

**VOL-3:** Lizzie outsmarts Nicholas on Christmas-eve, in their “Secret place”



**Excerpt from “Africa’s Snow-White” Vol-3, P-176 to P-184:** *Jonathan had a major problem writing love-scenes with his mom in them, so he asked “Nicholas and Lizzie” to re-enact them in these books. Nicholas wrote them and Lizzie vetted them, ensuring they were tastefully done.*

For now, their passions cooled by the fresh, clean water of their pool, that was not a concern—staying afloat was! Her legs were now quite tired from treading water, and so she swam over to

Nicholas, and put her arms loosely around his neck from behind. "Save me, Sir Nicholas—save your damsel in distress, for she is weak and may drown if you don't!"

Nicholas responded by saying, "Hold on, Lady Elizabeth, I'll get you to yonder rocks safely, so that you can gather your strength for the long swim back to yonder shore, where our supper awaits!"

Laughing together at their bit of drama, Nicholas swam and Lizzie rode on his back toward the side of the waterfall, where large, smooth rocks awaited them. Once there, Nicholas rose up out of the water, and pulled Lizzie up onto the rock beside him. They sat there, side-by-side, catching their breath as they leaned back on their hands and surveyed the beauty before and around them.

"Nicholas, have I told you lately how special you are to me?" Lizzie asked.

"Not in as many words, Lizzie, but earlier in the canoe I got that point quite clearly!"

Lizzie just smiled, rather coyly, and before she could reply, Nicholas continued, "But Lizzie, have I told you lately exactly how I feel about you?"

Now Elizabeth was quick to answer, "Yes and no," she said. "Yes, because you've been consistent in your feelings for me, and never given up—even when I made that very easy for you to do, and no because you've not used any of the flowery words us girls like to hear," Elizabeth concluded, looking at Nicholas with a playful smile on her face, while twirling her hair with her fingers.

Nicholas thought for a while. This was a trap. What if she lured him into being totally truthful, then didn't like what she heard? Would she then try to distance herself from him? Was it too early to confide in her, to tell her exactly how he felt about her? *Yes*, he concluded. *Way too early, and not a good idea!*

But she was literally begging him to whisper "sweet nothings" in her ear. *Actually*, he thought wryly, *make that "sweet somethings."*

What could he possibly do to satisfy her desire for loving banter, without compromising his long-term position? He still had to weather two years away from her—years in which she would likely be dating and meeting all kinds of men—rich men, handsome men, exciting men, maybe both while she was in high school and in university. He needed to keep something in reserve with which to up the ante later if he were to have any hope of competing for her heart. *What to do . . . what to do?* Then he had an idea.

"Elizabeth, do you have any background in theater in high school? Did you ever perform on stage with someone else, pretending to be in love with them?" Nicholas asked.

"Yes, a little theater, but I'm a ballerina, Nicholas, so I've often assumed roles like that in our high school's productions. I've also read the parts of the maiden desperately in love, in many a school setwork book. Why?"

Nicholas smiled at her, weighing his words carefully. "What if we stage our own play here tonight? We can be as romantic and passionate as we want, but we're only acting! Nobody gets hurt, nobody feels honor bound, and nobody leaves here unhappy, but we're free to put our hearts and souls into our acting, because we want our performance to be the best that it can be!"

"That sounds like fun! Why don't you set the scene—choose some names for us, give me background on the characters, and then you begin," Elizabeth replied, sounding excited.

"Ok . . . let me think. How about I call you Lady Guinevere or maybe something less formal . . . it's the Welsh form of the English name, Jennifer, so how about we call you Lady Jennifer?"

Elizabeth sat up, her eyes bright with excitement. "Great! What about you? Who will you be tonight?"

Nicholas didn't hesitate "I've always liked what Sir Gawain stands for, but let's just make sure we don't get our tongues tied up in knots here tonight, so what about Sir Ian?" Nicholas inquired.

"Yes, that name's short and sweet—I like it! So tell me more, what is it about Sir Gawain that you admire?"

"Well, Lady Jennifer, Sir Gawain was a formidable, yet courteous and compassionate

warrior, fiercely loyal to his family and to the king. He's a defender of the poor and downtrodden, and he was also known as the maiden's knight for being a defender of women. There's a lot to respect about that, so I'll try and portray those ideals in my character, but I'll not stick to his actual story either, nor should you feel bound by Lady Guinevere's story—it's much too sad anyway, and you've shed enough tears for a while. Let's keep this play happy, romantic, and chivalrous."

"Sounds good, but I need more background than that. Who are we? What about our families? How old are we? What challenges do we face? What do we look like? Where do we live?" Lizzie asked, prompting Nicholas for details.

"OK, how about this—it's the times of King Arthur, sir Ian is one of his many knights, a particularly handsome one—but not so handsome that he looks in the mirror a lot or anything—rather rugged handsomeness that shows he doesn't take himself that seriously, but that a woman, Lady Jennifer in particular, would find appealing."

"Mmmm he sounds familiar." Lizzie smiled wryly at him. "Keep going. What about Lady Jennifer?"

"Lady Jennifer's around 28 years old; she's a virtuous woman, with a strangely beguiling beauty—somewhat like what mermaids have, but without the tail in her case. She's a woman who loves with a passion so strong that it causes the object of her desire to become obsessed with following her to the ends of the world—not as her slave, mind you, because she always lets him be the strong independent man that she prefers. But she inspires him to love her, defend her, and take care of her, selflessly, to his dying breath if need be, and to enjoy every bit of his life with her while he's doing so!"

"Sounds like they're a good match! What about their families and where they grew up?" Lizzie pressed.

"Both grew up in England, of course. Lady Jennifer's a nobleman's daughter and lives in a castle with her family, high up on a hill, overlooking the town. Her mother is a tough one, always putting her down, never allowing her to feel good about herself, or even pretty. Her mother also prevents her dad from saying nice things to or about Lady Jennifer, and even from doing nice things for her.

"So Lady Jennifer's a bit of a loner, and most days she rides out from the castle into the English countryside to go and bathe in her favorite, private pool, where she knows she'll be alone—that is until Sir Ian, returning home, weary from battle, passes by her pool, and not realizing she's in it, he stops to refresh himself and water his horse there. Then he surprises her swimming in the pool, with just her long hair covering her - preserving her modesty ... but feel free to wear your bikini."

"Nicholas! I mean, Sir Ian! Behave yourself! I'll have none of that naughty stuff here tonight!" Lizzie responded, playfully punching him on the arm. "Besides, it's Christmas-eve!"

"Never fear, Lady Jennifer. Remember, Sir Ian is bound by his oath to defend the virtues of all woman—and yours, in particular, since from the moment he saw you, he's held you in particularly high esteem."

"So where do we start this story, then?" Lizzie prompted Nicholas, trying to hurry him up.

"Well, since it's my play, and I've got the director's role, at least for now, how about this—Lady Jennifer has never been allowed to find her own true love, since her bossy overbearing and manipulating mother always finds some well-connected, pompous, conceited—"

"Okay, I get the point—she's not a nice person! Let's hurry this along a bit," Lizzie insisted, feeling that description hitting a little too close to her own home, for her liking.

Nicholas cleared his throat, and then continued, "Lady Jennifer has fallen deeply in love with Sir Ian, and she has made him fall deeply in love with her, but Lady Jennifer's mother forbids them to be married, because he's not a nobleman with a rich family and a giant castle. So they make a pact that if they cannot be married to each other, they will never marry—not even to a prince or a princess, but instead they will stay true to each other forever, longing for the return of each summer, when he will come home from battle, when he will take three weeks to sojourn in a small cottage, in the forest, near Lady Jennifer's private pool. There he

will rest up and regain his strength before returning to the war, and there they will meet each other, each and every year, forever—or until her interfering mother dies so they can finally get married.”

“Oh no, how sad! Must they wait until then?”

“If they don’t, then they’ll have to elope to a far-away land to love and live freely. Well—rather than finish the story, why not let’s begin with Lady Jennifer swimming in her beautiful pool, awaiting the return of Sir Ian from the war to join her there as always for the summer?”

“Sounds good to me!” Lizzie replied, and before Nicholas could get too wordy again, she slipped gracefully into the pool, the sunlight now beginning to fade with red hues appearing in the sky and on the hilltops all around them. She swam toward the center of the pool, acting every bit like a mermaid. From there she swam over to some reeds and hid in them.

Nicholas took that as his cue and leaped into his role, standing up on the rock, stretching as if he were weary from a long trip, and then looking out over the waters, scanning their surroundings for his lady love. Placing a hand over his brow to shield his eyes from the setting sun, he called out, “Where, oh where is my true love, where may she be? Has she forgotten to meet her brave knight here this year? Has she been forced to marry that awful, pompous (but rich) Lord Cedric? The man that her mother has found for her? Has she forgotten about me? About our love?”

Elizabeth appeared from her hiding place among the reeds, wishing to cut short his dramatics before he got a second wind, swimming playfully out into the pool, teasing him shamelessly with her hands, her hair, her eyes and a beckoning smile.

“There’s my true love!” Nicholas said, as he pretended to hurriedly strip off his clothing. That done, he dove into the pool and swam under water until he reached Elizabeth. He surfaced right in front of her shaking his head to clear the water out of his eyes and hair; then he grabbed her under her arms, stood up, and lifted her out of the water, into his strong arms, hugging her joyfully before saying, “Lady Jennifer—oh how I’ve missed you these many months! I’ve dreamed of this wonderful day for so long now, dreading that maybe I’d return to find you not to be here waiting for me, dreading that I’d die here next to this pool, from a broken heart. But, as always, you’ve waited for me, my love! Have you missed me as much as I’ve missed you? Have you dreamed of me as much as I’ve dreamed of you?” Nicholas said, inviting Elizabeth to respond.

“Yes, my love—my wonderful, brave, ruggedly handsome knight. I’ve pined for you, longing to be in your arms again! I’ve dreamed of you often. Have you been true to me, and only me, all this time you’ve been fighting in France? Did you ignore all those cute French maidens making eyes at you, pushing out their chests and wiggling their derrieres in front of you?”

“Of course, my darling! Lady Jennifer, I know they have no real interest in me, only in my position at King Arthur’s court. So I ignored their wanton flirting, and I dreamt only of you, waiting patiently until the summer when I would make the long journey home, to see if you would be here waiting for me, so we can have three wonderful weeks alone and together again. I wanted the chance to return, to be with you once more so that I can remind you of how much you mean to me and how I truly feel about you.”

“Pray tell, my lord, how is it that you truly feel about me?”

“I love you, Lady Jennifer. I’ve loved you from the very first time I saw you swimming here. I’ll always love you, and only you, my sweet Lady Jennifer! If one day I return here to find you missing or married to someone else, I will surely die of a broken heart, waiting for you to return to my arms.”

“Oh, Sir Ian, what are we to do? My mother insists that I marry her choice for me, but he is not the one I love—you are! I’m just not sure I have the right or ability to resist her much longer. She is a forceful woman, bent on getting her way at whatever cost, and she has a tremendous distaste for knights, such as you, who are not men of means. She insists that I marry some spoiled, rich brat, the son of a nobleman with a big castle, lot’s of connections, social standing—instead of an honorable knight such as you.”

“Then run away with me, my love! Ride with me upon my steed to Scotland. I have family

there. We can start our lives anew among those remote mountains. There we can love each other freely, fall asleep in each others arms every night and awake next to each other each and every sweet morning.”

“But what of family, Sir Ian? I will want a family! I am getting older. My fertile years are fast leaving me, many spent waiting for your return here each summer. I want babies with you, lots of babies!”

“Then let’s start a family, my love. I will give you as many bonny babes as you could want. I will take an oath to provide for you all, and to defend you and our wee babes for the rest of my life!”

“Then, when I’m old, Sir Ian, and our babes are all grown up, with lives and families of their own, and they’ve left us alone once more—what then? Will you still love me then?”

“Oh yes, my love, my splendid lady, for I cannot think to ever love another! I’d be honored to die in your arms after enjoying your steadfast love for a lifetime, but if it should happen that you must die first, and I’d hope that should never be the case, I would want you to lie in my arms, and know that I’ve loved you loyally and devotedly my entire life. I’d want you to breathe your last feeling the warmth of my love for you, my tears falling upon your bosom like a waterfall, so that when you cross over to paradise, to the other side, you’ll wait there for me, by a beautiful pool, swimming there each day ... patiently waiting.

“We’d be reunited again, Lady Jennifer! I will not ever love another, so that when I too arrive there, on that other side, I will have only one person to search for – you, my one true love! And when I find you, lady Jennifer—and find you I will!—we will live by that beautiful pool, together, forever, and love each other steadfastly there too, for an eternity, and then—”

Before Nicholas could finish, Elizabeth took his head in her hands, pulling him down to her as she lay imitating that she was dying in his arms. Her head tilted backward now, her eyes fluttered closed, and her lips parted, quivering slightly—her chest rising and falling as she struggled for air. Her breathing was now labored as she whispered, “Kiss me one last time my darling. I want to feel your loving lips on mine again. Kiss me like when we first met in our beautiful youth. Kiss me until I breathe no more, don’t let me start out on the final journey to paradise, without feeling the warmth of your love for me. Hold me tight, my love, for I want to die only in your arms—to feel your tender love and take the memory of it with me, so that—”

Nicholas wouldn’t let Elizabeth finish. Instead, as he held her lovingly in his arms, he kissed her gently - his tears falling on her face, his own breathing sounding labored as he hugged her, kissing her forehead, her cheeks, her neck - then, holding her head gently in his hands, he pressed his head up against hers, and whispered his final farewell in her ear: “I’ve loved you steadfastly from the day I first laid eyes on you, Lady Jennifer. I love you still ... and I always will!”

With that, she breathed in deeply one last time and then let out her final breath and went limp in his arms.

“Lizzie!” Nicholas exclaimed, looking down at her in horror; the play had gone too far for him now. “Stop that! Wake up! Stop this stupid acting—I’ve had enough now!”

She opened her eyes, blinked, and then smiled up at him. Noticing the tears in his eyes, and keeping eye contact with him, she gently spoke to him: “I’m not sure how much of that was acting, Nicholas. I think maybe it was more about our dreams finding their voice, at last. I lost track of what was fantasy - and what was reality,” she said, shaking her head.

Nicholas pulled her up to his chest, and held her tight, saying, “Oh, Lizzie, I wish I could tell you how I really feel. I wish you would let me at least try without you being frightened by my words. I . . .”

Before he could continue, Lizzie reached up to his face and placed a finger on his lips to stop him from saying anything more. “Nicholas, I think you just did, and though I could have stopped you at any point, I didn’t! Instead, I encouraged you. I did let you tell me exactly how you felt! And I’ve heard everything I wanted to hear. Why don’t we just leave it there for now? Let’s let fantasy mix with reality. Enough has been said to last us both a very long time, and there’s no need to spoil it,” she said, smiling up at him. “Come now, it’s time that we get out of

the water and go and dry off. It's almost completely dark, and we'll need to light those candles soon, or else the hungry mosquitoes are going to find us!" Elizabeth stood up, rising out of his arms with water dripping off her body. Taking his hand in hers, she turned to head toward their sandy little beach, leading a stunned and silent Nicholas to the shore with her.

Nicholas wondered what had just happened. How did he lose control of his *play*, and when did their acting become real? Or was he ever really in control? He shook his head and shivered in the cool night air. This afternoon had been like none other in his entire life, and he couldn't help but wonder what lay ahead for them tonight.

He didn't have to wait long to find out what the rest of the night held in store. Elizabeth toweled off, patting her legs and arms dry. She towel-dried her hair, and then ran a huge comb through it to remove the tangles ...

For the rest of that Christmas-eve story, see: [www.Snow-White.us](http://www.Snow-White.us) For details on how to get all of the "Africa's Snow-White" Novels FREE.



**And the last 2 Pages of Vol-3:** Sitting in the back of the car next to Hattie, Elizabeth stared out the window, unmoving, rarely even blinking, trying to find solitude in the view out the window. All she could see was a mottled green and blue blur, intermittently shot through with golden lances of light from the rapidly-sinking sun.

Elizabeth felt ill. Her stomach felt queasy, her chest was hurting, her mouth was dry, and her throat felt tight with a lump in it that moved up and down every time she swallowed. She wanted to cry.

Elizabeth tried desperately to picture Nicholas in her mind's eye, but all that did was to conjure up the image of the shocked, helpless look on his face when her mother had dashed any hopes he'd had that one day they'd see each other in Siesta again—that one day he'd find her sitting on their bench and waiting for him as she always did. Hopeless tears welled up in her eyes. As the first tear spilled over onto her cheek, she turned, pretending to look out the side window to hide her tears. She looked just in time to see their car cross a bridge and a waterfall cascading down a cliff beside the road into a leafy green pool. . . . In an instant she was transported back to their waterfall, and it was Christmas Eve again. A weak smile crept onto her face as she remembered.

She conjured up the images and feelings of what it had felt like to be there, hiding in the reeds, watching Nicholas standing on the large flat rock next to the waterfall, by the side of

their pool, looking forlornly for his lady love and wondering if she was there to meet him again for yet another blissful summer spent together. In her daydream she swam out from among the reeds, just as she'd done then, and out into the center of the pool. She playfully frolicked in the water, beckoning for him to join her there.

Nicholas's idea of play-acting, of using fictional romantic characters as their proxies, had allowed both of them to freely express their feelings for the first time. She'd done so with wild abandon, and so had he. She'd also instinctively seized this rare opportunity to interview him on all matters near and dear to her heart—even the more distant future ones!

Lizzie smiled. He'd clearly not been expecting that! The privacy of their secret place always helped them be candid with one another, but this time, with both of them caught up in the fantasy Nicholas had imagined, she'd combined all her feminine charms with the beauty of their surroundings and the soft hues of the setting sun to blur the lines between their fantasy and their reality. In a matter of minutes she'd finessed him into confessing his true feelings for her, but better yet, she'd got all the confirmation she needed on what life would be like for her and Nicholas—a privileged peek into their future. She not only knew exactly what kind of a person Nicholas was, but equally importantly, she knew what kind of person he would be!

No, Nicholas was a lot more than her friend, and clearly he wanted to stay in her life, too, but how could that ever happen now?

The smile disappeared from Elizabeth's face again. She wanted desperately to be alone, but in the close confines of the car, there was no chance of that. At least everyone in the car was silent. No one was trying to engage her in conversation.

"Hey, Lizzie, what's that in your hair?" Hattie asked.

*So much for that*, Elizabeth thought. "There's nothing in my hair," Elizabeth replied, not turning from the window.

"Yes, there is. It looks like a flower."

Elizabeth froze. Of course—the flower Nicholas had tucked into her hair. She'd never removed it, and apparently . . . She reached up to her head and felt around for it. . . .

It hadn't fallen out either. She withdrew the flower from her hair and brought it down to look at it. Every petal was still intact.

"How did it get there?" Hattie asked.

Elizabeth gave no reply, but a faint smile touched her lips at the memory of Nicholas's goodbye kiss. Struck by a sudden urge to save the memento, Elizabeth reached into the leather pocket in the back of the driver's seat, withdrew the book she was reading, opened it halfway through, and pressed the flower carefully between the pages.

\* \* \*

Constance watched Elizabeth carefully from the front seat. Neither of her daughters noticed her turn around to look when Hattie pointed out the flower in Elizabeth's hair. Constance watched just long enough to see Elizabeth press the small white flower between the pages of a book she was reading before turning to face forward again. The flower was obviously a treasured memento of her summer romance with Nicholas.

Constance found herself tempted to comment, but resisted the urge to say anything. Telling Elizabeth not to be so foolish and sentimental would accomplish nothing, perhaps it would even accomplish the opposite of what she wished to have happen. As always, she was going to have to intervene in her daughter's best interests. Nicholas couldn't be allowed to distract Elizabeth from Charles anymore.

Constance began nodding to herself, and her gaze flicked up to watch Elizabeth in the rearview mirror. *The time for childish things is over, my girl. You're going to have to grow up now—you're almost 18, and the time for adult decisions is a lot closer than you think!*

For the rest of that Summer Love-story see: [www.Snow-White.us](http://www.Snow-White.us) For details on how to get all of the "Africa's Snow-White" Novels FREE.