

Chapter 14

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”—Genesis 50:20

Carly loved taking long morning walks at the family farm, winding her way through a grove of walnut trees, eventually arriving at the mailbox at the end of the lane. This morning, her slumping shoulders did not lift her face to look to the singing cardinals above.

Lavender lilacs and multi-colored tulips had given way to the bright splashes of red, orange, and white of the lilies and the green shades of the hostas. The cherries had ripened to deep red; green apples had begun to weigh down the branches of Honeycrisps and the Zestars. Carly didn't see any of it. She trudged forward, a dark cloud of anxiety following her to the mailbox.

Carly sorted the day's collection of grocery fliers and letters with cellophane windows. Another day with no mail from friends or family for encouragement. Instead, Carly stared at another letter from the bank.

“Probably,” she said to herself, “more bad news—like the day they are foreclosing.”

On the walk back to her house, Carly tore open the envelope open and braced for the worst.

Dear Ms. Cosgriff,

An error occurred in addresses. The foreclosure is intended for 535 C Avenue, NOT 525 C Avenue.

Your payments are current. No action on your property will be pursued at this time. May this be a lesson to you to make payments promptly. You can see that your bank takes these matters seriously.

Sincerely,

Ed Blither
Senior Loan Officer

Carly grabbed the black metal railing on her cement steps, slumping to sit at the top.

“Thank you, God!” she spoke aloud with the utmost sincerity. “I know you answer prayer. Forgive me for doubting you.” Carly looked up in the sky through tear-filled eyes, past the white clouds and into the expansive blue beyond. “Thank you!”

In Heaven, Theatre One grew silent again. All faces turned to Jesus who now spoke.

“You are very welcome, my little Carly. I see your heart of faith, and I am pleased.”

On cue, a small puff of colorful powder materialized, drifting into the golden bowl as the fragrant aroma of peonies pleased theatergoers.

Carly quickly stood up. “Oh! I must go and share this with Gremma immediately,” she thought as she grabbed her ample brown purse and headed to the Buick Skylark.

While Carly drove to town, Gremma had opened her email and found a long letter from Jay.

Dear Gremma and Carly,

Thanks for praying. God was at work here long before Keeja and I made our visit. *[Jay shared the story of the sacrifice at the crossroads.]* Thank God with me—the Jaro people are now engaged! I will write to Pastor Matt soon, so everyone at the church can celebrate with us.

Love you both,
Jay

“Hallelujah!” cheered Gremma. “I can’t wait to tell Carly,” hoping that this wonderful news would encourage her friend. Carly needed it. Gremma had gone to Eagle Java this morning and bought a cup of Ethiopian Yergecheffe which was now sitting on the Formica table across from her. Carly would probably arrive with her own cup, but her coffee-crazed friend would drain two, given the opportunity.

Carly’s Buick sped into Gremma’s drive, spewing a little gravel. The car door opened, then slammed shut.

“Oh no,” Gremma prayed aloud. “Carly’s still struggling in a big way. Oh, Jesus, help her!”

Jesus and all those in Theater One smiled, watching the drama unfold.

Jesus spoke, “I have been helping, Little One.”

Head nods and smiles affirmed the many “Amen!”s rolling off the tongues of theatergoers.

Gremma's front door swung open, no doorbell-ringing, no hello-ing. Carly didn't even give an insulated Hawkeye mug a rest on the table.

What is going on? Thought Gremma.

Carly held up a piece of mail, and words burst from her glowing face: "The farm! It's OK! The bank delivered the letter to the wrong address. God answered our prayers!"

"Praise God!" Gremma replied. "Sit down. Tell me all about it!"

Carly sat down at the kitchen table and, with without even thinking about it, took a sip of the coffee in front of her.

"What, did you go out and buy me a cup of coffee?! You were worried about me weren't you?" she chided Gremma.

Faith and confidence glowed on Carly's face as she spoke. "God was at work. He *did* answer our prayers. I hope I can remember this. I feel like sometimes my head is too thick and my faith too weak."

"I wonder if God is at work in other ways in this event?" Gremma asked.

"Well, I was thinking about the same thing, too, as I drove here," continued Carly. "I know the family that will be foreclosed—the Johnsons—Chris and Barb, those three little ones. With so much rain these past few summers, they haven't harvested much corn from the fields near that creek. Maybe we widows can plan a fundraiser to help them save their farm?"

Gremma smiled. Indeed, God was at work in this hard event and silently thanked God for a front-row seat to watch this transforming moment in Carly's life. Now it was time for Gremma to share her news. Her smile broadened, squeezing together the many wrinkles on her joyful face as she began telling the good news of God's work among the Jaro. She loved sharing God's answer to prayer.

Harland, watching his Christina from Heaven, smiled, "When you get to heaven, Christina, we will watch this movie together, loving this God-story and so many more!"

At Christina's kitchen table, this time, Carly was the initiator, "Let's pray, Gremma" she said.

The two grandmas held hands, letting the tears flow freely. Carly began, "God, thank you. Those two words seem so small, kinda like my faith. Sorry about that. But thank you, thank you for making a way for the Jaro to hear about Jesus and for giving me the farm. I pray that so

many more people will see how you answer prayers. I don't want to forget this moment. I want to feel this way more and more."

Gremma tightened her grip on her friend's hand and spoke the words repeated time and time again in Psalm 136: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His steadfast love endures forever. Amen."

"Whew. I'm a mess," said Carly as she wiped away a face full of tears. "Good Lord!"

"That he is, Carly. That he is!" smiled Gremma.

The tea kettle whistled its readiness, and Gremma stood, bracing herself on the kitchen table before making the slow journey toward the sound she knew so well.

"This time I will brew a fresh tea bag and get each of us TWO cookies," Gremma said, laughing. "We have much to celebrate!"

The End