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Magic Hour

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MAGIC HOUR

A Novel

KRISTIN HANNAH


BALLANTINE BOOKS
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*This one is for my son, Tucker.
It seems like only a few years ago I could hold you in my arms.
Now we're touring colleges and talking about your future.
I am so proud of the boy you were and the man you are becoming.
Soon you will be leaving your dad and me to find your own way in the
world. Know that whatever you do, wherever you go, we will always love
you.*

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“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse.

“It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful.

—*The Velveteen Rabbit*

Margery Williams

ONE

IT WILL ALL BE OVER SOON.

Julia Cates had lost count of the times she'd told herself that very thing, but today—finally—it would be true. In a few hours the world would know the truth about her.

If she made it downtown, that was. Unfortunately, the Pacific Coast Highway looked more like a parking lot than a freeway. The hills behind Malibu were on fire again; smoke hung above the rooftops and turned the normally bright coastal air into a thick brown sludge. All over town terrified babies woke in the middle of the night, crying gray-black tears and gasping for breath. Even the surf seemed to have slowed down, as if exhausted by the unseasonable heat.

She maneuvered through the cranky, stop-and-go traffic, ignoring the drivers who flipped her off and cut in front of her. It was expected; in this most dangerous of seasons in Southern California, tempers caught fire as easily as backyards. The heat made everyone edgy.

Finally, she exited the freeway and drove to the courthouse.

Television vans were everywhere. Dozens of reporters huddled on the courthouse steps, microphones and cameras at the ready, waiting for the story to arrive. In Los Angeles it was becoming a daily event, it seemed; legal proceedings as entertainment. Michael Jackson. Courtney Love. Robert Blake.

Julia turned a corner and drove to a side entrance, where her lawyers were waiting for her.

She parked on the street and got out of the car, expecting to move forward confidently, but for a terrible second she couldn't move. *You're innocent*, she reminded herself. *They'll see that. The system will work.* She forced herself to take a step, then another. It felt as if she were moving

through invisible wires, fighting her way uphill. When she made it to the group, it took everything she had to smile, but one thing she knew: it looked real. Every psychiatrist knew how to make a smile look genuine.

“Hello, Dr. Cates,” said Frank Williams, the lead counsel on her defense team. “How are you?”

“Let’s go,” she said, wondering if she was the only one who heard the wobble in her voice. She hated that evidence of her fear. Today, of all days, she needed to be strong, to show the world that she was the doctor they’d thought she was, that she’d done nothing wrong.

The team coiled protectively around her. She appreciated their support. Although she was doing her best to appear professional and confident, it was a fragile veneer. One wrong word could strip it all away.

They pushed through the doors and walked into the courthouse.

Flashbulbs erupted in spasms of blue-white light. Cameras clicked; tape rolled. Reporters surged forward, all yelling at once.

“Dr. Cates! How do you feel about what happened?”

“Why didn’t you save those children?”

“Did you know about the gun?”

Frank put an arm around Julia and pulled her against his side. She pressed her face against his lapel and let herself be pulled along.

In the courtroom, she took her place at the defendant’s table. One by one the team rallied around her. Behind her, in the first row of gallery seating, several junior associates and paralegals took their places.

She tried to ignore the racket behind her; the doors creaking open and slamming shut, footsteps hurrying across the marble tiled floor, whispered voices. Empty seats were filling up quickly; she knew it without turning around. This courtroom was the Place to Be in Los Angeles today, and since the judge had disallowed cameras in the courtroom, journalists and artists were no doubt packed side by side in the gallery, their pens ready.

In the past year, they’d written an endless string of stories about her. Photographers had snapped thousands of pictures of her—taking out the trash, standing on her deck, coming and going from her office. The least flattering shots always made the front page.

Reporters had practically set up camp outside her condo, and although she had never spoken to them, it didn’t matter. The stories kept coming. They reported on her small-town roots, her stellar education, her pricey beachfront condo, her devastating breakup with Philip. They even

speculated that she'd recently become either anorexic or addicted to liposuction. What they didn't report on was the only part of her that mattered: her love of her job. She had been a lonely, awkward child, and she remembered every nuance of that pain. Her own youth had made her an exceptional psychiatrist.

Of course, that bit of truth never made it to press. Neither had a list of all the children and adolescents she'd helped.

A hush fell over the courtroom as Judge Carol Myerson took her seat at the bench. She was a stern-looking woman with artificially bright auburn hair and old-fashioned eyeglasses.

The bailiff called out the case.

Julia wished suddenly that she had asked someone to join her here today, some friend or relative who would stand by her, maybe hold her hand when it was over, but she'd always put work ahead of socializing. It hadn't given her much time to devote to friends. Her own therapist had often pointed out this lack in her life; truthfully, until now, she'd never agreed with him.

Beside her, Frank stood. He was an imposing man, tall and almost elegantly thin, with hair that was going from black to gray in perfect order, sideburns first. She'd chosen him because of his brilliant mind, but his demeanor was likely to matter more. Too often in rooms like this it came down to form over substance.

"Your Honor," he began in a voice as soft and persuasive as any she'd ever heard, "the naming of Dr. Julia Cates as a defendant in this lawsuit is absurd. Although the precise limits and boundaries of confidentiality in psychiatric situations are often disputed, certain precedents exist, namely *Tarasoff v. Regents of University of California*. Dr. Cates had no knowledge of her patient's violent tendencies and no information regarding specific threats to named individuals. Indeed, no such specific knowledge is even alleged in the complaint. Thus, we respectfully request that she be dismissed from this lawsuit. Thank you." He sat down.

At the plaintiff's table, a man in a jet-black suit stood up. "Four children are *dead*, Your Honor. They will never grow up, never leave for college, never have children of their own. Dr. Cates was Amber Zuniga's psychiatrist. For three years Dr. Cates spent two hours a week with Amber, listening to her problems and prescribing medications for her growing depression. Yet with all that intimacy, we are now to believe that Dr. Cates

didn't *know* that Amber was becoming increasingly violent and depressed. That she had no warning whatsoever that her patient would buy an automatic weapon and walk into her church youth group meeting and start shooting." The lawyer walked out from behind the table and stood in the middle of the courtroom.

Slowly, he turned to face Julia. It was the money shot; the one that would be drawn by every artist in the courtroom and shown around the world. "She is the expert, Your Honor. She should have foreseen this tragedy and prevented it by warning the victims or committing Ms. Zuniga for residential treatment. If she didn't in fact know of Ms. Zuniga's violent tendencies, she should have. Thus, we respectfully seek to keep Dr. Cates as a named defendant in this case. It is a matter of justice. The slain children's families deserve redress from the person most likely to have foreseen and prevented the murder of their children." He went back to the table and took his seat.

"It isn't true," Julia whispered, knowing her voice couldn't be heard. Still, she had to say it out loud. Amber had never even hinted at violence. Every teenager battling depression said they hated the kids in their school. That was light-years away from buying a gun and opening fire.

Why couldn't they all see that?

Judge Myerson read over the paperwork in front of her. Then she took off her reading glasses and set them down on the hard wooden surface of her bench.

The courtroom fell into silence. Julia knew that the journalists were ready to write instantly. Outside, there were more of them standing by, ready to run with two stories. Both headlines were already written. All they needed was a sign from their colleagues inside.

The children's parents, huddled in the back rows in a mournful group, were waiting to be assured that this tragedy could have been averted, that someone in a position of authority could have kept their children alive. They had sued everyone for wrongful death—the police, the paramedics, the drug manufacturers, the medical doctors, and the Zuniga family. The modern world no longer believed in senseless tragedy. Bad things couldn't just happen to people; someone had to pay. The victims' families hoped that this lawsuit would be the answer, but Julia knew it would only give them something else to think about for a while, perhaps distribute some of their pain. It wouldn't alleviate it, though. The grief would outlive them all.

The judge looked at the parents first. “There is no doubt that what happened on February nineteenth at the Baptist church in Silverwood was a terrible tragedy. As a parent myself, I cannot fathom the world in which you have lived for the past months. However, the question before this court is whether Dr. Cates should remain a defendant in this case.” She folded her hands on the desk. “I am persuaded that as a matter of law, Dr. Cates had no duty to warn or otherwise protect the victims in this set of circumstances. I reach this conclusion for several reasons. First, the facts do not assert and the plaintiffs do not allege that Dr. Cates had any specific knowledge of identifiable potential victims; second, the law does not impose a duty to warn except to clearly identifiable victims; and finally, as a matter of public policy, we must maintain the confidentiality of the psychiatrist-patient relationship unless there is a specific, identifiable threat which warrants the undermining of that confidentiality. Dr. Cates, by her testimony and her records and pursuant to the plaintiffs’ own assertions, did not have a duty to warn or otherwise protect the victims in this case. Thus, I am dismissing her from the complaint, without prejudice.”

The gallery went crazy. Before she knew it, Julia was on her feet and enfolded in congratulatory hugs by her defense team. Behind her, she could hear the journalists running for the doors and down the marble hallway. “She’s out!” someone yelled.

Julia felt a wave of relief. *Thank God.*

Then she heard the children’s parents crying behind her.

“How can this be happening?” one of them said loudly. “She should have known.”

Frank touched her arm. “You should be smiling. We won.”

She shot a quick glance at the parents, then looked away. Her thoughts trailed off into the dark woods of regret. Were they right? Should she have known?

“It wasn’t your fault, and it’s time you told people that. This is your opportunity to speak up, to—”

A crowd of reporters swarmed them.

“Dr. Cates! What do you have to say to the parents who hold you responsible—”

“Will other parents trust you with their children—”

“Can you comment on the report that the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office has taken your name off the roster of forensic

psychiatrists?”

Frank stepped into the fray, reaching back for Julia’s hand. “My client was just released from the lawsuit—”

“On a technicality,” someone yelled.

While they were focused on Frank, Julia slipped to the back of the crowd and ran for the door. She knew Frank wanted her to make a statement, but she didn’t care. She didn’t feel triumphant. All she wanted was to be away from all this . . . to get back to real life.

The Zunigas were standing in front of the door, blocking her path. They were paler versions of the couple she’d once known. Grief had stripped them of color and aged them.

Mrs. Zuniga looked up at her through tears.

“She loved both of you,” Julia said softly, knowing it wasn’t enough. “And you were good parents. Don’t let anyone convince you otherwise. Amber was ill. I wish—”

“Don’t,” Mr. Zuniga said. “Wishing hurts most of all.” He put an arm around his wife and drew her close to him.

Silence fell between them. Julia tried to think of more to say, but all that was left was *I’m sorry*, which she’d said too many times to count, and “Good-bye.” Holding her purse close, she eased around them, then left the courthouse.

Outside, the world was brown and bleak. A thick layer of haze darkened the sky, obliterating the sun, matching her mood.

She got into her car and drove away. As she merged into traffic, she wondered if Frank had even noticed her absence. To him it was a game, albeit with the biggest stakes, and as the day’s winner, he would be flying high. He would think about the victims and their families, probably tonight in his den, after a few Dewars over ice. He would think about her, too, perhaps wonder what would become of a psychiatrist who’d so profoundly compromised her reputation with failure, but he wouldn’t think about them all for long. He didn’t dare.

She was going to have to put it behind her now, too. Tonight she’d lie in her lonely bed, listening to the surf, thinking how much it sounded like the beat of her heart, and she’d try again to get beyond her grief and guilt. She *had* to figure out what clue she’d missed, what sign she’d overlooked. It would hurt—remembering—but in the end she’d be a better therapist for

all this pain. And then, at seven o'clock in the morning, she'd get dressed and go back to work.

Helping people.

That was how she'd get through this.

GIRL CROUCHES AT THE EDGE OF THE CAVE, WATCHING WATER FALL FROM the sky. She wants to reach for one of the empty cans around her, maybe lick the insides again, but she has done this too many times already. The food is gone. It has been gone for more moons than she knows how to keep track of. Behind her the wolves are restless, hungry.

The sky grumbles and roars. Trees shake with fear, and still the water drips down.

She falls asleep.

She wakes suddenly and looks around, sniffing the air. There is a strange scent in the darkness. It should frighten her, send her back into the deep, black hole, but she can't quite move. Her stomach is so tight and empty it hurts.

The falling water isn't so angry now; it is more of a spitting. She wishes she could see the sun. Life is better when she is in the light. Her cave is so dark.

A twig snaps.

Then another.

She goes very still, willing her body to disappear against the cave wall. She becomes like the shadow of herself, flat and motionless. She knows how important stillness can be.

Him is coming. Already he has been gone too long. The food is no more. The sunny days are past, and though she is glad Him is gone, without Him, she is afraid. In a time—long ago now—Her would have helped some, but she is DEAD.

When the forest falls silent again, she leans forward, poking her face into the gray light Out There. The darkness of sleepnight is coming; soon it will be blackness all around. The falling water is gentle and sweet. She likes the taste of it.

What should she do?

She glances down at the pup beside her. He is on alert, too, sniffing the air. She touches his soft fur and feels the tremble in his body. He is

wondering the same thing: would Him be back?

Always before Him was gone a moon or two at the most. But everything changed when Her got dead and gone. When Him left, he actually spoke to Girl.

YOUBEGOODWHILEI'MGONEORELSE.

She doesn't understand all of the words, but she knows Or Else.

Still, it is too long since he left. There is nothing to eat. She has freed herself and gone into the woods for berries and nuts, but it is the darkening season. Soon she will be too weak to find food, and there will be none anyway when the white starts falling and turns her breath into fog. Though she is afraid, terrified of the Strangers who live Out There, she is starving, and if Him comes back and sees that she has freed herself, it will be bad. She must make a move.

THE TOWN OF RAIN VALLEY, TUCKED BETWEEN THE WILDS OF THE Olympic National Forest and the roaring gray surf of the Pacific Ocean, was the last bastion of civilization before the start of the deep woods.

There were places not far from town that had never been touched by the golden rays of the sun, where shadows lay on the black, loamy soil all year, their shapes so thick and substantial that the few hardy hikers who made their way into the forest often thought they'd stumbled into a den of hibernating bears. Even today, in this modern age of scientific wonders, these woods remained as they had for centuries, unexplored, untouched by man.

Less than one hundred years ago, settlers came to this beautiful spot between the rain forest and the sea and hacked down just enough trees to plant their crops. In time they learned what the Native Americans had learned before them: this was a place that wouldn't be tamed. So they gave up their farming tools and took up fishing. Salmon and timber became the local industries, and for a few decades the town prospered. But in the nineties, environmentalists discovered Rain Valley. They set out to save the birds and the fish and the eldest of the trees. The men who made their living off the land were forgotten in this fight, and over the years the town fell into a quiet kind of disrepair. One by one the grandiose visions of the town's prominent citizens faded away. Those much-anticipated streetlights were

never added; the road out to Mystic Lake remained a two-lane minefield of thinning asphalt and growing potholes; the telephone and electrical lines stayed where they were—in the air—hanging lazily from one old pole to the next, an invitation to every tree limb in every windstorm to knock out the town's power.

In other parts of the world, in places where man had staked his claim long ago, such a falling apart of a town might have dealt a death blow to the citizens' sense of community, but not here. The people of Rain Valley were hardy souls, able and willing to live in a place where it rained more than two hundred days a year and the sun was treated like a wealthy uncle who only rarely came to call. They withstood gray days and springy lawns and dwindling ways to make a living, and remained through it all the sons and daughters of the pioneers who'd first dared to live among the towering trees.

Today, however, they were finding their spirit tested. It was October seventeenth, and autumn had recently lost its race to the coming winter. Oh, the trees were still dressed in their party colors and the lawns were green again after the brown days of late summer, but no mistake could be made: winter was coming. The sky had been low and gray all week, layered in ominously dark clouds. For seven days it had rained almost nonstop.

On the corner of Wheaton Way and Cates Avenue stood the police station, a squat gray-stone building with a cupola on top and a flagpole on the grassy lawn out front. Inside the austere building, the old fluorescent lighting was barely strong enough to keep the gray at bay. It was four o'clock in the afternoon, but the bad weather made it feel later.

The people who worked inside tried not to notice. If they'd been asked—and they hadn't—they would have admitted that four to five consecutive days of rain was acceptable. Longer if it was only a drizzle. But there was something *wrong* in this stretch of bad weather. It wasn't January, after all. For the first few days, they sat at their respective desks and complained good-naturedly about the walk from their cars to the front door. Now, those conversations had been pummeled by the constant hammering of rain on the roof.

Ellen Barton—Ellie to her friends, which was everyone in town—stood at the window, staring out at the street. The rain made everything appear insubstantial. She caught a glimpse of herself in the water-streaked window; not a reflection, precisely, more of a feeling played out

momentarily on glass. She saw herself as she always did, as the younger woman she'd once been—long, thick black hair and cornflower blue eyes and a bright, ready smile. The girl voted Homecoming Queen and head cheerleader. As always when she thought about her youth, she saw herself in white. The color of brides, of hope for the future, of families waiting to be born.

“I gotta have a smoke, Ellie. You know I do. I’ve been really good, but it’s reaching critical mass about now. If I don’t light up, I’m heading to the refrigerator.”

“Don’t let her do it,” Cal said from his place at the dispatch desk. He sat hunched over the phone, a lock of black hair falling across his eyes. In high school Ellie and her friends had called him the Crow because of his black hair and sharp, pointed features. He’d always had a bony, ill-put-together look, as if he wasn’t quite at home in his body. At almost forty, he still had a boyish appearance. Only his eyes—dark and intense—showed the miles he’d walked in his lifetime. “Try tough love. Nothing else has worked.”

“Bite me,” Peanut snapped.

Ellie sighed. They’d had this same discussion only fifteen minutes ago, and ten minutes before that. She put her hands on her waist, resting her fingertips on the heavy gun belt that was slung across her hips. She turned to look at her best friend. “Now, Peanut, you know what I’m gonna say. This is a public building. I’m the chief of police. How can I let you break the law?”

“Exactly,” Cal said. He opened his mouth to say more, but a call came in and he answered it. “Rain Valley Police.”

“Oh, right,” Peanut said. “And suddenly you’re Miss Law and Order. What about Sven Morgenstern—he parks in front of his store every day. Right in front of the hydrant. When was the last time you hauled his car away? And Large Marge shoplifts two boxes of freezer pops and a bottle of nail polish from the drugstore every Sunday after church. I haven’t processed her arrest papers in a while. I guess as long as her husband pays the tab it doesn’t matter. . . .” She let the sentence trail off. They both knew she could cite a dozen more examples. This was Rain Valley, after all, not downtown Seattle. Ellie had been the chief of police for four years and a patrol officer for eight years before that. Although she stayed ready for

anything, she'd never processed a crime more dangerous than Breaking and Entering.

"Are you going to let me have a cigarette or am I going to get a doughnut and a Red Bull?"

"They'll both kill you."

"Yeah, but they won't kill us," Cal said, disconnecting his call. "Hold firm, El. She's the patrol clerk. She shouldn't smoke in a city building."

"You're smoking too much," Ellie finally said.

"Yeah, but I'm eating less."

"Why don't you go back to the salmon jerky diet? Or the grapefruit one? Those were both healthier."

"Stop talking and answer me. I need a smoke."

"You started smoking four days ago, Peanut," Cal said. "You hardly *need* a cigarette."

Ellie shook her head. If she didn't step in, these two would bicker all day. "You should go back to your meetings," she said with a sigh. "That Weight Watchers was working."

"Six months of cabbage soup to lose ten pounds? I don't think so. Come on, Ellie, you know I'm about ready to reach for a doughnut."

Ellie knew she'd lost the battle. She and Peanut—Penelope Nutter—had worked side by side in this office for more than a decade and been best friends since high school. Over the years their friendship had weathered every storm, from the ruination of Ellie's two fragile marriages to Peanut's recent decision that smoking cigarettes was the key to weight loss. She called it the Hollywood diet and pointed out all of the stick-figure celebrities who smoked.

"Fine. But just one."

Grinning at Cal, Peanut placed her hands on the desk and pushed herself to a stand. The fifty pounds she'd gained in the past few years made her move a little slower. She walked over to the door and opened it, although they all knew there'd be no breeze to suck the smoke away on such a wet and dismal day.

Ellie went down the hall to the office in the back that was technically hers. She rarely used it. In a town like this, there wasn't much call for official business, and she preferred to spend her days in the main room with Cal and Peanut. She dug past the signs from last month's pancake breakfast and found a gas mask. Putting it on, she headed back down the hall.

Cal burst out laughing.

Peanut tried not to smile. “Very funny.”

Ellie lifted the mask to say, “I may want children someday. I’m protecting my uterus.”

“If I were you, I’d worry less about secondhand smoke and more about finding a date.”

“She’s tried everyone from Mystic to Aberdeen,” Cal said. “Last month she even went out with that UPS guy. The good-looking one who keeps forgetting where he parked his truck.”

Peanut exhaled smoke and coughed. “I think you need to lower your standards, Ellie.”

“You sure look like you’re enjoying that smoke,” Cal said with a grin.

Peanut flipped him off. “We were talking about Ellie’s love life.”

“That’s all you two ever talk about,” Cal pointed out.

It was true.

Ellie couldn’t help herself: she loved men. Usually—okay, always—the wrong men.

Peanut called it the curse of the small-town beauty queen. If only Ellie had been like her sister and learned to rely on her brains instead of her beauty. But some things simply weren’t meant to be. Ellie liked having fun; she liked romance. The problem was, it hadn’t yet led to true love. Peanut said it was because Ellie didn’t know how to compromise, but that wasn’t accurate. Ellie’s marriages—both of them—had failed because she’d married good-looking men with itchy feet and wandering eyes. Her first husband, former high school football captain Al Torees, should have been enough to turn her off men for years, but she’d had a short memory, and just a few years after the divorce she married another good-looking loser. Poor choices, to be truthful, but the divorces hadn’t dimmed her hopes. She still believed in romance and was waiting to be swept away. She knew it was possible; she’d seen that true love with her parents. “Any lower, Pea, and I’d be dating out of my species. Maybe Cal here can set me up with one of his geek friends from the comic book convention.”

Cal looked stung by that. “We’re not geeks.”

“Yeah,” Peanut said, exhaling smoke. “You’re grown men who think other men in tights look good.”

“You make us sound gay.”

“Hardly.” Peanut laughed. “Gay men have sex. Your friends wear *Matrix* costumes in public. How you found Lisa, I’ll never know.”

At the mention of Cal’s wife, an awkward silence stumbled into the room. The whole town knew she was a run-around. There was always talk; men smiled, women frowned and shook their heads at the mention of her name. But here in the police station, they never spoke about it.

Cal went back to reading his comic book and doodling in his sketch pad. They all knew he’d be quiet for a while now.

Ellie sat down at her desk and put her feet up.

Peanut leaned back against the wall and stared at her through a cloud of smoke. “I saw Julia on the news yesterday.”

Cal looked up. “No kidding? I gotta turn on the TV more.”

Ellie pulled off the mask and set it on the desk. “She was dismissed from the lawsuit.”

“Did you call her?”

“Of course. Her answering machine had a lovely tone. I think she’s avoiding me.”

Peanut took a step forward. The old oak floorboards, first hammered into place at the turn of the century when Bill Whipman had been the town’s police chief, shuddered at the movement, but like everything in Rain Valley, they were sturdier than they appeared. The West End was a place where things—and people—were built to last. “You should try again.”

“You know how jealous Julia is of me. She especially wouldn’t want to talk to me now.”

“You think everyone is jealous of you.”

“I do not.”

Peanut gave her one of those *Who-do-you-think-you’re-fooling?* looks that were the cornerstone of friendship. “Come on, Ellie. Your baby sister looked like she was hurting. Are you going to pretend you can’t talk to her because twenty years ago you were Homecoming Queen and she belonged to the Math club?”

In truth, Ellie had seen it, too—the haunted, hunted look in Julia’s eyes—and she’d wanted to reach out and help her younger sister. Julia had always felt things too keenly; it was what made her a great psychiatrist. “She wouldn’t listen to me, Peanut. You know that. She considers me only slightly smarter than a pet rock. Maybe—”

The sound of footsteps stopped her.

Someone was *running* toward their office.

Ellie got to her feet just as the door swung open, hitting the wall with a *crack*.

Lori Forman skidded into the room. She was soaking wet and obviously cold; her whole body was shaking. Her kids—Bailey, Felicia, and Jeremy—were clustered around her.

“You gotta come,” Lori said to Ellie.

“Take a breath, Lori. Tell me what’s happened.”

“You won’t believe me. Heck, I’ve seen it and I don’t believe me. Come on. There’s something on Magnolia Street.”

“Yee-*ha*,” Peanut said. “Something’s actually happening in town.” She reached for her coat on the coatrack beside her desk. “Hurry up, Cal. Forward the emergency calls to your cell phone. We don’t want to miss all the excitement.”

Ellie was the first one out the door.