

JERRY JENKINS PRESENTS

What

A NOVEL

a Wave

Must Be

ANGELA HUNT

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Must Be*

ANGELA HUNT

FOCUS
ON THE FAMILY[®]

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What a Wave Must Be is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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The Bustle in a House

*The Bustle in a House
The Morning after Death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon Earth—*

*The Sweeping up the Heart
And putting Love away
We shall not want to use again
Until Eternity—*

—EMILY DICKINSON, 1866

Chapter One

Susan

I never imagined that Frank and I would live anything but a charmed life. But when I tripped over a dog toy and broke my right arm on an ordinary November day, I began to wonder if God was trying to tell me something. I listened and looked for writing on the wall, but if God was speaking, I couldn't hear him.

Three weeks later, Frank and I were upstairs cleaning our guest apartment. With one hand, I pulled the wrinkled sheet from the laundry basket and struggled to toss it to my patient husband. "I never thought having my arm in a sling would make me feel so helpless," I said.

Frank grabbed the sheet and fitted the corners to his side of the mattress. "You need help over there?"

"I've got it." I used my left hand to ease the seams over the corners of the king-size bed. "Thanks. I know you'd rather be teaching than helping me with this stuff."

“The school has other substitutes,” he said, taking the top sheet from the laundry basket. “I’m certainly not irreplaceable.”

“To me, you are.” I caught the edge of the sheet Frank had flung toward me. “A man is never more attractive than when he’s helping his wife with the housework.”

He grinned as he tucked the edge of the sheet under the mattress. “My mother said I should beware of women who tried to sweet-talk me. Next thing I know, you’ll have me doing the grocery shopping.”

I laughed, realizing that he’d done more than help me make beds—he had also lifted my spirits, which had lately taken a downturn.

“Don’t worry. I can fill a cart with one hand.” I finished smoothing my side of the bed and walked around to do his. “And I know better than to send you to the grocery. You’d come back with nothing but snacks and cookies.”

“Susan.” Frank pointed at my hip. “Your shorts are buzzing.”

“What? Oh—my phone.” I glanced at the caller ID. “It’s Rachel. Wonder what she wants?”

“The best way to find out”—Frank sat on the bed—“is to answer.”

I pressed the speakerphone. “Rachel?”

“Susan.” Our daughter-in-law’s voice sounded tight, so something had to be wrong. She rarely called us, except when she wanted to suggest gifts for Maddie’s birthday or Christmas.

“Is everything all right, hon?”

“I don’t know.”

I frowned. “Is everything okay with Maddie?”

“Sure, she’s at school. But I was wondering . . . have you heard from Daniel? I was wondering if he hopped on a plane to visit you.”

I shot Frank a look of alarm. Daniel and Rachel lived in Atlanta, only an hour’s flight from our home in Florida, but Daniel had never *hopped on a plane* to visit us.

“Rachel”—I sank to the bed—“are you two having problems?”

“It’s not like Daniel to ignore my calls. It’s probably nothing, but last night he seemed preoccupied. He barely spoke at dinner, and he didn’t even tease Maddie about the Falcons losing to the Buccaneers.”

“Maybe he’s dealing with a problem at work.” Our son was a top sales rep for a pharmaceutical firm.

Rachel sighed. “Maybe you’re right. Let me know if you hear from him, okay? Give Frank my love. I’ll talk to you later.”

As I put the phone down, Frank crossed his arms and nodded. “Male menopause. How old is he, forty?”

“Forty-two. And male menopause is a myth. You didn’t go through it.”

His mouth drooped. “I almost spent our savings on a boat.”

“Yes, but you didn’t.”

“That was male menopause. I thought a boat might fill some void.”

I winced. “Do you still feel that way?”

A smile crossed his face. “It was a phase, sweetheart. I haven’t missed a thing—in fact, my cup runneth over.”

“Good to know.”

“Daniel’s a grown man, a good husband, and we raised him right. If he wants a boat, he can afford one, but he’s not about to leave his wife and daughter.”

I wasn’t so sure. The news overflowed with celebrities who walked away from their families on a whim. Daniel wasn’t a celebrity, but any man could indulge a wandering eye or imagine he’d be happier living another life.

“If he’s having an affair, I’ll—”

“Not answering his phone doesn’t mean he’s having an affair.” Frank walked over and squeezed my hand. “Maybe his battery died. Maybe he dropped his phone in the toilet. Or maybe he just wanted a little peace and quiet.”

“Maybe.” I forced a smile. “I hope you’re right.”

That night, as I struggled to brush my teeth with my left hand, I thought only of Daniel. I didn't want to turn a dead cell phone into a torrid affair, but I couldn't shake a feeling of foreboding.

I rinsed and went back into the bedroom. "My intuition keeps telling me something's wrong," I told Frank, who was sitting up in bed and absorbed in the History Channel. "I'm worried about Daniel."

"No news is good news," he said, idly petting our pug, Ike. "I'm sure he's fine."

"But what if he's not? What if he's been abducted? Some junkie could have seen the samples in his car and—"

"Daniel calls on hospitals and doctor's offices, not drug dens."

"Still, it's not like him to ignore Rachel's calls. They must have had an argument."

"So why don't you call him?"

"I tried. I got no answer."

"Did you leave a message?" Finally a look of concern crossed Frank's face. "Did you tell him Rachel wanted to talk to him?"

"I asked him to call me—the first time. The other times, I hung up. He'll see how many times I've called."

"And when he does call you back, he'll say you were silly to worry about him. Relax, honey. He's a grown man. He can take care of himself."

I blew out a frustrated breath and crawled into bed. Ike left Frank's lap and waddled over to me, snorting in my ear before settling his head on my shoulder.

I closed my eyes, hoping the drone of the documentary would lull me to sleep, but too many dire possibilities crowded my brain. Daniel could be unconscious in a ditch or in the clutches of a drug lord. Or considering Frank's cardiac condition, he could have had a heart attack.

"Honey," Frank said, "you need to stop worrying."

"Who says I'm worrying?"

“You’re jiggling your foot. You haven’t stopped since you got into bed.”

“I can’t help it.”

“Pray for the boy and go to sleep.”

“I’ve been praying since Rachel called.”

“Is that what you call it?”

He had a point. Fretting and praying weren’t the same thing at all.

I sighed and closed my eyes again. “Lord, let Daniel call us as soon as possible so we can all get some rest.”

