

Trinity and Blane and Jay captured my heart from the first scene. This story is full of forgiveness, redemption, and surprises ... especially for someone like me who didn't think she'd be interested in wrestling! Good job, Heather Greer!

— HOPE TOLER DOUGHERTY, AUTHOR OF  
*IRISH ENCOUNTER*

At the heart of *Love in the Squared Circle* is the truth that God looks at our insides, not outsides. Gotta love that. And the sweetness. Gotta love that too. Sweetness with a message of wrestling judge-y-ness, embracing love-y-ness. This one is such a heart-hug of a book.

— RHONDA RHEA, TV PERSONALITY,  
AWARD-WINNING HUMOR COLUMNIST,  
AUTHOR OF 19 BOOKS

Love  
in the  
Squared  
Circle

Heather Greer



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*1 Samuel 13:14b NASB "The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart."*

*For all who try to look beyond and see the heart. And those who desire to be people after God's own heart.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every book is a team effort.

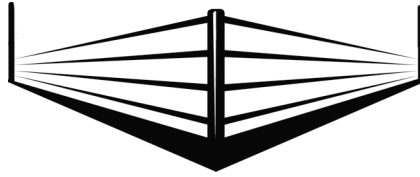
First and foremost, thanks to God for allowing me to tell stories that encourage and challenge others to grow in their faith.

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# 1



“Please be there. Please be there,” Trinity Knight begged under her breath as she fought through the throng of people exiting the conference room. As Jay’s small hand slipped from hers, she tightened her grasp and kept moving. She wouldn’t take the chance of getting separated from her eight-year-old son.

Trinity slowed her stride as she broke through the last of the departing masses and over the room’s threshold. Even with so many retreating, people filled the space, jostling Trinity and Jay, stalling their movement through the room. A grunt escaped Jay’s lips as he ran into her. She stepped to the side allowing him space to right himself.

“Where is he mom? Where’s Maverick?”

Trinity scanned the room. She stopped, catching sight of the backdrop designed to look like a wrestling ring complete with an excited crowd filling the stands. A sign on the table to the right confirmed it was the area for photo ops with Maverick. Her heart sank. Her son’s favorite wrestler was nowhere in sight. Other wrestlers had tables scattered

throughout the room, but it wouldn't matter. They'd come to see Maverick.

"Oh, no," Trinity whispered to herself. How could she let this happen? She'd endured an overflowing schedule for the last week. Pennies were pinched to make sure the trip wasn't going to be too taxing on her budget. She smiled through the four-hour car trip from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to Nashville, Tennessee, with an over-the-moon excited boy. Everything was to get him here for this moment, and she'd failed.

The noisy crowd wasn't conducive to the heart-to-heart Trinity was about to have with Jay. Finding one relatively unoccupied and quiet corner, Trinity wove through the people with her son in tow. Kneeling in front of him, she focused directly into the jade green eyes, so much like his father's, as she delivered the heartbreaking news.

Such a small thing to anyone else, but her son had experienced deeper disappointments in the last year than anyone should have to face, much less an eight-year-old. Already, the spark of excitement he'd had since breakfast was cooling. He knew what was coming. The last eighteen months of his young life had prepped him too well for times like this.

Emotion clogged her throat, and she sucked in a deep breath. "I'm sorry, buddy. I think we've missed him."

His gaze darted around the room before settling back on her. "But we're supposed to see Maverick. Are you sure he's not here?"

"I'm sure." She nodded, fighting her own tears as one escaped down her son's cheek. "I'm so sorry. I should've given us more time. I didn't realize how busy the roads would be this morning. It looks like Maverick is done for the day."

Jay wiped a tear from his cheek. Clearing her throat, Trinity blinked away the urge to let her own tears flow. A thin smile

appeared, forced but present, nonetheless. He shrugged a shoulder.

“It’s okay, Mom. We still get to watch him wrestle tomorrow night. Don’t be sad.”



The wind knocked out of Blane as surely as if he’d been gut-punched. What little boy put his disappointment aside to console his parent? What prompted his understanding of such complex emotions that he even understood the need?

If the voice asking after Maverick’s whereabouts had been whiny or demanding, it would’ve faded into obscurity along with the other similar-sounding voices Blane Sterling heard all day at these meet-and-greet events. But it was neither, and for that reason alone, it snagged his attention. Turning from the table where he waited for his photo op times with the fans to begin, he glanced toward the plaintive voice’s origin.

Blane raised one eyebrow as he found the little boy with the sad voice. The child had addressed his mother, but he hadn’t expected the woman and son to be alone. Fathers and sons were a staple at events like this. Moms joined them on rare occasions. Sure, there were plenty of female fans, but generally they didn’t attend these events on their own. And it didn’t take one hand to count the number of times he’d seen a mother-and-son combo coming to enjoy the show.

Without thinking it through, Blane moved to stand behind the pair. Whether it was the wide eyes that stared up at him or the not-so-subtle way the boy edged closer to his mother, the woman was alerted to his presence. She looked over her shoulder. He knew the moment she saw him because she stood, turned to face him, and pulled her son closer to her side in one graceful move.



She eyed him warily and pushed a wavy strand of strawberry blond hair over her shoulder. “Can we help you?”

The boy tugged on her hand. “Mom, that’s Blane Sterling.”

While her son spoke his name with something near awe, the woman seemed unimpressed. The look on her face didn’t telegraph fear, but it did border on cautious nervousness. He’d seen it a million times before when meeting people in person. From his hair to his height, everything about him was carefully planned to intimidate in the ring, but that often translated to life outside the ring too.

Blane stuck out his hand with what he hoped was a reassuring grin. The woman paused before offering her delicate hand for a brief shake. If he focused on her son, maybe she would see there was nothing to be concerned about. He looked down at the boy and grinned.

“So, you know who I am, do you?”

“You’re the champ.” His brown head bobbed emphatically with his words. “My dad and I watched you win on TV, but I’m going to see Maverick wrestle tomorrow. We’re going to Ring Wars 24. I won’t have to watch it on TV. I get to be there.”

Blane smiled at the way the child specified the title of the company’s biggest show of the year. He’d probably been counting down the days with his father.

“And is your dad going to watch Ring Wars with you tomorrow? That sounds exciting.”

The woman’s posture stiffened as she slid an arm around her son’s shoulders. Blane wasn’t sure if the motion was meant as support or a shield. A sick feeling twisted his stomach into knots as the boy’s eyes filled with tears that didn’t fall. The quivering lip returned as he spoke.

“My dad’s in heaven.”

He looked up at his mom. The protectiveness that had first drawn his attention crept back into the boy’s posture. A slight

tremor in his voice belied the child's smile, revealing the emotions churning underneath. "But Mom's going to watch with me. We're going to have fun, aren't we, Mom?"

She cleared her throat. "Yes, baby. We're going to have a great time."

"Mo-o-om! I'm not a baby."

Despite the seriousness of his faux pas, Blane fought a grin at the horrified tone. The woman smoothed her son's hair with her hand.

"Of course, you're not, Jay. I shouldn't have said it that way."

With a clear picture of the situation, Blane folded his six-foot five-inch frame down to squat in front of Jay. "Let me see if I've got this straight. You and your mom came to see Maverick today, but you ran a little late? And you and your mom are going to the stadium tomorrow to see him wrestle?"

"Yes, sir."

"So, you didn't come to watch me defend my title, huh?"

Light brown curls danced as he shook his head. "Nope. I came to see Maverick."

"Jay!"

Blane laughed as a deep blush bloomed on her cheeks. "It's okay, really. We've all got our favorites." He winked at Jay. "Maverick is one of my favorites, too, just as long as he doesn't try to take my belt."

He stood and addressed the woman whose cheeks still held the color of her embarrassment. "Can I talk to you a minute Mrs. ...?"

"Knight. But please, just call me Trinity." She got Jay's attention before continuing. "Mr. Sterling and I are going right over there and talk for a minute. I want you to sit on the floor right here and don't move. You can play one of your games on my phone while you wait. Got it?"

He nodded and took the phone, then sank to the floor with his legs crossed in front of him. “Got it.”

Blane moved them far enough away that Jay wouldn't be able to overhear and close enough that Trinity would have no reason to be nervous. As it was, she didn't take her eyes off her son, not even when Blane spoke.

“First of all, it's Blane. None of this Mr. Sterling stuff. Second, I want you to be my guests tonight. In fact, I'd love it if you'd come back in two hours, after my meet-and-greet is finished. We'll go over to the stadium. I think Jay would love a backstage look at what happens at these events. He can meet some of the other guys. Maverick might even be there. What do you say?”



When she'd turned to find this bear of a man with his long, black hair pulled back at the nape of his neck and his dress shirt straining with the responsibility of containing his muscled chest, Trinity had to consciously hide her surprise. She wasn't sure it worked, however, since he'd immediately stuck out his hand and smiled at her.

How did one simple gesture transform someone so completely? His clear, turquoise blue eyes lit up with his smile, and not even his dark beard and mustache could hide the deep dimples framing his mouth. Standing beside him, her five-foot four-inch frame made her feel like a child instead of a perfectly capable woman. Her late husband hadn't been a small man, but even Tucker would have seemed slight compared to Blane Sterling.

But he'd asked her a question. True, his smile undid some of her unease, but he was still a stranger. A famous stranger. If he were not to be trusted, would he be out schmoozing the

public? Would the Universal Wrestling Organization hire someone shady? Then again, what did she even know about the world of wrestling? No. She should stop being silly. Of course, the company vetted the wrestlers they employed.

And this wrestler wanted to spend the afternoon giving her son the time of his life. Didn't Jay deserve a little spoiling? There'd been little of that recently.

His eyebrows rose. Oh no, she'd been staring at him while he waited for her answer. She wouldn't embarrass herself further by groaning with the realization, even if she wanted to. But what should she tell him? He seemed sincere. And Jay would talk about the experience for ages. Just thinking of his smile brought out one of her own. That was it, then.

She nodded. "That sounds wonderful, Mr., uh, Blane."

Another full smile was her reward. What was it, again, that she'd found so intimidating?

"Great. Do you want to tell your son or should I?"

"You should do it. You're the one inviting us, and I don't want to take away from your generosity."

As if flustered by her praise, he looked away with a silent nod. Strange. She'd done every embarrassing thing one could think of since he approached them. Yet here he was refusing eye contact, and, if she wasn't mistaken, sporting a little color on his cheeks. How could someone with such a high-profile profession that flourished or fell with the adoration of fans be uncomfortable with a simple compliment?

Jay looked up from his spot on the floor as they approached. He swiped across the phone screen and handed it back to her as he stood. Once again, Blane crouched in front of him.

"How would you like to go visit the stadium with me today? You can see how it's set up, and you might even get to see some of the other wrestlers."

Jay sucked in a deep breath. “Maverick? Would I get to see Maverick?”

The possibility alone put a sparkle in his eyes. A chuckle rumbled from Blane’s chest. He reached out to ruffle her son’s hair. Jay didn’t flinch. He simply stood there smiling like it was Christmas morning with a room full of presents waiting for him.

Blane shrugged one shoulder. “I can’t promise Maverick will be there, but even if he’s not, I can make sure you get to spend some time in the ring. How about that?”

Jay pulled his gaze away from Blane to look up at her. The expectancy on his face was enough to bring the sting of tears. Would she ever regain control of her emotions?

“Can we, Mom? Can we come back? Please? Pleeaaaaase? I promise I’ll be super good.”

The waiting tears evaporated with her laugh. Nothing could beat the joy of seeing her son so excited. There was no way she’d even consider saying no. “Of course, we can. We’ll go eat lunch and be back in two hours.”

As Jay jumped up and down, venting his excitement, Trinity turned to Blane. The exuberance of a small child could be daunting to people who weren’t used to it. She didn’t know Blane’s background, but she doubted he’d had much up-close-and-personal experience with children. A warning might be in order.

“He’s definitely excited. You’ve just given him a gift I’ll never be able to top. I’d like to say he’ll be more reserved when we come back, but I can’t make any promises. You sure you want to do this?”

He smiled, watching Jay. “Absolutely.”