

## Hannah's Heart Chapter Ten – Chosen

February 16, 2020



The numbers on Hanna's clock clicked over to read 7:37 as Karen stood over her children, watching them sleep. She'd be late for work (as an attendant for the Gas & Quick Mart at the far end of town) if she didn't leave. But she wouldn't shake her self-imposed ritual. Not for that. Not even for Mike, who had demanded they needed the money when she had applied—protesting.

Mike. Well, that really didn't matter right now, now did it?

She had woken again an hour ago, with a stiff neck and a sore back, propped sideways in the rocker. The events of earlier rushed back in on her, and she'd fought herself to even get out of the chair. But she'd realized she needed to look at her bank account. That would help her make some decisions.

It suddenly seemed that she had an awful lot of them to make.

A review of their money showed that Mike had told her the truth, at least about this one thing. It must have been a sign-on bonus. There were several thousand dollars in the account that hadn't been there the day before; more than enough to keep them going for a few weeks, if she chose to quit.

What else could she do, anyway? Who would watch the children? Mama was getting too old for such a long, daily responsibility.

*Nothing Mike can do about it, now is there?* she reassured herself.

She taped the note in her hand to Hannah's dresser mirror, where she'd be sure to see it. She didn't want to say much yet, so she'd kept it to something short.

"Your father had to leave town for a meeting. Feed Evan and take him to the park today. Then you can go to Nana's for the afternoon if you like," read the note. Her hand had hovered at the end, tempted to sign it with "Love you, Mom." But she hadn't written that to Hannah in months. And it seemed wrong, somehow. Phony.

She pressed on the tape once more, making sure the paper wouldn't fall to the floor. She needed to get going. If nothing else, she still had a strong sense of responsibility when it came to an employer.

That thought made her frown.

*You care more about a podunk job with an absentee employer than you do your own children.* She looked down once more at the sleeping children.

*What a fool you've become.*

She had such confused, mixed-up feelings about her only daughter these days. Hannalee was far more mature for her age than Karen had ever been. She was also far more protective over Evan than her own sisters and brother had ever been towards her.

And now... to find that her only remaining son preferred to curl up in *Hanna's* arms, not her own, was galling.

Evan was different than other children, too. He was still very much a little boy, a needy one that looked for help with things he could have, should have, been doing for himself. In fact, as much as Hanna's quiet independence grieved Karen, his dependence on Hanna was like a constant knife, thrust through and turning in her heart.

She knew she'd driven away her firstborn, her princess. Karen had ignored her. Asked everyone else to take care of her. Been so caught up in her own private world of misery for so long—any idea as to how to walk back over the bridge of reconciliation to Hanna was lost to her.

The sight of Evan snuggled up against Hanna's chest, her arm draped protectively over him, ripped at her heart. He must have crawled into Hanna's room sometime in the night. Another bad dream, she supposed. Another lost time where she would have gladly gone to comfort him, to gather at least one of her children to her bosom and find solace from his sweet little soul.

But once again, it was robbed from her.

*How had it ever gone this far? How had she gotten replaced?*

When did they form an island unto themselves; separated, isolated from her, their mother?

*Didn't they know—*

"How much I long for them?" Karen whispered bitterly.

*No, of course not. How could they? Mike and I spent years pushing them on other people to "watch", and then abandoned them in favor of a dying sibling. What else could I expect?*

She saw it all again with the clarity that had been forming in her mind over the past few weeks—ever since she and her mother had re-connected. It was almost as though a veil had been lifting from over her eyes, a chisel had been chipping away at the tall, formidable wall she had so carefully built around her heart.

She tucked the stuffed dinosaur she'd been clutching under the covers, next to Evan's hand. They'd be waking up soon, and Hanna would uncomplainingly assume her enforced role as Karen's surrogate—feeding, caring for, and amusing Evan. School had let out nearly a month ago and they'd had no other recourse.

She could never be home.

Mike could never be bothered.

Not with babysitting. Not with nurturing. He was too busy.

*And now it didn't even matter—*

She pushed the searing pain from her heart again at the thought of his morning departure.

*Money. It's always about the money.* Or—she let out an exasperated huff, *the lack of it.* She knew in her heart that she should have said "no" to the job. They could have made it on his income, small as it was. She knew they could. She'd grown up in a family of seven that barely had two nickels to rub together, but somehow, they'd made it.

*And they had been happy, too.*

That thought chased her around the age-old tree for the hundredth time: *had* they ever been happy? She and Mike? It had seemed so in the beginning. At college. The early years. And when Hannalee was born it had been the fulfillment of a lifetime. All she'd ever wanted was a family. Children. LOTS of children.

So, what happened?

*Why does God hate me?* She groaned inwardly.

The question was on the tip of her tongue day and night: *Why did You take my precious babies away??*

Knowing there'd be no answer coming—there never was—she turned to go, her hip bumping against the small end table that held Hanna's clock and lamp. A black, hardcover notebook fell from the table and flipped open as it landed. Karen bent to retrieve it and her eyes fell on the top of one page.

Love is patient, Love is kind,  
Love will always help you mind.

Never wants to have its way,  
Never wants to take away.  
Love is what the King has given...

A yearning sprang up within her so suddenly, from so deep inside it made her gasp. *What in the world?* This is Hanna's handwriting, but where did she get THIS song?

*Mama?*

*Is this what you are teaching my children on these long Sunday afternoons—Papa's songs?*

She gently closed the book and held it cross-armed to her chest. A world of lost memories swirled and wrapped around her like a warm, wooly blanket. She closed her eyes and could almost hear the melodic **thrum of her father's guitar, the beautiful tenor of his voice as he sang another new song to the children.**

**Songs he'd written to teach them the Bible.**

To teach them how to live with and treat each other.

To teach them how to live in the world—without staining themselves WITH the world.

To teach them about the God he loved and served and lived for with every moment of every day—and may the whole world know about it, too!

When she'd ask him where the song came from, he'd always get that twinkle in his eye and tell her, "Why, from Heaven, Sweet Pea. Direct from Heaven!"

As a child, she'd actually believed him. She'd crawl up on his lap, lay her head on his shoulder and listen to him sing her soft songs when she'd had a bad dream, had a fall, or was sad the other children wouldn't play. Papa and God were once totally intermingled in her mind; kind and soft-spoken and always waiting with arms wide open.

She reveled now in the sweet memories, wondering if she could ever find her way back to that kind of place—one of safety, security, and peace.

*When had that all been driven away?* her aching heart began to demand with each sorrowing beat. *What stole it all from me?*

*God, if You're still there. If You really still care about me, like Mama keeps insisting—what happened?*

Worry, ever-present in her eyes, deepened. She'd asked the questions so often. With a heavy sigh, she leaned over and tugged the covers a little higher over Evan's arm. Indeed, she did know when and how it happened, on the rare occasions she was able to be bluntly honest with herself.

Oh, she was well aware.

But like everything else in her life, she kept it firmly chained within the dark castle of despair that dominated her soul—and the key was nowhere to be found.

Once her siblings had grown and left home (there'd been a five-year gap between her and next sister Betsy) she and her parents faced her last few high school years, just the three of them together. Papa had been growing ill. His cheerful songs and influence had lessened more and more until eventually Mama's time was consumed with caring for him. Karen began fending for herself, skipping time with God in favor of sleep and friends. Dreams of exploring more "modern" places than this tiny village of Breinigsburg began to call to her.

And her heart grew restless.

All of a sudden, her parents had seemed older than she ever remembered—and terribly old-fashioned.

Flashy brochures of a particular University came to her attention. It was huge and modern, offering dozens and dozens of course choices—including things she'd never had the opportunity to experience: Theatre. Art. Music. Film. She'd dreamed of being involved in these things one day—a thought not ever

entertained by her parents, as they'd shunned the movies and concerts for the most part; preferring older, more traditional entertainments, like books and board games.

Finally, she'd left for college. The very same she'd dreamed about. She'd hounded and pestered them, presenting it to Mama and Papa in the best of light, always bringing the conversation around to the facts. "It's a Christian college, Papa. What could be better than that?"

Once there, she found that the title "Christian" didn't necessarily match the hearts of the students, nor even the professors—particularly the ones in the Arts Department. The thrust was more to "Be shining Lights in the World using your own ideas and methods" instead of "Be separated from the world and holy, letting that Light within you shine before men." It was only a matter of time before she found it easier and easier to relegate her growing up experiences and thoughts about God to... before.

Now, she'd wanted New Experiences. And Freedom. And Think-On-Her-Own time.

And then she'd met Mike.

Papa hadn't wanted her to marry Mike. He'd been against it from the beginning, telling her that Mike would "pull her away from her roots." She'd been so in love at the time she wouldn't listen. She couldn't bear to listen. They'd already pledged their lives to each other, and she'd given her heart away. Besides, he'd sworn he was a Christian. He went to church, didn't he? And said all the right things.

What could be wrong?

Except... there *were* some things she'd wondered about. Things about him she'd suspected weren't quite the way her rose-colored glasses were seeing.

He'd started to pull her away more and more from her family, luring her away from times they would otherwise have gone home from college to visit. He thought Papa's songs were childish. Thought the 'quaint little chapel' they'd attended too... something. He never would really say what bothered him about First Church. He always had his sights set on the huge campus of the mega-church near college, the one pulling 3,000 people in at a time.

She'd heard his and Papa's animated discussions about it at the time, but always left to go help Mama with the dishes or take a walk once they'd "gotten into it". What did it matter, anyway? It was still church.

Suddenly, the bleakness of her world descended on her.

Maybe Mike had never known God in the first place.

*Maybe that's why it's all fallen apart—why he's left. He's sick of me, sick of the kids. He wants to live in the world without the weight of us dragging him down.*

What once seemed good had become so far away and long ago. And now had surely been swallowed up in the bad. She barely remembered anything about those years.

The past several years she did remember—and would give anything to stop. Her solution? Live in a carefully controlled, self-imposed exile from her feelings.

Unfortunately, her family had gotten dragged into the same banishment.

She reached over and gently replaced the notebook, wondering what could be happening in her daughter's life that she would be writing down Papa's songs in what looked to be a journal of some kind.

*Mama has to have something to do with this.*

She turned to leave. There was nothing to be done standing here, and she at least had to make an appearance at the Mart.



*Mama.*

If there were anyone in the world that could convince her God was still good, it would be Mama. And for the oddest reason, something felt different inside her since she'd woken up the second time. Life was worse than before, and she was devastated. Yet, there was a part of her inside that just kept feeling—stronger, somehow.

She couldn't sort it out, but to her own surprise, she found herself addressing Someone she hadn't talked to in years.

*God?*

"I know You probably hate me by now," she looked to the sky and whispered. "I've done everything wrong—right from the very beginning. Papa tried to warn me, and I wouldn't listen.

"I'm very, very sorry for that."

She knew that she might as well be honest. She knew He heard it all anyway.

"I'm still so hurt that You took away my babies. I can't deny that. You know it, anyway. I can't help but wonder if you did it to punish me? Would You really DO that? I don't know. I just don't know anything anymore.

"But God?"

"I think I need to try to find You again. I'm all alone now. And these two deserve a whole lot more than either Mike or I have given them, not for a long time."

She'd reached the car and opened the door. The sun was bright this morning, shining on the dew lingering on the grass. It looked like a field of green diamonds, glittering all the way down to the river.

"Can You ever forgive me? WILL You ever forgive me?"

"I don't deserve for You to forgive me—

"But I guess it won't hurt for me to ask..."

"Will it?"

She didn't know if Anyone had heard her or not.

No matter. She'd tried.



The click of a door closing confused Hanna; it should have slammed, not closed gently. Her consciousness arousing, she opened her eyes. Not to the forest, or even to the Office door. Not to the sight of the Lord waiting for her—but to the gentle, yellow walls of her room and the feel of Evan's little body pressed tight against hers.

"No! I have questions! Don't go, not yet!" She spoke the words out loud, then flinched when Evan moaned and started to roll away from her.

*Shhh...* she whispered fervently to him. She needed time to think her way through it all. *Shhh. It's okay. Go back to sleep.* His breathing grew deeper again, and she relaxed onto her back.

Everything. Everything that had just happened was so clearly imbedded in her mind's eye, she could still re-create it down to the tiniest detail. The feel of Regemmelech's muscles moving beneath her body. The sensation of the water-that-wasn't-water on her body. The sound of Jesus' voice beside her to the sight of His grin and how His eyes crinkled when He laughed...

The Office.

And the Book.

At the thought of the Book, her eyes searched the ceiling and her mind began to swirl.

Just like the first time, she wanted to believe it all. But the thought lingered: could it be real—or not? She'd been constantly flip-flopping between those two options. Even though her first adventure was

still firmly ingrained in her mind, the time that had elapsed, the “life” that had happened since had been making her wonder. And sometimes doubt. Nana had been so excited for her, had told her that the Lord was showing her great love and favor. She wasn’t entirely sure what “favor” even was—but she was pretty sure it wasn’t something anyone else wanted to give her.

Not her parents, anyway.

And now there was a thorn amid the roses.

*You promised nothing was going to hurt me, her mind raged.*

*So, what was that Book all about?*

*Didn’t You know that was going to hurt??*

She wanted desperately to hang on, believing the good in spite of the bad. But no matter how she tried, she just couldn’t reconcile it all. Those last few moments had left a gaping wound, and the joy and wonder of the entire—whatever it had been—was slowly oozing out of it.

Dreams.

*Maybe that’s all it was. Just a dream.*

*Not God, not Jesus.*

*Just my own imagination forming an incredible dream. Who ever heard of having Jesus show up, anyway? Didn’t He live in Heaven and just take care of the important people?*

The thought had barely formed before a flash of brilliant light appeared to her left. And Kamali, in all his angelic glory, stood beside her. She didn’t know how—since her bed was shoved tight up against that wall, and there wasn’t an inch of space between them.

But stand there he did!

“I have something for you, dear Hanna. You seemed to have left the Office before He was done showing you all He had intended.” His face quizzed her with a furrow between his eyes. Before she could answer, from within his garment he drew a white paper, rolled up into a scroll and tied with a deep purple ribbon.

“If you would, take this and read it. He said He has explained it all to you in here. And that any questions you still had, He would answer the next time you are together.”

Handing the scroll to her with a polite bow, he smiled and disappeared again as suddenly as he had come, as though he’d stepped out of a hidden doorway and back again.

She eased her arm out from under Evan, slowly pulled the ribbon’s bow and it fell away. The scroll didn’t feel—right somehow, not at all like she expected. It wasn’t like paper she’d ever felt before. It didn’t feel quite—solid, maybe.

*Curious.* Like everything else she’d experienced with Jesus and all of this.

She found the edge of the paper, and started to unroll it, holding it up over her eyes to read.

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“Dear Hanna,” the words began.

“You asked Me into your heart just a short while ago—and so I have come! We have had many lovely adventures already now, haven’t we? I have enjoyed every moment I have spent with you. I know you have enjoyed My presence as well. You have learned much, grown much, and are truly on the path to becoming a faithful Servant of God.

“As you know, I have planted a Garden. This is given to you so that there will always be a place especially set aside for us to meet together in. You have seen how beautiful it is already! This reveals the beauty and purity of your soul, bathed with My Blood from the Cross, all sins forgiven and washed away. It

will grow and expand and become even more beautiful as your spirit and soul grow and expand in Love and Obedience to Me.

“Oh, My Sweet Little One, I want to assure you. Do not fear what you have seen or heard or experienced here in the Garden—or in My country, to which it is connected. Do not allow the Evil One to rob you of the joy, to tempt you to dismiss it all as simply long, wonderful dreams. For it has not been fantasy, or dreams, or nonsense—as Kamali explained to you in the very beginning.

“No, Dear Hanna—this is all very, very real. More real, in fact, than the world you are aware of each day. This is the world of My Spirit that we explore together. My world, which speaks and interacts with your spirit.

“It is NOT ‘just your imagination.’

“And it is all ultimately for your Good.”

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The paper had been drooping lower and lower as she read, her arms tiring of the position, but her mind was oblivious to it as she tried to process what she was reading. Trying to understand how—if it were NOT real—how He could possibly know what she had JUST been thinking and put it all down in this paper? She scooted up into a sitting position and continued reading.

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“You see,” the message continued, “I designed your imagination for this purpose: to have a place for My Spirit to meet and interact with yours. You can use this imagination to make lovely things, compose sweet songs, draw beautiful pictures—all inspired by Me, whether you realize it or not. ‘Every good and lovely thing comes from above,’ as I have written in My Scriptures. Your imagination touches My world, Heaven, and brings back with it Heavenly-inspired things to bless the world with. This is as My Father desired and intended it to be used.”

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Up until this point she had been reading the scroll to herself, the words resonating within her own mind. Now, however, she was sure she heard someone draw a deep breath—then let it slowly out again.

A voice, almost as familiar as her own by now, picked up the reading from here on.

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“It is early in our walk together. But because of the times you are living in, it is necessary that I tell you about the ‘other side’, too. You are surrounded with things that are *not* lovely—movies, TV shows, books, video games. Yes, these things grow in someone’s imagination, too. But the thoughts planted in their minds, the imaginations that they experience are not from Me. Nor are they always from within themselves.

“You have an enemy, Dear. You may remember Me telling you that the first time we met. Everyone who loves Me does. We will talk more about him and who he is, what he does, as time progresses.

“He is MY enemy, and so hates everyone who gives their hearts to Me, too. He cannot hurt Me personally, so he attacks those who love Me instead, which brings Me great pain.

“And just as I am able, in the spirit, to meet and walk and talk with you, HE is able to talk and plant ideas and thoughts into a person’s mind, into their imaginations. Much of what is seen in the movies, in the books, in the video games is not ‘made up,’ either. No, it too is real—but unseen. Coming from the world of the spirit. Because this world is unseen, people in general dismiss it, and the dangers of it, and think nothing of allowing it all to enter their minds and hearts, not knowing the dangers they are exposing themselves to.

“Even though you are young, My Beloved One, you have already been exposed to a great deal of these things, although I have been diligently protecting you from their harm for many years.

“I have chosen you from the Beginning—for this time, this place, this family.”

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Hanna had been following the text with interest, but some detachment—like reading a well-written science or history lesson in school. But THIS line caught her up short.

The voice stopped as her eyes did.

*Chosen me? How? Why? From the beginning of what? And what does it all have to do with my messed-up family?*

Her hands dropped to the bed, crumpling the scroll and tearing a portion of one corner. She fingered the tear, wondering what to do with these thoughts, these new ideas that made her heart pound.

The Voice began again, quietly.

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“My dear child, do not be afraid. I desire that you grow with Me and learn of Me, and about the ways of My Kingdom. There is much I have planned for your life, if you are willing. Part of the reason I have chosen to come to you is to alert you to these dangers I have spoken of. We will talk about these things in time, as well.

“I call every person who loves Me to come to this place, to their own beautiful Garden—but very few hear Me. Very few are willing to set aside the noise and busyness of their lives to listen for My still, small voice within them. The older a person gets, the harder it can become to hear because of these things. This is another reason I have called you now—your youth.

“Always listen for Me, Hanna. Listen for My call. If you desire Me, go to the Garden Gate in your imagination and call to Me—I will always, always come. That is My most solemn promise: I will always be there for you. Know that, when you do not see Me, when we are not together in My world, I am walking right beside you, here in your world. Never be afraid to call out for Me, no matter the circumstance.

“I will always come. I will always bring help. ‘No weapon formed against you will prosper.’”

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The voice grew intense at these words. Not stern. Not frightening. But very, very intentional. In nearly the same tone, He finished His message.

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“I have a warning for you now, My dear Hanna: be careful with this Garden. Tend to it with great care! Together we can keep it always a glorious place to be. But if you become careless and wander from My path for you, the Garden too will feel the effects of your wandering.

“I am calling you now to stay close to My side. Read My words in your Bible. Talk to Me and the Father in prayer about everything and everyone that concerns you. Talk to Me all day long, about anything you like. Treat Me now as your closest Friend, for that is indeed Who I will be if you choose. Walk with Me. Meet with Me often in our Garden. Let the Light of My Love for others shine through you as you grow in Me—and it will be a strong force for your own healing, and the healing of your family.

“I love you with an everlasting Love, My Sweet Hannalee. I will see you again soon.”

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As the Voice ended, the scroll dissolved in her hands and disappeared. She didn't know it just yet, but every word had been engraved on her heart, the very seat of her Conscience, ready to be retrieved in a moment's notice. She sat still—hands in her lap, no longer holding anything, eyes focusing on nothing in particular.

“What'cha doing, Hanna?” a sleepy voice crawled into her thoughts. “I'm hungry. Can we have waffles today? Mom bought some from the store yesterday.”

Evan finished with a noisy *yawwwnnn* and an outstretched arm. Suddenly, he flung the covers back, scrambled off the bed and dashed for the door. A little dance accompanied his efforts to open the ancient lockset, and success sent him flying down the hallway. The slam of another door announced his destination—accomplished!

With a thud, Hanna's mind was fully 'back to Earth'.

*Well, that was a rude awakening!* she complained ruefully, rolling to the edge of the bed and sitting up. Stretching, she gathered her unruly hair up into a knot at the top of her head, then let it fall again, cascading over her shoulders. Her mind drifted once more to the nebulous 'somewhere'.

“It's real,” she breathed to herself. “Really, really *real*.”

“I believe You, Jesus. I don't know how You're going to make anything good out of this family, but somehow... I believe You.”

*This ought to be some circus to watch,* she thought, rolling her eyes as she heard Evan's feet trotting down the stairs.

*Well—bring on the clowns!*

She padded across the room, and reached to close and lock the door, preparing to change her clothes. Something fluttered against her mirror with the suction of pushing the door shut.

*What's this? A note? Mom never leaves notes up here.*

The note was cryptic but surprising.

*Wow! Dad's GONE? He never leaves like that.*

Wondering what was up now, she just shook her head.

*Like I said, Lord. Welcome to the circus!*

