

“Strangely enough, I actually see your logic,” Steve smiled sadly, “but that’s not making it any easier to leave you.”

“Then know you’re going for my sake,” Heather said quietly.

“What?”

Heather sat up and turned to face Steve, still sitting on his lap. Moose whined again, putting his front paws between them and laying his head on his paws. They both absentmindedly petted him.

“I need you to go because I’m not where you are yet,” Heather said. “I’m too tempted to let you stay and become a permanent part of my life.”

“See, that doesn’t seem like a bad thing to me,” Steve looked at her with hopeful eyes.

“But I know, and you do to, that God doesn’t want that for us,” Heather said earnestly. “You have a few more years of football to play. It’s me who has to leave my life for yours. I’m not ready.”

At her confession, Steve closed his eyes and dropped his head. She stroked his hair back from his brow then raised his head with a gentle touch to his chin.

“But I will be,” she promised. “It’s just a matter of time. I need some distance to discover that I miss you more than I love my life.”

She kissed her fingers and pressed them to his lips.

“This time next year,” she said huskily. “I don’t think you’ll be going off to the Mainland by yourself.”