

## Chapter II

The days and weeks passed by like a blur, with each day melting seamlessly into another and before anyone realized it, the day of the wedding had arrived. Early that morning, dull gray clouds, heavy with rain, rolled over the prairies and saturated the ground with life-giving moisture. By ten o'clock, the sun succeeded in breaking through the curtain of clouds that blanketed the land. As the clouds scattered from the sky, the sun's radiance began vaporizing much of the newly fallen rain, choking the land with suffocating humidity.

Emily awoke in a daze with fatigue weighing down heavily upon her eyes. Lately she had trouble getting enough sleep, culminating with little more than a few restless hours last night. As she looked out her bedroom window she could see that it was nearly noon. Emily felt disembodied, she could see her actions but did not feel that she was a part of them. She got up from bed, slowly dressed and made her way to the family eating room where her mother had prepared lunch. She felt like a prisoner eating her last meal before being led away to the gallows. With her fork, she twisted and turned her lunch of fried eggs and cornmeal into an unidentifiable yellow and white mash, looking for the strength to somehow make it through the day.

She didn't want to marry Jonathan and she knew he didn't want to marry her. It was clear her parents would rather not see her marry Jonathan, as well. So what was the point? After today she would be trapped in an unloving, abusive and impotent marriage. A prisoner of her husband's design, trapped in their home only leaving for the occasional social function and a dinner with his parents. She would almost never see her family, Jonathan and Aaron hated each other and to be allowed to see her parents would cause her great joy and that was something that he simply couldn't allow.

It was nearly impossible to get a divorce except in cases of lechery or homosexuality. But even with a marriage dissolved for those reasons, the unfaithful spouse was punished sometimes severely for violating the sacred covenant of marriage. Jonathan would almost certainly look outside the marriage bed to satisfy his desire for carnal lust. What was worse, there was nothing she could do to make the authorities believe he had been unfaithful to her; it would simply be his word against hers and they would believe his. He might even turn such a claim back on her and use it to divorce and disgrace her.

Then there was that other thing...

"Emily," her mother said in a somber tone, interrupting her train of thought, "aren't you hungry, hon?"

Emily closed her eyes and tried to make time stop. She stood up from the table and walked hurriedly back to her room and shut the door behind her. She collapsed quietly to the floor and buried her head into her hands. This was it, the last day of the rest of her life. Whatever happened now didn't matter; she would live and grow old in a perpetual state of unhappiness. For years she knew this day would come, but it always seemed like a speck in the distant future. Somehow time had caught up with her. It had

*Emily*  
*Dana De Young*

stalked her, toyed with her, waiting for the right move, and finally, without any warning at all, it had stolen her life.

She wanted desperately to run away and hide. But she knew they would find her. Plus, where could she go? She hoped that when she got to the church the wedding would be called off because Jonathan had died in a fire or a gunshot wound or had simply drank himself to death. Anything would do, she thought of a hundred different ways in which it could happen. But try as she might, she knew it would not be and even though she detested Jonathan, she knew it was wrong to wish for the death of another person, even if he was a worm.

Even if Jonathan were tolerable to live with, sixteen was far too young to be getting married. She had seen the effects of marriage on young girls who slowly turned to old crows with the burden of raising children and keeping house. It was the same for almost all women with their lives designated exclusively to domesticity. She knew in her heart that it didn't used to be like this, but so often she found it hard to believe when society constantly reiterated what was to be expected of her.

Before long her mother opened the door just far enough to stick her head through, "Emily, it's time," she said her breath barely escaping her.

Emily rose from her position on the floor and felt her body walk out of her room, through the house and outside into the stifling heat. Everything seemed like it was moving at a snail's pace at the speed of sound. Moments crept, second by second, but still everything seemed to be going too fast for her. Breakfast was finished and now the family was on their way to town. Too soon she could see the towering steeples and spires of the Seaton Cathedral and her heart sank like a stone in a clear blue lake.

The family rode the distance from home to the cathedral in silence and when the wagon had finally reached the church, Julia escorted Emily to the side entrance and up a short flight of stairs where they came to the bride's dressing room. Emily stopped at the door and looked sullenly back at her mother.

"Ma, could you give me a few minutes alone please," she said, her eyes pleading.

Julia looked into her daughter's eyes. This wedding was difficult on everyone, but it had to be almost unbearable for Emily. She nodded and said quietly, "All right, just let me know when you are ready."

Emily closed the door and looked at the small stuffy room around her. There was only one small window opened for ventilation and the gray drab bricks trapped almost enough heat to roast her. Against the wall sat an old wooden desk with a small reflecting mirror. She walked over to the desk and sat in the chair, staring blankly at her reflection in the mirror. For some time she sat frozen as a statue. She knew she only had a few minutes of precious freedom left, but she wanted nothing more than to sit here and be left alone. Soon her eyes wandered away from the mirror and fixed on the hanging wall clock. She watched the hands on the wall tick slowly toward five o'clock. She scarcely now had a half-hour left. Soon her mother would have to come in to get her ready.

Her clothes felt like they were made of lead and as she stood, a fresh wave of fatigue washed over her. She shed her faded, black dress and stood wearing nothing but a tattered and dusty cotton slip. She stood looking over her wedding gown, despite the wedding, the dress was still stunning and it took her breath away that she could ever wear something so beautiful. The gown was as clean and pure as a freshly fallen snow. The corset was made of sleek and shiny satin. A line of finely tailored velvet roses crossed the

*Emily*  
*Dana De Young*

breast and ran back from the left arm to the right side while a short, white lace strap would just barely cover her shoulders.

The skirt itself was actually three skirts. The innermost layer was a made from a delicate dark purple lace that would be almost completely obscured from view, except for a small length just above her ankles that would jut out when the outer skirt cut away. The second skirt was lavender and made of an imported delicate silk that receded in length to allow for the lace skirt to show through and with the exception of a slit that allowed the skirt to protrude through, the rest was covered. The outer skirt was made of a thick bridal satin with a white lace trim that ran up the right leg slit and was accompanied by small delicate lavender bows. Along the back, she could see the satin cluster together in a small, tight bustle.

It was time to put it on. Emily opened the door a crack and called for her mother. “Ma,” was all she said in a plain fatigued voice and stepped back to allow her mother into the room. Her mother entered the room and shut the door behind her.

“Give me a second to get this corset on, please,” Emily said. Her mother turned around and she removed the dusty slip from her body. She pulled on delicate lace pantilettes and then slipped the corset over her head. “Okay,” she said, beckoning her mother to turn around to help her tie the corset stays behind her. She had never worn a corset before, and the tightness she felt in her chest made it hard to breathe. The corset slimmed her waist, giving her straight figure subtle, gentle curves. Around her waist, Julia tied a small horsehair tournure so that it rested gently on her bottom; the pillow would give prominence to her bustle and add even greater emphasis to her new curves. Her mother picked up a small package from a nearby table. She opened it to reveal the most beautiful treasure Emily had ever seen- delicate white silk stockings. She reached out and carefully lifted them from their box. Her eyes began to swim with hot tears. She looked through their veil to meet her mother’s gaze. Emily knew her parents had gone to great lengths to procure the stockings for her. Emily felt her heart breaking as she slid the stockings up her legs. Would anyone ever show her this kind of loving gesture again?

Once the undergarments were in place and the corset was tied, she stepped into the skirts one by one. Slowly, the skirts began to slide up her small, boyish hips. As quickly as she could, her mother fastened the skirts together by the series of hooks that were sewn into the fabric. The pieces of her trousseau had come together.

“Come dear. We still need to fix your hair,” her mother said.

Emily looked back into the mirror and noticed how disheveled her hair was. Its brownish-red strands still gnarled from yesterday’s sleep. She sat back in the chair and her mother began to comb through some of the snarls and tangles. Gradually, her soft, silken auburn hair straightened and her mother combed through it. She parted the back of her hair in two and quickly braided them together. When she had finished, Julia felt her hands beginning to tremble and her pulse quickened as she realized she would never again get to comb through Emily’s long hair. A tradition that had carried on day after day, year after year was now at an end. Tears filled her eyes. Her daughter was being stolen by a man who did not care for her.

Emily looked back at her mother and the last remnants of her strength were shattered. She threw her arms around her mother and began to cry.

“Oh Ma, don’t let him take me away from you. I don’t want to go.”

*Emily*  
*Dana De Young*

“I know baby, I know. I don’t want you to go.” Julia desperately wanted to find something to say or do something that would give them the strength to carry on, her mind desperately attached to the only other thing that mattered in her life. “The Lord says he’ll never give us more than we can handle. I still believe that. I believe that we’ll still be together, even though we’re apart. You’ll always be in our hearts and minds, and I think as long as we have that connection we can make it through.”

Emily didn’t believe what her mother said. They would be separated, miles apart, but that didn’t matter. She might as well be on the moon. She knew she’d rarely get to see her family, coupled with being married to someone who despised her was far more than she could ever bear. She closed her eyes and flushed those thoughts from her mind, focusing instead on her mother’s warm, tender embrace. “The love of a mother,” she thought, “In all the world, there is no equal.”

She could hear the church’s pipe organ begin to play. The service had begun. Her mother broke their embrace and helped Emily get up from the chair in which she had been sitting.

“It’s time to go,” her mother said.

Emily said nothing. She tried to keep her mind blank, because if she thought about it she knew she wouldn’t be able to go through with the wedding. She stepped into her shoes, a one-inch heel sandal with polished white trim covering her toes. She stepped carefully in her dress and made her way back to the church’s narthex as quickly as she could. She looked through the glass windows that opened into the nave to find that the pews were surprisingly full. She knew that the Marsh’s had only a few relatives, and the rest of her family were more than two hundred miles south of here. The rest of the people had to be everyday townfolk who apparently came to weddings to relieve the monotony of their everyday lives.

She could see Jonathan and David walk up and take their respective positions on the stairs of the chancel. Abruptly the music changed, calling her to take her place by Jonathan’s side. Emily swallowed hard and the saliva exploded in her stomach as she reached for the bouquet that had been left for her.

“Are you ready?” her father asked.

Emily just shook her head as she took her father’s hand and together they began the long march down the aisle. With each step she took, she felt herself becoming hollow, a warm tingling sensation flushed through her arms and face as she let her body fall into a state of automation. She could see the townfolk look back at her as she proceeded down the aisle. Their stares tore straight through her as she moved closer and closer to Jonathan. She squeezed her father’s hand tighter. She had never been too close to him, but now she only longed for him to hold her and make all these people disappear. She could see them scrutinizing her every move. Her every action was being recorded in their brains because they simply had nothing better to do. She could see them whispering to one another. Were they criticizing her? Was she too plain or ordinary? Easy or prudish? None of it could be good. Emily knew that she and her family weren’t held with the highest regard in the community, especially after Aaron’s lechery.

When she had reached the final row of pews, her father embraced her gently and whispered, “I’m so sorry,” in her ear. They broke their embrace and Emily slowly ascended the chancel stairs the few remaining feet to Jonathan’s waiting hand.

*Emily*  
*Dana De Young*

Jonathan took her hand and pulled her close, his head a few inches from her own. “Do not embarrass me today,” he whispered haughtily. It was an impossible order.

They walked together a few steps then stood and faced Pastor Gertz. She looked back over to David who was smiling, blissfully unaware of how much she and Jonathan hated one another. The organ music had reached its climactic conclusion and gave way to the sounds of a hundred people settling in their seats.

Pastor Gertz quietly cleared his throat and began the service.

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. We are gathered here today in the sight of God to witness the union of this man and this woman in the holy bonds of matrimony. Our Lord himself commanded marriage in the Gospel of Matthew, saying that ‘in the beginning the Father made them male and female, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ It is this sacred institution that is well pleasing in the sight of God for which you are joined today and for the eventual procreation and rearing of children.”

“Emily submit to Jonathan, for it is commanded in the book of Ephesians chapter five verses twenty-two through twenty-four, that wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. How as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

“So there it is,” thought Emily, “Jonathan’s permission to do whatever he wants with me.”

“Jonathan, love Emily as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water and through the word.”

“As if Jonathan were capable of loving anyone but himself,” she thought.

Gertz continued, “Today you stand before these witnesses and in the sight of God as you pledge your love for one another and accept the responsibilities of marriage. From this moment on, your lives shall be intertwined. You should live for each other and create a lasting foundation on which to build your lives. Make love the cornerstone of your relationship so that it might withstand the winds of trial and tribulation that will seek to blow your lives apart. Remember to always put one another first before everything except God, so that nothing may tear you apart. And as you stand here today at the beginning of life’s road, remember that all paths lead back to God. He has brought you together and he will watch over you until the day in which you both come back into his fold.”

Fatigue was beginning to once again overcome Emily. She hadn’t really slept in two days and it took all of her remaining energy to keep from falling flat on the floor. She began to daydream that she was back in her own bed, safe and sound, locked away from all the evils of the world, sleeping an uninterrupted and continuous sleep like the kind on a mild winter’s morning in which there was no reason to arise, but instead to stay warm and to lose oneself in the dreams of childhood memories. Her body began to feel warm and comfortably numb at the thought, but as soon as it had entered her mind, the ongoing nightmare that consumed her life pulled her back into the real world.

“The choir will now sing as the unity candle is lit,” Pastor Gertz said.

Emily felt herself following Jonathan as they walked toward the candle, the soprano melodies of the choir ringing in her ears. Together, Emily and Jonathan attempted to light the unity candle that symbolized their lives. As they pulled their flames

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back, the unity candle burned with a low spark, only to be snuffed out by a faint breeze that blew through one of the church's open windows. Jonathan and Emily tried lighting the candle one more time only to see it dimly flicker before being snuffed out. By this time, the choir had concluded its melody and Pastor Gertz was motioning for the two to resume their positions on the chancel stairs.

When they were once again standing in front of Gertz, Jonathan held Emily's arm loosely and together they wore the expression of people who are sick with the flu. They both knew what was coming. Gertz looked to David and asked, "Do you have the ring?"

David reached into his pocket, produced the ring and handed it to Jonathan. Emily and Jonathan turned to face one another.

"Jonathan, place the ring on her finger and repeat after me, I, Jonathan Thomas..."

"I, Jonathan Thomas..." he repeated his voice monotone and hushed.

"In the presence of God and these witnesses..."

"In the presence of God and these witnesses..."

"Take you Emily Anne to be my wife..."

Emily watched with quiet mortification as Jonathan held her hand limply and slid the ring around her finger. The ring was fine sterling silver with a diamond the size of pea, it was truly a precious gem, brilliant and beautiful in every way, but it didn't matter to her. It was nothing more than a symbol of bondage; a chain that would forever behold her to her new husband.

"Emily, repeat after me."

"I, Emily Anne..."

"I, Emily Anne..." she said automatically, her head downcast and her voice barely escaping her.

"In the presence of God and these witnesses..."

As Emily repeated Gertz's hollow sentences, she reached for Jonathan's ring that rested in his open Bible. Her hands were shaking so violently that she thought she would drop Jonathan's ring on the floor. Somehow, she was able to hold onto it long enough to place it over the tip of Jonathan's finger. Emily pulled her hand back as if Jonathan's hand was a rat waiting to bite her. Jonathan refrained from looking at her, but instead finished the job for her and slid the ring down the rest of the length of his finger.

They faced Gertz one more time, both dreading what was coming next.

"Jonathan Thomas Marsh do you pledge to keep your promise toward your bride from now and this day forward? If so, say I do?"

Jonathan cleared his throat and quickly said, "I do."

"Emily Anne La Rouche do you pledge to keep your promise towards your husband from now and this day forward? If so, say I do."

"I do," she whispered.

"Then with the power vested in me by God and the Church of Divinity and Salvation I hereby pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride."

Emily turned toward Jonathan and looked up into his eyes, they were cold and callous like a coppermouth's. From this moment on, she would be his to do with as he pleased. She felt like running, but her legs were made of stone. She felt her face coming closer to his, the acrid bitterness and foulness of his breath seeping from his lips hinting at too much whiskey and bourbon from the night before. Emily and Jonathan's lips

*Emily*  
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pressed together and for a brief second became one. The kiss was hollow, empty and meaningless; their embrace was only for show. They parted and Emily could still taste him. She wanted to wipe him clean from her lips, but held still as she felt the cold hard stares of two hundred eyes looking through her, waiting for a vague sign of discontent so they could gossip about it later. She bit her lip instead. Everything that she was had disappeared in an instant and as the organ music once again began to blare, she began to take her first steps toward destiny.

Jonathan and Emily walked together back down the aisle towards the narthex to greet the wedding attendees. The townspeople stopped by to shake the couple's hands or offer a hearty congratulation before walking out into the balmy afternoon. Occasionally, an old man would try to pose as a gentleman by kissing Emily's hand or one of the many tearful hags would hug her and comment about how beautiful she looked as they passed by. Emily didn't want to be touched, she wanted to be alone and ideally be far, far away. At last, her parents appeared with David and Andrea Marsh. Her mother hugged her tightly and then James and Julia gave Jonathan a half-hearted congratulation.

David once again interceded, "Emily come, let's get a picture of the two of you by the altar."

The Marsh family walked back into the nave toward the altar where Owen and Douglas were set up to take their picture with Emily walking behind them.

Emily took her place next to Jonathan and did her best to put a plastered smile on her face while Owen seemed to shout at Douglas about how incompetent he was at nearly everything. After nearly twenty minutes of standing frozen in place, Owen finally took his two pictures.

Emily and Jonathan then joined Pastor Gertz in his office for the signing of the marriage certificate. Emily signed her name last. She wrote clean and plainly and noticed that her signature looked elegant and dignified next to her husband's blocky, chicken scratch. As the paper was folded and given to Jonathan it occurred to her that it was the last time La Rouche would grace her name. Now, she had a swamp attached to it.

An expensive coach sat waiting for them at the foot of the cathedral steps. It seemed like something out of a fairytale. The coach's exterior frame seemed to be made of glistening porcelain. It was so clean it was as if no dirt had ever touched it. Painted gold branches trimmed the coach's bulbous pear shaped body and the seats inside were the color of rich red wine, while two majestic Arabian horses sat waiting for the chauffer to whisk his passengers to their destination. Emily and Jonathan got in the coach together but as soon as it was out of view of his family Jonathan moved to the seat facing Emily. Neither one spoke to each other and at that moment at last they had something in common both wanted to be far away from each other.

After a few minutes, the coach reached the Marsh estate and Emily and Jonathan were escorted from their coach to the sitting room to wait for the rest of the dinner guests. A wave of cold dread flushed over Emily as she walked through the doorway and into the sitting room. She could see the chair that Jonathan had pushed her into and as she sat down, a painful dull ache shot through the back of her head. The dinner guests were slow in coming and Jonathan and Emily were forced to sit through an impatient silence. After what seemed like a lifetime, David arrived with Andrea with the rest of his family. Emily's parents were the last to arrive.

"Where's Aaron at?" Emily asked her mother.

*Emily*  
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“He didn’t think he could come after the last time. He said he would catch up with us tomorrow.” Emily was dismayed at the comment. In this desperate hour, she gained strength through her family but now one of them was missing. She was angry that he was not here. She didn’t want to be here but she was. Emily was beginning to feel increasingly abandoned. “If he doesn’t want to be here, that’s fine with me. I don’t need him,” Emily said, as she followed the rest of the Marsh family back to the dining hall.

During supper it wasn’t difficult to see the segregation between the families. The Marsh family sat to the right of Jonathan and enjoyed the orgy of food prepared for them. They laughed, they drank and ate. David’s brother Edward regaled the rest of the Marsh family of how he was too drunk to say ‘yes’ at his wedding. While David’s sister, Gabriella, tried constantly to keep her six unruly children in place at the table.

The La Rouche family, by contrast, said very little. Emily didn’t eat but kept drinking the wine that was brought to her. Unlike her last experience with wine, she didn’t feel happy but instead fell into a deeper and deeper state of depression. The more she drank the more time seemed to disappear. Soon the evening gave way to night and people began to disappear. Reality turned to water as shapes melted into one another and soon the whole room was spinning on an axis of its own. She felt warm, her breathing slowed and she felt as if she might fall into the realm of dreams.

Before long, the rest of the Marsh family had gone home for the evening. Andrea directed the servants to make up a room for the La Rouche’s and the families said their final goodbyes. Emily and Jonathan would not be staying the night at his family’s estate. Instead David had booked them a suite at the best hotel in town. James and Julia stood silently by their daughter and once again apologized with their eyes while their bodies quietly sang a requiem of the long chapter of their lives that was coming to an end. They held each other in a deep embrace to Emily what seemed to be the last time. She didn’t want to let go and she held fast to her mother for as long as she could. It wasn’t right! It wasn’t fair! She was being ripped away from the only people she loved. A tear escaped her eye as she parted from her parents. The final sand had fallen through the hourglass. It was time to face fate.

David quickly embraced his son, but said nothing. He was proud that at long last his son was now a man and that he was taking the first step toward carrying on his legacy. As Andrea wrapped her long arms around her son, she was amazed by how much he had grown and how the time had disappeared. The faceless clock of life had changed so much. He was no longer the bouncing baby she remembered from her youth, but instead he was now a man who would be leaving home to start his own life. She kissed him on the cheek and said only, “I love you.”

The chauffer assisted Emily back to the coach while Jonathan walked to the coach by himself. He was hot-blooded. He was on a mission. For once in her life, Emily would not be able to resist him and she would feel his power and from her he would take her virginity, a rare gift that would belong to him for the rest of his days.

The coach traveled through the deserted streets to the Piedmont Hotel, a small six-room hotel reserved for visiting Authorities of the Law and landowners. The coach left them standing in the hotel lobby. Emily collapsed into a chair while Jonathan went to secure a room key. It seemed as if her neck muscles had turned to jelly and it took monumental effort to keep her head up. She closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep. For her, time seemed to stop. But a second later, she was looking back up into Jonathan’s

*Emily*  
*Dana De Young*

face. She felt aloft, weightless and detached. She turned her gaze away from Jonathan and saw the hotel lobby disappear below her. One by one Jonathan ascended the stairs to their room with Emily in his arms. She closed her eyes and waited for the inevitable. There was no point in fighting it any longer. She was his.

They entered the room and were greeted by absolute darkness. Jonathan was able to locate the bed thanks to the light coming from the hallway. He laid Emily on the bed as he lit an oil lamp. Jonathan began to shed his clothing, first his jacket then he slid his suspenders off his shoulders, unbuttoned his shirt and threw it to the ground, quickly he removed his shoes and socks, then slid his trousers off and stood before Emily.

Emily saw him standing in front of her but averted her eyes from him, fixing them instead on a painting that was hung on the wall. As Jonathan came closer to her, she focused her eyes into the blue and violet hues that made up a shimmering lake. She strained to see each stroke of the brush, each line and blemish that made up the pleasant scenery.

Quietly and quickly Jonathan began to unhook the skirts of her gown. One by one, each hook was undone and the skirt was free. Jonathan pulled the skirts from her body and tossed them aside. He began to move into her body, his hands running up and down her legs as he pulled his body close to hers and began to suckle the back of her neck.

Emily exhaled and let her body fall numb. She tried to focus on something other than what was happening to her. She stared at the painting on the wall, her eyes focused as hard as she could into the lush landscape of the painting. She noticed the small wispy golden strokes of the grass and the white clumpy blotches that made the clouds in the sky.

Jonathan began to slowly thrust himself into her thighs. He rolled her over flat onto her back and began to position himself on top of her. It mattered little to him that she didn't want him. Right now, it was all about him, about his wants and desires. He cupped her breasts that were still bound in the corset as he slowly moved his hands to undo the snaps between her legs which held the garment together.

Emily closed her eyes as her body went numb. She tried to wish the nightmare away. As he undid the snaps she felt like she would explode, her skin burned as if it were on fire as his fingers danced between her thighs. Finally, with the last snap undone, Jonathan had his prize and as he moved in to claim it. As their bodies joined in unison, his scream pierced through the muggy night.

As Emily looked back up at Jonathan, she could see the look of shock and surprise reflecting in his face as he jumped away from her. After all these years her secret had been uncovered.

She felt the world begin to spin as fear consumed her heart. Darkness enveloped her as she fell into nothingness. She couldn't breathe and her body shook violently as she struggled to open her eyes. At last her eyes opened and a blinding light shot through her pupils. Her head throbbed as if it were trapped in a vice. She wrapped her arms around her head and let out a loud moan.

"Is she all right?" her father asked.

"She doesn't look too good, I'm afraid she hit her head really hard," her mother replied.

*Emily*  
*Dana De Young*

Emily looked at her mother and exhaled. The wedding had all been a dream and as she faded back into unconsciousness, she only hoped that it would not become a reality.