five men walked from an office in great mirth. Three left, but two remained tightly huddled in conversation. It appeared that they made plans for a golf game the next day.

“Superb, see you then, old man.” They laughed. The stranger, who passed her nodded with a puzzled look but did not question. Turning once to glance at her again, he seemed uninterested in her presence. He was middle-aged, trim, and very handsome. Timidly, she walked toward the remaining gent. He watched her approach. He seemed puzzled by her slow walk toward him. That was the first moment of meeting.

Standing before her stood a man of elegance. Although he looked about twenty years older, he radiated health and a love of life. He was not particularly tall. His features were dark. His elegant suit echoed the fact that he must be very wealthy. His teeth glowed in the semi-darkness. Outwardly, this man oozed sophistication. He waited for her approach with a glowing smile. Her reaction was trembling from her very soul.

“May I help you? Do you have questions?” His kindness assured her.

“Yes, I have a question. Do you know who I am?”

The smile left his lips. “Is this a joke? I’ve never seen you.”

“Please, you must help me. This situation is not a joke. I have no recollection of my life. The only thing I remember is my favorite Lancome lipstick because it is in my new bag. I know the handbag is new since the clasp is tight.” She sounded ridiculous, as she rambled her words incoherently.

If this statement created humor, she failed to see it. He laughed softly. Her tears started; they followed with increased tremors. Her hands covered her face. She staggered toward this stranger. He seemed to believe her, as he gently touched her shoulder.

“You don’t need to be emotional; I will do my best to assist you. An explanation must exist for your predicament. Together, we will discover your secrets.” He smiled so kindly that her tears stopped briefly.

“Please, I don’t want to spend the rest of my life in a homeless shelter, prison, or a mental institution. Look, I’m at the Met. How bad can I possibly be? How could this happen?”

The tears started stronger than before. He hugged her gently. With a touch of effervescence, he gently shrouded her. She felt like a small child, being comforted by a beloved parent. The peace, he offered, seemed like a life preserver to this little woman sinking in fear and despair.

“What will we do?” Did he realize that her problem, just became his? He smiled. He looked at her intently, as if trying to formulate a plan.

“Let me introduce myself, my name is Harry Grover. My driver should be waiting outside. I live many miles away. At my home, there is a small guest cottage. You are more than welcome to stay for a few days. My wife passed away years ago. Her room remains the same as the day that she died. We will find you a few clothes to wear during this time until your memory returns. Dottie has told me for years that I need to send these items to Goodwill, but I couldn’t. Do you feel comfortable with this plan? I could get a hotel room for you for a day or two. That will not be a problem.”

This suggestion was more than she could ever hope. “Yes, please let me stay at your cottage. Fear overwhelms me; I’m not sure why. I can’t be alone. Not now, please don’t leave me.” She realized the bizarre request from a stranger, but it seemed imperative that she not be left alone.

The handsome stranger smiled, as he guided her to a door in the back. The fragrance, of his freshly laundered shirt, caused her to wonder, *who took care of this kind and gentle person? Could it be Dottie*, whom he mentioned earlier? The girl’s eyes inadvertently studied his face. Although he was very masculine, there was a gentleness. Was she making a mistake leaving with someone, whom she did not know? What waited for her and where were they going? Her nervous system quivered, as though she could not process more confusion. They entered his black Lincoln. She trusted him completely since there did not appear to be another option. His driver whisked them away, quickly into the darkness.

TWO: A ROCKY START

As they sped into the darkness, silence pervaded the space around them. The woman later said that she immediately realized her folly. She suddenly suffered panic unlike the other episodes of fear. She considered jumping from the speeding car, but was too terrified to move.

The man insisted that the temperature should increase; since the lady did not have a sufficient wrap. Soon, the interior was stifling. This sad creature said she realized, at that point, that she had a deep fear of someone yelling at her. Even though perspiration

collected on her face and body; fear of reprisal, if she made a suggestion, kept her from commenting. Eventually, the driver complained that he may, "Pass out," if the temperature was any hotter. Everyone laughed, which cleared the air.

The young stranger began to relax for a few moments. When her eyes adapted to the darkness, she was able to study the face of her companion. His eyes remained fixed straight ahead. He gave no awareness of her presence. He was extremely handsome with dark features. Graying hair was brushed straight back off of his face. There was a small mole on his left cheek, which provided keen interest to his face. His gentle smile made her feel that he must be a kind and thoughtful person.

The silence became heavy, and fear began to invade her heart again. She felt tiny and alone. Tears filled her eyes covering her cheeks, but no one noticed. She stared out of the window, to her left, in case the man by her side might look her way. She refused to appear weak.

After some time passed, her host softly said, "Well, young lady, do you know anything about this area?"

No words escaped due to the lump in her throat. Feelings of nausea permeated her body. What would she do if she became sick? This stranger surely would not appreciate that. Already, she knew of the imposition, which she created for him. At that moment, she wanted to die. Death seemed like a more attractive alternative than being at the mercy of a stranger. As hard as she tried, she was unable to prevent the muffled sounds of her sobs.

"Here, here, what is this? Are you crying again? Why would you cry? Don't you know that you are safe?"

These words seemed absurd to the young woman. Either this man was very naive or insensitive. She hoped so intensely that he was not insensitive.

"No, sir, I don't believe that I know anything. Surely, you understand that I don't have the slightest idea where we are. I don't even recognize my name. I only want to go home, wherever that may be. I am so very sorry. I don't mean to appear ungrateful. You are most kind."

Then, to her amazement, the tears flowed uncontrollably. It was impossible to stop the deep emotion, which racked her body. Living in such a state of dependence would be impossible for her. Facing each day, with no memory, would be a constant state of Hell.

Her host pulled her firmly toward him. She pushed away, shaking her head.

“No, I may ruin your shirt with my makeup if you try to console me. I don’t want to create any more work for you or Dottie, whomever that is. I am sorry to be such a heavy burden.” Her muffled sobs saturated the quiet night air.

This kind man gently put his finger under her chin. He raised her face. She could smell alcohol on his breath. There was no fear of him; she only feared her circumstances. The look of compassion on his face was comforting. There was nothing at all of danger.

“Let’s be very clear, right now. I didn’t have to help you, but I wanted very much to be of assistance to you. I’m not sure why. My wife died a very long time ago.”

The stranger looked at the back of his driver’s head. It was apparent that he listened carefully. The handsome man raised the barrier between the two areas.

“Miss, I am lonely. My life, once exciting and full, is now filled with trivia. You suddenly give me a purpose. You see, I don’t believe in coincidences. I think God puts people in our lives for a reason; many people believe this. It is pretty apparent that you were placed right in front of me.”

They both laughed at the absurdity of their situation. To her amazement, he put his arm around her shoulders.

“You must believe me that I do not have an agenda. It is not my intention to seduce you or use you in any way. Maybe, you will find that I am a decent and good person someday.”

His smile seemed to back up his words.

“Look, you are not in danger. You should realize that you are safe. You are free to leave whenever you choose. I will help you with whatever decision you make. Why don’t we just enjoy this situation and each other, if possible? We can have great times together just educating you on the joys of New York, until the time that your memory returns.”

He then described to her, their location in relationship to the city.

They were entering Dutchess County located in the southeastern corner of New York State. He mentioned Franklin Roosevelt, which surprisingly caused recognition. She knew that he was a past president. This morsel of knowledge gave her hope for the future.

He was correct earlier in his statements. What other choice was there for her? She could live in fear that he may harm her, or she could trust him. His outlook was more appealing

to her. She started to relax, as she listened to the melody of his voice. He appeared so carefree and happy.

Apparently, he lived in a place called Millbrook. After about an hour of driving, she began to notice large areas, with lovely old homes. There appeared to be great plots of land with pastures. Was this horse-country? Mr. Grover stated that his home was not that old. He and his wife, Edwina, built it together about thirty years ago. She designed each detail of their rather eccentric home.

When he mentioned Edwina, he seemed to smile and look away with a detached gaze. There was a longing in his voice. It was apparent that his time with her was euphoric. He looked intently at the strange woman.

“Well, this is your abode for a short while. I need to explain that my wife was a little different. I suppose that ordinary people are labeled ‘crazy’ if they seem different. The rich are ‘eccentric.’ Soon after we completed our home, one evening, as we returned from a night in the city; she decided to add a remarkable feature. Don’t be shocked, this isn’t a circus or restaurant.”

As he looked ahead, she followed his eyes. Suddenly, as they turned, the entire entrance was lighted with hundreds, maybe thousands of twinkling lights. The most beautiful music softly played from speakers. The wrought-iron gates continued to open. They entered a fairly land; unlike anything she had ever seen. Although, she could not remember seeing much of anything.

“What is that enchanting sound?” She asked in a mesmerized voice.

“Funny that you use the term, ‘Enchanting.’ It is a song from long ago by a group named the Platters. Edwina loved the group. The song is ‘Enchanted.’”

The driver slowly drove into a beautiful world. Far-removed from the rush of the craziness outside. Here no terrorists existed. No arguing or fighting raged, only beauty and peace. The stranger later stated this was as close to Heaven, as she could ever feel. The driver slowed, as a large pool reflected the lights, which surrounded it. There was a small cottage. She felt safe. The man looked at his home, as though seeing it for the first time.

“Every time that I return here, it is as though I see it with my wife by my side. I love our home so much. Do you feel her presence? Her death may have transported her away, but she created this.”

He moved his hand in a sweeping gesture, with such joy. Now, the guest felt the essence of his being. She said, at that moment, she felt confident that she would never leave without him beside her, for the rest of her life. A chill ran down her spine, as she took in the beauty and security surrounding her.

“I hate to add to the circus theme here, but the name of our home is ‘Enchanted.’ He beamed with joy. Again, my name is Mr. Grover. You are most welcome at my home. It is only me. My housekeeper, Dottie, and her grandson live in another small house on the estate. This cottage is the pool house. I think you will be comfortable for as long as you need help.”

Those words gave the young woman such relief from the pain and worry, which tormented her. The girl later told Ms. Dottie that she saw her world connected to his and Ms. Edwina’s forever.

THREE: ENCHANTED

The black Lincoln pulled in front of a small stone cottage. The entire estate was well-lighted. Nothing escaped from view. They slowly walked toward the door of the little cottage. Ivy surrounded the gates.

“Do you leave these lights on all through the night?”

“Yes, we always have. You become accustomed to them very soon. However, if you feel they are a bother, we can turn them off.”

He smiled sadly. Would this stranger try to change the world he loved?

“What about the music? Does it play all night long?”

The handsome owner smiled again with sadness.

“Yes, my wife loved it so. Again, you have been invited. I want you to be comfortable, so we can do whatever you desire.” Chase, the driver, accompanied them. He signed loudly. Apparently, he did not appreciate the concessions his boss was making to this strange woman.

“Don’t you dare change a thing. I love it so. I’m sure that I will adapt quickly. I am most fatigued.” She lowered her eyes at the impetuosity of her words. It sounded as if she asked him to leave.

“Yes, of course, how about a quick tour; then, I’ll be on my way to the main house. First, let me show you the buzzer. If you press this, the entire compound comes alive with lights and our guard. In just a moment, you will be surrounded with protection. You see, you could not be in a safer environment. Everything is always fresh. Dottie makes sure. Well, I’m off. See you tomorrow.”

With that, he and Chase walked to the Lincoln and quietly drove away a little too quickly. She stood by the window sadly watching their departure. His “tour” had been very brief. Feelings of loneliness and fear pervaded her space.

Quietness, with the beautiful “Enchanted,” softly playing, she stood alone. The sound pulled her to the door. She walked outside. The air was fresh and crisp. Overhead, millions of God’s lights twinkled. The lamps of Enchanted were beautiful; there was no topping the stars in the heavens. She strolled along the stone path to the small stone fence, which encircled the cottage. Opening the gate, she studied her new home. It was magnificent. The smallness of the pool house, in comparison to the largeness of the compound, made her feel in control. The gray stones topped with a steep slate roof. The doors and shutters were painted black. Two black rockers moved gently in the increasing wind. All of the elements produced an elegant little home, which was perfect for one person or a couple. Of course, it was merely the pool house. Who were these people with such a fortune? The guest dipped her toe into the cold water of the pool. The wind blew into her face. Lights swirled all around her, “Enchanted” played so softly. The young woman felt faint with exhaustion and peace. A large smile covered her face.

Walking inside, she locked the lock, then bolted the door. The owners had thought of the peace and comfort of their guests. Her thoughts returned to the handsome proprietor. Who was his wife? The power, which she maintained over Mr. Grover, even from her grave was unyielding.

The stranger tired of all of the thoughts. Touching the shabby chic furniture, she walked to the travertine bath. Turning the water onto scorching, she lost herself in the shower. French soap caressed her body with a very light lilac fragrance. She began to relax. Luxuriating from the heat, she felt like a different person. As she stepped from the shower, she wrapped a thick, white towel around her body. The temperature of the cottage was too warm for her. After locating the thermostat, she plunged the temperature to a lower one, which allowed her to remove the towel quickly from around her body and climb into an antique sleigh bed. The yellow duvet was all feathers. These floated softly around her tired body and spirit. The softness of the sheets felt smooth and comforting. Instantly, she thanked God for keeping her safe, through whatever it was she had experienced. Suddenly, she realized that her fear of being alone was unfounded. God, the spirit, surrounded her. She felt his presence. A smile caressed her lips. The little room was

well-lighted from the many lights outside. The soft yellow color, of the duvet and walls, was soothing to her spirit. Gently, she closed her eyes with peace so perfect. There would never be words to describe the depth of her emotions, deep thankfulness to the handsome man for his immense kindness to her.

FOUR: PANIC

What was that sound? Fearfully, she sat straight up from a profound and peaceful sleep. Where was she? Confusedly, she rubbed her head. It throbbed intently. Strange thoughts swirled in her mind. A woman's smile permeated through the maze. Horrible yelling and anger caused her to jump from the safety of her feathered bed. Danger! All of the action seemed to be happening in her head, but she could not be sure. She grabbed a blanket and ran to the door. In a fit of fear, she quickly unlocked and unbolted the door.

As she ran, toward the direction that the car had driven earlier, she realized that she was out of control. Fear consumed her. Heavy perspiration, despite the cold temperature, drenched her body. No shoes on her tender feet, but it was of no concern. She must reach the main house and the kind man who made her feel safe, if only briefly.

The blanket, which was cuddled loosely around her, fell at one corner. It became snagged on a tree root. The force of the pull dragged her on the ground. Confident that she heard steps behind her, she ripped it from the confines of the tree root. Somehow, she had strayed from the path and was surrounded by trees and natural terrain. Still, she could see the lights of the palatial home. It pulled her, as a massive magnet. Safety awaited. She staggered from the ground. Deep pain radiated through her right shoulder. Still, she ran. That sound, "Enchanted," began to calm her. Her frantic pace slowed, if only a little. Her senses seemed to replace the confusion of before, but there was still a deep fear.

Looming ahead was the home of Mr. Grover. He would know what to do. Danger alerted her body to, "Fight or flight." She chose, "Flight." Peace must be attainable, even for this tormented soul with no memory. Had she done something terrible or had someone done something cruel to her? Again, the tears flowed. Unable to see clearly, she fell several more times before reaching the front door.

The grand house looked just like the pool house, but many times more magnificent. The stone stairs were cold and rough to her bleeding and torn feet. The pain in her shoulder intensified. Where was everyone? Plummeling the door with her fists, she screamed for help.

Instantly, it seemed as if every light in the house glowed. She appeared to regain her senses. What a foolish woman, he would think of her. Still, she beat on the door, as if driven by a force beyond her control. Was she insane?

Through the faceted crystal glass, she saw a dark form. He was looking through the window. The door slowly opened. Mr. Grover looked confused.

“What is the problem? You are bleeding. Someone has hurt you?” He stepped onto the porch and looked intently into the woods. The stranger fell into his arms.

“I honestly don’t know what is wrong. I fell asleep peacefully to the music but awakened in great fear. Please, can I sleep here? Please, don’t make me return to the little cottage alone.” Her breathing was labored. Her skin was wet. He pulled her inside and closed the massive wooden door.

Without a word, he walked up the grand staircase. Dense, red carpet poshly covered the stairs. She followed without a sound. As they topped the stairs, he turned right. Still, she silently followed. Sconces provided a soft-pink ambiance to the pale neutral-colored walls of the hall. He opened closed doors. They were French-white. He touched a switch. Her eyes surveyed the most beautiful room. A gasp escaped her tired lungs. The blood, from her cut leg, trickled onto the pink Persian rug.

The young woman sat on the floor with the blanket pulled tightly over her. Her attempts to put pressure on the bloodied site on her leg seemed to help. The bleeding finally stopped.

For the longest time, no sound was uttered. The owner watched her, with a look of interest, but no emotion. Suddenly, he held his hand to her. Timidly, she received it. He pulled her and the blanket close to his chest. Gently, they swayed as a parent would hold a child. Once again, she felt like a child being comforted by a parent. This man was kind; she felt confident.

He pulled back from her. His eyes registered compassion. This stranger needed him. His thoughts returned to his first wife. Edwina refused his desire to care for her, but this young woman had no choice. She needed him. All of his life, there abounded in his soul, a desire to care for someone’s need. Everyone in his life had been self-sufficient with vitality.

This strange woman looked into his eyes fearfully. Her dark hair fell in soft strands around a child’s face. The light reflected from the blue-blackness of her beautiful hair. Dark brown eyes also glowed at him. She appeared to blush from his intense stare. He realized that she was around forty years old. Such beautiful, delicate features looked at him. Her porcelain skin looked as alabaster. Many years without his wife had presented him with such profound loneliness. Could this being in front of him, be the answer to the dream of another life of joy and fulfillment? Her small face and delicate features resembled a child.

The woman staggered slightly. Taking her by the hand, he walked with her to the bathroom. He motioned toward the high claw-footed tub. Unsure of what action to take, she sat on the edge. Gently, he cleaned her wound with soap and water. He applied an ointment and bandage.

“Tomorrow, Dottie will know what to do. Now, let me see that shoulder.” She pulled her arm from the shield of the blanket. The sheet fell from her hand exposing her entire right side. She had inadvertently exposed herself from the waist up. Fear and confusion refused to allow feelings of embarrassment. Their eyes met.

“I don’t know how to proceed. Edwina would know.” He shook his head in disgust. What a strange thing to say, he thought.

The woman now reached toward his face. Gently, she drew him to her lips. The kiss was long but very gentle; it was not a kiss of passion. Again, they looked into each other’s eyes. Now, there was tremendous longing and confusion from each. This situation presented such a strange set of circumstances. Every action seemed wrong, contrived. They were both reacting honestly to the situation. Neither had an agenda.

“Why don’t we just enjoy each day and learn to trust, if possible?”

She looked at him with a smile. He smiled back at the woman-child. Those were his words from earlier, which she now repeated. Not desiring to leave her, he hesitated. She followed him into the room across from his. He motioned to the bed of his wife.

“I want you to sleep here. This room remained deprived of beauty for a long time. There is such longing in my heart to fill it with laughter and music, as long ago. We don’t know what you may remember. Could you be married with children? There is no ring on your hand.” They both looked at her left hand.

“We could be setting ourselves up for such pain. This scenario could destroy me. It is impossible for me to lose another love. All of this is preposterous. Of course, any feelings are premature. We don’t even know each other. You don’t know yourself.”

He shook his head in confusion. They both realized that they were acting hastily and without any real thought about the intelligent way to continue. They both longed for love. It seemed as if God had brought two damaged souls together here, at Enchanted. There appeared to exist a need to cling to each other. Could they not follow their feelings? Must they be forced to use caution? He was tired of always living under restraint.

“I think that we are worth the risk if we follow our hearts, but with great care. What do you say?”

The woman looked sad. She sat on the side of the shimmering turquoise coverlet of his wife's charming bed. "I don't know. There is such fear in my heart. What if I am a murderer or something evil?"

These words brought a smile to his lips. She was so young and naive. He had never experienced such intense desire. His feelings weren't lust, but loftier than that mere human desire. He saw a future in this beauty, but he must move cautiously. It was not his wish to hurt her or himself anymore. Not knowing what to do, he suggested that they "get a good night's sleep."

"We will both be here tomorrow. Together, we will move ahead very slowly, with respect for each of our damaged psyches. Does that sound wise?"

So much trauma for one day, a desire for escape from decisions and fear caused her smile. "Let's talk tomorrow. Are you free tomorrow? I mean, must you report to some demanding office?"

He felt amazed with her compassion. He kissed her gently on the forehead. He closed the hall doors and opened a set of French doors across the room. They opened into another bedroom. He motioned to his bed.

"I'll be just there. You will not be alone, for as long as you need me. I have no family now. Don't be afraid. You need sleep." With those words, he quietly walked into the other room and closed the door, but before leaving, he looked at her intently again.

Tears of disbelief and joy trickled from her eyes that had endured great strain. Carefully, she pulled the gorgeous covers back. The beautiful turquoise room began to spin gently. The linens were soft with a sheen. Certain that this was different from what she was accustomed; she closed her eyes with confidence that she was, at least, safe for now.

FIVE: POSSIBILITIES

A bird, outside the window, awakened her with his melodious song. She smiled. Then, she remembered her plight. Tiredness overcame her. What was she going to do? Her eyes darted around the room. She smiled. As her eyes took in the gorgeous place, confusion clouded her mind. This room was not the room where she retired last night. How had she gotten into another room? Quickly, she sat up. Turning to her right, she saw Mr. Grover, lying on the bed beside her, watching her. She was in his bed. Confusion and fear, two constant companions, flowed through her mind.

“I don’t understand. This room is not where I went to sleep. I don’t recall getting up during the night. How did I get here?”

“You came running into the room during the evening. You were crying and talking about ‘the unfairness of the situation.’ Don’t you remember? I tried to comfort you, but you wouldn’t allow me to touch you. You have peacefully slept since then. The mornings are my favorite time. I awaken early, just as I did when I worked as an attorney in my practice.” He smiled.

The girl was confused. How could she possibly have done these actions without any recollection? Was this man as kind, as she previously deducted, or was he a manipulative monster? Sadly, she shook her head. It was imperative that she stop doubting every action that Mr. Grover committed or she would lose the rest of her mind.

“Look, I think that we should get up and have an excellent breakfast. Dottie usually prepares breakfast, but today, I’m going to spoil you with Eggs Benedict. Do you like it?”

“Don’t know if I’ve ever had it. You don’t need to do special things for me. I should prepare something for you.”

“You do not need to cook here. I pay someone to do that for us, for me.” He lowered his eyes. What was this need to rush things? He was behaving like a confused schoolboy.

He held out a robe for her. It was turquoise, the same color as the coverlet on the bed of Edwina. She took it. As he turned, she quickly slipped into the silky, luxurious wrap.

“Was this your wife’s?”

He nodded, “Yes.”

“Please feel free to choose any of Edwina’s clothes. They have hung in the exact spot for so long.” He left her alone as he walked into the other room and closed the door. The sound of his shower seemed normal.

Slowly, she walked to the first bed. She studied the sheets carefully. Everything appeared calm and orderly. For a while, she was alone without fear. How did she get into his bed? His explanation made no sense. It appeared more and more that she was mad. Had she completely lost her mind?

The young woman, without memory, carefully looked at the memories of another woman. The woman who belonged here. Insecurity and doubt plagued the guest. She was sure that she was nothing like the glamorous, Edwina Grover. How could she ever be happy, when she didn’t even know herself?

A beautiful silver vanity set pulled her attention to the dainty desk, where the accomplished woman had brushed her hair and applied her make-up each morning. She reached for the silver brush and comb. There was a small chest. It contained all sorts of hair paraphernalia. Several silver combs sparkled in the morning light. What beautiful things must have delighted Edwina each morning. The girl chose a handsome, large comb and inserted it into her dark hair. The silver against the blue-blackness of her hair was stunning. Carefully, she looked into each drawer. Pale underwear of every pastel color waited carefully folded and arranged according to hue. It seemed an invasion to wear someone's lingerie, but she did not have a choice. Nervously, she selected a white bra and panties. They fit her perfectly. The two women must be the same frame. She smiled at her reflection.

With a little more confidence, she walked to the huge closet. It remained stuffed with every sort of appropriate attire and shoes. This cache of clothes was every woman's dream: owning a closet filled with such treasures. Instantly, she noted a gorgeous pair of cream boots. The leather was exquisite. From their appearance, they were brand-new. They were only slightly too large for her, so she stuffed some paper into the toes. Then they fit fine.

A cashmere sweater of the palest green seemed to call for her to pick it. Next, she discovered a drawer of designer jeans. They also fit like a glove. What an attractive ensemble she had chosen; she smiled at her reflection in the large mirror edged in gold.

Happily, she returned to the dressing table and applied some of Edwina's makeup. Her colors were a little darker than the slip of a woman trying to wear them, but they were better than none. Just as she stepped back to enjoy her reflection, the door opened.

He did not look happy. The gaze that he leveled at her was painful to read. No words uttered for the longest time.

"Well, you seem to have found everything. You look beautiful."

She was confident that she denoted displeasure. "I can choose something else, or you tell me what to wear. I am sorry. I have overstepped my bounds. Please forgive me." Her festive spirits plummeted.

Mr. Grover walked to a sofa by the window. Gently, he sat and put his head in his hands. Again, silence pervaded. The young woman waited. Would he ask her to leave? What mistake had she committed? Hadn't she done as instructed?

"I am sorry. You see, you look so much like my beautiful Edwina, when she was very young. I didn't realize it until I saw you in her clothes. That happens to be one of her

favorite outfits on a day at home. We loved to walk the property on a frosty morning. She would select rocks and strange, dead-looking branches. Then, when we returned home, she would design incredible vases. These changed almost daily. That was one of her passions; making beauty from the ordinary.” He looked up at her with tears in his eyes.

“I don’t know if I can ever enjoy life without my love. She haunts my thoughts and dreams daily. Forever, she will remain the love of my life. I’m sorry, but you need to know that. Whatever happens between you and me: lovers, friends, she will always be the one. Any other relationship is as naught to me.”

Those words did not daunt the stranger. She understood his meaning. Quietly, she walked to his side and took his hand.

“It was never my intention to gain your affection. I can’t explain how unworthy I feel, as I sit at her vanity or wear her clothes. Earlier, you said that we should just enjoy each other. Is that still possible or have you decided that you are unable? Of course, it is your choice. I will gladly do whatever you say.”

Tears glided down his face. He had not shaved today. A little stubble covered his chin. A chill went up her back, as she studied him. He was very handsome. If only she could soothe his spirit. She took his hand and waited. They studied each other intensely. Both felt aware of the awkwardness of their plight: Someone suddenly seems to be dropped into your life. What was the proper behavior?

“So sorry about this loss of control; please forgive me. Come on, let’s enjoy a good breakfast. We can’t know when you last ate.”

Together, they exited the room and walked down the stairs. The thick, red carpet sank slightly beneath her steps. She longed to remove the boots and run down the stairs barefooted. If only she could be herself.

A small cry escaped her as she took in the opulence of the hall. Last night, she had not noticed the black and white marble covering the floor of the grand entrance. A gigantic, circular table stood in the center: the top graced with a beautiful copper pot. All sorts of different varieties of flowers filled it. The colors were dark with many reds. Red must have been one of Edwina’s favorite colors. Now, it would be hers as well. An extraordinary chandelier-graced the center of the foyer. She tried to imagine grand parties hosted by Harry and Edwina.

“Your home is most beautiful.” She suddenly felt unimportant again. It seemed that any self-confidence vanished quickly. Just a look from Mr. Grover plunged the young girl into uncertainty.

“Do you like it? I know that it is a little strange with all of the lights and constant playing of ‘Enchanted.’ I do love it so.” He smiled with pleasure. In the light of day, he felt embarrassed by his longing last night. She must think him an “old fool.” He had no desires or longing for any relationship with her today.

His smile radiated only pleasure and pride. Together, arm-in-arm, they entered the sunny kitchen. Two lonely and damaged souls, who only sought peace and shelter from the storms of fear and loss.

SIX: MISS DOTTIE

The golden sunlight streamed, like streaks of butter, into the bright French-style kitchen. Edwina was a fan of anything “French.” The walls were painted that beautiful French red, like the perfect red of a Lancome lipstick. Antique blue and white porcelain bowls shone through the sparkling glass of the cabinets, as well as glowing large platters and bowls atop the dark mahogany cabinets. The stranger felt like a child in a candy store; as she gazed at the beautiful treasures.

Hungrily, she consumed the perfect Eggs Benedict with Starbucks French Roast Espresso Coffee, which her host prepared. At one point, Mr. Grover held her hand, as he described the “perfect” day with Edwina: many days, she busied herself in the city with fund-raising or shopping. Lots of friends kept her life filled with joy and contentment. However, her husband was the jewel of her life. Her favorite day was one when she pulled on a pair of jeans and walked hand-in-hand with her love around the estate. They enjoyed picking up “treasures” in their path. Edwina had many collections of such natural gifts waiting for her skilled hand to assemble into presents for her friends or sold for charities.

When Mr. Grover realized that her hand was gently clasped by his, an uncomfortable feeling overcame him and quickly let it go. At that moment, it seemed that such actions were foolish. Therefore, determination to keep her removed from his emotions rattled the poor man. She was merely a lovely guest in his home. At the least, she had provided a distinct purpose of caring for her; until located by a family. Certainly, her family was frantic.

Miss Dottie arrived as they finished their last sip of coffee. Mr. Grover was clearing the table; when she sauntered into the room. She dressed in a white dress, which she preferred, with white-laced shoes. A large green roller tucked into the back of her hair, which pulled it off her face. Many mornings, she arrived with the curler. It provided a constant source of enjoyment for Mr. Grover. He enjoyed removing it and holding it in her face. Her brown eyes would light up with his joviality. Dottie and Mr. Grover had shared a lifetime of memories.

This morning, her mouth dropped open at his guest. She stood in the door holding a large shopping bag filled with whatever she brought each morning. It amazed her to see this younger woman seated in Ms. Edwina's place at the table. The older woman found it incorrigible that Mr. Grover would behave in such a ridiculous way. This interloper did resemble a young Edwina, but she was not Edwina Grover; nor, would she ever be able to attain her lofty status.

Mr. Grover was totally unprepared for the glare from Dottie. Suddenly, he felt silly. With a look of disappointment, he studied his long-time employee. She was not happy. Her gaze leveled at the back of the young woman's head. Her eyes refused to roll away from the hateful mass of blue-black hair. Ms. Edwina's hair was much more regal, she thought.

"Hello, Miss Dottie. How are you on this sunny morning? It sure is warm outside for this time of year." Mr. Grover attempted to behave normally.

"Um-huh, it looks pretty hot in here, as well."

"Now what is that supposed to mean? Let me present our house guest," He stopped as he became aware that he did not know her name. This situation created an awkward moment for everyone but Dottie.

"If you ask me, her name is Ms. Edwina, want-to-be. I'm just saying." With that announcement, she began removing cleaning items from her shopping bag. The young guest was shocked. She was unsure how to respond, so she remained quiet.

"Now, Ms. Dottie, this is most unlike you. This young woman experienced an accident, which resulted in no memory. Surely, you can show her some respect and mercy."

"Umm. Compliance and mercy? Hey, lady, lovely to meet you." Under her breath, she mumbled, "Edwina want-to-be."

Mr. Grover, who always thought that everyone should be civil and agreeable, became shocked. He must get Dottie to accept the guest, or it would be unbearable for everyone.

"Dottie, help me think of a lovely name for our new friend." He beamed kindly at the older woman.

"I have the perfect name." She smiled sweetly.

"Lovely, let's hear it. We knew that you would 'save the day.'" He smiled back at the back of Ms. Dottie's head.

“Ok, here it is. Hello, Edwina want-to-be. How’s you this sunny, autumn morning?” Immediately, she returned to unloading her bag.

Never, in all of the time that he employed her had Dottie ever caused him a disappointment, at least, not until that moment. He felt shocked and betrayed.

“See here, old girl, this is not acceptable. You will follow me right now. We need to have a little talk.” Dottie continued to unload her bag.

“Now, Dottie George, right now!” He stormed from the room. Dottie stormed behind.

Another drama because of her, the young woman felt awful. Never, would she want to cause dissension for this kind man. Their intense exchange of words, in the next room, sounded pretty awful. Mr. Grover had the last word. Soon, they marched back to the kitchen.

Miss Dottie approached with fire in her eyes, but she smiled sweetly again. “Well, let’s see now. I think this lovely lady should have a youthful name. Let me think. Ummm, how about, Rock Star. You know one of those slutty women who sing?”

“Dottie, one more episode and you will be sent home. Apologize.” No words of apology were offered.

“Now.” Grover’s anger boomed in his voice.

“Oh, all right. How about, Elizabeth? I always told Ms. Edwina that she looked just like Elizabeth Taylor. I am sorry for being rude.” The sweet smile framed by fire from her dark eyes.

Mr. Grover knew that was as good as it would get. Now he waited to see if the guest would break out in tears. She seemed to cry all of the time. To his amazement, the lovely woman arose from her chair. Walking toward Ms. Dottie, she hugged her gently.

“That is such a beautiful name. I hope that when I find my real name, it is Elizabeth. Thank you so much, Ms. Dottie. Elizabeth it is.” Again she hugged Dottie and beamed at Mr. Grover.

“I’m so glad that Ms. Dottie has solved a major obstacle. I love my new name.” The young guest seemed genuinely impressed.

He returned her grateful smile. Never, did he ever remember Edwina hugging Dottie. The same thought raced through Dottie’s mind.

That was kind. I'm not about to let my guard down, though. I'll kill her if she hurts Mr. Grover.

Everyone stood in a circle, all smiles. They resembled the perfect little family.

“Elizabeth, why don’t you select a warm wrap? Let’s have that long walk, which we discussed.”

Elizabeth nodded with joy. A long walk outside would be wonderful. Joyfully, she ran back to “her” room. Mr. Grover removed the plastic curler from the hair of his employee and smiled. She smiled back but was sure that no good would come from this new person.