

GOLDEN GATE SECRETS

1

IN

*Places  
Hidden*

TRACIE  
PETERSON



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This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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To Camri and Caleb and Kenzie

Grow strong in the Lord and seek Him first. There may  
be rough roads in life, but nothing takes God by surprise.  
He's already made provision for your every need.

## CHAPTER

# 1

LATE NOVEMBER, 1905

*S*an . . . Fran . . . cisco! Next stop, San . . . Fran . . . cisco,” the conductor called in a slow, elongated manner.

Passengers throughout the car began gathering their things, and the volume of conversations grew as the train slowed.

Camrienne Coulter smiled at the two women sitting opposite her. “Thank you both for making this such a pleasant trip. I believe God put us together for a reason.”

The redheaded woman who’d introduced herself three days earlier as Kenzie Gifford nodded. “I don’t imagine I’ve been good company, but I’m grateful for your friendship.”

“You’ve been through a great deal, Kenzie, and despite that, you’ve been lovely to talk to.” Judith Gladstone pushed an errant strand of blond hair under her hat and smiled at Camrienne. “I’m not all that knowledgeable about God, but as my mother used to say, ‘I feel that fate has brought us together.’”

Camri nodded as some of the male passengers moved toward the end of the car. The aisles were narrow, and as the

men jostled Camri, they tipped their hats and apologized. She paid them little attention. She'd grown up in Chicago and was used to crowded situations and people who were always in a hurry.

Seeing no need to compete for a place on the car's platform, Camri merely checked the buttons on her gloves and continued her conversation. "I knew when I started this journey that God would provide for my every need. Because of my education, some people think it strange that I put my faith in an unseen Deity, but I believe trusting God is a choice based not only in faith, but wisdom. I personally don't believe in fate or luck, but I'm very thankful that you both agreed to help me. I'm glad to help you in your searches as well."

Kenzie gazed out the train window. "I am too. Although my search isn't a physical one, like yours. I'll be content just to find some peace of mind and heart."

"I'm sure you will," Judith said as she strained to look out the dirty train window over Kenzie's shoulder. "And Camri, I'm sure we'll find your brother."

Camri's journey was not one of joy and excitement, as it had been just a year ago when she'd traveled from Chicago to San Francisco with her parents. They had stayed with her brother, Caleb, for several weeks, and Camri had helped him put his house in order.

Now her parents were ill, and Caleb had disappeared.

She frowned. He had been missing for over three months, and no one had any idea where he'd gone. Until August, his letters had always come like clockwork on the first of every month. One letter came for their parents and another for Camri. He even managed to write their older sister, Catherine, who was married and lived nearby with her family. It was a routine Caleb had never wavered in since moving to San Francisco five years earlier.

Until now.

“Are you certain your brother won’t mind us staying at his house?” Judith asked.

The train conductor passed through the car again. “All out for San . . . Fran . . . cisco!” He edged through the men standing at the end of the car and moved on to the next.

Camri raised her voice to be heard above the din. “I can’t imagine he would. He’s always been kind and generous.” She retied the ribbons of her simple travel bonnet. “He has a nice house with four bedrooms, so there will be plenty of room.” Especially since he was not even there. Camri left that thought unspoken. She had already spent the entire trip dwelling on or discussing her missing brother. “Since we’ve all come to San Francisco with a particular goal in mind, I’m glad we can pool our resources.”

The train came to a jerky stop with the screech of metal wheels on metal rails.

Judith sighed. “I’m glad not to have to go to a hotel. My funds are quite limited.”

“As are mine,” Kenzie said, turning to face Camri, “although I’m hopeful my mother’s cousin will honor his word and put me to work at his candy factory. I’ll ask him about jobs for you both.”

Camri nodded, although with her expanded college education, she found the idea of working at a factory a bit beneath her. Education had always been important in her family, and that, along with women’s rights, had taken all of Camri’s attention the last few years. She had hated leaving her teaching position at the women’s college in Chicago. Her teaching ability was highly regarded by the college administration, and her work with the suffrage movement had garnered respect from men and women alike.

But Caleb’s welfare was much more important. Something had to be desperately wrong, or he would have written.

She couldn't help but sigh. The stress and worry had taken such a toll on their parents that both had taken to their beds with various maladies, and the doctor was concerned. Camri had decided, at their urging, to look for Caleb. She'd left their parents to the care of her elder sister, hoping against hope that she'd arrive in San Francisco to find that Caleb had merely been too busy to write. Of course, she was certain that wouldn't be the case. Since even his household servants, Mr. and Mrs. Wong, hadn't seen him, she knew he had most likely met with harm.

The real question was whether or not he was still alive.

Now that the train was stopped, passengers flooded the aisles. Camri knew better than to be in a hurry to disembark. She had no desire to be pushed and prodded by others as they rushed to exit the train.

Judith was the first of the trio to stand, reaching down for her small carpetbag. From the looks of it, the bag was ancient, but Camri knew it was one of the few things left to Judith. According to her sad tale, most of her family's assets had been sold off to pay the debts left by her deceased mother and father.

Kenzie was next to get to her feet, pulling a dark veil on her hat down over her face. It was in this state that Camri had first met Kenzie in Kansas City. While she'd waited for her train west, Camri had shared a table with Kenzie in the crowded depot restaurant. At first Camri had thought the redheaded woman to be a widow in mourning, but she'd soon learned that Kenzie Gifford had been stood up at the altar on her wedding day.

Camri gathered her thoughts along with her things. It was important to stay focused. She tucked her large leather satchel under one arm and clutched her purse close with the other. One could never be too careful in big cities, and she wasn't about to become the victim of a pickpocket.

They were helped from the train and instructed where they could hire a porter and cab. Camri was used to traveling and

easily managed the arrangement. A large uniformed black man took their information and collected their trunks while the ladies waited in the comfort of the depot.

“I’m so glad you recommended we take the train from Los Angeles rather than coming into Oakland,” Kenzie said as she glanced around. “I doubt I could have managed the ferry ride over. I’m already somewhat motion sick.”

“The other route is much longer.” Camri and her family had taken the Oakland route last year, and it had seemed to take forever. Caleb had learned only after their arrival that it was much easier to come by way of Los Angeles.

The porter finally returned and announced that their trunks had been loaded into a hired carriage. Camri tipped him generously and motioned to the other ladies to follow her.

Outside the depot, San Francisco was damp and chilly and noisy. The carriage driver helped them board and hardly waited for them to settle before putting the horses in motion. He paid little attention to the conveyances and people around him, almost as if he expected the traffic to magically part for his horses. It was quickly apparent that travel through the city was pretty much a free-for-all. Camri watched in silence and not a small amount of fear as horses and carts darted between automobiles and cable cars with a daring that should have been reserved for a circus act. Added to this were people who crossed streets and maneuvered in and out of traffic as though they had no fear of death.

The noise of a city was something Camri had missed. Long hours on the train traveling through wide-open farm country and prairie wastelands had left her longing for the city and its clamor. Vendors hawked their wares, cable-car drivers clanged their bells while newsboys sounded the headlines of the day, and annoyed freight drivers hurled insults at preoccupied pedestrians. It was a musical symphony Camri understood well.

Caleb's three-story house was set in a fashionable neighborhood just west of downtown. It wasn't where the elite of the city had their palatial estates, but it was near enough that respectable folk could approve. Caleb had boasted that one day when he became a famous lawyer, he might own one of those grand mansions on the hill, but for now he was content with his stylish home.

"Goodness, I had no idea this city was so hilly. It must be exhausting to walk anywhere," Judith declared as she gawked around like an excited child.

"You should try riding a bicycle here." Camri smiled at the memory. "Caleb and I did just that, and I never exerted more energy."

"I like bicycles," Kenzie murmured. "I used to go riding with—" She stopped abruptly as if the memory were too painful to speak.

Camri swooped in to fill the awkward silence. "I think you'll both enjoy the city. There are so many things to do, and once we're settled in, we can take a walk."

Kenzie brushed dust off her dark blue skirt. "Right now, I just want a bath."

"Well, you won't have to wait much longer. There it is." Camri pointed to Caleb's house. "It's the ecru-colored one with the bay windows trimmed in white."

"Ecru?" the driver called back.

"Beige," Camri clarified.

He threw her a blank stare.

"The light brown."

He looked back at the row of houses and nodded.

Kenzie and Judith gazed about them while the driver pulled to the curb. No doubt they were impressed with this beautiful little neighborhood and its lovely houses set up off the streets. Camri certainly had been when she'd first come here.

The driver helped them from the carriage, then began to unload the trunks. Camri made her way up the stairs. The first steps rose up from the sidewalk in a set of twelve. She paused on the landing, then turned to climb another six. At this landing, she waited for Judith and Kenzie to catch up.

“Isn’t it a charming house?” She gazed up at the two white pillars that framed the small portico. The double entry doors were artistically designed with stained-glass inserts. “I fell in love with it when we visited last year.”

“It’s charming,” Judith agreed. “The entire neighborhood is more beautiful than I expected. It doesn’t even seem like it’s in the city.”

“And much quieter than I thought it would be,” Kenzie added.

“I think the trees and shrubberies help,” Camri replied before moving up the final six steps. Her thoughts were on the last time she’d been here and Caleb’s enthusiasm about his house. Now he was missing, and though the house and neighborhood was just as she remembered, Camri couldn’t help but feel Caleb’s absence.

She paused at the door and squared her shoulders. Nothing about this trip was going to be as simple and entertaining as her last visit to San Francisco.

“Well, here we are.” She turned and looked at her new friends. “Welcome home.”