

"Right," she said dryly.

Not in the least discouraged by her lack of enthusiasm, he continued, "And it was lucky your clothes didn't get dry. Of course," he added as he wiped his fingers, "it's been a day of lucky breaks. For example, I've never seen Monty in such a rush to cross the stream. Usually he just swims it."

"I suspect a little collusion there," Anne retorted. "After all, you've taught him every other trick in the book."

"I swear all I've taught him is simple obedience." She shrugged and said, "And then there's the weather."

"Do you suspect collusion there, too?" he asked, lifting a brow.

She gave him a saccharine smile. "You could have heard a weather forecast, worked out your strategy with Monty, and planned to keep me in bed till the bridge was impassable."

"Or, you could have heard a weather forecast, dived off that rock at the opportune moment, managed to look sexy as hell in my robe, and kept me in bed till the bridge was impassable," he retorted.

She laughed then, and held her watch close to the candle in the center of the table. "It's nearly nine. I'd better call Nora so she won't worry. I'm sure she expected me back hours ago."

"Maybe not," he replied. "After all, you didn't go back last night, either. She may have figured it out by now. But, go ahead and call."

Anne walked to the phone and lifted it to hear dead silence. "Great," she muttered as she jiggled the switch. When she turned back to the table, Rob intercepted her and pulled her into his arms.

"Got a problem?" he asked with a smile.

Her arms crept around his neck. "Mmm-hmm," she murmured, and lifted her face for his kiss. "Do you lose the

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Chapter 2

You know, I wasn't going to let this happen," Anne said as she bit into a biscuit then dabbed her lips with a napkin at a tiny stream of escaping butter.

"Serves you right for spreading it on so thick," he said unsympathetically. He raised his mug and his eyes teased her over its rim.

"Not the butter, idiot, the day—our being together like this."

"Oh?" He cast her an inquiring look. "Did you have something else in mind?"

"Yes. I wasn't going to spend the weekend with you. And I was all prepared to tell you so last night, nicely of course, but you never mentioned it again, so I decided I wouldn't have to, either."

Rob laughed and said, "I would have if events hadn't moved along to take care of it for me. But think what you'd have missed—this great brown 'n' serve chicken for one thing." He nibbled the last bite off a thigh.

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electricity and the phone every time it storms?" she asked when they drew apart.

"Often enough." He smiled, lowering his hands to the small of her back. "Too bad, though—I was going to suggest a movie classic on TV. Now I don't know what we'll do for entertainment."

Anne laughed. "I'm sure you'll think of something," she said.

"You know, it actually might be a good idea to turn in kind of early tonight."

"I wonder why that doesn't surprise me?" Anne quipped.

He withdrew a hand to tap against a fake yawn and said as though she hadn't spoken. "Yeah, that's probably best. Waking up early really takes it out of you."

He grinned at her most of laughter, and he embraced her. "Want some more coffee?" he asked. "Or wine?"

"No, thanks. Come on, I'll help you stack the dishes before that candle burns out."

Monty came to the door as they finished, and Anne let him in, then drew back from him when she discovered that he was soaked. "It's still raining," he announced.

Rob took an old towel from a shelf and rubbed it over the dog, removing as much moisture as he could. But when he'd finished, Monty shook himself anyway, and sent a fine spray over both of them.

When Anne brushed at the robe, Rob grinned and suggested, "You'd better get out of that wet thing before you catch cold."

She made a face at him and said, "It's barely damp. I don't think I'm in much danger."

"That's what you think," he muttered, and with a determined glint in his eye he reached for her.

The rain clouds had moved on, leaving behind high-flown, innocent puffs to drift across the night sky. The

moon bathed the area in a soft, white radiance one minute, then ducked out of sight, abandoning it to darkness the next.

Rob lay watching Anne sleep as the changing light filtered through the curtains. The soft glow of their loving still lay on her skin and her hair was spread on the pillow in glorious disarray.

He looked first at her face, serene and relaxed, lips slightly parted. Then, slowly, lazily, his gaze traveled the length of her—over the smooth, silky skin of her shoulders and arms, the swell of her breasts as they rose and fell with the rhythm of her breathing, across the soft, flat stomach and sensuous curve of her hips, to the long, clean lines of her legs.

She's so beautiful, he thought. Beautiful, warm, responsive, giving. With a brief, wry amusement he pictured her trying to tough it out with the world, but on the heels of that thought came recognition of her very real vulnerability. The knowledge was like a knife slicing through him, and he made a silent vow that nobody would hurt her while he had breath to prevent it.

He lay back on the pillow and closed his eyes, but sleep wouldn't come. He was too aware of her, too conscious of the light press of her flesh against his. Even without the contact, he knew it would be the same. He could smell her, feel her warmth. Her taste lingered on his lips, and he wondered if he would ever have his fill of her. It seemed that the more she offered, the more he wanted. The more she gave, the more he needed.

MacKenzie, you're insatiable, he accused himself. But even as he had the thought, his lips were covering hers with a soft, insistent pressure.

Anne awoke as desire formed deep inside her, then sped outward through every nerve. With a sound of pleasure, her arms went around him, her fingers skimming his smooth,

warm skin. When she touched the tip of her tongue to the hollow of his throat, she thrilled to his murmured, "Anne, I need you so. I can't get enough of you."

He kissed her so that his mouth would clamp hers in one deep, searing kiss after another. Breaths mingled, then both drank deeply of dark, exciting flavors. Her hands moved over him, kneading, gripping, while his fingers sought soft, warm spots to stroke and fondle, arousing her to desperation.

With his lips he traced a path to her breasts where he drew in one taut peak. Anne, already delirious with her own need, arched, urging him to take more. When he moved to her other breast, to linger and savor, she moaned and moved against him, driving both of them close to the edge of madness.

His mouth returned to hers. He clutched her, and on a groan of need and passion, they were lost.

She wrapped her legs around him and gripped his shoulders convulsively. A sheen of moisture covered them. The sounds of their labored breathing filled the moon-dappled room, then became maddening cries as they rocketed over that fine edge into an insanity of whirling color and unbelievable sensation.

Minutes later they were still locked in a tight embrace, though the furious pounding of their hearts had slowed and their breathing quieted to something below the level of gasps. Remembering vaguely that he'd been out of control and rough with her, Rob lifted his head and spoke unsteadily. "Darling, are you all right? Did I hurt you?"

She smiled and pulled him back down to her. "No, never. Oh, Rob..." She tightened her arms for a moment, but didn't finish what she'd started to say.

He traced the contours of her face with trembling fingers. He had never made him tremble or experience the overwhelming tenderness that next had him running gentle kisses over her cheeks and eyelids.

Physically spent, but unable to stop their heads from roaming and caressing, they lay pressed together, murmuring soft, passionate promises. When the caresses stilled at last, and the quiet murmuring ceased, she pulled the sheet over them, and holding her close, drifted into a deep, dreamless sleep.

The morning was bright and clear, the day full of promise. Anne stood in the bedroom running her comb through her hair and thinking about Rob. He brings energy and emotion and so much beauty to everything he does, she mused. It's what makes his photography so special—and his loving.

Memories of the morning's drowsy, unhurried lovemaking sent waves of pleasure through her. But in its wake came a surge of excitement and wonder as she remembered the near violence of the passion they'd shared in the night. It reminded her that there were many facets to the man, even the suggestion of danger. It was part of his strength, and, she admitted, part of his mystique.

Then she remembered what she'd nearly said to him after that passionate lovemaking. "I would never be so unbelievably foolish, even for me," she thought. Rob MacKenzie is a globe-trotting wildlife photographer, not Joe Blow who manages the local hardware. This is just a little hiatus in his life, not the fabric. And there's no way I fit into such an exotic pattern.

Frowning, Anne set down her cup and walked to the window. Oh, Lord, I can't be falling in love with him...

When the door opened and closed behind her, she took a moment to force a smile back onto her face. She wasn't going to give him any hint of where her thoughts had been. But before she was ready to face him, he came in, wrapped around her waist. He nudged the hair away from her ear and nibbled at the lobe while Anne fought to control her reaction.

tion to his touch. Then, as his lips traced along her neck and encountered her fluttering pulse, she felt them curve against her skin in pleased acknowledgment and knew that she'd never succeed in hiding her reactions. She turned in the circle of his arms and smiled up into his eyes.

"I'm going to turn Blanc loose," he said. "I thought you might like to watch."

"Oh, yes! You mean right now?"

"Mmm-hmm, in a minute or two," he replied as his eyes grew dreamy. He bent his head to press her lips in a lingering kiss then drew back. "I'm not quite sure how I made it all these years without tasting your lips first thing in the morning and last thing at night," he said, punctuating the remark with another kiss. "Not to mention a good part of the day in between." Here he teased the corners of her mouth with quick, light touches. "But," he said with a sigh, "Blanc isn't much inclined toward romantic tolerance this morning." He dropped a last kiss on the tip of her nose. Then he caught her hand, and pulled her, laughing, out the door.

"Rob, I still think I should see Blanche Howard alone this morning. That is, if I can even get up to town." Anne was struggling to pull on a damp sneaker, and she grimaced at the clammy sensation against her foot.

"We've been all through this, Anne. My mind's made up," he said firmly.

"But nothing's going to happen in the Land Office in broad daylight," she insisted. "And I want to see if she's in a more receptive mood before we start badgering her. Ganging up might just make her more adamant."

Rob frowned. "Okay, we won't badger her. I'm perfectly willing to let you set the pace and do the talking. But, I'm not letting you go alone—not anywhere. Damn it, your friend on the phone said 'if anything about the survey

changes,' and that's exactly what's going to happen today."

Anne knew when she was licked, so she finally sighed with resignation and said, "Oh, all right. But it's totally unnecessary." She stood up then, and tugged at the seat of her jeans. They'd stiffened drying on the hanger. After one step she stopped with a look of annoyance.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"My shoes are still wet. They feel awful."

"Easy baby," he sympathized as his arms went around her. "We'd better get going then, so you'll have time to change before we have to be at the Land Office."

But he made no move to release her, and Anne felt her irritation melt away. She let her arms creep around him, and when her lips touched his the heat was immediate, spontaneous.

It would always be like that, she realized as he gathered her closer. Her hands trembled and her body hummed with all the cravings he'd awakened and she abandoned herself to the kiss.

Rob fought to control the storm that raged in him. Some corner of his mind argued that this couldn't be mere desire—it blazed too hot, flowed too swiftly. Desire shouldn't be so desperate.

Admitting the desperation finally let him check the surge of passion. His lips no longer plundered, but were soft and giving upon hers. His hands stilled to hold her gently. The sudden change had her melting against him.

Then a voice at the door, speaking to Monty, brought them apart. With his gaze fastened on Anne's, Rob called, "Come on in, Bill."

"Good morning," the sheriff said. "Got any coffee left?"

Anne moved to the stove to pour a cup for the visitor. "Don't tell anything," she asked, and he shook his head and gave her a smile as he accepted.

Turning to Rob he said, "I thought both of you might be interested to know I've just come down to see Raymond Kincaid. The old boy was tickled as hell when I told him about the survey. Says Henry Schaeffer swindled him out of that little strip of land forty years ago, but he always knew he'd outlast the old skinflint and get it back someday." Then he chuckled and added, "Says he wants to get it ready to plant with the rest of the field and asked me for a note giving him permission to go ahead and plow without waiting for the new survey."

Rob raised his eyebrows and said, "I don't suppose he mentioned why Schaeffer wanted it in the first place."

Ryan sat down at the table, taking a long swallow of his coffee before he answered. "No. He says there was a general survey of that area done in '47, and new deeds were issued to all the landowners. He thought there was a difference at the time, but never pursued it. The surveyors staked the boundary, and he's been going by that line ever since."

"When we talked to Blanche Howard Saturday morning, she seemed to think it was just a little bit of revenge because Schaeffer had come out on the short end in a couple of court actions over boundaries. And that the whole business was just a continuation of the old Noble-Schaeffer land feud."

Ryan nodded. "She's probably right, but somewhere along the line, that strip has taken on more significance for somebody. The question is who? And why?"

Anne shrugged and looked out the window, but she turned back when Rob said, "Anne received another threatening call Saturday night."

"What?" Ryan set his cup down and listened attentively to the details. When Rob had finished, he swore softly,

then said, "You're still planning to meet Mrs. Howard today and ask her about the new survey herself?"

"Yes."

"Anne, if you're really worried about this, I can take you—both of you—into protective custody, find a safe place for you—St. Louis, maybe," Ryan said thoughtfully.

Anne and Rob exchanged glances, then she said, "No, but thank you."

"Okay," Ryan said. "If you change your mind, or receive any more threats, let me know."

"There is one other thing," Anne began, hesitating because of what Rob had told her about Ryan's doubts.

But the sheriff looked at her with interest, so she rushed ahead. "I had another dream yesterday about that murder I saw. I can describe the killer now." She saw disbelief move through the sheriff's eyes and turned to Rob in silent appeal.

"Anne says he looks familiar, but she can't place him," he said, watching Ryan carefully.

The sheriff's expression was noncommittal. "Okay," he said after a few seconds, "I'll get hold of a police artist. It may take a couple of days, because we don't have one in the department. But as soon as I do, you can give him the description, and we'll see what we've got. I'll start looking into Margaret Schaeffer's disappearance today."

"Thank you," Anne said, grateful that she was at least to be given the benefit of the doubt. "I really appreciate it."

Ryan nodded and began to move toward the door. Then, with a snap of his fingers, he turned back saying, "I nearly forgot. If you've got those blowups of that accident out on County Road ready, Rob, I may as well take them now. The insurance company's been calling."

"Yeah, they're in the darkroom," Rob replied, heading down the hall.

The sheriff followed him and grinned as he passed Anne. "It helps to have a photographer friend with a lab when you're in a hurry."

Anne smiled, then turned to gather the empty mugs.

While Rob opened a drawer in the darkroom to lift out a manila envelope, he noticed the sheriff looking at a row of five-by-sevens lying on a counter. They were the ones of Anne, done with Rob's usual finesse. Ryan lingered appreciatively over the close-up, and grinned when he reached the final print of a dripping, furious Anne standing in midstream.

He laid the picture back in its place. "Nice," he observed. Rob handed him the envelope without comment, and Ryan removed the contents to study half a dozen eight-by-ten enlargements showing the mangled wreckage of two cars. He whistled through his teeth and said, "It's a wonder anyone got out of that one alive."

Rob agreed, but only said, "Will she be telling the truth about the killing?"

Ryan studied the face before he replied, "I'll do what I can, but there's nothing to warrant a full-scale investigation at this point. And isn't it just possible, my friend," he added softly, with another glance at Anne's photos, "that you're not being completely objective?"

Blanche Howard rose from the chair by the window to join them when Anne and Rob walked in.

"Good morning, Mrs. Howard." Silently Anne congratulated herself for speaking without any indication of the stress she felt.

"Good morning," the older woman replied quietly, taking in both of them with her glance, and Anne saluted her control, as well.

She opened her purse and produced the papers for Sylvia, who joined them at the counter with a quick, curious look at Mrs. Howard.

Anne introduced them and explained, "We're here to straighten out that incorrect survey, Sylvia."

Sylvia didn't comment on Anne's use of the word "incorrect." "Good. I know you'll be happy to have it settled." She smiled, then reached under the counter for a form and explained, "We'll have to do a new survey, Mrs. Howard. When it's completed, the other property owner will be notified and the deeds issued. Do you want to go on record as the party requesting it?"

"Yes, but before I sign anything to that effect, I'd appreciate your checking personally to see if the other owner is still Raymond Kincaid."

"Of course. I'll do that right now." While Sylvia was gone, Mrs. Howard turned to Anne and said, "I'm thinking of driving out there to tell him about this myself. It seems after all these years the least I can do is offer an apology for what Father did."

Anne glanced at Rob, who gave her a nod. Turning back to Mrs. Howard, she said, "We didn't have a chance to tell you, but the other owner is Mr. Kincaid, just as you thought. And I think your talking to him is a wonderful gesture, but I'm afraid it's already too late to give him the news. Sheriff Ryan told him about it this morning."

"I see," the other woman said somewhat stiffly. "It seems you've been busy. Perhaps you thought I'd change my mind. Understandable enough under the circumstances."

"No, that wasn't it," Anne protested, directing an anxious look at Rob. "When we got back from Groverton on Saturday, someone had ransacked my room and left a threatening note about the survey. That's why we called the sheriff."

Blanche Howard paled and looked from Anne's earnest face to Rob's grim one as though for confirmation. "But that's outrageous," she exclaimed. "Who would do such a thing?"

"Believe me, no one wants the answer to that one more than we do," Rob said, then stopped speaking as Sylvia returned.

The clerk confirmed that all the forms were now, then explained the forms. The paperwork was completed within a few minutes and Anne felt a mixture of relief, elation and dread, now that the deed was accomplished.

Sylvia turned and asked, "You won't be leaving town right away, will you? I'd like to get together before you go."

Careful not to let Rob see her face, Anne replied, "I'll be going pretty soon, Sylvia, but not without saying goodbye."

"Good. Call me," Sylvia replied, and smiled after them as all three left the office.

"Mrs. Howard, how about joining us for a glass of something cool before you head back home?" Rob's question surprised Anne as much as it did the other woman. After giving him a brief, considering look, Mrs. Howard accepted.

They went to Tillie's and sat in a booth. Rob gave Anne's hand a squeeze when she sent him a questioning look.

After they'd ordered, Blanche Howard said, "I'm rather glad you suggested this. I'd like to know more about that threat you say you received over the weekend."

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about," Rob replied. "You see, that wasn't the only one. There was an anonymous phone call that night, as well. The caller threatened not only Anne, but anyone who might help her."

Mrs. Howard paled again. "Anyone who..." She stopped speaking and stared for a moment, then her color returned

with her anger. "Now see here," she began, but Rob held up a hand and interrupted.

"I wondered if anyone had contacted you," he said quietly.

"No, no one, can scarcely be held responsible by whoever this person is."

"I agree," Rob said. "And if no one's been in touch with you, I'd say you don't need to worry. After all, we could have gone ahead with the request without involving you, so you're incidental as far as this caller is concerned."

Mrs. Howard looked slightly mollified and began to say something else, but stopped as their drinks arrived. When the waitress had gone, she searched the two faces across from her and said, "If what you say is true, I'd say the two of you had better keep a sharp eye out."

"We intend to," Rob replied.

They sipped in silence for half a minute, until Anne couldn't stand it any longer. Drawing a breath for courage, she asked, "Mrs. Howard, have you given any more thought to what I said about your sister the other day?"

"I was wondering when you'd get around to that," came the dry response. "Certainly I've thought about it, but I simply can't accept it, I know that's not what you'd hoped to hear, but I think it's only fair to be honest with you, Anne. The whole idea of that incredible scene you described... I know you believe you saw it, and I'm not accusing you of anything deliberate, but it's too farfetched to be real."

"What if I told you I can describe the man, now?" Anne asked.

"Are you saying you've had another of your—visions?"

"Not a vision," Anne corrected, struggling to stay cool. The pressure of Rob's fingers around hers helped. "It's the

reawakening of an old memory. Visions deal with the future."

"Perhaps, but I don't care to discuss it any further. Now, this past half hour has been reasonably pleasant. Let's not spoil it with a disagreement."

There seemed nothing more to say, so Anne nodded stiffly and lifted her glass. Then Mrs. Howard shifted uncomfortably, cleared her throat, and glanced up to meet Anne's questioning look. "If you had some evidence," the older woman said, speaking more gently, "I'd be willing to listen. But all you have are dreams. Surely you must see the impossibility..." She shrugged and left the sentence unfinished.

Evidence, Anne thought. Where did one find evidence in a memory? "Unfortunately," she finally responded, "if there are any clues as to what happened, you'd be more likely to find them than I would."

"I? How do you arrive at that?"

"If there are letters or photographs of your sister's that might shed light on what was happening or who she spent her time with before her disappearance, you'd be the one to have them."

Mrs. Howard regarded her steadily for several seconds, then nodded curtly. "Perhaps," she said at last, and turned abruptly to begin to slide out of the booth.

Frustrated almost to the point of tears, Anne watched her and thought, Damn, doesn't anything reach the woman? "If you'd only listen," she said. "Maybe if I describe the man, you'll recognize him. It's all so clear to me now—your sister's face, that yellow, flowered dress she was wearing, and the—"

"What did you say?"

Blanche Howard had stopped and now sat looking at Anne, who had broken off in midsentence at the intensity in

the woman's voice. Rob put his arm around Anne's shoulders as she answered, "I said I could see her face so clearly, and the man's too—"

"No, no," Mrs. Howard interrupted again. "I mean about the dress."

"She was wearing a yellow sundress. It dipped low in the front, and it had a full skirt, and the fabric had some kind of floral design, something in white."

"Daisies," Blanche Howard provided. "I was with her when she bought it, just a week before my wedding. It was our last shopping spree together, and she fell in love with the dress the minute she saw it in Kramer's window."

"Do you believe me now?" Anne asked Blanche Howard, almost holding her breath while she waited for the answer.

Mrs. Howard regarded her steadily as she replied, "It's obvious you saw my sister at some time. After all, you played next door every day, so it's only reasonable."

"I only saw her once," Anne cried. "Just once, damn it! What does it take to get through to you?"

"Anne, honey," Rob said as he felt her tense under his arm, "take it easy. It's not going to help to get so upset." Then he turned to the other woman with an accusing look and said, "But she's right. What does it take to get through to you?"

Blanche Howard looked extremely displeased, but she remained seated. "Very well," she said. "I'll drive out and look through my sister's personal effects. They're in the storage building behind the house. You're both welcome to come along if you'd like."

The building was packed with furniture and boxes, all covered by a layer of dust. "What a shame to let all of this just sit," Anne commented.

Surprisingly, Blanche Howard agreed. "Yes, isn't it? But I have neither space nor use for it. And believe me, it's better off in here than in the house. There it's exposed to vandalism, I'm afraid. I've been storing it, waiting for Peg to come back and claim it."

There was a forlorn quality in her last statement that hadn't been in her voice before. Anne spent a sympathetic few seconds trying to imagine how it would be to have a sister simply disappear and never know for sure whether she was dead or alive.

Rob had brought several boxes forward from the stacks, and produced a pocketknife to break the seals. Mrs. Howard began going through one of them, and Anne peered at it hopefully and asked, "Are those her things?"

"No, they're father's," the other woman said with a sigh, and began to tuck the flaps closed. "I'm afraid no one ever did label these boxes. I hired someone to pack all the personal items in the house when father died, then had the boxes and the best of the furniture moved out here." She looked around the small building critically. "I suppose it's time I got rid of some of it, but it means going through every box and extracting certain things—books, albums—you know what I mean. I'm sure. Family belongings."

Anne knew. She had recently been through the process herself, and it had been painful. No doubt she had parted with things in haste that she might regret later. But her brothers, both quite a bit older and many years away from the family home, had taken the few treasures they wanted and left the rest to her. And she'd been anxious to leave, to make a brief stop in Noble's Run, then get on with her new life.

Admittedly she hadn't been faced with the uncertainty that had kept Blanche Howard from acting all those years, waiting for someone to return who never could.

While Anne was pondering, the other woman had checked another box, tucked the flaps, and turned to open a third. The sound of breaking sealing tape snapped Anne's attention back to the present.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" she asked.

"I don't know," Mrs. Howard replied as she began lifting wads of packing out of the box. "When I think what they charged me for all this paper just to carry these boxes two hundred feet," she muttered as Rob set three more cartons beside her.

Anne leaned to look over Mrs. Howard's shoulder and caught a glimpse of a curved surface, smooth and shining. She gasped when more of the paper was pulled aside.

Blanche Howard turned to look at her and cried, "For heaven's sake, Anne, what is it? You're not ill, are you?"

Rob stepped quickly around several obstacles to reach her side.

"Anne?" he said as his hands went to her arms to steady her.

Anne barely shook her head. She couldn't draw her eyes away from the small glass globe. It was several seconds before she could answer in a hoarse whisper, "That's it. Oh, my God, that's it."

"What's it? What are you talking about?"

"That glass ball," Anne said. "It's what he hit her with."

Now Rob leaned forward for a closer look, and Mrs. Howard's hand wasn't quite steady as she lifted the object out of the box. It rested on a small, black base and was a little too large, overall, to fit comfortably in her palm. When she moved it, tiny bits of white inside the globe floated in a clear fluid, giving the appearance of falling snow. In its center sat the tiny figure of a snowman.

"This?" she asked in a hushed voice. "You're sure?"

Anne swallowed and nodded. "That, or something very like it," she said shakily. She sat down abruptly on another box and buried her face in her hands, while Rob stood with his hands on her shoulders.

Mrs. Howard set the globe on the floor while she remembered Peg's delight when she'd unwrapped it the Christmas she was ten years old.

"I gave it to her," she said dully. Then she stared at the next item in the box.

Anne saw the horrified expression on Mrs. Howard's face as she stared at a slim book with a dark cover. Mrs. Howard began to turn the pages. They were covered with a small, precise handwriting. "Is that something of Peg's?" Anne asked, still speaking in little more than a whisper.

Blanche nodded. "Her journal."

"She kept a diary," Anne's heart quickened at the implications.

"It wasn't exactly that," Mrs. Howard explained, "but she recorded her thoughts, ideas, sometimes things that happened, whatever interested her at the moment. She'd been doing it for some time. There must have been half a dozen of these. This is one of the older ones."

Their gazes met briefly, then Mrs. Howard began pulling paper out of the box. Within seconds she had produced several more of the journals, pausing only long enough to look at the dates in each one as it emerged.

Anne held her breath. Finally, a stack of seven sat next to the glass sphere, and Blanche Howard was turning the pages of an eighth.

"Oh, dear God," she cried, then sat with her head bowed for a few moments. When she looked at Anne and Rob, her eyes were brimming with unshed tears. "This is it," she said, and her voice broke. "This one covers her time at school

and those couple of months she was back home before she disappeared."

Anne couldn't speak.

"I could almost bring myself to believe she'd left the older ones behind," Mrs. Howard continued slowly. "But not this one." She let her gaze rest on it again. "Not with a third of the pages still blank. She'd never have done that." She looked up again to gaze at them helplessly.

"I'm sorry," Anne finally managed, overwhelmed with sympathy.

Still looking stunned, the older woman spoke in a tightly controlled voice. "Perhaps you'd better start at the beginning and explain all of it. What you saw, why you buried the memory, what's clear now and what isn't."

Once more Anne related the entire sequence of events. Rob knelt beside her, holding her hand, and watched the other woman. When Anne had finished, Blanche Howard said, "And you have no idea who the man might have been? You said there's something familiar about him. What is it?"

"It's nothing I can pinpoint," Anne replied. "Not a single feature or his hair or anything. It's just an impression. I'm sorry. I can't force it to come clearer. If it does, I'll let you know right away."

Mrs. Howard nodded, then swatted at her arm. "The mosquitoes are out already, and I'm highly sensitive to insect bites. The light is fading, too. It must be clouding up again." She paused for a moment, then said, "I want to take these journals home to read tonight. I'll call you in the morning to let you know if there's anything significant in them. Where will I be able to reach you?"

Anne hated the thought of another delay, but clearly had no choice. She looked at Rob who was already writing on a small pad.