

In The Quiet After:

Naomi

A Historical Romance

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Chapter One

July 7, 1871

Naomi hung the laundry carefully, pinning it the way Carolyn had shown her. Carolyn stood across the yard, picking fruit from their garden as Naomi shook the wet fabric out to hang it. It had become a familiar rhythm since Naomi had was old enough to assist her.

“Miss Naomi, might I borrow you for a moment?” Matthew Walker stopped at the edge of the laundry line.

She glanced his way once before looking back to her chore. “I’m a little busy right now, Mr. Walker.” Naomi brushed her hands down her skirt. “Is this something that can wait?”

“I...” He took a breath, stepping closer. “I wish to speak to you privately.”

“Privately?” Her eyebrows rose as she looked around the yard. “Do we have a chaperone?”

Carolyn tried to hide her smile as she listened to them speak.

“Well...I suppose I don’t. I asked your parents for their permission though.” He reached into his pocket.

“Then I don’t think it would be wise for me to go somewhere with you alone.” Naomi grabbed another wet piece of fabric, hanging it carefully.

Matthew took a deep breath. “Alright. I can do this here.” He pulled a ring out of his pocket, holding it out to Naomi. “Naomi Carter, will you marry me?”

She turned to look at him, blinking slowly as she looked between him and the ring.

“Mr. Walker,” She began.

“Naomi, please.” He swallowed hard. “Think about it a moment?”

Naomi sighed, shaking her head. “I’m flattered but-”

“Please?” He squeezed his eyes shut.

“Mr. Walker, we hardly have anything in common. I tried to do this politely, but we haven’t even been courting. What makes you think I would accept?” She glanced at Carolyn across the field. “Perhaps next time, you should get to know a woman first.”

“I...Naomi, I am a good man. Perfectly suitable for marriage. I thought you might consider getting to know me afterwards.” He shoved the ring back into his pocket.

“Mr. Walker, you are being too familiar.” She turned to face him fully again. “I never said you aren’t suitable. I have no intention of marrying a man I don’t know. Why would I want to wait until after I’m wed to know who my husband is? That’s how women marry awful men.”

He scoffed. “Alright.” He straightened his back. “I hope you have a lovely day, Miss Carter. I won’t make the same mistake again.”

“Mr. Walker.” Naomi sighed, bringing her hand to massage her forehead gently.

“No, it’s alright.” He raised his hands, backing away. “Message received.”

Naomi shook her head, returning to the laundry as Matthew skulked away, his hands in his pockets and his eyes on the floor.