

Africa's
Snow White

Summer Love

Jealous Winter

by

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Summer Love - Jealous Winter

by Jonathan Eloff

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This book is a work of fiction, but most of the places, characters, and incidents are real. The specific dialogue is a product of the author's imagination, and names have been changed to protect the identities of the characters.

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Chapter 9

After lunch, Elizabeth found herself wandering through the caravan park. She was looking for the handsome young man her family had given a ride to before lunch.

She wasn't having much luck finding him.

What was his name again? She racked her brain for a moment. *Nicholas. That's it. Nicholas. Maybe he'll take me to the dance tomorrow night? That is, if I can find him.*

The trouble was, she didn't know what his family looked like, or what their caravan, or even their car looked like. In fact, it had become increasingly apparent to her that she didn't even know where their campsite was. Nicholas had seemed to indicate that his family was parked near the entrance of the park where he'd been dropped off, but "near" was such a nebulous word. All she really had to go on was his windswept, light brown hair, his roguishly handsome face, his piercing, green eyes, and his patterned, white and gray t-shirt. *And he might have changed his clothes by now . . .*

Elizabeth sighed and panned her head back and forth. Everywhere she looked, she saw milling crowds of people, and a myriad of caravans, cars, tents, chairs, boats, and smoking fire pits. The sounds of adults' laughter and children's boisterous games reached her ears, and the air was thick with the smoke and smell of grilling *boerewors** and lamb chops. But there was no sight or sound of Nicholas. Elizabeth had never realized how busy Siesta was, or how large the park was—until now.

* *Boerewors*: Afrikaner farmer's sausage

She turned another corner, saw another caravan, walked past yet another family that didn't match the description Nicholas had given of his own. No little eight-year-old girl, no handsome young man with rakish features and wind-addled, brown hair . . .

That's it! Elizabeth thought, finally giving in to despair. *This is impossible.* And with that thought, she turned around and headed back to her family's campsite.

* * *

There was no sign of her *anywhere*. Nicholas had been searching up and down Siesta for the last twenty minutes. All he had to go on was a white Mercedes and that smile. *Elizabeth, where are you?* He'd seen every color of Mercedes but white: red ones, black ones, silver ones . . . *it shouldn't be this hard to find a car!* As Nicholas turned another corner, a little kid almost ran into him at top speed, but he dodged out of the way at the last second. *Jinne! It's busy here,* he thought, shaking his head.

He looked around again. No white Mercedes. *Maybe they were visiting some friends and now they've left again? Or maybe I just missed seeing their car?* Nicholas frowned. Given how little luck he'd had finding them, he decided they'd probably left. He turned around . . . and saw in the distance . . .

A girl with long, chestnut brown hair!

His heart leapt.

He walked up behind her.

"Elizabeth—" She turned around. His face fell.

It wasn't her.

"Oh. Sorry," he said, "I thought you were someone else."

The girl smiled but said nothing, and Nicholas walked on, now thoroughly discouraged and more than a little embarrassed. *I guess I may as well head back.*

* * *

It was just past one o'clock; Elizabeth had returned to camp not 5 minutes ago, and now she was sitting outside her family's tent, beneath the awning. Bored, she was drumming her fingers on the armrests of her chair, wondering what she was going to do with herself for the

rest of the day.

Hearing a rustling noise behind her, she turned her head to look. It was just her mother coming out of the tent. Constance took a seat in the folding chair next to Elizabeth and looked over at her daughter. She searched Elizabeth's face for a moment.

"You look bored," Constance decided.

Elizabeth smiled. "I am."

"Well, don't wish your life away." Constance bent down to pick up a magazine that was lying on the grass next to her chair. She opened the magazine and began reading.

Elizabeth contemplated the cover of the magazine, and a thought occurred to her. "I'm going to go to the *Duka* to see if I can find something to read." The *Duka*, meaning "little store" in Swahili, was Siesta's small convenience store.

"That sounds like a fine idea," Constance agreed as she turned a page in her magazine.

Elizabeth left the tent and her mother behind, dodging and weaving her way through the milling crowds of people on her way to the *Duka*.

* * *

Nicholas and his sister, Kristina, were sitting on a brown picnic bench beneath the shade of a large spruce tree, playing a game of rummy. Nicholas laid three cards out on the table and discarded his last one.

"Not fair!" Kristina pouted.

"Sure it is," Nicholas replied. "I got rid of all my cards first, so I win."

"But I was just about to go out, too, see?" Kristina showed him her cards.

"Not bad. You almost won."

Kristina glared at him.

Johann walked by them, a beer in his hand, a carefree look on his face. Kristina twisted around in her seat and called after her father: "Dad! Tell Nicholas he didn't win."

Oh, brother. This should be good, Nicholas thought.

Johann turned around and smiled at Kristina. He took in the game with a glance, then said, "Let me see

what you had in your hand, sweetheart.” She turned her cards around, and he walked over to her so he could see. “Well, look at that!” he said with easily-feigned wonder. “Looks like a tie to me.”

Nicholas’s eyebrows shot up. His father gave him a quick *let’s-not-rock-the-boat* look, turned, and then left. Their father now gone, Nicholas scowled across the table at his sister. Kristina was staring back at him with an insufferably self-satisfied smirk on her face.

“Seeee,” she said, stretching the word out like a rubber band.

Nicholas shook his head and got up from the table. “You’re such a child,” he said. His sister’s retort was lost on the wind as he left her alone at the table and made his way toward the caravan. As he drew near, his mother came out of the tent.

“Nicholas, could you do a favor for me? I need you to go to the *Duka* and buy some milk. We’re all out.”

“Gladly. I could use a walk.”

“Thanks, Nicholas. Here,” she held out some money, “take this. Feel free to get something for yourself with the change.”

Nicholas took the money from his mother, put it in his pocket, and headed for the *Duka*.

* * *

The *Duka* really was a *small* store—two car lengths at best—its cement walls painted a pale green with a darker, blue-green aluminum roof. It was a stubby T-shape with three pillars out front, supporting an overhanging section of the roof.

Nicholas walked through the entrance, eyes on the ground to watch the steps. The bells on the door signaled his arrival. He blinked a few times, his eyes still adjusting from the brightness outside. He brought his head up and—

Couldn’t believe what he saw.

Elizabeth! He almost gasped. After all his searching, there she was: browsing through the used books and magazines that the *Duka* had to offer, holding a small twig of peach-colored bougainvillea in her hand. As he watched, she turned his way to see who had come into

the store, and in that instant, their eyes met. Elizabeth held his gaze for a long, heart-stopping moment, and then she smiled.

Standing there, motionless, dazed, dumbstruck—Nicholas returned her smile.

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