

The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

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The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

by [LuxKen27](#)

Summary

Pre-canon. When Elizabeth Thomas meets Watson Brewer, he isn't exactly what she'd been expecting – but once she gets to know him, she realizes that looks can be deceiving.

Notes

Written for ozqueen, for the 2014 fandom_stocking holiday exchange on DW. Further author's notes can be found [here](#).

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~*~

Elizabeth Thomas glanced around nervously as she entered the coffee shop. It was half-empty, but that was only to be expected in the middle of the afternoon. She wished it was busier, if only to give her a bit of cover as she surreptitiously searched the faces of the other customers. *Cathy said he'd have a red rose*, she reminded herself as she scanned the tables. None of the tables were so adorned, so she continued to stand awkwardly in the doorway.

This is ridiculous, she thought to herself. *Why did I let her talk me into this?* Probably because she hadn't really dated since her divorce was finalized six years ago. She'd had to pull herself together quickly; when Patrick left, she'd been a homemaker for a decade, and hadn't held down a job since she was a teenager. It was a minor miracle that she'd found a position at all; she'd spent the last six years steadily climbing the corporate ladder. Unfortunately, it meant working in Stamford, which meant leaving her children behind in Stoneybrook for most of the day.

Charlie, Sam, Kristy, and David Michael were her world. Everything she did – every sacrifice she made – had been for them. She was determined that they would never want for anything, even if it meant she went without. The last thing she wanted to do was introduce another man into their lives, only for him to walk away, too.

No, she'd decided, it was just easier to not bother with the dating scene altogether. It helped that her dearest friend and neighbor, Richard Spier, was in the same boat. They commiserated over their losses, and compared notes on bringing up their children on their own.

She'd had plenty of encouragement to reconsider her decision; after all, she was only thirty-five. Even if it felt like her marriage had lasted a lifetime, and the resulting divorce had taken decades off her life, she was still relatively young and attractive. She enjoyed taking care of herself; her one indulgence was skincare and makeup, and over the years, she'd learned lots of clever ways to make her products stretch as far as possible. Lip gloss was a particularly guilty pleasure, and as she chewed on her lower lip now, she tasted the comfortingly familiar flavor of strawberries and cream.

"Oh! Excuse me," intoned a deep voice, startling her from her thoughts. Elizabeth turned, realizing that a man had bumped into her while attempting to enter the shop; in one hand, he was clutching a single, red rose.

She swallowed hard as her eyes swept back up to his face, mentally cataloguing everything Cathy had told her about her blind date. "*He's fabulous*," she'd proclaimed, "*incredibly sweet and successful with a stable career*." When she'd asked about his appearance, Cathy had hesitated, instead mentioning his "*great personality*." That had set off alarm bells in Elizabeth's mind, but she was determined not to anticipate the worst.

Unfortunately, it appeared her initial intuition was right.

He was older than her, with pale skin and dark eyes; he was already gray at the temples, with silver streaking into his otherwise light brown hair. He was wearing a navy blue business suit,

with a stark white shirt and a matching monochromatic tie swinging from his neck.

“Are you, by any chance, Elizabeth Thomas?” he asked, his gaze sweeping over her frame before rising again to meet hers.

She nodded, swallowing hard. *Is this what Cathy thinks of me?* she mused, taking in the kindly crinkles in the corners of his eyes, and the lines that extended into his receding hair line. “Are you Watson Brewer?” she replied, holding out her hand.

“Indeed,” he confirmed with a warm smile. He took her hand, giving it a short but firm shake, before offering her the rose. “Shall we go in?”

She nodded again, lifting the rose to her nose and inhaling its sweet scent, hoping to hide the embarrassed flush that had washed over her cheeks. She followed him to the counter, watching him from the corner of her eye as he looked at the menu boards posted overhead. She couldn’t quite get over how much *older* he was than her. The skin around his throat was starting to sag a bit; his hands were rough, his nails clipped severely short. He was dressed impeccably, with cuff links sparkling at his wrists and a brand new handkerchief in his right front jacket pocket. She also couldn’t help but notice how nicely tailored his clothes were, as if they’d been custom-made for him. There wasn’t a thread – or a hair – out of place, making her wonder just what it was that he did for a living.

What is he looking for? she wondered warily. Cathy had raved about him, more than once, mentioning how successful and philanthropic he was, but in Elizabeth’s experience, most men who carried themselves the way he did – with the air of old money – seemed to perpetually be in the market for young, blond trophy wives, trading them in every few years for a newer model. She didn’t have the time or patience for that, and for a long moment, considered seriously evaluating her so-called friendship with her bubbly coworker.

Watson placed his order, turning to her and indicating for her to do the same, but she waved him off, insisting that she’d pay for herself. It was another little test, to see how he’d react – but he simply smiled, and shrugged, not pressuring her into letting him be gallant.

This intrigued her.

She ordered, picking up her plain coffee and following him to a small table in the far corner of the shop. He’d bought two large slices of banana nut bread as well, and he offered one to her once they were settled at the table.

“No, thanks,” she demurred, busying herself with the sugar and creamer dispensers.

For a long moment, they sat in silence, and she wondered if he was sizing her up as unfavorably as she had him. She wasn’t young and pert and blonde, after all; she’d never had the best figure in the world, and four children had done her no favors in that regard. She was wearing a beige business suit several seasons out of style, the color of which had the tendency to wash her out.

Watson cleared his throat. “Elizabeth, please allow me to be frank with you,” he said. “I didn’t really want to come on this blind date.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh?” she managed to respond, the grip on her cup tightening. Okay, she hadn’t exactly put a lot of effort into her appearance due to her own reluctance for this date, but she didn’t look *that* bad. And since she’d hardly said two words to him, what else could he have found so offensive about her?

He smiled. “But I’m glad that I did,” he continued. “You are even lovelier than Cathy described.”

I wish I could say the same, she thought. “Thank you,” she murmured. “I must confess, I wasn’t exactly excited about this idea, either.”

“And I’m not exactly Mr. Dreamboat,” he laughed, startling her with his forthrightness. “I understand.”

“Well, it’s not exactly that,” she scrambled to reply, even though it *was* pretty much that. “It’s just – I haven’t dated much since my divorce, and I’m a little out of practice.”

He nodded, taking a long sip of his coffee. “I understand that, too,” he remarked softly, breaking off a piece of the banana nut bread. He toyed with it for a moment. “I’m in the process of divorcing as well.”

Elizabeth chewed on her lip, unsure of how to respond to that. She felt a rush of natural sympathy, but without knowing the circumstances, it was hard to know how to react. Was he just between models? He certainly seemed a bit more broken up than she’d expect if that were the case.

He popped the bread into his mouth, chewing it thoroughly and swallowing hard. “Lisa and I simply grew apart,” he said with a sigh. He smiled wryly. “At least, that’s what I keep telling myself.”

“I’m sorry,” Elizabeth replied, feeling a bit guilty for automatically thinking the worst of him. After all, she barely knew him – what had he done to earn her cynicism?

“That’s all right,” he returned. “We are still on good terms, for the sake of our children.”

“You have children?” she asked, surprised by this little revelation.

He nodded. “Two,” he told her, reaching into the inside pocket of his jacket for his wallet. He opened it, flipping through the pictures with a small, sad smile. He found the one he wanted, and showed it to Elizabeth. “Karen is five, and Andrew is three.”

Two tow-headed children beamed up at her from the picture. “They’re adorable,” she observed, feeling her heart melt just a little. The edges of the picture were well-worn, as if it had been handled quite a bit. She glanced up at him. “I have four children, myself.”

Watson lifted his brows as he took the picture from her, tucking it back into the safety of his wallet. “I can only imagine what that’s like,” he mused, “knowing what chaos my two can create sometimes.”

Elizabeth shrugged. “It’s not so bad,” she contended. “Charlie – he’s my oldest – is a big help.” She dug around in her purse, emerging a few minutes later with her own pictures. “That’s him,” she said, pointing to Charlie, “and that’s Sam, and Kristy, and David Michael.”

Watson cradled the picture in his hands. “They’re lovely,” he said appreciatively. He cleared his throat. “Are you still in contact with their father?”

“No,” she admitted. “It’s just me and the kids.” She took the picture back from him. “We do all right.”

“Of that, I have no doubt,” he observed with a smile. “Cathy mentioned to me that you were now the head of your department? Impressive. Though, I’d wager that managing four kids at home has given you quite a leg up on negotiating peace treaties.”

She chuckled. “Yes,” she said, “there isn’t much that my employees can pull that I haven’t already seen. Needless to say, my kids have *big* imaginations.”

Watson grinned, his eyes crinkling in the corners, and it was quite becoming, she decided. He looked almost boyish, with a strong smile to match his strong handshake.

“Cathy tells me that you’re an investment banker,” she mentioned. “That must be interesting work.”

“Not really,” he laughed. “It’s a lot of repetitious work, actually, moving stocks and bonds around ever-growing portfolios for a bunch of sticks in the mud. No one ever wants to take a chance – they’re always looking for the safest place to stash their money.” His eyes sparkled. “Just once, I’d like the chance to be creative, instead of risk-averse.”

She was surprised by this admission – he certainly didn’t see his chosen career as most others did. “But isn’t that how people make money, by *not* spending it?”

He shrugged. “Where’s the fun in that? What’s the point of having all of that money if you aren’t willing to put some on the line every now and again?”

“So you’re a gambler,” she mused wryly, swirling the dregs of her coffee around in her cup.

“I wouldn’t say that,” he replied. “I’d never offer a client silly or damaging advice – after all, I want their investment in me to pay off just as much as their investment in the various financial instruments I recommend. I’m just saying that sometimes it’s okay to buy a share or two of an upstart company. We can’t all own AT&T or Xerox. Our shares would be worthless if we did...”

She couldn’t help but admire his attitude. After all, his own success relied on the success of his customer base. She appreciated that it was about more than just money for him. There was something about him – the softness of his eyes, the seriousness of his tone – that made her believe he was sincere.

She also appreciated that he hadn’t spoken ill of his ex-wife or their young children. Patrick hadn’t had the patience to deal with babies, or toddlers, or anyone under the age of about

five, really. He just didn't seem to have much interest until they were old enough to walk and talk and spend most of the day at school. By the time David Michael had arrived, he had just thrown in the towel completely.

Even though he was the one who'd left her without so much as a forwarding address, their divorce had been a stressful and contentious affair. He'd fought for everything except the children, dragging her through a long litigation process. She'd eventually come out on top – keeping the house, the car, *and* the kids – but that was only thanks to a lawyer in Richard's firm, who had worked on her case pro bono. Patrick had gotten away with practically nothing, but he couldn't even manage that. It was as if he'd decided that his children were out of sight, out of mind, and out of his life completely.

"I apologize," Watson said abruptly, bringing her back to the surface of her thoughts. She lifted her gaze to meet his, and realized that he looked slightly embarrassed. "I didn't mean to just go on about my work like that."

"It's okay," she assured him with a dismissive wave. She checked her watch. "I should probably get going, actually, if I want to beat the traffic."

"Ah, well." Watson cleared his throat again, fidgeting with his empty cup. "You're probably right."

Elizabeth made to stand, picking up her purse from the chair beside her. As she turned to thank him for the pleasant afternoon, she realized that he was offering something to her. She glanced at him questioningly.

"It's the other piece of banana nut bread," he told her. "Take it, in case the commute turns into a long one."

She hesitated before accepting it. "Thanks," she murmured, tucking it into her purse.

He stood as she did that, pushing his chair back under the table. "It was a pleasure, Elizabeth," he said warmly, proffering his hand. "I hope we can do this again sometime."

She took his hand into her own. "I'd like that," she said with a smile. "It was a pleasure to meet you, Watson." She was surprised by how much she meant it, too. He wasn't conventionally attractive, but he seemed to be a genuinely nice person – one she wouldn't mind getting to know a little better.

"Mmm," he murmured, his gaze lingering on hers as he covered her hand with both of his, "I think the pleasure was all mine."

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