

Chapter 2

As Lynda was filling her trunk with soda, near-beer and wine from Beverages & More, she couldn't help but notice the commotion of picketers across the street and some lunatic on a Megaphone forcing his views on the world around him. Pro-lifers were picketing in front of the Women's Clinic beside the Albertson's.

"Good Lord," she thought, "What are those people doing out here? Isn't Northern California supposed to be full of reasonable people or at least liberals?" Returning her gaze to the task at hand she paused as she saw a young woman alone in her car in the Albertson's parking lot, eyeing the picketers as she bit her nails. "Poor thing," Lynda muttered under her breath. A police car circled the clinic and parked. An officer and a detective got out of the car. The two men walked through the protestors and entered the clinic. A few moments later they returned to their car and drove off.

Being the good mom, good citizen, that she was; Lynda returned the BevMo cart to its proper place by the front door of the store. Keys in hand, she glanced once more at the blue Honda Civic in the Albertson's parking lot. The young woman was still there, still chewing on her fingertips.

Lynda bit her lower lip, not sure what she should do. Raising her eyes to heaven, she said, “Well, you’re the one who made me so darn nosy and helpful.” With that, she tossed her keys in her purse and headed across the four-lane road trying to find the right words to say.

Approaching the Civic from the driver’s side, she saw that the young woman was young indeed, probably no older than Sean. The girl was staring intently at the picketers and jumped at the tap on her window.

“Mrs. B.?” she said.

“Hey, I know you, too. I’m sorry, I don’t remember your name.”

“I’m Maddie. I’m Paul’s girlfriend.”

“Of course. Sorry about that.” She was Sean’s best friend’s girlfriend.

“Um, can I help you with something, Mrs. B.?”

“Actually, Maddie, I came over because I thought maybe you could use my help. Maybe going in there?” Lynda gestured towards the Women’s Clinic.

Maddie flushed and looked down.

“Where’s Paul?”

“He’s late. Really late. I don’t think he’s coming.”

“What do you want to do, Maddie?”

She sighed. Her shoulders sagged with her burden. “I need to go inside.”

“You’re sure?”

Maddie nodded, eyes glued to the floor.

“Then let’s go,” said Lynda.

Maddie looked up.

Lynda opened her car door. “C’mon, let’s go.”

Maddie got out of the car and locked it up. As Lynda and Maddie approached the clinic, the pro-lifers smelled fresh blood. Lynda put her right arm around Maddie and held her tight; with her left, she pushed her way through the crowd, through the insults that threatened damnation. The ringleader was tall and thin and male. He was smug and righteous in his conviction. His hair was straight, neat and his clothes were crisp and conservative. He was camera ready. Lynda recognized him on sight from his many sound bites on the news.

His voice grated as he turned to Maddie and said, “If you enter that house of sin you’ll have to live with more than regret. You’ll have to live knowing that you chose to commit murder, a mortal sin!” Naturally, he was unwilling to offer any

real help or solutions. Instead his concern for Maddie's soul clearly ended at the clinic door. As they neared the front door, someone from inside opened it and ushered them in.

"Sorry about that," the woman said brusquely, "Ron Thompson is at it again."

She was tall and chic in a designer suit and had shiny, severe black hair. "Let me get you checked in. Please follow me." She led them through the small waiting room to the receptionist's window. "Do you have an appointment?"

"Yes," Maddie whispered, looking at the floor.

The woman just looked at Maddie, impatient. Glancing from one to the other, Lynda nudged Maddie.

"Maddie, she needs to have your name and who your appointment's with."

"Oh, sorry. I'm Madeleine Lacy and I have a two o'clock appointment with Dr. Cameron."

"Very well," the woman said, "Have a seat."

They sat together in the waiting room. "She seemed nice," Maddie said.

"Really? How do you figure?"

"She got the door for us. She's very businesslike and efficient. Maybe I'll be like that someday."

Lynda looked at Maddie strangely. "True, she got the door for us and I have nothing against businesslike and efficient, but don't you think she was a little cold?"

Maddie grinned ever so slightly. "Maybe if I was a little colder I wouldn't be in this mess."

Lynda chuckled despite herself. "I gotta love a girl with gallows humor."

Maddie turned and looked at Lynda. "Thanks, Mrs. B."

Lynda put her arm around the girl and hugged her. "You're welcome."

They listened as the roar of the crowd outside grew in anger. When the door opened, a woman in her mid thirties entered.

"Sorry I'm late, Susan. Ron Thompson is at it again out there," she said to the woman who had let Lynda and Maddie in.

Susan looked unforgivingly at the woman in jeans and a silk blouse, whose long curly hair refused to be tamed. "Carol, when you have a moment perhaps you could show Miss Lacy back to Dr. Cameron's office. She made it past Mr. Thompson and his megaphone and fellow picketers on time." Susan's tone was

condescending to say the least.

“Of course, Ms. Costas,” Carol said, unfazed. She turned to Maddie. “I’ll just be a moment, Maddie. Sorry I’m late.”

Maddie just smiled and nodded. A moment later Carol returned, beckoning Maddie to follow. Maddie got up and looked at Mrs. B., then back at Carol.

Lynda stood up. “May I come with Maddie?”

“Of course,” Carol said. “I’m glad she has someone with her today. I’m sorry Paul couldn’t be here too, Maddie.”

“Me too,” she said.

Carol led them into an office decorated with warm, cherry-wood bookcases and desk, a plush beige carpet, and comfortable stuffed chairs. She turned to Maddie and said, “Michael, sorry Dr. Michael Cameron will be here in a few moments. Today he’ll want to talk to you again for as long as you need. He’ll give you and your friend some information and counseling resources. I know this seems repetitive, but it’s important information, and, of course, you have our number here if you need us, or any of this information again. After you’ve conferred with Dr. Michael you will be able to fill your Plan B prescription here if you decide to go forward but you will need to fill the prescriptions for pain killers at your normal pharmacy.”

Without looking up, Maddie said, “Thanks, Carol.”

Lynda squeezed Maddie’s shoulder and turned to Carol. “Thank you, Carol. It’s nice to know what to expect.”

She nodded and closed the door behind her as she left. Maddie slumped in one of the chairs and Lynda sat in the one beside her. Maddie was silent and chewing on her bottom lip. Lynda watched her closely, not sure what to say.

Barely audibly she asked, “Mrs. B, do you think they’re right?”

“Who?”

“The protesters outside. Do you think God will ever forgive me?” She had tears in her eyes.

“Oh, Maddie!” Lynda reached for Maddie’s hands and took them in her own. Neither woman had heard the door open behind them. “God is a parent, Maddie. He feels your pain as intensely as you do.” Maddie’s tears started to roll down her cheeks. “If you ask me, God is more worried about whether or not you’ll forgive yourself and move forward in your life.”

Maddie raised her eyes and looked straight at Lynda. “You really think so?”

“Yes, I do. God loves you, Maddie. I may be a heretic but I doubt it. I mean, God is pretty definite about free will and, like any parent allowing a child to make big decisions, he or she may not always agree with what you do, but she’s on your side and hopes you learn from your choices and grow. Think about it, Maddie. Who did Jesus hang with when he was here?”

Maddie actually chuckled. “Hang with—I’ve never thought about Jesus hanging!”

Lynda smiled. “C’mon, that’s what He did. He walked around hanging out with people who wanted to listen to him. And he hung out mostly not with the powerful rabbis or the righteous. He hung out with the poor and troubled and the suffering. All kinds of people with screwed-up lives. And what did he offer them? He offered them love, Maddie, love.”

The door clicked closed behind them. Two female heads turned to see Dr. Michael. He was tall—6’3” at least, with thick, dark hair, lightly peppered with silver, and warm brown eyes. He was broad and strong and fit.

Lynda’s body tingled with an awareness of him that took her completely by surprise. Her heart was beating faster and her skin suddenly seemed more sensitive to the very air around it. Before she could stop herself, Lynda leaned toward Maddie and whispered, “You didn’t mention your doctor was hot.”

Maddie giggled. “Mrs. B., he’s a little old for me.”

He couldn’t take his eyes off Lynda, even as he reached out his hand toward Maddie and shook hers. Finding his voice at last—and what a deep, rich voice it was—he said to Lynda, “Hello, I’m Michael Cameron, Maddie’s doctor.” He looked like he hadn’t been so struck by a woman in a long time.

Lynda shook his hand. It was warm and enveloping. The air in the room was crackling with the energy between them. Her skin tingled at his touch. “Nice to meet you, Doctor. I’m Lynda Blake, a friend of Maddie’s.” Her voice was more breathless than she would have liked, she had to force herself to concentrate on Maddie. She was here for Maddie.

“Please call me Michael.” He forced himself to let go of Lynda’s hand and he went to sit behind his desk. Never had he been more grateful for a desk to sit behind. He focused on Maddie now. It was time to get focused on what was important. “Maddie do you feel like you truly understand all of your options?”

Maddie nodded silently, indicating that she did. Lynda took all the papers for Maddie, the counseling referrals. Lynda asked all the questions about who pays for the counseling, about what side effects to expect from the Plan B drugs and which ones to be worried about, what to expect psychologically in the days and weeks to come. She jotted down some notes on the papers. Maddie sat mute.

When the doctor asked her if she was ready to make a final decision, she nodded. "I'm sure, Dr. Michael. As hard as this is, it is easier than having an abortion somehow."

"And safer," Dr. Michael added, "I am glad that it was an option available to you. The drugs will start your period but the bleeding may be quite heavy. You can expect intense cramping, so be sure to get the prescription for the painkillers filled. Also remember once you take the Plan B drugs you have to lie down for at least two hours."

Lynda squeezed Maddie's hand and smiled sympathetically.

After giving Maddie the required medication and prescriptions, Michael smiled sadly at Lynda. Her eyes locked with his. He opened his mouth to speak but before he could utter a sound Maddie turned to Lynda with a sad determined look on her face. She was ready to go. They stood up and Lynda hugged her tight. She didn't really hug back. Maddie's eyes were red and she was trying hard not to cry. Without looking up she whispered, "Thank you, Dr. Cameron."

"I'll see you soon, Maddie."

She nodded.

"C'mon, sweetheart, let me take you to the pharmacy then home." Lynda quietly ushered Maddie out of the back door of the clinic and to her car. "Let me have the keys, Maddie."

Maddie fished out her keys and handed them over. She seemed to be on automatic pilot. Lynda unlocked the car and helped Maddie into the passenger side. As Lynda started the car and began to drive, Maddie looked up and said, "Hey, wait a sec, what about your car?"

"Don't worry, I'll get Sean to pick me up at your place and take me to my car."

Maddie's eyes got large. She gnawed on her lower lip. "I guess that's okay. I mean, Paul's probably told him everything anyway."

Lynda glanced over at her. "Do you feel a little like Paul got away with something, like this didn't affect him nearly enough?"

“Absolutely.”

“I have an idea, Maddie. It’s a little harsh, but ...”

“But what?” Maddie was actually animated. “I love Paul, Mrs. B., but he just doesn’t get it.”

Lynda smiled. “Have you ever seen the Cosby Show?”