

CHAPTER TWO

I wouldn't be telling this story if I didn't see those two again. But I might be telling some other story about the wayward souls who came through that door. I got plenty of stories. For almost forty years that shelter was my life. I heard more stories than I wanted to hear, and I saw more things than I wanted to see.

I'm retired now. Retirement means I only work five days a week instead of seven. I got to slow down. My bones are getting creaky. A lot of time has passed. But sometimes I still think about Chantay

and Jamal. Especially when I hear his name mentioned in the stories of the shelter children. Even now, years later, they still talk about him.

After that first night, I didn't think I was going to see them again. But they were back the very next day. This time, I made them sit down and tell me everything they could about themselves. They didn't want to give up anything. At first I thought they were being cagey with me. But soon enough I realized they just didn't know very much about who they were.

"What's your last name?" I asked them.

We were sitting at one of the rickety old shelter tables. Jamal just shrugged his shoulders. Chantay looked embarrassed.

"Well, come on," I said. "It's not rocket science, is it? Don't worry, I'm not gonna tell on you. You haven't done anything wrong, have you? It's no crime to be poor. What's your family name?"