

An excerpt from

The Magic Man, by Cat Treadgold

Kilo held out Maddie's chair, and she hid her surprise as he seated her. That never happened. She wondered how old he was, surely younger than thirty. Guys of her generation rarely did things like open doors for you, kiss your hand, or pull out your chair. Well, actors did. Charm was part of an actor's arsenal. They called it schmoozing. You were always kissing up to someone—agents, more established actors, directors, stagehands, costumers, fans, potential fans—in other words, everyone. You never knew who would recommend you for your next role or put itching powder in your costume if you crossed them.

Kilo's gentlemanly gesture inspired instant distrust.

"David," she heard Carrie say, "when is Sylvia coming to visit?"

David didn't reply immediately.

Who is Sylvia? Maddie thought.

Clearly disgruntled, David dragged his fingers through his short thatch of auburn hair. "She has a sister and brother-in-law in Portland, and she promised to spend Christmas with them. Her plan is to arrive in Port Townsend the day after and stay through New Year's."

Colleagues didn't spend the holidays with you unless they were *really* good friends. Dismayed, Maddie realized her glass was empty.

"Another?" Kilo asked, already pouring. She thanked him with a polite smile, one ear still cocked at David and Carrie.

She heard, "Mom, I have no idea where that relationship is going. I haven't ruled out marriage—if that's what you're getting at. You know why. Last we spoke, the ball was in her court."

She didn't catch Carrie's response because Kilo was vying for her attention. She'd heard enough, unfortunately. David was taken. With a disappointed sigh, she turned to Kilo. He did have beautiful dark eyes and really long eyelashes. Like many Eurasian men, he had a unique appeal. His skin appeared to be almost poreless, and there was that androgynous thing. Not that Kilo wasn't manly. He was a lot taller than she was, and she'd bet he looked fabulous naked.

"Ali says you're an actress," he said.

Ah. Her least favorite conversational opener, usually followed by *What have I seen you in?* "Not a successful one," she replied. "I got my Equity card last spring doing a Theater for Young Audiences tour."

"What was the play?"

"A one-hour adaptation of *Charlotte's Web* for kids. The musical score was kind of stupid, but the costumes were fun."

The way he zeroed in on her was flattering. Though she should know better. Most actors could do that super-attentive listener role convincingly for a short period before they switched the subject to themselves.

"I can't recall much of the story," he said, "though I don't see you as the pig."

She laughed. "I was the girl, Fern. I would have loved to be Charlotte the spider, but I seem to be typecast as a young girl or boy. My height, you know."

He gave her an appreciative sweep of his dark eyes. "I can see you as a beautiful boy."