

CHAPTER 1

Words. Nasty, hateful words. Recriminations, accusations, words written in spiny squiggles on yellowed paper – remnants from her diary. Ben closed the book and fell back on the pillow. It's too late. I should never have kept it. Her words burned holes in his mind. I hope she burns in hell!

As his thumb felt for each pearl in practiced formation, he recalled the last time she wore them. Her pale blue eyes shocked open, smeared red lips stretched, her swanlike neck straining against his clumsy hands as he watched her light fade and the pearls fall to the floor.

Retribution was imminent. He lowered the lid of her keepsake box and closed his eyes. Each breath now more difficult. He hadn't left a will. No need. He had nothing left to give. His family hadn't spoken to him in years. He hadn't even bothered to leave them a farewell note. What was there to say? That he was sorry? That he was responsible for her death? It was too long ago.

He heard the door open and turned to face the wall.

CHAPTER 2

Audrey opened the email. She had red-flagged it earlier in the day knowing she would open it and read it when she had the courage to do so. What could her sisters want with her now? Too many years had passed. Too many words left unsaid.

There it was. In black and white. Just like them. No please or thank you. They were coming to stay at her cabins. All of them. Uninvited and unwanted. *Important*, she read. *We need to talk*. What could they possibly need to talk about that couldn't be done over the phone?

The cabins were all fully booked for the next few weeks. She would need to cancel reservations and suffer the financial loss. Damn her sisters!

It was mid-day. Most of the guests had already checked out. She picked up the phone and began to make the calls.

CHAPTER 3

Honey's suitcase was a jumbled disaster. What to wear? That was the question. Every year her suitcases got bigger and bigger to accommodate her ever-increasing clothes size. This trip wasn't her idea. It was bloody Becka's. She had called the meeting. "It is time to sort this all out," she had said. "We have no choice." Honey wished she had said no. But saying no to Becka was not that easy.

Honey picked up the heavy suitcase and dragged it downstairs. Fat, fluffy cats sat waiting in their cage. Honey hated taking them to the cattery as much as they hated staying there. Thank goodness it would only be for a few days. Her long skirt caught in the door as she slammed it shut, pissing her off even more. Why do we have to bring it all up now? She pulled at the skirt. When I wanted to talk about it everyone acted as though it was all in my head. She unlocked the door to release her skirt and dropped the keys. Shit, shit, shit. The cats meowed in unison protesting their confined quarters and lack of attention.

CHAPTER 4

The wind pulled at her coat exposing her to the bitter cold. The platform, eerily empty, filled with the roar of the approaching train. She pulled her suitcase up the steps and was welcomed with a blast of warm air. It was a fifteen-minute ride to Heathrow and a grueling twenty-hour flight to New Zealand.

How long since she had seen her sisters and brother? She couldn't count the years. They had been just children. Escaping to London in her late teens was the best thing Becka had ever done. She had made a life for herself. At least it had been a life. Now she was alone. Her husband was up north, remarried and affluent. Her sons were lawyers in the City. She hadn't told them about her trip. She wouldn't. They knew nothing of her past and never would.

How did the old woman get my phone number? She wondered. He was dying. Well bloody good riddance! It was not sympathy but pure curiosity that stirred her into action. Greta was adamant that she should come. "He's going fast. I didn't know whom else to call. You were the only family he ever talked about. He keeps saying he is sorry." *Sorry for what?* "You had better come."

She would come. But she was not doing this alone. They were all involved. The doors swung open and she pushed her way passed the incoming passengers and up the escalators towards the terminal.