

## Hannah's Heart Chapter Seven - Picnic, Anyone?

January 5, 2020



Oh, he caught her all right—and immediately the two of them sank straight to the bed of the river! Down, down, below the bottom of the boat, below the current. Straight down until Adonai's feet rested on the rock-strewn floor. He was holding her wrapped tightly in His arms, her head pressed to his chest, eyes closed tight. As Hanna's mind caught up to the fact that they were *under water*, she started to gasp—and remembered just in time not to draw liquid into her lungs.

Violently, she pushed away from his chest, panicking all over again—only to meet his smile and calm.

*Wait a minute!* she suddenly realized. *HE isn't struggling to breathe. He's just standing there, relaxed. Like he'd stopped for a rest on the path in the Garden.*

Plewww! The air she'd been holding in her lungs escaped with a blast—and suddenly she realized that she was breathing, too.

In and out.

In and out.

Just as though she were back in the boat.

"Fun, isn't it?"

His eyes sparkled with delight as he bent over, blowing towards her. She could see a wavy pool heading away from his mouth, and then something (*If we're breathing it, how can it be real water??*) tickled her nose, split in two and wrapped around her face.

"If you practice," he informed her, "you can talk to the whales like this. Ones that are miles and miles away. You just have to add sounds to it," and He proceeded to demonstrate. When these bubbles reached her, they held the long, moaning cries of a baleen whale that washed in and out of her ears as they floated past.

About then, the wicker picnic basket came floating down alongside them. (She'd dropped it in the jump) And Jesus reached out and snagged the handle with his arm.

"Are you hungry yet?" he asked. "There's a nice little rock formation over that way—looks just like a table and two benches." He unwrapped her legs from around his waist and set her down.

Without looking at her, he replied, "Yes, I know. 'This can't be happening.'" He turned to grin at her again. "But it is." He held his hand out to her then. "I'll explain as we walk."

"Come."

He explained a lot of things as they walked. How they were again in a different dimension than her world. That nothing could harm her here, no matter what happened. That water in this place was made of different elements, and had many more properties, than the water on Earth.

Most of the time, she didn't have a clue what he meant, but the fascination of being able to walk on the bottom of a river was enough to keep her satisfied, and soon they reached the rocky settee.

"I've invited a few friends to come join us," he said. "I hope you don't mind." He set the basket down and pulled from it a red-and-white checkered tablecloth, two plates, a small loaf of bread and several pieces of fruit. There was another container, filled with an assortment of some kind of grainy cracker, but that wasn't put on the table.

The rocky bench wasn't cold, clammy or hard—but more like she was sitting on a soft sponge. Hanna had just seated herself when something hard and pointy ran into her arm. It didn't hurt, but it startled her. She pulled away from the pressure, and found herself looking into the large, black eyes of a huge fish. It had a long, slender, olive-green body with yellow-white dots in neat little rows, all down its body. Fully as long as her entire arm, the fish looked at her like an expectant puppy.

From the corner of her eye, she noticed more of the dark-bodied creatures gathering around them in a semi-circle, each sporting a pair of small fins just below a gaping mouth, moving back and forth like twitchy rabbit ears.

“Oh, my!” she squealed. “Are *these* your friends?”

Hanna wasn't so sure she liked the company. She could see into those huge jaws, and nothing but row upon row of tiny, very sharp-looking teeth met her gaze.

“Hmmm, more like pan-handlers, actually.” Jesus seemed awfully busy with something on his side of the rocks. “But there's plenty here for all. Reach in for that other container.”

Nodding, Hanna drew it out of the basket and opened it. Taking out one of the small bits of food, she hesitated, not wanting to get her fingers anywhere near those dangerous looking mouths.

“Go ahead,” he began. “He won't—”

“—hurt me, right?” Hanna grinned at him. She was beginning to like this game.

“Are you sure?”

He just raised his eyebrows at her and slowly nodded in the fish's direction.

Cautiously, she held the treat between her thumb and forefinger and extended it towards the beast. Without warning, the fish dove forward, grabbed the cracker from her hand, and swam off. In its lunge, its mouth encompassed her entire hand, and several of its teeth scraped along her fingers as it backed away.

“Ahhh!” she squealed again, flinging her hand up in the 'air.'

“It bit me!”

“Really?” He looked up with concern on his face. “How unusual! Are you sure?”

Hanna was indignant by this time. “Of course, I'm sure! Look!” and she thrust the offended part towards Him, fully expecting to see blood pouring out of a dozen cuts. Only... the skin was intact, and not a mark could be seen.

Jesus took her hand, examined it carefully, gave it a soft pat and turned back to whatever he'd been doing.

“Trust.”

His voice came floating out around his shoulder. “It's an awesome thing. Once you've established that you can really, truly trust someone, why... you can follow them anywhere. Believe anything they tell you.”

He twisted his head around and looked at her face, his eyes searching hers for something she didn't quite understand.

“Hanna. Do you trust me?”

The question hung between them, a door that could be opened or locked up tight.

She'd stood before this door with Him before.

Without answering, but also without looking away again, she dipped her fingers back into the container and pulled out another cracker. One more long, thoughtful look, and she turned to the next waiting fish. It had the same response as the first one, but she didn't scream. And hardly even jumped this time. Now that she was expecting it, its teeth weren't sharp at all. They felt more like pointy, rubber spikes on her hand, like the pliant, rubber bristles of a child's hairbrush. Going down the line, one by one she handed out the favors and watched until the last one was fed and swam out of sight.

“Yes, Lord,” she turned and finally answered him. Her face was solemn, her eyes still a little bit worried. Inside, she was trembling like a leaf, willing herself to extend to her Savior what He was asking of her—to let down her guard. Walk away from the betrayals of her past. And embrace NOW.

“Jesus,” she stilled her trembling and drew confidence from his gaze. “I do.

“I do trust You.”



The refreshments had been tasty, and the company delightful. As soon as the last of the huge pike had swum away, another school of fish came swimming by.

Well, it was more like a *cloud* of fish. Thousands of tiny, silvery minnows came, and for the picnicker’s enjoyment, swam like miniature ballerinas floating across a vast stage, forming themselves into dozens of lovely shapes: hearts, flowers, swirling ribbons that streamed and intertwined with each other. The light filtering down from the sky above shimmered across their scales as they moved, sending flashes of color this way and that, like bursts of fireworks going off amidst the display.

Hanna watched them in amazement, wondering how they all knew where to go, how to stay together in such a way that they could make all these designs.

*Who told them how to do this?*

As usual, Jesus just grinned at her unspoken question.

Next came a pair of graceful river otters. They sat at (or rather on) the table, asking politely for a treat. Then turned on their backs, clutching their biscuit between hand-like paws to nibble away on them.

One came to Hanna and hovered in front of her face, chattering away in some weasel-ish language. Hanna reached out and stroked the creature’s smooth fur and handed it one more cracker. With another stream of chitty-chatters, it swam off and the other soon followed.

“She was telling you, ‘You are a lovely girl, and I was so glad to meet you. And thank you very much for the food.’ She has several young ones at home, and was going off to share it with them,” Jesus spoke up.

He looked around in both directions, then told her, “I believe that’s all the company we’ll have for a while. Are you tired of being under the water? Or shall we continue on exploring?”

By this time, Hanna had forgotten that they *were* under the river surface. She thought a moment.

“I think I saw a deer up along the banks before we—well, before you— Well, you know!” she said. “Do you suppose we could find her? Would she stand and let me pet her, too?”

Before he could answer, another thought struck her, “So, how do we get out of here, anyway? Is the boat still up there? I can’t see it anymore.” She had seen the bottom of their craft once, when she was watching the minnows dance. But now there was no sight of anything above them, anywhere.

Jesus stood up and started folding the cloth that had covered the table. “We had no need of it anymore, and so I sent it away. Let’s clean up here and move on to dry ground. So to speak,” and she heard that now familiar chuckle coming from him.

She picked up the basket, and he took her arm, and soon they had floated up to break the surface of the water. He paused long enough to show her a few swimming motions for her arms and legs, and together they moved towards the shoreline. The river bottom made a gradual rise, and before long they were standing up and wading in, stepping now on tiny stones and sand until they reached the bank.

Of course, by this time she expected to be dribbling water everywhere, and she’d always hated walking around with wet clothes on.

*Yuck*, she thought as they emerged from the water into the air again. *This part is going to be gross.* She expected the familiar, clammy feeling of cloth sticking to her body and stringy, heavy hair clinging to

her arms and face. But things never acted the way you'd expect here, did they? In fact, it soon became apparent that whatever part of her was still under water was indeed wet—but as soon as it rose out of the water, it was immediately dry!

**"I think I see her over there, Hanna,"** Jesus pointed off to the right of them. **"Let's go find out."**

He began to head off in that direction at a brisk walk, not waiting to see if she were following. When she hesitated, again musing on this strange-but-wonderful place they were exploring, he called over his shoulder, **"You don't like to be wet, right? So, come on!"**

Giggling, she picked up the last foot that she had drawn out of the river and shook it. A few thin streams of sand fell out of her sandals, and a pebble.

Dry as a bone.



Karen thrashed from one side to the other, moaning and groaning, caught in a recurring nightmare—unable to escape. Her out-flung arm finally struck the nightstand with a hard *thunk*—and she was freed. The images dispelled like cockroaches scattering in the light and her consciousness returned with a jolt.

She lay there panting, and finding nothing else available, used the bed sheet to wipe the sweat and tears from her face. The smell of the fabric softener helped soothe her heart, and she let the fragrant lilac scent draw in and out of her lungs for a while—until her heartbeat slowed to normal.

*Why this torment still? After all this time?*

The nightmare was always as vivid as the real event.

**It began the night she'd woken to use the bathroom**—and filled the toilet with her blood. Miscarriage—again.

Time had started to blur what followed next. The frantic phone calls to find someone willing to come watch Hanna and Evan in the middle of the night. The careening drive to the hospital. The bustle of wheelchairs, nurses, charts, questions. The wild dash to an ER room to try to stop what was happening.

All to no effect.

**Mercifully, the anesthesiologist had put her under, once it was over.** **"To complete the procedure,"** she'd assured her.

It was here the nightmare recalled the events in absolute clarity.

**She'd begun to wake** up from the drugs, and as she did, her thoughts were drawn to her right arm.

*I'm holding something? I can feel the weight. The baby! The baby is here, and I'm holding it now in my arm!*

She had forgotten all the rest, even the reason she was there in **the hospital**. **Filled with joy, she'd** struggled to open her eyes to gaze on the precious newborn—only to be met by an empty space.

Laughter that could only be described as evil met her ears and rang on and on over her until it was finally choked off.

Her heart had exploded in pain, and she lay sobbing. So distraught, in fact, that the nurses finally gave up trying to talk to her, to comfort her, and left her alone again.

It had taken her six months to quell the real event from every waking moment.

**She still hadn't managed to kill the nightmares.**

Karen knew something had followed afterward, but it had been blocked from her mind, as though a veil had been brought down over the memory, a wall had been built around it.

She knew it had been wonderful, though...

How do you forget something like that?

*If only I could remember—I know it would stop the nightmares. I know I'd be free of this!*

Mike's footsteps could be heard ascending the steps. She quickly brushed the last of her tears away and re-arranged herself in the bed. She never let him know when these dreams happened, afraid that he'd explode even more, get even more worried about her. He just didn't know how to cope with her pain.

For cryin' out loud—he didn't know how to cope with *his* pain.

The fights? They didn't mean anything to either of them. It had just become a way to let off steam. A bad habit—she knew that. Even though the words they threw back and forth stung, it never destroyed what was in their hearts for each other.

Not entirely, at least.

Neither of them understood what it had been doing to the two children, however...

"Kids are resilient." Mike would insist. "So what if we fight and yell? We always make up. They don't have to see what goes on in private between us, do they? They're just kids."

They *were* too young, weren't they?

Well, at least Evan was. She was sure of that.

She never questioned Mike directly, but there was always a quiet niggling in the back of her mind about it all. As a kid growing up, she and her siblings had fought and yelled and screamed—and then made up again. So, what's the big deal? And so, she'd blindly followed his words and avoided the children's sad faces, never trying to help them understand anything.

Somewhere, she'd forgotten that her parents had never, ever done such a thing, but had always explained the reasons for their occasional spats. And had always welcomed questions and challenges from the children with open arms and consciences.

But that was long, long ago, Karen tried to rationalize. A whole different generation ago. They wouldn't understand today's pressures. Life was so much easier for her parents!

She lay in bed quietly, waiting for him to finish his bedtime routine; to settle himself and hear his breathing slow, his snoring to begin. More thoughts had begun pouring through her mind and she needed to get away, to be alone for a while. She slid back out of the bed, eased through the door and headed back down the stairs.

In the living room was still her one, last comfort from their life before—a two-seater, soft easy chair that lay back far enough, comfortably enough, to fall asleep in. It was piled with pillows and blankets, and everyone else was forbidden to sit there or rearrange anything.

It was calling to her now.

Her heart had to find solace. Somewhere.



They had been walking for quite a long time. And under normal circumstances, Hanna would have been watching the sun setting, or at least moving. But even though there was light everywhere they went, (and no shadows, she'd noticed. Strange, that. No shadows.) it never seemed to come from any one source, and it never lessened or increased.

They had found the deer—several of them, in fact. The doe was grazing with twin fawns, spotted little youngsters that frolicked around Hanna, circling her and playing their own form of Tag and Catch Me if You Can. They had been more than friendly, and when they had eventually tired of their games, she had sat on the ground holding their little bodies, stroking their fine, soft fur.

“There is one more place I’d like to take you before we send you home again, Hanna,” Jesus finally said, helping her to disentangle from them. “Time seems to stand still here, I know. There actually IS no time here; that’s a discussion for another day. But you are still expending energy, and there will be a ‘tomorrow morning’ for you, and a day to walk through with Evan.”

They watched the little family pick through the underbrush, the mother moving with stately grace weaving through the trees, leading her young ones forward. Gradually they ascended a grassy mound rising out of the landscape and disappeared behind a tree, the quick twitch of a tiny white tail the last thing to be seen.

Barely twice as wide as it was tall, the mound looked like it had been put there intentionally, not naturally formed. As Hanna looked closer, she realized there was something flat and brown centered in the middle, facing them—nearly covered with flowering vines, but still visible with a careful eye. Without asking if he wanted to go there, she started making her own way through the underbrush, weaving in and out of the small saplings that stood between her and the mound.

Yes. It was a door, quite a large door. It looked old, like something out of a Hobbit village. And there were pictures of things, people doing things, marching all across the front of it from the top to the very bottom, like the hieroglyphs in ancient Egyptian pyramids.

Only—no. These looked like *her*. She could see her own likeness in one of the figures. And as she examined it all, she found everyone who had been important to her in her family and life from the time she was born up to today.

“This is a special place, built just for you, Hanna.”

He had come up behind her and now spoke softly, seriously. “Inside, you will find a very special book—several of them, in fact. I’d like you to go in and see for yourself. It’s important. There are some things you need to see and learn there.”

She turned, looking up at him. Not at all sure that she wanted to do any such thing. She’d spent a good deal of time, up until the past few weeks, shoving feelings down, *way* down inside. Not wanting to deal with them; not knowing how to get rid of them.

But she had declared to him just a while ago that she trusted him.

And she did.

*Nothing here will ever hurt you*, rang through her memory. Did that apply to emotions, as well as body?

There was nothing in his face that frightened her. Indeed, nothing had ever truly frightened her here. Anything negative always turned out to be her own insecurity, not reality. And the expectant, loving look on his face was giving her courage.

“Trust me, Hanna. You’ve already begun.”

She didn’t understand all the feelings that had come rushing through her when he’d said that, but she was keenly aware of one. Deep inside, in a place that had just recently been awakened lay a stirring of Hope.

She barely recognized it for what it was. In fact, if the thought and actual word “hope” hadn’t just then come floating through her mind, she wouldn’t have. But she longed for it. There was a promise there that drew her.

With her heart fluttering like a release of doves, she reached forward and grabbed the oversized handle to the door—and pushed.



“Good for you, Hanna!” Kamali danced and sang out. He and Shimrath linked arms and performed a short do-si-do in celebration. They’d been cheering her on the entire time she and Adonai had been here, doing what angels do to encourage a human they have been assigned to.

“Look,” Shimrath drew Kamali’s attention. “Look at my robe!”

He’d been looking downward, but now flung both arms up waist high for the other angel’s inspection. Creeping up the fabric, from the hem of each sleeve and the bottom hem, were spikes of brilliant red. Not a lot. Not terribly far, maybe only an inch or so from the edge to where it stopped. Yet—oh, so apparent.

“Trust and Obedience grows! She’s getting it, Kamali. My robe has begun!”

Shimrath, whose very name meant Obedience to God, was just that—an angel assigned to Hanna at her salvation to monitor, encourage and measure her growth in Obedience to Yahweh. All through her life from now on, as she made choices of following the Lord’s directions—or choosing to walk the other way in her own will—his robe would be a visual testament to her progress.

He and Kamali were so jubilant at the path Hanna was choosing they couldn’t restrain themselves. Calling to a dozen other angels that watched nearby, together they raised hands and heads and voices to the Almighty Yah, lifting Him up with Praise and Worship and Glory. The sound of worship resonated all throughout the air around them, and travelled swiftly, until it reached the very Throne itself. The Redeemed on the Sea of Glass felt its vibrations, and together with the Host that surrounds the Throne, a spontaneous celebration of Praise broke out.

Adonai smiled to Himself as He watched it all. Knowing, of course, what was occurring in all realms, in all the lives of all of His Children, at all times. The Father and He shared the moment of Joy, and then He turned His attention back to His little charge and her journey.

