



Proudly Presents

# **MOURNING LOVE**

**WRITTEN BY CELESTE LEBEAUX**

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## IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ

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This morning, on my way to work, I was driving by a cemetery, and they were having graveside services. Nothing unusual so far, right? But here's the thing...there were only two people there. I figured one of them had to be a minister, so that left only *one* person to mourn for the dearly departed. Okay, so maybe the deceased wasn't so *dear*, after all, but *come on*...one person at a *funeral*? It's sad enough when someone dies, but I think it is *equally* sad if there's no one who *cares* if you died. Driving down the road right then and there, I had an epiphany. I have decided that on my days off... I will attend funerals.

Okay, attending funerals might not sound normal to the average person, *but*... for a single girl with *no* social life...I figure it will *at least* get me out of the house. My day off is two days from now. After work today, I stopped by a newsstand and got the daily paper. There were *fourteen* people listed in the obituaries, and *four* of them have a funeral on my day off. Now the hard part. Choosing *which* funeral to attend. My choices are: Morgan Freeman, a retired insurance salesman, *not the actor*, with six lines of surviving relatives; Sally Kensington, a salon stylist. Don't you know she'd be picky about who does *her* hair for the funeral! Dylan Moore, age six...I just don't think I could attend the funeral of a child so young; and Carl Stewart, survived by three grandchildren. Well, it seems my choice is made. Carl Stewart, I will see *you* on Thursday.

The funeral was very moving today. *And* there were a *lot* of people in attendance. It seems that Mr. Stewart was a very active man. He was very involved in his church, so there were a lot of parishioners there. And I couldn't be sure, but it seemed like all three of his grandchildren were there as well. All in all, I'd say Carl Stewart left quite a legacy behind. There were lots of tears, dozens of beautiful floral arrangements, and four people that I had *never met*...*hugged* me.

I may not go to a funeral tomorrow. It's supposed to thunderstorm, *and* I have been battling a cold. I'll wait until the morning to make

my decision, but right now? I'm staying in bed and reading a little Judith Krantz...

Even though I'm not a hundred percent *well*, I decided to go to the funeral of a Mr. Earl Watkins. It rained cats and dogs this morning. By mid-morning, however, the skies cleared up, and I decided that getting out *might* make me feel better. And it did. Trust me. *It did*. I got to the service just after it started, so I had to take a seat on the last row. Like I said, I still wasn't a hundred percent, and my nose was running, so all in all, I definitely *looked* like I belonged there. My nose has been beet red for three days. As I was trying to quietly blow my nose, the man next to me leaned over and asked if I was one of Mr. Watkins' former students. I looked at him, not knowing *what* to say, and said, "Yes. Yes, I was." He asked how long ago. I said, "I was his student five years ago." He then scooted over closer to me and whispered in my ear, "*Liar*." Then he just kept staring at me and smiling. After I give him this *what-did-you-just-say-to-me* look, he leans over one last time and says, "Earl Watkins retired eleven years ago." Caught, I just turned my face straight-ahead, listened to the eulogies, and as is customary for *me*, said a prayer for the dearly departed. After Mr. Watkins' funeral was over, I headed straight to my car...only to be followed by...*you guessed it...* by Mr. *Sherlock Holmes* himself. "How did you know him?" he asks. Wanting nothing more than to leave, I decided to tell the truth. "I didn't," I said. "I go to funerals on my day off. It's what I *do*. It's who I *am*. Okay?" Now, *he* is the one not knowing what to say. But like all men, he *finds* something to say quickly. And like all *wallflowers* who watch *way* too many movies, he says the perfect line, "Mr. Watkins... would have really liked you." Well, it seems that a group of Mr. Watkins' students were getting together for a little reunion of sorts, and would I like to go? Having no "chalkboards" to clean...I said, "Fine."

I met Bill, that's his name, at a restaurant, along with about a dozen of Mr. Watkins' protégés. What a teacher he must have been! Everyone took turns telling his or her favorite Mr. Watkins'