



BOOK 2: A LAYOVER IN DOPPELGÄNGER-VILLE

#HEART'S JOURNEY HOME

NIKKI JACKSON

Chapter One

They sat across from each other in silence. Tori found herself casting inquisitive glances at the strange Rachael double who was looking at her.

At first Tori wouldn't come inside the house, preferring to walk around the courtyard area, muttering to herself. Touching her head, she stumbled to her knees and the woman ran to her; speaking softly but firmly while pointing to the door of the house. She stepped away from Tori, giving her the wide berth she seemed to prefer until she finally relented and came inside.

"This is tore up," Tori muttered under her breath, allowing the woman to lead her into the small room just to the right of the open door. Inside were two high-backed couches along two opposite walls, four spaced chairs and two low marble tables. A large colorful rug covered the tiled floor. The woman motioned for Tori to sit in one of the chairs.

The woman was a dead ringer for her father's live-in girlfriend Rachael Cleary. Following the death of her mother, Tori and her archeologist father left the country traveling around the world on archeological digs. He met Rachael while on a dig in Italy and when they returned home Rachael was with them. Tori waged war on the woman who would dare try to take her mother's place and the nearly nine years Rachael had lived with them was tumultuous and filled with strife. It was only recently that Tori had begun to appreciate how much Rachael took care of her, especially with her father gone so often on digs and treasure hunts.

"I gotta get out of here. I gotta get home." Tori said as her eyes filled with tears.

The woman said something Tori couldn't understand.

"AJ, Kalea, what happened to you?"

She buried her face in her hands. Her head still hurt and crying wasn't making it any better. A few moments later she heard the woman place something on the table. She looked up to see a cup in front of her.

What was happening to her? she thought. Just a short time ago, she was with her friends from California, who all came from wealthy families like her. They were walking through an archeological dig in Jerusalem that her father was overseeing when there was a cave-in. But that was 2009, and everything around her seemed as if it was from a distant time; an era from the ancient past.

Tori took the ceramic cup, feeling the heat radiating from it. She looked at the greenish liquid and then at the woman. The woman tapped her own forehead, suggesting it would help Tori with her headache. Still keeping her guard about her, Tori took a sip. It was strong and didn't taste very good, but the woman seemed pleased she was drinking it. Tori

took a few more sips and after a few minutes the pain started to go away. She placed the cup down and decided to try to communicate with her.

“Rachael?”

The woman shook her head.

“Yudith.” she said pointing to herself.

“Well Yudith, you have Rachael’s face,” Tori said motioning to her own face. The woman pointed to her.

“Tori.”

“Tori,” she said with a familiar thick accent.

“AJ, Kalea, the people who were with me?”

The woman shook her head.

“Where are they?!”

The woman was startled when Tori raised her voice.

“Where are my clothes?” Tori asked pulling on the tunic she was wearing. The woman pointed to her torn and tattered clothes lying in a pile on a box against the wall.

“Where are the others?” Tori asked her.

The woman pointed to her.

“No, the others,” Tori said pointing to herself then motioning with her fingers – one, two.

“No others living.”

Tori sat back in the chair, stunned. She understood that.

Tori thought a moment then spoke,

“Eifoh hachi chaver?” *where is best friend?*

The woman’s eyes widened and she began speaking words quickly. It suddenly dawned on Tori; the woman was speaking Hebrew. It appeared to be an older, more primitive form of the language, but it was Hebrew nonetheless.

“Young like me dead?” Tori asked speaking the Hebrew slowly.

“No. Men only. We think you are daughter to one, bringing food.” Tori let herself breathe a sigh of relief. Perhaps AJ and Kalea had gotten out after all and were home safe and sound.

“What is this City?”

“Yerushalayim.”

“You’re saying Jerusalem. The old Hebrew alphabet doesn’t have the letter J, instead you use the letter Y. This is crazy.” Tori said to herself. “What were the men doing in the tunnel?”

“Digging away stone for building project.”

Tori thought about the question before asking it.

“What year is this?”

The woman shook her head not understanding. Tori said every version of the word “year” she could think of in Hebrew. She even came up with some Yiddish words, but the woman still didn’t seem to understand her.

“Tell me your timing?”

The woman thought a moment, then understanding she said –

“Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Av, Elul, Tishrei,”

“Heshvan, Chislev, Teveth, Shevat and Adar.” Tori finished for her.

The woman smiled. She and the strange girl were finding a way to communicate.

“This is tore up,” Tori said in English, shaking her head.

They were reciting the Hebrew calendar. Tori knew the Jewish months from Bottie’s Synagogue where they were teaching her Hebrew. Part of her classes involved a study of the Torah and these words were part of the instruction. They were the names of the months and they made up the Jewish calendar year.

Tori thought about how to convey the concept of “year” to the woman.

“Nisan to Adar, one year.” Tori said holding up one finger. “Nisan to Adar, two year. Nisan to Adar, three year.” she said holding up three fingers. Tori took a deep breath.

“Is the Temple complete or is there construction?”

“There is yet construction.”

“How many year, one, two, three, is the Temple being built?”

The woman thought.

“Constructing yet forty-sixth year.”

“Forty-six years,” Tori said to herself. “Okay, think, remember, remember. Herod started building the Temple around 19 BC. He’s been working on it now for forty-six years.”

After a few minutes Tori shook her head.

“BC, AD. Yours is the Hebrew calendar but mine is the Gregorian. I don’t understand enough about yours to match the timing of it to mine.”

She slumped back in the chair and closed her eyes.

“How do I get out of this?”

After a while Tori stood and walked out of the room. She stood in the open doorway, looking out onto the home’s courtyard. Though it was fenced completely around with a high stone wall and large heavy wooden gate, she knew what lay beyond. And though she couldn’t figure out what time period she was in, Tori knew she was far from home.

“Well, one of two things is going on,” she said to herself. “Either I’m still inside the tunnel knocked out cold and I’m dreaming all this, or Kalea was right and I fell through some kind of space-time warp continuum and now I’m in the past.”

The woman stepped to Tori.

“Have you family here?”

Tori shook her head.

“I am alone,” Tori said in Hebrew.

“Then you will stay here with me.”

Tori turned to the woman with Rachael’s face. Her eyes watered again and she was more afraid then she could ever remember. As if sensing Tori’s distress, the woman put her hand on Tori’s shoulder.

“There is safety here with me.”

The woman smiled at her and Tori believed her as if Rachael had spoken the words to her.

Tori folded her arms and gathered her resolve.

“I will stay with Yudith.”

Chapter Two

Tori allowed Yudit to convince her to come into the house as far as the small room with the low tables laid out in a square U-shape. Situated just behind the tables were couches with rectangular cushions at the head. From traveling with her father over the years, Tori recognized this to be a dining room. As opposed to sitting at a table in regular chairs, these Ancients reclined on low couches. They would lean on their left side and eat right handed. The couches were the height of the table so the food was within easy reach.

The home itself was on the far right of the courtyard. There were two other equally sized homes that shared the courtyard; one in the middle and the other to the far left. From what Tori could see all the homes were constructed of cut stone blocks. Each home was stretched ranch-style with an upper floor. There was a barn-like structure to the rear or the side of each house. The large shared courtyard had a large well in front of the center home. There was a brick fire pit in front of the house Tori was in, and another in front of the house on the extreme left. Just outside the door was a bamboo woven overhang with a long bench underneath.

The home itself was constructed of quarried stone and mortar nearly two feet thick. Limestone blocks were cut and finished, expertly masoned to leave room for a front door and spaced windows. The first floor interior ceilings were ten feet high while the second floor ceilings were eight feet tall.

The interior walls appeared to be covered with a layer of plaster that was white-washed and painted. The room they sat in was painted a light rose. The open door was made of cedar; clearly hand-crafted because the thick planks were cut the same size and had iron fittings and edgings. The floor was made up of large square blush-colored tiles.

There were tables on both sides of the room made of fine dark wood with marble tops. Tori guessed they were for food, and on either side were low back chairs, made of dark wood with thick burgundy padded seats. There were four spaced glassless windows running along the back wall that had open shutters. Though paneless, each window was covered with a cast iron type grate; Tori supposed, to deter burglars.

On the other side of the hall was a large room, and to its left were a set of stone stairs leading to a second floor. From what little Tori had seen, these people were wealthy, which meant she was in the upper section of Jerusalem.

The lower section of the city was where the poor people lived. Their homes were typically one story and made of mud bricks.

Tori was sitting on the edge of one of the couches while the woman sat in a chair. Tori touched the clothes she was wearing. It was a simple green tunic but the material was smooth, not coarse. She was wearing a lighter white tunic under it. She was barefoot and

bare-headed. Yudith had on a silk scarf covering her hair and was wearing expensive looking sandals. Yes, Tori thought, these people are rich.

Yudith sat calmly, giving this strange young girl who seemed to appear out of nowhere, time to settle down. She started to cry when Yudith led her into the women's dining room so she decided to let her cry a bit until she felt better. Her mother-in-law Martha had gone to the nearby Market for ointment for the dark ugly bruise on Tori's forehead.

"What is the name of this place?" Tori had asked this before, numerous times, and Yudith had told her. Now she was asking again.

"Yerushalayim."

"Yerushalayim." Tori whispered. "And you are...?"

"Yudith."

"You Hebrews don't do 'Js', I know that much." Tori said in English. "So what you're really saying is Jerusalem and Judith."

Tori looked at her.

"You are Judith." She said in Hebrew. "And this place is Jerusalem."

Judith nodded and smiled.

"You are Tori."

"Is this your house?" Tori asked slowly.

"It is the house of my mother and father-in-law."

"You are married then?"

Something came over her face.

"I am widowed."

"Oh, sorry." Tori touched her head. It was beginning to throb again.

"Martha, my mother-in-law has gone for medicine."

"That's right, you guys don't really do doctors or hospitals, so if I've got a serious concussion or blood clot, too bad for me," she said in English. "This is nuts. You have Rachael's face, including the same red hair; just longer and your skin is tan, but other than that you have Rachael's exact face. Even your voice is just like hers, how is this possible?"

Before she could continue thinking out loud a voice came from the door,

“It is I, returning,”

“What? That voice...” Tori whispered.

When the woman stepped in the doorway Tori jumped up and backed away.

“What is this?!” Tori said in English.

“Tori, this is my mother-in-law,” Judith said quickly. “I told you about her.”

Standing in the doorway was an exact replica of Awinita, even down to the sound of her voice.

Awinita Kingfisher was a full-blooded Cherokee. She became friends with Rachael after meeting her at an art gallery where both of their artwork was being displayed. With her Native American background, she was a wonderful resource for Rachael as she tried to establish a relationship with Tori. It was primarily due to Awinita’s diligent work that Rachael and Tori had recently begun bonding together before the cave-in.

Tori backed up all the way to the wall.

“Calm down, this is my mother-in-law.”

“What’s happening to me?! Wake up! Wake up!”

“Enough!” Martha shouted. “Silence!”

Tori shut up. She was shaking like a leaf and making little whimpering sounds.

“Come and sit.” Martha said softer, motioning to the spot she’d just left. “If you want your head to stop hurting then come and sit.”

“Awinita is that you?” she asked in English.

Then she asked again in Cherokee and Lakota. Martha stood looking at her, then she motioned to the couch.

“This is a nightmare.” Tori whispered, stepping away from the wall.

“Come, come,” Martha said. It was Awinita’s face smiling at her.

Tori sat and Martha unwrapped a small package. Then she removed the lid from the small container and Tori backed away.

“For your head,” Martha told her.

Tori gave her an unsure look. Martha put the small container under her nose and sniffed, then held it out to Tori. Tori leaned over, giving it a quick smell.

“Sulfur, camphor, some type of oil,” she mumbled, trying to decipher the ingredients. “Old school,” she said to herself.

Tori nodded and Martha smiled. She dipped her fingers into the tin and gently covered Tori’s bruise with the paste. It tingled then stung a bit. Tori frowned but didn’t say anything. She looked at Martha then reached up and touched her face.

“You feel real,” she whispered.

“I am real.” Tori snatched her hand away. She hadn’t realized she’d spoken in Hebrew.

“How did I get here?”

“What do you remember,” Martha asked, replacing the lid. She took a seat beside Judith.

“I was in the cave when suddenly there was a loud noise. The floor and walls were shaking. I was running to get out. Then I woke up here.”

“My husband Simeon, and a kinsman Eli were in the lower city delivering flour. Eli owns a mill. While they were there the cave-in occurred. Men quickly gathered to dig for survivors. They brought out a few dead bodies and you.”

“Simeon made the decision to have you brought here. Because of your strange dress he knew you were a foreigner. He felt you would be safer here than being left alone in the lower city,” Judith added.

“Where is Simeon?” Tori asked.

“Once you were safely here, he and Eli went back to the lower city.”

“Where are my clothes?”

“In the other room. They were covered in dirt and mud. Martha and I changed you.”

“This is yours?” Tori asked, tugging at the tunic.

“Yes.” Judith nodded.

“Do you have kin here?” Martha asked.

Tori didn't know how to answer. She still wasn't sure this wasn't all some concussion-induced dream; yet she could feel sensation from touch and was able to distinguish smells and her head was hurting. Could she do all of these things if she was unconscious?

"My kin were in the cave," she whispered, which was partly true. AJ and Kalea had been with her in the cave. Thinking of them made her eyes water.

"What happened to them? Are they alive?" She'd spoken this in Hebrew, although she was talking to herself.

Martha and Judith exchanged sad looks. They knew Tori was the only one pulled from the cave alive. Once Simeon made sure Tori was placed safely in the house, he and Eli returned to the lower city to assist in burying the recovered dead.

Once the dead had been respectfully buried Simeon returned home while Eli remained in the lower city to finish his deliveries. Simeon was anxious to return home and check on their young house guest.

"It is I," Simeon sounded as he came into the house. Tori jumped, startled.

"What the..." she breathed.

A half minute later he was standing in the doorway and Tori was screaming.

"No! No this is crazy!" she yelled in English. She was off the couch and backing up as far away from him as possible.

"This is Simeon!" Martha was shouting but Tori was yelling because the man Martha said was Simeon had the voice and face of her grandfather, Harald Logan.

"Tori!" Judith was shouting her name; yet Tori had backed against the wall and was screaming in English and Martha was telling Simeon to leave.

"I most certainly will not. You there," he said to Tori. "Be quiet!"

Tori hushed.

"That's better. I'm Simeon and this is my house. Does the child understand?" he asked Martha.

"She seems to be familiar with our tongue." Martha replied.

"Fine." He turned back to Tori. "Have you seen my house?"

Tori took a breath and tried to settle down. She couldn't believe it; he was speaking to her with the same aristocratic air as her grandpa Harald.

Tori's grandfather was on the staff of Cambridge University in England and was a highly respected archeologist. Following her mother's death, he comforted her by telling her how he believed objects from the past retained all the love and memories of their owners. This caused her to make personal connections with the ancient cultures she learned about rather than just viewing them as mere facts in a textbook.

"I've seen this room and the little sitting room." Tori said, barely above a whisper.

"Have you seen my dining area?" he asked, motioning across the hall.

Tori shook her head.

"Then come have a look."

He stepped to the side, giving her room to get by. Tori stepped across the hall and into another dining room. It was furnished similar to the other one: low tables, couches, serving tables against the wall and iron cast grated windows along the back. The walls were white washed and painted a light tan. The tiled floor was brown.

"You and Martha and Judith live here?" Tori asked.

"That is correct."

"You eat in here and the women eat over there?" Tori pointed.

"Yes."

"Don't you get lonesome?"

He smiled, and when he did his face looked all the more like her grandfather's. The main difference between the two was Simeon had a full white beard instead of the graying goatee her grandpa Harald sported; and although she couldn't see his hair from under the turban he was wearing, she saw white peyots hanging down from his ears. Tori had seen men and boys sporting them at grandma Bottie's church. Orthodox Jews adhered to the command that they were not to cut the hair at the sides of their head, their sideburns. They were to leave the hair growing down to the joints of their jaw, roughly about a third of the way down from their ears. At Bottie's church the males let their peyots hang, twisted into tight curls in front of their ears. Tori could see that Simeon wore his wrapped around his ears.

"The kitchen is toward the rear," Simeon pointed.

He led the way, passing by a set of rust-colored brick stairs that were down a bit from his dining room.

The kitchen was large, with most of it taken up by a huge brick fireplace-type pit. There was a rectangular depression in the floor for the wood fire and two slate rises on either side where the cook could place hot pots that had just been removed from the fire.

Surprisingly, there was a normal square table that had two high-back chairs on either side. Redwood carved cabinets and shelves that held pots, flat grills, kettles, bowls, plates, cups and a variety of cooking utensils along with aprons and towels were along one wall.

There was a row of large stone jars on the floor along the opposite wall which Tori assumed contained water and wine.

“There’s a storage area here,”

Simeon motioned to an area just to the side of the large bricked fire pit. Martha pulled back a thick curtain so Tori could peer in. There were baskets and sacks of flour, grains, vegetables and other things. They were on wooden type pallets sitting about four inches off the dirt floor. With the exception of the storage room the kitchen floor was tiled in a light green which matched the light lime colored walls.

“You two will take our guest upstairs and I will remain here,” Simeon said reaching for a cup.

Martha and Judith motioned for Tori to follow them out of the kitchen.

“The sleeping area is upstairs,” Martha said. “Come.”

She went ahead, Tori and Judith followed.

There were two curtain covered doorways on either side of the stairs. Straight back were two curtain covered arched doorways cut into the stone wall. The thick curtains were attached to wide brass rings on long wooded rods.

“This is my room.” Judith said pulling back the curtain to the room on the left.

“So you people don’t believe in actual doors,” Tori mumbled in English.

“Simeon and Martha are across the hall and the other two rooms are for guests.”

Tori peeked inside Judith’s room.

“Come,” Judith said, walking in and motioning Tori to follow.

The upstairs floor was tiled in wide cream colored squares. The walls of Judith’s room were whitewashed and painted cream like the floors. There were two large open windows with ornately designed cast iron coverings. Two wooden shutters had been pushed back to the sides.

“These open,” Judith said speaking of the cast iron grates. She simply pushed the grate out of the way on two side hinges.

Tori stepped over to the window and looked out. She was able to look down on the whole courtyard and onto the street just outside the gate. She turned to take in the rest of the room. It had a thickly padded couch that served as the bed. It was wide with an ornately carved wooden frame and headboard, standing a full foot off the floor on thick wooden legs. The room was large and spacious, with a couch for sitting and padded chairs. There were glass lamps on bronze poles on both sides of the room, expensive marble tables, colorful throws and large patterned rugs on the floor. Even the ceiling had a stucco-type look to it. There was a long curtain stretched along one wall which Tori assumed had to be where she kept her clothes and things. There were jars and bottles on a low table. A bowl of water, pitcher and towel sat on another higher, marble topped-like stand.

“Come,” Judith motioned.

Tori followed her to the room next door. Pulling back the curtain, Judith motioned her to enter. It was equally as large as Judith’s room with the same tile floor and stucco ceiling. The large windows were situated against the same wall as Judith’s and facing out onto the courtyard. It was simply furnished with a traditional couch-bed, padded chair, a square marble top table for the guest’s toiletries, a second table for a water bowl, pitcher and towel, and two glass lamps on bronze poles. There was a curtain stretched along the back wall. Tori peeked behind it. It was an empty room the size of a small walk-in closet.

“You may choose this room or the one across from it.” Judith said. “They are similar in size and furnishings. Come.” She led the way to the two rear curtain covered rooms.

“Here is where you bathe and the other room is where you relieve yourself.”

The bathing room was on Judith’s side of the floor, a few feet back from the guest room. Tori stepped over and pulled back the curtain.

The room was bare except for the stone tub which butted up against the wall on a slight slant. There was a hole which was plugged when the tub was being used. The tub would be filled by bringing jugs of water up the stairs, then after the person bathed the plug was pulled and the water drained to the outside of the house. There were two windows against the long back wall and another against a shorter side wall. They provided the only light in the room. There was a stone cradle down-spout about eight inches long, protruding from the hole in the bottom of the tub out through the wall to the outside back of the house. It directed the used water outside, keeping it from draining down the side wall.

Except for the tub, a table and a wooden shelf were the only items in the room.

“So far so good,” Tori said to herself.

She stepped out, pulling the curtain shut behind her. Both Judith and Martha were just standing there, letting Tori explore for herself. She stepped over to the next room.

Tori took a deep breath to steel herself. She'd been to a lot of impoverished places with her father and seen more than her share of jacked-up bathrooms and outhouses. She figured she may as well look at both rooms right now and get it over with. Tori pulled back the curtain,

“This is a hot mess.”

Back against the wall was a covered stone toilet. The wide half-moon bowl was situated on a broad three-foot-high pillar and appeared to have been fashioned from one stone block. Across from it, against the wall, was a table with a large jug of water that was used to flush after the person was finished. There was a table with a bowl, pitcher of water and a towel.

“Maybe I should be thankful I don't have to squat over a hole in the backyard.” She thought, stepping out of the room and leaning back against the wall.

“I chose that room there,” Tori said pointing to the guest room on the “tub” side of the hall.

Tori closed her eyes, taking a deep breath.

“I feel like throwing up.”

Martha said something to Judith but Tori wasn't paying attention.

“Child,” Judith said.

“I have to lie...”

“Rest.” Judith said. “Take your room.”

Tori walked carefully over to the guest room she'd selected as Judith and Martha followed her inside.

“How long am I going to be stuck here?” Tori asked in English. “My way home is the quarry through the tunnel. That's how I got here, and that's the only way I know to get home.”

She turned. Martha and Judith were both looking at her, worry and concern etched on their faces. How were they to help this poor foreign girl?

“When will they dig out the quarry?” Tori asked in Hebrew.

“After the schedule.” Judith responded.

“I don’t know what that means.” Tori said.

“The schedule has moved on. They will return after the schedule is complete.”

“What are you saying?”

“There is a schedule. The quarry, the walls to the other side of the Temple needs shoring, work done to Herod’s palace and grounds, and the roads outside the wall along the Temple way. This is the schedule.”

“They must move on.” Martha added.

“But, but…” Tori put her hands on the top of her head. “Don’t they need the quarry?”

“There are water works throughout the city, this one is not so needed.”

“Not needed?” Tori whispered. “When will the schedule come to the quarry again?”

Speaking and using her hands to explain, Tori understood Judith to be saying two and a half to three years.

“Years? I can’t be here for years,” she said in English.

Tori couldn’t imagine what was going on back home. Were they digging through the rubble trying to reach her? And what would happen when they broke through and couldn’t find her body? The thought of them living for three years, thinking she was dead and all the grief they would have to endure devastated her. Tori remembered the years of grief she suffered after her mother died.

She was starting to cry, “I can’t do this! I can’t! Get me out of here! Help! Help!”

She was screaming.

Judith grabbed her and was shaking her. Tori pushed her away and backed against the wall. She slumped down onto the floor.

“Wake me up! Somebody wake me up!”

She went on like this until her head throbbed and she got so dizzy she had to lay her head down. She was already sitting on the floor so she curled up there. The tile was cool and she closed her eyes.

“Daddy come find me.”

Judith sat on a chair, watching Tori sleep. Martha had gone down to prepare Simeon's meal.

Tori was still on the floor in the middle of the room. She barely stirred. While she slept, she would occasionally whimper, making a hurt animal sound. Judith sighed. She sounded so pitiful.

Martha came into the room with a small bowl of soup.

"She hasn't moved?"

"No," Judith responded sadly.

"The child cannot sleep on the floor. We must get her up and put her to bed." Judith nodded standing.

"Tori," she said softly as she approached her. She knelt down and softly shook her. "Tori," she shook her again. "Tori," she said a bit louder. Tori's eyes fluttered.

"Rachael,"

"It's Judith."

Tori sat up a bit.

"Crap, this wasn't a dream." She put her hand on her head. "This is a living, woke up nightmare." she said in English.

"Stand up," Judith said taking her by the arm. "Lay on the bed."

Tori pulled out of her grip and backed away. Her head was beating like a drum and she had to pee.

"Do you remember my name?" Judith asked her.

"Judith, I'm not saying Yudith so you can just get used to it." Tori said in English. "We do Js."

She turned to see Martha sitting in one of the chairs against the wall with a small bowl in her hands.

"Martha," she said.

"Whose house is this?" Judith asked.

"Simeon's."

“What city is this?”

“Jerusalem, the way my people say it.” She responded in Hebrew. “I have to use the room.”

Judith nodded and stepped a bit to the side so Tori could walk past her with a lot of space. Tori walked slowly, steadying herself against the wall as she made her way out of the room. Judith nervously walked behind her.

“The child’s hurting.” She whispered to Martha. “What do we do?”

“We do what we are doing, we give her shelter. Can you imagine her this way in the Lower City where Simeon found her? Not all are bad there, but there are enough. Look at her, young, beautiful. I shudder to think,” Martha said shaking her head. “HaShem the Great One has brought this child to us, to this house so that we might watch over her and protect her.”

“For how long?”

Tori appeared from behind the curtain and was making her way slowly back to the room, hugging the wall the way she had before.

“For as long as necessary. I tell you I’ll not be the one throwing an innocent young woman out into the street.” Martha said.

“No one here will throw her into the street. We need to know the whole story involving her. Why was she in the quarry, where is her kin?”

“Good questions I agree, but they do not have to be answered tonight.”

Tori entered the room with the women behind her.

“You sleep on the couch,” Judith said. Tori looked at her.

“Couch.” Judith said pointing. Tori sat on the couch. “Shall we try to undress her?” Judith asked Martha.

“She’ll be more comfortable in just the inner tunic.”

Tori looked at her clothes. There was a light white tunic under the heavier linen green one. She stood up and tried to pull her arm out of the sleeve.

“Let me help you.” Judith said, stepping over to her.

Judith helped her out of the tunic and motioned to the couch. Tori sat on the couch, hugging her legs while resting her forehead on her bent knees.

“Tori,” She turned her head. Judith was there with a bowl and spoon. “Here, eat a little, it’s soup.”

Tori looked at her through sad, frightened, tired eyes. Judith’s heart ached a bit. She looked so frail and pitiful.

“Look,” Judith dipped the spoon in the bowl and brought it to her own mouth. “Mmm,”

Tori reached for the bowl and Judith handed it to her. Ignoring the held out spoon, Tori sniffed the soup, then sipped from the bowl. It was warm and good, tasting a little like vegetable broth. She took another sip and then another.

“Do you know how to use a spoon?” Judith asked, remembering the odd clothes they found her in.

“Yes, but I prefer not to with broth.” Tori said, remembering back at how Rachael would get after her for doing the same thing at home. Tori would give her the “when I was in a village in Japan” story where she didn’t have to eat soup with a spoon. Her other favorite response – “why do I have to eat like a wasicun?” *white man*.

After a few more sips Tori was done and she handed the bowl to Judith.

“Thank you,” she said in Hebrew.

“Lay back. Sleep. We will leave a lamp burning.” Judith said.

Tori stretched back on the couch. Judith handed the bowl and spoon to Martha, then she retrieved a light blanket and covered Tori.

“You need only call us if you need anything.” Judith told her.

Tori nodded and closed her eyes. Judith stood there a moment, not knowing if she should leave. Martha stepped beside her and lightly touched her arm.

“Come, she will call if she needs anything.”

Tori was having that falling dream. The one that was so real you could literally feel the sensation of falling; hear the wind whipping at your clothes and feeling it against your cheeks. She was flailing about, trying to grab onto something, yet there was nothing to latch onto. By the time her body hit the ground she was screaming.

Judith came in to try and quiet her, but she was back on the floor again, quivering in a corner. She wouldn’t let Judith near her, nor could she be persuaded to get back into bed,

so Judith just let her lay there while she sat in a chair on the other side of the room. When she dozed off, Judith covered her with the blanket.

Judith woke up in the middle of the night to discover that Tori had eventually climbed into bed. She picked up the blanket from the floor and covered her, making sure there was enough oil in the lamp to keep the room lit though the night, then she went to bed.

“How is the child?” Martha asked.

“Sleeping soundly.” Judith replied.

She and Martha were in the kitchen. Simeon had taken an early morning meal and gone down to the lower city to ask questions about the foreign workers who died in the cave-in, thinking perhaps he might learn something more of the young woman now living under his roof.

“I heard her screaming in the night,” Martha said, placing the small plate of food in front of Judith. It contained a bit of fish, cheese and flat bread.

“Twice.” Judith said. “The second time she was so frightened I was afraid she would run down the stairs and out the door. ‘where am I, where am I?’ she asked again and again.”

“I feel sorry for the child.” Martha said.

“I also, she is so pitiful. May HaShem help us to care for her.”

Tori woke with a start and sat up. Then she grabbed her head, groaned and laid back down. She closed her eyes, steadied her breathing and simply listened.

Birds outside, women’s voices downstairs, faint smell of food cooking. She slowly sat up.

“Okay, I’m still here,” she whispered. “If it’s three years before the quarry gets dug out then it’s three years. I can trip all I want, but the quarry is blocked and there’s nothing I can do about it.”

She looked around the room.

“You know this. You know Hebrew from grandma Bottie, you’ve learned a lot of their ways by hanging around her and the Synagogue. You learned some of their history from grandpa Harald and ...daddy.”

She pulled her legs to her chest, putting her head on her knees.

“Daddy,” she breathed. “Rachael, grandpa Harald and Awinita’s here, maybe you’ll show up too. Judith, Martha and Simeon are all people from my life in the future, right down to their voices. Am I asleep, laid up in the cave-in, hurt and unconscious?” She took a pinch of skin at her arm and twisted. “I feel that. My head hurts, I feel that too.”

Her stomach grumbled.

“I’m either laid out in the quarry dreaming all this, or I fell through some kind of barrier that opened up during the cave-in, causing me to land here in some weird, ancient parallel universe.” She let go of a sigh. “Real or not, in my head or if I’m physically here, either way I’m stuck. Well, first things first,”

Tori scooted to the edge of the couch and planted her feet on the floor. There was a slow steady dull throb at the side of her head so she decided to do everything slowly and take a rest in between.

Slowly she pushed herself off the couch.

“Okay, good,” She took a few steps wincing. She touched the side of her head. “Well I know who I am. I remember where I came from. Outside of being stuck in this hot mess of a nightmare, I’m okay. I don’t think I have a concussion or any serious head trauma, maybe just a really bad bump on the head.”

Tori pulled back the curtain. She was alone on the floor. Stairs were ahead to the left and there were muffled voices coming from downstairs.

With one hand on the wall to steady herself, she started down the stairs.

“Take it slow,” she said navigating the steps, “and don’t fall. You don’t need to hurt your head any more than it already is.”

Tori reached the bottom step and peered around the corner. To the right was a short hall that led to the open front door. To the left was the hall leading to the kitchen. Tori stepped down on the landing and a near riot ensued.

“No!” Judith shouted from the kitchen. “Back upstairs!”

Judith and Martha were shouting and talking so fast that she couldn’t decipher what they were worried about. They both ushered her back up the stairs and into the bedroom.

“You must not leave the room looking like this!” Judith said.

“Like what?” Tori asked.

She was wearing the thin white tunic. Even though it was thin it wasn't see-through.

"You cannot leave the room wearing this, you must be covered." Martha said.

"You people are nuts!" Tori shouted in English.

They'd rushed her up the stairs so fast she was breathing hard and a throb was beginning to seriously sound in her head.

"I am covered, I'm wearing this," she said.

"You must cover that." Martha said. "You must never leave the room wearing only that."

"What's wrong with this?" Tori said, giving it a long look.

It was white, reached her ankles and had sleeves that reached her wrists.

"Wearing only that is considered being naked," Judith said.

"Shut up," Tori breathed in English. "Like butt-naked?"

Martha and Judith looked at one another.

"Bare skin naked?"

"That would be a good way to put it." Judith responded.

"But I'm wearing this, my body isn't showing, the tunic is covering me."

"Wearing this tunic alone is considered being naked. It's an under tunic, you must cover it with the over tunic." She pointed to the green one Tori had worn the day before.

"You must never come down the stairs like this ever again."

"Okay, don't trip." Tori said putting her hand on her head.

She sat down on the couch.

"You must never." Judith repeated.

"I understand. I must never. Where are my clothes?"

"A servant will wash them and return them to you, however, you must dress as we do."

Tori looked at the pair. She could see they were wearing under white tunics and more colorful over tunics. The over tunics were sleeveless and tied around the waist with a cloth belt. They were both wearing sandals and head scarves.

“You wear shoes and head scarves, even in the house?”

“Yes.” Martha said.

“How do you keep from passing out wearing all these clothes?”

Judith smiled.

“They are not so much, and they are light in weight.”

Tori was still frowning.

“What about underwear?”

“Martha will go to the Marketplace later and purchase clothing for you. Sandals, head scarves and underwear.”

“So is it permitted to be like this in front of you two?”

“Yes here, in front of us is fine.”

“In front of women, never in front of men,” Martha added.

“What if I have to relieve myself?”

“You must put on an over tunic or a cloak. I will bring you one of mine.” Judith said.

“Can I wear this tunic and a cloak downstairs?”

“Never.” Martha answered. “You must always wear an over tunic when you come downstairs.”

“This place is nuts,” Tori said to herself, shaking her head.

“We are a cultural people,” Judith explained. “Regardless of if we live among other people, we must always maintain our ways. Those choosing to live with us, under our roof, must do so according to our ways. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

Tori had lived with many people-groups throughout her life, and she learned the best way to get through life was with a certain amount of acclimation.

“Can you eat something?” Martha asked.

“More of the soup from yesterday.” Tori said.

“How is your head?” Judith asked.

“The pain is there,” Martha took a look at her forehead.

“There is yet swelling and an ugly bruise. A cold cloth and then ointment. I’ll make a hot medicine drink later.”

“Do you want to come downstairs?” Judith asked.

“No, here is fine.” Tori was quick to answer.

She was now a bit nervous after the clothing faux pas and decided she needed to settle down and take time to access her memory banks concerning ancient Jerusalem, Hebrew customs and dress. Between traveling with her father on digs around the world, and adding what she learned from her grandpa Harald as a professor on staff at Cambridge University, and all she’d learned from years of hanging around grandma Bottie and her Synagogue, Tori figured she would have enough knowledge to help her fit in and survive.

Also, she thought, she needed to perfect her cover story. She learned she’d been pulled out of the rubble with eight men, all dead. Now the quarry was so unstable that the rescuers had stopped work, leaving the rest of the workers where they were, buried under tons of rock. If the workforce had moved on and weren’t slated to return to that spot for three years, then she’d have to come up with a story that didn’t have her father returning to Jerusalem for the same length of time.

Tori stretched on the bed and closed her eyes. The drumming in her head started to pick up and she gave off a small groan.

“Be alright head,” she said placing a hand on her forehead. “This is so not the place to be seriously hurt.”

Chapter Three

Tori was wiping down the small table in Simeon's dining room. She'd been there two weeks and was feeling much better so Martha decided she needed chores to do, one of which was to clear things away after Simeon had eaten.

Simeon had gone to the Temple for early morning prayers, which was his custom. When he wasn't at Temple he was off doing something related to his business.

Simeon was a Merchant who exported things out of Jerusalem and imported items from other lands. In his line of work, he traded with Egyptians, Spaniards, Armenians, Indian and Oriental Merchants. As a result, he'd become quite wealthy. Simeon had a barn-type structure to the left of the house where he kept his inventory and a rented stall in the Marketplace.

Tori hadn't been out of the gate since her initial escape attempt. Judith and Martha felt she needed more time to acclimate to life inside of their walled home before venturing out among the general population.

Tori still had nightmares, but they were becoming less frequent. She stubbornly refused to wear sandals and a head-covering inside the house or the courtyard. She argued she was Lakota, Viking and American, and these things weren't necessary in her homeland. When Judith got vexed and tried to make her point, Tori would pretend to not understand. This left Judith more vexed and Simeon and Martha amused.

Tori had the wide mouthed jug and was headed toward the well situated in the courtyard to the right, closer to the middle house that belonged to a kinsman of Simeon; named Eli. Tori hadn't met any of the other people sharing the courtyard. Judith explained they were all kin. On the other side of Eli was the house of Tobias.

Tori placed the jug on the side of the well. She lowered the bucket, pulled it up and poured the water from the bucket to the jar. It was on the second pulling up that Tori glanced up and spotted a girl standing in the doorway of Tobias' house, watching her. Tori gasped.

It was Kalea.

"I'll be doggone."

The girl was wearing a burgundy outer tunic, sandals and a head scarf. She was just standing there looking at her.

"Well you may as well come over." Tori said in English, smiling.

The Kalea double smiled and started walking toward her.

“Hello,” the girl said.

“You even sound like Kalea, should I be surprised?”

Tori wondered if this girl would share the same inquisitive nature as her friend Kalea did. Born of Hawaiian and Japanese parents, Kalea had an amazing penchant for science, and was somewhat of a prodigy. She even had a large tree house that was designed and decorated with a NASA theme.

“My name is Hannah, and you’re Tori. You were caught in the cave-in at the quarry and you’re the only one left alive. My kinsmen Eli and Simeon brought you here. You have nightmares...oh,” She put her hand over her mouth.

“Yes, I have nightmares, not as many as when I first came here. Can you hear me all the way over here?”

“Before yes, I guess you’re not yelling as loud now.”

Tori laughed.

“No, I guess not. You want to help me carry the water?”

Hannah smiled wide.

“Yes!”

The jug was made with a handle on each side so they carried it between them.

“Why are you getting water, that’s Mara’s work.”

Mara was the hired servant who worked a few hours each day for Martha. Though they were wealthy enough to have many live-in servants, Martha would have none of it. She told Tori that their God, HaShem did not bring them out of bondage and many trials so they could live a life of ease with many servants. Mara did the washing, cleaning the house and mopping the floors, mended clothing and not much else. Martha and Judith did their own cooking; they were very particular about their food. Judith had a loom where she made cloth and Martha was a knitter.

“Martha said I should have work to do so that I don’t become lazy, so this is one of the things I do. I’m making stew today, my first time cooking for the family. I usually just chop vegetables and things.”

“I’d like to taste your stew.” Hannah said a bit shyly.

“Then you will have to come for evening meal.”

Hannah gave a big toothy grin. Tori laughed.

“You are so like Kalea, except you don’t wear glasses,” she thought to herself.

“Hannah, welcome.” Martha said looking up from her bread making.

They had flat pitas for breakfast and a regular loaf of bread for the evening meal. They ate twice a day; a small breakfast early in the morning, usually a meal of flat bread, cheese, fruit and a piece of broiled fish. The evening meal was usually more substantial.

Hannah helped Tori pour water into one of the much larger jars that sat on the floor near the cupboard. They were wide-necked jars with lids attached to a bit of rope. The jars containing wine were similar and sat beside the water jars. Two of the jars contained actual wine while the other two jars contained new wine, or grape juice.

“Have you had something to eat Hannah?” Judith asked.

“Not yet, I was getting some air when I saw Tori outside.”

“Both of you have something to eat.” Martha said. “Wash hands first.”

Tori and Hannah went through the elaborate hand washing procedure; taking a cup and pouring water on the left hand twice, then doing the same for the right hand. This was the Jews’ ritual hand washing requirement and they did it before their meals.

Hannah took a clay plate and bowl from the cupboard while Tori took a bowl and spoon. She scooped curds Martha had just made into her bowl. She then chopped a few dates, tossed them into the bowl, making herself some yogurt. Tori dipped water from the large jar into a cup.

“You have food Hannah?” Tori asked.

“Yes,”

“Follow me.”

Tori led her from the kitchen into the women’s dining room. She kicked off her sandals and sat on the couch. Hannah reclined on the couch beside her.

“You eat like that?” Hannah asked.

“Yes, I don’t understand how you eat laying down the way you do. I tried it and it didn’t work. Where I come from we eat sitting up at a table with chairs.”

“I’ve visited Romans with my family, they eat that way. It’s very different.”

“Yes I guess it is.”

“Where are you from?” Hannah asked.

Tori had rehearsed in her mind a cover story which she’d already used on Judith and the rest of the household. Since the Americas had not been discovered yet, she figured the best place to pick as a homeland would be a non-existent country in the region of Africa. She picked Africa because she knew there wasn’t a lot of back and forth travel or trade from there compared to Asia and the rest of the Middle East, and it was a large enough area for her to hide behind. She didn’t expect a lot of African visitors or pilgrims coming to the city, and if she ever met one she knew enough ancient African history to wing it.

Tori told Hannah that her father was a seaman, merchant and explorer. He had a large ship and she travelled with him from place to place. She told everyone that she came to Jerusalem with her father and uncle. When her uncle heard of the building projects, he decided to stay and hire on. Tori told them she’d wanted a break from travel and the sea, so she decided to stay with her uncle. Her father stated he would continue his travels and return for them both once the uncle’s work contract was up – in three years.

“How did you get stuck in the quarry?”

“I was taking lunch to my uncle, but you want to know the real reason I was there?”

“Yes please,” Hannah said excitedly.

“I wanted to go inside and see what was there,”

“And what did you see?” Hannah was up on her elbow now, her eyes wide.

“A lot of darkness.”

Hannah fell back laughing.

“The walls were carved out stone, smooth; so I found that surprising and the roof of the quarry was high above my head. It was very wide and very deep, going back for miles. I’d gone back quite a bit when I felt the first rumble.”

“What did it feel like?”

“At first like a sort of quivering under my feet, then it got bigger and the walls shook and rocks fell down.” Tori shook her head remembering. “There was yelling, running, the only light coming from the sun shining into the quarry because the lamps were dropped, I think. We were trying to run to the mouth of the quarry to get out. I guess I got the closest and here I am.”

“I am sorry your kinsman was killed but I’m glad you’re here. I heard my mother and father saying that Simeon intends to keep you until your father arrives.”

“Yes, I’m very fortunate. What house here is yours?” Tori asked changing the subject.

“The one on the other side closest to the opposite wall, the last house. My father is a blacksmith and his shop is in the rear of the house.”

“Your father is a blacksmith?”

“Yes and his brother owns a vineyard.”

Tori chuckled.

“No kidding?” she said in English. “What are your parents’ names?”

“Sherah and Tobias.”

“Well if things keep along the current line your parents are the ancient doppelgangers of Pualani and Kale.” Tori said in English. “Who lives in the house in the middle?”

“Eli and Pricilla. Eli is a miller. We get our flour from him. He and Simeon were delivering milled flour to people in the lower city when the cave-in happened.”

“Do they have children?” Tori asked hopefully.

“One son, but he’s not very pleasant most of the time.”

“Well that doesn’t sound like AJ.” Tori mumbled.

“Why isn’t he pleasant?”

“He’s angry I suppose, because he’s a cripple.”

“What?”

“He’s a cripple.” Hannah repeated.

“A cripple, how?”

“He was at his father’s mill working when somehow he slipped and his leg got caught between the stones. Now he has to use a crutch to walk because the leg is useless.”

“Shut up,” Tori breathed. “The right leg?”

Hannah nodded.

“AJ,” Tori smiled. “This joint is crazy, wacked all the way around.”

She busted out laughing.

“You’re not laughing because Aaron is a cripple?” Hannah asked, giving Tori a strange look.

“Of course not, I’m laughing because I’m happy to be living here, and in this courtyard so near to Simeon’s kin. I’m happy to have met you, because now I have a friend.”

“And I have a friend too.” Hannah smiled back. “I feel excitement coming to my life.”

Tori laughed heartily.

“You’re so Kalea.”

“Do you hear that?” Martha asked, placing a clean damp towel over the dough while it was rising.

“I hear.” Judith said. “She is laughing for the first time.”

“I think her nightmares will completely go away now. She will have a friend in Hannah and will now settle down with us.”

“I hope,” Judith said, sipping the pomegranate juice Tori made earlier that morning.

“You sound unsure.”

“She’s of age Martha, a woman.”

“She’s a child.”

“She’s old enough to be betrothed and married.”

“In our culture. She hasn’t spoken much of her people and their ways, yet I don’t feel they marry as young as our daughters. She may have been raised to stay in her father’s house longer, why else wouldn’t she be married?”

“Yes, you are likely right, it’s just...”

“You’re growing fond of her, I know. I can see it. HaShem has sent a child to this house, I do not believe he will take her away so soon.”

Another burst of laughter came from the dining room. Both Judith and Martha chuckled.

“I believe I will join them.” Judith said standing.

“Go, I will mind things here.”

Martha watched as Judith walked out of the kitchen.

“Oh great HaShem,” she prayed. “Please let laughter finally come and stay in this house.”

Just as she was finishing her prayer she heard laughter, and Judith had joined them.

Tori had just walked out of the house when she saw him. He was sitting on the top of the well with his back to her, fiddling with the wooden bar the bucket hung from.

He was wearing a brown tunic with a crude wooden crutch leaning against the side of the well. She could clearly see what Hannah meant about his leg. The hem of his tunic fell just below the knee and the bad leg was hanging, clearly useless. The leg was wrapped in strips of cloth from the ankle up, probably for circulation reasons; the limb was clearly misshapen.

Her thoughts turned immediately to AJ, and how his leg had to be amputated because of cancer. This young man looked so much like AJ, just like everyone else resembled people from back home, it was eerie.

Tori was only a few feet away when he noticed her. He jumped off the well, grabbed his crutch and started away.

“Wait,” she said in Hebrew and she had to repeat it before he stopped.

“I’m Tori, I live with Simeon,” she said to his back.

“I know who you are,” he said without turning.

“You’re Aaron, right?”

“Why do you want to know?”

She put down the jug.

“Because we’re neighbors and I’m being polite.”

“You may keep your polite to yourself.”

“If you’re going to be rude at least be rude facing me.”

He slowly turned and she took in a breath.

“AJ,” she whispered.

Though he had brown hair and eyes and his skin was a brown tan, it was AJ. His hair was shoulder length and he had the customary curled locks hanging in front of his ears. He wore a sort of yarmulke on his head.

“Dude, look at your face,” she said in English. He had a light sparse of hair on his jawline and chin and almost no mustache.

“Still trying to grow that facial hair,” she smiled.

“Is it ‘polite’ to speak to someone in a language no one understands?”

The almost smile washed from her face.

“I was just saying you remind me of someone from my homeland.”

“I find that difficult to believe.”

“Why? Do you believe you’re one of a kind? I’ve travelled far and wide, people are more alike than you know.”

“I take it where you come from civilized people don’t wear sandals or cover their heads.”

“Some do and some don’t. My people don’t wear their heads covered at all and they only cover their feet when they leave home.”

“So this is your home now is it?”

“Simeon says I can stay as long as I want.”

“So they’re taking in strays off the street now.”

Tori chafed a bit and took a step toward him, her hands on her hips.

“Where is this hospitality you Jews are supposed to be so famous for? Do you not worship HaShem? Would he have you throw me out into the streets?”

Now Aaron chafed and his jaw clenched. Tori folded her arms across her chest and she glared right back at him.

“Do not speak to me of my God, foreigner.”

“How about we don’t speak at all!”

“I would prefer that!” he snapped as he turned and walked away.

“You are so not AJ!” she yelled in English. “Just because you’ve got a messed up leg, please,”

Tori came back into the house, fussing in English. She emptied the water into the larger water jug on the floor and then went outside to draw more. When she entered the kitchen again she was still fussing. Martha and Judith exchanged glances and smiled when they heard her say “Aaron” in the middle of her tirade.

“What is his major malfunction?” she finally said to the pair.

They waited to see if she would continue venting.

“If you’ve asked a question you will have to ask it again in Hebrew.” Judith said.

Tori shook her head.

“He made me so angry I don’t know what language I’m speaking. All I did was to say hello to him, he was fixing something on the well when he became very surly and insulting.”

“He was not always this way – angry and bitter. He has not been the same since the accident.”

“Hannah said his leg was caught in the mill stone while it was turning.”

“By the time they were able to stop it the damage was done.” Judith explained. “It’s all but useless now.”

Tori sat at the table across from Judith. Martha was at her spot by the side of the fire pit, mixing the flour and ingredients to make the evening bread.

“That’s not reason enough to be mean. He’s fortunate to be living here in the upper city and not a poor man’s son in the lower city. He would likely be begging in the streets.”

“True Tori, but he’s a cripple and that shapes the view of him as a man in his community.” Judith responded.

“A man shapes the view of himself.” Tori said thinking of AJ. “If you are a cripple in your mind then that’s how others will see and treat you, but if you’re a man with a useless leg, then that’s how your neighbors will see you. A man with a bad leg, but still a man. He needs to move past it and look to where he can carve out a place for himself with the hand that’s been dealt him.”

Tori looked off into the fire burning low in the pit. Here she was, stuck in ancient times and he's being a jerk because his leg doesn't work.

"Maybe he needs someone to show him another way of viewing his situation," Martha offered, but Tori didn't hear her; she was lost in her own thoughts.

It saddened her a bit that Aaron had been so dismissive and insulting to her. He had AJ's voice and face, and even something in the eyes. Though she was looking at Aaron, she felt and saw AJ looking back at her. Something in her chest had been happy and glad, that is until Aaron opened his mouth. Now she was peeved and confused, two emotions she really didn't need on this wacked-up journey she was on.

I'll just give him a wide berth, Tori said to herself. He keeps to himself, I keep to myself and the three years should move on just fine.

Judith was looking at Tori. A shadow had come over her face and she was lost in her thoughts. Her hands were folded in front of her on the table and she was just looking off into the fire pit. There was a sort of sadness on her face and Judith suspected she was thinking of her home. Though she and Martha had gently questioned Tori, she'd given them just the barest of details and not much more.

Judith reached out and touched her hands. Tori looked up and smiled.

Chapter Four

“Judith,” Tori whined. “I’m going to pass out from all of this.”

“You are not leaving this house without sandals and a scarf. The family would be scandalized. What? They couldn’t afford sandals for the girl they took in. See her head is bare, who would have thought, and this from Simeon’s house.”

Tori chuckled and Hannah laughed.

“Do I have to wear the under tunic?”

She was wearing a fine linen burgundy over tunic; the front seam and around the hem were embroidered green and gold with a wide deep green cloth belt tied around the waist. She was wearing expensive sandals and Judith was fitting the scarf around her head; a soft cream with a green border. She had the ends coming down and around the opposite sides of her neck.

“Of course you must.”

“I’m going to pass out from the heat.” Tori complained.

“The clothing is light in weight, you’ll be fine.”

“Judith, I’m strangling in this scarf. Do we have to tie it around my neck like this?”

“Non-Jews wear their scarves many different ways or not at all,” Hannah shared. She was stretched out on her stomach, hanging half on and half off the couch in Tori’s room.

“You hear that Judith?”

“No I do not. You will not leave this house in a shameful condition.”

“Maybe you should put me in a sack and just throw me over your shoulder. Then I can pop my head out when you pass by points of interest.”

Hannah burst out laughing and Tori joined her. Even Martha was sitting and chuckling from her chair in the corner.

Judith sighed in aspiration.

“Are you this much of a chore for your father?” Judith asked, then was immediately sorry.

Tori's face broke into a smile then laughter.

"I drive my father crazy." She said many Hebrew words for crazy until she hit on the one they understood. "So don't take it personally."

"I won't. Stop fidgeting."

"My neck is hot. Can't we tie it behind my head?"

Judith let her hands drop, giving up.

"Mostly servants wear it that way." Hannah said.

"Hannah!" Tori and Judith said together.

"My head will be covered, does it really matter how?"

"No it doesn't where we're going." Judith relented.

She untied the scarf and motioned for Tori to turn around. She pulled the two ends of the scarf back under Tori's hair and tied them. The scarf was long enough to cover her head as well as her long hair hanging down her back.

Tori turned to face her.

"Am I presentable?" Tori asked with a smile.

"Barely." Judith kidded. She fought the urge to stroke her cheek the way a mother would her child.

"Let's be off then." Hannah said jumping up.

Tori had been there a month and a half and she was itching to see the city. Judith had been nervous, wanting to give her more time to acclimate to the cultural life inside the house first. Being a foreigner living with Jews, there were a whole host of do's and don'ts, religious and ceremonial rules she had to learn and follow - from how she washed her hands before a meal to dealing with her monthly periods. Tori found the whole period matter so horrendous she stayed in her room the entire time, lamenting the fact she was a woman. Self-seclusion would be her choice for the entire time she was there.

Hannah had become a nearly daily visitor and she helped Tori make sense of the household rules. In addition to that, she schooled Tori about life beyond the courtyard and the gate. Over time, Tori realized that Hannah's similarity to Kalea went beyond her face, personality and mannerisms; even her dreams mirrored Kalea's. Instead of flying away to the stars, Hannah wanted to sail the open seas. She shared with Tori how she wanted to marry a sea captain and sail around the whole known world just so she could see the wonder

of God's creation. For Tori, Hannah had become a wonderful buffer against the craziness of her situation.