

SECOND EPILOGUE

Gran sat in her rocker on the front porch, hiding in the shade from the hot afternoon sun. Even though they were well into October, the afternoons still stretched into the mid-eighties. She couldn't complain since the warmth felt wonderful on her stiff joints, and she had a glass of Liv's homemade mint iced tea in her hand. She was finally beginning to enjoy this afternoon ritual of resting. For weeks it had felt unnatural to sit down in the middle of the workday, but now her mind was used to it and her body was reaping the benefits. It had been a hard transition to leisure, as she'd never had time to relax in her adult life.

Although her heart scare had brought Olivia into their lives, for which she could only be grateful, it had definitely woken her up to the fact that Lillian Harper was no spring chicken. She made it a point to spend at least an hour every day reading a good book or enjoying the changing of the seasons from this very chair. Doctor's orders. She was just starting to doze in the heat, when a slamming door startled her awake. Gran turned to see Olivia stumble out the front door with her hand clenched in a fist and her voice at top volume.

"Theo! Theo! Where are you?" She sprinted for the barn.

"Liv? Olivia? What's wrong? Are you ok?" Gran rose to follow her when the young woman didn't reply. Concerned, she stepped off the porch to see Theo come racing around the end of the barn.

“Liv, what is it?” He gasped for breath around his questions. “What’s the emergency? Is it Gran?”

“No. No. Look!” She thrust her closed fist towards him. She opened it to reveal a thin white plastic tube.

*Well, that was interesting.*

“What’s this? I don’t understand.”

“Theo.” Olivia met his confused gaze with a calm and radiant smile. She reached for his free hand and placed it low on her belly.

Theo’s face went pale, and he swayed a little before giving up the battle and dropping to his knees. As if he were helpless to support his own head, he leaned it against Liv’s belly and hugged her close, tears streaming down his face. Olivia pulled back just enough to join him on her knees and return his embrace.

*Oh. Oh! Wasn’t that lovely?*

Gran turned away then, and walked inside the back door. They deserved a little privacy to enjoy their joyous moment before the overwhelming realities of having a baby really sunk in. She remembered that heady anticipation from her own pregnancy. Marcus had grinned at her after she’d thrown up in the trashcan while cooking his eggs.

“He’s gonna call me Pops.” He’d been disappointed on two counts. He’d had to give up eggs for the full nine months because they made her gag, and Celia had

never called him Pops a day in her life. But Theo had, and had loved him like a son. Sometimes you get what you need. How she wished Marcus was still here to share this full circle with her.

She twisted the small diamond ring in an antique setting that she had worn on that special finger of her left hand for nearly fifty years now. A symbol of the love and commitment she and Marcus had shared. She'd just mention to Theo that she'd always wanted it to go to the woman he chose as his wife. She couldn't imagine it on anyone else's finger but Liv's. That girl was a treasure, and she'd brought Theo back to life. Such a gift.

And she was busy bringing another gift into Gran's life. A great-grandchild.

Gran settled into her comfy rocking chair in the sitting room and closed her eyes. She needed to get her rest. A new season was coming to the farm.