

## Excerpt: Waiting for You

Gabby was just about finished with loading up the last shipping palette of the previous year's late harvested Pinot Gris when she heard the door of the production plant squeak open.

"Is that you papa?" she asked, expecting Joaquin to arrive at any minute. He usually came in about four to supervise the production plant's night shift. His job was to make sure the loose ends from the day were always tidied up before the day crew came in bright and early the following morning. Gabby freed a clean handkerchief she had tucked inside her bra and wiped the sweat and dirt from her face. No sooner had she put the soiled hanky back, but Matteo and Charles appeared from around the corner. Not expecting to see either one of them, she gasped.

"Don't be afraid, mama. It's me, Matteo, and this is Mr. Anderssohn."

Not sure she was seeing quite right, Gabby squinted and then blinked her eyes. When she opened them, she immediately noticed Charles staring at her, which did something quite lovely to her lady bits. Feeling suddenly hot in the face and peculiarly off kilter, she trembled. Not a great deal, mind you, but enough to make her feel horribly self-conscious.

"What are you doing here?" she asked with a tad too much bite in her words. Gabby was aware of her heart pounding against her chest, which was a fairly easy thing to do since she still had her hand wedged in her brassiere. At once she yanked her hand free.

"Mr. Anderssohn has something important to say to you. And he brought you flowers 'cause he's sorry." Matteo answered as if his mother had directed the question at him.

Gabby swallowed hard. "He did what?"

Charles at last cleared his throat. "Matteo's right. I brought these flowers for you."

She wasn't completely sure, but Gabby sensed a slight tremor in Charles's voice.

"But why?" she asked.

Charles cautiously shuffled toward Gabby to hand off the bouquet. “As soon as you left the bank this morning, I felt like a complete ass.”

“See mama? He’s sorry ‘cause he’s a complete ass.”

“Matteo!” Gabby said firmly. “What did I say about using bad words?!”

Matteo, chagrined, looked down at his feet in a pout. “Well, he said *ass* first!”

“Matteo!” Gabby quickly lobbed back. She wasn’t sure if she wanted to laugh or cry at this point. Plus, it appeared to her that Charles was having much the same dilemma.

“It’s true, Gabby,” he said as he stepped forward. “I did tell you the truth this morning. The bank can’t give you a loan until you become naturalized. But in the mean time I could’ve gotten the paperwork started, and made you feel more attended to and hopeful. Matteo is right. I did come here to apologize.”

“‘Cause he’s an *ass*!”

Gabby could no longer keep straight a straight face. “All right! Enough with the *ass* word already!” she said through her giggles. “I think you had better check in with Rafa now, Matteo. I’m sure he could use your help with Sofia.”

Matteo’s face fell. “Are you sure you’ll be okay?”

“Yes, Matteo.” Gabby answered lovingly. “Mr. Anderssohn is a good man, so there is no reason to worry.”

“Okay mama!” Matteo blurted as he spun around and ran out the door. “Love you!”

“I love you, too, Matteo!” Gabby called out just as the door slammed shut.

Gabby turned to look at Charles. There were those beautiful eyes again staring at her.