

The Christmas Proposal III – Simon and Rachel

by Keith West

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Simon couldn't remember feeling a sense of relief like he'd experienced when he saw Rachel drive up. It was like coming out of a bad dream. She'd liked dinner, and while that didn't surprise him, he was glad she had. He wanted everything to be perfect.

He wasn't sure why he had taken her hand. It had seemed the natural thing to do. Rachel hadn't pulled her hand away, although he had felt her tense up for a moment before relaxing. He realized it must have been a surprise to her. Their relationship had been mostly platonic.

“What shall we start with?”

“Well,” Simon realized he was still holding Rachel's hand, and she had turned to face him. “There are the glass balls. And some Christmas bear ornaments.” Simon had bought those especially for Rachel yesterday. She loved bears.

“And there's tinsel. And the angel for the top of the tree.”

Simon realized he was talking faster and louder. He took a deep breath to force himself to slow down. The evening wasn't going as he had planned.

“I love these ornaments,” said Rachel, holding one up by the string. “A bear Santa. How cute!”

She hung the ornament on the tree and reached for another. Simon was transfixed by the way highlights in her hair caught the light of the fire and reflected it back. Rachel hung two more ornaments then realized Simon wasn't helping her.

“Simon?”

“Uh, yes?”

“Aren’t you going to help me, or do I have to do all the work?” Rachel held up a bear popping out of a wrapped Christmas present. Her smile told him she was teasing about doing all the work.

“Oh, of course. Just wool gathering.”

He took the ornament from her. “Where should I hang this little guy?”

“Wherever you like. It is your tree after all.”

Simon swallowed. Nothing was going as he had planned. Not since the doorbell rang.

“Well, it is for now.”

“What do you mean?”

Rachel got that little furrow between her eyebrows she had whenever she was working on a puzzle or trying to figure out a mystery. There was a note of suspicion in her voice.

Simon tried to maintain eye contact and couldn’t. “I was hoping it would be our tree.”

He tried to say something more; the words stuck in his throat.

Rachel took his hand that wasn’t holding the ornament in one of hers. With her other hand, she gently turned his face to hers.

“Do you want to ask me something, Simon?”

“Yes.” He handed her the ornament. He dug the box out of his pocket and got down on one knee. Rachel’s eyes grew wide. She took a deep breath and held it, bringing both hands to her mouth. The ornament hit the floor, forgotten.

Simon opened the box.

“Rachel, will you marry me?”

Tears filled her eyes as she nodded, unable to speak.

Simon knew he’d made the right decision earlier that evening.