



Lake Geneva, Wisconsin
Two Days Later

Grace opened her eyes and glanced at the same alarm clock that had kept her on time for the first twenty-odd years of her life. Seven a.m. Back at Avenger Field in Texas, as part of WASP, she'd already have been up for two hours.

The hospital hadn't released her yesterday until almost four in the afternoon. The late start meant they hadn't arrived in Lake Geneva until almost midnight. Wound up from all that had happened and the travel, she didn't fall asleep until after two a.m., and yet now she felt wide awake.

She threw back her covers and padded over the hardwood floor to the open window. Across Main Street, a woman walked her dog through Library Park. A short distance to the east sat the wood-frame home that now served as the town's public library, where Mom worked as its director. A few steps to the south, Geneva Lake glistened in the late summer sun.

Although pleasing, the vista was nothing like the lake view they used to have at Safe Refuge, the family estate they'd had to sell in the crash of '29.

She pushed the unhappy thoughts from her mind and returned to her bed. It wouldn't be easy to fall back to sleep though. She had orders to rest, but all she'd done for days was rest.

She glanced around the room. As the oldest of the siblings, she'd been given first choice of a bedroom when they moved here just before Reenie was born. It really should have been offered to Reenie when Grace was accepted by WASP. But as Mom mentioned the other day, the room looked exactly the way it had the day she left for college. At least the posters of Ronald Colman were gone. She still enjoyed his movies, but she'd stopped idolizing him when her interests turned more to flying.

Grace heaved a sigh. Unlike the schoolgirl who lived here in the past, she was a college graduate and a pilot—though right now she had no airplanes to fly. Piloting was all she wanted to do and had trained for. She'd loved doing her part to help win the war as a WASP, but now she felt like an old dust rag that had been tossed aside.

She stared up at the ceiling. "God, You took Frank out of my life, and now flying. Is this my punishment? I repented, said I was sorry. Wasn't that enough?" A familiar ache filled her chest, and she rolled over. If she could sleep, it would go away.

A soft knock came at the door.

"Who is it?"

"Dad. Can I come in?"

She groaned. Dad coming with his encouragement for the day, as he'd done all her life whenever she was home. Would it be so bad to pretend to be sleeping? He knocked again.

"I'm awake. Come in."

He stepped in, wearing a crisp white shirt and navy-blue trousers. With his red-and-blue striped tie knotted perfectly, and carrying his suit coat over his arm, he was likely the most dapper attorney in Walworth County. And with his graying temples and thick, wavy hair, the most handsome. He crossed the room with

only a slight limp, evidence of the prosthetic limb that replaced the left leg amputated upon his return from the Great War.

The limp only appeared when he was weary. Two days of long drives to bring her and Mom home must have been tiring.

“I thought you might be awake.”

“I’ve done nothing but sleep since I was grounded, but can’t you at least go into the office later? I wish Granddad could have stayed the whole time to spare you having to drive down to get us.”

“He needed to get home to his medical practice and your grandmother. I didn’t mind at all coming to get you.”

“I still think you could at least take the morning off and go in after lunch.”

He chuckled. “Tell that to the judge. I have to be in court at nine and need to stop by the office first.” The box spring squeaked under his weight as he sat on the edge of her bed. “How are you feeling, now that you’ve slept in your own bed?”

“It hasn’t been my own bed for a long while. It feels soft compared to the one I had in Texas, or the one at the hospital.” She blinked at the wetness in her eyes and turned away. “I’m sorry, Dad.”

“Sorry for what?”

“Not being able to make you proud.”

A deep V formed between his eyes. “Why wouldn’t I be proud of you?”

“I wasn’t able to complete my mission. Carry on in your stead as a pilot during wartime.”

He heaved a sigh. “Gracie, look at me.”

“I can’t.” She shook her head. “Not only have I disappointed you, I’m blubbering like a baby.”

“I don’t know where you got the idea you’ve disappointed me. I’m very pleased that you love flying as much as me, and proud you became a WASP and accomplished so much in the time you served. But, my dear daughter, I’d be proud of you even

if you hadn't done all that and were doing something totally different."

The look on his face whenever she told him about flying the B-17 or a difficult landing she had to make in bad weather said otherwise. She turned over and looked him in the eye. "Really?"

"Yes, really. I think I know what's actually bothering you. You've poured yourself into ferrying those planes and looked forward to working as a pilot after the war. Suddenly, you have no identity. When I crashed and had to have my left leg amputated, I thought my life was just about over. But thanks to your mother, I was able to snap out of it and return to law school. I assure you, your life isn't over. It's only the beginning."

He leaned down and kissed her on the cheek. "I spent a lot of time when I was MIA, lying on a cot in that farmhouse cellar in Belgium, feeling sorry for myself. Don't fall into the same trap." He stood. "I have to go. We can talk more about this tonight. Try to get a bit more sleep. Your sister and brother are going to be pestering you with all kinds of questions once you're up."

After he let himself out, she faced the wall and let the bottled-up tears loose. She and Dad had a lot in common, but the pain clawing at her heart was nothing like what he'd experienced. And she had no one to talk to about it.