# Rachel's Promise

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Name meanings

Rachel- Gentle lamb

Jason- Healer

Jamie- Beautiful

Lily- the flower Lily

Selah-Rock

Breanna- Strong

Chad- Protector

Chad Jr-Protector

# Prologue

Rachel Verto walked to the library with her 5 year old niece, Jamie Peterson.

"Do you want to get a book?"

"Yes please." They went in and Jamie went straight to the princess books while Rachel went to look for book on Crime Scene Investigations

Rachel went to find Jamie; she was sitting at the table with a whole bunch of books.

"Jamie, you can only pick out one." Jamie gave her an evil look then looked at all the books. She started going though them and finally decided on one book.

Rachel took them to the front desk. Rachel looked at Jamie just in time to see a guy come towards Jamie and she ran into his waiting arms. It was Scott, Jamie's father.

Scott had abused Jamie's mother Lily. Now he wasn't allowed see Lily.

He had visitation every other weekend- with someone watching them.

Rachel walked over to them with the books under her arm; Scott straightened up.

"Hello Rachel," he said

"Hello Scott," she responded

"So you're watching Jamie today?" he said absently.

"Yes, Lily is at work and her babysitter had an emergency."

"Well that's too bad. I hope everything will be alright."

"Yes I'm sure it will. Jamie, shall we go?"

"Ok." Jamie was confused at her Aunt's cold attitude towards her dad.

Rachel hoped that her coldness towards Scott didn't come out through her voice.

Her sister had moved on and had forgiven him long ago. Rachel couldn't or wouldn't let go. She could only pray that someday she would be able to, but what her sister went though was the worst thing that had ever happened to Lily.

The only good thing out of the marriage was Jamie.

What she had told Scott was a lie; Lily wasn't working. She hadn't been to work for eleven months; Jamie was now living with Rachel.

Lily had moved out of state with a drug problem and had Rachel watch Jamie until she got through.

That had been almost a year ago and still no word from her. Things weren't looking good.

Lily wasn't answering the cell phone that Rachel had given her.

Rachel touched Jamie's blond curly hair; she looked just like her mother.

Unlike Lily and Jamie, Rachel had unruly straight brown hair and while Lily and Jamie had big beautiful blue eyes, Rachel had small brown eyes.

Well, she would just have to live with her looks and LOTS of make-up.

Rachel was just 25 and hadn't been on a date for awhile- not that she was looking.

Right now she was trying to take care of Jamie.

Rachel worked at home most days to keep up with bills.

There were times that Rachel wanted to quit and tell Scott everything, but then she remembered the promise she made to her sister the last time she saw her.

*"Promise me that you will never tell Scott about the drugs or that I left."*

*"Don't worry, I promise."*

Later, she found out that they never sent an acceptance letter telling Lily that she had a room at the drug rehabilitation center.

Rachel didn't know what to believe anymore. Lily *would* write every once in awhile, but those letters were always short and didn't say anything that was worth the reading.

Most of the time they were for Jamie more than Rachel.

One thing Lily never talked about was when she was going to come home, or how rehab was going (that she wasn't in).

Rachel had to wonder if she was going to ever come home.

Of course Rachel never said this out loud.

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Rachel's house was a little white farm house, with a red barn, a white garden shed and a little white milk house.

Behind the garden shed there was a pond and a forest.

Rachel had inherited the house from her parents; the house had been in their family for generations. She could honestly say that she was happy that the house went to her instead of Lily.

Rachel went to go get the mail while Jamie went into the house.

“Lily isn’t living here, is she.” Rachel spun around to see Scott standing right behind her.

“Scott, you scared me!”

“I get VERY angry when I find that I’ve been lied to.”

“Is that so?”

“Yeah, where is Lily? And don’t give me this crap about her being at work! ”

“Scott I think you should leave. NOW!” Rachel said with fear filling her voice.

Scott pinned her up to the side of the barn. His strong hands on her forearms. His blood shot eyes full of fury, his light brown hair was falling in his face.

“I’m not leaving without an answer.”

“Scott, let go of me!”

“You talk so tough!” Scott put his hand on her throat and started to tighten his grip. Then from behind him he heard a little, scared voice.

“Daddy, what are you doing to Auntie Rachel?”

Scott let go of Rachel slowly; Rachel fell to the ground. Rachel sat there looking at him- holding her throat.

“Jamie, go back in the house.” Jamie ran back to the house not sure what was going on, Rachel got up.

“Scott, you *will* leave and you *aren’t* coming back. Next time you step foot on my land, I’m calling the police!”

“You just wait! I’ll find out what happened to Lily, and you’ll be the one with visitation!”

“Just go!”

Scott went to the road then turned around and flicked her off.

Rachel started for the house and by the time she got there he was gone. Rachel opened the door and right away Jamie came running and hugged her legs. She was crying and Rachel hugged her.

“It’s going to be ok,” Rachel said softly.

Jamie started to back away, and walked into the living room while Rachel put supper on.

Rachel wished there was something she could do for Jamie, but she just didn’t know what.

Rachel was cooking when she heard something fall in Jamie’s room.

She went running and saw a chair on its side. Jamie was lying on the floor with a pool of blood under her head.

Rachel ran and put something on Jamie's head. With her cell phone she called for help.

In a few minutes the police were there, and the rest of the day was a blur.

# Chapter 1

Rachel sat with Scott in the family waiting room in the ICU.

Scott sat there holding her hands; tears were falling on their clasped hands.

"Scott I'm so sorry. I was downstairs making dinner. I didn't know that she was on the chair…."

Scott had put his hand up to silence her.

"It wasn't your fault, it could have happened to anyone."

For the first time Rachel saw a softer side of Scott, someone who really cared.

"It doesn't make me feel any better, I feel like I should have been watching her every second."

"Rachel it's not your fault, where's Lily? Doesn't she care that our daughter is in the ICU?"

“I don’t know. She probably won’t come; she’s very busy at work. I’ll be back.” Rachel was so upset that she was shaking.

The room was little. It had chairs all around the walls. There was one TV, a kitchen for the families with food that was provided, and there was a table and games.

Rachel got up, and Scott grabbed her arm. She looked into his eyes and felt like she was going to die.

“Where are you going?” He looked genuinely worried.

“Just to the restroom.” Rachel use to cut her wrist when she was younger and Lily must have told him. “Sisters!”

Rachel went into the bathroom and sat down on the floor- her hands covering her face.

“God help her!”

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Scott sat there looking at where Rachel had sat. Had he just grabbed her arm?

Had he really just held her hand? Earlier that day he had tried to kill her, now he was worrying about her and holding her hand and wishing that she would just forget what he had done to her sister.

Where was Lily? Doesn’t she care if their daughter was in the hospital?

He looked at his cell phone, but he had to have it off. What he really wanted to do was run- far away. But at the same time he wanted to stay here.

Scott looked at the way Rachel had gone. Lily had told him about her cutting herself.

He would feel awful if she was cutting herself. It wasn't her fault; he didn't know what to say to reassure her.

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Rachel picked herself off the floor and went to the sink to wipe off her face.

She then brushed off her clothes and went out to where Scott was still sitting.

There was a doctor, Jason Roberto, sitting with him.

Rachel hurried her pace. She got there right when the doctor was leaving.

"What did he say? Rachel said to Scott.

“She’s going to be fine. She’s going to pull through.”

“Thank God.”

“Yes indeed.” Scott hugged her. He was so happy, and Rachel didn’t pull back. She was too happy to move.

Life seemed to stand still; tears of happiness ran down Rachel’s face. She said a prayer of thanks.

Scott pulled away. When Rachel looked around the room at an elderly couple, they were smiling.

Rachel smiled back and sat next to Scott.

“Did he say when we can see her?

“No, probably in the next few hours would be my guess.”

“Ok,” she said quietly.

Rachel sat next to Scott wishing she knew what to say. Here she was sitting next to him.

About an hour ago she wouldn't be seen near him. Now all she wanted was to be held.

It wasn't because she was near him or liked him; it was because she felt so bad.

Rachel hung her head and let out a groan. She let her fingers go up through her hair and stop at the top of her head. Rachel could feel Scott's eyes on her, but where else could he look. She let her brown eyes look into his blue eyes. She searched his eyes for any little bit of blame. It would have been so much easier to hate him if he wasn't looking at her like that- like he didn't blame her at all, like he understood everything that she said. It was maddening.

Tears started filling Rachel's eyes; she couldn't help it. She was about to retreat to the bathroom

again, but Scott caught her arm. He looked her straight in the eyes.

"It's ok to cry Rachel."

He took her hand and Rachel couldn't resist the urge anymore, she buried her head in his shoulder and let the tears trail down her face and onto his shoulder.

Scott took his hand and smoothed her hair like she was a little girl.

Dr. Roberto came in and told them that Jamie had woken up and wanted to see them.

Rachel and Scott rushed from the room; Rachel's mind was racing. What would she look like? Would Rachel feel worse?

Rachel said a quick prayer and went into the room.

Little Jamie was hooked to so many different of machines.

Rachel wanted to run out of the room and find a little hole to hide in.

For Jamie's sake she had to stay where she was.

Rachel went to her side and took her hand.

"How are you sweetie?

"My head hurts."

Scott went to Jamie's other side and held her other hand. Jamie looked right into Rachel's eyes.

"Where's mommy?"

Time seemed to stop and Rachel's heart sank.

"I'm sorry sweetie but she isn't here. I don't think she's coming."

"Oh"

The look Jamie's face was like stabbing Rachel. She just wanted to die right then and there.

Scott kissed Jamie's forehead and whispered in her ear.

"It's going to be alright."

Jamie nodded and closed her eyes, Scott just stood there holding Jamie's hand.

Nurse Jessica came in and brought two chairs, Rachel and Scott sat down.

Scott closed his eyes and rested his head on Jamie's arm and Rachel reached out across the bed and touched his head. His unruly brown hair felt clean and nice in her fingers.

Rachel took her hand back and Scott sat up.

He smiled at her. His teeth were pearly white against his tan skin.

She asked God to make her able to forgive him, not fall in love with him.

## Chapter 2

Rachel had left Scott with Jamie to go back into the family waiting room.

He figured she was going to call Lily, so when she got back he was full of questions.

"Did you get a hold of Lily?" Rachel's smile disappeared in a flash.

"No, she was still busy." Something about her voice told him that she wasn't telling him the whole truth.

Scott decided to try and call Lily, so he went outside and turned on his phone. He tried the number he had for her and she answered on the second ring.

“Hello?” Her voice sounded weak- like she hadn’t slept for a year.

“Where the heck are you?”

“I don’t know…..here?”

“Well, Jamie fell and is in the hospital. She’s going to be fine but wants her mother. Don’t you care? Aren’t you coming?”

“I can’t! I don’t have a car.”

“What happened to your car?”

Scott waited for what seemed like hours.

“I don’t know, I think I sold it.”

“Where are you? I’ll go pick you up.”

“I. Don’t. Know.” She shouted, there was screaming and yelling in the background.

“Gosh! Fine! You know- I give up! If you don’t want to see your daughter that’s fine. Rachel’s doing a good job anyway!”

Scott stomped back into the hospital and walked straight into Jamie’s room.

Scott said strongly, but quietly, because Jamie was sleeping;

“Rachel I need to talk to you……NOW!”

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Rachel followed Scott into the hallway, then through the downstairs and into the parking lot.

“Scott, where are we going?”

“Leaving. I want to talk to you!”

Something about this Scott scared her, but she followed him into the car anyway. He drove them to Rachel’s house and she went in.

Rachel started getting some stuffed animals for Jamie when Scott came in.

“You lied to me!”

“What do you mean?”

Rachel was now freaking out.

Scott backed her into a corner.

“Lily isn’t at work, is she?! In fact she told me that she doesn’t know where she is!”

“You talked to her?” Rachel’s hands began to shake.

“Yeah. Where the heck is she?!” Scott slammed his fist into the wall right next to her head.

Rachel screamed.

“Tell me!” Scott grabbed her arm and against the wall.

"Stop it! Scott!"

## Chapter 3

Rachel woke up the following morning. Cuts and bruises were all over her body, and her back hurt. She had been raped. Rachel slowly picked up the phone and called the police.

Within minutes she was at the hospital and talking to the police while Dr. June Roberto examined her carefully.

The police arrested Scott on multiple charges, and Rachel felt a peace that she hadn't felt in days, even months.

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When Rachel came to visit Jamie she found her wide awake and wanting to go home. She was going to be released at the end of the day.

The next day, Rachel went to the courthouse.

Jamie sat outside the room as Rachel met with a judge. Rachel told him about Scott's abuse to Lily, and Lily's drug problem.

"Lily left Jamie in my care, but I don't want her to leave and go with her dad when he gets out of jail."

The judge agreed that Jamie should stay in the care of Rachel until such a time if/when Lily stopped using drugs, and Scott was to stay away from Jamie completely.

Rachel was pleased with the judge's decision.

About 8 weeks later.

Rachel drove Jamie to get some lunch, and then she brought her home.

Jamie went to her room and got her toys out.

Jamie was downstairs playing when Rachel received a call from Dr. Jane Roberto about her test results.

Rachel got off the phone and sat down- her head in her hands. She broke down and started crying.

Jamie came up and put her hands on Rachel's.

"Why are you crying?"

Rachel gave Jamie a hug.

"Oh baby I'm fine, Auntie's going to have a baby."

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Several weeks later, after dinner, Rachel and Jamie went for a walk. When they got back, the house had been broken into. Rachel put Jamie into the car and told her to stay.

Rachel slowly went into the house; it had been ransacked. Rachel called the police, after they were done going through the house. Rachel went back and got Jamie.

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Rachel awoke in the wee hours of the morning feeling like someone was hitting her.

Her hand went down to her stomach.

Rachel couldn't help bit have doubts on how she was going to raise this child. She already told Jamie, and Jamie would never forgive her if she gave it up now. And if she was really honest with herself she didn't want to, but she was still scared. Rachel got up and cleaned, it was 5 AM and she didn't have to be up until 8.

While Rachel was cleaning she dropped a plate.

Jamie came running when she heard it.

"Auntie what was that?!"

"Sorry to wake you, I just dropped a plate."

There were pieces of plate all over the floor.

"Go back to bed sweetie."

"Ok Auntie."

Jamie went back to bed and Rachel started to pick up all the pieces of plate off the floor.

Later that morning…

They got in the truck and drove to church.

After the service and coffee Jamie went up to her Sunday school class and Rachel went to her singles group.

Rachel's mind wondered a few times.

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Rachel put her hand on her growing stomach, feeling low and depressed.

She needed some heavenly help, so she went to a shelf and grabbed her fathers old Bible.

It opened to Philippians 4:6-7:

*'Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.' (NLT)*

Rachel fell to her knees.

"Dear God, I can't do this alone. I need your help with this child. I don't know what you have in mind,

but I want to do your will. Please protect Jamie, Lily, my baby and myself. Thank you for everything you have given me. And help me to forget about Scott. Amen"

She felt a peace come over her. Rachel got up off her knees and looked out the window; she couldn't look without remembering Scott.

"I guess it's going to take some time."

## Chapter 4

Rachel looked out of the window and into the yard; the neighbor's cat ran into her barn.

She took her flashlight to look for the cat. The barn was very old and was in need of repair. Rachel didn't want that cat to have kittens under it.

She stood outside and flashed the light around the barn. The cat was nowhere to be seen, so she decided to risk going into the barn.

She took her first step with caution, and since it didn't go crashing down, she walked on. After looking in moldy hay and around old wooden boxes, Rachel looked into the middle of the floor. There was a hole that looked just big enough for the cat to get under the floor. Rachel got on her hands and knees and looked down; to her surprise, she looked into a little room. She found a hatch with an old ladder that led down there; Rachel looked around a room that her father must have used. There were newspaper clippings on the wall, a roll top desk with a key hole in the corner. Rachel went back up and got some

wooden crates. She took all the paper clippings down and put them into the box.

She went into the house and called her best friend Breanna. She would need someone to help her, and Breanna was the perfect person to ask. Breanna's father had died when she was only three years of age. Rachel thanked her and went into the living room; her mind was spinning.

Rachel's father left her mother when Rachel was 10 and Lily was 12, she never knew why.

Maybe this desk held the answers to years of questions. Rachel went around her nice clean house making supper and singing. Jamie came up behind and hugged her.

"Auntie I love you."

"I love you too."

“Can Hannah come over?”

“I’ll have to talk to her mom. I’ll call her right now.”

Rachel got on the phone with Michelle, Hannah’s mom, humming to herself.

“Jamie was wondering if Hannah could come over.”

“Well it won’t work for Hannah to go over there, but it *would* work if Jamie came over here.”

“That would work. When do you want me to drop her off?” “Well we are going to be passing by there in a few minutes, if you can get her ready…..”

“I’ll try. See you in a little bit.”

“Alright, bye.”

Rachel went upstairs and helped Jamie pack. They had just gotten it done when the doorbell rang.

Jamie ran to answer the door, and Rachel heard little girl giggles.

Rachel brought the bags down and talked with Michelle about when she needed to pick up Jamie the following day.

After they had left, the house seemed so quiet.

Rachel put on some music. Because the music was so loud she didn't hear the car pull into the driveway until her doorbell rang.

Rachel just about jumped out of her skin. She turned it down and went to the door. Outside on the porch were three men in black leather trench coats.

"Yes?"

"We're looking for Lily, she doesn't happen to be here?" "No."

"Then you won't mind us looking around."

“Actually I do” Rachel said curtly trying to mask her fear.

Rachel didn’t want them in her house, but when she tried to close the door one of the men put his foot in the door and stopped her from closing it.

“It wasn’t a request.” They pushed their way in and Rachel had this bad feeling, deep down in the pit of her stomach. They started throwing things around while one of them pulled out a gun and stuck it to her forehead.

“Where is Lily? Where is she?!”

“I….Don’t….Know…..” Rachel was on her knees crying. She pleaded for her life and the life of her baby. One of the other guys yelled at the man who was threatening her, and he shoved Rachel to the ground.

“Don’t move; we’re not done yet.” He licked his lips and she closed her eyes. The second he was out of sight she made a dash for the door. Running as fast as she could for the open field.

Her heart was pounding and her pulse raced, but she stopped running when she saw a man walking towards her. For a moment she thought she recognized him.

She figured out it was Dr. Jason Roberto; she felt a rush of relief.

He quickly crossed the distance between them.

“Hi.”

“Hello, Doctor.”

“I prefer Jason.”

“Ok, then I like Rachel.”

"Ok, *Rachel*. How's Jamie? And what are you doing in this field?"

Rachel looked back at her house, and then turned back to him.

"Jamie's doing fine."

"Well, what about you?"

"I'm getting there."

"I live just up the road a ways- at the end of this field, actually. I was wondering if you minded if I checked on Jamie?"

"Oh well she's not here, she actually went to a friend's house. I need help moving something. Would you be able to come back tomorrow morning? I'll make breakfast and Breanna is coming."

"Uh, sure…..what time will Jamie be home tomorrow do you think? I really should check on her."

“Well I think that she should be home around two, but let me give you my number, then you can call.”

“Ok” Jason had a pen in his pocket, so he wrote Rachel’s number on his hand.

“Thanks so much for agreeing to come tomorrow. It will be a great relief for Breanna and me.”

“You’re very welcome.”

He left and Rachel hoped that the men inside her house would be gone by now.

She went in and saw that there was stuff all over the floor. On one of the couches sat one of the men, he motioned for her to sit on the chair across him.

“We want to know where Lily Verto is and you’re going to tell us.”

“Even if I knew I wouldn’t just tell you so that you could kill her.”

“We don’t want to kill her; she’s no good to us dead.” He laughed. “For your and Jamie’s own good, you will let Lily know to get us the money, soon, or you will be attending a funeral, if not your own.” They stood up and walked out the door.

Rachel, still shaking, started picking up.

To her amazement, she came across a little door that looked like just another panel of the wall, but there was a hatch that flipped down.

The men didn’t touch it because they didn’t see it.

Rachel slowly opened not knowing what might be in it.

She found several boxes; a couple of them felt like bricks. There wasn’t much space in the little room-just big enough to fit the boxes. But, if she removed them, it would be a good hiding place for Jamie if those men ever came back.

Chapter 5

Rachel woke up to a quiet house.

For a second she forgot that Jamie wasn't home.

She got up and got ready for the day. She started to lay things out for breakfast and started her coffee maker.

The first person to come was Breanna; they sat down for some coffee.

They had known each since they were kids, Breanna took Rachel's hand. Concern filled her green eyes; her strawberry blonde hair framed her face.

"How are you doing?"

"I'm getting by- taking life one day at a time. How are you doing?"

"Fine, really busy with the band. So what's this desk we will be moving?"

“I found my father’s desk and some boxes of his, also some of the newspaper clippings that he considered important. His desk is in the barn though, so that’s where I need you guys to move it from.”

“I will move anything you want,” Breanna said looking down at her steaming coffee, “So…..where’s this Jason.”

“He’s walking through the field.”

“Good cause I have appointments to get to.”

Rachel went and opened the door for Jason.

“Hello Jason,” She said cheerfully when he reached the doorway.

“Hello. Well, where is this desk that you need moving?”

“Oh it’s in the barn, do you want to get it first?”

Breanna joined them, and she said.

“Let’s move the desk first and then you can come in to eat.”

“Do you have to leave right after moving the desk?” Rachel asked.

“Yeah, I have to meet with my band and then I have to meet with the recording studio.”

“Ok, well, let me show you where it is.”

They followed her to the barn and then down to where the desk was.

Breanna looked around, smiled and said.

“What an awesome place to come and think. This is so your dad.” She walked around a little bit then turned around and asked. “Where does this door go?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t know that there was another door.”

The other hidden room was a gold mine for Rachel.

There were more boxes, a bed, a dresser and a night stand. Rachel spun around, hardly believing that she was in this room.

“Well would you mind moving these too? I can pay something if you want it.”

Both looked at Jason, who shook his head.

“No I’m fine. I’ll settle for food. Where do you want this stuff?”

“Well, the desk can go into the house, but the other stuff can go out into the garage. I would like to go through them before I take them into the house.”

“Ok.” Jason clapped his hands, “Breanna should we start?”

“Ok, lift on three.” They started lifting the desk and moved it into the house and then they started on the other stuff.

Rachel went back into the house to start the food.

Right when they brought the last thing into the garage, Rachel had finished the food.

Rachel ran out to say good bye to Breanna and walked in with Jason.

“Wow that smells good, what is it?” Jason said.

“Well, I made pancakes and coffee. I also have toppings for the pancakes.”

“Wow that sounds great.”

“It’s too bad Breanna had to leave”

“Yeah, she said that her band is just trying to get on their feet, so she had to be at this meeting.”

“Yeah, they are really good.”

Jason sat down, and Rachel got him a plate.

She brought the food to the table and sat down.

They started talking about their lives.

“So, whose stuff was that, that we were moving?”

“It was my dad’s, I think. He left when I was 10 and to this day I still don’t know why he left or where he went. He just all of the sudden left and we never saw him again.”

“Oh I’m so sorry! My mom left, too. She ran off with a truck driver. My sister and I ended up having to take care of my father. We worked through school while he sat at home. I’ve always thought that some secrets were meant to remain secrets.”

“I have never thought that, but I’m sorry about your mom. My mom was still the mother she’d always

been though we'd catch her crying quite a few times."

"These are great pancakes." Jason said hoping to get off the subject.

"Thank you. I'm glad you like them. I haven't made pancakes for years." Rachel said smiling.

"Well, you did a good job. Would you like to go for a walk?"

Rachel looked around the house, wondering if it was really a good idea. She should be going through the boxes of stuff, but she wanted to learn more about him. His dark green eyes held some mystery but she didn't like the way she felt when she was around him. She felt butterflies in her stomach. 'You are *not* going to fall for him Rachel! Just because you're having a baby doesn't mean that you need him.'

Rachel looked at him, then at the box that sat in the living room. She really wanted to go with him.

"If it's short- I have tons of boxes to go through."

"Ok. Sounds good. How about we walk half way to my house then you can go back home, and I'll go to my house."

"Ok. Let me grab my coat."

Rachel went into the mud room and grabbed a light jacket off the hook.

They left and went into the outer field that led to Jason's house. When they were half way to his house, he sat on a rock and Rachel joined them. Jason started the conversation.

"So what's your sister like?"

"Well she was always fun when we were growing up but now I don't know her. She looks so different;

the drugs really did a number on her. What's your sister like?" Rachel said quietly.

"Well," Jason said slowly, "she's a wonderful doctor and great at cooking. She's getting married in a few weeks. It's amazing how much she loves him; I never thought someone could love someone that much. Which reminds me- I have to run. She told me that she had something she needed to talk to me about. Thanks for the pancakes."

"You're welcome. Thanks for helping move all that stuff."

Jason said over his strong shoulders.

"No problem."

He took off in a run and Rachel started back to the house. She got to the woods between her house and the field when a guy stepped out.

"Hi Rachel"

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Jason stopped running when he was sure that Rachel wasn't looking. He couldn't believe that he had just lied to her in order to get home.

He had nothing there but his dogs, but something inside him told him to run.

She meant danger to everything he had worked hard to hold onto, and it was so easy to see that she didn't feel what he was feeling.

It had to be this wedding coming up. It had him thinking that maybe there was more to life then work, his lonely house (with the underground fence so his dogs can run while he's working all hours) and his dogs.

Jason looked into the mirror. He was covered with dust and dirt.

When he found out that Scott and Rachel weren't married, he was so happy. From the first time he saw her, he could picture himself dating her.

Rachel's straight brown falling across her face, her brown eyes red, puffy and watery. It touched him that she loved Jamie so much. He could have sworn that it was her child.

Jason grabbed a ball and took his five St. Bernard's out for a run.

He heard a scream and the dogs went off running toward Rachel's house.

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“Hello Rachel”

Rachel froze at the sound of Scott’s voice, her skin was crawling.

“Stay away from me Scott. You shouldn’t be here.”

“I missed you to.” Scott’s eyes were dark; they were on fire with all the evil he thinking.

Rachel could feel her knees about to buckle; her eyes were filling with tears.

Scott grabbed her arm and she screamed as loud as she could. Rachel pulled her arm out of his grip and ran toward Jason’s house.

Her eyes were fogging up; she could barely see when something ran past her bumping her a little bit. Rachel fell on her back to the ground and curled into a ball, her head hurt.

All she wanted was to wake up and this whole week had been a bad dream. Her world had gone dark, she tried to blink it away but it only got darker. Then she felt like she was moving, she could feel arms around her.

Rachel felt so weak; she couldn't fight but went deeper and deeper into the darkness. She didn't feel anything or hear anything else.

********

Rachel woke up on her back in a strange room and bed- her head was pounding.

She felt the back of her head, and pain shot through her body.

“What did I do?” Then the attack came back to her in a rush, she pushed up on her arms.

Was she with Scott? What was that thing that ran past her?

She slowly started to get up; her head started to spin and forced her back down on the bed. Her head hit the pillow hard, and made her head hurt even more, but she had to get out of this place.

Rachel pushed back her light headedness and walked to the door, she put her hand on the wall willing herself not to fall. She made it to the door and tried the knob; surprisingly, it was unlocked.

Rachel sent a prayer of thanks heavenward.

Rachel went into a long hallway and down some stairs. She heard a man talking and quickened her steps.

When she got down the stairs she found a closet to hide in. She closed her eyes and prayed that whoever was out there wouldn't find her. She heard some dogs bark and feared for the worst. What if these dogs were trained to kill?

Rachel wrapped her arms around her waist and opened her eyes; she had to get out of this place.

She fought through the waves of dizziness and left her hiding place. She looked behind her and then to the sides. She looked straight and there was a blur coming closer.

Rachel stopped dead in her tracks. She heard a voice call her name. Shock filled the voice.

“Rachel!”

She knew that voice, but couldn’t place it. Rachel turned; she could make out a man coming to her.

The man put his hand gently on her arm.

“You should be in bed; you hit your head pretty hard.”

“I have to go and find Jamie. Where am I?” She could make out him shaking his head.

“Rachel can you see me alright? How many fingers am I holding up?” he put 3 fingers up.

“Three- I’m just a little dizzy. Where am I?”

“Do you know who I am?”

Whoever this was had a deep voice laced with concern.

“When you hit your head you passed out, I carried you from the field. You’ve been out for a couple of hours. My sister and I agree that with some rest you will be fine. I called the mother that Jamie is with and explained what happened and she said that Jamie could stay with her as long as you need. What you need to do is go lay down.”

“No, what I need is to get out of this house and go to work. I have boxes all over my house; I have a job I need to work on.”

Rachel started for the door, but Jason blocked her from leaving.

“You can go home, but I’m not leaving you. I was given a few days off to watch over you.”

“I don’t need it. I’m *fine*.”

“Yeah, that’s why you’re not looking at me when you talk.”

Rachel vision was clear now but didn't want to look at him. Every time she did her hands began to sweat, her stomach turned and she got nervous.

"This isn't a request. As a doctor I am going to watch you. Even if that means making you go to the hospital."

"Fine then, please take me home."

He helped her walk out of the house and into the truck. She was still a little unstable on her feet. It felt nice with his arm around her waist and holding her elbow. She felt safe in his arms. What was she thinking? This was not the right time to be letting her romantic side take her away.

Jason got into his truck and started on the very short drive to her house.

Rachel closed her eyes feeling very tired all of a sudden and in a flash she opened them again.

In her mind she saw Scott's face, his eyes burning with hate. What had she done to deserve this?

For the first time in days she was glad to Jason was here with her. The spring day brought the flowers out with the sun; it seemed like God's promise of hope for her. She shivered at the thought that Scott might be waiting for her. She wrapped her arms around her and the baby growing inside her.

Jason put his hand on her arm to get her attention.

"Are you alright?"

Tears touched the sides of her eyes and she turned to the window so Jason wouldn't see her cry.

"Yes, of course." Rachel whispered.

# Chapter 6

Scott watched Jason help Rachel into the truck; he rubbed the spot where Jason punched him in the jaw. He would have had Rachel right now if it weren't for that guy.

Scott put out his cigarette and ran to where he could see her house- knowing that they were going there.

Scott lit another cigarette and sat down on a rock. A smile crossed his lips when he thought of all the things he was going to do to her.  He had served too many months in prison and wasn't going spend another night in there. Seven whole months all because of Rachel- she wasn't worth it. She was going to pay now.

He saw the headlights of the truck turn into Rachel's driveway.

"Finally……" Scott muttered as he slowly walked closer to the house. He noticed Rachel's stomach had gotten bigger since the last time he saw her. He raised an eyebrow; he was going to have to talk to her.

He went into the woods to wait for the perfect timing. He stopped when he heard someone coming; he ducked into a hollow tree.

Scott watched but didn't see anyone. Then a hand reached out and pulled him out of the tree.

Next thing he knew he was face down on the ground and handcuffed.

He'd been found.

*******

Rachel hugged herself when the police officer came. He told them that they had found Scott, and he was on his way back to prison.

Breanna was standing close by talking to another officer talking about how Scott escaped.

He had come to see her (Rachel); of that much she was sure.

Rachel's thoughts strayed to her baby. She couldn't raise this child when Scott got out of jail. He would be watching her every minute- not to mention he would want to be in this child's life. Rachel cringed at the thought.

She felt Jason put his hand on her shoulder; she couldn't think when he was this close. Rachel closed her eyes and laid down on the couch- her arms around her waist.

Jamie came running in the door with Michelle and Hannah close behind her.

“Auntie, look what I got!” Rachel sat up, and Jamie jumped on the couch with her and held out a little ring.

“It's beautiful Jamie. Did you say thank you for it?”

“Yes.”

Rachel smiled.

“Good job, you can go put a sticker up on the wall.”

“Yes!” Hannah and Jamie went running into the kitchen.

“Thank you Michelle for watching her, while I wasn’t here.”

“It was no problem. They had fun.”

Michelle and Hannah left shortly after that. Breanna left still talking to the officer and Jason helped Rachel up to her room.

Rachel shook a little after he had left her in the room- fear covering her like a blanket.

She went to bed but couldn't sleep.

*******

Downstairs Jason tried and tried to get comfortable on the couch.

He wanted to watch the door just in case someone decided to break in.

He wasn't sure if Scott had another trick up his sleeve. Scott wanted to kill Rachel- that or pay her back for turning him in.

What did Scott think that Rachel was going to do? She wouldn't just sit back and take it.

Just then his sister called his cell with her fiancé, Jimmy Maxon, by her side.

"Hey Jason, where are you?"

"I'm at Rachel's; I thought it would be best if I stayed over to watch her."

"I see. Well I called to let you know that we have fittings tomorrow and you have to be there. My wedding is next week and I need to know that you have your tuxedo all ready and that it fits."

"June, I already have the tux and it fits fine."

"When did you get it?"

"Just a few nights ago- I was on my way home. I tried it on when I was there and it looks nice. I think I should stay with Rachel, just in case."

“Ok, well, as long as you have the tux and it fits. I guess I’ll see you later.”

“Tell Jimmy, hi.”

“I will, and make sure you don’t do anything stupid. Bye.”

“Bye” Jason snapped his cell phone shut.

June was getting nervous and Jason knew that, but he didn’t want to leave Rachel’s side. And then he started *really* thinking.

He had already done the stupid thing his sister warned him about. He had lost him mind and was trying to protect a woman who didn’t want his help.

So he really should just go to the fitting. Rachel would be fine, but there still was this little bit of doubt in the back of his mind. What if she wasn’t? What if Scott somehow was able to get out again? Would he

make a break for the border or would he come back here?

Jason knew that Scott was going to make every attempt to get back to Rachel. Jason rubbed his temples; this was starting to sound like a bad soap opera. Next thing you know the mob will come and some guy with an eye patch.

Jason closed his eyes hoping for a peaceful, restful night.

"God give me strength."

Rachel curled into somewhat of a ball. Her tears tasted salty on her lips.

She felt so alone.

Jason had demanded that he stay here for at least tonight, but she didn't need or want his help.

Rachel had grown up mostly alone and didn't want to be looked after now. She didn't need a baby-sitter.

Rachel closed her eyes feeling a new rush of tears coming.

She was so tired.

Her emotions were all over the place.

She got up to pace; it was almost 3 AM, and she didn't dare go downstairs. Jason was sleeping and she didn't want to wake him.

Then she remembered that there was a small servant's stairwell that went into the kitchen.

She slipped on her flip flops and went down the stairs.

There were boxes that she should go through.

The door going into the kitchen opened, and someone flashed a flashlight up the stairwell.

Rachel kept in a scream, and started to creep back up the stairs.

“Rachel is that you?”

It was Jason, she felt so relieved.

“Yes.”

“What are you doing up?”

“I couldn’t sleep, so I thought I’d start on the boxes.”

“Well, here, let me help you.”

Jason started to go up the stairs but Rachel put up her hand to stop him.

“No I’m fine; I can make it.”

Jason nodded and backed away to let her down the stairs.

********

Rachel put her hand into the first box and pulled out several papers.

It almost felt like she didn't have any hope of finishing all these boxes of papers. The first box was full of bills; the next one was books.

The books were old and dusty. She looked through every page hoping that a piece of paper would fall out.

It seemed like a wild goose chase.

All she wanted to find was a diary explaining everything. Even just finding the answer to why he left would make her happy.

Her hand stopped on a book. It was a book of notes on the sermons he went to. There were notebooks full.

Rachel touched her hand to her forehead. This was a lot more work then she thought it would be.

Every time she went through a box, a book, or even thought of the boxes; she could hear Jason's voice in the back of her head.

'*Maybe some things were meant to stay a secret.*"

She closed her eyes feeling tired all of a sudden, and then she could feel Jason's hand on her shoulder. Rachel opened her eyes and looked straight into Jason's, she could see concern in eyes.

“Are you feeling ok Rachel?”

“Yeah, just a little tired.”

“You should go lie down.” Jason helped her up.

“Ok, and Jason?”

“Yeah” Their eyes met and he held her glaze.

“Thanks”

“No problem”

Rachel smiled and walked back up the stairs to her bedroom.

She knew now that she had given her heart to Jason and didn’t want to get it back……..

Chapter 7

Jason's phone went off, and he hurried to get it.

He didn't want anything to wake Jamie or Rachel up.

He picked it up and whispered.

"Hello?"

"Hey man, what's up?!"

It was his best friend, John DeKella, who had moved a few years ago to work at the one of the best hospitals in the USA.

Jason went outside and carefully closed the door.

"John! How's the new job going?"

"It's great, and that's why I called. I talked to the head of my department about you and he said he would like to have you come in for an interview. Isn't that sweet?!" That was John- always get right to the point

“Ah, man, this is amazing! When can I get this interview?”

“Well the sooner the better. I know your sister is getting married soon. I’m sure your really busy, but if you could get up here soon. Hey, you could stay with me!”

Jason talked with John for awhile and promised to call him with the answer.

A couple of weeks ago he would have jumped at this offer, but after Rachel had looked at him that way, he wasn’t sure he could just leave her.

He sat down by the pond.

How could he leave Rachel with Jamie and with the baby on its way? He looked back at the house, and knew that he had to leave.

He was getting too close to Rachel, and it scared him.

He would talk to her when she woke up. Jason felt awful leaving Rachel, but it wasn't like he was dating her or the kid was his.

He got up and started walking around- trying to think of a way to tell Rachel that he was leaving. He didn't want to just leave and have her wake up with him gone.

*******

Rachel woke up with the sun shining on her face. She was so sore. She felt like she had slept on a load of bricks.

She looked out the window.

Jason was sitting next to a tree, his brown hair falling across his face. He looked like he could be sleeping.

She walked downstairs in her pajama pants and shirt and went into the kitchen.

She made eggs and bacon. She had them on plates when Jamie came down for breakfast.

While Jamie was eating, Rachel went outside and went over to Jason.

"Jason?"

Jason jumped.

"Um....Yeah?"

"I made breakfast if you want some."

"Ah, sure"

After they were done eating Jason helped her with the dishes.

"I got offered a better job. I'm thinking of taking it," he said out of the blue.

"That's great; have you gone for the interview yet?"

"No, but I'm hoping to go sometime this week. If I get this job, I'll have to move."

"Oh….I see." Rachel's world seemed to go spinning upside down, and she had to put her hand on the counter so to steady herself. Jason didn't seem to notice- he was so lost in his thoughts.

Rachel had started to think that they could start dating, but now she tried to push the thought out of her mind. She forced herself to smile.

"When will you be leaving?"

“Well, I’m going to stay with a friend up there. I’m hoping to be leaving today.”

“Well good luck” Rachel said without emotion.

“Thanks.”

Rachel turned around and went upstairs. She watched out the window as Jason walked to his truck and drove off. She felt like he was taking a piece of her with him. Rachel shrunk to her knees and started crying.

This was why she never let a man get close.

*******

Jason drove away from the house; he felt like such a jerk.

He had seen Rachel reach out for the counter but he didn't help because if he had his heart would have taken over.

The only thing he wanted was to reach out and take her in his arms, but he knew if he had, he would have stayed, and he really wanted this job.

He ran his fingers through his hair.

"Good bye Rachel Verto"

********

Rachel woke up the next morning feeling lonely.

Being nine months pregnant wasn't the joy her mother had told her.

She suddenly felt like someone was squeezing her stomach. Rachel ran and got the phone and called Breanna.

Breanna made it to the house in only a few minutes and entered the house without knocking.

Rachel was sitting in a chair with her hands around her stomach.

Breanna started throwing out questions.

"Where's Jamie? Is she ready? How are you? Do you have your overnight bag ready?"

"Yes it's under my bed. Jamie's up stairs."

Breanna ran up the stairs. She grabbed the overnight bag and Jamie. Then she came running back down the stairs with Jamie behind her.

"Jamie can you take the bag to my truck please?"

"Ok" Jamie left.

Breanna helped Rachel to her feet and out to the truck.

Breanna stepped on it to the hospital and pulled to a stop at the emergency room entrance.

She ran in, got a wheelchair and ran up to the front desk.

"My friend is having a baby."

The nurse took her and left Breanna and Jamie to fill out the paper work, well, as much as she could.

After hours of labor Rachel had a baby girl, who she named Selah Lynn Verto.

Rachel sat in her hospital bed holding Selah with Jamie sitting next to her and Breanna sitting in the chair.

“She’s beautiful, isn’t she Breanna?”

Breanna smiled.

“Yes, she’s so cute”

Jamie put her hand on Selah’s hand.

“Hello baby” She touched the baby’s hair.

“Jamie, are you hungry?”

“Yes”

“Rachel, I’ll take Jamie to McDonalds. Do you want anything?”

“I want a Big Mac and fries”

Breanna and Jamie left to go on their way. Rachel rocked Selah and kissed the top of her head, then whispered in her ear.

"I will never let Scott hurt you, I promise you."

The nurse named Jessica came in and took Selah back to her bed.

Rachel had to think of a way to protect Selah from Scott. She didn't want him in her life, but her daughter needed a father.

Scott just wasn't the man she wanted in Selah's life, not with his history.

Breanna and Jamie came back with the food and smiles.

"Hey there, here's your Big Mac."

Breanna set the sandwich and fries on the tray.

"Thanks."

Jamie sat down with her chicken nuggets and Breanna sat down with a salad.

“Guess who we saw at McDonalds?”

“I can’t even start to imagine”

“Chad Smith”

“Really? I haven’t seen him for years! What’s he look like? Is he as cute as ever?”

“Of course! I told him that you just had a baby and he said would be coming over here to see you.”

Rachel’s mind went to her college sweetheart. They had been very serious. They even talked about getting married, but Rachel wanted to be single for a few years.

And that lead to years without him, until she finally forgot about him.

In a rush all the memories of their times together came back to her, him being a compete gentleman and loving. He never made her do things she didn't want to do and helped her with all her schoolwork that she was having problems with.

If it wasn't for him she probably wouldn't have finished school, but he probably had someone by now.

"What time did he think he would be here?"

"In about an hour. I see that look. You're hoping he's single and available, and I just happen to know that he's both."

Rachel's eyes lit up, but she didn't say what Breanna had thought she would.

"Really? I wasn't thinking that."

“Yes you were, and you know it” Breanna smiled and laughed, and added. “I know you all too well to not think that you’re still interested in Chad. For Pete’s sake! You talked about him for years and years after you two broke up. It drove me nuts! So do me a favor and don’t act like a compete jerk when he comes.”

Rachel threw a pillow at her.

“For your information Chad asked me to marry him, but I turned him down because I wanted to be single for a couple of years. And I’m not proud of my stupid moment; if I could go back I would have taken that offer……”

She turned as the door opened, and Chad stood at the door.

“Chad! Wow you haven’t changed much.”

“And you look just as beautiful as before”

Breanna took Jamie outside to the outside playground.

“I’ll be back! Don’t have too much fun.”

Chad sat down on the chair that Breanna had sat on and smiled.

“So how’s life with you?”

“It’s had its ups and downs, seems like more downs then ups.”

They talked for hours and hours until Jamie got too tired to play anymore. So Breanna and Jamie came in, Jamie curled into a ball next to Rachel.

Chad smiled and said.

“Is she yours too?”

“No this is my sister’s; my sister had to go rehab so I’m taking care of her.”

“Wow, that’s great. You are so nice.”

She felt the old flame relit. She couldn’t help it with his straight blonde hair and beautiful green eyes. Wow she couldn’t help but feel like he could see right through her.

“I heard what happened to you. I’m so sorry.”

“How did you hear about it?”

“It was in the newspaper, and when Breanna said you just had a baby I just kind of figured it out.”

“Oh, I see” It was getting late so Chad got up and left.

Rachel let out a sigh, looked at the wall dreamy. Breanna woke up from the sigh and said.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, not a thing, today was awesome.”

They both smiled. Breanna went back to sleep in the chair and

Rachel fell asleep in the bed.

## Chapter 8

Rachel woke up with the sun shining on her face. Breanna and Jamie were gone, probably to let her sleep.

Rachel smiled and stretched, life seemed to be turning around. Then SHE walked in…..

Chad looked at Selah from behind the nursery window. She was beautiful.

Scott didn't deserve her. He grew up with Scott so he knew what a jerk he was.

He almost didn't go to the hospital, and then over hearing Rachel and Breanna talking had almost torn

his heart out of his chest. He couldn't listen anymore. He almost left, but he walked in.

Looking at Selah he was glad he didn't. Even if he and Rachel didn't start dating again he hoped he could help her out with Selah.

*******

Chad smiled as he left the glass to go to Rachel's room, he stopped at Denny's and had gotten her some breakfast in a 'to go' box.

Chad neared Rachel's door and saw there were nurses and doctors running in and out. He went up to a policeman that was standing nearby.

"What happened?"

"Some woman on drugs came and thought she was taking her daughter. We can't get a name out of

the woman, but she tried to strangle Miss Verto. Luckily one of the nurses came in, or she would be gone right now."

"That's awful! Can I see the woman on drugs. It might be Lily Verto Peterson."

"Verto, you say? That's that the last name of the girl she tried to kill."

"Yes, Rachel Verto is Lily's sister. Lily is a drug addict so Rachel is taking care of her daughter Jamie."

Just then Breanna and Jamie came walking in; Breanna's smile disappeared when she saw Chad and the officer. She came running up,

"What's wrong? Is it Scott?"

The officer looked at her, "Who is Scott?"

"He's Lily's ex-husband and raped Rachel."

The officer looked confused; Chad put his hand on Breanna's arm.

"It's not Scott, its Lily. She's drugged out and tried to kill Rachel."

"WHAT?!" Breanna was in shock.

"It's going to be ok, they caught her in time."

Breanna stepped back and grabbed the nearest chair. Chad helped her sit down.

"Are you sure it was Lily? I grew up with her; I can't imagine her doing this."

"Well not 100%, but it's the only logical thing. The woman told the officer that she tried to kill her because she was trying to take her daughter from her."

"Jamie"

“Yes, Jamie.” Breanna turned to the officer. “May I see her?”

“She’s at the station. I can take you.”

“Thank you. Chad will you watch Jamie for me. If it is Lily I don’t want Jamie to see her.”

“Totally understandable, I will take care of Jamie.”

Breanna gave Chad a hug, “Thank you so much.”

Chad had known Breanna all her life and knew she was an only child. Rachel, Lily and him had always been her siblings. He missed the days when they would hang out for no reason other than they loved each other’s company.

Breanna left with the officer to go to the station. He went in with Jamie to sit by Rachel’s side, Jamie looked at him. Her big blue eyes held fear in them,

“Is Aunt Rachel going to be ok?”

Chad looked at Rachel; she was now breathing on her own. But she hadn't woken up yet. Nurse Jessica was checking her and looking at a clipboard, but other then that all the other doctors and nurses had left.

"She's going to be fine; we need to pray for her. Do you want to pray too?"

Jamie nodded her head and got on her knees next to the bed.

"Dear God, Please help Aunt Rachel get better soon and baby Selah. Oh and please help my momma to come home. Amen"

"Dear Heavenly Father, please help Rachel to get better and please help Lily also to get better. Please help Selah to be able to go home soon with Rachel and Jamie. Amen."

Jamie got up and sat in the chair next to the window; she grabbed some books and started looking at them. As Chad watched her he knew what he really wanted, what he had been missing these last few years: a family.

He smiled as he thought of sitting next to Rachel with the kids running around the grounds. He had to stop thinking that Rachel would be part of his life; it wasn't like she had said anything to make him think like that.

*******

Breanna got out of the cop car, and walked into the station. The officer took her to the cell that held the woman from the hospital; Breanna walked up to the cell and said.

“Lily?” The woman turned around and smiled.

“Breanna, have you come to get me out? I swear I didn’t do what they said I did, I could never hurt my sister”

“Lily, you did. What’s wrong with you? I thought you were going to give up the drugs.”

Lily looked like was going onto 50 not 28, her once bright beautiful blues eyes were now a dull blue color and her blonde hair was stringy and dull. She looked like she had missed far too many meals; she wasn’t the Lily she had known.

“I tried really I did, but the rehab center was so mean and wouldn’t let me talk to family or friends.”

“Don’t give me that! I met with your little drug friend, 50,000 dollars Lily. 50!”

“I know!”

“Did you smoke it all?” Breanna starting to raise her voice,

“Yes, and…..some more”

“What?! More?”

“Yeah from another guy, but I paid him back.”

“Oh. I’m so proud of you! Now how are we supposed to pay 50,000 dollars to a drug dealer who wouldn’t bat an eyelash if he killed Jamie. Tell me how!”

“I don’t know! I do have some money hidden in a tree at the house. It’s the big one in the middle of the woods. “

“How much?”

“Not much, maybe 50 bucks. If it’s still there, it might not be. I put it there when I was like 10.”

Jessica shook her head, “You know maybe it’s good that Jamie is in Rachel’s care.”

Lily got up and went as close as the bars as she could.

“How dare you!”

Lily slammed her hands against the bars and whispered, “Would you get me out of here?!”

“I wouldn’t do it even if I wanted to.”

“Fine then, I will make you pay!”

Breanna turned around and said before she left. “You aren’t the sister you used to be.” She left and went back to the hospital.

*****

Rachel slowly opened her eyes, her throat was sore. She looked down to her side. Chad had his head laid back, and he was fast asleep.

She was tempted to touch his messy blonde hair. What would it be like if she had said yes to him when he first purposed?

'Would they have lots of kids? Would they still be in love? What would their kids look like?'

Rachel started to imagine what they would look; she was in that daydream when Chad woke up.

"You're up?"

Rachel jumped; she placed her hand over her heart.

“I didn’t know you were awake.”

Chad smiled, and rubbed his neck.

“Wow my neck hurts.”

“You didn’t need to sleep there, you should have gone home.”

“I know I didn’t need to, I wanted to.” He held her glaze and smiled, he put his hand on hers.

She could feel herself blush, and she turned away. Rachel looked out the window.

“Wow, it looks like it’s going to be a great day.”

“Yup, and guess who gets to go home?”

Rachel smiled, “Are Breanna and Jamie here yet?”

“No, I told them that I would bring you home.”

Rachel filled out the release form and Nurse Jessica wheeled her and Selah out to Chad's truck. Rachel put Selah in her new car seat, and then she stepped back and smiled.

Then she got into the truck, and Chad drove them home. Rachel was never so glad to be home, but when she walked in the door she saw Breanna sitting on the sofa crying.

"Breanna? What's wrong?"

"My boyfriend….is bisexual! He's been cheating on me with another man!"

Breanna burst into fresh new tears and Rachel put on arm around her.

"Shhh….it's going to be ok. You were too good for him anyway."

Breanna placed her head on Rachel's shoulder.

“But I really liked him. I was starting to think that he might be the one. I was so ready to go home to a house and husband after long weeks on the road with the band.” Her crying started again.

“Breanna, if he cheated on you then he isn’t worth it.”

“I’m sorry Rachel, I wanted to make this day special. I made dinner for you, but I think I’m going home. I’m going to eat a box of chocolate and watch Veggie Tales. Welcome home, Rachel.”

Breanna left and Rachel picked up Selah, “Chad, I’m a little worried about Breanna. She just started dating; she hasn’t had much time with the band.”

Chad nodded his head and Jamie ran down the stairs.

“Auntie, some men in a black car just drove in.”

Rachel looked out and saw it was the same guys that had put a gun to her head; she took Jamie by the hand and led her to the little room in the wall. Rachel turned to Chad with Selah in her arms.

"Please take Selah and go in."

"I can't….I can't just hide. You could get hurt."

"If they do hurt me, I need you to watch over Jamie and Selah." Rachel looked him in the eyes. "I need you to do this…..for me."

Chad slowly nodded and crammed in. Rachel handed him Selah and closed the door.

She tried to calm herself down. The men kicked in the door and Rachel jumped back. Two of them grabbed her by the fore-arms.

"Let go of me!"

They the frisked her, shoved her on the couch and stood behind it.

“Miss Verto, you are quite a bit less hospitable then the last time we were here.”

He stood in front of her, her knees touching his calves. He loomed over her and to make her feel even smaller he leaned over. He whispered in her ear.

“Did you…..miss me?”

She turned away.

“No, can we get this over with?”

“Yeah, do you have the money?”

“Yeah, it’s in the bag over there. Stay away from my sister; this is the last time I pay her debt.”

“Are you sure you want to end this?” He touched her chin, she pulled away.

"Yes."

"You tell Lily that we came to see you and that I am dying to see her."

"You stay away from her!"

Rachel stood up, and pointed her finger in his face. Her fear was replaced with anger. The men left with smiles on their faces. After they left, Rachel was so shaken up that she barely heard it when Chad opened the door. She felt Chad's arm go around her, and she leaned her head on to his chest.

She felt like she was in her own little world, away from all the pain. Rachel prayed the men were gone for good now that Lily's debt was paid.

Jamie (now 6 years old) came out of the hiding place.

"Aunt Rachel?"

Rachel came out of her own world and into the real world.

“Yes?”

“Selah is waking up.”

Rachel backed away from Chad and went to get Selah, her baby. Chad came up and touched Selah’s face.

“Rachel?”

“Yes?”

Their eyes met, and he couldn’t hold back anymore. He kissed her, first testing her lips and then deepening his kiss when she kissed him back.

“Yuck!” Jamie turned around and went upstairs.

Chad and Rachel stopped kissing, started laughing and watched her go.

"Rachel I have to go, but would you like to go on a date tomorrow night? We can have it here."

Rachel smiled.

"Sure, I would like that." So they parted ways.

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At eight a clock, Chad arrived at Rachel's house to make dinner. His nerves were nuts. He fingered the ring in his pocket. He started to make the spaghetti, French bread and meatballs. It smelled amazing.

Rachel walked in and smiled, “It smells so good! Jamie wants to say goodnight to you. I’ll watch the food if you want to go up.”

“Ok. Don’t let it burn.”

He touched her nose and she hit him with a towel.

“I can cook, thank you.”

He went up, his hands sweaty. Chad opened the door to Jamie’s room and sat next to the bed.

“Goodnight Jamie. Sweet dreams.”

She gave him a hug and said,

“Make sure that Auntie gets to bed at a *reasonable* time.”

“I will.”

“Goodnight Chad.”

Chad went back downstairs and started dishing up the food. They sat at the table with candles, after eating and enjoying conversation. Then Chad took her into the living room and took her hand. He went onto his knee,

"Rachel, I don't want to *just* be friends. I want to be more then *just* friends. Will you marry me? I know we just got back together but we have known each other for years and I feel like I've just been waiting for years for you to come back….."

If Rachel hadn't put her finger up to his lips he would have gone on for hours.

"Yes!"

She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"I love you, Chad!"

# Epilogue

The wild three year old Selah ran around the people in the room while her cousin nine year old Jamie tried to catch her.

"Selah come back here!"

Selah was dressed in a full length green dress. It was a straight cut with spaghetti straps with white flowers around the waist. Her hair was up in a bun with wild flowers stuck in it.

Jamie's dress was a pinkish-red, full length, straight cut dress with gold flowers around the waist. Jamie's hair was braided and pinned on the top of her head.

Breanna picked up Selah and tucked her under one arm. Breanna's dress was green, strapless with sparkles all over and pink flowers around the waist. Breanna's hair was twisted and pinned up, but the prettiest of them all, by far, was Rachel.

She had a white wedding gown on; it was strapless with a train and had bead work on it. It was made out of pure silk with a train and the veil was white with white, pink and gold flowers on the top.

“What do you want me to do with this crazy thing? Should I throw her in the lake?”

Breanna was tickling Selah and Rachel joined them.

“I think so.”

The door opened and Chad’s brother Jack walked in.

“We’re getting ready. Wow Rachel. You look beautiful.”

“Thank you, Jack.”

Jack looked at Breanna, and smiled. She blushed, he clapped his hands.

“Ok, let’s got this show on the road.”

Breanna took Jack’s arm with Jamie and Selah in front of them. Rachel was behind them all, her palms

sweating. She stood in the hallway leading to the chapel.

Selah and Jamie started the wedding, throwing flowers, then Breanna and Chad followed them. Breanna gave Rachel a quick hug before going down.

Now it was Rachel's turn to go down. The bridal march started and Rachel started down the aisle. Her eyes caught Chad's and she knew that she was marrying the right man.

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Three years after Chad and Rachel's wedding:

Rachel stepped outside the door and onto the porch.

She looked at Jamie who was now 12 years old, feeding her horse. Lily had been in and out of jail, so they got full custody of her.

Chad had gotten her old farm into a full running farm. They had bought Jason's house and land after he moved. Chad now had almost 50 cows, 20 goats, 10 sheep, 7 horses, 17 rabbits and millions (lots) of chickens.

Rachel's hand moved to her stomach, and then there was her growing family. Selah was now 5, and they had a son Chad JR aka CJ who was 3 and then there was the baby growing inside her.

Chad was working in the fields; she could see him from the porch. Now if only she could talk Jack into dating Breanna.