

Only You

By Deborah Bedford

Chapter 1

It was late September in the blacklands of North Texas, one of those blatantly sunny days when autumn hung crisp and cool in the air, one of those breezy days that hinted of sweaters, hot apple cider and football games.

Emily Lattrell half walked, half ran north on Dallas Parkway. She was as sunny and bouncy as the day itself as she made her way toward the cedar-etched professional building that housed Petrie, Simms and Masterson, the advertising agency where she worked.

Emily had a round full face with large eyes the color of maple syrup. She smiled often, and the overall effect—her round transparent brown eyes, her tiny nose, her defined, almost heart-shaped lips—was that she looked somewhat like a doll.

She wore a silk dress today, striped in shades of taupe and cream and gray. She'd knotted a scarf around her hips. The strand of eggshell pearls around her neck had been a gift from her father on her birthday last June, and they were perfect for her, especially today, because they picked up a confident gleam in her eyes that hadn't been there very long.

Emily worked as an account executive and copywriter at Petrie, Simms and Masterson. She'd been busy all morning keeping appointments with clients. Arriving at the office, she walked to her desk, pitched her purse inside a drawer, checked her secretary's desk for messages and then peeked through the glass partition that separated the creative boardroom from the hallway. Her immediate supervisor, Lloyd Masterson, stood chatting with Tim Johnson, a photographer. When Emily's boss saw her, he motioned her to enter. She opened the door and slipped in quietly behind Tim as he was speaking.

"I don't see any problem shooting the full length of the train interior. I'll try using my wide-angle lenses. When it comes time to do the layouts we'll have lots to choose from."

"Just be sure you don't lose the proportions of the train," Masterson cautioned as he glanced up at Emily and gave her a welcoming nod. "We can fill only half the rows with people, if need be. You can always shoot from halfway down the aisle."

Already, Emily shook her head in disagreement. They were discussing the DART account—the Dallas Area Rapid Transit—and Emily felt strongly about it. That was one of the hazards of working in the advertising industry. They sold their ideas. But Emily's ideas and her boss's ideas were not always the same. "The proportions of the space don't matter at all, Lloyd. It's going to be the people who count in this campaign, not the stylized photography." Emily respected Lloyd Masterson. He had taught her almost everything she knew when it came to practical, hands-on knowledge of the advertising industry. And she wasn't afraid to debate ideas with him.

"Too bad you didn't get here sooner." Lloyd flipped a pencil into the air and watched it land a good five inches to the left of the ashtray he had been aiming for. "I could have used you—" he

paused to smile "—to stir Petrie and Simms up a bit. All our ideas were so cut-and-dried this morning. That always worries me."

Emily was pleased by his compliment. She had been Lloyd Masterson's protégée ever since her graduation from UT, and she knew she owed Lloyd more than she could ever repay. That was one reason she was becoming gutsy lately. She wanted all their campaigns to be perfect, brilliant in every detail. For years she had been content to conform to Lloyd Masterson's ideas. But she knew that she owed him more than conformity now. The two of them had turned into a marketing duo worth reckoning with.

Lloyd frowned at the photographer and waved one hand, pretending impatience. "Go ahead and break for lunch, Tim. I'll call you when we've gotten this thing figured out. At this rate—" he cast a knowing look at Emily "—it may be midnight next Tuesday before we can make any final decisions about the proportions of the train."

"Like I said," Tim replied patiently, "I can bring all the wide-angles I've got."

Emily grinned at Tim. He had never once raised his voice to remind them that he was the professional photographer in the group.

Tim shrugged his camera case onto his shoulder and let himself out of the room. It was long past lunchtime.

"Okay." Lloyd turned back to Emily after the door closed. "Why don't we spend a few minutes going over your ideas?" He had a twofold reason—for the suggestion. He was eager to hear her ideas. They were usually good. But he also wanted to show Emily that he had confidence in her. She had come to him with a good bit of enthusiasm and all appropriate degree from a good university. But she hadn't had much more than that.

Lloyd hated to admit it, but he had almost not hired her. She had seemed so frightened, so timid, at first. Something about her had won him over, though, something he had seen in her eyes. He had looked at her and seen raw honesty and strength and something else that suggested she knew how to survive. So he had taken her on. And he had never regretted his decision.

It had taken time to help her build her confidence, but he had slowly, by asking her opinion, by giving her increasingly challenging clients and by disagreeing with her ideas. She was a talented woman, and her lack of faith in her talents had, seemed strangely at variance with her abilities.

"Let's zero in on some of the important aspects, of this campaign and see what you can come up with," Lloyd said, pulling his thoughts back to the present.

"Fine." Emily paced past him. "What's first?"

"The copy," he answered, "which has already been approved by the client." Emily nodded. Lloyd continued. "The headline will read, Things You Can Do on a Train You Can't Do Driving a Car."

"Lloyd," Emily said as she paced the room, "tell me what the primary goal is going to be for this campaign."

Lloyd checked his notes. "'To increase ridership on the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system by fifteen percent,'" he read aloud.

"And how is this approach going to accomplish that goal?" Emily smiled at him, and Lloyd realized too late that she was carefully leading him on. He admired her for it, though. It was an effective marketing tool that he had taught her, and she was using it against him well.

Lloyd picked up another pencil and began flipping it into the air. "It will accomplish the goal by helping potential riders think of new reasons why they should be riding the DART train—instead of sitting in a line of stalled cars on Central Expressway."

"Texans aren't used to, mass transit. They're much more comfortable behind the wheel of their own cars." Emily plopped a manila folder full of notes onto the table and it landed there with a victorious thwack. "We alter their thinking by depicting people on the DART..."

"By depicting how they can best benefit by the time saved riding every morning." Lloyd didn't let her complete her sentence. She was coming close to dangerous ground now, a spot where they didn't agree. And he already knew it. "We need working furiously on a personal computer, a secretary taking dictation from her boss, a woman journalist with a notepad..."

"But those people are boring," Emily reminded him. "They don't appeal to me."

"They will appeal to our target market. Business men and women are the people we want to influence here. We need to make them realize how valuable their morning transit time can be. I want them to see this ad and feel that they're wasting their time when they find themselves stalled in a traffic jam. I want each of them to feel a great stab of guilt because they aren't already accomplishing things. We're trying to appeal to a hardworking, conservative group of people here."

"How do you know those things will appeal to our market? Are you guessing?" Emily leaned over the table, placed her weight on her elbows and stared at Lloyd full in the face. "I'm a business woman, too. And I want to see something that sparks my imagination. I want to see something that makes me think, that inspires me, that makes me laugh. Every time I look at that ad, I want to see something new, something I haven't noticed before. I want it to make me consider riding the train for new reasons. Ad campaigns and public service announcements have been throwing all the old reasons at me for years now. I'm still driving my car to work and battling Central Expressway every morning."

"These new ideas," Lloyd began, chuckling good-naturedly. "What might they be?"

"Fun things." Emily ran her fingers through her hair. "Outrageous things. Risky things." She began to pace the room furiously now, the way Lloyd knew she did each time she became so entranced with an idea that she forgot herself. He toyed with the idea of flipping a pencil at her to break her stride, but he decided it would be too mean.

"I'd like to see a bride throwing a bouquet out of the window and waving goodbye to the bridal party. I'd like to see her groom sitting beside her on the seat and giving her a passionate kiss while his mother scowls disgustedly from the seat behind him and holds up something, horribly important that he's forgetting to take on his honeymoon...like his toothbrush or his eyeglasses or his underwear."

Emily paused to take a breath and Lloyd opened his mouth to say something, but he didn't get the chance. "I'd like to see a ten-year-old boy wearing a snorkel mask and fins just peeking over the back of one of the seats. He can be obviously impatient for DART to stop so he can get off and go swimming at the city pool. And I'd like to see a man in a jogging suit—"

It was Emily who didn't get to finish her sentence this time. She was so intent on brainstorming that she didn't notice the door swing open. A man had been standing outside the glass partition for quite some time now, listening to her. He didn't mean to be eavesdropping, but it had long since passed time for his luncheon appointment with Lloyd Masterson. Lloyd had seen him there and had motioned to him to step inside the room. The man had been holding the

door open for a few minutes, entranced with Emily's ideas. He couldn't resist finishing just this one sentence for her.

"I'd like to see a man in a jogging suit standing on his head in the conductor's seat while he steers the train with his bare feet."

Emily wheeled around to face the stranger. At first she didn't know what to think of the interruption. But the man was smiling at Lloyd, so he obviously was supposed to be here. Emily decided to play along with him. She grinned. *What an absolutely absurd, wonderful idea. I should have thought of it myself.* She could change the copy to read: Fighting Dallas Traffic Can Be As Frustrating As Standing on Your Head.

"I like it." Emily did her best to appear serious, and she was thrilled when she saw the worried look on Lloyd's face. "This idea opens up an infinite number of new possibilities. Of course, it might be hard to get the right angle on the photo. What do you think, Lloyd?"

Lloyd was relieved when she let a touch of sarcasm intentionally slip into her tone. For a moment he thought Emily might actually have been serious. She loved to pounce on new ideas. But he saw that this time she was only teasing him.

"I think," Lloyd said as he stood up from the office chair where he had been sitting, "you should meet Philip Manning. Excuse her, Philip." Lloyd turned to the man who still stood in the doorway. "She can be a real live wire at times."

Philip Manning just looked at Emily without saying anything. She saw a strange expression flit across his face—amusement, coupled with sadness. Emily was instantly sorry she had spoken so impulsively. He obviously wasn't used to spontaneity. As she stood there, embarrassed, he finally spoke. "I'm the Manning Commercial Real Estate and Investment account.". He glanced back at Lloyd. "I hope you don't mind me barging in like this. I had no idea you and your staff were still in a creative session. Your secretary wasn't at her desk."

Lloyd glanced at his watch. "I lost track of the time."

"So I can see." Philip waved his arm in a casual gesture of dismissal and then glanced once more at Emily. "I enjoyed viewing one of your famous creative sessions. I can only hope that the two of you argue just as effectively when working on my proposals."

There was a pause in the conversation, and Emily knew she should have taken advantage of the moment to interject some dry, witty comment. But nothing-appropriate came to mind. She could only look at the man who stood before her. Philip Manning. There was something powerful about him, as if he had been born to be in charge of things. Although he was about six feet tall, physically he did not seem like a large man. But Emily knew of the stature he held in the business community. Perhaps because of that, he seemed to fill the room as she stood watching him. The company he had conceived and had coaxed into success, Manning Commercial Real Estate and Investment, Inc., was one of Lloyd's most prestigious accounts.

His eyes caught hers and held her. At first they'd been clear, ice-blue, with a steely glint of confidence in them. But now there was something else in them, too. Something guarded. When Philip Manning looked at Emily, his eyes darkened.

Then, with no further ado, the man turned back to her employer. "Since we've missed our lunch, let's do our business here quickly. I need to get back," he said, glancing at his watch. "I have another appointment scheduled."

"I apologize, Philip." Lloyd glanced ruefully at Emily. He hoped he hadn't jeopardized one of his best accounts. Manning was a kind man but he was demanding where his business interests were concerned.

Philip nodded in acceptance of the apology as he strode toward Lloyd. "I want to talk to you about the copywriting on this brochure, Lloyd." Emily had turned to leave the room, but she froze when she heard his words. He was holding up a brochure she had written. "I need to put together a portfolio about the person who wrote this."

"Is something wrong, Mr. Manning?" Emily asked. She was a relentless perfectionist when it came to the work she produced for the agency.

"Emily wrote the brochure, Philip," Lloyd explained. .

Philip turned toward Emily. "I like your copy," he told her. He laid the brochure flat on the table beside her and pointed to the second paragraph. "Explain why you wrote this."

Emily glanced over her work and searched for an obvious answer to his question. He was pointing to a paragraph about the sales associates at Manning Real Estate. The copy said that his sales associates were seasoned professionals, that they benefited from and complemented one another because they sought to draw on one another's knowledge.

"That question is too broad for me to answer," Emily said as she turned to face him. "I'm not sure I understand what you want."

Philip laughed, a warm, kind laugh that belied the steel in his eyes, and leaned toward her. "I want to know why you used each specific word. I had thought you used a basic formula. But hearing that tirade about the DART ads, now I'm not so sure. Maybe you're a person who flies by the seat of your pants instead."

Emily thought for a moment before she commented. "There are several definite marketing techniques I used in this brochure. The things Lloyd told me about your company showed me you place great stock in people. I had no choice but to use it as a marketing ploy. It is a very effective one."

Philip Manning studied her with approval. "I'm sponsoring a marketing seminar for my sales associates next week. There will be several specific workshops, many of which my own associates will be leading. At one of these workshops, I want to introduce the marketing tools your agency has produced for Manning."

"That sounds interesting," Emily said.

"Good—" Philip grinned "-because I'd like you to be there."

Emily's voice faltered. What did he want her there for? "I'm certain I could learn quite a bit."

"You misunderstand." Philip couldn't hide his amusement. "I don't want you there to learn, Emily, I want you there to teach. Actually, I had in mind Lloyd leading the workshop and then quietly introducing his copywriter. But, after what I just heard, I'd like you to do the workshop yourself instead."

Emily couldn't speak for a moment. How could she explain the creative process responsible for the words she had chosen? Certainly, she could explain the marketing tactics she had used. But she chose words because she liked the way they sounded, the way they blended together to form a rhythm, a harmonious idea. How could she present

marketing statistics about something she created because it pleased her? On the other hand, Emily knew her work had impressed Philip Manning. And she *did* know how the brochure should be presented.

As Philip Manning and Lloyd went on to discuss the aspects of a new project for the Manning account, Emily jotted several key words on a notepad. Speaking at the seminar would be an exciting challenge. It also scared her to death. She wanted to refuse, but there was something about Philip Manning, something about the trust he had already placed in her, that made her want to comply. The way he had sensed the small subtleties in her choice of words for the brochure, the way he approved of her writing, made her want to take a risk for him. And it made her want to risk something for herself.

Emily sat beside both of them for a while, in silence, while they talked. And then, finally, when the two of them turned their attention back to her, she nodded. "Okay," she answered somberly. "I'll do it."

"Are you certain?" Philip was concerned. He had seen her hesitation and it had surprised him. He had meant the invitation to be something of a compliment. He hadn't meant to put her on the spot. He touched her just lightly on the elbow, to reassure her. And when she answered him, she was thinking it was strange that here he was, so successful and certain what he wanted, yet still so kind and down-to-earth.

"Yes," she told him quietly, looking into his intense ice-blue eyes. They darkened once more as she gave him a determined smile. Emily wondered if she would ever have the chance to find out what caused this man's sudden somber expression.