

# CHAPERON

a short story by Erini CS

*This is the story of Maisie Chaperon, an attractive, well-bred young lady and her demise.*

## PART ONE

Zev glanced out the window of his second floor apartment as his printer loudly hummed to life. He didn't like watching pictures print, slowly painting figures on the paper. He moved over towards the window to watch the life below. Complete figures, moving freely, colors perfectly saturated. He watched each one of them, scanning for recognizable features – a familiar face in the evening streets.

“Which one are you?” he asked himself. “Are you out tonight, or are you working again?”

The printer went silent, dropping the finished work on the tray below. Zev returned to his desk and delicately picked up the document. He studied the image of the fair-haired woman, ink barely dry.

“You're out there, I know you are,” he said looking out the window again before taping the picture to the wall next to his desk.

Zev stared at the picture one last time, studying the details of her smile and the flecks of gold in her green eyes. With a sigh, he turned off his desk lamp and headed to the bedroom.

*“Maisie,*

*You might be the first waitress I've met - well, okay, we haven't met yet, which we should work on - but you're the first waitress I've known who really seems to enjoy her job. I admire that. You can't be at a high-end restaurant then (no offense if you are), because I can't imagine anyone enjoying serving any of the rich idiots in this town.*

*Work in the office has been typical. The tedium is starting to get to be a little much, however, it's nice coming home to an email from a lovely woman such as yourself.*

*Have a great evening, and I hope we can fix this “meeting” issue soon.*

*X - David”*

## PART TWO

Maisie tossed her apron and purse onto the armchair and then tossed herself on to the couch and stared at the ceiling. This had become her post-work ritual for the past eight months. She loved the way her body sank into the small blue sofa, exhaling deeply as she plopped herself down.

She glanced across the room. Her laptop was sitting open on her desk, just as she had left it the night before. Her heart raced a little as she stared, watching the black screen.

“I know you’re there,” she said as she sat up. “You always are.”

She got up, walking past her desk, and went to the kitchen. She glanced behind her again at the computer as she opened a cream soda from the fridge. The bottled ones were never as good as the ones from the diner, made with real cream and soda water.

She sat back on the couch and picked up the book from the coffee table and opened it to the dog-eared page. As she read, she occasionally glanced over at the computer. The book slowly slipped from her fingers and onto her chest – her closed eyes faced towards her desk as drifted to sleep.

*“David,*

*You’re too flattering! But at least you can’t see me blushing right now...*

*Maybe we should fix that problem. I’m working an earlier shift on Thursday. Let’s go to Oma’s for coffee afterwards. It should be around 9 or 10 o’clock. Will that work for you?*

*-Maisie”*

*“Maisie,*

*That sounds perfect.*

*X - David”*

She glanced up at the clock causally, the fourth time in the past ten minutes. Maisie tried to keep herself occupied, straightening the menus again, cleaning the same three tables, and checking the contents of her apron.

“You seem anxious tonight, Maisie,” the line cook said as he leans over the counter of the pass through window.

“Oh, no. Well, I just have this date tonight. I’m meeting him for the first time – guess I’m just a little nervous.”

“So where’s this hot shot taking you?” he chuckled.

“We’re supposed to meet over at Oma’s for coffee after my shift,” she glanced around at the tables and back at the clock, “or well, whenever my tables clear.”

She took the stack of menus and straightened them again.

“He must be something special if he’s got you this restless.”

“Well, maybe,” she said trying to hide a smile. “I mean, we’ve been talking almost every day for three weeks now – David and I. He seems really nice,”

“So you haven’t met him before?”

“Nope. Met online. Haven’t even seen his picture!”

“Well, how are you going to find him at Oma’s? That place isn’t huge, but it’s not the best lit coffee shop in town.”

She laughs. “He’s going to have a white carnation. I’ve got a red one.”

The bell on the door rang as a man hurried out of the restaurant. Maisie looked back and checked her last table, the couple who were sitting there an hour ago are still there. She sighed.

“Well, just be safe Maisie. There are all sorts of crazies on the internet these days.”

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Maisie took a deep breath as she fidgeted with her carnation. She bit her lip and eyed the room, wishing she had been more insistent on getting his picture.

“White carnation, white carnation,” she thought as she scanned the room again. “Oh come on, David, where are you?”

“There,” she smiled. A white carnation slowly twirled in the back of the room.

### **PART THREE**

“David?” the beautiful, fair-headed woman from his picture spoke as she reached him.

Zev stood to greet her, extending his arm to invite her to the table.

“Yes, yes,” he said, still standing. “And you, of course, must be Maisie. I’d recognize those green eyes anywhere.”

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He studied her face as they continued their conversation. He was surprised by how engaged he was, despite being entranced with the real, breathing woman he had been studying for the past week. Her cheeks were rosier in person, softer than he had imagined. His eyes followed her fingers as they ran through her hair, yet again.

“Hey, let’s get out of here,” he said abruptly. “Go for a walk or something. It’s too beautiful out to stay here.”

## PART FOUR

Maisie tried to hide her face as he grabbed her hand and led her to the door. She thought she might have been blushing earlier, but now she knew it was noticeable.

“Where do you wanna go?” she asked as they stepped out into the warm air.

She started walking down the street, towards the bars and jazz clubs and the crowds flowing out of them. He gripped her hand tightly and pulled her back, smiling.

“Let’s just walk,” he said coolly as he headed down a side street. “Come on.”

The street was quieter and darker. She glanced back at the main street, watching the crowds disappear. Soon she felt his hand on the small of her back, pushing her to keep up with his quicken pace.

“Wait,” she said. “Where are we going?”

“David? Really, where are we going?” she asked again.

He wrapped his arm around her and covered her mouth with the other. Frighten and panicking, Maisie tried to struggle away. He pushed her to the ground, keeping his hand firmly planted over her trembling mouth. In the moonlight, she notices the tear on his sleeve as he raises his arm to hit her. Motionless, she stops struggling and goes limp on the cold ground.