

## SIX

Mary let out a silent, contented sigh at the end of their quiet dinner for two. It had been a wonderful time, but, sadly, it was over now. Immediately upon their arrival at Britney's house, Ken swept Erik away to the computer room. That was likely the last she would see of him until their ride home. But surprisingly, she really enjoyed their times in the car, just the two of them talking about the ordinary events of their days.

Britney turned to her and gripped her forearm. "I am so sorry for this."

Mary tipped her head. "For what?"

"For Kenny having Erik over to look at our computer."

"Erik seems happy to do it."

"Kenny can do most anything he needs to do with the computer. He insisted I invite the two of you over so he could check out your new beau."

Her jaw unhinged. "He's checking Erik out?"

Britney nodded reluctantly. "He's protective and paranoid." She scrunched up her face. "He googled Erik and called his company to make sure he wasn't lying to you. I'm so sorry."

"Doesn't Ken trust me?"

"It has nothing to do with you. His older sister was abducted and killed by a psycho. He was just a kid."

*How awful.*

Britney rubbed her bulging belly. "I sure hope this is a boy. Can you imagine if we had a daughter what it would be like for any boy who wanted to date her?"

It was nice of Ken to want to protect her, but God was her ultimate protector. Only He knew how many days were assigned to her. "Even if he thinks Erik is no good, it will still be my choice whether I date him or not." How could anyone think Erik could ever harm her? He was gentle, kind, and sweet.

Britney nodded. "If he didn't do anything and something happened to you, he'd carry around that guilt for the rest of his life. He has enough of that."

Poor Ken. Such a burden he tried to carry. "Tell him not to worry about me. I'm not going to do anything stupid."

"I have. He just needs to get to know Erik better for his own peace of mind. Please don't be mad at me."

Maybe God was protecting her by way of her busybody family. "I'm not. I'd rather have a family who cares than one that doesn't." Even if they were exasperating and annoying at times, at least they cared.

Britney sighed out her relief. "With that in mind, you can probably expect Dan and Ted to check Erik out as well."

"They already have. They double-teamed him last week."

"Both of them at once?"

She nodded. "Ted and Emily invited us over for dinner. Dan was there, too. Of course, the three men ended up around the computer. If I had realized they were cornering him, I would have intervened."

"He must really care for you to put up with the family inquisition three weeks in a row. At least when I was first dating Ken, they cornered him one at a time."

Poor Erik. Did he even have a clue what they were doing? She would have to put a stop to her family's grilling of him. This was not what he signed up for when Phoebe talked him into that first date.