



KERRY EVELYN

Love
ON THE HEART



Dear Reader,

Have you ever felt yourself saying “yes” too easily? Or forgiving something so quickly because you just want things to go back to how they were or how they were meant to be? Maybe you’re a peacekeeper or can see through (or past) the pain for the person asking forgiveness to the heart of the issue.

This is how we find Molly when Jack reappears. She can feel it in her soul that they’re meant to be together, but she doesn’t know the best route to get there or if she should even start that journey. After all, he hurt her deeply when he left. Should she say no way, forgive him and begin to move forward, or take it slow? Or something in between?

It’s never an easy choice to forgive. But holding on to hurt and anger will ultimately harm the holder. Molly has already learned this hard lesson, and she’s determined to find a path that will lead her to the joy and life she dreams of.

This book also touches on some sensitive issues: infertility and children with special needs, specifically Down syndrome. With my own experiences and the help of friends whose lives these circumstances touch 24/7, I pray that you’ll find these story threads and conversations authentic and true to life. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome is heartbreakingly common, affecting one in every ten women of reproductive age. We aren’t talking about it enough, and I pray this book brings light to the issue and offers hope to those touched by it and other conditions related to reproductive disorders.

Speaking of light, if you read *Love on the Fly*, you met Jamie Dalton. This amazing little boy was inspired by children I’ve personally known and worked with who have Down syndrome. Similar to two specific children I knew personally, he is high-functioning, funny, loving, and thoughtful, a true bundle of sunshine to everyone blessed to know him. I hope you find his character as endearing and bright as I do!

As always, please feel free to email me at Kerry@KerryEvelyn.com with your thoughts and comments. I’d love to hear from you!

Love, Kerry

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Love on the Heart

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Published 2023 by Swan Press

Edited by Sharp Editor

Cover design and formatting by Chris Kridler, Sky Diary Productions

Proofing by BookNookNuts

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: February 2023

Swan Press

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-960412-01-0

EBook ISBN: 978-1-960412-00-3

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Hala and all of my sweet friends who shared their stories with me over the last six years, and to women everywhere who've experienced PCOS or other reproductive disorders and faced infertility. I pray that you find peace and hope.

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

—James 1:12

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Chapter 1

Jack Dalton's stomach clenched as he turned onto Crane's Cove Road. He squeezed the steering wheel as if he was back in a combat zone driving an armored vehicle through a route potentially riddled with life-threatening IEDs.

His reaction surprised him. Showing up at Molly's family's resort in cliffside Maine after six months of no contact elicited a stronger reaction than he'd expected. Both his body and his mind were on high alert, as if anticipating their reunion was a life-or-death event.

A reunion she knew nothing about.

He'd brought along his son and his mother for moral support and because it was Thanksgiving. Beside him in the passenger seat, Beverly Dalton's fingers danced effortlessly between the crochet hook and ivory chenille yarn as she put the finishing trim on a new scarf they'd made together for Molly.

Jack chuckled, remembering Molly's disbelief when he told her his mom had taught him to crochet to help him self-soothe and sit still as a kid. Over the years, he'd improved to an advanced level that surprised even his mother. They regularly tried to one-up each other with their projects. He'd run out of time on this one, and she'd been happy to work on it during the car ride.

Six months ago, he and Molly had fallen for each other, hard and fast. The depth of their unexpected bond and his genuine desire to shield Molly from pain and hard things compelled him to leave, partly because of the challenges of his home life and family circumstances. He'd tried to convince himself it was simple logistics. His life was in Boston.

Hers was in Maine. But there were other things, too. Mostly, it was those other things. But he didn't want to think of them right now.

At some point this weekend, he needed to talk to her about the personal battles she'd shared with him, the very things that put him in a full retreat. And he'd share his own wounds, the whole story, the pieces of his life he'd kept from her, no matter how hard it would be.

After that, if she didn't want to move forward, at least he'd know he'd laid it all out this time.

"Dad!" Jamie shouted. The excitement in the one word conveyed more than what he spoke. Jack's gaze flicked to the rearview mirror, and he smiled. Eight-year-old Jamie sat twisted in his booster seat, his mop of short, sandy-brown hair askew and palms pressed against the window, looking out over the cliff toward the twinkling sea.

"Yeah, bud?" Jack asked.

"I see water! Shiny. Little waves. Lots of rocks. And trees. Lots of trees!"

Warmth replaced the tingling in Jack's nerves. Jamie had had speech therapy since he was a toddler, and his vocabulary had improved exponentially since he started second grade. The physical, mental, and emotional challenges of Down syndrome often meant his milestones were delayed. A main focus in school and in therapy this fall was expanding his vocabulary by verbalizing and naming what he could see, making full sentences, and reminding him to keep his glasses on—a new thing to help with his vision issues.

"It's very pretty," Jack agreed. The late-afternoon sun had begun its departure, leaving behind a stunning twilight that bathed the tiny Downeast harbor in a filter of purply blues and peachy yellows. Molly had once called it "sky-blue pink," and Jack thought that summed it up perfectly.

Crane's Cove appeared just as he'd left it in late May, just colder. The small Acadian town was idyllic and cozy, a big draw for tourists who wanted a northeastern escape. The Cliff Walk Resort, owned by the Crane family, was the premier lodging to stay at year-round.

Jack inhaled a deep, fortifying breath as he slowed his company-issued SUV and set the blinker to turn. Second thoughts flooded his mind, and once again, his heart pounded in response. *This is a dumb idea. Why would she ever want to see me after what I did?*

His mother laid her hand on his shoulder. "You've got this, Jack," she said softly. She'd always had his back. When his father was killed, when his wife left him and then later died, and through Jamie's heart surgeries and other emergencies, his mother was steady. She'd been his rock through all of it.

He made the turn at the town playground and slowed his speed to the posted twenty miles per hour as their vehicle climbed to higher elevation. The main lodge of the resort sat on a flattened plane in the cliffside. The buildings and recreation areas fanned out beside it and above it. He couldn't see Molly's cabin through the trees, but he knew the route to it by heart.

"Dad! Can we go to that playground? Look! A pond! I don't see ducks. Where are the ducks?"

"I don't know, buddy. That pond looks frozen. The ducks probably already flew south for the winter." Jack's eyes flicked to the mirror again. Jamie had settled back into his seat and was frowning. He looked so serious with his green-framed glasses resting on the bridge of his nose.

"No ducks?" Jamie asked.

"Probably not, but we can check when the sun comes up. Do you want to go to the playground after breakfast tomorrow?"

“I do! I do!” Jamie bounced in his seat, and Jack smiled as his little hands worked to straighten his glasses.

The main lodge appeared in the tree break. Jack pulled in underneath the awning and set the vehicle in park. “I’ll be right back.”

Jack left it running and stepped out of the warm interior, quickly closing the door to trap the heat inside. He walked around the front of it, boots crunching on dried leaves. It was darker now, but the building was well-lit. When the automatic doors didn’t open, he pulled at the handle on the single door beside them. *Probably turned off to keep out the cold.*

Inside, Jack paused to take note of the updates to the lobby’s interior. Just past the gift shop on his right, twinkle lights lit up the festive fall garland curled around the banister of the main staircase. To his left, the sitting area was also decorated, the summery touches of last season replaced with shades of goldenrod, deep oranges, red, and brown. Straight ahead, the host stand for the dining room stood empty, and he wondered if Molly was working tonight.

Joe Crane waved to him from the registration desk. Jack strode confidently toward the owners. Summoning and projecting his closed outer countenance was second nature for him.

“Welcome back, friend! We’re thrilled you and your family will be joining us for Thanksgiving tomorrow.” Carol Crane flipped her long silver braid over her shoulder and greeted him with a smile, wide and warm like her daughter’s. Unlike Molly, though, her hair was fine and straight while Molly’s was curly.

“Thanks,” Jack replied. “It was thoughtful of you to invite us.”

“We enjoyed having you on staff,” Carol said. “It’ll be nice to catch up.”

“Almost didn’t recognize you for a minute there. Nice hair,” Joe teased, stroking his beard. “Too cold for your Mr. Clean style?”

Jack grinned. “Something like that.” No one at the resort had ever seen him with his full head of carefully combed dark brown hair. He’d shaved his head for the job last spring, which he sometimes did when he went undercover as hired security or a bodyguard to appear more threatening. At five feet six, he didn’t have the height to intimidate, even if he did have the muscle and the glower.

Joe returned the grin and handed Jack one of the resort’s welcome folders. “Keys and meal vouchers are inside for today through Sunday.”

“That’s not—”

“We insist.” Joe’s tone indicated the courtesy was not up for discussion. “You’re a part of the Cliff Walk family, Jack. And we’re looking forward to meeting your mother and your son.”

Jack sucked in a breath. *Part of the Cliff Walk family.* If the weekend went well ... No, he couldn’t get ahead of himself. One day, one hour at a time.

He wondered if Joe and Carol knew the extent of his relationship with Molly or that he’d ghosted her when his job here had ended. Unlikely, or he wouldn’t have been greeted so warmly—or received an invitation in the first place. They’d been careful, trying to lay low and keep the extent of their feelings a secret. They were both still working through wounds from their marriages.

After a few more minutes of small talk and ensuring the cabin had a blender for his and Jamie’s fortifying shakes, Jack promised they’d return for dinner and he headed back outside. With the sunset, the nightly chill was setting in, and his exhalations became little white puffs in the air.

Jack settled himself in the car and handed the Folder-o'-Fun to his mother and buckled his safety belt. He pulled out of the semi-circular drive and followed the road around to the back of the lodge toward the stables. On his left was Molly's brother Easton's cabin. Easton's truck wasn't there, but the lights were on inside.

Maybe he should talk to Easton first, find out what the family knew, and ask for her number instead of just showing up unannounced at her place. The doubts that plagued him on the ride up about going to Molly's out of the blue came back full force. She probably wasn't even home. Besides, he had his mom and Jamie with him. Better to find her later, when he was by himself.

But he needed to find out where she'd be. Molly had the skills to work all the jobs at the resort, inside and out.

It was a bad idea to drop in on her unexpectedly.

He was starting to think this *entire trip* was a bad idea.

"I'm just going to make a quick stop at Easton's," he said, pulling into the empty driveway. "See when a good time to talk to Molly might be. She's probably got a million little things she's handling, prepping for tomorrow and all. Then we'll go right to our cabin, okay?"

His mother nodded. He'd told her everything when he accepted the invitation. "Take as long as you need. You can do this, Jack. If she once felt the way you still do, it's worth finding out if there's still something there."

He sure hoped so. "All right. I won't be long."

Why was his heart racing? Joe and Carol's oldest son was over a decade younger than Jack and zero percent threatening. Easton liked horses better than people and seemed to be in a constant state of brooding.

Jack knocked on the door. When it opened, it wasn't Easton on the other side.

It was—

“Molly?” He felt a jolt, as if a live wire had shocked him.

“Jack,” she whispered.

She was just as he'd remembered her. The same as how she appeared in his dreams at night. Her pale blond curls framed her face like a halo, and those striking light blue eyes peered up at him like no time had passed.

“Everything okay?” a male voice asked from somewhere behind Molly.

Jack blinked, then focused on the man limping toward them.

It wasn't Easton.

This guy was good-looking, too, but he was leaner than Easton with longish wavy hair and well over six feet. A good head taller than Jack.

Jack's heart sank.

He swallowed a lump the size of a softball at the six months of time lost. “Is this your—”

“Brother,” Molly said softly, finishing his sentence.

“JC Crane,” the man said, deftly bracing himself with one hand on the wall and offering the other to shake.

Ah. The youngest of the Cranes had been in Haiti on a missionary trip when Jack had lived at the resort on assignment.

“Jack Dalton.” Jack shook JC's hand and tried not to look as awkward as he felt. “I was looking for Easton.”

JC grinned. “Got married, moved out. New place is on Molly's old site.”

Married? Had Easton and Kat gotten back together? Or did he marry someone else? Wait ... Molly's *old* cabin site? What had happened to her cabin? And where was she living now?

What else had he missed?

JC turned to Molly. "You wanna let him in, or are we gonna freeze?"

"By all means," she said in a forced cheerful tone. Jack recognized it from when she attended to problematic guests.

"Uh, I can't." Jack glanced back at his SUV. "Thanks, JC. Molly." He dipped his chin, spun on his heel, and hurried back to his vehicle.

He wasn't ready to face Molly just yet.

He needed a Plan B.

Molly Crane stared in disbelief at the man retreating from her brother's doorstep. His unexpected appearance ripped the sticky bandage off the carefully tended emotional wounds he'd left her nursing months ago. Just the sight of him brought back the pain of her heart breaking all over again.

She slammed the door shut. The resounding bang was satisfying, and she made fast work of setting the bolt into place. Behind his thick lashes, Jack's warm brown eyes had shimmered in surprise, and it had taken every ounce of mental strength to tear her eyes from his. She was disappointed in herself for her reaction, staring at the man's chiseled features, unable to tear her gaze away.

Weak.

JC wore a quizzical expression but didn't speak.

“Scuse me a sec.” She needed a minute, and she didn’t want him to see her cry. She ran up the stairs and shut herself into the bathroom, knowing JC couldn’t follow due to his recent surgery.

Six months! It’s been six months!

It felt like an eternity. But what unnerved her the most was that even after all that time, one look at the undeniable tenderness in his eyes was all it took to make her heart thump and her brain go all mushy.

They’d only been together for three weeks. *Three weeks.* How could getting to know someone over three measly weeks cause such turmoil?

You know why, Molly. She braced herself on the counter as the voice in her head taunted her. She did know why, but after he’d left suddenly, she convinced herself she was wrong.

She hadn’t believed in insta-love until she met Jack.

The connection with him had been ... different. Nothing like the young, crazy affection she’d felt for her ex-husband Kyle in her early twenties. No, it went deeper than that. It was more ... grown-up. A soulmate kind of force that she couldn’t put into words.

Cursing under her breath for ever thinking she was falling in love with the man, she snatched a tissue from its box on the counter. She hated herself for crying. For giving him that power. For letting him live rent-free in her mind and heart.

For activating her sinuses.

Every time. He was worse than her seasonal allergies. Chronic allergies deserved their own Lake of Fire and Brimstone.

Along with men who make you fall in love and then leave you for reasons outside of your control—or disappear without so much as a see-you-later.

Eventually, her breathing evened out and she pulled herself together enough to rejoin JC in the living room. Tentative steps down creaky stairs. One foot in front of the other.

She lifted her coat from where she'd left it on the newel post and called to JC. "I'm gonna head home," she said without looking at him. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Don't forget the container." He twisted on the couch cushion and held up the bowl she'd brought his dinner in.

"Right." She crossed over to him and plucked it out of his hands.

"Who's that guy?" JC asked softly.

She set the container down on the bottom stair. "Jack Dalton," she replied, turning around to pull on her gloves.

"You know what I mean. Who is he to *you*? I know the name. He worked security here in May. He and his family are staying in Cabin 10 and were a last-minute reservation."

"His *family*?" she echoed, spinning around, eyes wide. "He has a *family*?" Her keys slipped out of her hand and fell to the floor with a *thud*.

"Beverly and Jamie." He sat up. "Hey, you aren't okay, are you?"

"I—no." She chewed on her lower lip. "It's a short story. We met. It didn't work out. He left."

"There's more to it, or you wouldn't be so upset right now."

If you only knew, little brother.

His pitying look prompted a brief explanation. She didn't want him to worry about her. "I thought—everything was going great until I told him a little bit about Kyle and our—problems."

She gave a short laugh. “That used to deter pretty much every man I dated, and that was a good thing. They’d fail the test, we’d part ways before it got serious, and move on. But not this time. This time it felt different. Like if I told him, he’d understand and accept it. I had a feeling he had a secret, too, but he started avoiding me, so I never found out what it was. He wasn’t different at all.” Now she knew. He had a family. A *child*. The thing she’d told him she’d wanted most in her life but was physically unable to provide.

“Aw, Mol, I’m sorry. If he’s anything like your loser ex-husband, you’re better off without him.”

“Yeah. That’s what I kept telling myself. But I couldn’t shake the thought that this could’ve been something, you know? And now he’s *here*? With a family! Why? And why now?” Her heartbeat quickened again, and she inhaled deeply in an attempt to stave off the anxiety.

“Well, you know what Pastor Porter says. God’s timing and all. Maybe he needed time to figure things out. Maybe he’s back here for you.”

“Ha! After that encounter, I highly doubt it. Also, who are Beverly and Jamie? Wife and daughter?” She shook her head. He hadn’t seemed like the type to cheat, but she also never expected him to run, either.

“Could be his sisters. I took the reservation. Needed three beds when he called. Good thing we still had a cabin left.”

She lifted her gaze to meet his. “I guess we’ll find out tomorrow.”

“Or you could call Mom or Dad and see who was with him when he checked in.”

“No, I’ll find out tomorrow, I guess. I’m going to have to go redo the seating chart for the first sitting.” When she’d finalized it three days ago, there had been no Daltons on the list.

“Come on, Mol. You know you won’t sleep tonight. Here. I’ll text Mom for you.” Molly stared out the front window but didn’t make a move to leave.

His mother texted back instantly, and JC’s lips turned up in a smile.

“What? Tell me!”

“His mother and his son.” JC’s brow furrowed.

“He has a kid?” Molly’s heart sank. She’s guessed at least one of the guests he brought was likely a child, but the confirmation was a kick to her heart. Why would Jack keep something like that from her? She’d had a strong feeling he was keeping something from her, but she’d never imagined *this*.

“Yep. Eight-year-old little boy, and Mom says Jack told her he doesn’t like breakfast food. Only green shakes.”

Her jaw dropped. “A kid said that?” She wondered if Jack had shared her recipe with his son.

“Uh-huh. Sounds like the *kid* is your soulmate.”

“Very funny.”

“Go to Cabin 10, Mol. Talk to him. I doubt he’s here because he was missing Easton.”

“Talk to him about what?”

“See what his story is. At least call the room and see if he’ll meet you for breakfast. Bring the kid one of your specialty green shakes.”

“Who are you, and what have you done with my little brother?” she asked. “When did *you* become the advice-giving grown-up?”

“I’ve had a lot of time to think the last couple days. Kinda hard to do anything else.” She detected a note of sadness in his reply. Torn between staying at the resort and flying off to do

missionary work, JC was at a crossroads—and falling in love at the same time. Molly thought Caroline was his perfect match and a life partner that could help him take the little family resort to the next level, but JC had to reach that conclusion himself.

Molly laid a hand on his shoulder. “Please take it easy. I know you’re used to doing all the things, but you need to heal. You don’t have a spleen anymore. You’ve got to be careful, especially if you plan to fly your plane home from Puerto Rico once it’s repaired.

He sighed. “Yes, Mom.”

She couldn’t help smiling at him. “Love you, lil’ baby bro.”

Molly gave him a gentle hug and grabbed the covered bowl on her way out. As the door closed behind her, she pulled her scarf up over her nose to block out the bitter chill. Her hair whipped in the night’s fierce wind, and she wished she’d brought her hat.

As she walked the lamppost-lit trail to the main lodge’s parking lot, the urge to bake took over the urge to go home to the big pink house on nearby Piney Point. At Kat’s family’s estate, Molly had a roommate who would take one look at her and know something was wrong. All it would take was a raised eyebrow from Shelby or sad frown from Kat—if she was visiting—and the whole ugly story would pour out. Then Shelby would call Jane, her sister and Molly’s best friend, and fill her in, and Kat would tell Easton, who would call JC and tell him to call Molly and—

Oh, the circles of having a big family in a small town!

She quickened her pace, cutting through the cars in the lot to reach the kitchen entrance. It was still early but late enough that the dinner rush would be winding down and one of the ovens should be free.

The kitchen door was locked, and since Molly had left her keys in her purse, inside, she knocked on the small, square window and peeked through the narrow column of light created by the curtains. A panel was pushed aside, and a kindly wrinkled face with a pouf of cloudy white hair grinned at her. The mechanism clicked, and Daisy Mae Saunders pulled the door open.

“Hey, Meemaw.” She stepped inside the bustling kitchen. The old Southern woman insisted everyone call her that, whether they were her grandchildren or not. She’d explained once to Molly that the moment her granddaughter Rachel was born, she’d earned that title, and thenceforth, it was her identity.

“Molly! I see at least one of your brothers likes my Brunswick stew!” She appraised the empty container. Behind her, Frieda Sadler, the resort manager, waved a hello. Molly returned her boss’s wave as she hurried out of the kitchen with an armful of rolled silverware.

“JC will eat anything,” Molly said to Meemaw, then groaned. That hadn’t come out right. “I mean—I don’t mean—it’s good stew, and Easton is a picky eater. JC isn’t, but he’s got his favorites. And he loved it.”

Meemaw waved her hand and took the empty dish from Molly. “I knew what you meant, dear.”

“Oh, good.” Molly shrugged out of her coat, pulled off her gloves, and stuffed them into the pockets. She frowned at the full coatrack and decided to drape her outerwear over the back of a chair at the ancient hard maple dining table in the corner. “Is there a free oven I can use?”

Meemaw’s sharp powder-blue eyes narrowed. “Once my pies are finished. We have more desserts for tomorrow than we can serve, dear. And you’re not scheduled to work this evening.” She paused and held Molly’s gaze. “I’ve heard about your stress-baking.”

Molly set her shoulders back and pushed up the sleeves of her sweater to her forearms, ready to parry with her. Meemaw was well-meaning but nosy, and she had no plans to empty her thoughts, fears, and who-knows-what-else in the Cliff Walk's kitchen.

"Any of Molly's baking is great," a familiar voice declared from behind her.

Molly squealed as Lanie Saunders hurried over to her. "When did you get here? It's so great to see you!" Molly hugged her tight. "How's Matt? How's married life? I'm sorry he couldn't come up for Thanksgiving. Where is he now?"

Lanie hugged her back and laughed. "One question at a time! Houston." She frowned. "Everything is fine—when he's home. I haven't seen him all that much. He's been working a lot. Houston, then Puerto Rico, back to Houston. There's so much storm damage and flooding." Matt worked for a company that employed veterans to serve in areas affected by natural disasters.

Molly nodded. "It's a lot, I'm sure. Want to stress-bake with me?" She darted a glance to Meemaw, who smirked.

Lanie shook her head, her silky ombre waves shimmering under the light. "I've got my keyboard upstairs, and Caroline's not here yet, so I'm good. Thanks, though." She held up a mug that said *Remember to close all the parentheses. We're not paying to heat the entire paragraph.* "I was hoping to trade this one out for something more ... fitting, I guess? For my sister. This one has Shelby written all over it."

Molly laughed. "Ha! It does!" Shelby was a freelance writer with a dry sense of humor. She worked at the diner part-time, sometimes filled in at the resort when they were short-staffed, and was on call most nights as the town's designated driver. On top of that, she helped out at the church. Her father was the pastor there, and Shelby had just started a nonprofit to turn Kat's family home on Piney Point Road into a women and children's safe house.

The renovation was another reason Molly didn't want to go home yet. Since Kat moved out, it'd been busy at the house. Their friend Kevin Conroy and his crew had been renovating the "big pink house," as Kat called it, for several weeks. The kitchen hadn't been affected, but the guys were in and out all day long working on turning the many rooms of the stately Queen Anne into suites for future residents. Likely all night long, too, as they wanted to finish it up today. This weekend, Shelby planned to ask Caroline, an interior designer of boutique hotels, to decorate it over the holidays, when she'd have time off in between major projects at her Boston firm.

While Lanie browsed the mug cupboard and Meemaw went back to the kitchen staff, Molly gathered ingredients to make sugar cookies. She'd make double the dough and set half aside in case she needed to bake again tomorrow.

One never knew what stresses tomorrow might bring.

She made a conscious effort to appear cheerful, but by the time dough was ready to be rolled out, she was muttering to herself.

"God, why is he back?" *Thunk!* She brought the wooden pin down hard onto the dough. The metal prep table *thwanged* in protest. "Why now? It's been six months!"

"Oh my. Sounds like someone made a mistake and wants to mend it, bless his heart."

Molly jumped. She hadn't seen Meemaw sneak up behind her. How much had she heard? The oven timer went off, signaling the last of the pies was done.

The octogenarian sidled up to her. "You know, God's a funny guy sometimes. You may not feel Him when you need Him, but He's always there. And He's always on time."

"That door slammed last spring, Meemaw. I don't want to talk about it." She pressed the pin harder into the dough.

“Humph. I believe when He shuts a door, He’s giving you directions. Sounds like a new door is opening. But it doesn’t mean the destination has changed.” She turned off the timer and pulled on a pair of hot pink oven mitts.

“Into the same house? I don’t even know what that means.”

“Maybe that first door was broken. Or it got repaired. Or needed time to weather a storm. Or the path on the other side wasn’t clear. Either way, you should enter this new one, see what’s inside before you pass on by. Might be something in there worth stickin’ around for. Don’t quit travelin’ a difficult road—it can lead to a beautiful destination.” She narrowed her eyes at Molly. “And you’ve got some flour on your chin.”

Molly sighed and finished rolling out the dough, a little more gently this time. Maybe Meemaw was right. She should at least give Jack the benefit of the doubt and a chance to explain himself.

Once the cookies were in the oven, she went to the sink to wash her hands and chin. She patted her face dry and realized a lone hair had poked its way through her chin. It grazed the side of her finger like a tiny needle.

It would need to be plucked out. ASAP. She couldn’t stand it, the reminder of the health issues that had started in her mid-teens. That particular chapter of her life was supposed to be over. The electrolysis was supposed to have prevented that and erased all signs of the dark hair that grew in places that were noticeable on her fair skin.

“Just going outside for a sec; don’t lock me out!” Molly grabbed her purse from its hook on the coat rack, and Meemaw waved as she flew out the door.

On the stoop, under the light, she dug for the zipper case that held her tweezers and mirror. Pulling her lips in and tilting her chin up, she maneuvered the mirror until she could see the offender.

“Too dark.” She ran a finger along the skin until she could feel it. “There you are!” She set the mirror down, held her skin taut, and guided the tweezers into place.

One sharp yank and the hair was out.

Molly sighed heavily. If only all of her problems were solved so easily.