

Chapter One

Bill Murdoch had retired from the police department almost a year earlier, but he wasn't enjoying himself. His wife, Julie, had died just before he was to retire, and he was still grieving for her. They had all sorts of plans to travel abroad. He'd even agreed to take a cruise to Alaska. Now, with her gone, he had no desire to go anywhere.

Julie's death was so sudden. It had happened one week before Christmas. Like many long-married couples, they had their routines. He would get up at six, shower, and have his coffee and bran cereal. When he heard Julie stir, he always made a fresh pot of tea and put in some bread to toast. That particular morning, he didn't

hear her. She had complained of being out of sorts the night before, and he thought she might be sleeping in.

He never liked to leave without a kiss, so he went upstairs. When he was partway up, he heard an awful thump. He raced the rest of the way to the bedroom. He found her lying half out of bed, her head touching the floor. He rushed over, but he'd seen death before. He knew that she was already dead. It turned out that a clot of blood had gone to her heart, and it had killed her instantly.

He had spent the next months in a state of shock. The police chief suggested that he retire, as he was so close to retirement anyway. So he did, but he only found himself walking from room to room in the house, feeling lost and alone. He and Julie had lived there for over thirty years. He'd lost his purpose. His friends did their best, but nothing could replace his wife. He stopped answering the phone and refused all invitations. Bill was the kind of man who didn't share his feelings easily.

He and Julie had one daughter, Wendy, who had a child. Amy was six years old, the only

grandchild, and she was the apple of Bill's eye. She was the one person he didn't cut out of his life after Julie died. He would have liked to have seen more of Wendy, but she was always busy. She was a single mom. She and Keith, her husband, had parted ways about two years before. Wendy was a producer in a film company, and she worked long hours. She had to juggle the duties of her work and the duties of being a mom.