

## Chapter Thirty-four

**A**s usual, I had turned off my cell phone when I came to court. I don't keep it on, not even on vibrate. because it's distracting. When I powered up my phone, I saw I had three text messages from Sylvia, my sister. The messages were an hour old, one minute apart. They all said the same thing. CALL ME, IMPORTANT. All caps means she was yelling. If she could text in bold, they'd have been in bold as well.

I called her as soon as the judge left. She picked up after the first ring.

"Adrian!" she almost screamed. "Listen, don't get worried."

Now, I was worried. "What happened, Sylvia?"

"It's Pop."

She was maddening. "What happened?" I repeated, trying not to shout.

"Pop had chest pains. George brought him to the hospital right away. I'm here with him now. Bernie is here too. I can't get hold of Alex. I left him messages."

"Is Pop all right? Did he have a heart attack?"

"He had an episode. I think he'll be okay."

"Can I talk to him?"

"They took him for tests. He should be back soon."

"Which hospital is he in?"

"Mountainside Medical Center in Hackensack."

"Why Hackensack?"

"Because I'm affiliated here. George has instructions to bring him here if there's time. It's only twenty minutes from my house. Pop didn't have a heart attack, Adrian. He just had mild chest pains. George did the right thing. I know the staff here. Pop will get the best care."

"Hey, Sylvia, you're the doctor. I'm sure you did the right thing. I'm on

my way.”

I asked Nancy Hannah to get me a cab while I called June.

Traffic was heavy on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and at the Verrazano Bridge. Staten Island was a nightmare. The shorter route through Manhattan and the Lincoln Tunnel or the George Washington Bridge probably would have been just as frustrating, if not more so. There is no easy way out of New York City during rush hour.

My father was back in his room when I got to the hospital. Sylvia and Bernie were at the nurses’ station. My father looked a little pale, but I suppose everyone looks a little pale in a hospital bed. I hugged him and kissed him on the cheek.

“What’s going on, Pop? You don’t get enough attention?”

“Don’t start up with me, boychik. My blood pressure.”

“All right. How’re you feeling?”

“Pretty good for an old geezer. I want to go home, but they want to keep me overnight for observation.”

“Good. I’ll visit you tomorrow in Montclair.”

“I hope I’ll be home.”

“Tell me what happened, Pop.”

He shrugged. “Nothing. I got a little kvetch in my chest. Didn’t even hurt. I mean, maybe a little. George drags me into the car and shleps me to the hospital. Hey, where is the lovely June? Send her next time, and you don’t have to come.”

“I came straight from court, Pop. June’s still with patients. She sends her love. I’ll bring her with me when I visit you in Montclair.”

“Is that a promise, boychik?”

“I promise.”

“Good. I don’t know why that lovely woman married a shlepper like you, but I’m happy she did.”

“I’m worried about you, Pop. Why so much dialect? You sound like Jackie Mason.”

“Oy vey. Okay, I’ll stop. Seriously, how’s the trial going?”

“I think it’s going well. The judge ruled that the burden of proof is on the school board. I don’t have to prove that the Bible is true. They have to prove that it isn’t. I don’t think they have a strong case. You can read the transcripts online. If you’re interested.”

“I’ve been reading the transcripts on Jessica Davis’ website. And her articles. Good stuff. You’re talking to her, boychik. Spilling your guts.”

“I am. The idea is to drive the publicity. Raise the awareness.”

My father raised both hands and beetled his brows like Bernie Sanders.

“Remember David Goldfield!” he declared.

“I see you’ve been watching television, Pop. Remember David Goldfield. That’s what it’s all about.”

“You just be careful, boychik. You’re messing with some really nasty people. Watch yourself.”

Sylvia and Bernie came into the room. They looked a little somber.

“They’re going to keep you another couple of days, Pop,” said Sylvia.

“They need to run some more tests.”

“What for?”

“Just being cautious,” she said. “You should be home by the weekend.”

“I’ll come by tomorrow, Pop,” I said, “and I’ll bring June.”

“Nah, don’t come tomorrow,” he said. “Save your strength for the trial. I’m okay. They just want to run up the bills to Medicare.”

I smiled. “I’ll call you, and we’ll visit you on Saturday.”