

PROLOGUE

The date was August 3rd, my mother's eighty-second birthday. The voice over the phone told of a sudden summer storm. I could picture the crystalline whitecaps and angry winds. I could picture the calm waters, the floating debris, the aftermath of the storm as the quiet voice of sympathy sent its load of tragedy and guilt across hundreds of miles of fiber-optic phone line.

"What remains of a capsized Catamaran has been discovered along the southern shore of Indian Bay. The numbers on the hull show the craft to be registered to a Laura Lanvin."

Mother! My phone hit the floor as the voice droned on. I picked it up. "Please. What did you say?"

"Would you know? Could Mrs. Lanvin have been at the helm? No one saw her leave and so far, there is no sign of a body."

I was speechless. Again, the fury of the summer storm, as I remembered others, battered my mind. Rain pounding the wall of windows in her log home; the manic frenzy of whitecaps hammering clustered rocks with a vengeance. There would be a few raging moments, then quiet, calm. I could visualize the shore alongside mother's dock. Only logs and flotsam bumping against each other, vying for space to rest along the crowded beach, would be left to lend credence to the passing squall.

"Are you there, Mrs. Peterson?"

What to say? How to respond? "Yes...yes, I'm here. The shock. I have no words."

The voice paused, giving me a moment to collect my thoughts. "I know this will be difficult, Mrs. Peterson, but I need some information. If you could answer a few questions I would appreciate it."

"Yes. I realize that. Sorry I was so rude. Please go ahead."

"Mrs. Lanvin was your mother, I believe."

The past tense. Why did he have to use the past tense?

He continued. "Will someone be coming to Polson? There are other children, I believe."

"Yes, yes of course we will be there."

"Do you want us to notify them? The neighbors gave us your name but I'll need names and numbers for the others."

"I was just out there. A week ago. Oh, my God. I should have stayed." Intense, like the storm, the waves of guilt crashed against my heart. "You say there is no body? Where could she be?"

"Mrs. Lanvin, please. Just a few more questions." I took a deep breath. "About the rest of the family. Shall we call?"

"No! No, I'll do it."

"Would she have worn her life jacket? The storm was forecast. Do you know why she would have gone out or where she usually sailed? Search and rescue crews are on the lake now. A possible location to a familiar bay would really help them."

Of course I knew why she went out. It was her birthday. Through the years so many things had happened on her birthday. Some good. Some bad. But always significant. Life jacket? Who knows. Sometimes 'yes.' Sometimes 'no'. Deliberate or accident? With my mother it could have been either.
