



Love By Chance

Kacy Cross

SHE CONSIDERED HIS QUESTION ABOUT her dad as she set another piece of chocolate.

“He’s a financial advisor, but he and my mom are newly retired and about to travel to Italy together.”

She could easily stop there, but Eric always listened to everything she said so attentively, as if there wasn’t anything in the world more important than whatever she was about to say next. A lot of guys constantly checked their phones, even while on a date, which really annoyed her. Eric never did that, and as a pediatrician, he had the best excuse for it.

His laser focus on her hadn’t shifted an iota since he’d arrived. It felt like a good time to share the reason she thought the way her parents had met was so romantic. Why she’d held out for her own story.

“They actually met in a college bookstore,” she told him. “There was one copy of *A Room with a*

View, which is set in Italy, and they both needed it for an exam, so they shared it, and by the end of the book they were in love.”

“Huh, that’s a great story.”

Yes. And the fact that he thought so spoke volumes. Enough that she couldn’t help but take a tiny break from her chocolate to focus on him for a few minutes. She settled onto a stool next to him. It wasn’t a hardship in the least to drink him in. He really was gorgeous with his dark hair and chiseled features that were so distinctive.

“Just think. If the clerk had more copies, I wouldn’t be here.”

“I think you should track down that clerk and give her a box of your pastries. It’s the least you can do.”

She laughed at yet another example of his blind support for her culinary skills. It really turned her head in the best way. “Okay, I’ll get right on that.”

One thing about Eric’s laser focus: it was impossible to miss the way he was looking at her, as if he’d spotted his favorite treat inside the bakery case. It tripped her pulse and, suddenly self-conscious, she glanced away.

“I must look a mess,” she announced unnecessarily, because clearly he could see that for himself. “I usually wear half of what I bake.”

Served her right for choosing this instead of a real date at a nice restaurant where she didn’t have to do any of the cooking. But it had been this or nothing. And she wasn’t sorry at all as Eric leaned in to capture her gaze in his, refusing to let go.

The long, charged moment dragged out, impossibly thick with possibilities.

“I think you look perfect,” he murmured.

Nerves kicked up a storm in her stomach as his gaze dropped to her mouth. Was he thinking about kissing? Because she sure was.

She had no idea what to say next, so she blurted out the first thing that came to mind. “Did I ever tell you when I was five, I had my first éclair? The waiter was French. I kept thinking he said ‘Claire.’”

Eric took her hand, leaning even closer, intent written all over his face. He did want to kiss her, but she was still babbling about éclairs. Knowing that didn’t seem to give her any special ability to stop babbling though.

“So I thought he named the dessert after me. Isn’t that hilarious?”

“Hilarious,” he repeated softly.

And then suddenly the words died in her throat as his mouth settled on hers. Tentatively at first, as if gauging whether she’d welcome this, but when she melted into it, he lifted a hand to her face, deepening the kiss. Eric kissed her with that same laser focus, as if there was nothing else in the world that could compare with this experience and he wanted to savor every second.

She felt the same. This was better than éclairs, better than any of the finest chocolate in the world. If the Wandering Gourmet himself walked into her bakery, she’d tell him to wait.

She was busy.

Fate had gotten the timing exactly right. This was meant to be. How many other guys would have so graciously veered from course when she'd announced she couldn't make their date?

That alone had tipped the scales. No doubt about it. She was falling for him.