

# LOVE IS IN THE HAIR



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# Chapter One

## A Bad Day

New words: rich, domestic familiar, overruled, sighed

Flo was angry. Why did she have to clean this house? She had been promoted to supervisor two months ago. She worked in the Team Clean office now. She wasn't a house cleaner!

But her boss had asked her to clean this house. Two cleaners were sick this week. Flo wasn't too busy in the office. And the people who owned the house were rich! They were going to have a big party.

Louisa was angry. Why did she have to work today? It was her day off. She had planned to spend the day with her friend Tina.

Louisa worked as a domestic for a family with three children. They were rich. Tonight they were going to have a big party. Some cleaners were coming to tidy up the whole house. Louisa was supposed to supervise.

At one o'clock, the cleaners arrived. One woman, who seemed to be the leader, told the other two to start working in the living room. She looks mean, thought Louisa. She doesn't even clean. She just tells the others what to do. But she looks familiar. Where have I seen this woman before? "Start with the kitchen, not the living room," said Louisa. She just wanted to overrule what the woman had said.

Flo was not pleased. She did not like to be overruled. She marched off into the kitchen. Louisa followed the cleaners. "You must wash all the windows, both sides," she said.

"We will start by washing the floor," answered Flo. Now it was Louisa's turn to be overruled. She sighed. What a lot of trouble on her day off! Working as a domestic was not easy.

Flo sighed too. They all began to clean. They cleaned and cleaned. All day they cleaned. Soon the house was very tidy. When they were finished, Louisa thanked them. "You did a good job," she said. "Fine for you," answered Flo. "I'm not even supposed to clean houses. I work in the Team Clean office now!"

"And what about me?" yelled Louisa. Now she was really angry. "This is supposed to be my day off!"

Flo looked at her. It must be hard to be a domestic for a rich family, she thought. This woman looks familiar. Where have I seen her before? Then she laughed. "The work is done. Let's stop being angry."

Louisa sighed. She smiled and then she laughed. Flo laughed with her.



## Chapter Two

### Neighbours

New Words: recognize, sunshine, soft, neighbourhood, reach, clouds

One week later, Flo got on a bus. It was late afternoon. There were only a few clouds in the sky. Flo reached the back of the bus. She thought she recognized Louisa. The woman looked tired and worried. But her eyes were bright as sunshine. Louisa had beautiful eyes. Flo would always remember those eyes.

“Louisa?” said Flo. The woman looked like her head was in the clouds.

“Louisa?” Flo said again.

Louisa looked up and smiled. Flo recognized her bright eyes at once.

“I thought I recognized you,” Flo said. “You were at the house we cleaned last week. Where are you going now?”

“I’m going home,” said Louisa. Her voice was soft.

“You sound tired,” Flo said with a smile.

“I am tired,” Louisa said. “It’s been a long week. I spend all day working in the house, cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking. I have no time for myself. I’m in the Lanes’ house all day. I never get to see the sun shine.”

Flo remembered her days as a cleaner. She thought of her hold boss, Mr. Small. She remembered the long night shifts. She had worked all night and slept during the day. She had never seen much sunshine either.

“Back in Jamaica I spent my days in the sun,” Louisa said. “I remember the bright, warm days and the cool nights. They were so beautiful. Now I’m too tired to care about anything. All I think of is my bed in my small apartment on Lachute Avenue.”

“Lachute Avenue?” said Flo. “That’s in my neighbourhood. It’s only about a ten minute walk from where I live. We’re almost neighbours!” The bus came to a stop. The sun was now behind a cloud. It was setting quickly. The man next to Louisa got up to leave. Flo sat down in his seat. “It would be nice to have someone near me to talk to,” said Louisa.

Flo took Louisa’s hand in her own. It was soft and warm. “Why don’t you come over to my apartment next Sunday?” she asked. “I would love to hear about Jamaica.”



“I would love to tell you about it,” said Louisa. “But it’s my life here in Canada I’m worried about. I’ve reached the end of my rope.”

“Don’t worry about that,” Flo said. She gave Louisa her address. “We’ll talk about that, too.” Soon the bus reached a busy neighbourhood. Flo and Louisa recognized it as theirs.

“You’ll remember to come over next Sunday?” Flo said as Louisa stood up. Apartment six at two o’clock.”

“I’ll remember,” Louisa said with a warm smile. She stepped off the bus into the summer night.





## Chapter Three

### Hope

New Words: aloud, guest, flowers, replied, suddenly

It was Sunday. Louisa was going to visit her new friend Flo. She was a little nervous. What should she wear? Should she take a small gift for Flo? Louisa wanted to do the right thing. She had never been a guest in a Canadian home. Louisa had worked for Canadians, but being a guest was not the same.

Louisa was very worried. She had to tell Flo her troubles. "But right now," Louisa thought aloud, "I must get ready for my visit. I'll put on my best clothes and a big smile, just for Flo."

On the way to the bus, Louisa saw some flowers in a store. She would love to buy some flowers for Flo. Too bad she had so little money. Louisa counted her change. She needed two dollars and ten cents for the bus. One dollar and five cents each way. One dollar, two dollars, two fifty, two seventy-five...She had three dollars and thirty-five cents.

Where did her pay cheque go? She had to send most of it home. Home was Jamaica. That was where her family was. She felt sad to think of them. "I want to buy flowers for Flo," she said aloud.

"May I help you?" said a smiling saleswoman. "I want to buy flowers for my friend," said Louisa. "But all I have to spend is \$1.25."

"Don't worry," replied the saleswoman. "I will give you a beautiful rose for your friend. It will only cost one dollar."

"Thank you. Goodbye," said Louisa. She felt much better. "People are so nice in Canada," she said aloud.

The bus arrived. Louisa thought that everyone was smiling at her. She felt much better now. A few minutes later, she knocked at Flo's door.

"You look so nice!" said Flo. "Please do come in. We'll sit in the kitchen. Would you like some coffee? Or tea? Or hot chocolate?"

"Hot chocolate would be lovely," replied Louisa. "I have baked a peach cake too," said Flo. "Do try some."

Louisa suddenly remembered the rose. "This is for you," she said.

“How lovely!” said Flo. She was touched. She knew Louisa didn’t have much money. They drank their hot chocolate and ate their cake. They didn’t talk much. Louisa felt at home in Flo’s kitchen. She felt Flo was her friend.

Suddenly Louisa said, “Flo, I’m so lonely in Canada. You are my friend. I need help. I have only been in Canada for two and a half years. I cannot become a citizen yet. I can’t stay in my job. I’m afraid and I’m lonely.”

Flo put on her thinking cap. “There must be a way!” she replied. “You must go to night school. I went to school. I got a better job. Now I’m very happy. Louisa, you work hard. I have high hopes for you.”

Flo gave Louisa a big kiss. They both felt better. They knew Louisa would be okay.

## Chapter Four

### A Talk With Tina

New words: islands, grocery, sauce, shy, immigration.

Louisa was going to see her friend Tina. When Louisa left Jamaica to come to Canada, friends gave her Tina's name and phone number. She called Tina. They had slowly become good friends. It was good to have someone from home to talk to.

On Louisa's day off, sometimes she and Tina would go for a long walk. They would talk and talk. Sometimes they'd talk about Jamaica. But more and more now, they would talk about their new lives here in Canada.

Tina worked in a small grocery store. The store sold special food from the islands. Tasting food from the islands made Louisa feel good. It was the food she had eaten when she was a little girl. There was rice and spices and hot sauce. It tasted good.

Tonight, Louisa was going to pick Tina up at the store. She needed some groceries, too- rice and hot sauce. Then they were going out for supper. They might go out to the movies, too.

That was the best part of being with a real friend, thought Louisa. You could do whatever you wanted. Or you could do nothing together. A real friend would understand if you were tired. Sometimes they would just sit for hours over a cup of tea.

Today, Louisa really needed to talk. Her talk with Flo had made her feel a little better. But she still needed to talk to Tina.

There was someone in the shop. Louisa waited while the woman bought some sauce. Tina saw her friend and smiled. "Just a second, Louisa. I'll be right with you."

A man came out from the store room. He was tall and good-looking. Louisa saw him smile at Tina. "Oh, Louisa," said Tina. "Meet my brother Winston. He's just moved here from Toronto. Say hello!"

Louisa and Winston shook hands. Suddenly Louisa felt shy. She couldn't think of a thing to say.

She didn't need to worry. Winston wasn't shy at all. He asked her how she was. He said Tina had often spoken of her. "I almost feel like I know you myself," he said.

"Okay, Louisa, I'm finished. Let's go!" said Tina.

"Where are you going?" asked Winston. "Can I come along?"

Louisa smiled her shy smile. "I'm sorry, Winston. I just want to talk to Tina. Another time, okay?"

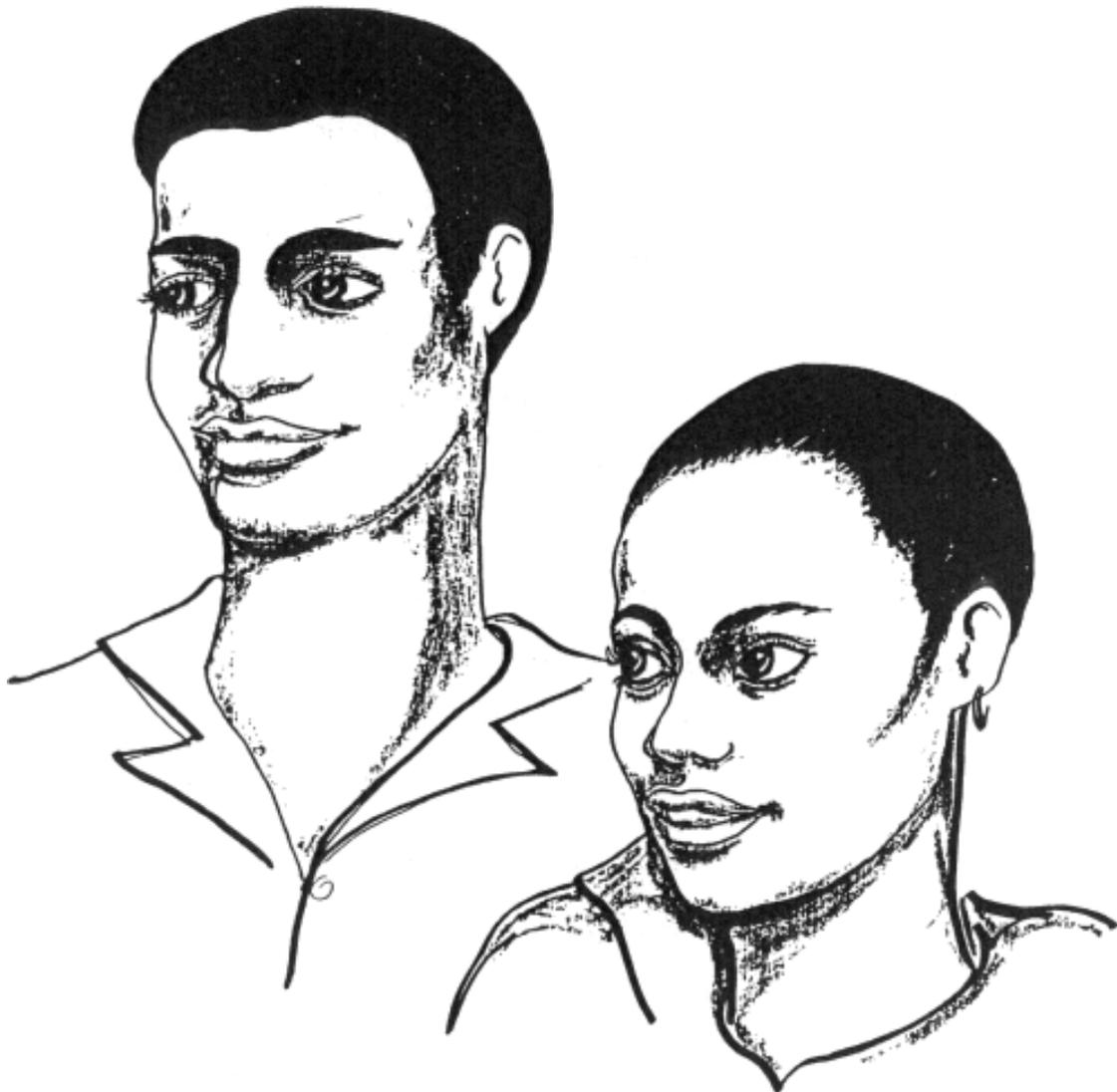
"Sure," said Winston. "But I hope I'll see you soon."

"Me too," said Louisa. She still felt very shy. Tina looked from Winston to Louisa with a smile.

Tina and Louisa went to their favourite restaurant. "Okay, Louisa, what is it?" asked Tina.

"I just wondered if you knew anything about immigration," said Louisa. "I guess I should go to immigration. But I'm afraid. I had to wait for hours when I went the first time. That was when I went the first time. That was when I just came to Canada." "I'll tell you what. We'll go together!" Tina smiled.

"Would you really go to immigration with me?" said Louisa. She felt much better. She was not afraid any more.



## Chapter Five

### Getting to Know You

New words: serious, accounting, bother

Louisa still had very little time to herself. But when she did have time off, she spent it more and more with Tina and Winston. Winston was fun to be with. He made her laugh. He worked in a bank, but he wasn't serious at all.

He was serious in one way, though. He worked very hard. He did his work well. That was why he had moved to Montreal. It was a promotion. He was proud of that promotion.

Winston didn't have much free time either. At night, he took courses in accounting. Accounting was a subject that helped him with his work. He was a serious student.

Louisa wasn't so shy any more when Winston was around. In fact, she really liked him. Even when she was very tired, she liked to be with Winston as much as with Tina.

At last Winston found the courage to ask Louisa for a date. Just the two of them, without Tina. A real date! He was very pleased when she accepted.

Winston and Louisa agreed to go out on Sunday afternoon. "I'll pick you up at 2 o'clock," said Winston. "Don't bother," said Louisa. "I can meet you at St. Catherine and Peel."

"No way, Louisa, I will meet you at your apartment. It's no bother, Louisa. Really, no bother at all."

Louisa wondered what to wear. That was strange. She didn't wonder what to wear when she was going out with Tina. She had a new blue dress. It made her feel pretty. That's what she would wear.

Two o'clock on the dot. Winston was right on time. What a sharp dresser Winston is, thought Louisa. She said nothing. But she was pleased that Winston had dressed up just for her.

"My, you look nice!" said Winston. "Blue is your colour. You should always wear blue." Louisa felt shy again. "Thank you," she said in a shy voice.

"Where would you like to go, Louisa?" asked Winston. "To a movie? Or a play? There is a good play at the Centaur Theatre. The man who wrote it is from South Africa. It's supposed to be very good."

"I've heard it's very good," said Louisa. "But the play started at 2 o'clock. Let's go to a movie. my friend Flo saw Rainman last week. She liked it. It's about two brothers. One of them has a handicap. I think it's playing at 3 o'clock."

“Great,” said Winston. “I haven’t seen it yet. Let’s go!”

“Shall we take the bus or walk, Louisa?” he asked when they got outside.

“Let’s walk, Winston. It’s such a beautiful day! I never get enough sunshine. Back home, I used to walk a lot!” Louisa smiled at Winston. Suddenly, she wasn’t feeling shy at all.

## Chapter Six

### The Date Goes On

New words: aware, heaven

“Do you like your job, Winston?” asked Louisa.

“I do, but I want to better myself, too. I’ve made an application to McGill. You know, McGill.” said Winston. “Not the metro station, the university!” He loved to joke around.

“I heard about McGill University back in Jamaica,” said Louisa. “I knew some people who sent their children to McGill. They didn’t like the winters here in Canada. But they did like the university.”

They walked for a while without talking. With Winston, you could talk and joke around. But it also felt good not to talk.

“Wow! There’s a long line up, Louisa,” said Winston. “Oh, well, it must be a good movie.”

Winston hoped it was good. It wasn’t cheap to go to a movie. He hadn’t seen a movie for ages.

“Where would you like to sit, Louisa?”

“Not too near, please,” she said.

Winston was aware of Louisa’s nearness. He was very aware of her. He liked the feeling very much. Did he dare take her hand? Would she be angry? He smiled at her. She smiled back. Her eyes looked soft and beautiful. Winston took her hand. Aware of feeling very happy, he sat back and watched the movie.

Louisa left her hand in his. It felt wonderful.

Her hand is so soft and warm, thought Winston. He was in heaven. I really like this girl, he thought. I wonder how she feels about me.

“Did you like the movie, Louisa?” He was still in heaven. He didn’t want to come down to earth.

“Yes, I did.” She gave him a big smile. He began to sing “Heaven, I’m in heaven,” as they walked along.

“Can I take you out to dinner?” he asked.

“I wish I could go with you. But I have to get home. I have to babysit tonight.”

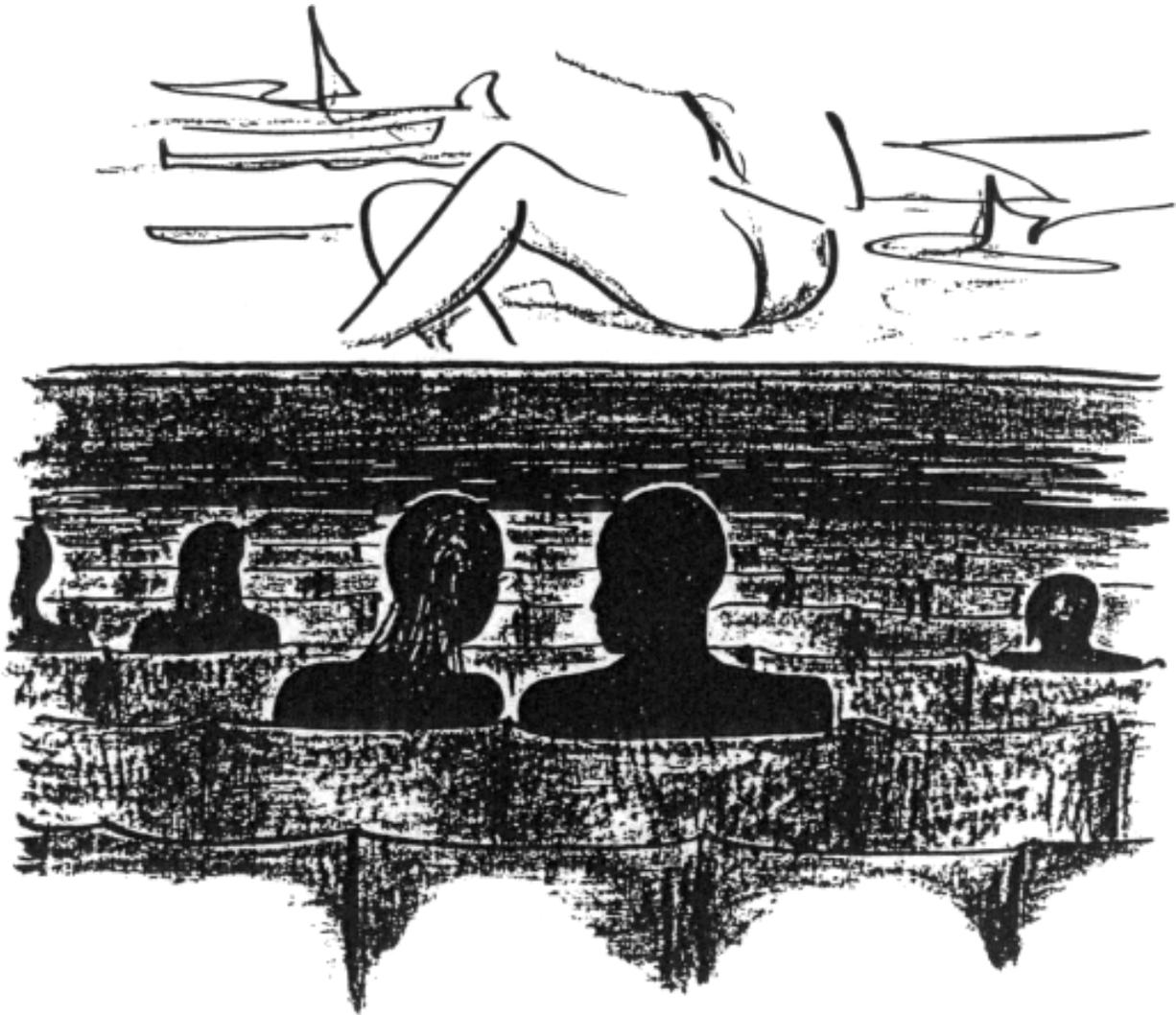
Winston was sorry. He was very sorry. He stopped smiling.

“But thank you for everything, Winston. And let me know when you hear from the university,” said Louisa.

“Will you go out with me again?” asked Winston.

“Yes!” Louisa smiled, a big smile. “Call me soon.”

The next day, Louisa daydreamed while she was working. Next time, would Winston kiss her? If he didn't kiss her soon, she decided, she would kiss him!



## Chapter Seven

### Coffee Mate

New words: sponsors, ambition

It was a cold, windy day. Louisa was coming out of the bakery when she heard someone call her name. She turned around. It was Flo.

“Hi there!” said Flo. “It’s been a while.” Flo’s face was all covered up in a scarf. Louisa would never have noticed her.

Seeing Flo made Louisa smile. “Good to see you,” she said. “It’s too cold to stand here. Why don’t you come up to my place for a coffee? It’s just around the corner.”

“Sounds good to me,” said Flo.

Soon Flo was sitting at Louisa’s kitchen table, watching her make coffee. Louisa’s place was small, but it was her own. On the wall was a picture of Louisa with two small children.

“Are those your kids?” asked Flo. She was surprised.

Louisa laughed. “No. My sister’s kids. I used to take care of them when she went to work. I look at those pictures when I’m feeling really low. They always make me smile”.

Louisa put some cookies on a plate. She gave Flo a cup of hot coffee.

“Are you still working for the same family?” asked Flo.

“Yes,” said Louisa. “I wish I could go work someplace else, but I’m afraid.” She looked sad.

“Why are you afraid?” asked Flo.

“They’re my sponsors. I have to work for them for three years. Then I can apply for my landed immigrant papers. Then I can work where I want.”

“Are you sure about that?” asked Flo. She knew that lots of people didn’t understand the immigration law. “Maybe you should go to night school, Louisa. It’s never too late. Look at me. Getting my diploma last year made a big difference. Now even Leo, my husband, is learning to read.”

“My friend Winston talks about going to school, too,” said Louisa. She had to smile. She couldn’t talk about Winston without smiling.

“Who’s Winston?” asked Flo. There was a smile in her voice, too. She put down her coffee.

“His sister runs the grocery store on the corner. His family is from the islands. He works in a bank. But he’s taking courses. He wants to be an accountant.”

“He sounds like a man with ambition,” said Flo, smiling.

“Maybe I don’t have enough ambition, Flo. I know I could do something better than clean houses. But I don’t know what. And I don’t think Mrs. Lane will let me go early for night school.”

“You won’t know until you try, Louisa. Why don’t you check it out? Call immigration. Then you’ll know what you can do!”

Flo felt sorry for Louisa. She was so young and pretty. She should be meeting people. She should be having fun. She shouldn’t have to stay with her sponsors. Not unless she wanted to.

“More coffee, Flo?”

“Sorry, Louisa, it’s getting late. I have to go home and start dinner.”

Flo put on her coat and gloves. She covered her face with her scarf.

“Don’t worry about your ambitions, Louisa. The important thing is to find out what you want to do. Then you can try and do it.!”

Louisa smiled. “Thanks, Flo! You put a different look on things.”

## Chapter Eight

### Night School?

New words: complained, course, decided, hairdressing, language, vacuum, cooking\

Louisa looked out the window. What a day! First, Mrs. Lane had complained that the house wasn't tidy enough. But her children had come home first. That was why the house wasn't tidy! Then the vacuum cleaner broke down while she was vacuuming. She had to call for the vacuum to be fixed. And the day was only half over!

Louisa had been working for the Lanes for more than two years now. She did her job well but she complained about it to Tina. She wished she could do something she really liked. A little more money would be nice, too.

Ever since Louisa and Flo had talked about going to night school Louisa had been thinking. What would she like to take? Why couldn't she be a hairdresser? She liked cutting hair. She was good at it, too. But she needed some training. She had to find out more about it.

It was Louisa's lunch hour. While she ate, she looked in the yellow pages under Hairdressing Schools. It said, see Schools - Hairdressing. So she did. Schools - Art, Schools - Cooking, Schools - Language. Oh oh. Language - she had gone too far. She looked back. There it was: Schools - Hairdressing. There were several listed. She would have to call them. She'd ask if they had night courses.

Louisa was nervous. She didn't like calling people she didn't know. So she decided to write down what to ask. Then she wouldn't forget to ask anything important. These were her questions:

Do you have a night course?

When does the next one start?

How many weeks is it?

How many times a week?

How much does it cost?

Do I have to pay before the course starts?

Can I get my money back if I change my mind?

Do I get a diploma at the end?

Do you help students find jobs?

What language is the course given in?

By the end of the week, Louisa had called all the schools. She had the answers to all her questions. She had complained long enough. Now it was time to do something!



## Chapter Nine

### A Bird in a Cage

New words: feather, duster, dictionary, library, title, nest, cage, den, offer, wage

Louisa was cleaning in the den. She was cleaning books with a feather duster. She liked dusting the books. So many different titles! The den was like a small library. Louisa thought, it's like some libraries I went to as a child. My school library wasn't much bigger. This one even had a dictionary on a stand. Louisa loved to look up new words in the dictionary. Sometimes she used the dictionary when she was alone in the house. Other times she would look at the book titles and daydream.

Louisa's favourite title was *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Sometimes she felt like a caged bird. The Lanes had been nice to her. But their house was still a cage.

Daydreams were a way out. Louisa looked at the feather duster. She looked at the title of her favourite book. The feathers made her think of her favourite birds in Jamaica. She started to daydream. She dreamed she was in a nest. She was about to fly. She didn't hear Mrs. Lane walk in.

"Hi, Louisa," said Mrs. Lane.

Louisa dropped the feather duster. Mrs. Lane had surprised her.

"I didn't mean to surprise you," Mrs. Lane said.

"I came to make you an offer."

"An offer?" said Louisa. "What type of offer?"

"Soon you can apply to be a landed immigrant," said Mrs. Lane. She sounded friendly. "You'll be able to get another job. But we would like you to stay with us. We'll give you high wages, of course."

Louisa thought about the offer. She thought about her weekly wages. I do a lot of work, Louisa said to herself. Cleaning, dusting, washing, cooking.

My wages are too low for the work I do. Yes, the Lanes have been kind to me. But a cage is a cage. It is not the same thing as a nest. She looked at the feather duster. She thought of birds that fly. One day I'll be a hairdresser. Maybe I'll have my own shop. That will be my nest.

"No, thank you," Louisa said.

Mrs. Lane looked very surprised. "I'm not sure I heard you." She came closer to Louisa. "What did you say?"

"No, thank you," said Louisa with a smile.

"I don't understand," Mrs. Lane said. She sounded angry. "What will you do without us? Haven't we been good to you?"

"You've been good to me," said Louisa. "Now I want to be good to myself."

Mrs. Lane didn't say a word. "Well, think about it," she finally said. Her voice was cold and sharp. "Let me know." She walked out of the den.

Louisa picked up the feather duster. She began to sing her favourite song.

## Chapter Ten

### Love is in the Hair

New words: shampoo, spray, chemicals, salon, citizen, conditioner, noise

Ah! What a wonderful smell! Shampoo, conditioner, hair spray, chemicals that can change your hair colour ... The best thing about getting your hair cut, thought Louisa, is all those funny smells.

“Yuck! Those chemicals have such a strong smell!” said Winston. He made a funny face.

Louisa laughed. After six months together, you’d think they’d agree on something! She said hello to the woman who always cut her hair. She sat down to wait.

“I like the smell of shampoo and hair spray,” she said. “When I was young, I always cut my sister’s hair.”

“That must have been a bother,” said Winston.

“No, it was fun,” Louisa said. She smiled and said, half to herself, “I’ve always wanted to be a hairdresser.”

“Have you really?” Winston looked up from his book. “Stick with me, and I’ll buy you the whole shop!”

Louisa’s hairdresser came by to say that she was ready. Louisa followed her, looking back at Winston with surprise.

The hairdresser shampooed her hair. Then she put on some conditioner. “I’ll come back in five minutes,” she said. “This conditioner will make your hair really nice and soft.”

Winston walked over to Louisa’s side. He said something. But she couldn’t hear him. The hair dryer was making too much noise.

“You should stick with me, Louisa!” he yelled.

Louisa had a funny feeling in her stomach. “But I am sticking with you!” she yelled back.

“No, no. I mean really. I mean I want...”

“What?” Louisa tried to hear, but the dryer was still making too much noise.

In a loud voice Winston said, “I mean I want to...” The dryer turned off by itself. “I want to marry you.”

There was silence in the salon.

“You’re getting married?” asked the hairdresser. She came over to Louisa with a big smile.

“Oh, how wonderful!” said the girl in the next chair.



Winston didn't care now if everyone in the whole place heard him. "I'm not joking, Louisa. I've been thinking about this. It bothers me that you work so hard. You make so little money. I want to make you happy. I want you to have a hair salon. A salon that's all yours! I'll even put up with hair spray and chemicals and everything!"

The hairdresser looked at him. She thought he was the greatest man in the world.

"But I can't!" said Louisa. "I'm still not a citizen here in Canada."

"If you marry me, you will be a Canadian citizen."

Louisa looked at Winston with big, bright eyes. It would be wonderful to be a citizen, she thought.

"It would be wonderful to be married. Think of it," said Winston. "Everything would be just right..."

Louisa didn't know what to say. She looked around the salon. Everyone was smiling at her. Was she the only person here who had doubts?

"We would be so happy," said Winston again. "Why wouldn't you want to marry me?"

## Chapter Eleven

### First Comes Love

New words: rather, interrupted, convenient

Flo wasn't crazy about vacuuming. It was hard work and it was noisy work. But someone had to do it. It was Saturday. Flo was alone in the house.

The vacuum cleaner was so noisy that Flo almost didn't hear the phone ring.

"Hi, Flo. It's Louisa. Is everything okay with you?"

Flo laughed. "Sure," she said. "I was just vacuuming. I ran to get the phone. It's good to hear your voice."

"I need to talk, Flo. This might not be a convenient time for you. But could we meet for a coffee?"

"It's a fine time, Louisa. You could come over here. I'm alone."

"I'd rather go out, Flo. I don't want us to be interrupted."

"Okay. Why don't we meet at the restaurant at the corner of Sherbrooke and Decarie? That's pretty convenient for both of us."

When Flo got to the restaurant, Louisa was already there at a table by the window. She looked worried. But when she saw Flo, she smiled.

"What's up?" asked Flo. She sat down.

"Winston has asked me to marry him, Flo."

Flo opened her mouth to speak. The waitress interrupted. "What can I get for you today?" she asked.

"Coffee for me, please," said Flo.

"Same for you?" the waitress asked Louisa.

"No, thanks. I'd rather have tea."

The waitress left. Flo turned to Louisa. "I guess this means you're not sure if you want to marry Winston."

Louisa sighed. "That's it, Flo. He's a great person, but I don't think I'm ready for marriage."

“Don’t you think Winston will understand that?” asked Flo.

“I’d rather not hurt his feelings, Flo. He’s been so good to me.”

“Are you sure that’s all, Louisa?”

Louisa looked at Flo. “No, that’s not all. Marrying Winston would make life easier. I would get my immigration papers in no time.”

“Winston’s a very nice man, Louisa. But there must be another way to get your papers. Why don’t you call immigration and find out? You don’t want a marriage of convenience, do you?” said Flo. She looked into Louisa’s eyes. They were soft and sad.

“You know, Louisa, if you’re not sure you love Winston you shouldn’t marry him. You could hurt him badly. And you could hurt yourself, too.”

“But if I say no, I could hurt him too.”

Not as much as if you marry him for the wrong reasons, Louisa. Like you said, Winston has ambition. He’ll stick around even if you say no!”

Louisa lifted her head and laughed. “You’re right, Flo. And I’ll call immigration first thing tomorrow. I should always come to you!”

“Any time,” said Flo.

## Chapter Twelve

### Immigration

New words: appointment, butterflies, sneeze, bless

Louisa and Flo were on the bus. They had almost reached the immigration office. Louisa had been thinking about going to immigration for a long time. She had talked to Tina, and she had talked to Flo. Finally she had stopped talking. She was doing something!

Louisa had an appointment with an immigration officer in five minutes. She didn't want to be late for her appointment. She had butterflies in her stomach.

The room was full of people. Some looked as though they'd been waiting for a long time. Louisa didn't want to wait long for her appointment. The butterflies would only go around her stomach a hundred more times. "Flo!" said Louisa in a low voice.

"What's the matter, Louisa?"

"Nothing. But I'm so nervous, Flo!"

"Don't be nervous, Louisa," said Flo.

"You have a right to be here. You're a good person. You have nothing to be nervous about."

Someone came to the door. "Louisa Denning!" the immigration officer called.

"Help, Flo! They're calling me!" Louisa's butterflies were back.

She went into the office and sat down. The immigration officer looked at her application papers. "So you want to be a landed immigrant, is that right?" He didn't look too mean. He looked quite kind. Louisa noticed that he had a cold. He sneezed. She said, "Bless you." He sneezed again and she said, "Bless you again."

Then she sneezed. It was his turn to say, "Bless you." He smiled. Now she wasn't quite so nervous.

"How long have you been in Canada?" he asked.

"It's all in the application form. But I've been here for more than two years now."

"And you've been working for your sponsor all that time?"

"Yes. There's a letter from Mrs. Lane with my application. It's right there."

“Well,” said the immigration officer. “It looks like a simple case. We’ll look through your application. You should become a landed immigrant soon. You could become a good citizen. You will get a letter soon from this office.”

“But do I need to stay with the family I work for?” asked Louisa.

“Not unless you want to. You can stay by yourself.”

“So soon I can be a Canadian citizen? All by myself? I don’t have to marry a Canadian citizen?”

“Who said anything about getting married?” he asked.

“Forget it,” said Louisa with a big smile. “It was just a funny idea my boyfriend had.” She was very happy. She felt like kissing the immigration officer. She shook his hand and left the office. Flo was waiting for her.

“Flo!” Louisa almost shouted. “I can be a citizen - all by myself! I’m going to stay in Canada! This is my home now!”

## Chapter Thirteen

### Tug of War

New words: proposal, control, tug of war, reason, attention

Louisa was thinking about Winston. His proposal of marriage had really surprised her. She remembered what he had said. “If you really loved me, you’d marry me. And if you don’t marry me, you might get sent back to Jamaica.”

Then her thoughts turned to the Lanes. Mr. Lane had made her another kind of proposal. “Stay on with us. We’ll give you higher wages, of course. We are moving to a bigger house. You can be our housekeeper. We’ll hire another maid.”

Mrs. Lane had said, “I thought you were happy with us. You’re like one of the family now. What will you do without us?”

Louisa was all mixed up. She was the rope in a tug of war between Winston and the Lanes. Winston wanted her to marry him, and the Lanes wanted her to keep on working for them.

Louisa didn’t know what to think. She was having a hard time paying attention. She was supposed to be learning a new hair style. For the first time, she couldn’t wait for class to be over. She needed time to sort out what she wanted to do.

The evening seemed to last forever. Ten o’clock finally came. Louisa raced out into the warm night air. She began to walk home. It was a long way, and she often took the bus. It was the end of a long and trying day. The time had come to decide on her future.

In just a few months, Louisa’s life had changed a lot. First she had met Winston. That friendship had become special. She had started to learn to be a hairdresser. And then she found out that she had a good chance of becoming a landed immigrant. Everything seemed to be going well.

But it was hard for her to know what to do. Everyone seemed to have different ideas about what was good for her. Winston had asked her to marry him. Louisa had thought about his proposal. But she hadn’t said yes or no yet. Flo had told her not to decide too quickly. Today Winston had asked her again. He wanted an answer soon.

The way Winston was acting worried Louisa a little. He didn’t seem to pay attention when she said that marrying him would not change her chances of becoming a landed immigrant. Did he think she might not marry him for any other reason? Why would he think that?

The Lanes had also asked Louisa again to keep on working for them. They said Louisa could use her hairdressing skills when Mrs. Lane went out at night. They seemed to think Louisa couldn’t make a life without them. But Louisa thought it was the other way around. The Lanes couldn’t

get along without her. They were trying to control her. Everyone was trying to control her. But she only wanted to control her own life.

She certainly had lots to think about.

Louisa looked up. She was almost home. But she still had not made up her mind. She didn't know what to do.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

### **I Did it My Way**

Louisa turned her key in the lock. Suddenly everything seemed clear.

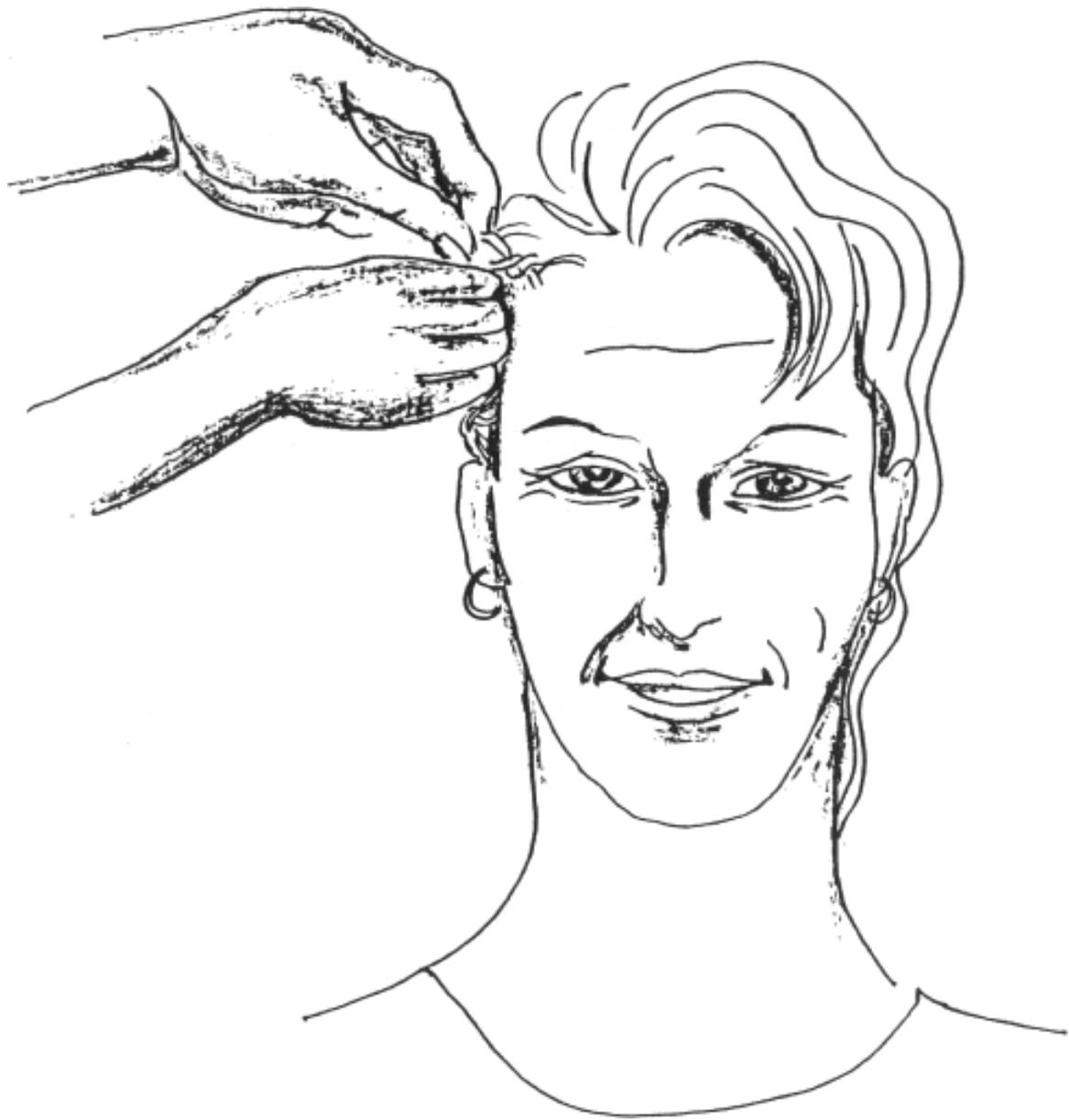
She had a home of her own. Her apartment was small, but it was all hers. She had a new working life ahead. She had a pretty good chance of staying in Canada. And even if she did have to go back to Jamaica, she would be a hairdresser. She would be better off than when she left.

And what about Winston? Well, she liked him. No, she loved him. But he was moving too fast. There was really no reason to marry right away. Why not wait until she had a real job in a salon?

Tomorrow she would talk to him. She wanted to leave things as they were for now. But she really did love him. She would tell him that she didn't want to marry for the wrong reasons.

Tomorrow she would also talk to Mrs. Lane. Louisa would make her realize that she would have to find another domestic. In a few months, Louisa would have a job in a salon. Then she would do Mrs. Lane's hair for her!

She felt better already. She could hardly wait to tell Tina about her decision. She felt very tired, but very happy. The tug of war was over. Louisa was in control of her own life!





neighbourhood	2
nest	1
noise	10
offer	9
overruled	1
proposal	13
rather	11
reach	2
reason	13
recognize	2
replied	3
rich	1
salon	10
sauce	4
serious	5
shampoo	10
shy	4
sighed	1
sneeze	12
soft	2
sponsors	7
spray	10
suddenly	3
sunshine	2
title	9
tug of war	13
vacuum	8
wage	9

## Learning Ideas

Some exercises tutors can use with their students while reading *Love Is in the Hair*:

Chapter Two: List some chores that Louisa does at the Lanes'.

Chapter Three: What does Louisa spend her pay on? List some items and how much they cost.

Chapter Four: What special foods do you eat? Make a list.

Chapter Five: What movies are playing now? Make a list of titles.

Chapter Six: Name some metro stations

Chapter Eight: Chose a title and look it up in the yellow pages.

Chapter Nine: How do you use a dictionary? List the steps.

Chapter Ten: What do you use on your hair? What do you buy when you go to the drug store?

Chapter Eleven: Name some streets in your neighbourhood.

Chapter Twelve: What questions should Louisa ask the immigration officer?

Chapter Thirteen: What choices does Louisa have?