

A NOVELLA

sweet
DELIVERY

HEATHER GREER

If you've ever found yourself chasing a path that isn't God's best for you, know you're not alone and that we serve a God who can set us right again.

Chapter 1



“Ugh!” Will Forrester swiped his arm across the top of his desk, sending stacks of papers swirling through the air like giant snowflakes.

Movement at his office door caught Will’s attention. Not bothering to school his features, he glared up at the intruder.

Madison. The mousy girl he’d hired a month earlier stared with wide eyes and a face drained of color. Did she think him a monster?

“Sorry,” she squeaked before scurrying away.

The girl would never make it. Couldn’t a man vent his frustration in his own office without judgment from the help? At least he hadn’t resorted to swearing like some of the popular chefs. He hadn’t even yelled at her or anyone else, for that matter.

He reached across his desk to return the frame he’d knocked over in his temper. His own image smiled at him from behind the glass. Flanking him on both sides Adeline Li and Taylor Prince, the *Cake That!* baking competition judges, wore similar expressions. The only difference? Their smiles were

pasted on specifically for the camera. For once, his was genuine. The happiest day of his life.

Wasn't that one hundred-thousand-dollar grand prize supposed to make his dreams come true? If this was happily ever after, why was everything falling apart?

He rose from the desk and stepped over the loose papers littering the floor. After closing the door against prying eyes and listening ears, he dropped back into his chair, picked up his phone, and dialed the one person who would understand. She'd been his competition in the show until they were the only two left standing, and somewhere along the way, she became his friend.

"Hello. Thanks for calling the Sugar Cube. This is Livvy. How can I help you?"

Will smiled. His name would have flashed across the phone screen, but Livvy likely answered without checking it. Probably fully immersed in handing out cupcakes to her customers. The people in front of her always came first.

"Hey, Livvy. It's Will," he greeted her. "Do you have a minute?"

"Evan?" Her voice sounded muffled. She must have pulled the phone away from her mouth. "Can you watch things for a minute?"

Will couldn't hear the answer, but footsteps and a door opening and closing assured him Livvy was moving to a place where she could talk.

"What's up, Will? Evan and I have missed you the last month or so." Her voice wasn't accusatory—just genuinely curious.

"How do you do it?"

A light chuckle. "I'm going to need a little more to go on."

"The Sugar Cube. How do you make it work? I mean, it's a cupcake truck. Nothing special, but you and Evan enjoy

success at every turn. And neither of you are even classically trained bakers.”

“Thanks, Will,” she said, her voice monotone. “In one breath you managed to insult me, Evan, and the dream I’ve worked so hard to achieve.”

Will dropped his head against the back of his chair and huffed. “That’s not what I meant.”

“I know.” Her voice was calm and patient. “But you can’t put others down like that, bad day or not. You can be successful without others having to be failures.”

“It was easier with Harper here,” he admitted. Who knew he’d come out of the competition with a former competitor-turned-girlfriend? Considering the course of the current conversation, maybe he shouldn’t have.

“I know.”

“She was good for me. She’d give me *that* look every time I was toeing the line and needed to take a step back.”

“I know.”

“And she had great ideas. For me and for Pastry Perfect.”

“I *know*.”

If he rolled his eyes, would Livvy know that too? Probably. But really, had he told her anything new? Or anything requiring more than her simple acknowledgment? His current predicament would have been avoided completely, if not for Harper’s inability to accept things as they were.

“Why couldn’t she be happy for me *and* let me have my faith?” He reined in his voice to lessen the whiny toddler vibe. “I wasn’t asking her to believe too.”

Livvy sighed.

Will could imagine her toying with one of her dark curls or maybe even the teal lock of hair that always framed her face. He caught himself running his hand through his short, blond

hair as he thought about it and forced his hand down on the desk.

“There was a time you didn’t want to hear it either,” Livvy started. “And I know you weren’t pushing her, but the differences in you were undeniable. They pushed her whether your words did or not.”

“But faith makes me a better person,” he reasoned.

“I know Harper wanted you to be the best man you could be. At the same time, she didn’t understand why your faith made you that way. It was threatening for her. Just like it was for you when we first discussed it.”

“I guess,” he muttered.

“Now, tell me what this call is really about.”

“What do you mean?”

“We’ve rehashed the Harper-Will relationship devastation more times than I care to count during the first three months after she left. You know the answers, and you’ve done well accepting them. That is until some new stressor comes into your life. So, out with it. What’s really getting to you?”

Unable to channel his nervous energy into anything productive, Will stood and paced the confines of his small office. “It’s Pastry Perfect.”

“Your bakery? I thought that was doing well.”

The reports he’d been studying taunted him from the floor where they’d landed after being unceremoniously shoved from his desk. He glared at them. “I thought so too. When I started the bakery after winning eighteen months ago, everything was fine.”

“And now?”

He shrugged, though she couldn’t see it. “We’re still doing decent business, but about six months ago ... one of those chain bakeries, *Cupcakes & Cookies & Cakes, Oh, My!*, opened up.”

“Might as well buy a box of cookies from the grocery store,” Livvy murmured.

“Yeah, well, they have delivery. As long as their minimum order of \$15 is reached, they will bring it to your door.”

“Does that affect you much?”

“I’ve lost several regulars from the local hospital and doctor’s offices. Why stop before work or make a trip at lunch when they can simply have something delivered?”

“Have you considered offering the same service?”

A huff escaped before he could stop it. “No. I make quality desserts with quality ingredients. I shouldn’t have to pander to the whims of lazy people looking for ways to remain blissful in their laziness.”

“Will.”

He adjusted the condescending tone before continuing. “Besides, Madison is only a part-time employee. And between you and me, I don’t see her adding hours as a delivery driver. And we both know the disaster it would be for me to do the deliveries.”

Livvy’s snort signaled her agreement. Will was self-aware enough to know his personality didn’t lend itself to dealing with the public. Following Harper’s departure, Pastry Perfect received its first and only one-star review. After an hour venting his frustration to Livvy, he’d acquiesced to her suggestion and hired Madison to work the register during their busiest hours.

“I know you don’t want to hear this,” Livvy began. “But I think you should consider hiring another person and offering delivery, even if it’s only limited hours each day.”

“I don’t know.”

“Want me to get Evan? He may have a better idea.”

“No, thanks,” he declined as an impish idea took hold. “But do tell him he better take good care of you. Otherwise,

he'll regret the delays in tying the knot, because I'll beat him to it."

"Bye, Will."

Livvy no longer responded to his baseless taunts. While he once meant every word, they'd moved beyond that early stage in their friendship. Evan did, too, for that matter. While Will wouldn't consider them close, Evan had led Will to the Lord, and they'd developed genuine respect for each other. Livvy had chosen wisely when she'd accepted Evan's proposal.

Livvy was smart, relationally and professionally. That was the reason Will couldn't dismiss her suggestion for his business even though just thinking about dealing with another employee wore him out. What she said made sense. Honestly, he'd thought about this himself.

He would spend the day in prayer, like Evan and Livvy both taught him to do before making big decisions. But come tomorrow, he had a sneaking suspicion there would be a help wanted sign in his window.