

Chapter 39

When Heather and the colonel got back to the suite with Naomi, they laid her down and decided to take naps with her since the game didn't start until one. The colonel woke to find Heather staring down at the Medal. When they'd come back to the suite on Friday, Gloria had put it in its display case and placed it on the side table in the living room. Heather had avoided it ever since.

"I don't deserve this," Heather said as the colonel walked up behind her.

"I disagree," he said, "but I'm curious to know why you feel that way."

“I know there are others who did so much more and got downgraded,” Heather shook her head. “Why me?”

“Why do you think you got it?” the colonel asked.

“Because I’m a woman. Because I was already a public figure since I’ve been dating Steve. Because I just happened to walk into a school shooting on the very day they were going to vote me down on the Medal.”

“Why do you think all those ‘because’ things happened?”

“I don’t know,” Heather said angrily.

“I think you do,” the colonel replied calmly then stood there silent and unmoving.

“But why did God will it?” Heather finally asked. Before the colonel could start his next question, she jumped in and answered it.

“Okay, so he wants me to use it for his glory, but how?” She gave him stink eye and shook her finger at him. “And you better give me a straight answer this time.”

“I think you already know your answers,” the colonel laughed gently. “You don’t really need my advice.”

“Yes. What’m I gonna do with that thing?” Heather pointed toward the Medal with her chin. “I know I don’t really deserve it.”

“But how often do we get what we deserve, either for the good we’ve done or for the bad,” the colonel shook his head. “The trick, my dear, is to take your focus off yourself.”

“And put it on God where it belongs,” Heather sighed and frowned. “I know this. Why do I need to be reminded of it?”

“Because my friend, for all your heroism, you’re still just a child,” the colonel inclined his head, “as am I also. We’re struggling to grow in God, to become more Christ-like. Like a child we toddle along, fall down and get back up again.”

“I do a lot of falling,” Heather said.

“But your general direction is toward a bold march,” the colonel replied.

“But how do I know where to go?”

The colonel thought for a moment. “When you were in boot camp, did you always know where you were going?”

“Ha! Hardly ever.”

“How did you get there if you didn’t know where you were going?”

“I followed the guy in front of me,” Heather smiled, understanding his direction. “Who followed the guy in front of him, who was ultimately following the drill sergeant.”

The colonel nodded.

“So all I really need to do is just take one step at a time, as the way becomes clear.”

He nodded again.

“When opportunities arise, ask God what he wants me to do, and follow his lead,” Heather said. “Thanks, Colonel. You’re a good reinforcement.”