

From its spark-filled beginning to the sweet conclusion, *No Place Like Home* is an endearing read. Fans of faith-filled romance will enjoy this latest from Amy Anguish reminding us that home is more than a place or a family, especially when we learn to bloom wherever we're planted.

— CANDEE FICK, AUTHOR OF THE WARDROBE SERIES

No Place
LIKE HOME

AMY R. ANGUISH



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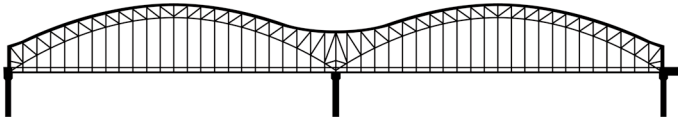
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Even though they have all passed on, I was blessed with amazing Christian women who took me under their wings through my growing up years, and helped me feel loved even in the hard times. This book goes out to Ms. Olga, Ms. Violet, Ms. Kathleen (Sparky), and Ms. Earline. Their efforts aided me in remembering that even though the church is made of up of imperfect people, there will always be ones who care and want to help you be your best.



“**Y**ou need to let them know.”

Adrian’s answering huff echoed through the phone. Danielle had always considered herself the big sister despite being only a few minutes older.

“I’m serious.” Danielle continued. “It’s not fair for you to be the closest you’ve been in years and not at least make some effort to see them.”

“That’s easy for you to say. You get along with our parents.” Adrian leaned too close to the window, and her breath clouded up the glass. She wiped away the moisture with the back of her hand. Fog swept over the land outside, creeping up from Lake Michigan and spreading out into the city. Not like the ‘cat feet’ the poet had claimed years before. More like a floating wave. Or an army of ghosts.

The park across the street was so thick with it, Adrian could hardly make out any of the strange metal statues or the new buds on the trees just starting to bloom. Spring seemed to come later here than in the places she grew up. ‘Most everything would be green in the south now.

“Adie, seriously.” Danielle’s chiding cut through Adrian’s mental fog. “It takes two to have a relationship. If you’d quit

approaching them with hackles raised and actually attempt keeping the peace, you know things would go easier. But it's like you come with a chip on your shoulder the size of Minnesota every time you visit them. Not that you visit that much."

"Minnesota?"

"It was the first state to pop into my head." Danielle's voice carried that *Don't mess with me—you know what I meant* tone only a mother could pull off.

Adrian ignored it. "Why would Minnesota be the first state to pop in your head?"

"I don't know. Quit trying to change the subject."

Adrian glanced at her watch. Saved by the bell. "Look, Danielle, as much as I love a good sparring match first thing in the morning, I have a meeting soon. I'll keep your advice in mind."

"Adrian—"

"Love you, too, sis. I'll talk to you later." Adrian ended the call before her sister could reprimand her more. Deep down, she knew Danielle was right. The awkwardness between her and their parents was mostly her fault. After all, she was the one who quit trusting God eight years before. That was more than a little hard for her preacher dad to swallow.

She stepped back from the window and took a sip of her coffee. This was her last day in Chicago. The winter had passed more quickly than she'd expected, and her time working here to train Premium Healthcare of Illinois employees was done.

They had most of the ins and outs of the computer program figured out now and could handle the rest through basic tech support online and over the phone. She would run by their office one last time later this morning and then pack her few things to be ready to head south tomorrow. She glanced at her watch—ten minutes.

Video meetings didn't require her to change out of her yoga pants. That could wait. But she did run a brush through her hair and throw on a decent shirt. She hummed "Oh, What a

Beautiful Mornin'” as she pulled out her laptop and checked emails one more time before the call would begin.

The circle went round and round on her screen as she waited for someone else to log in for the conference. Her coffee was getting cold, but it was a risk leaving to warm it up this close to the meeting time.

The screen flickered, and then Brad's face appeared in one of the boxes. His hair had a bit more silver around the temples now than it had when she first started working with him, although he couldn't be more than ten years her senior. Did he look more harried than usual?

He leaned forward to adjust something on his computer and straightened a few papers before realizing she was there and watching him. “I should have known you'd already be on here.”

“You know me.” Adrian crisscrossed her legs under the table and grinned. “I can't stand being late, so I'm always early.”

This was her fifth year working for LogMeIn Inc. The last four she'd handled a big chunk of their out-of-town training. Among other places, she'd spent time in Kansas City, Louisville, Springfield, and Indianapolis, as well as the four months finishing up in Chicago now. Since she'd helped develop the software, she was good at her job of staying to work one on one with each company to make sure they could use the software properly.

This morning Adrian would chat with her boss and the head of the IT department at the next place she'd be heading. In a month she'd be in Memphis, Tennessee, the farthest south she'd ventured since starting with LMI. When Brad Donahue and Michael Laramie had started LogMeIn Inc., they'd hoped to spread to two or three states. This would make six.

“Gray should be on here any minute now. I just got off the phone with him.” Brad tapped his pen on the papers he was studying. “He had to do one quick thing before he joined us. You ready to head south again?”

“I don’t know. It’s starting to warm up here in the Windy City.”

He glanced up as if to see if she was teasing. She was.

“Chicago has been one of my favorite cities to live in so far, Brad, but you know I’ll go anywhere you need me. I don’t have any roots or plans to put any down.”

He shook his head. “I don’t know how you do it. I can’t sleep well when I’m gone for one night. You stay at these places for months at a time, never sleep in your own bed, hardly get to see your family.”

“It’s not so bad. The extended-stay hotels I end up in are really nice, I keep my movies and books with me, and my family and I don’t always get along anyway. Plus, I get to see all these different places.”

“You might get along better with your family if you saw them more often.”

Before she could reply, the left side of her screen flickered and another man joined their video conference. For someone named Gray, he didn’t remind her of the color at all. His blond hair waved a bit across the top of his head, his blue eyes crinkled at the edges, and his smile was like a ray of sunshine. Usually, Adrian didn’t pay much attention to men, but this one made her breath catch a little. She mentally shook herself and focused back on the task at hand.

“Adrian Stewart, this is Grayson Roberts. He’s the head of the IT department at Healthcare for All in Memphis. You’ll be working closely with him the first few weeks while you make sure the software is set up and ready to go. After that, he’ll help you get everyone else trained.”

She gave a little wave at the screen and smiled. “Hi.”

He nodded his head and grinned even bigger than he had been. “How are you?”

It was a typical southern greeting, one she hadn’t heard much in the last few months. Chicago was nice, but it had nothing on the South when it came to charm. She knew the question didn’t

need a real answer—it was just what people said when they met someone. But it was still nice to hear.

“We should be good to go on our end.” Brad flipped through his papers again. “Gray, I think you gave me the last bit of information we needed this morning, so we can get those final few drop boxes installed in the software. Adrian will stop by here in the next day or so to go over everything and make sure she knows how it’s set up for you guys. Then she’s getting a much-needed vacation for a couple weeks before she heads your way.”

Adrian hid her scowl. She hadn’t wanted the vacation, but Brad threatened to quit paying her if she didn’t take some time off. Not that she had any idea what she’d do with that time. She wasn’t good at doing nothing.

“That’ll be great,” Gray said. His voice was deep. If he were singing, he’d be a bass. “Our aim is to get this rolled out at the beginning of July, so that should give us around a month to get it set up, installed, and everyone trained on the basic stuff. That’s reasonable, right?”

“How big is your company again?” Adrian asked, glancing through the information sheet Brad had faxed her last week.

“We have about five hundred employees who will use it to clock in and out and about fifty-five in the offices using the program to work with the clients and monitor payroll.”

“We’ll do our best, but that might be pushing it a bit to get everyone trained. I usually want at least three or four days to work with the office staff on basics, then at least another week to see what issues and questions arise.” Adrian’s finger traced the line that said Healthcare for All had five locations. “Are we combining training for all the locations, or will we be doing separate trainings at each one?”

“We’re combining trainings with two sessions each.” Gray’s eyes never left the screen.

“That should be more than doable, then.” Brad tapped a pen against his desk. “Adrian is the best.”

She shook her head. “I don’t know about that, but I’ll do my

best to make it happen if we can. Cross your fingers we don't run into any complications."

Their software helped businesses monitor their staff members by giving them a more accurate way to log time worked. Companies who provided home health services were attracted to the ability the software gave their employees to use their phones to clock in and out, even from clients' homes.

It was much more efficient than logging hours on a piece of paper. It also allowed the workplaces to keep track of information to better serve their clients and make sure each worker got paid for the right hours. But more employees using it made it more likely something could go wrong.

"I'll let my boss know your concerns and see what she thinks, but if Brad thinks we can do it in this timeframe, we'll probably stick with the original plan." Gray leaned back in his chair. "And I'll pray for smooth transitions."

Adrian chose not to comment on that. She and God were not on speaking terms. Hadn't been for years. If Grayson was going to pray about the trainings she was about to do, she'd better expect complications and problems.

"Anything Adrian needs to know before she arrives in a few weeks?" Brad asked.

Gray sat forward again. "Not that I can think of. I sent her my contact information so she can call if she thinks of anything."

"I got the email about the extended-stay hotel I've booked, too, so I'm good to go there. I'll call you or email if I think of anything between now and June." Adrian set aside the papers and finally looked back at the handsome man on her screen.

Gray gave her a smile. "Sounds like we're set. I'm looking forward to meeting you in person."

"Sounds good. I'll see you in June."

"And I'll see you in a few days, Adrian," Brad said.

They all ended the video conference at the same time, and she shook her head. What was it about Grayson Roberts that

had her so kerfuffled? She couldn't remember the last time a man's appearance had made her catch her breath.

She stood up and refreshed her coffee. Looking out the window, she was almost surprised to see how foggy it still was. Somehow Gray had made it seem a lot sunnier. She stirred some more creamer into her mug. *Get it together, girl. You're working with him, not dating him. AND he's obviously a Christian. You don't want to go back down that road.*

Speaking of Christians, Danielle was right, loath as she was to admit it. She should probably call her parents. If they found out she had time off and didn't come see them for at least a couple of days, they'd be beyond hurt. She dreaded visiting them because of the disappointment in their faces each time they realized she still wasn't going back to church. After all, how bad did it look when the preacher's own daughter wouldn't join him there?

She put it off several more minutes by packing up a few things. Since she lived in an extended-stay hotel whenever she did trainings, she didn't need much. But she liked to have some personal items—her entire collection of old musicals to watch, a few of her favorite books, a couple of pictures of family.

Gently placing each frame in the top of the box of books, she wrapped them up with some scarves for protection. Tonight, before bed, she could move the clothes from the drawers to the suitcases. That just left a few favorite mugs and her personal coffee maker that went with her even though most hotels had one in each room. Hers was faster and brewed it stronger, two things she needed first thing in the morning.

Moving a box packed full of her movies, she sat down on the couch and clicked the button to call her mom. Better get this over with so she wouldn't have to think about it later.

"Adrian?" Her mom answered on the second ring. "Everything okay, honey?"

Every time Adrian called over the last few years, her mom had answered the phone almost exactly the same way. Her voice

was always careful, expectant, hopeful. Adrian stifled a sigh. She hated having made her mom sound like that whenever she talked to her. She didn't want their relationship to be strained, but she couldn't find a way to fix it either.

"It's fine, Mom. It's my last full day in Chicago. I'm just finishing up a few things today, then headed back to St. Louis tomorrow."

"You've been up there a while now, right?" Adrian could hear her mom doing dishes as she talked on the phone.

"About four months. Winter is definitely colder up here." This was her life. She'd rather talk to her mom about the weather than about coming to visit. She bit her lip. "I have some vacation time coming up."

"Oh?" That one word from her mom came out with so much hope.

Adrian blinked and swallowed against the tightening in her throat. "Thought I might swing down and see you guys for a few days. If that's all right."

"You know it is. We'll have to let Danny know you're coming. I'm sure she'd like to come over and see you while you're here. It's been a while."

Adrian picked at a spot on the sofa. "It will be good to see her too." She didn't dare let her mom know she'd been on the phone with Danielle earlier. Even though they looked exactly alike, they were almost complete opposites. But Adrian kept up with Danny better than she kept up with her parents. There was less friction between them, and Adrian could be herself with her sister.

"Do you know what days exactly?" her mom asked.

"I'm not sure yet. I'll see how long they need me at the office in St. Louis before I figure out my exact dates off. I know I need to be in Memphis by June first."

"You're going to Memphis?"

"That's my next job. I'll be there a couple months, probably—maybe a little longer." Adrian had kept that tidbit to herself

until now too. Memphis was only about two and a half hours from the small north Arkansas town where her parents lived, close enough they might expect to see her more.

“Just across the river from us.”

“And a few hours.” Adrian stood up and paced back to the window. The early morning fog was starting to dissipate, and she could make out the strange metal legs of the statues across the street. “I’ll be pretty busy, though. This company wants everything running a month from when I get there.”

“Still, it will be nice to think of you so close. You know, if you decide to come for your vacation days around the twenty-second, we’re having an area-wide gospel singing. It would be nice to hear your voice again.”

“You know I love singing, Mom. But I love singing songs from musicals or the radio. Not ...” Adrian’s voice trailed off. “I don’t know exactly what dates I’ll come, but I’ll let you know next week, okay?”

“Of course, Adrian.” Her mom’s voice sounded a little more strained than it had a few minutes before. “You know we’ll love to have you whenever you come. You be safe driving home tomorrow, okay?”

Adrian took her coffee cup and set it in the sink. “I always am.”

“I’ll be praying for you.”

You always do, Mom. For all the good it does ...