

Sample Chapter

The Italian Ski Instructor

Jennifer finished packing, except some last minute shuffling for the morning.

She dressed carefully for dinner and the sleigh ride. It would be a good way to spend her last evening in Switzerland. She was surprised that Matteo had suggested the sleigh ride. It sounded more like a date than friends enjoying an evening together. Perhaps Matteo was getting ready to move from instructor/friend to a divorced man going out on a date with a divorced woman. She thought it was about time.

He was waiting for her by the fireplace. He had no wine glasses in his hands.

“I took the liberty of making a dinner reservation somewhere else,” he said.

“Wonderful. Where?” she asked.

“Meierhof Restaurant. Their Davos mountain lamb is extraordinary.” He helped her into her coat. “Our cab is waiting,” he said.

They settled into their table. Matteo said, “They have an extensive wine list. I thought we might have something really nice to celebrate your winter sports accomplishments on your Swiss vacation,” he said.

The waiter appeared with the wine list. He and Matteo had a long conversation in Italian about various offerings on the list. They settled on one and Matteo said, “Thank you.”

Matteo looked around the dimly lighted restaurant. “This is one of my favorite places in Davos. I hope you like it,” he said.

Jennifer wondered how many women he had brought here. It was a quiet romantic place where couples could talk. She said, “It’s very lovely. I’m looking forward to the special wine and Davos lamb. Indeed, a fitting end to my Swiss vacation.”

The waiter returned with the wine. After Matteo tasted it and nodded his approval, the waiter filled their glasses and discreetly disappeared.

Matteo raised his glass, “To a student who overcomes fear and a friend who is full of surprises and delights. Salute.” They touched their glasses.

Jennifer said, “Thank you.” She raised her glass and said, “To an instructor who instills confidence in his students and a man who is strong enough to open his heart to a friend. Salute.”

Matteo nodded his thanks.

“This is wonderful wine,” Jennifer said.

Matteo looked across the table, admiring Jennifer in a green sweater that matched her eyes. His eyes met hers.

“So, Jennifer, what will you be doing when you get home? Do you have big things coming up?” he asked.

Jennifer sighed. “Yes, I do have big things coming up. I’ve been putting off finding a real job. I’ve just been substitute teaching here and there. I decided to stop teaching and get a pharmaceutical lab tech job.”

“What did you teach?” he asked.

“High school chemistry,” she said.

Matteo laughed. “You probably would have flunked me. I made very bad grades in chemistry. I got out of it as soon as I could and avoided it in university.”

“I absolutely love chemistry, but I don’t absolutely love teaching it. I think a teacher should love the art of teaching. I think you do. That’s why you’ve been such a successful ski instructor. I think you know exactly what a student needs from you to learn. I think you are a natural teacher, and I know that I am not.”

“You may understand me better than I understand myself,” he said. “And, we have known each other for such a short time. You amaze me.”

The waiter came with their dinner.

They started to eat in silence.

Jennifer said, “The lamb is as good as you said it would be.”

“Lamb has always been a favorite for me,” he said. “I grew up eating lamb roasted with potatoes. My mother has always been a very good cook. I am thankful that my son Angelo can enjoy her good cooking.”

“Do you ever take a few days off during ski season to go home and visit him?” she asked.

“I try to see him at least once a month during the season. In fact, I plan to go next Tuesday and come back here on Thursday,” Matteo said. “When I see him only once a month in the season, it seems that he grows a lot between visits. And, he’s always smarter every time I see him.”

Jennifer laughed. “Spoken like a good father,” she said.

The sleigh was waiting for them in front of the restaurant.

Jennifer said, “After that meal we should probably be walking uphill instead of riding.”

Matteo helped her into the sleigh. He carefully pulled the faux fur blankets and sheepskin throw around them. He scooted closer to her as the sleigh began to move.

Jennifer smiled at him. “This is very cozy.”

Matteo reached for her gloved hand and closed his over it.

“I intend to keep you warm,” he said.

The driver turned off onto a road that wound along a stream. Occasionally, they could see the water sparkling in the moonlight.”

Matteo whispered and pointed, “Look, there’s a buck standing in that clearing in the trees. Do you see him?”

Jennifer leaned closer to him to see where he was pointing. She said, “Yes, I see him. Oh, now, he’s gone.” She looked up to meet Matteo’s eyes. He leaned a little closer and kissed her. He put his arm around her and moved her a little closer. “I’ve been wanting to do that since I first saw you in the rental shop in Heavenly. But, I couldn’t. You were my student. I couldn’t kiss my student.” He kissed her again.

He said, "If you ever come back to Switzerland, you will have to find a different instructor. If you ever come back, I would not want you to be my student. I would want you to be my friend and more."

Jennifer snuggled into his embrace. She said, "You have shown me Switzerland. Come to San Diego after ski season. I will show you my corner of America. You could do it in June. That would be a great time to visit San Diego."

"You told me in Heavenly that you know more about tennis than skiing. If I come to San Diego, may I watch you play tennis?" he asked.

"My tennis playing is not one of the attractions of San Diego. If you come to San Diego, I will give you a royal tour. It's my town, and I love it. I think I love it like you love the mountains. Promise me you'll come soon," she said.

He kissed her again. "I can't make any promises, but I want to warn you that if I come, I will not be looking for a tennis instructor. I will be looking for something more. What do you think of that Jennifer Robertson?" he asked.

She leaned into him and whispered into his ear, "I think you would find my tour guide services adequate. I promise not to disappoint." Then she kissed him deeply and snuggled closer to him.

They finished the sleigh ride and rode in comfortable silence in the cab back to the Belvedere. In the lobby, he said, "I have a very early take-off tomorrow. I must say goodbye tonight. Ignoring others in the lobby, he pulled her close and kissed her deeply. He whispered in her ear, "Safe journey, Jennifer. Be safe until we meet again."

Jennifer repeated, "Until we meet again."