Lemon Curd

A Novel by Homa Pourasgari

Linbrook Press

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This book is dedicated to all those who aspire
to write their first novel. Be patient. Never
give up. Believe in yourself
and others will too.

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ONE

Anna Lisa Gibson swore at the never-ending Los Angeles traffic on a gloomy Thursday January afternoon as she drove toward Little Brit, her favorite British market in Santa Monica. She needed a jar of lemon curd, an English delicacy she preferred to jam, which she ate every morning with organic wheat toast and mocha java coffee. Surprises didn't sit well with Anna Lisa. She had to have a plan and if her plan didn't go her way, especially her morning, she was sure the rest of her day was doomed. That's the reason she needed to have her lemon curd for tomorrow morning.

When she finally reached her destination, she parked her metallic mint-green Saab convertible in a two-hour parking zone. As she walked into the store, bells above the door chimed as they always did when a customer entered the premises. The small market with a dusty cement floor was patronized by the British as well as the Americans who enjoyed British products. The cash register sat on a table at the front of the store. Next to the register was a small shelf filled with various hard candies, chocolates and biscuits, and a stand carrying imported magazines, newspapers and tabloids. The store, divided into four narrow aisles, was packed with teas, jams, unusual spreads and scones, beer and specialty sauces. Unlike a supermarket, it had a homey and warm feeling to it – a charming hole in the wall. Walking down the second aisle, she noticed only one lemon curd left on the top shelf. She tried to

grab it but it was out of her reach. She asked a tall young clerk with pale yellow lashes for help. He was helping another customer and politely told her with his English accent that he would help her in a minute. Anna Lisa waited impatiently as she kept her eyes on that last jar. She watched a male customer walk in, pick up a few items and head toward the desired curd. As he reached up, he heard a woman's voice – hers – addressing him.

"Excuse me, but that's my lemon curd."

Neil Scott Whittaker turned around and assessed the lady who interrupted him. She was around his age – he was 35. From the serious expression on her face, her conservative gray skirt suit, soft pink blouse and a black thin leather briefcase, he assumed she was an ambitious uptight career woman. Her hair, pulled back in a ponytail reached the nape of her neck and complimented her oval face and big almond eyes. She was 5' 5", not skinny but rather curvy. He glanced at her full lips and then at her voluptuous firm breasts. She was real and amazingly beautiful without fake body parts, he thought as he admired her for some time before replying with a British accent, "Sorry but I must have heard you wrong for I thought you said this lemon curd was yours."

She looked at him more carefully now that he was closer. He was meticulously dressed in a double-breasted black Armani suit, a white cotton shirt and a burgundy silk tie. His wavy dark brown hair was short, and his height towered hers by at least six inches, but she didn't find him extraordinary. She preferred Mediterranean-looking men with football-player physiques as opposed to this lean man whose skin was white with a few fine lines around his round eyes and whose nose was long and narrow. His expressive midnight-blue eyes did make him appear handsome, she thought, but then, she preferred black eyes like her boyfriend's. "No, you heard right," she responded. "That's my lemon curd."

He glanced at the label on the jar as though reading it for the first time. "I'm sorry, I don't see your name on it unless your name is Samuel as in Samuel's Old Fashioned Lemon Curd."

His sarcastic remark did not escape her. “I had my eye on that jar before you came in,” she said. “But I couldn’t reach it. I’ve been waiting for the cashier to get it and, if you were a gentleman, you would let me have my lemon curd.”

“I am a gentleman, but I am not giving you this jar. Don’t you have a saying in America – first-come first-served?”

“You are the rudest Englishman I’ve ever met. That lemon curd is mine and you know it.”

He didn’t answer. After all, he was English and she was American and if anyone were entitled to this lemon curd, it would be him. What did an American know about lemon curd anyway? He ignored her, walked toward the cashier who had been listening to their ridiculous conversation for some time, paid him, and left.

Anna Lisa stood there in disbelief.

The kind cashier shrugged, looked at Anna Lisa and said, “No worries, we will have more in day after tomorrow.”

“But I don’t want it for the day after tomorrow. I need it today,” she vented.

“Sorry, Miss.”

She wanted to complain more but realized it was useless. Her favorite lemon curd was gone and that Englishman had it.