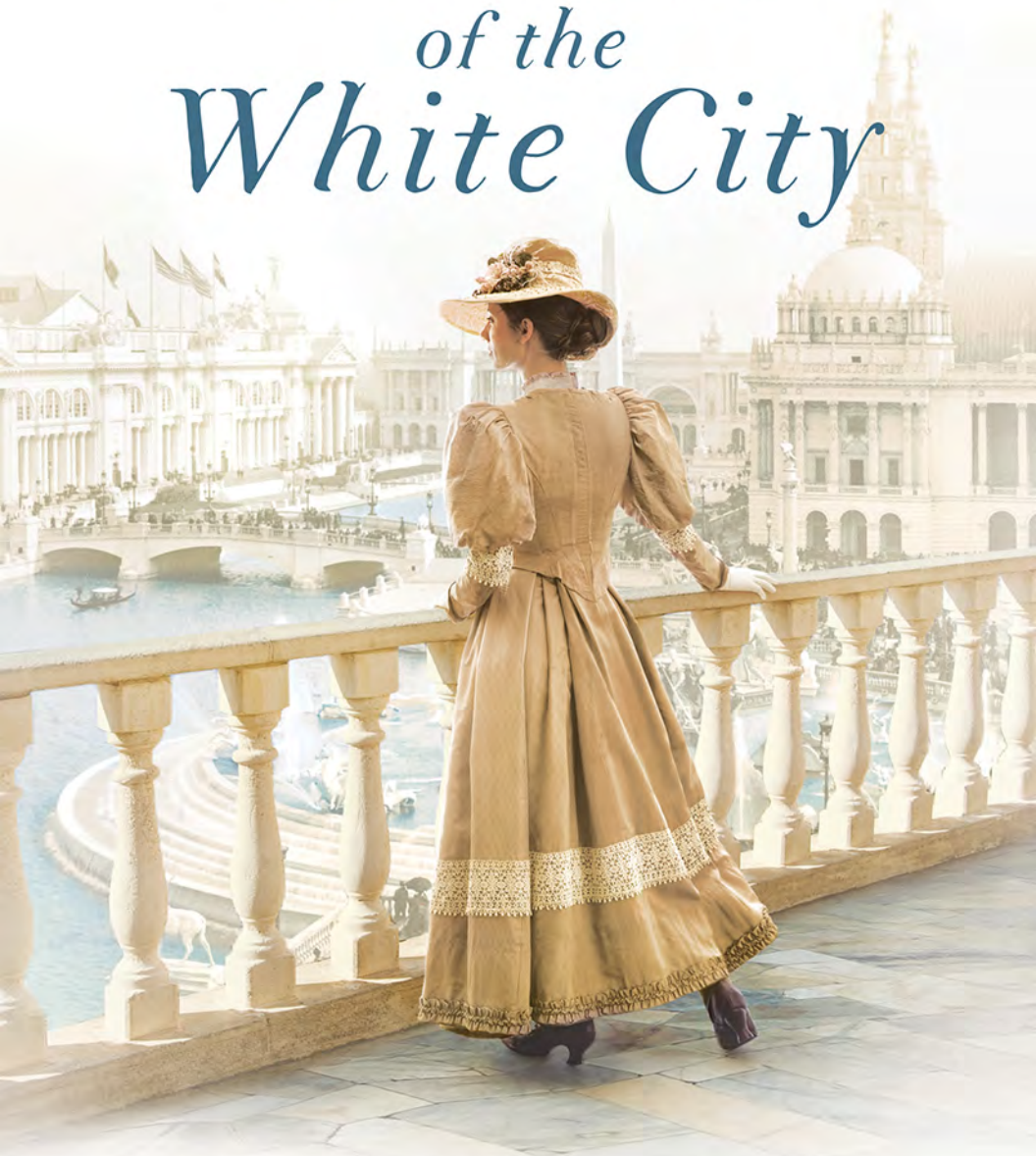


THE WINDY CITY SAGA • 2

Shadows of the White City



JOCELYN GREEN

Christy Award–Winning Author of *The Mark of the King*

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*Shadows
of the
White City*

JOCELYN GREEN



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To Bettina,
Who loves fiercely,
Who holds on, and lets go,
Even when it hurts.



I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look,
or the words, which laid the foundation. It is
too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew
that I had begun.

—Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

How great is the love the Father has lavished on
us, that we should be called children of God!

—1 John 3:1



World's Columbian Exposition AT Chicago, 1893

Based on Rand, McNally & Co.'s
New Indexed Miniature Guide Map



- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Palace of Fine Arts | 11. Festival Hall | 21. Administration Bldg. |
| 2. California Bldg. | 12. Transport. Annex | 22. Railroad Terminal |
| 3. Illinois Bldg. | 13. Transport. Bldg. | 23. Machinery Bldg. |
| 4. Woman's Bldg. | 14. Mines Bldg. | 24. Agriculture Bldg. |
| 5. Fisheries Bldg. | 15. Electricity Bldg. | 25. Stock Pavillion |
| 6. Children's Bldg. | 16. Manuf. & Lib. Arts | 26. Krupps Bldg. |
| 7. Government Bldg. | 17. Music Hall | 27. Leather Exhibit |
| 8. Greenhouse | 18. Peristyle | 28. Forestry Bldg. |
| 9. Horticulture Bldg. | 19. Casino | 29. Anthropology Bldg. |
| 10. Rose Garden | 20. Columbian Fountain | 30. Stockyards |

PROLOGUE

CHICAGO DECEMBER 1880

“Look at them,” Sylvie Townsend whispered to her sister. “I wish we could do more.” The cold seeped through her cloak and into her boots.

They shivered in the alley outside the orphanage. Meg, surrounded by her own three children, looked through the grimy window. “We’ve done what we can. For now, at least.”

It felt like precious little.

On behalf of the Chicago Women’s Club, Meg and Sylvie had delivered donations from local grocers for the Christmas holiday and were then quickly ushered out. Before they left, Sylvie couldn’t help peering into the dining hall at the children she longed to help.

Her eyes burned as she watched the orphans and half-orphans—those who had one parent living. There were so many of them packed onto the benches, hunched over bowls of thin soup. This building wasn’t a home. It was a warehouse for unwanted goods.

“So much children!” Five-year-old Hazel stood on her tiptoes to see, her nose red with cold. “Do all their mommies and daddies live here, too?”

“Hush, Hazel.” Walter, older by two years, stuffed his hands into the pockets of his wool coat. “You don’t know anything.”

Meg picked up her four-year-old, Louise, and held her close, though the child was getting too big for that. “Those children’s parents can’t take care of them anymore.”

Frowning, Louise clasped mittened hands around her mother’s neck. Two braids the color of Meg’s blond curls trailed down her back. “Will you ever stop taking care of us?”

“Never ever. Your father and I will always take care of you.” Meg gave Louise a squeeze before setting her down again. A raw wind cut through the alley, bringing with it the stench from the privies behind the orphanage. “Walter, take your sisters to the carriage while I talk to Aunt Sylvie for a moment.”

Bending, Sylvie kissed three cold cheeks, then watched the carriage driver bundle them into the landau. The difference between those bright-eyed children and the wan souls inside the orphanage was so stark it stung. “Oh, Meg. It isn’t enough to bring extra food a few times a year. How far will that nourishment go when they need the nourishment of loving parents far more? I wish there was more I could do.”

Meg tucked her hands into her muff. “I know how you feel.”

Sylvie doubted it. Meg had a houseful of her own children and a husband who adored her. Sylvie had none of that. She was thirty years old, the sole caregiver for their aging father, Stephen. She owned a bookstore across from Court House Square and managed two rental apartments above her own, since they’d added a fourth floor to their building after the Great Fire. Though there was no husband on the horizon, Sylvie had plenty of space for a child in her home and heart. But the orphanage wouldn’t let her adopt one as a single woman.

The waiting horses swished their tails, their breath small puffs of white. Meg turned her back to them. “Sylvie, I worry you’re taking on too much.”

Sylvie laughed, and tiny crystals formed inside her muffler. “You’re the one who encouraged me to join the Women’s Club

to begin with. You said I needed something else to do, something else to think and care about aside from Father and the store. And you were absolutely right. My world had become far too small.”

“I fear you’ll wear yourself out, between your volunteering activities and taking care of Father and the store and your tenants’ needs. I don’t see anyone taking care of *you*.”

“What exactly are you saying?” Not that Sylvie couldn’t guess.

“There’s still time.” A lock of hair whipped about Meg’s collar, and she tucked it back under her hat. “You could still find someone to love you.”

“You love me, and so do your children. Nate is like a brother to me. Father loves me, as do Karl and Anna Hoffman.”

“You know what I mean.”

Sylvie folded her arms. “And you know where I stand on the subject of matrimony.” She didn’t need a husband in order to be fulfilled. Furthermore, she had no time for one. The fact that she’d had her heart smashed to bits by her first love years ago didn’t need to be mentioned. Since then, there’d been a couple of suitors, but she had only entertained the idea of courtship to please her father, who claimed he wanted to see her settled. Ironically, however, he’d declared neither suitor could pass muster. She’d agreed.

“All right.” Meg rolled her lips between her teeth, hesitating. “I just don’t like to think of how lonely you’ll be after—well, Father isn’t getting any better.”

Sylvie dipped her chin into the folds of her muffler. As much as she wanted to, she couldn’t deny it. Her father’s health had been broken by his time in the Andersonville prison camp during the Civil War, and it only grew worse with each passing year. There was a reason he’d recently transferred ownership of the bookstore to her.

She took her sister’s hands, Meg’s scar tissue a reminder of all they’d been through together, including and after the Great Fire that ravaged Chicago nine years ago. “I’ll adjust. And I’ll always have my sister.”

Meg replied with a fierce embrace, then joined her children

in the carriage and wheeled away. Sylvie would return home by streetcar.

Picking her way between islands of slush, Sylvie emerged from the alley's shadows onto the street the orphanage faced. The sun was bright in the powder-blue sky but held little warmth. While she paused at the front doors, a brawny man approached with a little girl who clutched an adult-sized peacock-blue shawl at her neck.

"Excuse me." The man tipped his cap to her with fingers chapped red at the knuckles. He carried the raw smell of keeping company with animals, living and dead. "The orphanage is open, yes?"

Dread for the child tightened her chest. "It—it is," she stutted. "I hope you have no need of it." It wasn't her business. But if this child was to join the orphans in this facility, then she would become her concern in an instant.

The man frowned. "I heard they take in children whose parents can't provide for them well enough." His voice was as gruff as his beard, his words thickly accented. Broken blood vessels spread tiny red webs across his nose and cheeks. "I heard they offer clothing, food, and shelter. They keep them safe. Is it not so?"

The little girl tugged the hem of his unraveling sleeve and said something in a different language.

He placed his hand on her uncovered head. "Not now, Rozalia." He said the name with such tenderness, it sounded like a poem: *Rosa Leah*. He looked up. "My name is Nikolai Dabrowski. This is my daughter. My wife didn't survive the journey from Poland. I cannot care for the girl on my own."

Rozalia brought his hand to her cheek and watched Sylvie from behind a tangle of dirty blond hair.

"She's lucky to have one parent living," Sylvie said after introducing herself. "She needs a father's love. Besides, the conditions inside this orphanage are deplorable. There's not enough food or soap or tender care."

"I work fourteen hours a day at the stockyards," Mr. Dabrowski said. "She stays in our shack alone, or plays in the street with other

children. This isn't safe or right. Believe me, Miss Townsend, I bring her here because I love her, not because I don't."

But Sylvie could tell he wavered. "No one in that building loves her," she told him. "They will not ask her what she likes to eat or sing her songs to soothe her." She listed her complaints and described the orphans who had reverted to sucking their thumbs and wetting the bed. She told him of children wasting away and becoming mute with neglect and despair. "Do you really think she'd be better off there than with you, or perhaps a relative of yours who could care for her during the day?"

His broad shoulders sagged. "We have no other kin here. The neighbor women have their own worries. They work at factories, or they do piecework at home with barely enough attention left to keep their own babies from falling into the fire. Rozalia is in danger almost every hour as it is."

Sylvie looked at the girl, a lump forming in her throat. "I'm sure that's not—"

"True? And how do you know what is true and what is not in the place where I live?"

Heat flashed through Sylvie. He was right. They shared a city but lived worlds apart.

Mr. Dabrowski's hand cupped Rozalia's chin. "She is already a beauty, no? And not yet five years old."

Despite the lack of hygiene, she was an uncommonly beautiful child, with delicate features and eyes an enviable cobalt blue.

"People have noticed. Vile people."

Goosebumps lifted Sylvie's skin. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that wicked men have tried to buy her from me, and next time they'll make no offer before they take her to be raised in a brothel, trained for a life of sin. Now tell me, Miss Townsend, do you still believe my daughter is better off with me than she would be behind those doors?"

On an impulse founded on years of thought and striving, Sylvie decided right then that she might not be able to change the system, but she could change the life of this one precious girl.

“I can take her.” Her heart hammered as she heard the words, but nothing had ever sounded or felt more natural. “For as long as you need, Rozalia can live with me and my father.” She described their home and the bookshop below it on the corner of Randolph and LaSalle Streets. She offered to show him their property for his approval. “I’ll bring her to see you any time you wish, and you’re always welcome to visit us, too.” She took his rough hand in hers. “Make no mistake. She is your daughter. I’ll only care for her until the two of you can be together again.”

Grooves furrowed his brow. “I cannot pay you. But she can work for her keep, if that suits. You can dust, Rozalia, can’t you? Wash dishes? Tend the fire?”

She nodded.

Sylvie wasn’t after domestic help but had the sense to recognize a man’s pride when she saw it. She knelt, the cold creeping through her skirts to her knees. “That’s all fine, dear. But I will also want you to play. I have a very old cat named Oliver Twist, and he would love to have a little girl to keep him company. I would love to have a little girl to keep me company, and so would my father, I’m sure. Shall we try it and see what happens?”

Rozalia loosened her grip on her father and gave another tentative nod.

Mr. Dabrowski cleared his throat. “She isn’t so good with English now. The people in our neighborhood don’t speak it. But with you, she will learn English very good, yes? This is what I want for her. She’s an American now.”

Sylvie unwound the muffler from about her neck and wrapped it around Rozalia. “I’m sure she’ll learn quickly.” She stood to address one more concern. She knew few Protestant Polish and wondered if her religion would pose a problem. “Mr. Dabrowski, I feel I ought to make you aware that I’m neither Jewish nor Catholic.”

“Neither am I, miss.” He sniffed and rubbed his nose. “It’s been a long time since I’ve believed in anything. If you have faith of any kind, it will be more than the girl gets from me.” To Rozalia,

he spoke in Polish. The girl protested. He replied with a stronger voice. To Sylvie, he said, "It is settled."

For a few weeks? A few months? A year? There was no way to know how long this arrangement would last. To Sylvie, it didn't matter.

Too overcome for words, she held out her hand. Rozalia took it.

"Keep her safe for me, Miss Townsend."

"I promise. For as long as you need."



CHAPTER ONE



CHICAGO
FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 1893

Sylvie hadn't always leapt to the worst possible conclusion. But being a parent seemed to enlarge her imagination as much as it did her heart.

Tightening her grip on her parasol, she paced the broad sidewalk parallel to the many-columned Peristyle—one column for each state of the Union—that stretched between Music Hall and the Casino. She squinted against the blinding white buildings, straining to find her seventeen-year-old daughter among the thousands of other visitors here at the World's Fair.

"You worry too much." Beth Wright called to her from the shade of the Peristyle's central arch, one hand planted on her hip. At forty-three years of age, the same as Sylvie, she'd already been a widow for five years but had no children. Sylvie didn't expect her to understand the niggling dread Sylvie felt. "So what if she's a few minutes late? What's so urgent, anyway?"

Sylvie returned to her friend, ducking into the shade. "Her violin lesson with Kristof was supposed to start at two o'clock. Right there." She pointed to Music Hall. It was the off-season for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra right now, so Kristof and Gregor Bartok, her third-floor tenants, were both performing in

the Exposition Orchestra at the Fair. Rose met Kristof between their two daily performances for her weekly lesson. He wasn't her first violin teacher, but he was the best.

Beth fanned herself with her hat. Coils of cinnamon-colored hair swayed at her neck, the only soft aspect of her otherwise wiry frame. "When we were children, the idea of a woman playing the violin was scandalous. The times are changing indeed, and I'm glad of it. But don't tell me you go with her to her lessons."

Sylvie peered up at her friend, who had three inches on her. "I don't. I just finished my tour early at the Manufactures Building." The massive structure was adjacent to Music Hall.

Most World's Fair tour guides were men, but a select band of female guides, including Sylvie and Beth, were hired to lead groups of women. Two or three days a week, Sylvie conducted tours based on each group's interests. On Friday afternoons, many of those tours overlapped with Rose's lesson time.

Brassy notes marched through the air, courtesy of the Iowa State Band. "Good group today?" Beth asked.

"Very. Seventeen young ladies from New Orleans, with three nuns as chaperones. We visited the model of St. Peter's Basilica on the Midway, Queen Isabella's relics in the Woman's Building, the Louisiana State Building, and the Catholic School Exhibit in Manufactures, among other things." Tours were paid for per person, per hour, which made today's work a valuable supplement to her rental and bookstore income. "The nuns work with blind children too, so I took them to see the inventor of the braille typewriter and his machine. While we were there, a girl who was both blind and deaf came forward—Helen, I think, was her name—and when she was introduced to the inventor, she gave him a hug and a kiss. It was so moving, watching them meet." It was easily the highlight of Sylvie's week.

Beth gave a low whistle. "Lucky. My five ladies from Minnesota wanted to stay at the Stock Pavilion for two hours before they let me show them around the Agriculture and Dairy Buildings. I'll

have to wash my hair twice to get the smell out.” She brushed a piece of hay from her sleeve. “Anyway, don’t worry about Rose running behind today. It happens.” Her brown eyes were soft, but her opinions remained as plain as the tip of her nose.

Sylvie prayed her friend was right, even as she scolded herself for being ill at ease. Still, she looked for Rose’s figure and golden hair.

Lake Michigan lapped against the back of the Peristyle. Before her lay the marble-edged Grand Basin, surrounded by the principal exhibit buildings that bordered the Court of Honor: Manufactures and Liberal Arts, Electricity, Mines and Mining, Machinery, and Agriculture. The gold dome of the Administration Building reflected the sun at the opposite end of the Basin. Each of the colossal, classically styled buildings was designed to dazzle, all of them resembling white marble.

But not everything at the Fair was what it seemed. Just as nearly every structure here was made of a temporary substance easily deconstructed, every well-dressed man was not necessarily as well-behaved as he appeared.

“Come on,” she said, nudging Beth. “Let’s rest our feet while we wait.”

Repinning her hat in place, Beth followed Sylvie down the steps and into the glaring sun. They sat on a bench beside the Basin where they could see the Roman Corinthian-style Music Hall and the matching Casino, which hosted no gambling or gaming, but only a restaurant, cloakrooms, toilet facilities, and other public comforts. From its roof, American flags snapped in the wind. People passing by in their Sunday best were dwarfed by both buildings, and they weren’t even the largest on the grounds.

“Honestly, what’s the worst that could happen?” Beth asked. “There are twelve hundred Columbian Guards stationed at the Fair.”

Sylvie didn’t want to think about the worst that could happen, let alone list the possibilities aloud. There had been a fatal accident at the Ice Railway last month, and a deadly fire at the Cold

Storage Building. People stepped in front of speeding cable cars. Girls disappeared. *Not my girl, Lord. Please not mine.*

Mastering her imagination, Sylvie limited her reply to Beth's comment. "The Fair covers six hundred acres, and that doesn't even include the Midway. That's only two guards per acre, for pity's sake." She didn't spot any of them now.

"Do you want me to wait with you?" But Beth was already standing.

"No need." Sylvie waved a fly away. "I don't want to keep you."

"Come to the suffrage meeting with me. It'll do you good to set your mind on more important things. Wherever Rose is, she knows how to get home."

"Next time," Sylvie said.

Beth shook her head and took her leave.

Rising, Sylvie walked around the edge of the Basin, weaving a path between other visitors. The Statue of the Republic reared up out of the Basin on its pedestal, nearly blinding in its gold-leaf brilliance. Passing under a massive arch, she entered Music Hall and closed her parasol. Rose had probably slipped inside unnoticed, and Sylvie had worried for nothing.

Forgoing the grand auditorium, her heels tapped briskly up the stairs and down the hall toward the practice rooms, following the sound of strings to an open door.

The small space was alive with music. Kristof's tuxedo jacket was folded over the back of a chair and his shirtsleeves rolled up to his elbows, revealing forearms finely honed from a lifetime of playing the violin. A black bow tie flared at his collar. He exuded precision, control, command.

"She hasn't been here," Sylvie said.

Kristof's bow lifted as he faced her. The last note bounced off the wall and fell. "Not yet. If she doesn't come soon, we'll have to reschedule the lesson." A hint of impatience threaded his tone. He wasn't really angry, Sylvie knew. He was punctual and expected everyone else to be the same.

"If she doesn't come soon, the lesson will be the least of my

worries.” Sylvie snapped open a paper fan painted with the Court of Honor.

Brows lowering, his expression shifted from a violinist strung tight to that of a compassionate friend, which was what the confirmed bachelor had become to her over the last two years. Reserved, yes, and somewhat preoccupied, but he was reliable and metronome-steady. He was safe.

“Please, sit.” He laid down his instrument, then pulled out the piano bench for her. “What’s going on?”

She remained standing.

Sunlight shone on his dark brown hair, glinting on grey threads at his temples. “Is she on her own?”

“She was meeting Hazel and some of Hazel’s friends—all responsible and a little older than Rose. It’s likely they lost track of time.” Yet she could not keep the concern from her voice.

Kristof walked to the window facing Lake Michigan. Sylvie joined him. Endless blue water extended to the horizon. Boats and watercraft of all kinds dotted the lake. Benches bolted onto a Movable Sidewalk carried fairgoers out along the Casino Pier nearly half a mile into the lake before bringing them back again. Rose had far too much energy to sit for a ride that moved so slowly.

After rolling down his sleeves, Kristof buttoned the cuffs. “She could have misjudged the amount of time it takes to get from one part of the Fair to another.”

Before she could reply, hurried footfalls sounded in the hallway. Sylvie stepped outside the practice room to find Rose heading toward her, violin case swinging from her hand. Relief surged, then ebbed away. A snap of irritation followed.

“Where have you been?”

Rose brushed past her and into the practice room. She smelled of a man’s cologne.

Sylvie stared after her, unable to reconcile this. “Rozalia. Why—”

“I’m sorry I’m late,” she said breathlessly. “Mr. Bartok, do you have time to listen to my pieces, or must you go down to the stage?”

Kristof looked from Rose to Sylvie. “Sylvie would like a brief explanation first. I can step outside if you like, and then yes, I have a few minutes to spare, but not many.”

“No need for you to leave. It’s simple.” After removing her gloves, Rose opened her violin case, tightened her bow, and began rubbing a block of rosin along the horsehairs. “I went to a lecture at the Palace of Fine Arts. They’re inaugurating the Polish art section today, and I couldn’t have left early without being rude. Since the Art Palace is clear at the northern end of the fairgrounds, I thought I’d take the electric elevated train to get here—and I did—but I just missed the one I wanted and had to wait for the next. Then there was a huge line at the cloakroom in the Casino where I’d checked my violin. I couldn’t very well come here without it, could I?” She set the violin to her shoulder. “I told you it was simple. I’m sorry you didn’t trust me.”

“It’s not that I don’t trust *you* . . .” Sylvie said.

Rose cut her off, sawing away on her D string, twisting a tuning knob until the tone rang true. “You don’t trust anyone.”

Sylvie made no response, nor did she register Kristof’s reply, other than that it was in her defense. She couldn’t stop staring at a thumb-sized bruise on the inside of Rose’s left wrist.

It hadn’t been there this morning.



The performance was over. The applause had faded from Music Hall, and the audience trickled toward the exits. Kristof Bartok and the rest of the Exposition Orchestra should have been free to pack up their instruments and have the rest of the day to themselves.

Instead, Maestro Theodore Thomas gripped both ends of his conductor’s baton and told them to wait where they were. This had been their eighty-third performance together since May 2, but it was the first time he just stood there, bushy mustache drooping, while the hall emptied. Behind him in an enormous horseshoe, a dozen mammoth Corinthian pillars soared from bal-

cony to ceiling, each wrapped with laurel garlands to match those draping between them. Laurel wreaths topped and anchored each pillar.

Papers shuffled on stands as one hundred and fifty orchestra members gathered their music into leather folders. Beside Kristof, his younger brother shrugged and stashed his violin beneath his chair, displaying the same lackadaisical attitude that pervaded every corner of his life. Kristof had earned the position of concertmaster and first chair violin, but only because Gregor—who had more natural talent by far—had no discipline. If only he cared enough to practice, if he cared about his potential half as much as their father had, he would be the star of the orchestra, and Kristof would literally be playing second fiddle to him.

Even if the maestro didn't know that, surely Gregor did.

Kristof dabbed a folded handkerchief to his brow, then rested his instrument across his lap and waited for whatever Maestro had to tell them.

Gregor made a show of yawning, then shoved a thatch of oak-brown hair off his brow.

“Out too late last night?” Kristof asked, *sotto voce*, though he already knew the answer. Gregor was so loud coming home that surely Sylvie and Rose could hear him tramping above them. Just as he had heard one of the Hoffmans stirring upstairs after Gregor slammed the door to their apartment.

Gregor rubbed his hand over his face. “No later than usual.”

True. And that was the problem. There was always something to do, see, experience that was more alluring than home. Before Kristof could reply, however, Maestro Thomas rapped his baton on his stand.

“I have an announcement,” he began. “You’ve all played well here at the World’s Columbian Exposition. Two concerts daily, plus rehearsals, for the last three months has been a grueling schedule. I have been proud to stand at the helm of this body as you’ve offered the public a more cultured, sophisticated music experience than they get anywhere else in the city.”

Gregor leaned over and whispered, “This can’t be good.”

As much as he wanted to disagree, Kristof sensed the same. Thomas’s demeanor was too sober for mere praise.

“But as you’ve noticed, our afternoon concerts have suffered shamefully low attendance.” Thomas’s eyebrows knit together.

“Pardon me, sir,” Gregor inserted, “but I’m not surprised. The public can attend our free concerts in the morning, plus hear bands throughout the fairgrounds, all included with a fifty-cent ticket to the Fair. Why, then, would they pay another dollar to attend the afternoon concert?”

He had a point. The Exposition Orchestra’s morning concerts of popular music averaged thirty-five hundred patrons. The afternoon concerts: one hundred.

“Why indeed?” Maestro echoed. “As the musical director for the Fair, my aim has always been to use music to both amuse the crowds and to elevate the more discerning European visitor. But I’m forced to concede that music as art and education has been an utter failure. Music as amusement is all the people want, and they won’t pay extra for it.”

Kristof shifted in his chair, making a mental note to change the programming. As concertmaster, he would suggest more Wagner, Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky. Fewer of the longer pieces they’d played this afternoon from Beethoven and Liszt. He tugged his damp collar away from his skin. The ninety-six-degree heat lately hadn’t made the stuffy afternoon concerts more popular either.

“As free music doesn’t pay the bills,” Thomas continued, “I’m resigning my position as musical director and disbanding the Exposition Orchestra.”

“What about the contract?” Kristof asked quietly. It was a six-month agreement, and they were months shy of completing it.

“We’re breaking the contract,” Thomas replied. “Cutting our losses, so to speak. The Fair officials agree that, in this case, the only way forward is to find the way out.”

Kristof was out of a job. They all were, until the Chicago Sym-

phony Orchestra season began the day after Thanksgiving. But it was only the start of August. The end of November loomed far away.

Surprise rippled through the orchestra sections, but none louder than that from Gregor. “This can’t be happening.” He stood. “What about our salaries?”

“The last concert I’ll conduct will be August 11, and that will be in support of the chorus at Festival Hall. After that, I assume none of us will be paid. I certainly won’t ask for money I didn’t earn. Will you?”

“This is outrageous. You can’t do this to us. I was counting on that money. That is, we were all planning to be fully employed for the duration of the contract. Did you think of that—think of us—before you resigned?”

Kristof kicked his brother’s shoe to silence him. “Sit,” he hissed. Nothing could be gained by attacking the maestro.

“I regret any financial hardships this may cause you,” Thomas boomed. “But if you’ve been wise, you have saved some of that generous salary you’ve been paid all summer.”

Kristof had. One hundred fifty dollars a week was more money than he could possibly spend. Apparently his brother had found a way to do it.

Gregor sank back into his chair and held his head. “This wasn’t supposed to happen,” he whispered. Sweat beaded his upper lip.

At thirty-five years old, Gregor ought to be able to take care of himself. But when Kristof looked at him, he saw the younger brother always getting into scrapes, always reaching to Kristof for rescue. He set his jaw, already frustrated without even knowing why. But he knew Gregor. That was enough.

As soon as Thomas adjourned the meeting, Kristof swiveled in his chair to face his brother and braced for confrontation.

“Did you know about any of this?” Gregor asked.

“Why should I?”

“He relies on you. If you had any idea, and you didn’t tell me . . . If I had only had some idea my funds would dry up—”

Shadows of the White City

Kristof leaned forward. “I’m a concertmaster, not a consultant. I mark the bowings on the sheet music, help with programming, and perform the violin solos. I am not the maestro’s confidant.”

“If only I’d known, I would have—I wouldn’t have—” Cutting short his confession, Gregor shoved his fingers through his hair.

“Tell me.” Kristoff kept his tone low. “What have you done?”

And what must I do to fix it?