

The Christmas Proposal I – Simon

by Keith West

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Simon Cleary lit the candles and stepped back to admire the table. Between the candles, the fireplace, and the lights on the tree, they set just the mood he was looking for. Rachel would be coming over soon. After dinner, they would trim the tree together. Then he would give her the gift he had saved months for. He gently caressed the small, square box in his pocket. A diamond ring with the central diamond encircled by small rubies and emeralds to signify the season.

There was nothing to do now but wait. Not his strong suit.

Simon began to pace the entry hall. On his second lap, he forced himself to stop. If Rachel arrived and saw him pacing through the glass of the front door, he would look too eager.

He went back to the dining room. On a side table was a punch bowl filled with eggnog, his grandmother's recipe. None of this stuff from the grocery store. He started to dip himself a cup. No, he was nervous enough that if he started drinking before he had any food in his stomach, he might not stop soon enough.

Simon had left his phone in the kitchen. He'd silenced it. Now, simply to kill time, he went and picked it up. He'd missed a call.

From Rachel.

She'd left a voice mail.

He almost dropped the phone trying to hit PLAY.

“Simon. Hi, it's Rachel. I'm going to be there, but I have to make a stop first. Mrs. Thompson needed someone to run an errand for her, and since I'm on call, I've got to do it. I won't be long. Promise.”

Simon sighed. Rachel worked part time with a local senior citizen assistance program. Their clients were folks who were still capable of living on their own but needed a helping hand from time to time. Mostly it was yardwork or small household chores. Sometimes grocery shopping or someone to drive them to doctor's appointments. Things like that. Good and necessary work, and normally something Simon approved of entirely. Tonight he wanted to curse Mrs. Thompson.

But no, that wasn't fair. Mrs. Thompson was a sweet old lady. If she needed something, then she needed something. It was just bad luck that Rachel was the one on call tonight. He should have planned this dinner for tomorrow night, when someone else was on call, but he wouldn't have been able to bear the waiting.

Rachel's giving nature was part of why he had fallen in love with her. He had met Rachel when his grandmother had been enrolled in the program, and he had seen how caring Rachel had been to his grandmother.

Simon resisted the urge to open the stove and check on the lasagna. That had also been his grandmother's recipe. Rachel had told him one time how much she liked his grandmother's lasagna. That was why he'd chosen it instead of a more traditional holiday menu.

The doorbell rang.