

Last Pen Standing

A Stationery Shop Mystery

VIVIAN CONROY



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Chapter One

EVEN THOUGH THE SIGN OF HER DESTINATION WAS already in sight, calling out a warm welcome to Tundish, Montana, “the town with a heart of gold,” Delta Douglas couldn’t resist the temptation to stop her car, reach for the sketchbook in the passenger seat, and draw the orange-and-gold trees covering a mountain flank all the way to where the snow-peaked top began. From this exact point, their autumnal glory was reflected in the water of a clear blue lake that stretched without a ripple. Delta could just see this image reproduced on wrapping paper, notebooks, or postcards.

Until today, all her ideas for her own line of stationery products had lived only in her sketchbook, hidden away in her bag while she worked hard at her regular job as a graphic designer for a large advertising agency. But on Delta’s thirtieth birthday, Gran had handed her an envelope. The elderly lady had had a mysterious smile that had made Delta’s heart race. Leaning over and pecking her on the cheek, Gran had whispered, “Why wait until I’m dead? You’re my only granddaughter, and I’d rather have you spend it now, while I’m still here to see what you do with it.”

Inside the envelope had been a check for an amount that to some people might have represented a trip around the world, a boat, or the down payment on an apartment. But for Delta, it had symbolized independence—a way to leave her steady but stressful job with too many tight deadlines and finally do what she had always dreamed of: start her own business.

During summer holidays at Gran's as a little girl, Delta had sat at the kitchen table for hours drawing her own postcards, experimenting with watercolors and crayons, charcoal and felt-tips. Gran had arranged for her to man her own stall at the church fair and sell off her creations. It had been amazing to see her work bring in actual money. Some locals had even placed orders with her for Christmas cards, which she made back home and sent out to Gran to distribute. That sense of accomplishment had always stayed with her, and in her free time, she had continued to draw, cut, and paste with purpose, creating a portfolio of fun ideas that brightened her days. And suddenly, with Gran's gift, her own stationery shop was finally within reach.

It hadn't taken Delta long to take the plunge: she handed in her resignation at the agency in downtown Cheyenne, Wyoming, and crossed off the days until she could clear her desk, clean out her apartment, and drive away from the city she had called home for more than seven years. With every mile of her two-day road trip to the Bitterroot Valley, she had felt more excitement rush through her veins. She was now officially her own woman, ready to take a leap of faith and dive into a brand-new adventure in the small community tucked away at the foot of these glorious mountains.

Delta breathed in the spicy air, which still carried the warmth of summer. The sun was high in the sky, and the wind that had been tugging at her car during the ride had finally died down. She felt almost hot in her thigh-length knit vest, black jeans, and boots. Sneakers would have been better, but they were safely packed up in the trunk with the rest of her limited luggage. Since she had rented a furnished apartment in Cheyenne and donated to a charity shop most of the small stuff she didn't want to lug around, she hadn't

had to pack a lot of things for the move. Just clothes, her many sketchbooks, pencils and other drawing materials, and laptop. In Tundish, she'd move in with her best friend from college, Hazel, who ran the stationery shop where Delta was going to be co-owner. Her heart beat faster just thinking about it. Her own shop, and the freedom to design products for it. She couldn't wait to get started. Having put the sketchbook with her brand-new autumnal design back on the passenger seat, she hit the gas and zoomed into town.

Tundish had been developed when settlers migrated to Montana for gold and logging. Most houses were made of wood and built in a sturdy Western style, some with dates carved into the front, placing these builds firmly within the nineteenth century. The word *gold* appeared everywhere: in street names, on signs pointing in the direction of an old mine site or to the gold-mining museum. However, Delta wasn't looking for gold. She was on a hunt for something even more precious: the old sheriff's office that housed the shop of her dreams.

Painted powder blue with black trim, the building sat on Mattock Street like a dependable force. It still had the hitching post in front where riders had tied up their horses before storming in to bring word of a bank or train robbery. The faces of the culprits had soon appeared on wanted posters between the barred windows, and even today, such posters were on display, but they no longer advertised the faces of notorious bandits, instead sporting the latest offering in stationery supplies: collectible erasers, washi tape, notebooks, and planners. A chalkboard on the sidewalk invited everyone to a Glitter Galore workshop on Friday night at the Lodge Hotel with a note at the bottom stating: *All materials included and mocktails to celebrate the results*. Sounded like a ton of fun, and Delta would be there.

Her eagerness to take in everything as she drove past had reduced her speed to about zero, and behind her, a car horn honked impatiently. Waving apologetically at the driver, who probably couldn't even see it, Delta accelerated and passed the neighboring hardware store and grocery shop, spying a parking lot beside the town's whitewashed church. She left her car there, then walked back the short stretch to the stationery shop's invitingly open doors. Over them, a wooden plank carried the name *WANTED* in tall letters burned into the wood, underlining that Western vibe. Delta grinned to herself, anticipating Hazel's expression when she saw Delta amble in. She could have called when she was almost there but had decided a surprise was that much more fun.

When she was a few feet away from the doors, her friend darted out of the entrance with a bright-yellow paper arrow gingerly held between the fingers of her outstretched right hand. Whirling to a stop in front of the wanted poster advertising notebooks, Hazel tilted her head to eye the poster, her blond bob swinging around her ears. She positioned the arrow over the right edge of the paper, moving it up and down as if to determine the perfect spot to stick it on. It read *two for one*.

Delta said, "That probably means I'll buy four. Do co-owners get a discount?"

Hazel swung around and whooped, the arrow still dangling from her finger. "Delta! I hadn't expected you yet."

She rushed to Delta and hugged her, then stepped back and held her by the shoulders, looking her over. "It's been too long. I mean, we did chat and all that, but it's not the same as a real meeting in the flesh. I can't believe you'll be living here now! The guest room at my place isn't all that big, but you can find something for yourself soon enough, once

leaf-peeping season is over, and the cottages aren't all rented out to tourists who want to snap pictures of the trees."

"I'm in no rush to find something," Delta assured her. "Rooming together will be just like college." She surveyed Hazel's deep-orange blouse, chocolate-brown pants, and green ankle boots. "Wow, your outfit is fall to the max! Are there boutiques in town with clothes like that?"

"Sure." Hazel pointed across the street. "Right beside Western World, with all those Stetsons and boots on display, we have Bessie's Boutique. I've got a closet full of their pants. They're the perfect fit, and that's so hard to find. Besides, the owner is a friend of mine, so I get first dibs on all the new stock."

"Sounds great. Can I meet this friend?"

"Soon enough. She'll be attending our first workshop together." Hazel gestured at the chalkboard.

"Glitter and mocktails. Sounds posh." Delta nodded at the cocktail glasses drawn beside the workshop title.

Hazel laughed. "On Friday nights, the Lodge Hotel offers live entertainment for the guests and the locals. A big band for dancing, that sort of thing. This Friday night it's their gold miners' annual party, a sophisticated affair that's a throwback to the hotel's heydays when tourism was just beginning to boom. It's really fun, and I thought we should have the workshop tie in to that. Of course, we'll be in our separate space, away from all the high-profile guests dancing the night away, but hey, at least we'll be able to breathe the glam atmosphere."

"Sounds fabulous. I'll snap some pictures for Gran to show her what I'm up to."

"Great. Now..." Hazel clapped her hands together and said, "Guided tour of my shop. *Our* shop, I should say. Come on in." She led the way through the entrance's double doors.

Delta followed with a pounding heart. She had seen photos of the shop, but she had never been to Tundish in person. This would be her first real-life view of her new enterprise.

Hazel gestured around her at all the warm woodwork and the authentic hearth where a pair of dusty cowboy boots stood ready, as if the sheriff would appear any moment to jump into them and set out with his posse. "This used to be where the sheriff sat to wait for news about a bank robbery or a gang of cattle thieves. You can see that I kept his desk and used it to display the newest notebooks."

Delta jumped toward the notebooks, eager to pick through the stacks and take Hazel up on the two-for-one offer. But Hazel laughed and pulled her away. "No, no browsing yet. First, you have to see the rest. There, along the wall, I have shelves for crafting packages. You can find anything, from designing your own planner to making a birthday calendar. Then in that old cell..."

Hazel walked through a barred door that led into a small space with a wooden cot pushed against the wall. Above the cot, replicas of original newspaper pages displayed the faces of the Old West's most notorious gang members, some of them smug, others defiant.

"A few of them spent time in here," Hazel explained, gesturing around her. "And I put up that bit of rope"—she gestured to a rope tied around one of the bars in the narrow window—"to refer to all the escape attempts made. They tied the other end of the rope to a horse and gave it a scare so it would gallop off and tear the bar right from the window. Crude and often not very effective."

"I love it." Delta fingered the rope.

"If you have ideas to give it even more atmosphere, just say so. I'm constantly switching it up to attract people who

normally might not walk into a stationery shop but who do want to breathe everything Western. In my experience, once they are sold on the shop's atmosphere, they also buy a little something, if only to show their appreciation for the way in which I preserved it."

"You did a great job," Delta said. "And that's all the washi tape?" She pointed at countless glass jars filled with rolls of tape.

"Yup. I have unique offerings from Japan and Australia that you can't get anywhere else in the country. You should see me salivate when those parcels come in. I was tempted to keep all the ones with the pandas to myself. And in the other cell, I have all the collectible erasers."

Delta followed her into the second cell, which had a rough table against the wall where small glittery objects were lying beside old-fashioned scales and yellowing papers, folded and unfolded so many times that they were torn along the edges. A plasticized card with information warned visitors not to touch the objects because they were authentic and breakable, while also explaining that mining had often been the seed of crime as people sold fake claims or ended up in fights about gold found.

Hazel gestured across the papers. "Real stake claims donated to me by the gold-mining museum. They have a ton of those and didn't mind me having some. They get attention here instead of sitting in an archive."

"I love the fake gold clumps. At least I assume they are fake?"

"Created by a loving volunteer at the mining museum who also puts these into small wooden mining carts they sell as souvenirs." Hazel gestured to the bunk bed against the wall. "There's our offering of collectible erasers."

Delta wanted to sit on her haunches to study the products closer, especially the miniature makeup replicas, including a blusher box that could be opened to reveal two colors and a little brush inside. But Hazel tapped her on the shoulder and gestured to follow her out of the cell, back into the main space where the sunlight through the windows gave the wooden surfaces an extra-warm glow.

Hazel pointed. "Now, there in the back we have the old umbrella stands with all the wrapping paper. Above, an old clothes rack with gift bags."

Bags in several shapes and sizes were hung by their ribbon handles from the rack. They came in bright colors with glitter or in intricate geometric patterns that created visual depth. Delta closed in and spotted a few Christmassy ones among the offerings. Picking out one with a cute design of cocoa mugs and sweet treats, she held it up to Hazel. "Candy canes already?"

Hazel laughed. "Christmas themes sell well all year round. There's just something quintessentially cozy about them. I've already scheduled some early November workshops we can do to teach people how to make menus and name tags to use on the dinner table, or teach pro-wrapping skills where we turn simple presents into gifts *extraordinaire*. I'll show you my idea list later on. I'm sure you have lots you want to add."

Delta nodded eagerly.

"But first to wrap up our tour: here's the old weapon rack where the sheriff could grab his double-barreled shotgun, now used to hold all my wrapping ribbons, stickers, and tags. The puffy stickers are selling especially well with kids."

Hazel smiled widely as she encompassed the whole

shop with a wave of both her outstretched arms. "Now you're free to take a closer look at whatever you want to. And yes, co-owners do get a discount."

Delta made a beeline back to the old sheriff's desk and took the top notebook off a stack. "These dogs are adorable." Her finger traced the rows of small dachshunds, poodles, and Labs that marched across the hard cover. "In the city, I never got around to having a dog, you know. I was away most of the time, and it just seemed sad leaving him or her alone in the apartment all day long. I wonder if I could have a puppy here."

She opened the cover and leafed through the pages. "Wow, every page actually has a different dog. Aw, this border collie puppy is chasing a ball!"

"Remember that it's two for the price of one now! Speaking of, where did I put that arrow?" Hazel checked both hands and then began to look around her. "Maybe I dropped it outside?"

"Then it must be gone. There was a strong wind when I drove over here. Or someone stepped on it and it stuck to their shoe."

Ignoring Delta's predictions, Hazel ambled outside, scanning the pavement for the missing arrow.

Delta was completely engrossed in choosing the four notebooks she planned to purchase. Four initially seemed like a lot for someone who already had more notebooks than she knew what to do with, but in no time, she had selected six and was eyeing two more: one with dancing flamingos and one with letters that formed hidden words. Why not take them all?

Vaguely, she heard a footfall behind her, probably Hazel entering the store.

Suddenly, she felt a slight tug at her hair, and someone said, "Two for one. Yes, please."

Turning around, Delta found herself face-to-face with a grinning man with wild blond curls and brown eyes, a dimple in his cheek. He wore a crisp, white shirt, unbuttoned at the neck, and dark-blue jeans with a silver belt buckle of a running horse. He held up the bright-yellow arrow. "This was stuck to your back, half in your hair."

Delta flushed. "It must have gotten hung up there when Hazel said hello to me. She's looking for that arrow. I'll take it out to her." She reached out her hand, and the man put the arrow in it. His infuriating grin stayed in place. "I haven't seen you here before. New to town?"

"I'm coming to live here. To run Wanted, with Hazel."

"Really? She didn't mention that to me." The man looked puzzled. Delta couldn't figure out why this man would think Hazel should have told him that Delta was moving to Tundish. Could it be her friend was dating him? Hazel hadn't mentioned anything about it, but then again, over the past few weeks, their conversations had been focused on practical details for Delta's move and the financial arrangements for co-ownership of Wanted, so maybe Hazel had figured she could tell her once she was in town.

Hazel's most recent relationship had ended in heart-break when she found out the guy had been cheating on her. Delta had assumed her friend wouldn't have been eager to dive into something new, especially not one with a man whose athletic physique and cute dimple probably got a lot of female attention.

"Oh, there it is." Hazel buzzed up to Delta and reached out for the arrow with a smile. "I had no idea where it had

disappeared to.” Ignoring the man completely, she hurried outside again to put it in place.

To make up for her friend’s rather brusque behavior, Delta asked quickly, “Is there anything you need from the shop?”

The man picked up a notebook with peacocks, their large purple-and-turquoise feathers adorned with little sparkly gold foil elements in them. It was the first on top of the stack, and he didn’t look inside or check the price, just handed it to Delta as if he couldn’t wait to get this chore over with. “Can I have this?”

“Of course, but”—Delta knew men often didn’t like shopping, but still, he was entitled to a second notebook, under the deal advertised outside—“it’s two for the price of one, so you can pick another for free. I can find you one that matches what you already have. Blue and gold...” She wanted to dig into the stacks, to extract those spines that looked like they might offer a color match, but he waved her off. “I only need one. Can you gift wrap it for me?”

“Certainly.” Telling herself that the customer was always right, no matter how illogical their decisions might be, Delta took the notebook from his hand and walked to the cash register, feeling a little giddy at making her first sale. This was awesome, even better than she had imagined. She detected several rolls of wrapping paper stacked under the counter. “Blue and gold would be a perfect match.” Delta tore off a piece the right size for the notebook. “Now, where’s the tape dispenser?” She glanced across the length of the counter, then knelt down to look for it below.

Tilting forward to peer behind a stack of paper bags imprinted with the Wanted logo, she pushed herself up a

little. The top of her head made contact with the counter's edge, and she winced.

"Are you OK?" the customer asked, leaning his hands on the counter.

"Yes." Delta rubbed the sore spot. "But a tape dispenser is nowhere in sight. Maybe I can dig out scissors somewhere. And a loose roll of tape. Ah, here. No, this roll is empty. Let's see what's in here."

She pulled a plastic basket toward her that was brimming with elastic bands, pens, pencils, and scraps of paper with illegible notes written on them. This space needed to get more organized. She dug through the items in a rush. "Sorry about the delay."

"No problem." The customer rocked back on his heels, a surreptitious glance at his watch belying his casual reply.

Hazel came back in, and he immediately turned to her and lowered his voice in a tone of confidentiality. "I'm not eager to get back to the Lodge. Rosalyn is having a fit over the gold miners' party. The photographer she managed to get after lots of calls to friends in the right places decided to drop her like a brick for a chance to shoot some pop group in Vegas. I told her I could take a decent shot, but she just glared at me like I was suggesting she hire the seven dwarves. But she'll come around. She can't get anybody professional on such short notice."

"Why doesn't she ask Jonas?" Hazel said. "He's a professional, even if he usually has deer in front of his lens and not people."

"Now, there's an idea." The man smiled at Hazel, who kept her aloof expression in place and started to reorganize the gift bags, which were already perfectly aligned.

Delta finally found tape and wrapped the peacock

notebook, putting a gold ribbon around the parcel. "There you go."

He put a ten-dollar bill on the counter. "Never mind the change. See you Friday, then." Picking up the parcel, he walked out with an easy, athletic stride.

"Never mind the change?" Delta hitched an eyebrow at Hazel. "I thought people only tipped waiters."

"Oh, that's Ray Taylor. The Taylor family used to own half of the town. People worked at their Lodge Hotel or delivered goods to it or organized trips for guests staying at it. They're a household name in the region. You just work with them, not against them."

"The Lodge Hotel is where we're doing the workshop Friday night, right?" Delta wasn't sure if she was pleased or annoyed at the idea that she might run into Mr. Taylor again.

Hazel nodded. "Ray never wanted any part of the hotel business and left town to play football. He did very well for a couple of seasons, had a string of high-class girlfriends and was even set to be drafted into the NFL. But he was injured last spring, and there are rumors his career is over. Ray is the last person to say a word about it, but the fact that he's back in town and suddenly snuggling up to his father suggests he's looking for a way back into the family fold. Needless to say, the other Taylors are not pleased."

Delta frowned. "Let me guess. He has an older brother who worked his butt off for the hotel and now sees charming Ray sailing back into town and into his father's good graces."

"*Her* father's good graces. The eldest Taylor is a daughter. Rosalyn runs the hotel like a pro. Made a lot of changes, pulled in new guests. Saved it from mediocrity, really. I mean, there are so many places to stay now. They can't depend on

their former monopoly in the region anymore. Mr. Taylor Sr. doesn't seem to see that clearly, but Rosalyn does. She's invested everything in the hotel's survival. It's still a family business; her younger sister, Isabel, is working at the hotel as hostess, welcoming the guests and arranging for all the entertainment. She got Finn a job there."

Delta stared at Hazel. "Your brother Finn?" She had had no idea that Hazel's brother had moved to Montana. Hazel hadn't mentioned him in ages, suggesting they were barely in touch. Last thing Delta knew about him was that he had graduated college with flying colors and started a job with a top-notch insurance agency in Los Angeles. And now all of a sudden he was living in Tundish?

Hazel grimaced, as if the subject were painful to her. "Yes, he came here last summer for the boating and mountaineering. Then he met Isabel, and they fell in love. She got him a job as wildlife guide at the hotel."

"Wildlife guide?" Delta echoed. "I thought Finn was in finance. Insurance and that sort of thing. Or am I confusing him with someone else you told me about?"

"No, he was in insurance, but it just made him unhappy." Hazel made a wide hand gesture. "He was always sporty and loved water, the great outdoors, a sense of freedom. He hated city life with all the concrete and the never-ending hum of the traffic. He's much more at ease here, bunking with another guide who has a cabin in the middle of nowhere. The deer are at his window in the mornings, he says. It would all be perfect, if Isabel would just stop pestering him about getting engaged at Christmas this year."

Delta tried to gauge her friend's feelings on the subject. Did Hazel not like Isabel as a person, or was she uneasy about the idea that her brother would become a part of an

influential family whose lifestyle might be miles away from her own? Did she think that Finn, who hadn't liked high-pressure city life, wouldn't cope well with the demands his new family might make on him?

She tried to sound casual as she probed, "And you're not a fan of the match?"

Hazel sighed. "I'm not sure if they're really a fit. They're like day and night, you know, Isabel always in high heels, Finn in a fleece jacket and shoes full of mud. He still has this college student attitude, showing up for work when he wants to and calling off when he has suddenly thought up something else to do."

Delta wondered for a moment if Finn had also had this attitude during his work in LA. His bosses wouldn't have liked it. Had Finn really given up on his insurance job because he didn't like the city, or had he been fired?

Hazel continued, "On the other hand, Finn did think up some clever ideas to entertain the hotel guests, and Isabel incorporated them into their activity calendar. She claims they're a golden duo. That is, they used to be until Ray showed up, disturbing the balance."

Yes, Ray Taylor was someone who could disturb things, Delta readily accepted. He had a self-confidence that was hard to overlook. Maybe his siblings were afraid that, even after many years away, Ray had the power to convince his father he was the best person to run the Lodge Hotel.

"Why were you so rude when he came into the store?" Delta asked.

Hazel shrugged. "There have been rumors I'm after Ray because I'm doing my workshops at the hotel. People whisper that I just want to see him. But I don't have the space needed for the workshops here at Wanted. I guess it's

because Finn is with Isabel now, and people are sure I want a part of the Taylor pie as well."

Hazel shook her head impatiently. "I know trouble when I see it. Ray isn't the type to stick around. He'll just stir things up all over town and then run off again, leaving others with the mess. When he does leave, I don't want to be caught in the middle. Same goes for Finn."

Delta studied her friend more closely. Hazel sounded a little too protective, given the fact that her brother was a grown-up who had to make his own choices and even his own mistakes if need be. There had to be more to Finn and his job at the Lodge Hotel that Hazel wasn't telling her right now, but she figured her friend would confide in her later when she was settled in.

Hazel smiled again. "I'm so glad you're here now and we can do things together, starting with the workshop on Friday night. It's fully booked, with twenty participants. Some of them are regulars. They call themselves the Paper Posse."

"Posse?" Delta repeated, not sure she had heard right.

"Yes, that was Mrs. Cassidy's idea. She has a slight outlaw obsession. You know these genealogy sites where you can build your family tree, dating back centuries, to see whether you happen to be related to royalty or to a famous inventor?"

Delta nodded. "I've thought about giving it a try, but it's a lot of work, I heard. Especially if you want to go back farther than just a few generations."

"Right. Mrs. Cassidy has been searching for years now, not for a link to the British Crown, but to find an outlaw in her family tree. To quote her, 'Those who stray outside the law are often more interesting than those who adhere to it.'"

"That's an original opinion. Well, as long as she

doesn't bring any outlaws to our workshops, I guess it can't do any harm."

Delta looked around her and breathed the scent of paper. The sun slanting in through the windows made all the colors come even more alive. Outside, traffic hummed, and a pigeon cooed as he strode by the open shop doors, pecking the pavement in search of food scraps.

Everything was just that little bit more leisurely here, laid-back, at ease. Finally, a break from hectic city life, late-night hours, and deadlines. And all because of Gran. The love of crafting that had been born at her kitchen table all those years ago would now provide Delta's bread and butter. Play with paper and make money off it too.

Delta smiled and vowed to herself that she was about to make her grandmother very proud.

Chapter Two

HAZEL CLEARED HER THROAT. "READY TO LEAVE?"

Delta spun around, feeling kind of caught red-handed, standing in front of the long mirror in Hazel's narrow hallway. She smoothed down the sleek, ankle-length dress she had worn before to office parties. "I'm just worried about the color. Is the red too vibrant? Maybe as workshop host I should blend in with the wallpaper? Like a good butler: there when you need him and otherwise invisible."

"Not at all. They have to get to know you tonight and the outfit is their first clue to your personality. Without frills, energetic, and bright." Hazel winked at her. "Fits you to a tee. What do you think of my pantsuit?" Spreading her arms, Hazel turned in a circle so Delta could admire the black, velvet suit from all sides. She knew her friend hated dresses and hardly ever wore them. "Perfect," she assured her. "That gold blouse underneath adds a festive touch. Just right for a Glitter Galore theme. But what's that green stuff in your hand?"

"Oh..." Hazel glanced at the leaves. "Fresh mint I just cut for the mocktails. I'll put it in this bag with the other ingredients. Sparkling water, juices, fresh raspberries. The Lodge will provide the glasses, shaker, and strainer. And Rosalyn assured me a waiter would take in the ice we need around the time we're done with the crafting and ready to create our own mocktails. You carry this bag, I'll take the box with paper goodies." Hazel grabbed the big cardboard box from the side table at the front door and gestured for Delta to follow her.

Outside, they got into Hazel's Mini Cooper and turned left onto the road that led to the Lodge. Like the rest of the town, it was built on the edge of the lake, but higher up into the foothills, so it offered a gorgeous view of the water and the snow-capped mountains behind it.

Delta drank in the scene, half-twisted backward in her seat, while Hazel steered the car up the drive leading to the hotel's large parking lot. It was so full they had to drive around a couple of times to find an empty space.

"Glad I didn't come in something like that." Hazel nodded at a large, dark-gray SUV parked a few spaces away from them. "It would have been hard to fit into this narrow space. Can you squeeze out?"

Delta opened her door carefully and managed to wring herself through the opening with the bag full of fresh ingredients. The invigorating scent of the mint wafted at her.

A horse neighed in the distance. Delta turned her head around to locate the sound.

Hazel laughed. "Welcome to Tundish. That's not just any horse, but a Taylor horse. The stables are down that road there. They have a couple of horses of their own and stable some for friends. Both Isabel and Rosalyn did show jumping when they were teens, but I suppose they don't have time for extensive training anymore."

Voices resounded from the hotel entrance where people were gathering, exchanging greetings and interested questions about how they had been since last year.

"You said the party was an annual thing, so for how many years has the hotel been organizing it?" Delta asked.

"About a hundred, I guess."

Delta glanced at her friend. "You're kidding me, right?"

"Absolutely not." Hazel grinned at Delta's astonishment.

Balancing the cardboard box with crafting materials in her arms, she fell into step beside her. “Gold miners’ parties are a really old tradition in the area. They started in the twenties when tourism around the lake began to develop. People wanted to get out and explore the great outdoors, but they also wanted to enjoy the comfort and luxury they had at home. The hotel offered just that. Entertainment was part of the experience. They hired singers, dancers, pantomimists. And they also had the guests perform little plays and sketches. They’ve held on to that tradition ever since. The guests’ contributions are a major part of the show tonight.”

They were at the entrance now, and a tall woman with straight, dark hair, dressed in a purple gown with silver embroidery on the bodice, came over to them. Elbow-length gloves emphasized the twenties vibe of her outfit. “Hazel! Everything is ready for the workshop in the boardroom. I hope you emailed your participants to turn right immediately after entering the hotel? We don’t want them mixed up with our party guests.” There was a slight hint of disapproval in the woman’s voice.

Hazel said quickly, “Of course. Delta, this is Rosalyn Taylor. She manages the hotel.”

“Pleased to meet you.” Delta shook the woman’s hand. She tried to find a resemblance to Ray in Rosalyn’s features, but the guarded eyes and polite but chilly smile formed a stark contrast to the golden-boy joviality Ray exuded. Here was a woman who took life seriously. Someone who probably made a lot of demands on herself and others.

Delta said, “The hotel is in a stunning location. The view of the lake is breathtaking.”

“Thank you.” Rosalyn’s gaze fell over Delta’s shoulder. “Jonas! You’re late.”

A tall man with dark hair came over, looking slightly uncomfortable in his tuxedo. He had a professional-looking camera with a long lens around his neck and a dog leash in his right hand. A large German shepherd bounded beside him, sniffing the air and wagging his big, bushy tail.

Rosalyn Taylor frowned down on the dog. "I'd hoped you'd have the sense to leave the dog at home. You're here to work."

"I always bring Spud when I come to work. He'll stay wherever I put him and wait until I'm done." Jonas spoke without raising his voice.

"I can take Spud into our workshop," Hazel offered. "Hey, boy." She seemed to want to free a hand to pat the dog, but the big box in her arms wouldn't let her. "How does the theme Glitter Galore grab you?"

The German shepherd barked enthusiastically, as if he couldn't wait to get started.

Hazel laughed and said to Delta, "He's hardly a puppy, but I'm sure you'll love him anyway. Can you take the leash?"

Rosalyn Taylor turned impatiently to Jonas. "We want to do the family photo at the fireplace before the party starts. I'll tell everyone to assemble." She marched into the hotel on her high heels, Jonas following her after he had pressed the dog lead into Delta's hand. "Introductions will have to wait till later," he called to her as he left.

Spud watched his boss go without pulling to go after him. His tail was low and his eyes alert.

Hazel whispered, "That's Jonas Nord. He's a wild-life photographer working in the area. He also helps Finn with guided tours when it's a busy season, like with the leaf peeping tours now. Apparently, Ray listened to me and told Rosalyn to hire Jonas for the photos tonight."

Hazel sounded as if she was slightly surprised at her own success. With a grin, she added, "I bet Jonas had to borrow that tux. He's not the type to have a closet full of suits."

"It does look good on him."

Hazel looked at Delta curiously. "Oh?"

Recognizing the implications of that *oh* from prior occasions where Hazel had tried to pair her off with friends she considered totally right for Delta, Delta added quickly, "Just a factual observation. I'm here to settle in and work, not...get entangled in anything, you know." At least for the first few weeks she could do without matchmaking attempts.

"Sure." Hazel didn't sound convinced, but as people came up behind them, they moved on inside.

The hotel lobby had its reception desk on the right and a seating arrangement of cozy leather sofas on the left. Decked out with sheepskins, the sofas were grouped around a low, wooden coffee table holding a silver tray with burning candles. A big fireplace, in which a log fire crackled, spread the scent of pine. The marble mantelpiece was full of silver-framed photographs. Rosalyn stood a few feet away from the fireplace, explaining something to Jonas, who nodded repeatedly. A woman who looked like a younger version of Rosalyn came up to them with a tall, broad-shouldered man with blond hair, who had his arm around her waist. An elderly man with stooping shoulders and a sharply etched face followed the couple. They were all in evening wear.

Hazel whispered to Delta, "There you have Isabel, Finn, and Mr. Taylor."

Delta had never met Hazel's brother before, but right now seemed like a bad time to go over for introductions. Rosalyn looked flurried as she directed everyone to a spot for the photograph. Stepping back to take his place, Finn

collided with Mr. Taylor and excused himself profusely. Rosalyn gestured at him, her hand up to her throat, making a folding gesture, and Finn, even redder in the face now, reached up to check his collar and bow tie. A smug smile flashed across Rosalyn's features, vanishing as she gave new orders to get everyone where she wanted them.

Jonas was waiting patiently, holding the camera in his palm. His gaze swept the room, and his eyes met Delta's briefly. Delta looked away to avoid the suggestion she was staring at him. She was only interested in the Taylors' family dynamics. Hazel had seemed anxious about the prospect of Finn getting into this family to stay, and she wanted to find out why.

Hazel jabbed her with an elbow. "This way to the boardroom where we're setting up shop tonight." They passed the reception desk, which held several brass, horse-shaped stands with information leaflets, to reach one of several oak-paneled doors leading off the lobby.

Through the first of these doors, Delta and Hazel entered a large room with an oval table in the center surrounded by comfortable velvet pile chairs. A smaller table against the wall held cocktail glasses, a shaker, strainer, and several plastic bowls for leftovers. Delta put the bag with fresh ingredients for the mocktails on the table, leaning it against the wall. On this wall hung a gorgeous oil painting of a running horse, while the wall opposite had a watercolor of the lake with boats bobbing on it.

"There we are." At the head of the oval table, Hazel put the cardboard box down and opened the flaps. "I'll put everything the participants can choose from here. You'd better return to the lobby and make sure the participants don't go the wrong way. Rosalyn seemed a bit tense about

them getting mixed up with her guests. You can easily recognize our arrivals as they won't be in evening dress but in their normal clothes. Mrs. Cassidy will also have her dog with her. Nugget is a Yorkie."

Delta nodded and left again, positioning herself close to the entry doors without being in anybody's way. A swinging sax coming from open doors beside the elevators on the far end of the lobby suggested the party would be held there, and Delta would have loved a peek at the way the room was decorated for the big event. But thinking of Rosalyn's insistence that they keep to their own territory, she controlled herself, focusing her attention on the fireplace where the photo session was now in full swing.

Jonas went over to Isabel and touched her elbow, directing her to hold her arm differently. Apparently, it had been just outside the frame. On that arm Isabel wore a rather impressive gold bracelet with precious stones. Delta wondered if it was fake or real. Real probably, considering the Taylors' wealth.

Isabel spoke up, "Shouldn't Ray be in the picture as well? I could go get him. I think I just saw him walk down..."

"No, he doesn't have to be in our pictures," Rosalyn snapped.

Delta held her breath, waiting to see if another member of the Taylor family wanted to object, but the father's face was inscrutable, Isabel kept smiling, and Finn even looked slightly smug, as if he were happy that his future brother-in-law was being excluded from the annual family portrait.

Jonas took a few shots and walked forward to show them to Rosalyn, but Rosalyn muttered something, waving her hand, and rushed off. Jonas stared after her as if he wanted to call her back, then shrugged and hurried to the

open doors beside the elevators. The sax was now joined by a strumming double bass, and Delta couldn't help tapping her foot to the rhythm.

A few ladies in their fifties entered the lobby, chatting busily. They were all casually dressed in jeans or corduroy pants, with long woolen sweaters or cardigans on top. One of them, sporting a knee-length woolen coat and big scarf printed with red-and-gold fall leaves, carried a Yorkie on her arm, the dog's fluffy head moving in the direction of the music as if she wanted to explore where it was coming from.

Recalling that Hazel had mentioned something about Mrs. Cassidy's dog, Delta went up to them. "Mrs. Cassidy? You're here for the Glitter Galore workshop, right? That way please."

"I've been before," Mrs. Cassidy assured her and directed the other women to the first oak-paneled door beyond the reception desk. Lingering to unbutton her woolen coat with one hand while holding her furry companion with the other, she said to Delta, "You must be Delta Douglas. Hazel mentioned to me over the phone that you would be here tonight." She reached out her free hand. "Orpa Cassidy. I'm so excited that you're joining Wanted and the Paper Posse."

Delta shook her hand. "Pleased to meet you. I still feel like it's a bit unreal. But this morning I had some business cards printed, proclaiming myself co-owner, and now it is starting to sink in." Delta grinned as the exhilaration of holding her very own glossy business cards washed over her again. She had had just fifty printed at the local printing shop, but it felt like another step into her new life.

She gestured over her shoulder at the boardroom door. "They are in there, with the paper crafting material, so you can take one along if you want to. Then you have my cell

phone number and email, should you want to get in touch with me.”

“Perfect, I’ll do that. Oh, before you go in, you should have a look at the photographs over there.” Mrs. Cassidy waved to encompass the right-hand wall, which was lined with framed photographs, some black-and-white, others in color. “They’re fascinating. The Lodge Hotel was much smaller in the past, with more trees around it. Unfortunately, they had to make way for a parking lot. You can just see the vehicles change over time from the Ford Model T of the roaring twenties to the Porsches and SUVs of the present-day visitors. The clothes are fascinating as well, showing how people originally went hiking and boating in the same clothes they wore when they went dining, and only over time, outdoor clothing and plastic raincoats came along.”

“I love knowing a bit more about the history of places.” Delta smiled at Mrs. Cassidy. “Hazel told me you’re into genealogy, but it’s local history as well?”

Mrs. Cassidy shrugged it off as if it were but a small matter. “I work at the gold-mining museum, so I’m afraid sometimes I get carried away by my love of the past.” She leaned over and explained in a confidential tone, “I’ve studied outlaws as much as I can. Did you know they actually had group portraits made of their gangs? Like they weren’t afraid of the law at all. And there were also female gang members. Seamstress by day, bank robber by night.”

She lowered her voice to a whisper. “Some of their loot was never recovered. I strongly believe there’s gold hidden around Tundish. And someday we’ll find it. Won’t we, Nugget?” Mrs. Cassidy cuddled the Yorkie in her arms.

Before Delta could respond, Mrs. Cassidy said, “Oh, Hazel is waving at us from the boardroom door. I guess she

wants to get started on the workshop.” She waved back at Hazel, crying, “Coming!” and rushed over, her red-and-gold scarf flapping behind her.

Delta stared after her, almost forgetting she had to follow suit. Of course, gold had a mythical ring to it, but to believe you could still uncover an old stash... Seemed like with Mrs. Cassidy around, there would never be a dull moment.

When all twenty participants were inside the boardroom, the last one rushing in with red cheeks and hurried apologies about her babysitter being late, Delta closed the door and Hazel welcomed everyone and explained the theme for the night. “Glitter Galore means we’re going to make something extravagant to treat ourselves or somebody else. I bet you all know some kind of inspirational quote containing a word like ‘shining,’ ‘diamond,’ ‘gold,’ ‘priceless,’ etc. We’re first going to hand letter that quote onto a piece of cardboard. Hand lettering means that you vary the letters in size and font, completely by your own design. You can make them nice and sleek or big and broad, filling them in with colors or glitter or even small, sticky gemstones. You can then decorate the background, going as extravagant and over the top as you like. Remember, this is really meant to convey luxury and shine.”

Hazel pointed to all the material laid out at the head of the table: glitter paper, feathers, glitter paint and spray, sequins, ribbons, and other small bits and bobs to use for decoration. “Feel free to choose anything you want. If you need help with attaching materials or deciding on colors, ask us. We’re here to ensure you end up with something you

really love. Oh, and to reward ourselves when we're done, I've brought everything to make mocktails." She gestured at the table along the wall with the glasses and shaker. "There's no alcohol involved, so we can all drive home safely."

The ladies gave her a spontaneous round of applause, the one closest to Delta remarking to their neighbor that she had never had mocktails before and couldn't wait to try one.

Spud was walking about the room, sniffing here and there. He halted at a purse someone had deposited in a chair and began to bark.

"No, Spud," Hazel said. "No."

The dog looked at her expectantly.

Hazel shook her head. "No."

She explained to the women who studied the dog with interest, "He's a retired K-9 officer. He was never used to find drugs or cell phones, but money. Is there a lot of cash in your purse?"

All the participants laughed. "Caught red-handed," someone commented to the owner of the purse.

"Is he yours?" a woman asked Hazel.

Hazel shook her head. "His owner is doing photography at the gold miners' party tonight. I'm just babysitting him."

"I think he's babysitting us," the woman said, nodding in Spud's direction.

Disappointed that no search of the purse would be allowed, Spud lay down with his bushy head on his front paws. He never stopped scanning the room with his amber eyes, keeping an eye on everyone present.

Nugget came over to him to make friends, but Spud ignored the energetic fur ball shooting around him.

Delta sat down beside one of the ladies, who wanted to make a sequined mask with feathers on the side for

her granddaughter. It didn't really involve an inspirational quote like Hazel had mentioned, but it was very glam, and Delta was sure the girl would love it. "If you leave room here to insert two little holes for an elastic band, she can really wear it."

"What a great idea, thank you."

Delta smiled and picked up her own piece of cardboard to decorate. She knew exactly what phrase to write to celebrate her first workshop as co-owner of Wanted. It could go on her mood board, or maybe she'd send it to Gran.

"*Living the dream*," she wrote on the paper, the word "*living*" flowing in elegant curly letters, with *the* in bold, square print and *dream* in thinner strokes, which she wanted to fill up with glittery gemstones. Several women watched over her shoulder to see how they could apply the techniques to their own creations.

Mrs. Cassidy, who had obviously done hand lettering before, was working on a long quote, using several styles and sizes of letters while still maintaining perfect balance and symmetry on the page.

Soon, everyone was spraying and cutting and gluing to their hearts' delight. To drive the sharp chemical scents of paint and glue out of the room, Delta opened the french doors that led outside. She stood for a few moments, looking at the stunning view toward the lake and the mountains. With the sun down, the sky was showing small specks of stars and a sliver of silvery moon.

The main door opened, and a woman came in, her blond hair piled high on her head, her sparkly, blue-tasseled dress moving above her knees as she walked. She halted abruptly, glancing around with a slightly confused look.

Delta went over at once. "I think you have the wrong

room. You're a guest at the gold miners' party, right? We're doing a paper craft workshop here. Separate events."

"Oh! But I love stationery," the woman said, clasping her hands in front of her. "Can I have a look at what you're making?"

Without waiting for confirmation, the woman walked around the table and looked at what the participants were creating. "Very posh," she cried, spotting the sequined mask with feathers. She picked up a purple feather and blew it away from her hand so it fluttered slowly to the floor. She burst into a fit of laughter.

Delta cringed. The too-loud laughter and the woman's slightly tottering steps on her high heels suggested she had drunk a little too much.

And it was only nine in the evening.

But as the woman was probably a wealthy acquaintance of the Taylors, or maybe even a hotel guest, Delta didn't dare send her away. She just hoped the participants were so wrapped up in their creations that they didn't mind this odd intrusion too much.

The woman stopped at the table against the wall where, beside the cocktail glasses, Hazel had laid out some paper goodies for the women to browse over during the promised after-workshop mocktails. She grabbed a notebook with gold foil on the front and cooed, "How lovely. Can I buy this? I really need this. Yes, and this one..."

She chose a silver one with robins. "I'll put them in a bag myself."

She grabbed a Wanted paper bag and fumbled to slip the notebooks inside. She folded the bag closed and put it aside. "I'll come get them later. And then I'll pay you. OK? OK!"

Delta exchanged a quick look with Hazel.

Hazel shrugged. She said to the woman, "Thank you for your interest. We have a much larger offering at the shop in town. If you're coming that way, please feel free to drop by. Wanted, in the old sheriff's office on Mattock Street. You can't miss it."

"Thank you," the woman slurred, smiling at Hazel. She walked back to the door, again with those slightly faltering steps. She waved a hand in the air by way of a general good-bye and left, banging the door shut.

"How odd," one of the participants said, her red felt-tip hovering over the paper where she was decorating an *L* with tiny roses.

The woman next to her was carefully attaching sequins into a difficult symmetrical pattern. "I wonder if she'll remember anything about this tomorrow morning."

Mrs. Cassidy smiled indulgently. "I suppose she isn't having a very good time. Vera White is visiting from Miami. She's married to one of those two brothers who organize dolphin-spotting trips in the Florida Keys. Ralph and Herb White. You must have seen them around town. They're leaving their business cards *everywhere*. 'Your day isn't right without a trip with White' and 'With White there's always a dolphin in sight,' that sort of tacky thing."

She grimaced, and the other ladies laughed as she continued. "I even found one pinned to the bulletin board in the church hallway. Needless to say, I took it down. Advertising is fine with me, but not in church."

"Why do you think she isn't having a good time?" Hazel asked, breaking open a fresh pack of rhinestones for the participant beside her. "Doesn't she like mountains and the lake? If the Whites are into boat trips, you'd expect they can appreciate all the outdoor activities offered around Tundish."

"Well, it's a case of non-aligned interests, I'd say," Mrs. Cassidy responded. "The brothers are both middle-aged men, a bit addicted to their work, I suppose. Rumor has it they are here to find new business opportunities. They've been here for three weeks already and show no intention of leaving."

Mrs. Cassidy reached for the glue gun, continuing pensively, "On top of this business trip thinly veiled as a vacation, Vera White has to spend it with her sister-in-law, Amanda, who is at least twenty years older than her and the polar opposite personality-wise. While Vera is outgoing and bubbly, Amanda is quiet, someone you barely notice. They were at the museum the other day, you know. I showed them around. I think you can always deduce a lot from the way in which people interact with each other. Or do not interact."

Delta was amazed at the knowledge Mrs. Cassidy had about people who were apparently from out of town, but her Paper Posse friends seemed to think this perfectly normal and eagerly awaited more gossip.

Hazel spoke quickly, refocusing the group. "Yes, well, I'm glad she liked the notebooks. I'm sure she'll be back later to get them like she said. How's everyone doing? Need any advice? Oh, that looks very nice."

Delta assisted someone who needed a ton of small, sticky gemstones for her quote, tearing them off the sheet with tweezers and then carefully pasting them in place. It was a very delicate job, and she found herself at it with a frown and the tip of her tongue between her lips. A headache was forming behind her eyes because of the exertion and the heat in the room. The breeze from the open french doors barely reached her, and she longed to feel its cool touch on her cheeks.

As if Hazel had read her thoughts, she came over to her. "Spud wants a walk, I think. If you take him and Nugget, I'll stay here and finish up with the ladies. Then we can mix some mocktails. I brought raspberries because I know you love them."

"Great idea." Delta smiled at her. "Thanks." She took the dogs' leashes, and Spud immediately jumped up and came with her.

Nugget circled Mrs. Cassidy's legs, as if to ask for permission, and then ran out of the french doors after Delta and Spud. They emerged onto a terrace decorated with pots full of what had been plants in full bloom during the summer. Now, as fall reigned, they were just green stalks, looking rather sad.

But Delta breathed the crisp, fresh air and, detecting a path lit with electric lanterns leading a vantage point, followed it quickly. Spud stayed beside her, taking in his surroundings with his ears up, while Nugget tripped ahead, every inch the little diva who had a bodyguard following her discreetly.

The highest point, a narrow, wooden plateau with a railing, offered a full view of the expanse of water, this time not mirroring the snow-capped mountains, but the bright stars above. The crescent moon's reflection rippled in silver to Delta's right, while to the left, a dark shadow moved across the water.

"Fishermen, probably," Delta said to Spud. "I'm a little jealous of them." There was a breathtaking quality to these tranquil surroundings. It was good to be away from the heat inside the Lodge and just stand here and experience the charm of the view.

The only downside was the cold wind that breathed

through the trees and put goose flesh on her arms and legs. Nugget was also shivering. They shouldn't stay here for long.

Turning around, Delta thought she saw a path leading up on the other side of the plateau, a perfect shortcut back to the Lodge entrance. But a few steps onto the trodden earth, with tall trees towering over her, she began to doubt it was going in the right direction. Then she froze.

Angry voices resounded nearby. Instinctively, Delta stayed where she was. Spud pressed himself against her, not making a sound. Nugget stood between the bigger dog's legs, as if hiding there.

Voice high-pitched and brittle as if she were about to cry, a woman said, "You don't have to make such a spectacle of it."

"It's not my problem you can't move." The second voice was female as well, but not emotional, rather dismissive and callous.

"I'll tell Ralph to quit the dancing lessons." The words rushed out in a breathless hurry.

A scoffing sound before the second voice spoke with determination, "He won't listen to you. He loves dancing. Especially with me."

The silence stretched a moment as if the first woman fought for control, before she spoke again. "He won't love it anymore if I tell him the truth."

"But you won't." There was emotion in the second voice now, a menacing undertone. "Because it would hurt you just as much, and you know that."

A sound rang out, as of a hand striking flesh. High heels clattered, as if the woman on the receiving end had staggered back.

Delta raised a hand to her mouth, covering her lips to

prevent herself from making a sound. She hadn't expected the altercation to turn physically violent. Should she intervene to prevent the situation from getting further out of hand?

Spud lowered his head but stayed perfectly quiet.

In the sudden silence, the whisper sounded even more menacing. "You'll be sorry for this. Very sorry." Footfalls rushed away.

A voice said, "Wait. Wait up now." It sounded pleading, almost desperate. More footfalls resounded, and a rustle of fabric.

Then the quiet hung over the lake again, hovering around them almost like a presence.

Delta moved her head slightly to determine if the women were really gone. She was suddenly even colder and couldn't wait to get back to the boardroom, the crafting Paper Posse, pleasant company. She picked up Nugget and held the shivering dog against her as she pulled Spud along to get back to the hotel.

In her hurry, she took a wrong turn and found herself facing a low, natural stone wall. Uncertain whether she could just clamber over it—she might end up in flower beds and trample something—she decided to follow the wall and came to the front entrance of the hotel.

Seeing the friendly light streaming from the doors, she exhaled in relief and whispered to Nugget, "Almost there. That wasn't fun, right? But it's OK now." As she stepped into the lobby, Delta almost bumped into Rosalyn, whose face was mottled. "Where's Jonas?" she hissed. "The guests want pictures of them dancing."

Her gaze glued to the rash in Rosalyn's face, Delta had difficulty focusing on the question. Had Rosalyn been out just now, and had she been slapped by another woman? But

the mention of someone called Ralph had prompted a connection with the Whites in her mind. Mrs. Cassidy had just told them Ralph White was married to Amanda, who was the polar opposite of outgoing Vera. That the sisters-in-law couldn't stand each other. And Vera had also been drinking. That could cause tensions to boil over.

Delta realized Rosalyn was waiting for an answer to her question about Jonas. "I, uh...don't know," she faltered. "I haven't seen him. I just took the dogs out for a few minutes."

Rosalyn nodded curtly and vanished into the restrooms.

Delta leaned down to put Nugget on the floor. The Yorkie had managed to entangle her legs in the leash, and Delta knelt to get the leather strap unwound from her front paws. "Stand still, girl, let me get that. That's right. Good girl."

As the lobby was practically empty, and the party music just at a soft piano intro to a big band hit, Delta could hear the voices of the hotel clerk and Finn, who was standing at the desk. He asked, "Mrs. White just wants to make sure her things are properly stored away. That box contains valuables. Are you sure it's in the safe?"

"Yes, Mr. Taylor put it there himself."

A clatter resounded, and Delta looked up, seeing Finn ducking to the floor to retrieve one of the brass, horse-shaped stands with information he had apparently knocked over. Straightening up with a red face, he asked, "Ray?"

"No, Mr. Taylor Sr.," the clerk corrected. "He and Miss Rosalyn are the only ones who have the combination."

Delta had disentangled the dog leash and rose to her feet. Rosalyn stormed from the restrooms, saw Finn, and sailed down on him. She whispered something in his ear, and Finn looked at her with an appalled expression. "How can you think that? I'd never do that!" He seemed to want

to say more, then reconsidered. He rushed off, back into the ballroom, where the full orchestra was playing now, creating that twenties roar.

Rosalyn looked after Finn with a satisfied little smile. Her gaze drifted away to find Delta looking at her. "Is anything wrong?" she snapped.

Delta shook her head. "The ice for the mocktails..." She just mentioned the first thing that came to mind.

Rosalyn glanced at the grandfather clock on the lobby wall. "One of the waiters should bring it any moment now."

"Great. Thank you." Delta retreated to the boardroom, pulling the dogs along. There seemed to be quite a bit of tension in the air for such a happy party night. Still, it was none of her business. She couldn't wait to have Hazel mix her a raspberry mint mocktail so they could toast their joint venture's success.