

# ***A Downtown Holiday***

**(working title)**

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## **Chapter 1**

She couldn't believe that it was already late November and the auspices of the holiday season were upon them. The year had flown by faster than she cared to admit, and today was the final meeting of the town's holiday committee before the event commenced and the historic downtown she called home turned into a frenzied winter wonderland for the season.

Maddi couldn't think of another time in her life when she was more excited to be a part of her town's holiday event committee. She especially loved the holidays so it was no surprise that she jumped at the chance to be chairwoman of the holiday committee when she was asked. They all

knew she loved the holidays. Afterall, her tea room, The White Heron Tearoom, had become the quintessential location for holiday cheer since she opened nine years ago. From carolers to musicians, and holiday storytelling, her tearoom had become the “it” place for holiday happenings and often had lists of guests waiting to attend one of her sold out events.

This morning, in typical Maddi fashion, she had gotten tied up with some last minute planning at her tearoom and now found herself running late to get to her meeting.

As she pulled into the parking lot across from the town’s historic hotel, The Hacienda, where the meeting was taking place, she took a quick glance at her phone.

“Whew, five minutes to spare,” she said to herself out loud as she grabbed her purse and exited the car. “Just enough time to grab a tea, and still get to the meeting on time.”

Instead of crossing the street to the hotel’s entrance, she scurried down the sidewalk to one

of her favorite little coffee shops. Maddi had never enjoyed coffee, but as the only tea sommelier in the state, she knew a good cup of tea when she had one. Of course, it didn't hurt that this coffee shop carried tea from her tea brand so she knew it was good. That also made visiting them for a tea even more special.

"Good morning Jake," she chimed as she swung open the door. "I'll have my usual...." she was cut short as she bumped into the back of the gentleman standing at the counter.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Maddi exclaimed, putting her hand out to help quell her body from running the gentleman over.

Jake's Java was a small place. In addition to its serving counter, the entire place consisted of three bistro tables with two chairs each. It didn't take much to get crowded.

"No problem," he said without even looking at her. Instead, he kept his attention on Jake behind the counter. "I'm not sure if this this is going to be dark enough," he said in a rather huffy tone.

“This is a triple roasted bean,” Jake explained with a wide smile on his face. “It combines three different beans from regions in Brazil and Columbia. It’s our darkest selection and our guests seem to really enjoy it,” he said to the gentleman as he winked over at Maddi. Maddi rolled her eyes and smiled. She just knew she was going to be late, so much so that she didn’t realize she was tapping her foot on the floor.

“Am I keeping you from something?” the man asked as he turned toward her, taking his time to look down at her tapping foot.

“Actually, yes,” she stated matter-of-factly. “I am on my way to a meeting and your need to know about the journey of the bean to your cup is making me late.” She smirked as she said it, but that didn’t mean she wasn’t being totally serious.

“Well, I’m sorry you are on a time crunch, but having an enjoyable cup of coffee is very important for me, especially in the morning,” he chided back. “And if you knew you had to be somewhere at a certain time, you should have

planned a little better,” he said as he turned his attention back to Jake.

“Well,” she said flitting her hand at the man to continue. “Get on with it then.”

“I’ll take your suggestion of the triple roast, in large please,” as he glanced over his shoulder at Maddi.

Maddi couldn’t help but think this man knew more about coffee than he was letting on. She assumed by his appearance, sporting his dark blue blazer and khaki pants that hugged him in all the right places, and his perfectly brushed back but still slightly spikey brown hair, that he must have been a guest at the hotel because his appearance didn’t quite match that of others in town. Of course Maddi noticed this. Not just because she observed everything, but because he was an attractive, six foot two, dark-haired man, the likes that her town rarely sees.

The man paid, and turned to leave as Maddi stepped up to the counter. Before she could get a word out, he turned around to look at her as he

opened the door to step outside, “I hope you have a good day,” he said snidely. She glanced back at him with a smirk before turning back to Jake.

“Boy, I thought he’d never make up his mind,” she said.

“You and me both,” Jake replied. “He was here for ten minutes asking me all kinds of questions before you walked in the door. I guess I have you to thank for helping me move him along,” he said with a chuckle as he handed Maddi her tea.

“One large Downtown Afternoon black tea, two sugars, and a splash of oak milk for the Holiday Queen,” Jake teased as he set her cup of tea on the counter.

“Thank you good sir,” Maddi teased back as she tapped her card to pay. With a slight bow, she grabbed her tea and headed out the door to the hotel for her meeting.

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