



*Legacy of the
Celtic Brooch*

Dana
Mentink

*The
Treasure
Within*

The Treasure Within [Legacy of the Celtic Brooch 6]
by Dana Mentink

The Wild Rose Press

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The Treasure Within—The Legacy Of The Celtic Brooch,
Book 6

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Welcome to the Legacy of the Celtic Brooch series. The authors of this series were handpicked by our editors at The Wild Rose Press, and asked to write a tale using an heirloom Celtic Brooch as the one constant in each story. Beginning in March 2007 with English Tea Rose and Tarah Scott's *The Pendulum*, and ending sometime in early 2008 with Marly Mathews from the Faery Rose Line, we will follow this brooch on its mystical journey from Regency England to modern times.

It might show up as part of a dowry or be used to pay a ransom. It might be magical; it might simply be a piece of jewelry. Every author was asked to put her own spin on the brooch's appearance, and they have all done a beautiful job.

We welcome your comments on this series and hope that you will enjoy reading the stories as much as our authors enjoyed creating them for you.

Enjoy the journey!

RJ and Rhonda

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Dear Reader:

Thank you for purchasing this electronic copy of the sixth in our "Legacy of the Celtic Brooch" series. Please send the following code, along with your first and last name, to legacyseries@thewildrosepress.com. You will be entered into a drawing for an actual Celtic Brooch.

The winner will be drawn at the end of the series, approximately January 2008. Only one entry per person per story is allowed. If you purchase all 13 stories as they come out this year you will have 13 chances to win this authentic Celtic Brooch.

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Dedication

For those who yearn to walk by faith and not by sight.

Chapter One

Pappy shuffled in and bobbed his chin with approval.

"Morning, Honeybunch. That dress is fetching."

Lorna looked up from her spot next to the coffee grinder.

"I'm wearing pants today, Pappy."

He smoothed the wild puff of white hair that stood out like clouds from his speckled scalp. "So you are. And a perfect shade to go with those blond curls."

Lorna smiled at her reflection in the stainless steel machine. Her razor cut, red bob was the furthest thing from blond and anything but curly. She continued to tighten the bolt on the persnickety machine, throwing in a kick for good measure.

Pappy rubbed the brooch that nestled in a box on the piano, the way he did every day before he meandered behind the counter to receive the cup of coffee she'd prepared for him. Three sugars, a hefty swig of cream. At eighty one, cholesterol was a memory for Pappy rather than a dietary restriction. "Gorgeous day," he said around slurps.

"I haven't seen a day that wasn't gorgeous in Hawaii."

His wide smile showed off a gap from his missing front tooth. "Yes, siree. Can't argue with that. I think maybe I'll take the old motorbike for a spin, to get my juices flowing."

She stood, almost conking her head on the counter. She wasn't sure which was more frightening, a blind man driving a motorbike or a blind man who thought he could see doing the driving. Pappy's mental disorder was still a puzzle to her, in

spite of the hours of research she'd done on Anton's Syndrome since she came to Hawaii four years ago. Though Pappy had been completely blind since his late twenties, courtesy of a car accident, the man believed without a morsel of doubt that he could see.

A blind man who thought he could see.

He probably belonged in a nice old folk's facility with manicured lawns and bingo days, but for some reason, Lorna knew she would die before she let that happen.

He must love her too to entrust her with his beloved coffee shop, Pink's.

That explained the panic that hovered just below her stomach. Pink's was on the verge of disaster, and it fell squarely on her shoulders to save it. One thing at a time, she reminded herself. "I'd love to go for a ride with you, Pappy. Maybe later this afternoon? I'm hoping that tour group really does stop by on their way to Holualoa. We've got to get them before they spend all their money on souvenirs, right?"

His laugh was raspy. "You are a treasure, Lorna. Right as rain, right as rain. I'll just go help Maria with that roasting. I think I hear her in the back room. Or maybe that's my stomach rumbling?"

"Chocolate with sprinkles. Just don't tell your doctor." Lorna chuckled, handing him a white paper bag. "You're supposed to have oatmeal."

"What does that quack know? He keeps telling me I'm blind, for the love of cheese." The grumbling followed Pappy as he felt his way out the door.

A rich smell of roasting beans hit her as the door to the back room swung closed again.

Pappy's voice carried over the sound of the roasting drum. "First crack, Maria. First crack!"

Pappy knew a moment before anyone else when the beans released their moisture and let loose a sharp cracking sound. Lorna had learned enough to know if the proper heat wasn't maintained at this point the roasting would stall and taste "baked." Then Maria would clamp her lips together in irritation while Pappy let loose with his arsenal of instruction.

Lorna returned her attention to the grinder. The bell chimed and she poked her head around the corner of the counter.

The tall, lanky man strolled over. His close cropped black hair sparkled with moisture from an early morning swim. "Hi, Lorna. Hot, eh?"

She ran a hand through her own hair to straighten the unruly bits. "Morning, Kai. What's up?"

"I dropped the beans around back. Thought you might need some help." He leaned over the counter, his almond shaped eyes glinting back in the overhead light. "What are you doing down there?"

"Trying to get this grinder going. It's circa 1950 and only works when it feels like it."

"Need help?"

"No thanks. I'll get it." She continued to twiddle with the machine.

He dangled the yellow binoculars over the counter. "These yours?"

She shot to her feet. "My binoculars. Oh, I must have left them..."

"It's okay. I found them before he did. No harm done."

She sighed. "I owe you one, Kai."

He smiled. "That's right. So how about coming to lunch with me?"

A heat flooded her cheeks. "I can't. I promised Pappy I'd take him on a ride and if I don't come through he'll try it alone."

He folded his arms, lean muscles accentuated by his tan skin. "Are you sure you aren't avoiding me, Miss Lorna Amerino?"

"I ... no ... I mean yes, I'm sure I'm not avoiding you."

A movement from outside the shop caught his attention. He walked to the window.

"Lorna?"

"Yes?"

"Expecting a group today?"

"Yes, a couple dozen senior citizens. We were lucky. For some reason they couldn't find another place to accommodate them. I can't imagine why Roger couldn't. He's never been shy about taking business from Pink's." Her lip curled.

Kai bent closer to peer out the window. "Is there anything unusual I ought to know about these tourists?"

"No. I think they call themselves the Natural Beauties. Why?"

At that moment Pappy came barreling in. "What in thearnation? Maria spilled a whole bag of beans when she got a gander out the window. What's goin' on?"

Lorna joined Kai at the window. Her mouth fell open. "So that's why they're called the Natural Beauties."

The twelve, naked, old ladies stood in the parking lot, stretching their legs and admiring the stands of trees that encircled the tiny property.

Lorna closed her gaping mouth and yanked open the door.

"Hello, ladies," she said, pulling it shut behind her and keeping her eyes dead level. "Welcome to Pink's. We're so glad you could come for a tour."

The shortest naked woman, sporting two neat braids shook Lorna's hand. "We're happy to be here. I'm Glenda. You're looking at twelve gals who are ready for coffee."

They looked ready to step into a bath, Lorna thought. "Um, there's just one thing. You know with the health department and all, we ... well ... we can't er ... allow nudity inside."

Glenda, along with several other naked women, fisted her hands on her hips. "Unbelievable. I thought your place was different. We're persecuted everywhere we go, even in paradise. That guy down at The Bean Scene told us your coffee was swill but we took a chance on you anyway and see what happens."

Roger at the Bean Scene, eh? "I'm very sorry. It's the health department you know. We really have no say in the matter."

Glenda exhaled, noisily. "I guess we don't have any choice if we want to get to Holualoa any time soon. Fortunately, we travel prepared for this sort of inconvenience. Bonnie, get the robes, hon."

"How about I offer you ladies a free muffin to go with your coffee? Would that make it more palatable?"

At the word "free" Glenda's face softened. "Well okay. That would be nice."

Bonnie emerged from the bus, her flappy arms filled with robes the color of rubber duckies. In a few minutes, the whole gaggle was clothed in knee length yellow splendor.

Lorna led the way back inside. Pappy stood on the threshold, scrawny arms crossed. "Are them women naked? I don't allow no strange stuff like that. We're a God fearing people, we Papageorges. What would Auntie Mim say?"

"They're wearing matching dresses, Pappy. Not naked, just barefoot at the moment."

His face wreathed into a wrinkled smile. "Ah. That's okay then. Right this way ladies. Welcome to Pink's. Come inside, come inside."

Kai shot her a look over the top of the white and gray heads. "It is a first, you've got to admit. How about I help out?"

"That would be great. The more fully clothed people the better."

It wasn't long before Pappy's tour was underway. "We've been making coffee here at Pink's since the '40s."

Maria hid her face behind her long, dark hair as the ladies streamed by the coffee roaster.

"How hot is the oven?" said a woman with 'Bonnie' embroidered on her robe.

"Around 400 degrees," Maria said. "Then the beans drop into the round tray for cooling."

Pappy chimed in. "The sifter moves them around to help 'em keep cool. Let's do the same for you, lovely ladies. Follow me into the café area and we'll let you sample some of our spectacular brew." He gestured grandly for the ladies to follow.

One skinny woman by the name of Beatrice tapped Maria on the shoulder. "Is he blind?"

"Only according to the doctors." Maria put on an apron to help serve coffee and muffins.

The place was awash in pastels. Muted pink walls reflected the early morning light and glass vases sporting fresh pink carnations dotted the tables. In each pink, upholstered bar stool, perched a yellow-robed woman.

Kai leaned over and whispered in Lorna's ear. "Reminds me of those yellow birds we saw the other day."

He smelled of soap and coffee. The feel of his breath on her neck made her dizzy. She moved away a step. "Pappy seems to be charming Beatrice, over there."

The old man was playing a soft tune on the piano, his hands moving effortlessly over the keys. Beatrice peered over the top of her glasses at him. "So this is your place, honey?"

"Oh yes, ma'am. Belonged to my Auntie Mim, God rest her soul. She loved Pink's. Said it was her treasure."

Beatrice eyed the jewelry that lay on the piano. "And what's this?"

"That's my brooch. Auntie Mim said I'm to keep it on account of the fact it's the key to the treasure."

Beatrice eyed the silver whorls and green stones that made up the round pin. "Doesn't look like it's worth a whole lot to me."

Pappy winked at her. "Maybe you just ain't got the eyes to see it. It's real lucky, you know. Been known to change lives."

Glenda pointed to a small painting on the bookshelf next to Auntie Mim's musty Bible. "I've seen that picture before, I think."

"Pappy says it's a copy of Madonna of the Pink's, by Raphael," Lorna said.

The woman peered closer at the luminous Madonna and the baby on her lap. Mary's serene smile beamed down at her son. In their hands were clusters of pink carnations. "Maybe it's the real thing. What would a painting like that be worth?"

Kai wiped the crumbs off a table. "Millions, but it's not an original. Auntie Mim made a few additions to the painting. You can tell if you look close. The real Madonna of the Pink's was sold three years ago for 22 mil."

Glenda's mouth dropped open. "Twenty two million dollars?"

Kai nodded. "Nice chunk of dough, eh?"

"How do you know all that?" Lorna asked.

He grinned. "I know a few things besides how to grow coffee beans."

Glenda whistled. "Now that's a lot of beans." A napkin slipped out of her hand and she bent over to get it.

Lorna and Kai became suddenly busy checking out the overhead lighting until Glenda returned to her upright

position. Then she rallied her scantily clad troops and headed for the door.

"Thanks so much for coming, everyone." Lorne eyed the dozen or so Pink's bags of purchases the women clutched. "Please come again."

"Okay," Glenda said. "We'd love to do some early morning snorkeling. We'll stop by again."

As they waved goodbye, Lorna couldn't suppress a round of giggles. "They're going to need a lot of sunscreen."

* * * *

The warm wind whipped past her face as they zipped down the slope that afternoon. Pappy grunted in delight as the motorbike's wheels shuddered over the hills in the dirt road. It reminded her of Kansas, when she'd ridden her bike for hours in search of humps to take at top speed.

"Let's hit the beach, Honeybunch," Pappy yelled in her ear.

They tootled along past the Koa trees, past The Bean Scene, a modern building, recently remodeled, with outdoor furniture that gleamed in the sun.

Roger looked up from wiping the tables. He smirked at them as they drove by.

"There's sand in my eyes. Is that Roger fellow out?"

"Yes, Pappy."

"Thought so. I can smell his kind a mile away."

They both laughed. Lorna shuttled them down to a stretch of beach bordered by a cliff of black rock. The ocean was pocketed in a hollow of white sand. It had become her favorite place because the spot was relatively undiscovered

by tourists. She parked the bike, shouldered a backpack and took Pappy's arm as they picked their way down to the warm sand.

Lorna was startled to find a lone, yellow beach towel folded into a neat roll next to a pair of sandals. She spread their towels and Pappy eased down on his back in the sun. "Surf's high," he said.

She looked out at the blue waves. "You're right again. How can you tell?" She hastened to add, "With your eyes closed and all."

"Listen."

She tuned in to the sound of waves rolling over each other in an endless rhythm. The sound filled her soul and the sun enveloped her in a bubble of warm comfort. For a moment, it eased the worry, but not for long. She sank down on a towel next to the old man.

"Pappy, I think we'd better talk about Pink's."

He mumbled something from underneath the straw hat he'd eased over his face.

She tried again. "I know you aren't concerned, but we're just barely making the bills. The Bean Scene is taking a lot of the tourist action."

"Don't you worry, Honeybunch. Our coffee is heaps better than that young slickster. Things will pick up."

She sighed. "That's what I'm hoping for, but what if they don't? What are we going to do? The place needs repairs and we don't have the capital. If we let it go too long, we'll lose even more business to Roger."

Pappy reached out a hand to scratch his elbow. "Auntie Mim left us the keys to the treasure, don't forget. We've got that to fall back on."

Lorna had heard about the mythical treasure for years. Unless Mim had buried a box full of cash somewhere on the property, Lorna had grave doubts the woman had left anything helpful. "Have you seen a glimpse of any treasure in the fifty years you've been here?"

He sat up and straightened the hat over his brow. "Nope, but that don't matter."

"Then how do you know there is one?"

"You gotta remember your Romans 2:19, Honeybunch."

She hadn't done much Bible reading since she left the small, Kansas town where it was a required Sunday activity. In fact, the last time she'd read it was right before the accident. "I can't remember that one. What does it say?"

A dripping man crunched up, his brown face lit by wet sparkles. "*For we walk by faith, not by sight. Romans 2:19.*" Kai said.

Pappy's face wreathed into a grin. "There you go, Lorna. Didn't I tell you Kai was a smart one? He knows the Good News. You oughtta spend more time with him."

She cleared her throat, tearing her eyes away from the water that channeled down Kai's muscled chest and legs. "Hi. I wondered who the towel belonged to."

He removed the snorkel that hung from his neck. "Great ocean life here. A sweet, little unicorn fish checked me out."

Smart fish. Her attention was snatched away by a flicker of color that darted among the pickleweed. The binoculars were

in her hand in a second. "What is it? Did you see? Where did he go?"

He laughed. "I'm better at ocean stuff. A dove? Waxbill maybe?"

"No. Oh there he is. See the yellow body and white undertail? It's a White Rump Sharma. Right there."

"That was my guess too," Pappy said with a smile. "Treasure everywhere, just like I said."

Kai leaned close to her and followed her pointing finger.

Her arm prickled into bumps where his skin touched hers.

"What were you tracking on Roger's property?" he murmured in her ear.

The blood flooded her cheeks as she returned the binoculars to the backpack. "I had a good reason for trespassing. I thought I saw an Akialoa."

"No way. They disappeared in the sixties."

She sighed. "A girl can dream, can't she?"

His teeth flashed white against his caramel skin. "That's what I like about you, Lorna. You've got a stubborn, optimistic streak under all that worry. Just don't let Roger catch you on his land."

"I won't." She handed Pappy a bag of taro chips. He settled into munching and humming the Oscar Meyer theme song.

Lorna and Kai wandered down to the fringe of wet sand.

"How do you know I'm worried?" she asked over the hushed roar of waves.

"You worked pretty hard to keep the naked ladies."

She laughed. "Yes, I did. The truth is we need the money. The place is falling to pieces and we're in the red nearly every month. Pappy says we can always break out Auntie Mim's treasure but all the treasure I've seen is that brooch he pats every morning."

Kai picked up a broken shell and tossed it back to the waves. "Pappy's lucky to have you here to do the worrying for him. Why did you leave Kansas anyway? Looking for paradise, yeah?"

Her chin went up. "I'm not your typical tourist. I came because..."

He regarded her with licorice black eyes.

She remembered another set of eyes with a similar gleam. "It's a long story."

"I'd like to hear it." He put an arm around her shoulders and they splashed along in the warm water.

Lorna allowed herself to snuggle against his side. Tell him? See his splendid, angular face morph into a mask of disappointment? She wasn't ready. Not yet. "Why don't you tell me how you got here? To Hawaii, I mean."

"Beans."

"Beans?"

"Beans. Mom came from Japan on a trip as a young girl and met Dad. They got married and worked the land together. The coffee plantation has been in Dad's family for three generations. I'm here because of the beans. I've got java in my veins instead of blood."

"Did you ever resent it?"

"What?"

"Having to take over the family business."

"Look around." He pointed to the panorama of black cliffs jutting out of an azure ocean. "I'm blessed to live here. Got a family who loves me and I mess around in a personal way with the land God made. No resentment here."

She eyed his strong profile. His face looked predominantly Japanese with hints of his Polynesian father's side. The two gene pools certainly produced a delicious blend, like a cup of great coffee. "But you don't have much time to, er, meet people, running your own business, I mean." Except for Sheila. She'd seen the two of them together in town, dark heads close, arms linked.

"You make time for things you want to do, yeah?" He squeezed her shoulder.

Maria appeared on the beach, tossed off her sandals and secured her flying hair in a ponytail. She stopped to talk to Pappy. He offered her a chip.

"I'd better see what Maria needs."

After a second of hesitation, he let her go. They rejoined the others.

Pappy looked up from his munching. "Maria stopped on her way home. She wants to know if we should do a third roast today."

"Have there been many customers?"

"Only the ones driving by on their way to The Bean Scene," Maria said.

"Any tour bookings?"

"Nope."

Lorna sighed. "Then I guess there's no need for a third roast."

"Good deal," Kai said.

Her eyebrows arched. "Why do you say that?"

"Means you've got time for a tour of the plantation."

"I do?"

Pappy nudged her with a sharp elbow. "'Course you do. Plenty of time. You should see where the beans come from. Everybody on the Kona coast should know that. You show her, Kai."

"But I've got to send in the bakery order and clean up the shop," Lorna protested.

"I cleaned it before I left," Maria said.

"But there's still the pastry order."

"You come back and make me a list and then off you go." Pappy crumpled his chip bag and jammed it into the pocket of his baggy shorts.

Kai nodded. "Excellent. I'll follow you on my bike. Last one back's a rotten bean." He grabbed his towel and sandals and sprinted up the beach.

Pappy held out his palm for a hand up. "That Kai's a good man. I wonder where he gets those funny green shorts."

Lorna smiled, admiring the play of muscle where Kai's sprinting legs stuck out of the bright blue swim trunks.

"Maybe I'll ask him."

Chapter Two

Pappy and Lorna made it to Pink's minutes after Kai did. He was waiting for them on the gravel drive, breathing hard.

"You made good time," she said.

"I didn't stop to watch the birds." He ducked her punch to his shoulder.

They helped Pappy off the bike and headed for the shop.

"The door's open," Kai said, with a frown.

Lorna laughed. "Sure it is. Nobody locks doors in Hawaii."

"No, I mean it's wide open."

"Maria must not have latched it."

They heard a shriek from inside. "Fire! Fire!"

Lorna dropped her backpack and ran into the shop.

It wasn't a fire.

Not even close.

"Oh no," she groaned as she took in the scene.

"What is it? I don't smell any smoke." Kai said from behind her. When he peered over her shoulder, he reached out a restraining hand toward Pappy.

The shrill voice continued to shriek from the kitchen area. "Fire! Fire! Come quick! Help!"

Lorna picked her way over the heaps of napkins and turned over tables. She heard Kai trying to soothe Pappy. "A fire? Praise God I had the brooch in my pocket. We coulda lost Auntie's treasure. What's the damage? How bad is it?"

"It's not a fire," Kai said. "Sit here a minute, Pappy. I'll be right back."

Beatrice was in the kitchen, fully clothed this time in jeans and a hibiscus print shirt. When she saw them she stopped abruptly mid scream, her mouth frozen for a second in a wide circle. "It's about time you got here. I've almost lost my voice."

"What ... how ... why are you yelling 'fire'?" Lorna said.

"I heard somewhere that's what you're supposed to do in an emergency so people pay attention. Just look at this place. Somebody's vandalized it. That seemed like an emergency to me."

Kai stepped over the spilled beans. "I don't know about vandalized. It looks more like someone was searching for something."

Pappy shuffled in. "It's okay," he puffed. "The Madonna painting is okay, only thrown on the floor but not ruined. And the Bible too. Sakes, Auntie Mim would have had an attack seeing them flung around so."

Lorna's heart sunk to ankle depth as she looked around the kitchen. Beatrice grabbed a broom and began sweeping the coffee beans into a pile. "Um, Beatrice, what are you doing here anyway?"

She looked up from her sweeping, eyes bright behind her wire-rimmed glasses. "Me? Oh I came back to ask about snorkeling. I'm tired of shopping. I thought maybe Pappy would show me a good spot to dive."

"I certainly will." Pappy smoothed his wild fluff of hair. "It would be my pleasure. May I offer you a drink, madam?"

She patted her hair. "That would be lovely. Let me just sweep up this mess. I'll meet you at the piano."

Pappy offered a courtly bow and left the kitchen. Kai watched through the door to make sure he didn't trip over anything.

"He's blind as a bat, isn't he?" Beatrice said.

Lorna bent to pick up a stack of Styrofoam cups. "Yes, he is."

"But he doesn't believe it?"

"Not for a second."

She smiled, adding more wrinkles to her round face. "Then I guess I don't need to worry about makeup." Beatrice dumped the ruined beans into a trash can and went to join Pappy.

Kai and Lorna set to work on the spilled beans and the far-flung contents of the cabinets. Beatrice and Pappy helped sort the jumble of coins scattered from the cash register after Kai piled them up on a table. Lorna watched the old man and his new friend from her spot in front of the pantry shelves.

Kai wiped his brow and returned the dustpan. "That about does it."

"Thanks, Kai."

He followed her gaze. "Pappy sure looks pleased, for a guy whose store just got tossed."

"He likes Beatrice."

"Why do you sound worried about that?"

"Someone was looking for something, Kai. They didn't take the cash or vandalize the place. They were searching."

His eyebrow arched. "And you think Beatrice was involved?"

"She was the only person in the shop when we arrived. Maybe she was sounding the alarm to cover her tracks."

"But she's only been here once. What could she have been looking for?"

Lorna shot him a look. "Maybe she believes there really is a treasure hidden here."

Kai blinked. "That would be a big risk to take on an old man's rambling."

"I wish Pappy would let me call the police."

"He was pretty adamant about not wanting to involve ... what did he call them? The fuzz."

"I know," Lorna said as she replaced the stacks of cups on the shelves. "I'm going to make sure he's tucked in for the night before I leave. I'll have to take a rain check on that tour of your plantation."

He reached over and gently brushed a smudge off her cheek. His fingers lingered for a moment, cool on her flushed skin. "Okay, but I'm going to collect on that rain check."

Lorna tried to steady her breathing as she watched him straddle his bike and pedal away. She continued to tidy up while Pappy and Beatrice chatted. The sun mellowed its way into rose-colored splendor.

"Can I call you a cab, Beatrice?" Lorna asked.

"No need," Pappy called out. "I phoned up Mrs. Paupa and she's a'goin' let Beatrice stay with her for a few nights. That way I can show her the snorkeling spot before she's got to leave for home."

The woman patted Pappy on the hand. "You're just a sugar lump."

"Where is home, Beatrice?" Lorna asked.

"Chicago."

"How's the weather there this time of year?" Pappy asked.

"October is still pretty mild, but that's just a tease." She laughed. "Lulls you into a false sense of security before winter comes along to freeze your fanny."

Lorna eyed her. "Isn't it tricky to be a ... uh ... Natural Beauty in that kind of climate?"

"Sure is. That's why we only travel to nice warm spots. Last year, we went to Arizona which was nice. Really dry there. Hard on the skin."

Pappy handed Beatrice her hat and walked her to the door. "I'll see you tomorrow for snorkeling. I'll show you where all the best fish are."

She giggled and kissed him on the cheek. "I'll be here for my morning coffee."

Lorna walked Beatrice to Mrs. Paupa's house and returned to find Pappy, wearing his striped pajamas, sitting on his bed in the little room on the top floor above the shop. He was smoothing his wrinkled fingers over the brooch. At the sound of her approach, he looked up and stifled a yawn.

"What a day, eh? That Beatrice is a fine figure of a woman."

Lorna was still recovering from seeing Beatrice's fine figure in the buff. She checked the window to make sure it was locked.

"You figure someone's after the treasure?"

"I'm not sure but I thought it would be best to be cautious. It sure looked like someone was searching for something. I can't imagine what, though. What do you think, Pappy?"

"I think I'd better keep my eyes on this baby." He held up the brooch. "It's the key to the treasure, you know. Someone gets their hands on this and they've got the whole kit and caboodle. Auntie Mim would turn over."

"I'm glad you had it in your pocket."

He slid the brooch under his pillow. "You betcha. I'll keep it secure." He wandered over to the gargantuan banana tree that brushed the ceiling with its leaves and watered the gnarled roots. "It's the darndest plant. As old as me and not one banana. Even when we put it outside. Nothing. Whoever heard of a banana tree with no bananas?"

She helped him into bed and closed the shades. "Are you sure the brooch is really all that valuable?"

"Nah. It's probably not worth five bucks."

Lorna sighed. At least Pappy understood the value was mostly sentimental. Maybe she could talk some sense into him about taking out that business loan.

He scratched his head. "It's the safe combination on the back that's the important thing. 'Night, Lorna dear."

Chapter Three

Lorna rolled around most of the night in her tiny unit on the back lot behind Pink's. Several times, she got up to pace a couple of circles on the worn, hardwood floor and once she tiptoed back into Pink's to check on Pappy. He snored, tucked under the sheet like a skinny burrito.

There is a safe combination on the back of the brooch? She wondered if she'd dreamed the whole wild conversation. There was no safe on the property that she knew of. Certainly Pappy had never mentioned one before. The idea was ludicrous, probably the figment of an old man's imagination.

The recent, ruinous search of the place was not, however. Her head whirled with a load of worry. Was it coincidence Beatrice arrived at the same time the place was tossed? Did she listen to Pappy's tales of treasure and believe him?

Lorna shook her head.

If there was a treasure.

If there was a safe.

If she was still sane.

A little before six, Lorna gave up and threw on shorts and a halter top. She staggered to the shop, stopping long enough to peer at the Madonna of the Pink's painting, as she had hundreds of times before. Raphael had captured the look of child-like joy on Mary's face, the deep peace that came from being steeped in the love of the Father. It shone through clearly, even though the painting was a reproduction.

She remembered long ago summers when she'd felt a peace like Mary's. But those were days before the accident. Before God's love was buried under a pile of guilt. Even living in paradise couldn't change that.

With a sigh, she began the morning set-up. When the first roast was underway, Maria arrived, braiding her hair as she entered the shop.

"Morning, Lorna. How was business yesterday?"

"Fine, until someone trashed the shop."

Her mouth fell open. "What?"

"We cleaned it all up. Not much harm done except some beans spoiled and a lot of elbow grease needed to put everything back together."

"Did they take anything?"

"No. Not that I can tell."

Maria's eyes filled. "It's my fault."

Lorna gave her a hug. "Of course it isn't. There was no way you could have known what would happen when you went to find us at the beach."

The beach. The words made her breath catch. "Oh man. I almost forgot. Pappy is going to take Beatrice snorkeling today."

"How's he going to do that? He can't even find the beach by himself."

"My thoughts exactly. Can you possibly run things here while I take them? I'll try to keep it short but I just can't let him go alone." *Especially not with her.*

Maria nodded as she filled a pitcher with cream. "I can handle it."

"Thank you."

True to her word, Beatrice arrived promptly at eight, clad in a pineapple print swimsuit with matching yellow shorts. Lorna poured her some coffee and tended to three other customers. By the time she'd finished, Pappy was seated at the piano playing "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny."

It was all she could do not to pull him away and grill him about the mythical safe somewhere on the property. She felt a warm hand on her back.

Kai's black eyes searched her face. "You okay?"

Her pulse quickened. "I didn't sleep much last night."

He smiled and pulled her into his arms. "You need a hug to jump start your day, as my mother used to say."

She relaxed into his embrace relishing the way her head just fit into the space under his chin. A sudden desire caught hold of her with an iron grip. She wanted to run away with him, to sit under the broad canopy of a koa tree and talk about everything and nothing.

Pappy called from his spot at the piano. "Beatrice and I are goin' snorkeling."

Lorna pulled away from Kai and opened her mouth to respond just as a noisy family of ten pushed into the café. Maria ran to the back to start the first roast.

"Good morning," Lorna called to the horde. "What can we get you?"

They started calling in orders for everything from espresso to iced mochas. Lorna watched in a panic as Pappy headed to the door. "Can you wait just a little bit, Pappy? Until things slow down? Then I'll take you. It'll just be a minute."

"No need, Honeybunch. Beatrice said she'll drive the moped. The sun is too bright for me today. Stings my eyes." He looped his arm through hers.

The old lady beamed at Lorna. "Don't worry, honey. I had a moped when I was little."

Lorna jerked her hand away from the hot drops of coffee she'd spilled on herself. "Still I'd feel much better if I went along." The man took his coffee order and a teenager took his place in line.

"No business yesterday and they all pile in today," she muttered. The noisy coffee sippers seated themselves on the pink seats and the second wave took their place in line.

Pappy and Beatrice left the store.

"Pappy, wait!"

Kai materialized at Lorna's side. "I'll go keep an eye on them," he said.

"Thank you," she said with a sigh. "You are a wonderful man."

He smiled. "Great. Then you'll come to the plantation with me this afternoon, after things slow down. For your tour."

"Sounds good." *Right after I have a serious talk with Pappy about that brooch.*

* * * *

Pappy was unavailable for talking or anything else for a good three hours. Kai returned from snorkeling, having left the two at the Coconut Hut in town where they settled in for sandwiches and tea. Bennie, a cashier at the place, offered to see them home after their lunch. Lorna worked for an hour on

trying to repair the grinder, only looking up when Beatrice tapped on the counter.

"Hello, Lorna."

"Hi. Where's Pappy?"

"He needed a siesta, so he's sitting in a rocker on the porch."

"How was the diving?"

"Great. We saw the most amazing school of Yellow Tangs. Brilliant." She gave Lorna a sly look. "That chaperone you sent with us sure knows where to dive, I'll say."

She wasn't going to offer any apologies for her protective streak. "Pappy's like my father."

"And he loves you just as much. I'm going to get in a hike now. Would you tell him I'll be back later?"

"Sure." She busied herself with cleaning until the shop gradually emptied. Pappy was stirring when she joined him on the porch with his afternoon muffin.

"Did you enjoy the dive?"

"Oh yes. That Beatrice, she's a looker in a bathing suit, let me tell you."

Lorna smiled. "She said she'll be back later. What have you two got planned?"

"Maybe a walk after dinner. She's bringing pizza. Extra cheese." He hummed as he picked at the muffin. She watched the birds flutter from branch to branch in the copse of trees. Pappy turned his face to the late afternoon sun.

"Last night you told me there's a safe combination on the back of the brooch."

He nodded. "Sure enough." He pulled it out of his pocket and fingered the back. "There. You see? Right there."

She squinted. The numbers 783219 were scratched into the back of the metal surface. "How do you know that's the combination to a safe?"

"I seen it. On my twentieth birthday. Auntie Mim showed me the safe right after Uncle Stan came home from his trip to Europe. That Uncle Stan. What a card. He was always bringing home a passel of junk. Never made a dime off any of it. He told me later he got it from a mysterious stranger. I figured it was another one of his tall tales. He said belonged to someone's cousin's cousin in Florida who brought it here after they found their true love on account of this here brooch. I think Auntie Mim scratched the safe combo on the back."

Her breath came out in a whoosh. "So there really is a safe here at Pink's. With a treasure inside?"

"Sure there's a safe, but I ain't seen what's inside. I just got the combination. She told me it was only for emergencies and I never had one of those."

Her stomach clenched. "Pappy, I'm afraid we're just about at emergency status with Pink's. We can barely make ends meet. If business doesn't turn around, we'll have to close the store."

He blinked and rubbed his rheumy eyes. "You think? That bad, huh?"

"I think so. I'm so sorry. I've tried everything to encourage new customers." Tears pricked her eyes. "Maybe if I had more business training."

He patted her hands. "No fretting now. You're a blessing to me, the way you took the burden off old Pappy's shoulders when you moved here. Don't you pay it no never mind. If we're fixin to have an emergency then could be it's time to crack open Auntie's treasure."

She squeezed his hand. "If there is anything in the safe, we can use it to turn this place around. Fix the roof and add a new seating area. People would enjoy drinking coffee and watching the birds."

"Yes, sirree. That would be nice. Maybe I could get a little fishing boat. Me and Beatrice could go out when she comes to town."

She blew her nose. "That sounds nice."

Pappy finished his muffin. "Only one problem, Honeybunch."

"What's that?"

"I can't remember where the safe is."

* * * *

Closets.

Under the bed.

Every shelf and cabinet.

Lorna searched Pink's from floor to ceiling. She didn't stop until Kai showed up and steered her out of the shop and onto a bike. Even then, she pressed him to let her stay and search.

Kai fitted a helmet on her head and clasped it under her chin. "Tour time. If the safe's been there for fifty years, it'll still be there tomorrow."

They pedaled down a gentle slope past pockets of fern and red-torch ginger. The air was thick with humidity and alive with the sound of birds and the rustle of wind in the treetops. After another steeper hill, they dropped down into a flat valley etched with vibrant green rows of coffee bushes, passing through a slatted fence and onto the plantation property. Settled into a shady nook was the office, a wooden building with a sign over the door that read Kaela Coffee.

They parked the bikes in the shade and Kai led her into the building.

Joe Kaela sat behind a small desk with a phone pressed to his ear. The familial resemblance was obvious, but Joe's build was more solid. His features were broader than Kai's, his skin the gorgeous, burnished tint common to Polynesians. He hung up the phone and gave Kai a bone crushing hug before he turned to Lorna and squeezed her gently.

"Come to visit, yeah?" He smiled. "You want a pop? Some tea?"

"No thank you, Mr. Keala. I'm here for a tour."

"Okay. Take your tour today and come back next week. We harvest then. Plenty of fun picking the cherries. A real hands-on experience." He winked.

"Don't let him fool you, Lorna. It's backbreaking."

Joe laughed. "I've been doing it for forty years and no broken back yet. Your mother did too, and she was a bitty thing, like Lorna here."

"Lorna may be small but she's mighty."

Joe cocked his head. "I can tell that by the fire in her eye and her red hair."

Lorna blushed. Kai took her hand and led her to the door. They waved good-bye and headed into the field. The bushes were actually small trees, Lorna observed. Each plant was packed with glossy dark leaves and clusters of round fruits ranging in color from green to crimson. She leaned close to finger the tiny balls.

"The cherries don't all ripen at the same time. These red ones here will be ready next week and then we'll do pickings throughout the season."

She scanned the plot. "You have to pick all this by hand?"

"All seven acres. We have some help from Pauley and Rico and some part timers."

"It's hard to believe these things turn into coffee. Just like magic."

His laugh echoed along the red earth. "Not magic. Hard work and God's hand. Together we get it done, praise Him. Come on. I'll show you where we process these magic beans."

She followed him to a greenhouse type building, covered by a wide dome of glass. The air inside was stifling, perfumed with coffee aroma. Slatted wood decks covered with mesh screens lay waiting for the next harvest. Some were covered with drying coffee beans.

Lorna poked at the nearest screen. "So how does it change from a cherry to a bean?"

He laughed. "No coffee plantations in Kansas?"

She shook her head.

"The cherry is the fruit of the coffee plant. We pulp it to take off the outer skin and what's inside is the bean." He gestured to the platforms. "We sun dry it here on these

hoshidanas. Then we mill it to take off the silverskin and it's ready to take over to Pink's for roasting."

"Who knew so much went into a cup of coffee?" She wiped a trickle of sweat from her temple and followed Kai out. Even the humid tropical air refreshed her after the sweltering confines of the greenhouse.

He led the way to a small hill, crowned by an enormous tree. A blanket was spread out, anchored by a bulging backpack. "Madam, your tour will conclude with a gourmet dinner served al fresco."

"Really?" She squelched the flutter in her stomach. "I haven't been invited to a picnic in a long time."

He laid out plates and napkins. "I find that hard to believe, a gorgeous girl like yourself. You didn't have piles of suitors in Kansas?"

Her cheeks heated. Was Kai a suitor? The thought made her insides spiral. "Uh, no. Not really."

He handed her a plate of fresh pineapple, and wedges of fresh bread dolloped with goat cheese. Next came a spoonful of chilled crab.

She took the cup of lemonade he offered and he folded his hands around hers. They bowed their heads and Kai said a humble prayer of thanks.

She savored the succulent crab and the tang of the fruit. She'd had plenty of seafood and pineapple since she came to Hawaii, but it had never tasted so good. Her gaze traveled over the rows of vibrant green coffee trees, enveloped by the setting sun. A bird glided over their heads. "That's a Pueo. I just read somewhere they are relatives of the owl. I can't

believe how many amazing birds there are here." She felt his gaze on her.

"Tell me about your life back home, Lorna."

"In Kansas? Oh, it was nothing special. Typical Midwestern upbringing. My dad builds and repairs tractors. Mom teaches at the city college part time. I have one brother who helps Dad with the business."

"Why did you leave?"

She took a deep swallow of lemonade. "Why not?"

His smile was gentle. "I have this feeling you wanted to escape something. Am I close?"

"Me?" She looked at his face and wanted to lie. It would be so easy to invent a life. "I was supposed to get married but it didn't work out."

He blinked. "That's too bad."

"Um, yes. I came here and met Pappy and the rest is history."

"And that's it?"

"Isn't that enough?"

"Lorna, if you want me to butt out, just say so but you and I both know that's not the reason you left your life in the states."

She plucked at a green leaf that settled on the blanket. She couldn't tell him, couldn't see the disapproval on his face. "That's all I want to say."

He eased back on the blanket and propped himself up on one elbow. "Okay. But if you ever want to talk about it, I'll be here to listen."

"What about you?"

"I've told you about my ancient history. I'm just a happy, go-lucky bachelor, helping his dad grow coffee."

"What do you do for fun?"

"I'm an ocean geek. I go to the beach and run or snorkel. The rest of the time I'm here, thinking about you."

She fought against an odd prickle of tears. "You think about me?"

"All the time. Especially when I see a really cool bird."

"What about Sheila?" She knew it sounded petty the moment it left her lips.

"Sheila? What about her?"

"I ... I thought you were together."

"I dated her for a while. We're just friends now."

"Does Sheila know that?"

His lips curled into an amused grin. "I didn't know you kept tabs on my personal life."

She picked crumbs off her blouse. "I don't. I just wondered what kind of woman you'd hook up with."

He sat up and moved closer until their shoulders touched. "I'm looking for a girl with a passion for life. A girl who worries about old men and endangered birds. It would be nice if she was a redhead too." He lifted her chin and kissed her.

Lorna let her worries fly away on the wind as his kiss warmed the empty space in her heart.

Chapter Four

Lorna smiled as she unloaded the fat photo albums from the bottom bookshelf. She could hear Pappy whistling in the storage room. Even though they'd spent the hour before sun-up searching for the elusive safe, her heart was still on a high from Kai's surprise, picnic dinner. He wanted a girl with a passion for life who worried about old men and birds. And she certainly wanted a man like Kai. If she could just close the lid on her past, maybe she could have a life with him, God willing.

The dust made her sneeze.

"God bless, Honeybunch," Pappy called from down the hall where she'd left him fingering his way along the storage room shelves. "Any luck?"

"No," she yelled back. "No sign of a safe anywhere.

The absurdity of the situation struck her again. Were they really tearing apart Pink's looking for a safe because of some numbers scratched on the back of an old brooch? An image of Paul rose in her head. He would have found the whole thing utterly ridiculous. And he would have been right.

A shout sounded from the other room. "Whaddya know! It was there all the time!"

Lorna's heart rose to her throat as she ran to the storage room. "Did you find it, Pappy?"

"I sure did. Just listen to this baby." He held a tarnished whistle to his lips and let out a shrill blast.

"You found a whistle?"

"Not just a whistle. This here's an Acme Thunderer. That's the prince of whistles. I thought for sure I'd done lost it for good."

She hid the disappointment as best she could. "That's great, Pappy. I'm glad you found it." The old clock downstairs sounded the seven a.m. hour. No more time for searching. Maria would need help. She left Pappy with his whistle and headed to the kitchen.

As she flipped on the lights and turned on the roaster, the cracked floor tiles seemed to jeer at her and the water stain on the ceiling begged for her attention. How much longer could the place survive without repairs? There was never really a dry season in Hawaii. Leaking roofs could not wait inevitably.

Maria arrived, her long hair in a neat braid. "Couple of rental cars in town this morning. Maybe they're headed in this direction."

Lorna hurried to the window in time to see two packed cars coast by. She groaned. "Headed to The Bean Scene."

Pappy shuffled in, the whistle on a string around his neck. "Roger doesn't know beans about coffee. He blends before he roasts." His words dripped with disgust.

Lorna remembered Pappy explaining that different varieties of beans should be roasted separately and then blended to maximize flavor. "How do you know he does that?"

"Oh he comes to the Coconut Hut all the time. We talk, but he don't listen, the rotten, bean blender."

"Morning all." Beatrice swept into the shop, a blur of brilliant orange. She kissed Pappy on the cheek. "Did you find the safe, honey?"

"Nah. But look at this baby. It's an Acme Thunderer."

Lorna wondered how she could tell Pappy to be a bit more discreet about the elusive safe. They'd already had one break in to deal with.

The sound of a heavy bag of beans landing on the floor made her heart pound. Kai came through the swinging door. "Morning." He patted Pappy on the back and greeted Beatrice who kissed him on the cheek.

He looked at Lorna and pointed to the other cheek. "I need a kiss for this one."

She blushed and gave him a peck. He turned his face so her lips landed on his.

He grinned. "Now that's the way to start the morning."

She hurriedly put Pappy's doughnut on a plate and poured coffee for everyone.

A few customers came in. Lorna and Maria took care of the orders until the shop was quiet again.

Kai called to her from his spot at the table. "I'm going to take these two snorkeling again this morning before I have to be back to help Pops. Come with us."

She looked around the empty shop.

Maria called from the kitchen. "Go on. I'll send somebody to get you if I need help."

Snorkeling with Kai? She would go anywhere with him, anytime. Taking off her apron, she went in search of a swimsuit.

They settled Pappy and Beatrice in a shallow section of surf where their feet could touch bottom. Pappy dutifully exclaimed over every fish that Beatrice pointed out. Blindness didn't seem to take away any of the joy of the ocean for him.

Kai and Lorna swam further out. She was still fearful of the wide open ocean. He held her hand as they floated on the clear water, the sun warm on their backs. The gentle undulating rhythm lulled her as they paddled along. She recognized the ever present school of yellow tangs and the comical parrot fish. Kai pointed to a sizzling splash of color as it jetted by.

"Damsel fish," he explained after they exited the water and settled on a towel a discreet distance from Pappy and Beatrice who had done the same. "They've got that stripe of blue along the sides."

"You know a lot about fish."

"Not as much as you know about birds."

She laughed. "I used to get in trouble for disappearing into the woods behind our house to bird watch. The birds here are so gorgeous I can hardly pay attention to anything else."

He gazed into her eyes. "I know the feeling. I can't stop looking at beautiful things either."

Her breath grew shallow. His face was so open, earnest. She knew, in her heart of hearts, she could not give her love to him until he knew the truth, warts and all. She drew a deep breath and in the silence of her heart whispered a prayer. *Give me courage, Lord. Help me tell him the truth.*

She looked up to find him watching her. "You're far away," he said.

"I was ... thinking about why I left Kansas."

He remained silent.

"I told you I was supposed to get married."

"Yes."

"My fiancé died. He wasn't actually my fiancé. He was driving to work and his car was hit by a tractor trailer."

"That's terrible."

"Uh huh."

He brushed away a bead of water from her hand. "So that's why you came to Hawaii? To grieve maybe?"

She sighed. "It would sound better if that was the truth."

His brow furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"Paul was a very practical man. We'd known each other since we were babies. Our mothers met in the hospital when we were born, two days apart. We were play mates; we went to the same schools until he went to college before he came home to buy a real estate business."

"Sounds like a hard working guy."

"Oh he was very hard working, smart, driven and all that. He planned everything down to the last detail. I remember one time when we went on a picnic; he even remembered to bring a battery-powered bug zapper."

Kai chuckled. "Man. I can hardly remember the picnic blanket."

"Me too, but Paul never forgot anything. He announced in fifth grade he was going to marry me and I think he never deviated from it."

"What did you think? About the plan?"

She picked at a loose thread on the blanket. "That was the problem. I liked Paul, probably even loved him on some level, but I didn't want to spend my life with him. The night he proposed, I ... I told him I wasn't sure. He was hurt, but he said I should take time to think about it and we'd talk again. That was so Paul. He didn't really recognize anything that didn't fit into the plan."

"Did you ever have that talk?"

"No. He died two days later. I found out he'd told both our parents he was going to propose and they all assumed I'd said yes. When he died, they were so buried in grief I just couldn't tell them the truth."

"I can understand that. So you left home instead?"

"Not because of that. Not really."

"What is it then?"

"I prayed long and hard before I decided not to marry Paul. I asked God what to do. Should I follow the practical plan? Marry a good man who would take care of me and love me in his own way? I prayed and prayed."

"And you decided not to marry him?"

She nodded. "But when he died, I felt so guilty because I ... I really didn't love him." The words burned her mouth like acid.

Kai watched her silently.

"I was very sorry he was gone. The anguish for his parents and mine was terrible, but ... but I didn't feel like someone who has lost a lover." Hot tears began to fall down her cheeks. "It's terrible, Kai, but I didn't love him. I wondered, I wonder..."

"What?"

"I wonder if I made the wrong choice and God took him away because I didn't deserve Paul's love." She held the sobs inside and her voice came out in a choked whisper. "I didn't love him and now he's gone."

Kai's mouth opened but he didn't have the chance to answer.

Pappy shouted at them and waved his arms in their direction. Beatrice was nowhere in sight. "I've got it. I remembered where the safe is."

Chapter Five

Lorna rubbed away the tears as they raced over to Pappy. The old man was dancing up and down on the sand.

"I done remembered. I told Beatrice we should go back right away only she hadda go meet one of them Natural Beauties."

"You told Beatrice where the safe is?"

"Sure. She'll come back tomorrow and we can open it."

Lorna and Kai exchanged a glance. "Why don't we go now, Pappy? Let's have a look and you can show Beatrice tomorrow."

"Your call, Honeybunch. Let's go."

As she piloted the moped back to Pink's, Lorna tried to rerun her conversation with Kai. *Was that disapproval on his face? Disgust? Confusion? What did he think about a woman who didn't love a thoroughly good man?* Her thoughts bumped along with the wheels. Maybe she had misunderstood God's direction. Should she have married Paul? Would it have somehow prevented his death?

Pappy leaped off the seat as soon as she ground to a stop on the gravel drive. He was in the house and up the stairs in a flash. Kai held the door for Lorna and they called a hello to Maria as they followed Pappy. They found him trying to move the massive banana tree.

She hastened to his side. "What are you doing, Pappy?"

"I remembered when I was a boy and this was just a peanut of a plant. Uncle Stan hung a bunch of bananas on it

and told me the tree done finally hatched some. I ran up those stairs and swallowed the whole joke hook, line and sinker. Never occurred to me that them bananas weren't actually connected a branch." Pappy chuckled. "Hadn't thought about it for years."

Kai helped Pappy ease the heavy pot away. "That's a good joke but what did it help you remember?"

Maria joined the group. "What's going on in here?"

"Pappy's remembered where the family safe is hidden," Lorna explained.

Pappy straightened in triumph as his fingers found what they sought. "I remembered that the safe is in the wall right behind that durn banana tree."

They looked beyond Pappy's finger. A square outline showed plainly against the faded paint.

Lorna reminded herself to breathe. "I can't believe it. The safe was right here all along. It's like some sort of mystery novel."

Kai peered at the dial. "Amazing. Now all we've got to do is open it."

Pappy cleared his throat. "That's gonna be tricky."

Maria's brow furrowed. "Why?"

"I gave Beatrice the brooch for safekeeping."

"And you don't happen to..." Kai began.

"Remember the combination?" Lorna finished.

"Nah. I never was no good at numbers."

* * * *

Lorna wracked her brain trying to remember the combination scratched on the back of the brooch. It just wouldn't come. Now, hours after Pappy had gone to bed, Lorna crouched in her hiding place in Pappy's closet. Kai was sandwiched next to her.

"I feel ridiculous," she said.

"This is the stuff great stakeouts are made of." He handed her a bottle of water.

"I'm probably totally wrong. We'll be sitting here in this closet all night for nothing."

"I can think of worse ways to spend my time." He leaned close and kissed her temple.

Her heart began to hammer. "Kai, about what I said before. I hope I..." Her words trailed off into the darkness.

"You've been carrying a heavy load around, haven't you? Feeling guilty you didn't love Paul?"

She nodded, unable to speak.

His face was just visible in the gloom. "You made a decision based on your true feelings, Lorna. God gave you those feelings and He trusts you to make your own decisions."

"Paul was a good man. I don't see why I didn't love him."

"It doesn't have to make sense, Lorna. You were walking by faith, not by sight. You listened to God and your heart and that's enough."

Lorna felt a flood of warmth as her heart was infused with a sense of peace that had been long absent. "Thank you," she whispered. "Thank you for understanding."

"It's easy to understand people you love." He took her face in his hands and kissed her tears away.

A sound from the stairwell made them both start. The creak of a foot on the steps sounded quiet, but unmistakable. Closer and closer until the feet paused on the threshold.

Kai slowly got to his feet in the closet and helped Lorna up. They half stood, bent under the hanging clothes. Kai eased the door open a crack. A dark shadow slipped into the room. It paused for a moment, next to Pappy's empty bed, then moved to the banana tree.

A hand gleamed white in the darkness, fingers twirling the dial on the safe. With a groan of metal the door of the safe swung open. Kai leaped out of the closet and turned on his flashlight. The figure gasped and launched himself at Kai bringing them both down in a pile of arms and legs. Lorna ran to the switch and turned on the light. The sudden illumination gave Kai the upper hand and he pinned the intruder's hands.

Pappy crashed through the door. "What's a'go'in' on? Did you get 'em?"

Kai hauled Roger, owner of The Bean Scene, to his feet. "What are you doing here, Roger?"

"I ... I..." The man clamped his lips together, eyes sullen.

"I know you heard Pappy talking about the safe," Lorna broke in. "But how did you get the combination? She gave it to you, didn't she?"

"I'm sorry," Maria said, stumbling into the room. "I'm so sorry, Lorna. He's my uncle and he made me copy the combination from the back of the brooch."

Lorna's mind spun. "You? You mean ... you are helping Roger?"

Her eyes brimmed with tears. "He told me to get him the combination and then he came to search for the safe. I didn't know he was going to mess the place up. He said he would find the safe and get out. No harm done."

"So you were the one who ransacked Pink's." Pappy glared in Roger's direction. "Never trust a bean blender," he snorted.

"I told him Pappy remembered where the safe was. I thought he would wait until you were gone to the beach before he robbed you." Maria wiped the tears from her cheeks. "I'm so sorry. He said if I didn't cooperate he'd tell you I had given him the combination. I knew you'd fire me and I love working here."

"Beatrice wasn't guilty after all," Lorna murmured.

"Wasn't guilty of what?" Beatrice said, as she brushed by Maria on her way into the room. She kissed Pappy on the cheek and handed him the brooch. "Here's your brooch, honey," she said, eyeing the safe. "Looks like you didn't need it though."

Pappy squeezed her. "Hello, Beatrice. I wasn't thinkin' you were going to come back tonight."

"I promised to spend the night with my girl friends but I couldn't stop missing you. I cut the visit short and came back. All the lights were on so I figured you were up." She walked over to the safe. "So what's the big treasure anyway?"

Lorna had been so caught up in Maria's betrayal and her misjudgment of Beatrice the safe had temporarily slipped her mind. "Go ahead, Pappy. You look. It's your treasure."

The old man shuffled to the safe and reached a hand inside. His brow furrowed as he searched. Finally, he pulled his arm out and opened his palm, revealing a slip of yellowed paper. "That's it. That's all there is."

Lorna took the paper from his hand and read. "It's a Bible verse. Romans 2:19. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*"

"Yep. That's a good one all right," Pappy said, a peaceful smile lighting his face. "That was Auntie Mim's favorite."

Kai, Roger and Lorna stared into the empty safe.

There was no treasure. No gold, stocks, bonds or cash. Just a Bible verse. Lorna should have been crushed, but thinking about the love she had found with Kai seemed to eclipse everything else.

"What do you want me to do with this guy?" Kai said, still pinning Roger's hands behind him.

"Aww let him go," Pappy said. "His brain's been pickled from drinking all that rotten coffee. Send him packing. Come on, Beatrice. Let's go find some doughnuts."

Kai released Roger who stalked out of the room. With a tortured glance at Lorna, Maria followed him out. The room settled into silence.

"Well, little lady," Kai said, "I'm a bit too wired to sleep. How about you?"

Lorna laughed. "I feel like I'll never sleep again."

"Then how about we see if the lovebirds left any doughnuts?"

She took his hand and they went downstairs.

The moonlight filtered through the blinds, dancing off the glass vases. Lorna snuggled next to Kai, sipping decaf coffee

while Pappy and Beatrice sat in twin rockers on the porch outside.

"It would have been great to find a treasure, though. Imagine how we could fix the place up." She eyed a new crack in the ceiling. "What will happen to Pink's?"

"I don't know but whatever happens, I'll be there to help you."

She heaved a sigh and gazed at the serene Madonna's face in the Madonna of the Pink's print. "If it was real, it would be priceless."

"To Auntie Mim it was priceless anyway."

The baby Jesus was even more luminous in the moonlight. The painting seemed to glow with a light of its own. "You said Auntie made some changes to the painting. What were they exactly?"

Kai got up and they walked over to the small picture. "She's changed the colors a bit, added some more carnations. And this little Bible next to her. That's not in the original."

Lorna peered closely. "It's got numbers on it. Two, one, nine. Romans 2:19? 'We walk by faith, not by sight.'" She thought about Pappy, a man who felt treasure all around him, though he couldn't see a thing. Simple treasures, like a shiny whistle, the feel of the sun on his face, the companionship of a kind woman.

Underneath the numbers she noticed something else, a tiny arrow, pointing to the bottom edge of the painting. Squinting, she examined the bottom edge, gliding her fingers along the frame. There she could see the picture was clipped

to a canvas backing. Kai helped her move the picture to the table where they gently unfastened the clips.

Underneath was a pencil drawn sketch of Raphael's Madonna of the Pink's. The lines were graceful, inspired. The simple strokes created an image of peace and love that seemed to leap off the page.

Lorna and Kai were speechless, staring at the sketch. Kai leaned close to the canvas, peering at the scrawled signature. He finally cleared his throat. "Lorna, did I mention Raphael made preparatory drawings for some of his works?"

"No, I don't think you mentioned that."

"Hmmm. I could be wrong, of course, but I do believe this is one of those sketches." He lifted a hand to the drawing but did not touch it.

Her mouth dropped open. "This is ... a Raphael? A real Raphael? From *the* Raphael?"

"I think so."

She gaped at the swirling lines that captured Mary in her adoration of the baby Jesus. "And it was there all along. The treasure was here the whole time, but we were just too blind to see it."

Pappy's humming filtered through the open window. She watched him twirl Beatrice around, their faces painted in joyful moonlight. A smile grew on her face. "Not Pappy, though. He has always known there was treasure in Pink's."

Kai wrapped her in a warm hug. "I guess now you'll be able to fix the leaky roof."

Their laughter rose to the rafters. She snuggled in against Kai's shoulder, grateful to God for allowing her to finally see the joy that waited in her own little corner of paradise.

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