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Holly Would Dream

Karen Quinn

Once upon a time, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, there lived a brown-haired girl in a spacious apartment on Park Avenue, in the most desirable building in New York City, if not the world.

The apartment was enormous indeed, and had many servants. There was a maid to dust the Picassos, a chef to cook ten-course dinners, two pilots to fly the his-and-hers jets, and a landscape architect to tend to the terrace and roof gardens.

There were workers to service the indoor pool, the indoor racquetball court, the rooftop pool, and rooftop tennis court.

There was a chauffeur of dubious distinction who had been imported from England to drive the family and care for their six shiny automobiles.

Also among the staff was a man of no particular title who took care of the family's toy poodle named Noodle.

This man of no particular title was father to the brown-haired girl who was called Holly. The two of them lived in the servants' wing of the grand apartment on Park Avenue.

As it happened, the mistress of the mansion, a woman of considerable taste, had a deep admiration for romance films of the 1950s, and most especially, for a certain actress by the name of Audrey. For her viewing pleasure, she had assembled a collection of Hepburn films, along with her other favorite classics from the golden age of cinema.

When her father was off brushing, bathing, or exercising the dog, Holly was allowed to amuse herself by watching any movie she desired. Every day after school, she would eagerly visit the media room, where she would lose herself in a simpler time when the clothes were beautiful, the men debonair, and the women unforgettable.

There was Sabrina, the awkward daughter of a chauffeur, who after going off to Europe and returning an elegant and sophisticated woman, was pursued by two brothers of great wealth and charm.

There was a shy, funny-faced book clerk in New York named Jo who be-came the toast of Paris, where she was transformed from caterpillar to butterfly by discovering her gift in the world of high fashion.

There was a princess called Ann who rebelled against the duties of her station by escaping her luxurious shackles for a Roman holiday with a newspaperman whose true motives were less than pure.

For the little girl who lived with her father in the sprawling apartment on Park Avenue, life was as close to heaven as one could get on the island of Manhattan.

Then one day, everything changed. Holly's father, the chef, the maid, the pilots, the landscape architect, and the chauffeur of dubious distinction were all told to pack their bags and leave, for the owner of the apartment had suffered a reversal of monumental proportion and would no longer be able to keep the staff in the style to which they had become accustomed.

With great sadness, Holly and her father gathered their belongings and journeyed to another place. In time, Holly's father secured a home for himself and his little girl in a one-room studio with a window facing a brick wall in Astoria, Queens, some ten miles from the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Her father drove a cab and played piano in jazz clubs, while Holly went to school, then came home to cook, clean, sew, and manage the tiny household.

Holly's father rarely got to see his little girl anymore. Their life gone from blissful and gay to bleak and gloomy. To remind them both that life could be as wondrous as a fairy tale, Holly's father assembled his own collection of Audrey Hepburn's most endearing films. Each night, after finishing her chores, Holly would play one and transport herself on a marvelous cloud of romance and style to an enchanted world where endings were happily ever after and dreams almost always came true.