

He was waiting for her near Lotta Frutta, a popular lunch spot that sold a great selection of sandwiches, salads, soups, and, of course, a lot of fruit. He knew what she liked. She smiled as she walked up to him, tall, elegant in blue jeans, dark blue jacket and matching striped tie. After all these years, his blue eyes and dark hair, now streaked with silver, still seemed a striking combination. He stretched out his hands and kissed her cheek before leading her into the restaurant.

“I know the guy who runs this place. I was able to get him to hold a table for us.”

“Good idea.” She didn’t have much time, but she also wanted him to know she didn’t plan to dawdle over lunch either.

When they were seated, he asked, “How have you been keeping?”

“Busy, like you wouldn’t believe.”

“Because of the holidays?”

She sipped her water. “That’s just part of it, but I’ve been busy at home as well.” Without going into too much detail, she filled him in on Milli’s illness/

He appeared attentive, his eyes on her face. “I’m glad she’s recovering. And your son is back?”

“Yes, he is.”

The waitress came and took their order –a ham sandwich and fruit salad for Eric and a LottaFruta cup with yogurt for Pat. She handed the menu back to the waitress and looked at Eric.

“So, how have you been?”

“Busy as well. The real estate market is not as vibrant as it was a year or two ago, but I still have enough work to keep me going. And on the home front, my daughter Kimberly is expecting her second child.”

Pat smiled. "That's wonderful. What does she have now?"

"A boy, and this one is going to be a girl."

"She must be so happy. So, what did you get her?"

For answer, he handed her the bag from the Mommy Place he'd been carrying. It was a soft, wooly sweater with the words "The Loveliest Mommy" embossed on the back.

"Oh, Eric, what a fitting birthday gift. I'm sure she'll love it."

"I think she will. She's a very simple person; likes lounging around the house in sweatshirts and pajamas."

While he waited for the check, he asked, "I know it's kind of early, but would you consider going out for dinner with me some time?"

She took a minute before replying, "Like you said, it is a bit early and ..."

"And?"

"And, well, my son hasn't yet got over his father's death. I don't know how he would take to me going out so soon."

The waiter returned with the check, and Eric handed him his credit card. "Ask him. I guess we're at the age when our children's approval does matter."

His response surprised her. She didn't think he would understand. "I guess you're right."

Then he gave her that smile that had sent all the high school girls' silly hearts fluttering. She wasn't a high school girl any longer, but her heart still fluttered.