

A festive winter scene featuring a black street lamp with a white lantern, decorated with a red bow and greenery. The background is filled with evergreen trees and strings of white star-shaped lights. The overall atmosphere is cozy and celebratory.

TANYA
STOWE

WHITE
CHRISTMAS

Excerpt for White Christmas by Tanya Stowe

Now he remembered her. She always wore her hair tied back in a bun and secured with combs. She'd been so business-like, so informed and capable. Her curls and her embarrassment over the nickname made her human and real.

"Your secret is safe with me," he said, laughter still in his tone. "I won't remind you or rub it in. Especially after all the nice things you said about my work. I want to keep you on my side. In fact, I'm thinking of asking you to be my campaign manager."

Suddenly, the laughter left her eyes and she gazed up in all seriousness. "Will there be a campaign? Is that why you refused another term in the assembly so you can run for Senator Rizzi's seat when he retires next year?"

Chad caught his breath, wondering how he'd let that happen. He never spoke out of turn or let information slip. But they'd been talking like old friends and it just happened. What was it about this young woman that made him so comfortable? Before he could gather his thoughts and come up with a reason, she held up her hand.

"Don't answer that," she said, closing her eyes. "I'm sorry I even asked it. That's none of my

business and I don't know why I said it. I--I just feel like I know you."

Chad smiled, thinking how her words echoed his feelings. "We do. We've even worked together."

Tessa opened her eyes and stared at him. A slow, sweet smile spread over her lips and made her blue eyes sparkle. He thought it just might be the prettiest smile he'd ever seen.

That's when the alarm bells started going off.

Suddenly, he noticed that it had gotten dark and Aunt Nell still hadn't shown up. He looked around. "Well, it was nice talking to you.

He stopped short of saying Tessa. The name had taken on new meaning for him...untamed strawberry curls and a sweet smile. Now, it sounded far too personal.

"My aunt's waiting for me, so I'd better get back," he said rather shortly.

She nodded. "My grandmother's waiting, too."

Her tone sounded disappointed and those blue eyes that had sparkled all night lost some of their shimmer. She gestured across the street. He turned and saw Aunt Nell sitting on a park bench. Beside her was another little white-haired lady. They both smiled and waved.

"Wait a minute," he said beneath his breath. "You're not—"

He turned back around.

Tessa smiled and held out her hand. "Nice to meet you. I'm Sophie's granddaughter."