

CHAPTER ❖ 2 ❖

June

Hana looked around her. These basement rooms were her new home in the United States. The walls and carpet were gray and dark. Her house in Korea was much larger. She tried not to show her disappointment. She turned to her sister-in-law, Mi Sun. *“Thank you for your hospitality. We will be very comfortable here.”*

Mi Sun smiled and waved her hands at the walls. *“We can paint these a different color to make it more cheerful.”*

Hana nodded. She tried not to show her gloom. She missed Korea already, after only a few hours in the USA. Where would she do her pottery? How would she have any privacy in this cramped house, with all Hyo’s family? She followed Mi Sun up the stairs to the sunny kitchen on the first floor.

Kwan and Hyo were on the back deck. They were talking seriously with each other. Mother-in-Law glanced at Hana. *“My sons are having a talk. Take them some drinks.”*

Hana looked at Mi Sun in dismay. This wasn’t

her house. She didn't even know where the glasses were. Mi Sun gave her a little smile. *"Thank goodness you are here, little sister,"* she whispered. *"Now, we can follow the old lady's orders together!"*

That night, after the kids were in bed, Hana and Hyo sat in their gray living room.

"Hana, did we make a mistake?" asked Hyo. *"When Kwan told me that Father wanted me to work in the business, I felt like I had to say yes. But now that we're here, I already feel like I'm being smothered."*

"No, we did the right thing," said Hana. She tried to sound very confident, but she didn't feel very confident. *"We are a family. Your brother needed you."* She paused. *"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Mi Sun told me there's an English class in the school where the kids will go. They have a summer program. I can start on Monday."*

The next day was Saturday, but Hyo and Kwan went to the office. Mi Sun and Hana went shopping, leaving their children and Mother-in-Law at home. They drove from the urban neighborhood where Mi Sun and Kwan lived to the Korean market in the suburbs. Mi Sun showed Hana what foods Mother-in-Law preferred.

"I don't really like to cook," Hana said to Mi Sun. *"I hope I can satisfy Mother-in-Law."*

"Don't worry. I love to cook! I'm not going to stop cooking just because Mother-in-Law thinks it should"

be your responsibility. We'll cook together. It will be fun. You know, Mother-in-Law just wants life to be smooth and easy for her sons."

As soon as they got home, Mother-in-Law wanted to start making *kimchi*, the spicy dish that Koreans ate with every meal. Mother-in-Law complained about everything Hana did. Hana tried to remain patient and kind. Later, she thanked Mother-in-Law for showing her how to make the *kimchi* and offered to make her a cup of tea after all the hard work.

"No, I want a nice glass of water. Then we'll make dinner for the men. I'll teach you how to make Hyo's favorite dish.

Hyo's favorite dish? After ten years of marriage, Hana knew what Hyo liked. Would every day with her mother-in-law be like this?