

Bless His Dead Little Heart
An 80s Church Lady Mini-Series Novella
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Bless His Dead Little Heart
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Chapter One

"Thank you for calling Baduga Fellowship Church. We're in the middle of collecting our Vacation Bible School donations. Will you be dropping off a check or mailing in your contribution?"

One way or another, I planned to break Mr. Wales from his late Friday afternoon calls.

"Wait there a minute. My hearing aid is giving me a fit."

"Waiting." I recognized these calls as a game and hurriedly gathered my belongings. Unlike any other Friday, I had plans.

Deputy Maxwell Hunt and I were going out on a real date. A new drive-in theater was showing *Star Wars*. The first fifty people through the gate would receive a special fan pack, complete with jacket pins, posters, T-shirts, and PEZ candy dispensers. I couldn't wait.

"Are you there, Mr. Wales?" I asked, noticing I only had three more minutes before the week was a wrap.

"Yes. And I'll donate, but only if you pick up the check today."

I sighed. "Tomorrow works better for me. I'll even bring over a pizza. My treat. Today was payday."

"Church is on Sunday. Tomorrow, I'm busy. And I always pay for pizza. You bring it. That's our deal. A man my age doesn't let a woman buy his dinner."

I was in a losing battle. Sometimes, I believed Mr. Wales deliberately thought of new ways to insert himself into my life. "I have a date tonight. I hate to tell you, 'no' about anything, but this is *Star Wars*. How about tomorrow morning?"

He wheezed and then took one of his coughing fits. My heart clenched a little, but I still planned to stand my ground until he said, "Have it your way. I'll let the deacons know that you put a silly spacecraft before Noah's Ark."

I drummed my fingers against the desk, prayed for patience, and then accepted the defeat. "How about after the movie?"

"I go to bed early. Deputy Hunt can tag along. What I say to you, I can say to him, too."

He'd missed the point.

"Are you there, Harper Kay?"

"I'm here. Mr. Wales, it's sort of our um...first official date."

"Consider me as an unofficial stop on the way to this event," he said. "What time does he pick you up?"

“Six.”

“Perfect. I’ll see you both at ten after.”

“But—”

“No buts. This is important. Someone else should be serving time for a death. I know who it is. I’m *the only one* who knows.”

He now had my attention. “Someone else was involved in Pastor’s murder?”

“I’ll explain all of it when you get here.”

I was about to suggest that he call Sheriff Clark, when he hurriedly added, “If you and Deputy Hunt want to know what I do? Postpone those romantic adventures and meet me at the farm.”

He hung up and I stared at the receiver. On the bright side, he didn’t slam the phone down in my ear, but I was now at a disadvantage. And I wasn’t the only one.

Pastor Mick was murdered nearly two months ago. If there was another suspect running around in our community, weren’t we all in danger?

To make matters worse, I’d worked alongside those who had killed Pastor Mick. Did that mean I was still working by someone else who had a hand in his death, too?

What did that mean for the church or our small town as a whole? More importantly, who was this guilty party?