

## Wanting a Family

## Chapter 1

"Girls listen up!" Miss Swanson hollered from across the room as she tightly gripped a small scrawny girl by the arm. Now Miss Swanson was probably the meanest lady I had ever known. She had no compassion or any kindness in her heart. She could care less about us. "We have a new girl today from Chicago, and her name is Leah she is ten years old and will be with us for 2 weeks. That's it, now get back to your chores!"

she said as she yanked the poor girl in front of her, being sure that all the girls could see her, and turned to walk away. The girl stood there with bruises on her arms and tears in her eyes.

"Well, well look at her," a tall slender girl to the right of me said, "Well we should have fun with this one." She smirked.

"Leah is it?" another girl, with a long braid running down her back, said as she walked towards the girl.

"Um...yes." She said hesitantly as she look down at her dirty feet.

"Hmm, nice...dress." The girl sarcastically said as she nudged her arm.

"Now Charlie, leave her alone! She has done nothing to you," I said as I ran over to Leah's side and quickly pulled her away. The snotty girls just rolled their eyes, "We're just havin' some fun," and turned away. I knew that if I did not say anything, they would not leave her alone. "I'm sorry 'bout them, they are always mean to new comers." I walked with Leah to the bathroom. "I'm Kori by the way. Kori Jane Henderson." I grabbed a small washcloth, dabbed it into some warm water and started washing the smudges from Leah's cheek. "I'm fifteen and I've been in this orphanage since I was an infant, I pretty much know everything you need to know about this place."

"Like what?" Leah said curiously as she stood there watching me. "This place seems horrible!"

"Well to begin there are 3 ladies that run this crazy place, first we have Miss Swanson, the meanest lady here. She is very tidy and will not stand for any bad behavior. Second, Miss Radcliff, she can be nice, but not all the time. Some days she is happy and always smiling and other days she is always crying and no one knows why. Last but not least, Mrs. Camille. Mrs. Camille is our nurse. She is

a very sweet old lady. She always gives us candy after our visit. Some times I just fake sick, just to go see her!"

"You really do know a lot about this place." Leah said as she straightened out her dirty dress.

"Yeah, I guess, but one of these days I'm going to leave this messed up place and try and find my mom."

"Your mom? She's still alive and...wants you?" Leah hesitated and her big brown eyes looked up at me.

"Well I don't know if she still wants me or even if she is alive, but I just want to know why she would leave me in such an awful place like this?"

"Well why you don't just wait a couple more years. Can't you leave when you turn eighteen?"

"Yes I can, but I just don't think I can handle this any more. I've been through so much, the girls here are mean. Now you seem like a really nice girl, Leah. People like you and me just don't belong here. Hey can you keep a secret?" I whispered.

"Yes, yes I can!" she said eagerly with her eyes searching mine wanting to know more.

"Okay so one day I was cleaning up the dishes after supper and I found this key. Just lying on the counter; it opens the doors to the office, where Mrs. Radcliffe works.

So I held on to it till everyone went to bed and then I quietly creped down the main hall way and snuck into the kitchen, went out the side door and the offices were the second door on the left, so I lifted my hand nervously for I knew if I would get caught I would be in trouble beyond you could imagine." Leah's eyes grew larger and larger as I continued my adventurous story.

"So as quiet as I could I slipped the key through the lock and turned it slightly to the left, and the door opened. I was in! I set the cold key on the nearest desk, shut the door and turned on the lights. I ran over to the filing cabinet flipped my way through the files until I found one labeled: KORI HENDERSON. I opened the folder and just started reading and reading..."

"What...what did it say?" Leah said all excitedly.

"All it really said was little things about me, when I was born, when my mother (supposedly her) dropped my off on the door step, and other little things about me that I already knew. But the most important thing of all, I found a letter..."

"A letter? What did it say?"

I pulled the envelope that I kept in my pocket at all times and read the letter out loud.

"Orphanage of Chicago,

I am the mother of this baby, Kori Jane Henderson. I had no choice but to put her in your hands. I trust you will take good care of her. She has an uncle, Cleat Buck. He lives in Belton, about five miles south of here. His address is 143 S. Weston Lane. I entrust that when she turns 18 you will return this letter to her so that she may be in contact with him. One day I hope to see her and explain to her why I did this, but until she is old enough to understand please keep her there at the orphanage. I love her dearly and I will never stop loving her.

Thank you and May God be with you.

And that was it; she didn't sign her name or anything." I explained to Leah in private for no one could no about my secret.

"Hmm...how strange, well at least she still cares for you." Leah responded.

"I hope. And I hope she is still alive. I have to find her!" I looked out the window to see such a gloomy day.

"What was your family like Leah?" I asked turning to look

at her. Leah wore a pale blue dress with white and lace at the bottom; it looked like she had been wearing the dress for ages, it was really outdated. Her hair was all black and it obviously hadn't been brushed for a few days. This poor girl, she needs help.

"Oh fine. My mom died when I was real little. I never knew her." She explained to me. I could see the pain in her eyes my heart ached for her because I believed I still had a family out there for me.

"What about you dad, is he still alive?"

"Well...yes," she said, her voice went very cold and her arms were very stiff.

"Then...what happened?" I asked intently.

"Nothing!" she said as she threw the washcloth on the ground and jolted out of the room.

"Leah!" I said as I picked up the washcloth, set it back in the sink. What did I do to upset her, I thought?

It was half past six and I was starving. Dinner was at seven and did not think I could wait any longer. I went to sit on the bed and there I found Leah. I figured she was waiting for me. So I sat beside her on the old worn out bed and told her I was sorry for whatever I did to upset her.

"It's okay Kori. You didn't do anything; I was just acting like a child. That's what my dad would always say." She paused and looked up at me. "Kori you must promise me something!" she said.

"Okay. What is it?"

"Well my dad is a very angry man he would go out some nights and not come back till 3 the next morning. I was very worried; I don't know why. When I would wake up he would just yell at me and I didn't even do anything. He would call me mean names and it just seemed like he never cared for me,"

"Is that why he gave you up for adoption?" I interrupted.

"No. I ran away and some guy found me on the streets and turned me in." Leah replied.

"Oh I see." I said.

"Now you must promise you won't tell anyone. Everybody seems to hate me already and I don't want them to find something else to bug me with. I don't need anymore humiliation, its nobodies business where I come from."

"Oh I promise Leah, as long as you promise not to tell anyone about my secret?" I said.

"Oh I promise!" She said giving me a huge. She was so cold and fragile I could feel her bones sticking out. I gently put my arms around her, for I thought if I held her any tighter I might just break her into. I often thought about taking her with me when I leave, but I thought there was no way I could take care of her. She is too weak and I couldn't bear to lose her. I will have to write to her every day! She would have a hard time surviving here. "I've made a decision Leah." I said as I turned to her.

"And what's that?" she asked looking up at me.

"Tonight I am going to leave."

"Leave! Tonight? You just can't. You're my only friend and I don't know what I would do without you?"

"Look Leah this is just your first day. You will make other friends. You'll be fine. Trust me. I have been wanting to do this for months and I am finally gonna do it. This is my chance and I'm not gonna give it up." I said. "I will write to you."

"Fine, I understand," she looked down, and thought for a bit. "Kori I am going to miss you!" She said giving me a warm smile.

"I know, and I am going to miss you. Now let's go eat! I'm starved!" I said as I grabbed her soft hand and helped

her off the bed. We walked to the dinning hall and took our seats at the table.

## Chapter 2

Tonight is was night, I thought as I grabbed a roll from the basket, set it on my small plate and passed on to the person beside me. I'll sneak out the bedroom window. I'll be sure to grab all my extra dresses, although I only have two, wrap them in my pillowcase and leave the orphanage. The only home I ever had.

After dinner Leah and I went to our room. We straightened up our beds, went to brush our teeth and one of the girls stopped us. "What are you doing with her?" she said. Now this girl was a fairly close friend of mine. She and I got along pretty well. We both had bathroom duty every Tuesday and Friday.

"Oh, hi Meg, this is Leah. She just arrived!" I said.

"Yeah I know who she is, but why are you with her?" she said giving Leah a snotty look.

"Well, because. I like her. She is really nice."

"Sure, whatever," She turned away and began getting ready for bed.

Every day we had the same routine. We wake up and 7:30 brushed our teeth, made our beds and got dressed. At 8:30 we'd go for breakfast, we usually would just eat toast and

fruit. At 9 our school day started, our first class was English; it was rather boring. Our teacher Mrs. Swimmings was really old. She was gray haired and had so many wrinkles you can hardly tell if her eyes were opened or closed, or if she was frowning or smiling. Now that class last for an hour then we go to math and Mrs. Swanson taught that class. It was the worst of them all. She would make us all sit up very straight; if we are caught slouching she would slap are hand. Now I don't understand why we have to sit up straight, who cares?

Anyways we have to do fifty problems a day, and it is not fun. At eleven we go out for recess. We usually play foursquare, but it always turns into a fight. The rest of the day we just have science, lunch and history. Then for the rest of the day we work on our homework and clean. But today was my last day to do any of it. I was leaving tonight, and no one was going to stop me!

That night after everyone went to bed, I slowly pulled my blanket off me. Bit by bit I climbed out of bed. This was my chance; I could just feel it. Now I had to be as quiet as I could, I most definitely did not want anyone to see or

hear me. My foot then hit the floor with a loud "creeeeeeek"  
I thought for sure someone heard me and I pulled my foot  
off the ground before I made the noise any worse. "Oh  
shoot!" I said softly under my breath. I quickly laid back  
down and pulled the covers over me. I laid there for just a  
few minutes just incase someone heard and would come and  
check on us. A few moments later I slowly sat up looked  
around the room. *Good, now is my chance.* I thought.

I stepped out of bed, pulled my shirt on over my  
pajamas and slipped on my coat. I snatched my bag, and  
threw my tooth brush, a hair brush, some extra clothes and  
my secret letter in my bag. I carefully tiptoed to the  
bedroom door; I turned to see all the girls all snug in  
their beds. Looking at Amber, I remembered the time we had  
our snowball fight last winter and we got stuck doing  
dishes for two weeks; so much fun!

I looked at Meg; she was sound asleep in her bed. *We  
were such good friends.* I thought. We would always do each  
others hair and paint our nails. Wow I am really going to  
miss them I thought to myself.

I grasped the door handle and turned it slightly. I  
opened the door to the long hallway. I peeked my head out

the door, and looked both ways. It was clear. I shut the door behind me and I made way down the stairs and heard aloud *creeek* I turned to see that the bedroom door was slowly opening. I took a deep breath and hustled down the stairs and slipped into the closet where the coats her hung.

I stuck my pocket in one the coats to see if I could find anything useful. I felt a small box light box I pulled it out to find it was box of cigarettes. I dropped it to the floor and kept searching the pockets. I found some piece of paper. I pulled it out and found that is was ten-dollar bill! I stuck it into my bag. This will be handy I thought.

After about five minutes in the closet, I lifted my hand to the doorknob and gradually twisted the knob. I lifted myself up off the ground and looked out the door. No one was there. There was no way the bedroom door just opened by it. *Someone knew I was there*, I thought. I just have get out of here as soon as I can. I went out into the next hall and snuck through the kitchen and went out the window. There was no way I could just walk right out the front door. Throughout the whole day Mrs. Swanson hired a guard. Many girls in the past would try and sneak out. So I

knew I would have no chance if I went that way. Hopefully he will not see me if I go the back way.

I spotted a small window above the counter. I pulled myself up on top of the counter and unlocked the window. I used all my strength to open it, it took me several tries before I finally got it open enough for my body to fit through I threw my bag out and watched as it hit the ground below me. It wasn't too far of a jump just a few feet. I slid my legs through first then my upper half, then my arms. "Ouch," I said as I hit the ground. I grabbed my bag, and with my back against the wall I slid down to the corner of the building. I glanced around to see if anyone was there. The coast was clear.

I was on my way. I took a few steps and little raindrops came pouring down onto my cheek. "Oh great, just what I needed," I said as I pulled up my hood and started walking.

"Wait!" said a familiar voice from behind.

"Huh," I turned around to see Leah falling out the kitchen window.

"Kori! Wait!" she yelled as she came running towards me.

"What are you doing Leah? How did you get out here?" I asked.

"I followed you," She said, her voice, so innocent.

"Leah, you do not belong out here--"

"Why not?" Leah said interrupting me.

"You are too young, and too weak. You will not survive. It is just too dangerous. And just think the orphanage will know we are both gone and will come looking for us. It is just not a good idea." I said wiping the raindrops from her face. "And plus Leah, you hardly know me."

"But I know that you care about me. And you are my friend!"

"Oh Leah, you're right, I do. I just don't want to see you get hurt."

"Please Kori, just let me stay with you, I won't be a bother, I promise." She persisted.

"Leah you just have to go back." I said turning away.

"Kori, please," She said as she began sobbing. I did not know what to do, I cannot just leave her, but I cannot take her with me, it's too risky. My heart ached for this girl, but I just ignored her and kept pushing on.

I by myself walked to the next block and could not stop thinking about Leah. *Did I do the right thing? Should I not have left her there?* I felt so sick in my stomach and I then, began to cry. Leah was so wretched, she has no family, no one cared for her the way I did. I could not just leave her. I started to run back towards the orphanage hoping Leah was still there, and would forgive me for being so selfish. "Leah! Leah!" I yelled running faster and faster. I found her on the curb outside the orphanage. Her hair was dripping yet and her face was as pale as ever. "Oh Leah, I am so sorry. Will you please forgive me, I was being very selfish and only thinking of myself?"

"Do you really mean that, Kori?" She said rising to look at me.

"Yes, yes I do. I don't want to do this alone."

"I forgive you," she looked at me and smiled.

I put my coat around her shoulders and we walked until we found some an old abandoned building. We made our way through the door the building was old, lots of dust and some old furniture piled in the corner. I pulled out my blanket and went to sleep.

The next morning came sooner than I thought. At sunrise I woke Leah up. We gathered our things and started

on our journey. Our plan was to travel to my uncle's house. I was pretty sure he would help us.

It has been one hour since we had woken up that morning and we were starving. We only had the ten dollars I took from the coat pocket back in the orphanage, and we did not want to waste it quite yet. The weather had been raining on and off all day. It was rather windy and we did our very best to stay warm. We did not have much to carry. Leah had nothing but a blanket that she wore around herself to stay warm and I had a blanket as well and my bag. I was sure to keep my letter close to me at all times. It was the only thing I had to prove I still had family.

Leah and I walked into this small shop just to take a small break. We sat down on this on two old chairs that were placed in the corner and watched as people shopped.

I have never seen so many different kinds of people. Some were larger with puffy cheeks, and some were real skinny. Some were short and some were tall. But the one family that struck me the most was the older looking lady who had three kids with her. The oldest of the three was a tall boy, probably my age, which was teasing his little sister and tugging on her pigtails. There was a small baby lying in a carriage crying. The mother was doing her best

to keep the baby from crying and trying to tell her son to leave the girl alone, but he wouldn't. I could not help but think, *is that what all families are like, do they always fight?* There was no way my mother would be like that, it just couldn't be.

"Kori," Leah asked.

"What?" I said looking away from the family.

"What will happen if you never find your mom? Are you just going to go back to the orphanage?"

"No, I don't think so. If I never find my real mom, I will just stay and live with my uncle, and with you, of course." I said. But I was more frightened than ever. I had to be strong for Leah; I couldn't show my fear in front of her. I just had to find my real mom. It would mean the world to me. "Now come on lets get out of here."

We grabbed our things and continued out the door.

## Chapter 3

I pulled out my letter that I found in the orphanage, and read: *143 S. Weston Lane*. We were getting closer. My heart was bounding I thought it was going to jump right out of my chest.

I saw a man, "Excuse me sir," I said to the older gentleman sitting on a park bench reading a newspaper.

"Well hi their little lady, can I help you?" he said. "Yes, could you tell me where I go from here to find Weston Lane? I hear it is very common street." I said sitting beside the man.

"Yeah, well you keep going straight and at the stop light you turn left on Willoughby." He held up his hand and pointed me in the right direction. "Then keep going till you see Weston lane, it should be on your right."

"Oh thank you very much, sir." I said grabbing my things.

"Where do you come from, missy?" he asked as he stood up along side me questioning my moves.

"Oh...uh...you know, around. I...was just on my...way so see my...grandma." I said. Hoping my tone of voice did not just blow my cover.

"Yes, are mother and father are going to meet us there, we just had to stop and get a few things." Leah said jumping right into the conversation.

"Oh I see, well you girls be safe now." He said as he set his hat on his head patted me on the back and walked towards the bus. "There are some crazy people in this world."

"Wow that was a close one. Leah I did not think you would just lie like that." I said as I began to laugh to myself.

"Well you did too, and I just wanted him to believe us." She said.

"Well its good thing you did, thanks. Now let's go! I can't wait to see him!" I said.

We did exactly what we were told. We walked up to the street to the stoplight, and waited till the sign across the street said **walk** and turned left to Willoughby. "One step closer," I said looking at Leah.

"Hey, Kori I am starving do you think we could get a bite to eat before we see your uncle?" Leah asked. "We do have some money."

"I suppose. I am really hungry as well." I said.

We saw a small food shop and decided that it'll do. We bought two sandwictches and large water, and the water was of course free but the sandwiches cost \$2.29 each.

We took our food and sat down on a nearby curb and ate.

"What if he won't accept us?" Leah said taking a huge bite into her sandwich.

"Why won't he?" I replied with my mouth full of food.

"I don't know, I was just thinking. We have never met this man I don't know if I want to live with him." She said

"Now, Leah do not be so pessimistic." I said taking a sip of water.

"Sorry," she said bowing her head.

We finished our food and began our journey. We found Weston Lane and started looking for the house that said 143. It took about fifteen minutes till we found it. The house was a tan color. All one story with two windows on either side of the door; there was a nice silver car parked in the driveway. Leah and I hesitated just a little and then went to the door.

We knocked on the door and big man with gray hair came to the door.

"Hello. What do you want? If you are sellin' somethin' I don't want it. If you are asking for my money you aren't gonna get any."

"Oh, no. Um...well..." I said looking at Leah hoping she would help me out a little.

"What? Speak up child. You mute or something?"

"Well we have not met, but my name is Kori Jane Henderson. I have a letter here." I held it in my hands,

He snatched the letter from my hand. "Oh I see. Come in," he said.

"Thank you." I said shutting the door behind me.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

"We just came here from the orphanage. Chicago Orphans." I said.

"I see. Well you stay here; I will be right back." He said turning and walking into a room that looked like a kitchen. "BOOM" I heard a door shut. I looked around the corner and he was gone.

"Come on," I said as I took Leah's hand and pulled her into a room. "This looks like his bedroom." I opened a desk drawer and fumbled through some papers.

"Kori, you can't just do that. Now come on he is going to catch us." Leah said.

"Oh Leah, come on. I'm just looking for some evidence where I might help to finding my mom." I found a lot of little things, some screws, pens and pencils. But underneath a pile of papers I found a small letter. I pulled out the white envelope that had a slit at the top where it had been opened. "Look at this!" I said. On the front side I read: **Cleat Buck** and at the upper left hand corner the return address said: **St. Mary's Hospital 1576 Cranberry Road**. I pulled out the letter and read:

**Dear Mr. Buck**

**Your sister, Anne Henderson has been struggling with some breathing issues. She was brought in about a week ago. We have been doing many tests on her and are doing our best to help. We will do our best to keep you updated. If any questions just contact her nurse.**

**Thank you,**

**St. Mary's Hospital**

"What are you doing in here?" I loud voice from behind said.

I quickly shoved the letter back into the desk drawer.

"Oh, I'm not doing anything. I am so sorry I..."

"You don't belong here." He said.

"No, please you have to help me! I need to see my mom; I want to know who she is!" I said.

"You are too young, you belong in the orphanage." He said pulling me into the hallway. "She didn't want you for a reason, and you won't understand." He grabbed the phone and began dialing. "Hello operator, Chicago Orphans."

"No! Stop, please!" I knocked the phone from his hands.

"Hey!" he snapped as he bent down to pick up the phone. "I'm going to call the orphanage and let them know I have you, and take you back where you belong!" he said grabbing me by the arm.

"No you can't!" I kicked him in the shin and Leah and I ran as fast as we could out the door, and went running down the street.

"Hey get back here!" he yelled as he stepped out the front door. "Oh, you are a stupid girl." He shouted.

"Oh I just cannot believe he betrayed us like that," Leah said as we slowed down to catch our breaths.

"I know. He is hiding something." I said. "Well all I know is that she is at St. Mary's Hospital, or at least she was, and her name is Anna, Anna Henderson. And if she isn't

live there any more we can probably find out where she went after that."

"Let just hope she is still alive," Leah said.

"Yes, I'm sure she is. Now do you have any idea where St. Mary's is?" I asked.

"No idea." She said.

## Chapter 4

We began walking further down the road. When I realized we should probably get out of town before he or the orphanage comes looking for us. "Leah, what do you think if we used the rest of our money for a bus? That way we could get out of town." I said looking at Leah. Her face was pale, and her back was all slouched over. I could see the struggle on her face as we kept walking.

"Sounds good, Kori," She said as with a shaky voice. She rubbed her eyes.

"Leah you really don't look so good." I said grabbing her and she fell right into my arm. "Leah! Leah! Wake up, what's wrong?" she had fainted in my arms. My heart began pounding. Oh no what happened?

I knelt down; Leah was too much weight for me to hold. I set her in the grass. And hastily grabbed the water from my bag and set Leah up enough for her to drink. I began pouring the water into her mouth. I sat there for a few seconds rubbing her cheek and slowly I could hear her begin breathing. "Phew," I said. "I thought I was going to lose you." I said as I gently sat her up.

"What happened? Where am I?" Leah asked as she slowly sat up and wiped the water from her mouth.

"Leah, you just fainted. Let's just sit here for a few minutes, till you catch your breath."

"Okay," she said laying back into the grass. I really don't feel so well."

"I know, but just drink some water, you'll be okay. Hey I have extra food from lunch, would you like some?" I asked pulling out my meat and cheese sandwich I bought.

"Sure," she took a bite and began chewing down the sandwich faster than I could've swallowed.

After Leah rested, we walked up to the next block in search for a bus stop. All that we saw was a big lot where people were farming. Our only option was turning around and walking back to where we started; the bus stop with the friendly old man.

We began walking when we saw a silver car driving slowly down the street. "Leah, that looks like my uncle's car!" I said looking closer and I saw the same gray haired man in the window. "Hurry duck, before he sees us," I knelt down behind the tall yellow grass and pulled Leah down with me.

The car began to slow down, I peeking through the grass just enough for me to see him and hopefully he not see me. Leah was shacking, and I could hear her teeth chattering behind me. "It's going to be okay, Leah. Just calm down," I said patting her on the back. This poor girl is scared to death! The car door slammed shut, and I peeked through the grass and saw him walking towards us. Oh no! I thought. Leah and I scurried across the field on our hands and knees; we had to get out of here. "Hey, get back here!" He yelled from far away. He began chasing after us.

Leah and I ran as fast as we could down the street. He was right behind us. We cut through someone's yard and made it to the main road. "Phew, we lost him." I said catching my breath. Why was he after us, what did he want?

"Kori I'm so tired, I can't move anymore." Leah said as she slouched over grabbing her knees.

"I know, I'm exhausted too, lets just here for a few minutes." I said and we sat down on the curb and took a break.

After a few minutes I stood up. "Now we better get going, we have a lot to do, if we want to make it to that bus stop before dark." I said.

We made it to the main stoplight, and rounded the corner and walked a little bit more, before we made it to the station. We sat on the bench and waiting patiently. Where are we going to go? I've only known this town; I've never been elsewhere. I thought so myself.

"Kori...I'm scared really scared." Leah said as she grabbed my arm and squeezed tightly.

"It's going to be okay, Leah. You just have to trust me," I said.

The bus arrived moments later and we boarded. "Where are you two headed?" the bus driver asked.

"Anywhere, take us wherever." I said and we took our seats by the window.

We drove for a few more miles. Leah was sleeping on my shoulder and I rested my head on hers. We were both exhausted.

It was about 10 that night when the bus finally stopped. "All right, last stop for the night," the man said.

"Okay Leah, this is it. We have to go." I said waking her up and grabbing our things.

We stepped off the bus. The town had a new smell. It smelled so fresh and friendly. I felt safe. The first thing

I saw was an old barn in the distance. We had to stay there; there was nothing better in sight. "Come on Leah! That's it, we'll stay there!" I said pointing towards a brown barn over the hill. We ran all the way.

When we made it to the barn, it looked abandoned. Leah and I struggled to open the door, but finally made it. There was some hay and nothing else. We both cuddled in a corner and drifted off to sleep.

Morning came bright and early and we were both starving, we had not eaten very much and Leah was not feeling to well again. We gathered our things and left the barn. We traveled up the hill and made it to the main rode. We needed food and we had nothing. Leah and I saw a small little shop with big rectangular shaped windows; and in the windows where cupcakes and cookies and different sizes of bread. Oh it looked amazing! Leah and I were starving I think any food would have looked good to us at that point. Anyways we decided to go in and see if they had like any free samples or anything like that.

"Hi, welcome to Abby's Bakery!" said an old man with a beard. "What can I do for ya?"

"Well we are just really hungry and wanted to know if you all had any free samples. Cuz...we have no money." I said.

"Well I'm sure we could something for you two." He said as he stepped behind the counter and began pulling out to small pieces of pumpkin bread.

"Oh my," said a young girl with golden blond hair as she walked in. "Where did you two come from? You guys look like you haven't bathed in ages!"

"Oh...well..." I said looking down. Oh no! We cannot know what we've done, I thought. I took a sharp glance at Leah and she was as pale as ever. "Well our parents just died and...we just left and now we are really hungry." I was tired of always lying someone for sure is going to find out I thought, but no one can know our secret. They would take us and put right back in the orphanage.

"And have no home!" Leah added.

"Leah," I said glaring at her.

"Well I'm sure we can help." Said that woman who was standing beside the bearded man. "My name is Abigail Johnson. And this is my father, Henry. What are your names?"

"My name is Kori, and this is Leah." I said.

"Well what are you guys hungry for, we've got plenty?" Abigail said pulling open a cabinet. Oh the smell of fresh bread, my stomach was growling I couldn't take it any more. "Well, go on help yourself."

"Oh thank you!" Leah said reaching for a buttered roll.

We ate so much and enjoyed every bit of it. We were truly thankful.

## Chapter 5

Leah and I ate till we were satisfied while Abigail hung over our shoulders and watched. "So what do you guys mean you have no home?" she asked.

"Well...are parents died and...we were scared so we ran here." I said.

"Oh I am terribly sorry. Are you staying with family here?"

"No, we are all alone. We slept in that barn down the street last night and have no money or anywhere to go." Leah said.

"Leah!" I whispered as I kicked the back of her foot from underneath the table.

"What?"

"You don't say that kind of stuff." I said giving her mean glare. Abigail sat across the table eating a muffin and acting like she wasn't listening, but I knew she was.

"Well where did you girls come from? What town?" Abigail asked.

"The Chicago area," I answered.

"Oh okay, so not too far from here, about thirty minutes away."

"Yes, we took a bus here with the money we had left," I said.

"Okay well let's get you two cleaned up. Well let me talk to my father and we'll see if you can stay here for a few days, or just till we find you guys a home."

"Thank you, but you just can't send us to an orphanage! Please you must not!" Leah blurted out.

"Well of course not," Abigail said. "I would never. Orphanages are terrible and disgusting places nobody would want to live there." She said and began walking off.

We finished up are little snack Abigail took us to the back part of the shop and showed us this small room, she brought in a mattress and a few blankets and made us feel right at home. It was amazing! We were so very thankful for her hospitality. No one had treated us so kindly we didn't know just how to respond.

"Well girls it has been a long day. You need to get some rest. If you need anything I will be right down the hall."

"Are you sure this is okay with your dad?" I asked as I straightened out the bed.

"Oh yes, he is a very easy going guy. Oh and in return I expect some help around the bakery." She said teasing.

Leah and I took to ourselves and had a good night sleep, in fact the best one we have had in a couple of nights. We finally felt at peace. The bakery was such a nice place, with a small home in the back. When you first walk in it looks like any ordinary shop but once you go through the wooden doors in the back it is like a whole new place. There was one bathroom and next to the bathroom was a smaller room where Mr. Johnson slept. And down the hall was Abigail's room and across from hers was where Leah and I stayed. It had cute pink colored wallpaper and a small lamp in the corner, a good size dresser on the back wall and an old wooden desk that looked as if it barely was stood. I was thankful.

Later that night I awoke to a strange noise. "Ughhh... oow..." Leah was tossing and turning; she held tightly to her stomach.

"Leah, Leah what is wrong?" I asked nudging her arm trying to wake her up.

"Ohhh...my stomach, my stomach is really hurting. Ouch!" she yelled.

"What is it, what's wrong?" Abigail said as she came rushing into the room.

"I don't know. Leah said her stomach is hurting; she seems like she is in a lot of pain. I don't know what to do," I said.

"Okay go into the kitchen and get a hot towel, the towels are in the second drawer by the sink. Hurry!"

"Okay," said I ran to the kitchen, still not sure where to go, but I made my way quickly and grabbed the first rag I saw. I turned on the hot water and waited till the rag was soaked, then squeezed out the excess water and ran back to the bedroom. "Here," I said handing her the wet towel.

"She has a really high fever." Abigail said placing the rag across her forehead. "Lets just let her get some rest and we can check back on her in the morning."

"But isn't there anything else we can do?" I asked.

"Well, not right now. She is calming down; I think she will be okay."

"All right,"

"Now you better get back to sleep, we don't want you getting sick too." She said and walked out the door.

The next morning I woke to find Abigail helping Leah. I had never seen Leah so pale in my life. She looked lifeless. "How is she? Will she be okay?" I asked sitting up. "Did you call a doctor?"

"I'm sorry Kori, but my father says we don't the money to right now, but we need to do our best to get her healthy and if things do not get better then he might call for one. The closest hospital around is thirty minutes south of here."

"Oh...okay." I said. This is not good. Leah has to get better; I can't do this by myself. I can't just sit here living this lie. I was determined to get her on her feet again and continue looking for my mom.

"Mr. Johnson ran the bakery by himself today. Abigail and I nursed Leah as much as we could, but still nothing. Leah lay helpless in the bed. Her head was hot and she wasn't eating and hardly speaking. Seeing her like this, made me sick. What was wrong with her? What else could we do, there must be something, I thought.

"Kori, why don't you go see if my dad needs help at all, I can watch Leah for a bit." Abigail said.

"Okay," I walked towards the front of the shop and saw Mr. Johnson laying his head down against the counter. "Hi, Mr. Johnson. Is there anything I can do?"

"Well..." he said.

"I can sweep the floors." I said.

"That would be great Kori, thanks," he said handing me a broom.

How am I ever going to get out of here with Leah sick? I have to find my mom. But Abigail and Mr. Johnson cannot know my secret, and on top of everything my insane uncle is after me. This is all turning into a big mess. What am I going to do?

## Chapter 6

Later that night Leah lay, still helpless, on the bed. Abigail helped her and did everything she could but Leah was not getting any better. "What are we going to do?" I asked Abigail kneeling beside the bed.

"I don't know, sweetie, I just don't know." She said. "She is getting worse." Her face as all washed out, she hasn't slept all night, and I couldn't afford having Abigail getting sick too. "Hey, Abby I can take care of Leah for the rest of the night, that way you can get your rest, you look exhausted!" I said.

"Oh are you sure?" she said wiping her brow.

"Yes, positive," I grabbed the damp rag from her hand and started dabbing Leah's forehead. Abigail walked out the door, I followed her out, and shut the door behind her, and walked over to Leah's side. "Its okay, Leah you'll get better, I just know it," I said softly, just hoping Leah could hear my voice and know everything will be okay.

I rested my head on the side of the bed, and hummed softly.

The next morning I awoke lying on Leah's beside. I jumped up. "Leah," I said. She lay there still, her chest was not moving. I grabbed her arm to check her pulse. Nothing. I bet over to see if I could feel her breathing. Nothing. "Oh no!" I yelled. "Leah! No!" I stood in shock. No! This can't be true. Tears began to pour from my eyes. I could feel my heart beating faster. I felt so alone.

"What? What is it?" Mr. Johnson came running in.

"It's...its Leah." I hesitated as I wiped the tears from my eyes as I stepped away from the bed. Everything seemed like such a blur, I couldn't move.

"What?" he rushed over, to find her lying faintly on the bed. No sign of life. She was dead. "Kori, I'm sorry." He said. He took me in his arms and hugged me tightly.

"It's all my fault! I fell asleep. If I wouldn't have fallen asleep I could have been there for her!" I said gripping his shirt with my sweaty fingers. I could've helped her when she needed it.

"No, no Kori, its not."

"Yes is it!"

"Kori, listen things like this just happen and there is nothing we can do. We just have to trust in God." He said as a single tear came from his eye.

"God? What God?" I stormed out the room.

"Kori!?" I heard a voice from front of the shop.

"What's wrong? I heard you yelling." Abigail said coming towards me.

"Just leave me alone!" I shouted back. I went out the front door and just sat on the steps outside. I couldn't help but cry. My heart was shattered. Leah was my only true friend. Now what was I going to do; she was gone? These thoughts ran through my head as I sat there. At that moment my world stood still. I sat on the steps outside the shop. The wind blew through my hair and I could smell the dirt and dust in the air, as people would pass by. At this time the bakery was full of people making orders and impatiently waiting. I knew I should have been in there helping but I just couldn't. I could not just act like everything was fine when it wasn't. I will never forgive myself.

## Chapter 7

"Kori," Abigail said sitting down on the steps beside me.

"What?"

"You can't be mad." She said rubbing me on the back.

"Why shouldn't I be, my best friend is now dead! And it's all my fault! You can't tell me not to be mad!"

"Kori things like this happen for a reason. God knows He is in control." She said.

"God? Who is this God, you keep talking about." I asked, wiping the tears from my cheek.

"The God who sent his son to die for our sins; he loves us. Kori he loves you and he will be there for you."

Abigail and I sat on the steps and she explained it to me the greatness and sovereignty of God. She told me about how Jesus came to earth and was crucified and resurrected. She shared with me his abundant love and she gave me a small black book. On the cover it read: **HOLY BIBLE**. I took it and began reading and reading it. It was still very hard for me to grasp the whole picture of Jesus; I just wasn't sure about all this. Is it really true, I mean all these stories? I had to think about it for a while. I just

couldn't see how a God like this would just let this happen. Something so terrible and let Leah and I and others suffer and live in such a terrible orphanage for so long. I just couldn't believe it, not yet.

That night after dinner I went in and talked with Mr. Johnson to get his perspective on this God thing. We sat and talked for quite some time. I learned a lot and could see God's greatness. I could tell that Mr. Johnson really did love God. I wanted to be like him. Abigail and Mr. Johnson were different and I wanted what they had. They had such compassionate hearts and really cared for others. I did not get mad very often, such peaceful people. How did they do that?

That night I lay in bed contemplating about becoming a Christian. That night I tossed and turned. No matter what I did I just couldn't sleep.

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That morning I woke up, after a terrible night sleep. I felt cold and alone. I was confused. Who was this God? And did I really want to believe in him? It was all a lot to comprehend at once.

The rest of the day I just helped out around the shop with sweeping and taking peoples orders. I was tired my back ached and my feet were sore. During the day I did my best to focus on my work and not think about Leah, or this God; but for some reason this idea of God kept creeping into my mind. So I sat down and pulled out the small black book and began reading in the book of Luke. I just kept reading and reading I didn't want to stop, it was so interesting and I wanted to know more.

"Hey Kori, mind if I join you?" Abigail said as she walked into the room.

"Sure."

She sat down and I asked a few questions and she seemed to know all the answers. I was intrigued.

Later that night, Abigail and Mr. Johnson and I sat around the table and ate dinner. "Okay, I have a confession to make." I said looking down.

"Oh what is it?" Mr. Johnson added as he took a bight of his food.

"Well this whole time I have been here, I have learned a lot and I am very thankful but I have also been lying to you, both." My heart began pounding, what if they didn't except me? What if they took my back to the orphanage?

"Okay...my parents didn't die. Leah and I escaped from the orphanage in search for my mom." It was silent. I didn't know what to say.

"Well...I'm shocked. What made you lie to us in the beginning?" Mr. Johnson asked with a puzzled look on his face. "I always knew something wasn't right."

"Well we were afraid you were going to take us back. See my uncle is after me, and I don't know why." I added and began telling them my story about the letter in the orphanage and the letter I found in his desk drawer. They were in shock, but they wanted to help.

"Well what can you do? Do you want to stay here still, because that's fine? What would you like Kori?" Abigail asked.

"To find my mom," I said. We talked a little more, and they definitely wanted to help.

A sudden calmness ran through me. I felt at ease and knew I could trust them. "I'm really sorry for lying to you guys. And thank you for the Bible and sharing with me God's word."



## Chapter 8

I went to the front of the shop and knelt down and began to cry. I was so confused. I felt bad for lying to Abby and Mr. Johnson; but now they know. I just don't know if they still want me. What am I to do? Should I just leave and never come back? Do they really want me here knowing that I am a liar? Oh these thoughts ran through my head all day.

I heard soft footsteps coming towards me I quickly stood up and wiped the tears from my eyes. "Kori? Hey I thought that was you." Abby said as she grabbed the washcloth and began wiping down the counter. "People are gonna start coming in soon. Do you want to run the counter? I have some shopping to do for the coming week."

"Sure," I said. I went to unlock the front doors. Abby grabbed her bag and coat and left the shop. I sighed. Well at least I will have some time to myself to think.

The day drug on and on, Abigail was gone all morning. I had just few customers. I larger women came in, "Hi," She

said. She wore a nurse's uniform and her hair was pulled in to a low bun in the back.

"Hello, can I help you?" I asked.

"Yes, I would like one croissant please." She said looking up at me. "Child, how old are you?"

"Oh...I'm fifteen." I said pulling out a croissant and putting in into a plastic bag.

"Oh well you just seem very young to be working here; and to be young lady. Are you here by yourself?" she asked handing me her money.

"Oh yes ma'am I just needed some things to do...and yes I am here by myself but my owner and his daughter will be here soon." I said.

"Oh I see. Well I've just been coming here for years, and they have never hired anyone before."

"Oh well yeah..."

"All right well tell 'em Lucy Weaver stopped by. Will you child?" she said.

"Yes, I will. Have a nice day." What a strange lady, and so many questions.

I closed the shop for a few minutes so I could relax some. I made myself a sandwich and went to sit down in one of the booths. I began reading from the small black book. I

thought hey this guy knows a lot; maybe He could help me with my situation.

I started in the book of Jeremiah and stumbled on an interesting verse: **He loves each one of us, as if there were only one of us. God's hand is always there, once you grasp it, you'll never want to let it go!**

I have read a lot in the Bible and have to come see God's love for his people. I was ready to make Him head of my life. I was ready for him to guide and direct me in a ways that honors him. This was it, I thought. I knelt down and bowed my head and began praying. That day at lunch I accepted Christ as MY Savior!

After I finished eating I began reading and reading the Bible. I couldn't stop. It was so intriguing. I heard the door open and turned to see Abigail walking in with brown bags in her arms and her cheeks all rosy from the cold breeze outside, "What's going on? Why did you close?" she asked.

"Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry. I was eating lunch then I...I...just started reading." I hesitated I didn't know how to tell Abby I became a Christian.

"Oh, well okay just remember next time," she seemed confused. "Well I got some soup for dinner tonight. I hope you like it."

"I'm sure I will." I said as I got up and went to my room.

I began straightening things up. My room had become a big cluttered mess and I needed it clean. I think I'll just wait till dinner that way I can tell Mr. Johnson and Abby together that I am now a Christian.

## Chapter 9

That night at dinner I told Abigail and Mr. Johnson I accepted God into my heart. They were very excited to hear my news. They each gave me a big hug. I felt loved. They were so good to me.

Minutes later there was a big bang on the door. "I'll get it," said Abigail.

"No, let me," said Mr. Johnson as he stood up and began walking to the door. "I'm sorry we're closed."

"Well too bad." The man said as he barged right in.

"Oh no!" I panicked. "That's him. That's him!" I said grabbing Abigail by the arm.

"That's who?" she said trying to loosen my grip.

"My--"

"Her uncle, now come on. You are coming with me." He said as he grabbed me by my shoulder and yanked me out of the chair. "There is no more running now. I got you!"

"NO! Stop! Please, leave me alone!" I yelled, as tried grabbing table.

"What's the problem?" Abigail said as she pulled me her direction. "You can't just take her."

"Yes, I can. This is known of you're business. Stay out of it. Now come on girl!" he said pulling me back from Abigail.

"Now just wait a minute, let's just sit down and talk about this." Mr. Johnson butted in.

"Quiet, old man." He said grabbing a small pan that was sitting on the counter and turned and whacked him in the head.

"No! Henry!" I yelled pulling myself away and running to his side. Mr. Johnson stumbled to the ground.

"Just run Kori. I'll take of this," Abigail whispered as she bent down near her father.

"No, I can't just leave you. This is my fault. I'm gonna fix it."

"No go!" she said. My uncle began walking over to me. "What is your problem? If...if you don't get out of here I'm calling the police!"

"Sure," he said. And that was all I heard. I ran out the back door of the shop, went into my room. I grabbed a few things and scurried out the window.

I called for a taxi. I pulled out the address to the hospital I had tucked away in my pocket and told the driver

where to go. If I was going to leave, I might as well go to the hospital now. I was afraid. It was my only chance.

I looked out the back window and saw the gray haired man coming out of the shop. It was him. He was angry but I did not know why he wanted me. I didn't do anything. Well at least I was ahead of him now.

I began to relax some, the taxi was pretty comfortable. I laid my head down and I must have drifted off to sleep because the next thing I knew we were parked right outside the hospital and the taxi driver kept nudging my arm, "Get, up. Hey girl, come on!" he said.

I got out of the car. The hospital was huge. It was the biggest building I had ever seen. I walked into the large double doors. There were nurses everywhere, and people. It was so loud I could not even hear myself think. I didn't know where I was. I walked up to a young woman sitting at a desk. "Excuse me." I said.

"Yes, how can I help you?" She said softly. "No I'm sorry sir we do not serve pizza here. This is a hospital."

"Huh?" what was she talking about, I thought.

"Oh no, miss I wasn't talking to you. Sorry about that." She pulled a small black thing from her ear and set it on the desk. "What can I help you with?"

"Oh yes I was wondering if you could tell me where my mom is? I heard she was in this hospital." I asked.

"Oh this is the wrong department. You need to go down this hall and take the elevator to the second floor. They can help down there," she said.

"Okay, thank you." I said. I began walking I saw all kinds of people; some were laying on these weird beds with rollers but many people were sitting outside the rooms. I did not know what they were doing.

I walked over to the elevator and went to the second floor. I saw a desk all the way at the end of the hall. I sighed. I have a long ways to walk.

I finally made it to the counter. "Hi."

"Yes, can I help you?" said the older woman with gray hair.

"Yes, I was looking for my mom. Could you tell me where she is?" I asked.

"Well could I have some ID?"

"ID?"

"Yes. Oh I see...well how old are you? What's your name? Do you have a birth certificate that I can clarify your relation?"

"Well my name is Kori Henderson. My mom's name is Anne Henderson and I am fifteen years old," I said. "Will that do?"

"Well I suppose let me see if I can find this Anne Henderson. Just one moment." She said as she began typing something into the computer. "Okay I found a name here. Anne Henderson. She is in room **103b**. Okay."

"Okay thank you. Oh could you tell me where that is?"

"Yes it is down one floor. You just have to look for the room number. She'll be in there, sweetie."

"Okay, thanks." I said. Oh another floor. This place is enormous!

I walked by and saw many rooms. There were lots of people. They all looked miserable. I felt bad for these people. What were they doing here? What could be wrong with them, I thought.

"Oh, excuse me," said an older woman as she bumped into me. "Oh wait a minute. Do I know you?" she said.

I knew I recognized her, but didn't know where. "Um...I don't know. You do look familiar."

"Hmm...oh do you work at the bakery on Ivy street?"

"Yes, yes I do," I remembered her now, she was the nurse that came in the other day.

"Well how are you? What are you doing here?"

"I'm good. I'm looking for my mom. Actually you might know her, Anne Henderson?"

"Oh yes, she was been a patient of mine, since she was diagnosed. Do you want me to show you where she is?" she asked.

"Oh yeah thank you that'd be great."

"Okay, come with me."

We walked down the hall. Mrs. Weaver just kept talking and talking I wasn't really paying any attention my mind was going in circles.

"Right in here miss," She said.

"Thank you." My heart was pounding, this is it, I thought.

!

## Chapter 10

I stood right outside the hospital room. My heart was pounding. This is really it. I'm going to meet my mom! I grabbed the door handle, my hands all sweaty.

"Don't you dare open that door!" yelled a man with a deep strangling voice.

I turned around. It was him. He was coming towards me. He wore an old rugged shirt his arms bulging out. His hand was all bloody. My only thought at that moment was Henry.

He came closer and grabbed my arm. "Stop! Let me go!" I shouted. He dragged me to the stair case and pulled me down the stairs and out the door. I was no match for this guy. He was too strong for me to handle. "Where are you taking me?" I yelled as he stuck me into his car.

"The orphanage." He snapped.

"But my mom! She's in there! I have to see her."

"Yeah, well too bad your mom is sick. She has lung cancer and won't make it for a few days. She's dying and definitely doesn't need her "daughter" coming into the picture at a time like this--"

"At a time like what?" I added. "I'm her daughter, she would be happy to see me. Wouldn't she?"

He scoffed. "She told me that when you turn eighteen I was supposed to come get you but no I don't want you and neither does she. That's why I am taking you back. You are too young to out in a world like this.

He did answer my question. He was making me mad. "But why can't I just live with the Johnson's. I was fine there?"

"Because you are a nosy little snot just like your mom and I just don't care!" he said as we came to a stop at the stoplight.

Then at that moment I swung open the car door and leaped out as the light turned green. I went running down the street; as fast as I could. I didn't look back. I had to get to that hospital!

I didn't really know where I was or where to go. I just kept running. I called for a taxi.

"Where to?" the man asked.

"The hospital please." We were there in seconds. I had no money left, so I just ran out the car.

"Hey! Hey get back here kid!" he shouted. I just kept going.

I went through the double doors, just like last time, and ran to the elevator, floor 2. I made my way to the same

room I was about to enter before. Stopped for a minute and caught my breath. I didn't feel as nervous this time. Maybe because I'm all shaken up.

I went to open the door but a man in a white suite came out. "Oh excuse me. Are you going in?"

"Yes."

"Well you are going to have to wait for a few minutes. The nurse is in there checking up on her. You can wait over here," he said pointing to me where the seats were.

I took a seat and gathered my thoughts. What was I going to say? What if my uncle was right, what if she really didn't want me? What if I would just cause more pain? Maybe I've made a mistake coming here. Maybe I should just go back to Abigail's. Oh I was confused and what was my next move if my uncle finds me here. Oh this is not good. I began pacing back and forth. My heart began pounding I was so nervous!

I went over to the pay phone I had just some extra change in my bag. I called Abigail.

"Hello," she said.

"Abigail, its me, Kori," I said.

"Kori! Oh thank goodness you are okay! Where are you?"

"Abigail how's Henry? I'm at the hospital about to see my mom. I don't think I can do it."

"Oh he'll be all right. Just a small concussion," she paused. I knew she was worried. "What do you mean you don't think you can do it?"

"I am just having second thoughts about meeting my mom. Like is this the right thing?"

"Kori I know this must be hard but you have to have courage. Pray to God; ask him for help and guidance. He will help you. If this is not the right thing then you will know. Trust me. Just pray." Her voice was so calm. She was so strong and always knew what to say.

"Okay, thanks." I hung up the phone. Walked back over to where I was sitting and sat down and began praying.

"Excuse me, miss. Are you waiting to come in here,"  
Asked a small voice.

I looked up to see a nurse coming out of the room. "Oh yes. May I go in?"

"Yes, you can but don't make it too long, she needs some rest."

I took a big breath and walked in the door.



## Chapter 11

I walked in the hospital room. I saw a young woman lying helplessly on the bed. My heart began beating faster. I began to shake. "Hi," I had to force the words from my mouth.

She gave a warm smile. "Hello," she said sitting up. Her arms were weak and her eyes were tired. "Who might you be?" her body was restless and she was all shriveled up. She looked...dead. I've never seen such a horrid sight.

I gulped. "My name is Kori Jane...Henderson," I said. Her eyes got big.

"Come here," She whispered.

I slowly walked toward her and she grabbed my hand. Her eyes searching mine. "Oh, my baby, my baby!" she said as she took my hand.

"Mom..." a single tear came down my face.

"Yes, yes it's me," she said as she began to cry. I knelt down to hug her. "It's really you isn't it? Cleat told me about you,"

"Mom what happened?" I asked. The hospital door swung open. I froze.

"Cleat! What are you doing here?" asked Anne.

"I was coming to take this girl out of here."

"No, your not; please leave I need to talk to my daughter, alone," she said.

He reluctantly left the room with that glare in his eye. I my heart went back to a normal pace. I thought I was going to die there for a second.

"Now, where were we?" She asked.

"Why did you leave me?"

"Kori, it's hard for me to explain,"

"I have escaped from an orphanage been run down by my uncle, and I have been dying to know the truth. And now you are ill and this is my only chance."

"Well tell me more about you, you don't wanna here my sad story." She added.

"Mom. Please," I said placing her hand in mine. I don't know if the word "mom" would come so easily.

"Okay sweetie." She coughed. "Well...lets see where to began," her eyes closed as she thought deeply. "Well you father and I were in love, we met in high school," she paused. Took a breath, "See, my parents didn't approve of him so I ran off and married him. We had no money no home had barely enough food to live. We stayed in a flat your father worked in a shoe store," she paused again and looked up at me, tears began to fill her eyes. "Two years later I

found out I was pregnant with you. Your father was not pleased. In my second month he came to me and said he had fallen in love with a different woman. My heart was broken. There was no way I could have this baby on my own. I started working in a grocery store and made very little an hour. I couldn't afford the apartment any more and had to leave,"

"What about your parents? Couldn't you live with them again," I asked.

"I tried and they wouldn't accept me. I was practically homeless," she struggled as she spoke, I could see the pain in her eyes and she was barely breathing. "Anyways, I had you months later, and when I was at the hospital they noticed something was wrong. I had cancer; I was very ill and could not take care of you," she sighed and as grabbed her stomach.

"Oh I...I understand," I said.

She took another breath. "I was in the hospital for 3 weeks and they took care of you. Then after that they couldn't help me any longer with you and that's when I sent a nurse to take you to the orphanage,"

"Well see I have this letter," I pulled it out of my bag. "Didn't you write this?" I asked.

"I couldn't I was in so much pain I had the nurse do it," she said. "You know I love you, I always have."

"So that's it, you just couldn't do it anymore?" I asked. "Well why is your brother after me? It doesn't make any sense."

"Honey, he is my brother as has been through a lot. It's nothing against you he just cares a lot for me. This... this is my last day." Tears came from her eyes. "It's not that he doesn't like you he just was trying to protect me. He didn't want us meeting because...he doesn't want you."

"Yeah I know that, but why was he trying to keep me from you?" I asked.

"Because he thought it would make things worse for me," she coughed.

"Oh I see. But its not making it worse is it? It is better, right?" There was a knock on the door. I turned to see Abigail walking in.

"Hi," Abigail said softly.

"Everything will be fine." Anne said.

"But wait what is going to happen to me? What's going to happen to you?"

The nurse came barging through the doors. "Excuse me miss,"

I moved out of the way. My mother began coughing and her body began still.

"What's going on? What's happening?"

"I'm sorry miss. That was her last--"

"What? NO!" I yelled. My heart stopped beating. My body froze. That...that was it. I had only known her for a few moments but it felt like forever.

I ran over to her side. I saw her pale body lying helplessly. What am I going to do? Abigail came over to my side. "Kori, I am so sorry," she said with such compassion in her voice.

## Chapter 12

That was it; a big part of my life was ruined. I was not prepared for such devastation. Abigail came to my side. Hugged me, "You are going to get through this, it will be okay," she said.

"But that's it, there is no more hope! I was sure she would get better then take me back and we would live together like a mother and daughter would live. She...she just died, so sudden."

"I know...I know. She was taken off life support just yesterday, there was nothing else the doctors could do."

"Is that what the nurse said?" I asked.

"Yeah before I came in, look I'm sorry Kori,"

"I know it's probably better off this way, then her suffering. I just wish I could know more. You know?" I added.

"I know--"

"Excuse me, you guys need to say your goodbyes and head on out," the nurse said.

"Goodbye...mom," I kissed her hand and let her go. I let her go forever. Tears came from my eyes. I hardly knew her, but I knew she loved me and that's all that matters.

I pulled myself together and Abigail and I left her the hospital room.

"Wait, stop right there," Cleat held up his hand up blocking us so we couldn't get through, "And where do you think you're going. After your mom dies, you are my responsibility," he held up the papers to his legal rights.

My heart sank. He was going to take me back to the orphanage.

"She can stay with me and my dad. We really don't mind." Abigail said. "We can work something out.

"Haha you can't be serious this girl is trouble, I know her. You can't possibly want her. It would just be best for all of us if she went back," he grabbed my arm and began pulling me.

"Its okay," I whispered as he took me away. It was hopeless for me to fight back, I didn't even care. After losing my mom that afternoon nothing seemed to bother me, my heart was broken. I knew I would never be the same.

"Wait! Kori, wait!" yelled Abigail as we went into the elevator. She started running towards us and the elevator door closed. Tears of agony fell from my eyes and I knew that was the last of Abigail.

"What's the matter with you? You didn't even try and fight back?" Cleat scoffed.

I didn't answer I just pushed him out of my thoughts. I've lost everything today, a good home, two amazing people and my mom. But one thing I will never forget is my Savior, Jesus Christ. He was always there for me. Through the pain and sorrow of losing two people, and for losing Abigail and Mr. Johnson. I never stopped fighting; I learned to be honest with others and myself and care for others. I've learned to love and have compassion. I wouldn't trade my life for anything.

