

The Four Seasons

By Barbara Handshy Anderson



The Four Seasons, 375 Park Avenue, in Manhattan. It was where celebrities, the up and comers, the movers and shakers, the high rollers, and anyone who was anyone came, *not* just to eat, but to *see* and *be seen*. It was where successful businessmen and power brokers made proposals over appetizers and sealed the deals before dessert. It was where the wives of successful businessmen, lawyers and politicians of New York came to eat with the other wives of successful businessmen, lawyers and politicians to show off their expensive jewelry and their designer everything, their latest cosmetic “augmentations”, and, of course, to complain about their aerobics instructors, rave about their tennis coaches, and talk about how difficult it is to get good help these days.

The atmosphere, the food, and the elite patrons, all combined to create a heady sense of wealth and success about the place that was palpable, as soon as one entered the doors.

It was an afternoon, not much different from many other afternoons, at the popular upscale, fine dining establishment. The large dining room buzzed with the sound of a hundred quiet conversations and the clinking sounds of fancy utensils on fine china. Some patrons discreetly looked around them to see if they recognized anyone from the New York social register, or hoping to catch a glimpse of some local, or not-so-local, celebrity.

Elliot Burch was dining with several business associates from the New York Architects Association. It was one of the things he hated about his business. Networking; it was an important skill he had been forced to develop. *He'd had to*. Especially in the early days of his career, when he'd had an abundance of talent and ideas and no money or connections to back it all up.

That had only been in the beginning, though.

Elliot didn't need *any* of them now. The truth was, *they* needed *him*, and he reveled in it. But he chafed at having to act as if he actually cared what they were talking about.

He begrudgingly accepted the necessity of these business lunches, but they bored him to tears and he was anxious to get back to the office.

He was one of the wealthiest and most successful architects in the city... probably the country. But Elliot didn't care about the rest of the country. New York was where he had chosen to make his mark. And as far as he was concerned, the rest of the world didn't exist.

Elliot Burch was an artist, and New York City was *his* canvas. *Long after my bones have turned to dust...* he'd determined. *New York City will bear witness that **Elliot Burch**, the self-made architect, entrepreneur, and multimillionaire, has been here.*

As his mind, as well as his eyes, wandered, he caught sight of her across the dining room.



He had an eye for symmetry and aesthetically pleasing lines. That's part of what made him so good at what he did for a living. *She's beautiful*, he thought immediately. And then, as he studied her, he realized, *but not in that artificial, "Barbie doll" way, like most of the women I know.*

There was something unique about her, something that struck him. *She stands out*, he thought, *but in a way that I can't quite put my finger on.* As he scrutinized her, it was clear by the way she was dressed, as well as the way she carried herself, that she was wealthy. *Born to it, if my*

instincts are correct, and they usually are. But she doesn't have that haughty air of a woman who believes that she's better than everyone else.

He continued to observe her from his vantage point across the room.

*She **must** be aware of how lovely she is, he concluded. But, she doesn't have that conceited look that many women have when they know how beautiful they are, and want the world to acknowledge it.* There was something understated about her that made Elliot believe she actually preferred *not* to be noticed.

Ironically, that was the very thing that was making her stand out all the more. Even from across the crowded room, he could see that there was something special about her. She almost seemed to glow, as if a light was shining from somewhere within.

As he watched her eating lunch with an older, gray haired gentleman, Elliot could see that there was a sadness about her too, as if she was haunted by something. She didn't have that carefree, easy air like most of the coddled, wealthy young women he knew ... there was also a quiet strength about her ... something he'd seen before, in people who had passed through some deep sorrow or tragedy ... he sometimes saw it in his own face when he caught his reflection in a mirror or window, in an unguarded moment.

She piqued his interest, which was a rare thing for Elliot Burch.

Who is she? he wondered. *And how can I meet her?*



It was September 22nd, 1987, the first day of autumn. Charles Chandler and his daughter, Catherine, had had a standing lunch reservation at The Four Seasons on the first day of spring, the first day of summer, the first day of autumn, and the first day of winter for as long as she could remember. It was their way of celebrating, not only the change of the seasons, but the delectable seasonal change of the famous restaurant's menu, as well.

It had fast become a tradition with Charles and his wife when the restaurant had first opened in 1959. Finally, when Cathy was eight, she was deemed old enough, and well behaved enough, to join them.

Keeping their little family traditions had always been important to Charles, especially after his wife, Caroline, had passed away. Even though they rarely spoke of her, Charles and Catherine both knew that it was their way of keeping a little bit of her alive in their hearts. Cathy had always looked forward to this quarterly lunch date, almost as much as other people might look forward to Christmas, or a birthday.

Sitting in The Four Seasons across from her father had always made her feel so grown up... children were seldom ever seen here. And even as a child, it hadn't escaped Cathy's attention that the clientele were the most important and successful people in New York. Her father always made a point of introducing her to them. It made her feel important too.

It wasn't until she was much older that she realized what a singular and privileged childhood she'd had, and how blessed she was to have such a special relationship with her father.

Their relationship had been more distant of late. It weighed on her. But there were things she couldn't admit to him, things she couldn't share with anyone, even some things she had not yet admitted to herself.

It had created an invisible barrier between them.

Today was the first time she could ever remember dreading their quarterly lunch date.

It's now or never, Cathy, she'd told herself as she had gotten ready for the meeting with her father. Catherine had made her decision weeks ago, but she hadn't been able to muster the courage to tell him.

I can't put this off any longer, she told herself.

They were both nearly finished with their main course, and to say their conversation had been strained was an understatement. For the most part, they had eaten their meal in mutually uncomfortable silence.

"I need to visit the ladies room, Daddy. I'll be right back." She tried to smile at him as she stood to leave the room.

As she made her way to the powder room, Charles looked after his only child with concern. She seemed so different since her horrible accident, several months earlier. His worst fears had been alleviated when she'd miraculously returned after being missing for ten days. But he couldn't help noticing how drastically she'd changed since. Not so much physically, now that her face had healed, but in many other subtle, unseen ways.

Catherine had always been open with him. Conversation between them had always been easy. Even as a teenager, she'd always come to him to share the adventures of her day, with her questions about life, her triumphs, and even her deepest heartaches and innermost feelings ... at least, he thought she had.

In the months since the accident, though, she seemed increasingly secretive and distant. She claimed to have no memory about where she'd been, but his gut told him that she was keeping something from him. He'd hoped that as her face and other injuries healed, and she got back into her old routine, she would eventually confide in him and get back to being her old self. But he was wrong. She had been healthy enough to return to work at Chandler and Coolidge for months now, but she kept putting it off.

One of these days, she'll snap out of it, he kept telling himself, but he was beginning to worry that maybe she wouldn't.

It wasn't just work that she'd failed to return to. She didn't seem to have any desire to return to any of the things that had filled her life before. She attended very few social functions, and then, only when he or Tom absolutely insisted. She rarely confided anything in him anymore. If anything, they had only grown further apart.

Am I losing her? he wondered. *Will the old Cathy ever come back?*

“Will that be all, sir?”

Charles looked up, startled from his reverie. “Oh ... uhm ... no ... actually ... could you bring us two slices of your famous chocolate cake?”

The waiter nodded, as he said, “Right away, sir.”

Charles returned to his private thoughts as the lunch dishes were cleared from the table.



by Renate Haller

Those were the days that were the most difficult for her to walk out of her apartment and meet the day. Thankfully, those days were becoming fewer, as time went on.

She lifted the hair on the left side of her face, exposing the one ugly scar that still remained. It ran down the side of her face, just in front of her ear, where her attacker's knife had penetrated deep into the muscle tissue. Dr. Sanderle told her it was a miracle that there was no perceivable nerve damage. But a stubborn secondary staph infection had undermined her surgeon's meticulous repair, making the scar even worse than the original injury had been.

After months of antibiotics and topical treatments, the infection had finally cleared up, but not before leaving a thick, unsightly, raised scar that was a constant reminder of what had happened to her.

Catherine stood in front of the well-lit mirror in the ladies lounge, running a quick comb through her hair, and giving herself a mental pep talk. *You can't put this off any longer*, she told herself. *You have to tell him today, before he hears it from someone else.*

To any casual onlooker, she was just another self-absorbed young woman, admiring her own reflected beauty. After all, with one exception, when she was wearing make-up, the faint pink lines that were all that remained of the scars from the attack were virtually invisible ... to everyone but her, that is.

Cathy knew intellectually that most of her scars were undetectable. But standing there looking at the reflection of her seemingly perfect face, she knew exactly where each scar began and where each one ended. Some days, she hardly noticed them, and then others, she thought they seemed more pronounced.

Thankfully, she was able to hide it with her hair. Dr. Sanderle assured her that eventually he would be able to take care of it for her. Until then, she would just have to learn to live with it.

Whenever she felt herself sinking into self-pity, she would think of Vincent, and recall his soft reassuring voice and his encouraging words. *“You survived, Catherine, and what you endured will make you stronger, better.”*

He’d been right, of course. It had been difficult, but she *was* stronger, a little stronger every day, in fact. Stronger than she’d ever imagined she could be. And with that strength, she had finally mustered the courage to apply for a job at the District Attorney’s office.

But am I strong enough to stand up to my father? she wondered.

As the doubts in her mind began to loom larger, she thought she could hear Vincent’s soul soothing voice again, *“You have the strength, Catherine. You do.”*

She had known him for such a short time, and yet she had felt his influence and recalled his words of encouragement throughout the difficult months of her recovery. Sometimes it seemed almost as if he was right there by her side. His words had given her strength when she doubted her own. She longed to tell him about the profound impact he’d made on her, how grateful she was for what he had done for her, and how meeting him had changed the way she saw *everything* in her life, including herself. Knowing Vincent made her want to be a better person than she had ever been before.

She often wondered if she would ever see him again.

“Cathy? Is that you?”

Cathy turned to see who had spoken.

“Miranda? Mandy Wainwright? How long has it been?” Cathy asked, even though she knew. Catherine and Mandy had run in the same “society” circles since they were teenagers. They’d never been close friends, but they were friends, nonetheless.

That is until last spring, when everything in Catherine’s life had changed. Since then, most of Catherine’s so-called friends had been scarce. But she wasn’t sure if it was her friends that had changed or just her.

“Too long, Cathy! What are you doing here?” Miranda replied.

“I’m having lunch with my father. You?”



by Renate Haller

“Oh, I’m here with Chris Michaels. Do you remember him? We’ve been dating off and on and he invited me to tag along with him to one of his Architect Association lunches today. Now I know why... *Good Grief!* It’s a wonder they don’t all die of boredom! Thank Heaven it’s almost over!”

Catherine had the good manners to laugh, but she wasn’t sure exactly what to say.

“We have got to get together and catch up ... *soon*,” Miranda insisted.

Smiling, Catherine nodded as they exited the lounge together. “I think I would like that, Mandy. Give me a call some time and we’ll have lunch or something.”

As they parted ways, Catherine was grateful that Miranda hadn’t mentioned her face or the attack, even once. *Could it be possible that people are finally going to let it be forgotten?* she wondered. She surely hoped so.



Returning from “powdering her nose”, Elliot noticed his colleague’s lunch date was speaking with the young woman he’d noticed earlier.

“Do you know her?” Elliot asked nonchalantly as she sat back down at their table.

“Who?” Miranda asked, surprised that Elliot Burch was addressing her.

“The young woman you were speaking with as you came out of the ladies lounge?”

“Oh, yes. That’s Cathy... Cathy Chandler. We’ve known each other since high school. You *don’t* know who she is?”

Shaking his head, he answered, “She looks vaguely familiar, but I can’t quite place her.”

“She *should* look familiar. Her face was plastered all over the papers last April. Of course, she looked a lot different in those pictures than she does today.”

“How do you mean?”

“Are you kidding? Cathy Chandler ... she’s the socialite that was missing for ten days and then turned up at her apartment building with her face slashed to ribbons. Her picture was in the paper. It was awful! They say she has no memory of what happened to her, or where she was all that time. Can you *imagine*? You didn’t know about that? She’s Charles Chandler’s daughter. *Surely* you know who *he* is?”

Elliot looked across the room in Catherine’s direction and squinted, in an attempt to get a better look. *So ... my instincts were right*, he inwardly gloated. *She is wealthy, and she has been through something terrible.*

“Yes, I’ve heard of Charles Chandler,” he finally replied. “But I don’t know him personally. I was right in the thick of the Madison Avenue project back in April, I guess I missed that story in the paper.”

“That’s Charles Chandler, over there,” Mr. Michaels pointed out. “He’s sitting across the table from her. *Really*, Elliot, you should pull your head out of the sand once in a while.”

“Cut to ribbons, you say?” Elliot asked. “She looks like she’s healed up quite nicely, from what I can see,” he mused.

“I should say so,” Miranda agreed. “I heard her father got Dr. Sanderle, the best plastic surgeon in New York, to take her case. I don’t know what he had to pay, but whatever it was, she was bumped *straight* to the top of his waiting list, and that’s *no small feat*. She had surgery within a few days of being found. Then she left town for a few months to recuperate from the whole sordid ordeal. Had us all guessing where she’d gone to.”

“Is she single?” Elliot attempted to sound nonchalant.

“Why? Are *you* interested?” Chris Michaels asked.

“I suppose that depends on if she’s available,” Elliot hedged.

“I’m not sure,” Miranda said. “She’s been dating Tom Gunther for the last year or so. You do know who he is, don’t you?”

Elliot nodded. “Yes, I do cross paths with him from time to time.” He declined to elaborate on what he thought of the architect that was a professional rival.

Miranda was full of information, and seemed happy to share it all. “Before her accident, the gossip was that Tom and Cathy were all but engaged. Since then though ... who knows? He’s been seen out on the town with a few different women, but he’s been seen with Cathy on his arm on a few occasions too. Do you want me to ask her?” she offered.

“No... no,” Elliot was quick to answer. “I prefer to be a little more discreet than that. I wouldn’t want to embarrass her.” *Or myself, for that matter*, he thought.

Then he had a better idea. “There’s an art gallery reception in my honor next month. I’m donating my private art collection to the museum... the bulk of it anyway. Why don’t you two innocently invite her to double date with you? If she comes with Tom Gunther, then I’ll have my answer. If she comes alone ... well then ... I guess I’ll just *have* to introduce myself,” he said with a mischievous smile.

They all laughed ...

Networking might not be such a bad thing after all, Elliot thought.



As Cathy made her way through the dining room to their table, she could see that her father had taken it upon himself to order dessert. Though it had always been a part of their tradition, for the first time in her life, it bothered her that he had chosen for her. *Why do people always think they need to make choices for me?* she wondered. In spite of her irritation, she decided that now was not the time to get sidetracked by something so trivial.

“I ordered your favorite for dessert, Cathy.”

She smiled indulgently and nodded. “Yes... I can see that.

“Try it,” he said hopefully. “It’ll cure what ails you.”

“Thanks, Daddy, but I’m not a child anymore,” she said as she took her seat. “I think the days when chocolate cake could cure my troubles, are long over.”

“What troubles could you possibly have these days?” he gently prodded. “You’ve recovered wonderfully from your accident. You look terrific, Honey. Your sabbatical has clearly done wonders. When do you think you’ll be coming back to work?”

She could feel her face immediately flush and her heart was beating in her throat. *Why does everyone always refer to it as “my accident”?* she wondered. *Why can’t they just call it what it was?*

Pushing the cake aside, she looked him in the face.

He waited expectantly.

She took a deep breath and finally said, “Dad ... I’m *not* coming back... I’ve decided to leave the firm.”

There! she thought with relief. *I said it. I finally told him.*

Charles couldn’t hide his shock. He’d been worried about her for months, but the thought that she might leave Chandler and Coolidge had never even occurred to him. “What are you talking about?”

Cathy knew he wouldn’t give up without a fight. That was why she had dreaded this moment. She mentally braced herself. In all her life, they had rarely disagreed on anything, and she had always, eventually, been willing to bend to his will, when they had.

But this time, she’d resolved, I’m going to take control of my own life. It’s time for me to begin making my own decisions.

“I was never very good at corporate law,” she began. “You *know* that, Daddy. In fact ... I was a disaster.”

Always the father who saw the best in his child, he jumped to defend her assessment. “Nonsense, Cathy! You have the potential to be a great corporate lawyer. You *always* came through, at least when you put your mind to it.”

She smiled at his loyalty in her defense. *He’ll never admit it, she thought. I’ll always be perfect in his eyes. I hate that I’m disappointing him.*

“Dad, things have changed...” she said.

“How?? What’s changed...?” He protested. *I’m not giving her up without a fight* he thought. *I just have to make her see reason.*

“I’ve changed... What happened to me ... *it* changed me. You’ve got to accept that...”

He won’t accept that, she knew. That’s the problem. He wants the old Cathy back and she’s not here anymore.

“How can I accept it?” he demanded. “I don’t even *know* what happened. You refuse to tell anybody what happened those days you were missing. Where were you?? Why won’t you tell me?”

I can’t tell you, Daddy, she thought. I wish I could, but I can’t.

She closed her eyes momentarily and took a deep breath to try and calm her pounding heart. “I’m not even sure myself,” she lied. “But that’s not the point.”

He waited for her to go on.

“Once you become a victim ...” she tried to explain, “... it changes you. You see things differently. You see all the people who’ve been hurt and their lives destroyed. I want to help them, Dad. I’ve got the skills to help them. I want to be more involved – maybe work in the D.A.’s office...”

“Prosecuting criminals?” he asked, clearly upset. “That’s ridiculous!”

His quick dismissal of her suggestion, hit a nerve.

“Either help me or don’t, Dad – but *don’t* call me ridiculous...”

Trying to regain her composure, she took another breath.

“I’ve already submitted my resume,” she admitted. “I have an interview with the District Attorney this afternoon. I would like to go there with your blessing.”

Shaking his head, he responded as if he hadn’t heard her last request. “You’re having some kind of reaction to what happened to you. You just need more time to ...” He was grasping.

“*I know* what I need, Daddy,” she insisted. “*Trust me*. I’ve thought long and hard about this, and I know what I’m doing,” she said, standing her ground.

Charles shook his head. “I’m not so sure anymore...” he said doubtfully.



He isn’t making this easy, she thought.

She could see how worried he was. She had seen it for all these months.

He was angry that someone had hurt his little girl. He was frustrated that her attackers had never been caught. He was at a loss as to how to help his daughter. He was confused by her memory loss. And he wanted answers that Catherine couldn’t, or wouldn’t, give him.

I’m not the only one who’s been hurt in all of this, she realized. He’s suffered too... and now I’m hurting him even more.

She spoke from the heart, not wanting to cause him any more pain, but not willing to back down either.

“Dad, *please* understand. *I can't go back ... to the way it was... I need your encouragement ... I need your blessing.*”

Charles could see something in her eyes, hear something in her voice. A strength and resolve that had never been there before. It reminded him so much of ... her mother.

Sadly musing, he said, “You were *always* going to work with me –you were always going to work at the firm. That wasn't a fantasy, *was it?*”

“No Dad...” Cathy smiled sympathetically and shook her head. “*It wasn't a fantasy. That was the plan... but things are different now...*”

Things are very different, she thought. He's right. Working for the District Attorney's office was never part of the plan ... before ... But being mercilessly brutalized and left for dead was never part of the plan either.

Charles wisely decided to back down, at least for the moment. *Maybe she just needs to work this out of her system, he hoped desperately. And then she will come back on her own,*

“I'm not sure I can go as far as giving you my blessing, Cathy,” he finally said. “It's a lot for me to process out of the blue. But I do want you to be happy. I hope you know that.” He sighed heavily. “If this is what you *really* want ... I won't stand in your way.”

She reached across the table and squeezed his hand. “Thank you, Daddy. I love you.”

He smiled wanly. “I know you do. I love you too, Sweetheart.”

He pushed his untouched cake aside. Somehow it didn't look as tempting as it had only a few minutes before.



Charles walked into his outer office and was greeted warmly by Marilyn, his receptionist of twenty-three years.

“How was your lunch with Cathy? Did she say when she plans to come back to work? I miss her smiling face around here.”

Charles looked up at her and then entered his office without responding.

Something's definitely wrong, she thought. I'll give him a minute and then I'll go in. They had been friends even longer than she had been his secretary, and Marilyn knew when he had something he needed to get off his chest.

She entered his office quietly and softly shut the door behind her. He had his back to her as he looked out the window at the New York City skyline beyond. She stood at his desk waiting for him to say the first word.

Finally he spoke. “When Cathy was missing for those ten days, I was so afraid that I had lost her for good... I thought she was ... that someone had ... *you know* ... But now ...” He sighed, and shook his head. “Now I'm losing her anyway, Marilyn.”

She scoffed at the idea, in that uniquely “Marilyn” way she had. “*Cathy?* Oh, I don’t think you could lose her ... *not even if you tried*, Charles. She worships the ground you walk on.”

Without turning, he shook his head. “She *isn’t* coming back.... She’s leaving the firm. She says she doesn’t want to be a corporate attorney. She’s going to work for the District Attorney’s office.”

“Well it’s about time!” Marilyn exclaimed.

Charles turned and looked at her with surprise. “What did you say?”

“You heard me, Charles. I said, it’s about time. You *do* realize that most children leave the nest much sooner than this, don’t you?”

He sighed heavily and leaned against the bookshelf behind his desk. “Yes, I suppose you’re right. But so much has happened to her this year. I just want to keep her close to me, so I can keep her safe.”

He looked so dejected, much like a boy who’s lost his best friend. Her heart went out to him.

“I understand what you mean, Charles, but you *can’t* protect her from everything. Deep down, you know I’m right. She *has* to make her own way in the world, and *you* have to let her. It’s long overdue, and you know it.”

“That’s sounds like something Caroline would’ve said.”

Marilyn looked at the picture of his wife that still held a place of honor on his desk. She smiled at the memory of her good friend. “She always was the smart one of this outfit, wasn’t she?”

He smiled sadly, “You’ve got that right. What was she thinking, leaving me to raise Cathy alone?”

Marilyn chuckled softly. “Funny ... I always thought it was Cathy she left to raise *you*,” she said, only half joking. “You should take it as a compliment, Charles. She finally thinks you’re old enough to make it on your own.”

Charles grinned and looked at Marilyn as if he was seeing her for the first time. “You know, Marilyn, I think I understand why you and Caroline were such good friends. You’re wise like she was.”

“She *was* wise.” Marilyn nodded. “*After all*, she *did* leave me to keep an eye on the both of you. You don’t need to worry about Cathy, Charles. You’ve done a wonderful job raising her. She’s an incredible woman. You should be proud.”

“I don’t know how much that has to do with me?” He turned to stare out the window again. “I’ve built my whole world around her, Marilyn. I always dreamed that she would take over the firm one day, when I was ready to retire. And now--”

“And now she doesn’t want it?” Marilyn finished the sentence for him. “She’s decided that corporate law *isn’t* ... *everything*, after all.”



He nodded.

Marilyn continued, “Are you sure it isn’t your pride that’s injured?”

Marilyn always did know how to get right to the root of things, and she wasn’t afraid to be brutally honest when the situation called for it.

Charles didn’t answer her. He knew Marilyn could see right through him and he didn’t want to admit that she was even a little bit right, besides, he was in too much pain to respond.

When he didn’t say anything, Marilyn continued, as if he had. “She’s quitting corporate law, Charles ... *She isn’t quitting you.* There *is* a difference, you know. She’ll *never* stop loving you. You haven’t lost her, at all.”

Without turning to look at her, he replied, “I guess I just needed to hear that, Marilyn. Thank you.”

“Anytime,” she said, as she turned and quietly left the office.¹



It is a wise parent who gives his child roots and wings.

–Chinese Proverb



¹ ***Note from the author:** This story is based on an unproduced scene from the original script of the pilot episode of Beauty and the Beast, “**Once Upon a Time**,” which was written by Ron Koslow. No copyright infringement is intended ... only fun.

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