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## Chapter Twelve

Patty Masour knew the scanner codes better than anyone in Rock Point, Oregon. She was the part-time dispatcher at the Spruce County Sheriff's Department, a job she shared with her sister, Sandy. The code sputtering over the scanner next to her davenport meant trouble, big trouble. Multiple homicide in the woods of the county. She turned off her TV and told her husband she felt uneasy about what she had half heard crackle, and she dialed her sister.

"County Sheriff. Merry Christmas and hello," a woman's voice answered. Her voice was flat, her words sounded as though they were read from a card, not words from the heart.

"Sandy?"

"Yes, Patty? Oh dear," she said when recognition came. "Have you heard? They're hauling bodies out of the Logan family's tree farm. I haven't had time to call you; things have been off the meter over here for the past two and half hours!"

"Logan?" Patty's heart sank. She knew the family. Everyone in Rock Point did. The Logan place had been

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their destination just ten days before when she and her children went to get their tree, a perfect, pyramidal-shaped Noble fir.

"Claire and her two little boys are missing. It's real bad out there. I mean real bad! Place is burning to the ground and the girl . . ."

"Hannah?"

"Yeah, she's the only survivor we know about."

Patty's knees weakened, and she slid into the soft folds of her velveteen davenport, "Michelle goes to

school with Hannah," she said. Michelle was her daughter, thirteen, Patty hung on every word while her sister went on about the investigation under way. She remembered how Claire's daughter had rung up the sale for the Christmas tree in the little kiosk set up outside of the wreath shed. She was a pretty girl, big brown eyes with thick, ash-blond hair, held in a ponytail, Michelle and Hannah had been in the same second- and fourth-grade classes. They were best friends back then. By seventh grade, though, they'd stopped seeing each other outside of the classroom. Michelle told her mother that Hannah was no longer much fun to be around. Patty thought it might have had to do with what was going on at home with the girl's mother.

"They're taking Hannah to the hospital for an exam, then back here," Sandy went on. "You got any clothes that might fit her?"

"Yes," Patty answered. "Hannah and Michelle are about the same size."

"Well, she hadn't barely a stitch on when they found her. She was wearing her nightgown and socks. Soaking wet, too. The poor thing was out in the snow when they found her."

Patty mumbled something about Christmas being ruined, hung up, and spun around for her car keys. She hurried to her daughter's bedroom in search of some-