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Synopsis: In the episode "The Legend of Das Geisterschloss", Lee and Amanda refer to the day Amanda first met Emily Farnsworth. Other than a brief mention of Amanda showing Emily around Washington and not knowing that she is a spy, we don't find out much about that day. So here's Emily's version of the story...

Emily and Mrs. King

Although England is now my home and has been for many years, I take advantage of any excuse for a visit back to the States. The sight of the Statue of Liberty always brings a patriotic lump to my throat which all my years in London haven't been able to Anglicize out of me.

I spent the first two weeks of this particular trip on business in New York. Then, having wrapped up my case sooner than expected, I decided to visit some friends in Washington, DC. My late husband, James, had been posted there for a short time early in his career. And of course, I have several friends in the American counter-intelligence community as well.

I arrived in Georgetown late on Thursday afternoon. The receptionist, a particularly dour-faced woman who has been in espionage even longer than I, phoned Billy Melrose's office to announce my arrival. I took in the innocuous appearance of IFF's foyer while waiting for security to clear my credentials and allow me into the inner sanctum of the Agency.

Before too many minutes had passed I was seated on a sofa in Billy's office, sipping tea and exchanging pleasantries. Billy is one of the nicest people I know but also a consummate professional. These qualities have served him well as head of the Field Section. I had worked with him on several cases before he took a desk position and had seen first hand other people make the mistake of overestimating his soft-hearted demeanour. Beneath that smiling exterior was a highly experienced agent who demanded as much from himself as he did from those around him.

"So where is Lee?" I asked Billy after we had discussed my successful mission in New York and how his family was doing. "I was hoping to see him today... or is he out on assignment?"

"No, Lee should be around here somewhere. He and Francine have a job this weekend. We've got a lead on a possible kidnapping at a resort outside of town. They're going to pose as a married couple and check it out."

"Lee and Francine?" I asked in surprise. "Don't tell me they've taken up with each other again."

I sincerely hope not. Francine Desmond is a good agent, but I never felt the chemistry was quite right between the two of them. As one of Lee's oldest friends in the business, I reserve the right to take a personal as well as professional interest in him.

"No, no, that's long over with. This is strictly professional," Billy was quick to reassure me. "They work well together -- better now that they've worked out their relationship, I think. It would never have lasted."

While he spoke, Billy flicked a remote to activate the monitors at the back of his office. He quickly scrolled through several camera vantage points. "Found him," he said after a few minutes. "He's in the outside elevator on the way up to the Georgetown foyer. I'll have Mrs. Marston intercept him and tell him you're here."

I watched the screen while Billy made a quick call upstairs. Lee and a young woman seemed to be involved in a rather heated discussion. I watched as Lee ran a hand through his hair, a sure sign that he was agitated.

"Who is that with Lee?" I asked curiously when he hung up.

"Amanda King."

I thought hard for a minute. "Is she an agent? The name sounds familiar, but I don't believe I've seen her before."

"No, Amanda's a civilian," Billy explained. "We use her from time to time. She keeps Lee on his toes."

"Ah, yes, he told me about her."

The last time I had seen Lee had been nine months earlier while he was on a job in London. One evening while we were on a stakeout together, he told me about a woman he had recently been working with.

"Emily," he sighed wearily. "She's driving me crazy. She's untrained, inexperienced, not to mention incredibly overeager. It's as if she thinks this is all some kind of game."

"Sometimes it is," I remarked. "Is she causing serious problems though? I mean if she's interfering with your work..."

"No, as a matter of fact she's been pretty helpful at times," Lee said with a wry smile. "I can't figure if she's got good instincts or if it's just dumb luck. That's how she got involved in the first place." He explained briefly how he'd randomly recruited her at a train station one morning. "And now I seem to be stuck with her," he concluded ruefully. "I even did some off hours surveillance of my own. I was hoping to discover something, anything to disqualify her. But I couldn't find a thing. She's as clean as a whistle."

"Lee, she can't be all that bad." I smiled, thinking back fondly to my own introduction to espionage. I too had been recruited out of the blue and had been fascinated with my glimpse into the world of spies. I instantly felt a certain kinship with this Amanda King, especially if Lee was giving her a hard time. I love the boy dearly, but he can be exasperating.

"Give her a chance." I reached out and patted his arm. "I seem to recall a very young, very green agent who turned out all right in the end. Remember, when you've looked at something and looked at something and you're sure you've figured it out, that's the time to look again. Amanda may have more in her than you think. She may surprise you someday."

Lee rolled his eyes in disgust. "Trust me, Emily, I know all I need to or want to about Amanda King. Ever."

Now nine months later it appeared she had managed to survive Lee's gauntlet. I

peered more closely at the monitor showing them in the lift. "They seem to be arguing," I remarked to Billy.

He smiled broadly. "I'd be surprised if they weren't."

"Is she that difficult to get along with?" I asked in surprise. I certainly hadn't realized that was the case.

"Amanda?" he laughed. "No, Amanda King is one of the friendliest, kindest people you could ever hope to meet. But she sure knows how to push Lee's buttons. Right from day one. I've never seen anything like it."

Returning to the screen I mused, intrigued, "You know, Billy, I was planning to take a day next week to just tour around Washington -- see the sights and do some sketching." Anyone who could affect the seemingly unflappable Lee Stetson in this way was a person I wanted to meet. "Any chance I could get one of your civilians to escort me?"

"I think that could be arranged. Have anyone in mind?"

I faced Billy again. "Perhaps. But you can't tell Lee. And don't let Amanda know who I am either. Just tell her I'm the relative of a diplomat who wants to be shown around."

"Whatever you say, Lady Farnsworth," he said, unsuccessfully trying to hide his smile.

Lee and I met for dinner on Monday evening.

"So how was your weekend?" I asked over the wine. "You and Francine were successful, I hope."

"Oh, we got our man. But Francine was out of commission. She had a root canal on Friday. I should have called you -- you would have made a charming Mrs. Stetson." He flashed me one of those smiles the female agents seem to find irresistible.

"Be serious," I scolded. "So, if Francine couldn't go with you, who did?"

"Uh, Amanda came along instead," Lee admitted reluctantly.

"Amanda?" I repeated, stunned. I would never have imagined Lee accepting her as a replacement for a trained agent after his opinion of her only a few months earlier.

"Amanda King," he explained, misinterpreting my reaction. "The civilian I told you about."

"She posed as your wife for the whole weekend? I thought you wanted to be rid of her." I couldn't resist the opportunity to tease him.

Lee squirmed uncomfortably. "Believe me, Emily, it wasn't my idea. But there wasn't anyone else available. And Amanda's come a long way in the last year. There are times when I think she might even turn into a decent agent."

Now I was looking forward even more to meeting Amanda the next day. Lee gave out compliments few and far between. Obviously, he'd reassessed his opinion of her and was more impressed than he had initially let on. Billy had allowed me to read her file and I had taken note of the numerous cases she had participated in. With a smile, I filed away my observations for future consideration.

I had arranged with Billy that Amanda would meet me at the Mayflower -- my favourite DC hotel. In actuality I was staying with the British Ambassador and his wife, who are friends of mine, but I didn't want Amanda to know that. I wanted to see what this friend of Lee's was like when she wasn't trying to impress anyone.

As I waited for her to arrive, I enjoyed my breakfast and made a quick sketch. Ever since I was a little girl, drawing has been a favourite hobby of mine. I even took a few classes in it after James died, more as a way to fill in those first lonely days without him than anything else. I have also found that my artist's eye has helped me as an agent on more than one occasion -- making me pay attention to the finer details of a situation.

Now as I sat in the Cafe Promenade I worked quickly, trying to capture the scene

around me. The hustle and bustle of most of the clients contrasted with the tranquillity of the room itself -- the white wicker chairs, the crystal chandelier, the marble columns. On this warm summer morning it was even more beautiful, with the sunlight flooding through the octagonal skylight. I was just adding some touches of colour to my illustration of the floral centrepieces when the maitre d' escorted Amanda to my table.

"Mrs. Farnsworth, I'm Amanda King," she introduced herself.

"Emily Farnsworth," I replied, shaking her hand. "It's nice to meet you, Mrs. King."

"Please, call me Amanda," she said with a warm, inviting smile. "What a beautiful drawing," she added, moving to take a closer look at my handiwork. She glanced around the room as she took her seat. "You've done a wonderful job of capturing the essence of the room."

"Thank you."

As she sat down, I had my first good look at her. Over the years, I had met several of Lee's girlfriends at various functions. Amanda really didn't match any of them. She was as beautiful as the best of them and had the most lovely brown eyes. But she also had something more; there seemed to be a genuine person beneath the attractive appearance. Just a first impression, I know, but in my field, you learn to trust your instincts. Every one of mine was telling me that Amanda King was someone I wanted to get to know better.

"So have you been to Washington before?" she asked. "Or is this your first trip?"

"Oh no," I replied. "My husband and I visited several times when he was in the diplomatic service. But I never really had the chance to do any sightseeing. So I thought I'd like to take a tour of Washington this time."

"Is your husband with you?" she asked.

"No, James died ten years ago," I explained.

"I'm sorry," she said quickly.

"Don't be." I tried to put her at ease. "We had a wonderful life together. Are you married?"

"Divorced. But I have two boys -- Phillip and Jamie. They're nine and eleven."

"They must keep you quite busy. I really appreciate you taking the time today to show me around."

"It's my pleasure," she replied with that warm smile of hers. "So, do you have something specific in mind you want to see? There's far too much in Washington to be covered in a single day."

"Do you like to walk?"

She laughed. "With two young sons, I have to be quick to keep up with them. Between Little League, Junior Trailblazers and school activities, it seems like they're always on the go."

"Well, since the weather is so beautiful today, perhaps we could just do a tour of the Mall." I indicated my pad of paper. "If you don't mind, I had hoped to do some more illustrations."

"That sounds like a wonderful idea."

As we strolled through the lobby, Amanda remarked, "This is one of the oldest hotels in the city. Did you know it's on the DC Historic Register? Not to mention that every president holds an inaugural ball here."

I had better reason than most to know that. Back in January of 1973, I had attended Richard Nixon's inaugural ball, ostensibly as a guest of the British Embassy. In reality I was a part of an inter-agency security force trying to catch a double agent. One of the American operatives I worked with on that occasion had been on his first official assignment after being hired. I couldn't help but smile, thinking back to that evening. Lee Stetson had been such a brash, young rookie -- so eager to get out the gun and prove himself. How things had changed over time as he had gradually learned patience and control. I was so proud when I'd heard Paul Barnes had chosen Lee for his elite Oz Network only two years later.

The valet brought around Amanda's car -- a wood-paneled station wagon. I tried to picture Lee sitting in it and then added the image of Amanda and her two sons. I shook my head at the absurdity of the thought. I must be slightly mad to think that there was something personal between Lee and Amanda. Lee would never get involved with a divorced mother of two.

Amanda parked her car in a lot near Union Station and we continued the few blocks to the Capitol on foot, working our way around the building. "It's such an imposing structure," I remarked peering up at the white columns and stonework, crowned with the dome rising high into the air and a tall bronze statue perched on the very top.

We walked onto the terrace on the west side of the building. Spread out at our feet was the length of the National Mall. The broad avenue of green spaces stretched from the foot of Capitol Hill to the place where the Lincoln Memorial stood on the banks of the Potomac. Just past the midpoint, the Washington Monument towered into the air. Trees lined the sides of the Mall and a bit further out large buildings were spaced at regular intervals. The movement of the morning traffic on the intersecting streets was barely noticeable at this distance and did nothing to disrupt the harmony of the view.

"Quite the vantage point," I said. "Do you mind if I make a sketch?"

"Not at all," Amanda said. "It's a perfect spot. The Capitol is the focal point of the city," she continued. "You can see it for miles. Most cities just gradually evolve into being. DC was planned and it shows. A Frenchman, Pierre L'Enfant designed the city after the Revolutionary War. All the streets are numbered or lettered starting from the Capitol and moving outward." She stopped abruptly and appeared a bit embarrassed. "I'm sorry if I'm rambling on too much. It's just I've been on so many school trips with my sons, plus research for school projects, not to mention family outings of our own, you tend to pick up things."

"Amanda, that's okay," I reassured her. "I don't mind at all -- and I'm happy to hear anything you have to tell me about your beautiful city."

"Thanks," she said slowly. "I tend to chatter a bit too much. Some people find it rather annoying."

Some people? I wondered. Or one certain person in particular? Perhaps someone who tended to demonstrate a distinct lack of patience at times with people different from himself.

"Well, I don't mind it at all. I asked for a tour, remember?" I said pleasantly but firmly. "Now why don't you tell me about all about this," I gestured around broadly, "while I draw it in. For starters, what's the statue at the base of the hill?" I asked as I drew in the figure seated on a horse, eternally staring out over the pool of water at his feet. It was flanked by two smaller statues on the either end of the terrace.

"That's Ulysses S. Grant, a Civil War hero and President," Amanda explained. "The building a bit further on the left is the Botanic Gardens. They had a wonderful exhibit of *Camptosaurus Rysophyllis* a couple of months ago."

"You're interested in horticulture?" I asked, looking up.

"Not really." Amanda blushed slightly. "But a friend of mine recommended it."

As I continued to fill in the details of my sketch I remarked, "There aren't many tall buildings in the area. You get such a wonderfully unrestricted view of the city. But what's that one tower peeking up on the right?"

"That's the Old Post Office Pavilion. The city has an ordinance prohibiting the construction of any structure past a certain height, but that was built before it came into effect."

"What are the rest of the buildings lining the Mall?" I asked.

"Smithsonian Museums mostly. The one on the left just past the Botanical Gardens is the Air and Space Museum -- my son, Phillip, loves it. We've spent many rainy Saturdays there. Next is the Hirshhorn Museum. Or as my sons would say -- boring, weird art stuff. They're a little young to appreciate the finer points

of modern art and sculpture. The red sandstone building just before the Washington Monument is called the Castle. It's the headquarters of the Smithsonian. On the right side are the National Gallery, National History Museum and Museum of American History."

I worked quickly, filling in the variety of buildings, the wide-open spaces down the centre of the Mall and the trees framing it. After I had finished, we walked down the steps and began our trek down the Mall, joining in with the numerous other tourists. In just a bit over a mile, we came to the Washington Monument, its base ringed with American flags.

"That's my mother's favourite monument," Amanda said, rolling her eyes. "You don't have to tell me what that means. We can go up to the top this afternoon if you like. The windows are on the small side, but you do get a great view in all directions. At the moment though, I'm a little bit hungry. How about you?"

"Lunch does sound good. Where would you like to go?"

"I know a great deli nearby; we can pick up some sandwiches and salad. There's a nice place to sit and eat not far from here -- Lafayette Park. It's just across the street from the White House. The townhouses lining the other three sides of the park have all been restored."

I had to smile -- a picnic in the park. How different and unpretentious from what Francine or even Lee would have suggested. But I found Amanda's openness and simplicity to be a refreshing change. She was so down to earth and likeable.

As we walked past the President's residence, I remarked, "It's easy to see where the White House got its name."

Amanda smiled. "My son Jamie did a project on that for school last year and inundated the family with obscure bits of information for weeks. So, I just happen to know that the colour is thanks to you British."

"Really?" I asked. "How?"

"During the war of 1812 British troops invaded the city and set fire to most of the government buildings. When the Executive Mansion was restored after the war,

its walls were painted white. I think everything in this town dates back to or is named after some war."

We carried our brown bag lunches from the deli and sat on a bench in the park. I took out my pad again and started filling in the outline of the White House. "Have you always lived in the area?" I asked Amanda.

"I grew up just across the river in Arlington and attended the University of Virginia. That's where I met my ex-husband. He was still in law school when we got married so we bought a house nearby."

"Does he still live here?" I asked. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't pry."

"That's okay. When Joe graduated, he got a job with the Emergency Aid Organisation. They offered him a posting overseas and he took it. He's still there, working in Africa. After he left, my mother moved in with me. My father had died of a heart attack a few years previously. She was lonely living on her own and I appreciated the help taking care of a baby and a toddler. So, it worked out well for everyone."

"And do you work outside the home at all?" I was interested to see how Amanda would react if I broached the subject of her part-time career.

"I just started a service -- walking dogs, house sitting and so on for people who can't do it themselves." Amanda seemed a bit uncomfortable as she related this, breaking off eye contact to root through her bag in search of an apple.

I knew from her file that this was the official story she used with her family to disguise the true nature of her job. Actually, as far as covers go it wasn't bad - providing fairly plausible excuses for the sudden departures and irregular absences the Agency demanded. I did get the feeling though, that lying was something that did not come easily to Amanda.

After lunch we resumed our journey, approaching the Washington Monument again.

"The colour changes part way up," I noticed suddenly. "It gets darker about a third of the way from the base."

"Construction was halted during the Civil War," Amanda explained. "When they started building again, they went back to the same quarry for the marble, but it was at a much different level then, and the stone was darker."

As we drew closer, we caught sight of the long line of tourists encircling the base. Amanda and I both looked at each other, obviously sharing the same thought. "Maybe next trip," I said as we continued towards the Lincoln Memorial.

Before too long the pathway veered off to the right and downward. A steady line of people moved along, all with slightly subdued expressions on their faces. I suddenly realized what location we must be approaching.

Amanda confirmed my suspicion. "This is the newest monument on the Mall. It was unveiled only two years ago."

I don't think it's possible for anyone to visit the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial without being affected in some measure. While I had been living in England for the duration of the war and didn't personally know anyone who had fought, my mind still reeled at the sight before me.

The simplicity of the structure makes its impact all the more powerful. The walkway slopes downward and leads along a deep gash cut in the hillside. One side is lined with highly polished black granite. It starts off incongruously enough, with only a few names inscribed on the first sections. Then as the panels become larger, the small trickle of names gradually becomes a stream and then a torrent and the scope of the staggering loss of life becomes apparent.

"Do you know how many names are inscribed?" I asked Amanda.

"Over 57,000 in total," she replied.

Something in her face made me ask if any of them held special significance to her.

"I grew up in the 60's," she said, "so I knew some of the boys being sent over there. But the war never seemed real until...." She stopped and wiped a few tears from her face. "When I was growing up," she began again, "my best friend was Debby Ann Macabie. Her brother Ian was three years older than us, and we used

to drive him crazy. He called us the 'Terrible Twosome.' I was only fifteen when he was sent to Vietnam. I had such a crush on him back then -- he was so handsome in his uniform. He never came home -- he was killed in action in 1967."

We walked along the list of names, Amanda moving with the certainty that previous visits must have brought her. Stopping part way down the first arm of the monument, she reached up to touch a name engraved into the stone just above eye level: Ian James Macabie.

"Debby Ann has three daughters," she said softly. "So, when my second son was born I asked her if it would be okay if I named him after her brother. I just transposed the two names. Ian was the closest I ever came to having a brother of my own -- it didn't seem right that his name would just be forgotten."

"That was very thoughtful of you," I said, reaching out to touch her arm. "You're a very kind person, Amanda King."

After a few minutes, we continued along the length of the Memorial. As the pathway dipped to its lowest point, the sheets towered over our heads. Then we worked our way upwards again, the panels decreasing in size and the names diminishing in number. When we reached the end, I turned and took out my sketchbook. I quickly roughed in the outline of its V-shape then drew in a few of the people on the path. Finally, I shaded in the way the polished black stone acted like a mirror, echoing back the scene around them -- the visitors solemnly looking at the names, the surrounding trees and green spaces behind them.

After I had finished, we continued on our way to the final building on the Mall -- the Lincoln Memorial. We crossed the street and ascended the steep set of stairs.

As we paused to catch our breath at the top, I took out my pad and pencil once again. We could now view the Mall from its westernmost end -- the Capitol building far in the distance. The length of the Washington Monument was mirrored in the large pool of water stretching from its base to the Lincoln Memorial. The smooth lines of its reflection were broken here and there by ducks paddling calmly across the pool in perfect indifference to their historical surroundings.

We headed into the Memorial, giving us a closer view of the immense statue

inside. Amanda gave a short laugh, then explained, "The first time I brought my boys here, Jamie was only four. He took one look at the statue of the bearded man and asked if he could sit on his lap and tell him what he wanted for Christmas."

We spent a few moments at the statue of Lincoln as he stared contemplatively out at the city and reading the excerpts from his speeches that had been carved into the walls. Then we turned and walked back out into the sunshine.

For the final leg of our tour, we strolled around the Tidal Basin towards where the Jefferson Memorial stood in solitary splendour on the far side. "People don't seem to be as drawn to area as much," I commented, noticing a sharp drop in the number of tourists.

"It's a bit out of the way," Amanda replied. "But in the spring when the cherry trees are in bloom, you can hardly move along without being crowded into the water."

"Amanda, if you don't mind..." I held up my ever-present paper and pencil as we reached our destination.

"Sure, take your time." She sat down at the base of the flight of stairs which seem to be a prerequisite for every tourist attraction in Washington.

I went a bit further, then moved to the perfect position for my picture. The simple design of white columns and domed roof instantly brought to mind the Parthenon in Rome, after which the Jefferson Memorial had undoubtedly been modelled. I caught sight of Amanda now standing halfway up the steps with a faraway expression on her face and added a few more details.

She was still staring out over the water as I came up behind her. "Penny for your thoughts," I asked as I approached her.

Amanda blushed. "I was thinking of the inscription inside -- how all men are created equal. Last fall someone I know tried to ditch me here because he didn't want to work on a project with me. I don't think he considered me his equal at all."

"What kind of project?" I asked.

"Oh, just something for a club I belonged to -- he thought I was just getting in his way. So after one meeting he dropped me off here and basically said goodbye and that he didn't expect to have to see me again."

"That was rather harsh," I remarked. "He doesn't sound like someone I'd like to know." Actually, he sounded exactly like someone I already knew quite well.

"No, he's a pretty good guy. Well, most of the time anyway."

"I take it you're still in contact with him? Evidently you discovered a way to change his mind?"

"Let's just say there were circumstances outside of his control." She smiled at whatever particular memory those words had brought back. Heading towards the street she continued, "I think we've gotten our share of exercise today. Why don't we go over to 14th street and see if we can find a taxi? Besides, we should leave soon if we want to miss the worst of the commuter traffic."

"I hadn't realized how late in the afternoon it was getting to be," I said as I glanced at my watch. "I didn't mean to monopolize so much of your time -- was your family expecting you home by now?"

"I was wondering," Amanda said hesitantly, "Mrs. Farnsworth, would you like to come to my house for dinner and meet my family?"

"I wouldn't want to intrude," I replied.

"I was just thinking that you might be tired of hotel food and want a nice home-cooked meal. My mother is making my favourite, pot roast and succotash. And it's no intrusion. In fact, my mother suggested it to me before I left this morning. I can drive you back to your hotel later in the evening." She looked at me with her clear, trusting eyes.

The effectiveness of my job, first as a stage actor and then later as an agent, depends on my ability to make people believe the roles I play. But now, as I looked at Amanda, I felt a sudden twinge of guilt. It was an emotion I had successfully suppressed for so long that it took me a minute to identify it. Here

was this incredible person welcoming me into her home, and almost everything she knew about me was a lie. At that moment I made a resolution that someday I would tell Amanda the truth about who I was.

For the time being though, all I could do was say, "Thank you, Amanda, that does sound very nice. I would love to meet your family."

We hailed a cab and were soon in the parking lot. We got into Amanda's car and she drove quickly through the city streets. As we travelled along the parkway bordering the Potomac, she pointed out various sites such as the Kennedy Center and the Watergate complex.

"It's such an innocuous setting for a scandal that brought down the President of your country," I remarked as we passed the black and white striped building.

"I know, the place always sends a shiver down my spine. A friend of mine lived in one of the apartments for a while this past spring. I was so glad when he moved out again."

We crossed the river and into Virginia. Fifteen minutes later we pulled up in front of a modest two-story house in a quiet neighbourhood - typical American suburban setting. As we entered through the back door, two young boys were on their way out.

"Mrs. Farnsworth, these are my sons, Phillip and Jamie." Amanda indicated each of them in turn. "Boys, this is Mrs. Farnsworth, the lady I've been showing around Washington today."

"Hello," they both said politely.

"Now, where are the two of you going in such a hurry?" Amanda asked.

"Dave's dad got some free tickets to the Orioles game tonight. Grandma said we could go." Both boys looked at her with pleading eyes.

"All right, but you be good and do everything Mr. Jopling says, okay?"

Her sons dashed off almost before the words were out of her mouth, calling behind, "Thanks, Mom, see you later."

We entered a cheerfully decorated kitchen with a breakfast alcove on one side and an open concept den on the other. Both rooms had a comfortable, lived-in feeling to them. Crossing through to the front hall, we were met by an older woman, coming down the stairs. Amanda introduced her to me as her mother, Dotty West.

The three of us continued into the living room, which was slightly more formally decorated but again I was struck by the casual, unpretentious atmosphere. Amanda's house was truly a home, rather than a showplace complete with invisible 'Look but Don't Touch' signs.

"How are you enjoying your stay in Washington?" Dotty asked as we sat down.

"Very much. Your daughter has been a charming tour guide."

Dotty turned to Amanda. "I assume you saw the boys on their way out. We didn't know when you'd be home, so I gave them permission. Mr. Jopling got the tickets at the last minute and needed to know right away."

"That's fine, Mother. They always have a good time with Dave and his father."

"Yes, it's good for boys to have a male role model. And with Dean no longer in the picture..." she let her words hang in the air.

"Mother!" Amanda groaned. I got the impression that this wasn't a new topic of conversation. "I'm going to check on dinner," she excused herself.

"Dean was this wonderful man Amanda was seeing a few months ago," Dotty explained to me as soon as her daughter had left the room. "He was wild about her -- they'd been dating for almost a year, and I was sure they would get married."

"What happened?" I asked, my curiosity getting the better of me.

"I'm not sure. She just seemed to lose interest in him at the end. I don't know what on earth she's looking for."

I smiled, thinking that I might know the answer to that question.

Amanda's mother continued, "Suddenly she's out all hours of the day and night, taking care of her clients. You would think that walking dogs and watering plants could be done during normal business hours but apparently not." She lowered her voice to a conspiratorial whisper. "I think she's interested in one of her clients. But she hasn't said anything, and I'm the last one to pry."

I had to smile again. Poor Amanda.

"You've never met any of her clients?" I asked.

"Just one -- a woman named Francine Desmond. Amanda takes care of her chimpanzee from time to time."

"What an unusual pet," I remarked, trying to keep a straight face despite the image that came to mind of Francine with a pet chimpanzee.

"Isn't it? And Francine seems like such an elegant young woman."

I wondered what circumstances could have brought Francine into contact with Amanda's mother. It also suddenly struck me how difficult it must be for Amanda to keep the two parts of her life separate -- family and work. How she must have to constantly watch herself, not to let anything about the Agency slip out at home.

I knew something about that kind of life of course, but I always had James to confide in. Who did Amanda turn to when things got rough? From her file I knew she worked almost exclusively with Lee. I also knew how difficult he could be. Had he taken the time to get to know her or did he still dismiss her as little more than a nuisance?

Amanda appeared in the doorway. "Is it safe to come back in?" she asked.

"Honey, I'm just taking a natural motherly concern in your welfare," her mother protested.

"I know. But dinner's ready so can it wait until later?"

We had our meal in the dining room. Afterwards Amanda cleared the table and asked if I would like some tea.

"Amanda, you and your mother have done enough," I said, as I got up. "Let me take care of the tea."

As I walked into the kitchen, I thought I caught a flash of movement through one of the windows. When I looked more closely however, there was nothing out of the ordinary to be seen. I picked up the kettle, moved to the faucet and started to fill it. At that moment Lee's face popped into view in the window over the sink.

"Emily, what are you doing here?" he demanded in a fierce whisper.

"Making tea," I said mildly, not all that surprised to have him show up at Amanda's home.

"I can see that. I mean why are you here at all?"

"I could ask you the same question. Is there something important you need to talk to Amanda about? Shall I get her for you?" I turned as if to head into the dining room.

"No, that's okay," he said hastily. "I just needed to ask her about some wiretap transcripts she's been doing for us."

"And you couldn't call her? Or wait until morning?" I asked in amusement.

"Emily, it's not what you think," he protested. "It's just business."

"I'm sure it is," I said soothingly.

He ducked out of sight when we heard Amanda entering the kitchen.

"Amanda, I had a lovely day but I'm afraid I do have an early flight tomorrow. Can I trouble you to take me back to the Mayflower once we finish our tea?" I gave our destination for the benefit of the audience outside.

"Of course, and it's no trouble at all."

Half an hour later we drove back into DC. In the west a ruddy smear was all that remained of a late summer evening sunset. As we crossed the river, the lights of

the city created a flotilla of twinkling lights on the surface of the water. The paleness of the Capitol and other monuments stood out starkly against the night sky. "Washington is just as beautiful at night as it is during the day," I remarked to Amanda. "Thank you again for taking the time to show me around. I had a lovely day."

"I enjoyed myself too," she said with a smile. "It was a pleasure. Feel free to call if you're ever in town again."

"I will."

She pulled up under the covered entrance to the hotel. I reached for the door handle, almost opened it, then turned back again for a moment.

"That service you run -- taking care of pets and plants. I imagine you must meet all kinds of people in that type of work."

"You have no idea," she sighed.

"Sometimes people tend to take the people who help them for granted," I said carefully. "But Amanda, don't ever let anyone sell you short. You're a wonderful person."

She looked a bit disconcerted but replied, "Thank you."

"You're welcome," I replied as I got out of the car.

As I had anticipated, Lee was waiting for me in the lobby.

"Lee, how nice to see you again," I greeted him.

He just looked at me for a long moment, then took me by the arm and steered me into the nearby cocktail lounge. "Okay, so what was that all about?" he asked once we were comfortably ensconced in a pair of club chairs and had placed our drink orders.

"What, today?" I said innocently. "I just wanted a tour of Washington. So, I asked Billy if he had a civilian who wouldn't mind acting as a guide."

"And he just happened to suggest Amanda?" Lee asked with more than a touch of suspicion in his voice.

Our drinks arrived and I slowly sipped at my wine, smiling at him over the rim of my glass.

"So, does Amanda know who you really are?" he asked.

"Heavens, no." I shook my head. "She thought she was just showing some nice British woman around the capital."

"Who just happens to work for MI-6. Unbelievable." He sighed in frustration. "What did the two of you talk about all day anyway?"

"Oh, this and that. I couldn't ask her about you of course, unfortunately."

"That's just terrific." He stretched into his chair and sighed again.

"Lee, I don't know why you're upset about today. It was just a simple tour of the city."

"Emily, nothing with Amanda is ever simple. She has a way of attracting trouble." He glanced at me with an aggravated expression.

"If she didn't, you never would have met her," I pointed out with a smile. "You didn't by any chance take her to the Jefferson Memorial to try to get rid of her?"

"During our first case together," he said warily. "How did you find out about that?"

I opened my sketch pad to a drawing of Amanda standing on the steps of the Jefferson Memorial looking out over the Tidal Basin. "Just a hunch. I'm glad you were less than successful in your efforts. You know, you could do worse for a new partner."

"Emily, I don't need a partner. I'm doing fine on my own."

The coldness in his voice reminded me of the day only eighteen months earlier when I had sat next to him at his previous partner's funeral. The pain I had seen in his eyes on that occasion still came back to haunt me.

In a business that prevents people from forming many close relationships, the bond between partners is something special. To lose a partner then, especially through a work-related incident, creates a double void -- the disruption of the work environment coupled with a personal loss. Eric and Lee had been a good match, the strengths of each bolstering the weaknesses of the other, and Lee took his loss very hard. In his case, I knew his grief was additionally compounded by guilt. Although no one else blamed him for what had happened, Lee seemed determined to shoulder the entire burden of Eric's death.

I had tried to be as supportive as possible, but living thousands of miles away my chances to help were minimal. I rang him as often as I could and had Billy send me infrequent reports. He had told me of Lee's refusal to be assigned a new partner. Instead, Lee had insisted on taking assignments first with one agent and then another, apparently unwilling to let anyone else get close to him.

Having lost several close friends myself over the years working as an agent, I could sympathize with Lee's feelings. Still, I was afraid of what the end result would be for him. Given his stubborn nature, he would probably be all too successful in his attempts to close himself off from the people around him who cared. I had vainly tried to think of a way to break through the wall Lee seemed to be bent on constructing.

And now it seemed that an unassuming housewife from the suburbs was quietly dismantling it brick by brick. I wondered if Lee was even aware of how close the two of them had become. Probably not, or he would have headed straight for Dulles to book himself a ticket on the next flight to Sri Lanka.

"What's so amusing?" Lee asked, catching the smile on my face.

"I was just picturing you paired up with a mother of two."

"Emily, we just work together. Believe me, there's nothing more to it."

"The Scarecrow doth protest too much, methinks." I don't know why the notion of the two of them as a couple kept intruding into my thoughts -- with their diverse

backgrounds, they were an unlikely pair at best. And yet, somehow, they seemed to belong together. I continued, "Billy let me read Amanda's file. From the looks of it, she's been a big help to you on more than one occasion. And from what I observed today she's a very warm and caring person as well."

"Emily," he tried to cut me off.

"Lee, I'm serious. I think she might be just what you need. Amanda's not the sort of person you can shove away easily."

Lee grinned wryly. "Does the word flypaper mean anything to you?"

I laughed. "I believe you like her more than you're letting on. It wouldn't be an act of treason to admit it, you know." I reached out and covered his hand with mine.

"Are you really staying here at the hotel, or can I offer you a ride somewhere?" Lee abruptly changed the subject as he is wont to do when things hit too close to home.

"As a matter of fact, I could use a lift. I'm staying with the British ambassador. I didn't want Amanda to know."

"So what's next for you?" he asked as we got into his car. "Going to track down some of my other contacts and pry further into my life?"

"Nothing like that. I really am flying back to London tomorrow. Then I'm off for the grand tour of the Continent. It seems that someone has been establishing listening posts scattered across Europe and using them to intercept top secret communications. I'm posing as a retired Englishwoman on an extended holiday."

"Well, I'm sure they'll be no match for you." He smiled as he got up and offered his arm to me.

That was all several years in the past. Now on another sunny morning, I sat in the conservatory of my London townhouse, the morning mail scattered across the table in front of me. It had all gone unopened once I caught sight of the envelope postmarked Arlington, Virginia.

I sipped my tea, picked up my pen and smiled. Carefully I wrote:

Lady Emily Farnsworth accepts with pleasure the invitation to the wedding of Lee Stetson and Amanda King.

The End