



A Summer in **PARIS**

— A NOVEL —

He came for
the summer
—

She has no
intention of
staying.

The Last Woman to Fall

Emma Kotecki



Autumn leaves of gold and copper drift across the bustling Parisian boulevards of 1958 as Nathaniel Nate Presley walks with effortless confidence. Wearing a sharp tailored suit, his easy smile draws warm glances from passersby near a sun-drenched café. To Nate, the city is a beautiful stage where romance is a delightful, effortless game he has always won.



Inside a quiet, dusty bookstore near the Seine, Nate's eyes lock onto Claire Beaumont as she translates a rare leather-bound volume. Hoping to charm her, he offers a smooth, practiced compliment, expecting her to blush like all the others. Instead, Claire raises a cool, unimpressed gaze, her sharp eyes seeing right through his polished veneer before she quietly turns the page.



Under the red awning of a lively sidewalk café, Nate sits across from Claire, determined to understand her quiet dismissal. As jazz music drifts from a nearby record player, their conversation becomes a lively battle of wits, with Claire challenging his easy assumptions about life and art. For the first time, Nate finds himself listening intently, his usual effortless charm suddenly feeling entirely inadequate.



They stroll through the Jardin du Luxembourg under a canopy of fading orange leaves, the crisp autumn air settling between them. Claire speaks passionately of her independent life and her distaste for shallow gestures, her voice carrying a quiet strength that deeply moves him. Nate finds himself holding back his usual flirtations, choosing instead to offer sincere, thoughtful questions.



Standing along the stone banks of the Seine beneath the soft glow of a streetlamp, they watch the moonlit water ripple against the docks. When Nate reaches out to gently adjust her coat against the chilling wind, Claire pauses, searching his face for any sign of insincerity. Seeing only quiet, respectful concern in his eyes, she offers him her first genuine, albeit soft, smile.



At a glamorous winter gala filled with glittering chandeliers, silk gowns, and high-society chatter, Nate watches Claire command the room with quiet grace. Though many wealthy suitors try to gain her attention, she looks past them, her eyes finding Nate standing quietly near the terrace doors. He does not rush to her side, instead offering a respectful nod from across the crowded room, honoring her independence.



Seeking shelter from a sudden winter downpour, they retreat into Claire's cozy, sunlit art studio, filled with the scent of turpentine and oil paints. As rain drumbeats against the glass skylight, Nate helps her organize old canvases, asking her about her dreams and fears. In the quiet intimacy of the studio, the protective walls they both built begin to crumble.



Walking down a narrow, cobblestone alleyway in Montmartre, Nate finally shares the quiet pressures of his past and his fear of never being truly known. Claire stops walking, touched by his rare and raw honesty, realizing that beneath his charismatic armor lies a deeply loyal and vulnerable man. She gently reaches out, her hand brushing his arm in a silent promise of understanding and trust.



Spring arrives in Paris, painting the Tuileries Gardens in vibrant shades of pink and lavender. Sitting together on a green metal bench, they share a comfortable silence that speaks far louder than any of their previous witty banter. They no longer feel the need to perform or defend themselves, fully content in simply being seen and accepted by one another.



On the iconic Pont des Arts at sunset, with the golden light reflecting off the water, Nate takes Claire's hands in his. No grand declarations or rehearsed charms are needed; there is only a profound, hard-won devotion between them. As Claire leans her head against his shoulder, Nate realizes that by surrendering his pride, he has finally found a love worth keeping forever.