

Chapter 4

Miscalculation

Bobbi reached around Shannon and slid the pizza box on the table. The five-year-old opened the box, and breathed in deeply. “How much longer is he going to be?” she moaned. “I’m gonna starve!”

“He’s on his way. I just got off the phone with him.” She set plates on the table, and yanked the silverware drawer open.

Shannon watched her carefully with a tilt of her head that was a mirror image of Bobbi. “Mommy?”

“What, baby?”

“Am I in trouble?”

“Of course not. Why would you think that?”

“Your eyes and your mouth are little and squished up. That’s trouble.”

“You’re not in trouble. Want a piece of pizza?”

“Now?”

“Sure.” Bobbi pulled a slice away, pinching off the stringy cheese, and laid it on a plate. “So you won’t starve.”

“Daddy’s in trouble,” Shannon said, pulling the plate closer.

“Daddy?”

“There’s only three people in this house. If it’s not me, it’s him.” Shannon took a big bite, chewing to get the cheese in her mouth.

“Shannon, Shannon,” Bobbi said softly.

Suddenly Shannon's eyes grew wide. "The door!" she exclaimed, her excitement muffled by the mouthful of pizza. "He's home!"

"Chew!" Bobbi cautioned as Shannon darted around the kitchen table.

"Daaaaddddyyyy!" She hit Chuck at a dead run and wrapped her arms around him. He took a step backward to keep his balance, and then scooped the little girl up in his arms. "Daddy! You're late! Mommy and I ate all the pizza and she said you'd have to eat peanut butter and jelly!"

"Not again," he whined. He kissed her, and then set her back on the floor with a pat. "Hey, you said you ate all the pizza." He squinted in pretend aggravation.

Shannon's dark eyes danced as she broke into a wide grin. "Gotcha!" she giggled. Chuck gave her ponytail a twist, and then lifted her into her chair.

He stepped past the table, but Bobbi pulled away before he had a chance to kiss her. "Do you want tea?" she asked, without making eye contact.

"Tea's fine."

Bobbi set the drinks on the table, and took her seat. Cast out the bondwoman and her son. That was still the answer, regardless of what Chuck was about to hit her with. Get rid of Tracy, and get rid of her son.

"Did you have a good day, Daddy?" Shannon asked as she twisted in her seat.

"I was very busy. I didn't even eat lunch." Chuck eased into his seat, still trying to catch her eyes. Apparently, he expected bonus points for his suffering.

"Ask me what I did!"

"So what did you and Mommy do today?"

“We checked on my teacher! I got Mrs. Brubaker, and listen, I can spell it. B-R-U-B-A-K-E-R.”

“Wow,” Chuck said. “I don’t think I could have spelled that.”

“Then we went shopping. I got shoes, and a backpack, and a lunchbox, and what else, Mommy?”

“That was all the big stuff,” Bobbi answered, straightening her knife and fork.

“Why don’t you say grace, sweetie?”

Bobbi reached for Shannon’s hand and bowed her head as Chuck took her other hand. As soon as she felt the weak squeeze, she knew she’d hurt his feelings. He’d worked on this thing with Tracy all day long and no doubt formulated a watertight plan. He expected her to be his primary cheerleader, falling in step with him as he marched forward into battle. How quickly he forgot that he promised to protect her first and foremost.

“Dear God, thank You for our food, for Mommy and Daddy and for Jellybean coming home tonight. Amen.”

“Brad’s coming tonight, too,” Chuck said, reaching for a slice of pizza.

“Really, really?”

“Really, really,” Chuck answered.

“Yes!” Shannon said, taking a huge bite from her pizza.

“Don’t take such big bites, sweetie,” Bobbi chided.

“But you said he’d be here after dinner,” Shannon protested through a mouthful of pizza.

“He’ll get here when he gets here. It’ll probably be closer to bedtime, so you may as well slow down.”

Bobbi tried her best to chew each bite of pizza. She believed Chuck when he assured her that he wasn’t interested in Tracy, but was Tracy interested in him? Years ago, it only took her five months to get him into her bed, and now with a son, a bond between them ...

“Bobbi? Are you with us?” Chuck waved a hand toward her.

“I’m sorry, what did you say?”

“Can you pass me the tea, please?”

She reached around to the counter and handed him the tea pitcher, but he wouldn’t take it at first. “Thank you,” he said gently, trying to apologize with his eyes. She needed more than a simple apology though.

“Mommy, can I play outside, now?”

“Backyard, and set your plate in the sink, please.” Shannon gathered up her plate, cup and napkin, and a moment later, the back door slammed.

Bobbi flinched, and Chuck said, “At least she shuts the door. Brad and Joel never did.” She stood and began gathering up the dishes. “I’m sorry,” he said. She jerked the refrigerator door open and reached across him for the tea pitcher. He put a hand on her wrist, and looked into her eyes. “You’re upset. Let’s talk.”

She pulled her hand away from him and collected the silverware. “I don’t want to hear what a paranoid, suspicious lunatic I am. Thanks anyway.”

Chuck hung his head. “I don’t think that at all. I want you to check up on me, and ask questions, whatever it takes to reassure you. My life is completely open.”

“That’s just it! I don’t want to be suspicious!” She carried plates and flatware to the dishwasher and dropped the door open. “I hate this,” she muttered. “It’s making me crazy.”

“What can I do? What would help?”

“Get rid of her.”

Chuck sighed, and pushed away from the table. “Here, let me show you what I found out today.” May as well get it over with. Bobbi followed him to the study and watched him dig through his briefcase, and then he dropped a folder on the desk.

“Tracy’s not her given name.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Her real name is Teresa Reynolds.” He handed her a copy of a name change record. “Jack was named Reynolds at birth, and then she changed it.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.” He flashed paper after paper in front of her. Tracy. Teresa. Ravenna. Reynolds. Baltimore. Massachusetts. Cincinnati. Back to St. Louis. Finally, he showed her a newspaper article. “This is what I found right when you called.”

Bobbi scanned the article about a denied parole for a murderer. “Wait, this is Tracy’s father?”

Chuck nodded. “She watched it all happen, then testified against him in court.”

She tossed the papers back in Chuck’s briefcase. “She’s psycho. With good reason, but she’s crazy.”

“I don’t think so.”

“If she went to all this trouble to hide Jack, then why’d she show up? You would have never known about him.” Her eyes narrowed, and she pointed a finger at her husband. “She’s after you.”

“That’s ridiculous.” Chuck straightened the papers and slid them back into his briefcase. “Something else is going on.”

“Yeah, her grip on sanity is becoming more tenuous. Your mother was right.”

“Trying to escape your past doesn’t make you unstable. Lots of people do that.”

“Why are you defending her?”

“I’m not. I’m just ... I don’t think we should make snap judgments about her.”

“Snap? Are you forgetting this woman seduced—?”

“Yes, I remember! Every single day of my life, I remember. I am not going to cheat on you! Never!”

“This is not about you! It’s about her!”

“This is about Jack! I helped bring a little boy into the world and I have a responsibility—”

“Your first responsibility is to us! Listen, I did some research of my own this morning.” She strode across the room to her desk, but the front door opened before she could reach for her Bible.

“He’s here!” Shannon announced.

“I’m not through,” Bobbi said as she pushed past Chuck to get to the entryway.

Joel flipped Shannon over his shoulder and set her gently on the floor, then leaned down to hug his mother.

“You don’t know how good it is to have you home,” Bobbi said, glancing at Chuck while she spoke. Joel would never go along with Chuck’s idea of pursuing custody of Jack, and Chuck would listen to him. She ran a hand over his two-day-old scruff. “It’s awfully hot for a beard, isn’t it?”

“Mom, I haven’t even been home five minutes!” He threw his hands up in the air. “I get up at six every morning and run. I do all my homework. I eat all my vegetables. Cut me some slack on shaving.” Then he grinned broadly with Chuck’s dimple and his blue eyes twinkled. “Gotcha.”

“Probably shouldn’t tease your mother right now,” Chuck said quietly, as he reached out to shake his son’s hand.

“Shannon said Brad was coming. What’s up?”

Chuck glanced at Shannon hanging on every word. “Nothing. We just wanted you both here.”

Joel nodded, and Bobbi had to look away. He knew they were keeping something from him. She could read it in his eyes. If Shannon could figure out she was upset with Chuck, Joel would piece together why, probably before Brad got here.

“So is there anything to eat in this house?” Joel asked, looking back toward the kitchen.

Bobbi smiled and shook her head at him. “If Brad ate like you do ...”

“Then he’d have these big, broad shoulders,” Joel said, flexing his biceps.

“I’d have to get a second job just to pay for groceries.” She took Shannon’s hand. “Come on. You can help me make Joel a sandwich.”

“Peanut butter and jelly and bologna!” Shannon said, as she bounced down the hall with her mother.

“And pickles!” Joel called over his sister’s giggles. He strode into the kitchen, and took a seat at the table. “I think I’ll finish the summer term with A’s, except maybe English,” Joel said as Shannon set a sandwich in front of him with great ceremony and dignity.

“Your sandwich, Sir,” she said, bowing low in front of him.

“He’s gonna have an even fatter head if you treat him like that!”

“Brat!” Shannon squealed and ran across the kitchen, jumping into her oldest brother’s outstretched arms. “You snuck in!”

“Weren’t you expecting me?” Brad asked, pretending to be surprised.

“Not this early,” Joel teased.

“How could I be late when my father calls on my first night off in seventeen days?”

“Seventeen days!” Bobbi said, crossing the kitchen to him. “You haven’t picked up a third job, have you?”

“No, I’m still Monday to Thursday at UPS and Saturday and Sunday evenings at the hospital, but lately they’ve called me in Friday nights, too.”

“You shouldn’t be working so many hours.” She stretched up to hug him, and he shifted Shannon to his hip so he could kiss Bobbi’s cheek.

“Mom, I want to get all my rent in the bank before school starts.”

“You don’t have to do that, you know,” she scolded. “There’s money in the bank, and you can live here.”

“And I can always fall back on that if I need to.” He glanced at his dad and smiled. “You don’t want two lawyers living here. Ask Grandma. She had to put up with Dad and Grandpa Jim.”

“But if you came back, the Italians would outnumber the Slavs!” Shannon exclaimed.

“What do you know about Italians and Slavs?” Brad pulled her ponytail as he set her back on the floor.

“Me and you and Mommy are the Italians, and Daddy and Joel are the Slavs. Just look at 'em! All blonde-haired and stuff.”

“You’re too smart for your own good,” Brad said, shaking his head.

“Shannon, you’ve seen your brothers,” Bobbi announced. “It’s almost nine o’clock. Bedtime.”

“But Brat just got here,” Shannon whined.

“I’ll be back Sunday,” Brad said. “Mom has to feed me and Jellybean both.”

“Honest?”

“Promise,” Brad answered.

“All right.” Shannon moped and trudged upstairs.

“I’ll be up in a minute,” Bobbi called after her, then turning to the others, she asked, “You guys want some coffee?”

“Where’s it from?” Brad asked.

“Indonesia.”

“No, thanks.” Brad pulled out one of the kitchen chairs, and took a seat, stretching his long legs under the table.

“Chuck?” Bobbi asked.

“Not this late. Thanks anyway.”

“I’ll have some, Mom,” Joel said. Bobbi smiled and began brewing it. “Now, who called this meeting?” Joel asked, turning to his father.

Chuck glanced at her, then cleared his throat, and inched his chair up to the table. He was waiting for her to go upstairs. He wanted to talk to the boys alone, to lay down his case before they ever heard from her. Not this time.

“Just hold your outrage, please,” Chuck said, fixing his eyes on Brad. Of course, Brad would be the hard sell. “Tracy Ravenna is back in town. We found out about it when Mom got her class list.”

“Her class list?” Brad asked. “What has that got to do with anything?”

“There was a boy enrolled in Mom’s class, Jackson Charles Ravenna.”

“Her son,” Brad said.

“Yeah.” He dropped his head, took a deep breath, then he looked squarely at his sons, Joel first and then Brad. “And my son. I have a son with Tracy.”

The words knifed through Bobbi’s heart. He’d never said them exactly that way before. *I have a son with Tracy*. With Tracy. He had a son with Tracy because he’d been with Tracy. The lawsuit Tracy filed accusing Chuck of harassment described in vivid detail every moment she and Chuck spent together, and now those words and images they conjured flooded Bobbi’s mind.

The coffeemaker kicked off, but not trusting her unsteady hands, she didn’t move to pick up the pot. She watched her sons’ faces as Chuck dropped his bombshell. For a long moment, they were frozen, too stunned to react.

Brad dropped his eyes, embarrassed for his dad. He shifted uneasily, stretching his body back in his chair. Joel turned his head toward his brother, giving him the chance to say something first. Brad just blinked slowly as he stared across the room with the subtlest shake of his head.

Finally, Joel looked up at her, and in those clear blue eyes, his father's eyes, was a depth of compassion and sadness no one else had. Joel understood. This wasn't about distrust, or anger or even doubt. It was about heartache, a heartache that took months to heal even after the reconciliation.

"You're just now finding out about it?" Brad asked. He leaned forward until his elbows rested on the kitchen table. "That's a little hard to believe, Dad."

Brad was coming to her defense, just as he did seven years ago, and he was the one person Chuck couldn't out-negotiate.

"I know it is," Chuck said, "but I promise you, I had no idea until Mom showed up in my office with that list. After the affair, Tracy dropped off the face of the earth. I haven't heard from her at all."

"Wait a minute. Has she told you this boy is yours?"

"No, she denies it."

"But you don't believe her?"

Bobbi saw him glance back at her. He was going to make such a good lawyer.

"Brad, the boy, Jack, his birthday is nine months after the affair." Chuck's voice was soft with resignation. This was where he expected Brad to give up his protests.

Bobbi watched as Brad leaned back in the chair. He stared at the ceiling, processing, then he suddenly snapped forward again.

“How do you know she wasn’t sleeping with somebody else, too?”

“I’ve seen Jack. He looks just like Joel.”

“That doesn’t mean anything. You can’t just assume this is your son, and get Mom and everybody else torn up over it. I think that’s kind of irresponsible, Dad.”

“So I shouldn’t do anything?” Chuck shot back. Bobbi watched as the back of his neck grew red. He dropped his hand to his thigh and clenched his fist.

“I didn’t say that. You have no proof, no facts, just a worst-case scenario.”

“So why’s she here?” Joel asked. “She’s not making a play for you, is she?”

“Excellent question, Joel,” Bobbi said as she set a cup of coffee in front of her son, her eyes fixed on her husband. “Chuck, what’s the answer to that?” If everyone else could see through Tracy, maybe, just maybe, Chuck would recognize it.

“She’s very bitter,” Chuck said slowly moving his eyes from his wife to his son, “and Gavin thinks she just wants to prove she can do a better job at parenting than I can.”

“If that’s the case, then she would’ve been around all along,” Joel said, shaking his head.

“You think Uncle Gavin is wrong?” Brad asked raising his eyebrows. “I don’t know if that’s ever happened.”

“There’s a first time for everything,” Joel said, and then he turned back to his father. “Has she had a marriage fail or something?”

“I doubt it,” Chuck answered, “but here’s what I do know.” As Chuck began filling his sons in, Bobbi motioned that she was leaving to put Shannon to bed. She’d heard enough of Tracy’s schemes for one evening.

She couldn't have scripted this any better, though. The boys handled the news with reason and maturity. She expected a little more shock, but no matter. They could just keep chipping away at Chuck, forcing him to admit that he hasn't thought this situation through, that he's operating purely on instinct. Once they were done, she could explain what she read about Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, and the case would be closed.

"Teeth brushed?" Bobbi asked Shannon as she stepped in her bedroom.

"Yep, but what took you so long? What are you guys doing?" Shannon was propped up in bed, arms crossed, frowning in irritation.

"I made some coffee and Daddy and the boys are talking." Bobbi sat on the edge of the bed.

"What about?"

"Brad is showing us how well prepared he is for law school, and Joel is asking a bunch of questions that Daddy can't answer."

"Sounds boring," Shannon huffed.

"It is. You aren't missing anything."

"Promise?"

"I promise," Bobbi answered, raising her right hand.

"Is Brat gonna work for Daddy?"

"I think that's the plan once he finishes law school."

"Does that take a long time?"

"Three years."

"I'll be ... eight!"

“Good adding,” Bobbi patted Shannon’s knee. “You’re gonna sail through kindergarten.”

“How old will you be?”

“Old.”

“In numbers, Mommy.”

“Forty-nine,” Bobbi whispered.

“That’s how old Daddy is now!”

Bobbi nodded. “Right again. Now, smart cookie, what time is it?”

Shannon squinted at the clock, and pointed with her index finger as she counted.

“Kinda nine ... twenty.”

“Kinda?”

“Well, it’s between three and four.”

“And what time is your bedtime?”

“Eight o’clock,” Shannon groaned. “You’re so tricky with that.”

Bobbi smiled at her. “It’s a mommy thing. Now say your prayers.” She reached out and took Shannon’s hands, then bowed her head.

“Dear God, thank You for our day, for Mommy and Daddy and Grandma and all my brothers. Amen.”

“All your brothers?” There was no way Shannon could know about Jack.

“Joel and Brad. I can’t thank God for just one of 'em.”

“Of course not. Goodnight, sweetie.” Bobbi kissed her, and then pulled the covers up as Shannon scooted down in the bed. “Sleep tight,” Bobbi said as she turned out the light.

All her brothers ... No, Shannon had two brothers. Two. No more. The sooner they settled that, the better.

When she returned to the kitchen, Chuck was wrapping up details of his convoluted adventure through the public records.

“Wait a minute,” Brad said, raising a hand. “She gives birth using her real name, files a fraudulent birth certificate, then drags the baby to Massachusetts to change his name. Then she comes back, running the risk of being found out.”

“For the express purpose of being found out, I think,” Chuck said.

“She’s nuts,” Brad said. “It makes no sense.”

“That’s what I said,” Bobbi agreed. She hadn’t prompted or primed the boys at all. Chuck couldn’t claim she influenced them.

“Crazy like a fox, maybe,” Joel said. He pushed back from the table, and walked over to the counter. “She couldn’t hold down a job if she was really insane. She’s either a sociopath, or there’s an explanation behind it that makes sense, at least to her.” Joel poured a second cup of coffee for himself and refilled Bobbi’s.

“What’s a sociopath?” Bobbi asked as she slid into the seat at the table.

“No morals, no conscience,” he answered dryly and began rummaging through the cabinets, finally settling for a bag of pretzels.

“I think that just about sums her up,” Bobbi said.

“What’s next? What are you gonna do?” Brad asked his father.

“Go to court and make her give proof of paternity.”

“What about custody?” Brad asked.

Bobbi watched her husband shift in his chair. “Well, Chuck?” She leaned forward, her elbows resting on the table. “What about it? Are you going to sue for custody?” He couldn’t lie to her now. She’d asked him point blank, in front of their sons.

He looked at Brad and then Bobbi and without any hesitation in his voice, he said, “Yes.”

Bobbi dropped her head and waited, but there was no indignation, no shock, not even a question. Her boys said nothing. “You guys are okay with this?”

“Mom, what else can he do?” Brad shrugged, and shook his head. “Deny the boy’s his?”

“What happened while I was upstairs? Weren’t you the one who said he had no proof? That Dad was just acting on speculation?”

“Mom, first of all, I didn’t say speculation. I said worst-case scenario. Based on the public records’ manipulations she went through, I don’t see how the kid’s not Dad’s. Besides, what kind of damage would that do to him if he found out his dad didn’t want him.”

“What about the damage this is going to do to your sister?”

“Bobbi, this is not going to hurt Shannon at all,” Chuck said.

“How can you say that? You don’t know!” She stood and paced across the kitchen. “Joel? Your dad has an illegitimate son he wants to bring into our family. This doesn’t faze you?”

Joel poured the last of the pretzel crumbs from the bag directly into his mouth, and chewed until he could manage to speak. “It’ll take some getting used to, but I think once we get to meet him—”

“Meet him! Have you lost your mind?”

“Mom, he’s our brother.”

“No, that boy is the ‘son of the bondwoman!’” Bobbi’s eyes flashed, and she pointed a finger at Joel.

“Bobbi, what are you talking about?” Chuck asked.

“This is what I read this morning!” She whipped around to face him. “About Abraham and Sarah. He had Ishmael with Hagar, and Sarah told Abraham to throw them both out. And he did.” Bobbi clenched her jaw, and stared at Chuck, daring him to reply. “God told Abraham to listen to his wife!”

“I don’t think that applies,” he answered quietly.

“Why not?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t read that story in a long time, but it can’t be the right thing to do.”

Bobbi jabbed at the kitchen table with her index finger. “Then you tell me how it can be good and right, to bring a living, breathing reminder of your affair into my house!” Bobbi said through clenched teeth.

“You already have one,” Chuck said softly. “Shannon Hope Molinsky.” Bobbi’s chest tightened at the mention of her daughter’s name. “No affair, no reconciliation, no Shannon. You can’t separate those.”

She had no argument, no rebuttal. He’d done it to her again, cutting her off from anyone who might agree with her, leaving her isolated and speechless.

Her boys ... They betrayed her. They jerked all the supports out from under her and left her twisting in the wind. Struggling to maintain her composure, and her dignity, she turned, and without another word began loading the dishwasher.

After a long awkward silence, Brad made an excuse about needing rest, mumbled a goodbye and slipped out as quietly as he came in. Maybe he was feeling guilty. Bobbi hoped so anyway.

“Mom?” Joel carried his cup over, and placed it in the top rack.

“Joel, there’s not anything you can say right now that won’t make it worse,” Bobbi said without looking up.

“I’m not choosing Dad over you. It’s nothing personal.”

Bobbi rolled the dishwasher rack back in and slowly raised her head to look at her son. “It is absolutely personal. I thought you, of all people ...” Her voice was low, controlled, but fury lay just below the surface. “You and Brad are something else. For you to sit here and self-righteously disapprove of me ...” She rolled her eyes up to the ceiling and swallowed hard before continuing. “You have never been married, have never been cheated on. You don’t know what you’re talking about, Joel. How dare you ... How dare you suggest that this boy ... that he’s just like you, or just like Shannon ...”

“Bobbi, don’t take this out on Joel.” Chuck crossed the room to stand in between them, and nodded toward the doorway. “Son, why don’t you go on up to bed.”

“Mom ... I never ...” Joel’s eyes darted between his parents as he lingered for a moment. “I love both of you, you know,” he said, then shuffled out of the kitchen.

“I’m the one you’re upset with,” Chuck said.

“Upset doesn’t begin to describe it,” Bobbi said, jerking the dishwasher door closed. “You haven’t given me the slightest consideration in this.”

“That’s not true.”

“It is! You’ve backed me in a corner and you’re forcing this on me.”

“I am trying to face my responsibilities and undo the damage I did to another innocent person.”

“At what cost? Your marriage?”

He stood straight, his fist clenched tightly.

“Why are you getting defensive? You’re completely right, and I’m completely wrong.”

“Bobbi, I never said that!” He took a long slow breath, his lips moving as he did. Was he counting? Reciting a Bible verse maybe? “Honey, that little boy shouldn’t have to pay for what I did.” He spoke calmly, his voice softer. “The way he was conceived is not his fault. He deserves a dad.”

How could he? He knew what she went through. How could he put this boy ahead of his own family’s best interests? What was he thinking? Was he thinking, period?

“We have to be able to discuss this,” Chuck said.

“There’s nothing to discuss. Neither one of us is changing our minds, so unless we have some divine intervention, you may as well go on to bed, Chuck.”

“Are you coming?”

“No.”

“I love you.”

“I’m sure you believe that.” It came out sharper, more sarcastic than she meant, but she was tired of fighting him and everyone else he lined up against her.

“With all my heart,” he said, and then shuffled toward the stairs.

Finally, he quit arguing. If it’s not Ishmael, then what is the solution to all this? Bobbi sighed deeply. She put the empty pretzel bag in the trash, checked the back door and turned out the kitchen light.

Was she overreacting? Was it wrong to protest Chuck trying to wedge that woman’s son into her family? She went to the study, pulled her Bible from the desk and collapsed on the love seat. She revisited Psalm 142, which became her heart’s cry in the aftermath of Chuck’s affair. She needed something like that now. Her eyes drifted to the next psalm.

Hear my prayer, O Lord,

Give ear to my supplications!

In Your faithfulness answer me,

And in Your righteousness ...

For the enemy has persecuted my soul;

He has crushed my life to the ground ...

Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me ...

Cause me to hear Your loving kindness in the morning,

For in You do I trust;

Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,

For I lift up my soul to You.

Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies;

In You I take shelter.

Teach me to do Your will,

For You are my God;

Your Spirit is good.

Lead me in the land of uprightness.

Revive me, O Lord, for Your name's sake!

For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

In Your mercy cut off my enemies,

And destroy all those who afflict my soul;

For I am Your servant.

“I don’t necessarily want her destroyed,” Bobbi muttered. “I just want her to go away.” She read the psalm again. *So what’s he really asking for?* She pulled her notebook out of the back of her Bible and began listing David’s requests. *He wants God to hear him, not abandon him, deliverance, show me what to do, teach me.*

She shifted in her chair to get more light on the page. “Cause me to hear Your loving kindness in the morning.” *That’s a good one. Tomorrow morning would be good, Lord.* Then she read the next line. “For in You do I trust.”

“It’s the trust thing again,” she said, shaking her head, and then she read the psalm once more.

Father God, You are good and faithful, but this terrifies me. Chuck isn't as strong as he thinks he is. This woman ... she's evil, and she's up to something, but Chuck refuses to see it.

She sighed and shifted sideways, then drew her legs up under her.

I hate feeling like this, being at odds with my husband and with my boys, and I'm afraid of what You might be asking me to go through.

What if Chuck left her this time?

Help me let go and give this to You. I need Your peace.