

Prologue

Saturday, August 23rd, 2014

I stepped out of the car after a four-hour drive, and checked out the house. It was missing the pots of flowers that I planted by the front door every spring, but otherwise appeared much the same. By the garage, Jay's vegetable garden seemed uncharacteristically overgrown. He was usually on top of every weed and slug, but the cucumbers, tomatoes, and beans were rioting across the ground in cheerful abandon.

Pulling my weekend bag and laptop out of the Prius, I walked into the kitchen and dumped them on the bright-blue counters I'd chosen ten years before, when we built the house. They still looked like new and nothing was out of place, so I guessed my husband had tidied up, knowing I was coming.

There was a stillness to the air inside, as though it hadn't been disturbed for a while. I couldn't see or hear anyone, so I walked through to the picture window in the dining room and gazed at the view. It was still beautiful, the lake serene. The lawn Jay had planted the year before stretched down to the water, and I could see a few sailboats racing in the distance. A day without a cloud on the horizon.

Jay was lying on a chaise longue on the deck, his eyes closed. A glass of something stood on the low table beside him, sweating in the heat. As I moved forward, I scanned his face, wanting to get used to the idea of being there with him before he saw me. He'd lost weight, and when I looked beneath his tan, there were shadows around his eyes.

"Hi, Jay," I said. His eyelids fluttered open. If all had been well between us, I would have called him Jayway, or darling. But all was not well.

"Thanks for coming up, Gabi."

"No problem."

I'd decided to treat my visit as a weekend in the country, and planned to read, swim and pick blueberries when I wasn't driving my husband to and from his medical appointment. He caught me glancing at his drink.

"It doesn't make the pain any worse," he said, picking it up and taking a sip, as though to prove it.

I remained silent.

It had all begun so differently, so long ago.

Chapter 1: Romance 1974

London, May-November 1974

I heard about Jay Wilson long before I ever met him. I was twenty-five, newly divorced, and the mother of two small children. I worked for a market research firm in London, part of a global network headed by Jay's company. Among other things, they commissioned the studies that we carried out for a well-known bra manufacturer.

On a lovely day in May, my boss, Dawn, called me into her office. As it happened, Jay's American bra client was in town that week, and Dawn wanted to connect with this lucrative customer. But she had to fly to Copenhagen for the network conference, so she delegated the job of contacting the client to me.

"You're familiar with the projects—you've been working on them. Her name is Cindy Cavallero." She handed me a scrap of paper. "Ring her up at the Hilton and ask her to lunch. You're joining us in Denmark tomorrow, so today's your only chance."

Taking a deep breath, I dialed the hotel and asked for the client, who answered in an attractive drawl that reminded me of Jane Fonda. She accepted my invitation, and we arranged to meet in the lobby. I was checking my makeup before heading out, when the phone on my desk rang.

"This is Jay Wilson. Am I speaking with Gabi Coatsworth?"

I confirmed that he was, liking his voice immediately. Until he spoke again.

"What the hell do you mean by asking Cindy Cavallero out to lunch?" He didn't even pause for an answer. "She's my client, so *I'm* taking her to lunch. What's more, I'll be reporting your unprofessional behavior to your boss."

As I hung up, I felt my face flush with mortification. I sat in my office, my appetite gone and my heart sinking as I envisioned coming face-to-face with this man in Copenhagen at the annual meeting of the network. As the head of it, he would certainly be there.

Dawn had arranged for me to attend the gathering, to take the minutes, and to meet people I'd only spoken to on the phone. I'd never been to such an event, nor seen Denmark, so, having arranged to leave the children with my mother for a couple of nights, I felt a quick rush of adrenaline as I boarded the plane for Copenhagen. Only my unfortunate phone encounter with Jay worried me, and I mentally rehearsed how I would explain my failure to meet Cindy to Dawn.

Knowing I would meet Jay at the welcome cocktail event that evening, I wanted to feel like a competent businesswoman, not the inept, if not downright shady person he'd spoken to on the phone. So I borrowed a purple dress from a friend. As I checked it

out in the mirror before I went down to the party, I felt reassured that I looked like someone who wouldn't let anyone intimidate her.

I was standing near a window on the far side of the room with a glass of white wine, immersed in conversation with a man from the Paris agency. Barely disguising his boredom as he stared through his wire-framed spectacles, he paused and glanced toward the door.

"Voilà," he announced, blowing out a stream of smoke from his *Gauloise*. "The uncouth Yankee has arrived."

I must have looked blank.

"It is Wilson," he explained. "From New York."

I followed his gaze and spotted the man with no trouble. I'd seen his photo in the network brochure, but it didn't do him justice.

Handsome in what we thought of then as the all-American style, he stood at least three inches taller than anyone else in the room. He was younger than I'd imagined, considering he ran such a big company—I discovered later he was thirty-eight. His blond hair, aquamarine eyes, and pink complexion reminded me of early Technicolor movies.

He wore a blue-and-white-striped seersucker suit, à la Gatsby, and his trousers were too short. We expected this sort of thing from our colonial cousins, knowing they had no dress sense.

Still, his presence commanded attention. The executives in the room may have been talking disparagingly about him only a moment before, but they came forward now, anxious to greet him. He appeared cordial but guarded, and as his eyes scanned the room, they fell upon me. His gaze widened, and I hastily turned my head to continue chatting to my French colleague.