
Croissant Murder

A Patisserie Mystery Book 5

Harper Lin

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Chapter One

“Are they still out there?” Clémence peeked out the window of the *Damour salon de thé*.

“Yup, they are,” said Celine, who worked as a hostess. “Still standing around like idiots, waiting for your pretty mug.”

Although Clémence’s family-owned patisserie chain had the occasional celebrity visitor and it wasn’t a surprise to find photographers waiting outside from time to time, Clémence was the target of the paps this time. She wasn’t used to this amount of attention from the media. She wasn’t a movie star or model or singer. Some still considered her a socialite, but she hardly went out to parties and events anymore. There were four beefy-looking guys chatting and waiting for her by the lamppost.

“They have all day, don’t they?” Caroline, the store manager, came by, shaking her head. “Once they get their photo, it’s payday. How can they sleep at night, knowing that they’re making a living by harassing a young woman that has just been through hell and back?”

Clémence sighed. “Not only that, but our customers just want to enjoy a quiet lunch outside.”

It was July, and the weather had been exceptionally amazing in Paris for the past week. No hint of rain clouds and every chance of sunshine. The terrace was full, and everybody looked to be enjoying themselves, except for the looming thugs with cameras, just a few feet away.

“Nonsense.” Celine smiled mischievously, her dimples deepening. “They’re enjoying the novelty of it all. Half of them are tourists who want a taste of glamor and dining with the elite, and the other half are the elite, who’re used to Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) this kind of thing. Don’t worry about it.”

Clémence was doubtful. She peered out at the paparazzi again, at the nameless and faceless guys in T-shirts and ill-fitting jeans, loitering outside her store for a quick buck.

She’d passed Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) them on the way to work that morning. She was wearing a chic black sun hat Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) and sunglasses, and somehow they *still* managed to recognize her. Compared to the glamorous models, the trophy wives, or the chic mothers in the posh 16th arrondissement, Clémence considered herself quite ordinary. With a black bob haircut and an average, five-foot-four frame, she was only getting attention because of a kidnapping that had made headlines around France. She’d been a victim, along with another heiress, Sophie Seydoux. Sophie, a true socialite and It girl, was used to being in the tabloids and gossip blogs, but Clémence hadn’t been part of that world for years.

“They’ll give up eventually,” she muttered.

Those guys Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) had planted themselves outside of 4 Place du Trocadéro for days now. There had been more of them when the news first broke that Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) Clémence and Sophie Seydoux had been kidnapped and held for ransom. That was over a week ago. Both girls had been bombarded with interviews to talk about their traumatic experiences. Sophie already had a talent agent to deal with the calls and interview requests, but Clémence had no one.

She first saw herself splashed on the cover of tabloids wearing that infamous lavender Marcus Savin dress, which was now causing some sort of fashion frenzy Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) and raised the talented designer’s profile even more. Tabloid magazines wrote features about her, and they even dug up old photos of her from other events, dating back to when she was eighteen. They dissected her street fashion, her relationship with her boyfriend Arthur, and churned out sensationalistic pieces on the kidnapping.

The truth was, Sophie was the one who had suffered the most. She’d been missing for six days. By the time she was found, she’d smelled since she hadn’t showered at all, and she’d lost six pounds because they barely fed her. She’d been handcuffed to a chair during the day. At night, they locked her in a bare Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) room with only a pillow and a blanket; she had to sleep on the floor. Sophie was the one who’d gone through Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) the real horror.

Clémence had only been held for a few hours. She didn’t deserve the media attention; they were spinning it Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) to say she was some sort of hero. She’d tried to set the record straight, but the journalists didn’t listen. They

preferred the original angle; they needed a hero and a bad guy, and she had to play the role of the good guy in all of this in order for the stories to sell.

It wasn't a bad position to be in, except that all the attention was causing plenty of stress. Paris could be stressful enough to live in to begin with, especially during the summer, with its narrow and crowded streets, Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) flocks of tourists, and sniffy locals offended Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) by anything and everything. What she enjoyed about the city—the beauty, the architecture, the river, the bridges, the parks and the walks—were now tainted by the paranoia of being followed by a bunch of guys with cameras. Take away the cameras, and what did she have? A bunch of guys following her around. She couldn't even walk into her own store without lights blinding her. She also wondered whether customers were really staring at her and talking about her under their breaths, or if she was just Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) imagining things.

But she tried to be positive. For the past few days, she'd had to remind herself that she was lucky. Lucky that she wasn't still being held—or possibly killed, as that was what the kidnappers had planned to do before the police came to the rescue. Better that she was suffering through a media storm than having her parents shell out millions and still end up with a dead daughter.

No matter. It was all Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) behind her, and this would all blow over soon enough, too. No more murders, no more kidnappings, no more tabloids and paparazzi and journalists harassing Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) her for interviews. Clémence Damour would return to being a baker in the family's flagship patisserie and moonlighting as a budding painter. She would return to basking in the freshness of her new romance with her boyfriend Arthur—who happened to be rounding the corner and passing the paparazzi.

The paps recognized Arthur, too—he'd been photographed next to her at the police station when she was wearing that gorgeous lavender Savin dress.

The photographers called his name and began snapping away, but Arthur had his Persol sunglasses on and maintained a neutral expression. He wore a white V-neck T-shirt and his favorite dark-blue jeans. His chestnut-brown hair was overgrown, since he'd been through a lot, too, and hadn't had the chance to go to the barber. Even as one guy filmed him and bombarded him with questions, Arthur kept cool and maintained his normal pace.

It was only after he pushed through Damour's front door that he muttered expletives. The paps stayed outside, knowing that they didn't have the rights to film or photograph them inside. If they did, the police would be called.

"Bonjour, chéri." Clémence kissed him hello. *"Ça va? Are you okay?"*

"Yeah. I'm not bothered by a bunch of low-class leeches." He took a few deep breaths. *"Ready to go?"*

They had plans to lunch at La Coquette, which was only a few doors down, but Clémence was hesitant about going outside again.

“If only there were a back door we could escape through,” she said.

“Don’t let those guys get to you,” he said. “They’ll get tired of coming around here sooner or later and move on to the next story of the week. Don’t they usually get bored and leave later in the afternoon?”

“Yes, so can’t I hide until then?”

“Come on. Just act like they don’t exist. You can’t put your life on hold because of some vultures.”

“I know, I know...but maybe we can just eat here.”

Arthur gave her a look, one that said that she was being a wuss.

“Oh, all right,” she said. “Let me get my sunglasses, at least.”

When she reemerged from the back room, she and Arthur both put on their sunglasses. They were cool enough to take on the world, or at least appear to. Clémence had worn all black for the day, to stay incognito. She looked like a French spy.

However, before they could go out into the chaotic crowd, she could’ve sworn she saw a couple of the customers snap photos of her from the salon de thé.

She took a deep breath before she pushed the door open.

“Clémence! Clémence! Was the kidnapper really your ex-boyfriend?”

“Is Sophie really in therapy for trauma?”

“What exactly did they do to you when you were held hostage?”

“Are you going on La Grand Journal this week?”

“Why aren’t you doing interviews? Don’t you want to tell the world your story?”

Clémence now understood why celebrities had to wear sunglasses all the time. It was easier to look unfazed Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) and dignified. She didn’t want to Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) talk about the kidnapping because it was over. Her captors had been caught. One was even dead. Sophie had become a recluse, and Clémence didn’t blame her. They both wanted to forget the whole thing. Why drag it into a media circus when justice had already been served?

Arthur squeezed her hand tighter, communicating that he had her back. He was even more private than she was, but lately he'd been dragged into the Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) tabloids and the blogs with her. They'd even dug Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) up information on his private life, only the basic facts, even though there was nothing juicy—how he was from a prominent family, how he had gone to the Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) best schools, and how he was currently doing a PhD in macroeconomics at Paris Dauphine University. Because he was tall with broad shoulders Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) and had a killer bone structure, he was being profiled in the media as a former playboy turned devoted boyfriend. Their love story was tabloid fodder. It was Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) embarrassing for both of them, especially because their relationship was so new that their parents had only found out about it recently.

At La Coquette, Arthur requested a table in the Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) very back corner, away from any windows.

"I got a phone call today from a publisher," he said, when they were seated. "*Editions Laberg*. The guy said they left a message with you, but you'd never called back. They wanted me to pass on the message."

"What's it about?" Clémence asked. "I have about a hundred messages from numbers I don't recognize. I'm seriously thinking of changing my phone number."

"They want to give you a book deal for a memoir."

"A memoir? About the kidnapping?"

"Yes. Croissant Murder (A Patisserie Mystery with Recipes Book 5) And about your patisserie, your family, the Seydoux girls, everything."

Croissant Murder A Patisserie Mystery With Recipes Book 5

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