

Chapter 5

LILLY RETURNED FROM the kitchen and sank deep into her pillow-covered couch. Grabbing her drink from the glass-topped table in front of her, she stirred it thoughtlessly, staring at no point in particular.

“That must have been Kadin on the phone,” Dana said.

Focusing on her best friend, she gave a weary smile. “He’s coming over.”

Dana set her drink down, nestled back into the opposite mission chair, and twisted her hair about her index finger. A habit that hadn’t left her in the years Lilly had known her. Sometimes it was hard for people to believe Dana was an accomplished surgeon.

“I just don’t get the two of you,” she continued. “There’s obviously an attraction. You’ve been going out for months . . . as friends.”

Lilly chuckled as Dana made air quotation marks around the platonic word.

“Neither one of you are seeing anyone else. You should see the nurses swooning over Kadin in labor and delivery. I mean, they’re all wrapped around his little finger.” She held up her pinky and tapped the end of it.

“You know the reason.” Lilly took a sip of her margarita.

“For the swooning? Well, of course, that’s obvious. I mean, he’s gorgeous, kind, thoughtful, considerate. He bathes the NICU in these quilts his sister makes.”

“No, as for why Kadin won’t make it official.”

“His faith and your lack thereof.”

“I think things might be changing between the two of us.”

“Is this a joke? It’s not fair getting my hopes up . . .”

“I feel peaceful around Kadin. Like all this chaos I try to control could stop. I’ve never had that with anyone else.”

“What about his faith?”

“One step at a time. Isn’t wanting to move past friendship enough for you?”

Dana’s eyes darkened. “You know I don’t take your atheism lightly, and

Kadin won't either." She gathered her shoulder-length brown locks and formed a knot behind her head. Small wisps of hair fell around her face.

"I'm open to his thoughts about God."

"What did you think about the tree?"

"I was shocked, and I've forgiven you for divulging personal information."

"How was your annual graveside visit?"

"We never made it." Lilly rolled the ice in her drink. "That was the day Torrence Campbell came into the ER, and Anderson dropped the case in my lap right when I was supposed to leave."

"That was an ugly day. The OR was a mess for hours."

"I didn't tell you that I stopped to see Torrence today. Kadin brought the baby to see her."

"How did it go?"

"They didn't make it."

"Strange . . . both of them dying the same day."

"The baby wasn't doing well in the nursery. Kerns agreed to let Kadin take the baby to Torrence."

"Not like Kerns to be such a softy."

Lilly nodded, tracing the drops of condensation.

"Have you gone to the cemetery? Did you know Kadin planted the tree?" Dana pressed.

"It doesn't seem right unless I go on the day."

"You drive me nuts, Lilly Reeves. You claim I have certain peculiarities, yet you won't visit your mother's grave unless it's the exact day and you have the right flowers and you can bring a tape of her favorite song. It's not about the ritual; it's about the visit. It's about your healing from her loss. Lilly, it's been over fifteen years."

"To me, it's always just yesterday."

"This is one of the issues with your lack of faith in God. You try to hold everything together in your universe. How much energy does that take?" Dana asked.

"A lot."

"Yet you believe all life came from chance, without external energy forming it. Does your house ever clean itself? Have you ever come home and, by chance, found it was in an orderly state? This peace you feel from Kadin doesn't come from him but from Christ living within him."

So where did that leave their relationship? Was she attracted to him or just to his inner peace—his faith?

“This is not the time to get into this.”

“It never is for you.” Dana stopped and reached for her hip. “I’m vibrating.” Pulling the pager up, she noted the number.

“This is why you should have gone into emergency services.” Lilly pointed a finger. “You could have a life.”

“Good thing I was just drinking water. I’ll call you tomorrow to hear how it went with Kadin. I’ll want explicit details.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Lilly said standing. She followed her friend to the door. They hugged briefly.

“Don’t forget your triple locks.”

“I never do.” Lilly secured the door after Dana left.