

A Partnership with Promise

Tidal Creek Hearts Series, Book 2, Chapter 1

Sandie Seagroves



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*A Partnership
with Promise*

Coming
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SANDIE SEAGROVES

CHAPTER 1 APWP

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Deluge Disaster

The azaleas were in full bloom; their pinks, oranges, and fuchsias enlivening a largely green landscape. Gradually, the marsh was losing its winter brown as small stalks of green appeared near the waterline. Spring was unfolding in Oyster Point. And a season of renewal and rebirth was unfolding for Summer Raines, too.

Summer sat on the dock just as the sun peered over the horizon, its golden warmth enveloping her hooded sweat shirted figure. Crouched over her Bible, Summer was working through the Gospel of John.

Closing the book, Summer closed her eyes and smiled, feeling the warmth of a now fully risen sun this early April day.

What beauty comes after a rainstorm! In a way, surprising. Kinda like you, God. Summer smiled at the thought.

Summer arose from her seat and walked down the dock, back toward Aunt Patsy's house, to grab some breakfast and dive into her funding research.

I think I'm at a bit of a crossroads, research-wise. I need more details on what the clinic truly needs. What would make the biggest

impact in the shortest time, thought Summer as she buttered one of Aunt Patsy's homemade biscuits. *A totally new building?* Summer chuckled at the thought. Ideally, it would be a new building. *But that's such a big ask, almost an impossible task. Organize huge fundraisers and target grants that are so necessary for a capital campaign? I don't know if I trust myself.* Summer's lip trembled a bit as her mind went to the not-so-distant past. *No, I'd rather narrow our focus, at least at first. That I can do.*

With the last bite of biscuit swallowed, Summer headed out the door. A chat with Caleb was due.

The clinic was only a short walk along a wild azalea-lined dirt road, past many of the great houses. Droplets of water were still on the flowers' petals, enhancing their perfume as it wafted into the early morning air. As Summer walked down the road, there were scattered puddles she had to dodge.

It appears it rained heavily last night.

Rounding a little bend in the road, Summer caught sight of the clinic in the near distance. *Has Caleb put a blue roof on it now?* Coming closer, Summer could see that Caleb had indeed re-roofed the clinic in blue, blue tarps, that is.

Oh my! I didn't realize the storm had done such damage. Hope everything in there is OK.

"Hey, Missy! How are you this morning?"

"Could be better. Since four this morning, I've been here, helping Caleb with tarps and cleanup from the storm."

"Oh, my, I see." There were buckets everywhere, still catching drips with a steady Plink-plink-plink. "What got damaged?"

"Well, old Doc Watson's exam table came out just fine. I suppose it's weathered many a Lowcountry storm...from inside a building, however. The room holding our medical supplies is another story, however."

“Where’s Caleb?”

“Reviewing the damage to all our supplies while I try to reassemble our damp and damaged medical records.”

“Thank you, Missy.”

As Summer entered the equipment storage room, she could see the floor tiles slick with runoff from soaked boxes.

“Oh, Caleb; I’m so sorry!”

Caleb reacted, swiveling toward the source of the recognizable voice.

“Hi, Summer. Just assessing the damage and trying to think of the next steps. Hated to close down the clinic for the day, but there was no other way.”

“Yes, I see.” Quickly surveying the damage, Summer saw autoclave pouches now translucent and their contents no longer sterile, sterile gauze pads still in their wrappers, swollen with water and discolored, and disposable gloves, their cardboard dispensers collapsed, revealing the individual packets still stuck together.

At least some supplies escaped the deluge, Summer thought, as her eyes caught plastic medication bottles and alcohol wipes in foil-sealed packets unscathed, sitting on shelves.

“What can I do, Caleb? How can I help you?”

“Well, you can start by helping me inventory what’s damaged and what’s not, so I know where we stand,” said Caleb as he thrust a clipboard into Summer’s hands. “I’ll call out the item, noting whether it’s good, salvageable, or destroyed, and you mark the correct box, OK?”

“OK. Now my medical knowledge may be a little rusty. Truthfully, it’s practically nonexistent, so I may need your help in finding the item.”

“No worries, Summer,” Caleb said as he smiled. “I’m just

glad for the extra pair of hands. It'll make the process go faster, even with your questions."

The pair worked the entire morning inventorying the extensive damage. Finally, around noon, it was complete.

"Man, that was work! But it would have taken even longer if you hadn't stopped by, Summer. How can I ever repay you?"

"Well, you can start by taking me to lunch at the Oyster Point Seafood Shack. Isn't that our celebration place? And our progress deserves to be celebrated. Besides, I'm famished!"

"Seafood Shack it is, then. Let's invite Missy, too. With all her work, she deserves the celebration break, too."

"Sure!"

Within 30 minutes, the trio arrived at the Oyster Point Seafood Shack and were quickly shown to a table.

"Here are the menus. In the meantime, what beverages may I bring you?"

"Ladies, teas sound good?"

"Absolutely. I'm parched," said Missy.

"We'll have three teas, with lemon on the side."

"Yes, sir, coming right up."

With the server gone, they turned their attention to menus.

"Now, remember, ladies, lunch is on me. It's the least I can do for all your hard work this morning. No arguments."

"Thank you, Caleb. We appreciate it."

After a few minutes, menus were laid aside, and the server came back to take their orders.

The trio went back to sipping their tea, lost in their own thoughts. Seemingly seconds later, a different crew was back with plates of steaming seafood.

"Who ordered the Calabash-style shrimp?"

"I did," said Summer.

“And the flounder?”

“Me,” said Caleb.

“That leaves the shrimp Caesar salad to you, m’am,” as the crew member settled the huge salad bowl in front of Missy.

Each person hungrily attacked his or her meal. After a few minutes, Caleb said,

“Why don’t we use this time to discuss the clinic’s current state? I would love to hear from each of you your observations, assessments, and recommendations.”

“I did all I could with the medical records, but some were lost causes. I’ve separated them out as much as I could.”

“Thank you, Missy. What about the drawer of ‘scrip pads?”

“That cabinet ended up being more watertight than the one that contained the records. So all the ‘scrip, phone message, and doctor’s notepads are in good condition.”

“Summer, your thoughts?”

“The first thing that struck me was the extent of the damage. Although I know the storage building’s pretty old and it needed repair even before the storm, the amount of damage still surprised me. And, if my memory serves, seems like most or even all the supplies you purchased with the oyster roast funds have been destroyed. Am I right, Caleb?”

“Yes,” said Caleb as he stared at his flounder, not wanting to meet her gaze.

“Caleb, it isn’t your fault. That was a very old building, and the spring storm was a bit stronger than most.”

“Yes, it is my fault, Summer. I should have reserved funds for repairs, even had an emergency fund, but in my eagerness to help as many of those wonderful island people as I could, I opted for medical supplies rather than building supplies.”

“You made the right choice, boss,” said Missy. “I’ve always

believed that people come first. I'm happy—and proud—that you did.”

“Thank you, Missy. But it doesn't help our present situation. We are mostly out of medical supplies and all out of money. No money, no medical supplies. No medical supplies, no helping people.” Caleb's sigh came from the depths of his soul.

A thoughtful quiet settled on the table, interrupted only by the occasional clink of silverware on plates. Then Summer spoke.

“Caleb, I'll go and get the medical supplies. I just need a list and directions on where to go.”

“How? I just said we have no money.”

“Don't worry about it. I'll get it done.”

“But how, I...”

“I said, ‘Don't worry about it.’ You have enough to do with getting things squared away so you can re-open the clinic tomorrow. Besides, it will give me something to do.” Summer bracketed her words with a soft, confident smile.

“Okay. You seem quite determined. I wouldn't dream of hindering a determined woman,” Caleb remarked, smiling.

“Ready for dessert?” asked the server who had quietly returned to the table.

“Ladies, thoughts?”

“Yes, let's. I'd like another piece of that decadent chocolate cake you have. Missy, have you ever tried it?”

“No, I haven't. But “chocolate anything” definitely gets my vote. How about you, Caleb?”

“Me, too. Miss, three pieces of your decadent chocolate cake, please.”

“Will do.”

“And miss...”

“Yes?”

“Give me the check, please.” Summer and Missy glared at Caleb through slitted eyes.

“Now, ladies. Remember I said it was my treat. I want no argument.”

Soon thick slabs of The Shack’s signature dessert arrived at the table. The trio dove in enthusiastically.

“Summer, about the supplies...”

“Now, Caleb, I want no argument from you. I said I would pick them up; don’t worry how the cost will be covered. Besides, I’ve already conceded on one point: you’re paying for this celebration lunch.. Now it’s my turn,”

“Touche’.”

The trio finished their desserts, the check was paid, and they left the restaurant to get into Caleb’s F-150.

“I’ll take you ladies back to the clinic. And then, Summer, I’ll give you the list of supplies we’ll need. Some require ordering, yet gathering as many today as we can would greatly help reopen the clinic tomorrow.

“Sounds good, Caleb.”

Once back at the clinic, Missy busied herself with resurrecting all the medical records she could, trying to read the blurred notations. Caleb and Summer went back to the medical equipment room to retrieve the inventoried list. Taking the clipboard in his hand and pulling out a pen from his shirt pocket, Caleb began checking off supplies while Summer sat in a chair. Twenty minutes later, he was finished.

“Summer, I’ve checked off most of what I think we can get this afternoon from Herold’s Pharmacy. I’ve put question marks where I wasn’t sure, so you’ll have to ask them when you’re there. Then the rest, without either check or question marks, you’ll likely have to have Herold’s order for next day delivery.

Sound good?

“Yup. Just one question.”

“What’s that?”

“Where’s Herold’s?”

“Oh, so sorry I forgot to tell you. It’s on Charlie Hall Road in West Ashley. Going to Herold’s will save you some time and you won’t have to fight the traffic coming off the Peninsula, ‘k?”

“Perfect. I’m on it. Bye, Caleb!”

“Bye.”

My, she never fails to surprise me.

* * *