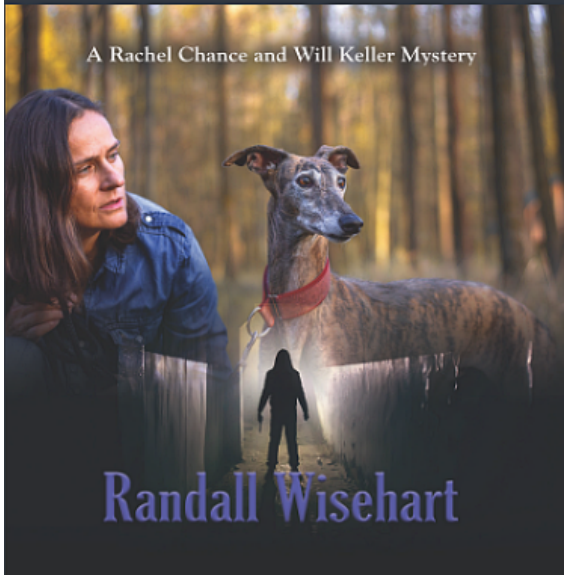


# A Greyt Greyhound Rescue



*Rachel Chance is happy living a simple life with her retired racing Greyhound Abby. When a murder occurs in her neighborhood, Rachel and her new love interest Will face a puzzle with dead ends and find danger in unexpected places.*

## **A Greyt Greyhound Rescue: A Rachel Chance and Will Keller Mystery**

By Randall Wisheart

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# A Greyt Greyhound Rescue

A Rachel Chance and Will Keller Mystery



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## Chapter One

Rachel Chance was dreaming. *She was standing outside a huge house. Someone needed her help, but Rachel didn't know which way to go. Suddenly her Greyhound, Abby, appeared and led Rachel into the woods. She followed Abby but fell. Will was beside her, helping her to her feet.* Rachel opened her eyes and realized she was in her bedroom. She lay still and thought about the dream. She looked at the mystery novel she had put on her nightstand late last night. *Maybe not a great idea to stop reading in the middle of a rescue scene right before falling asleep,* she thought. *And how did Will get in the dream?* She felt a slight tingling as she thought about him, wondering if her subconscious was trying to tell her it was time to move beyond casual dates.

She admired the antique oak dresser that matched the woodwork in this century-old house. On top of the dresser were two pictures, one a high school graduation picture with her mother and the other a college graduation picture with her grandmother. Next to the pictures was a notepad where she would soon list her jobs for the day, next to the notepad, a bottle of lavender hand lotion. In the far corner, she could see the chair her grandmother had given her, a comfortable chair Rachel had admired for years, pink with a floral

pattern. Her clothing hung in her closet organized by color and function, work clothes on the left, casual clothes on the right; lighter colors and dark colors separated.

Rachel liked her life. She shared the downstairs with her fawn Greyhound Abby and her cat, the fluffy gray guy named Dancer. Her routines. Her decisions. Her choice about what to eat, when to go to bed. Her choice to sleep alone. She had good friends but could choose to call them or not. She was very comfortable with living alone and not having any complications beyond what she did to make a living.

Abby was already awake and ever so gently starting to roo. She didn't need an alarm clock; Abby woke her at the same time every morning. Rachel stretched her arms and yawned; she smiled as she remembered when she was introduced to "rooing." It was the first time she had taken Abby to the dog park with other Greyhounds and their owners—her "Greyhound friends." Charley, Rachel's neighbor and a retired high school teacher, and his Greyhound, Gooch were there. Charley had looked at Rachel with a twinkle in his eye and asked her if she wanted to see something she'd never see from another breed of dog. Naturally, she was curious.

Charley pulled out his cell phone, turned up the volume, and played a YouTube clip of Greyhounds

rooing. As soon as Gooch heard the sound, he threw back his head, pointed his nose toward the sky and let out a yowl that sounded like, “Rooooo.” Most of the other eight Greyhounds joined in, but two Greyhounds ignored the sound. Charley went on to explain it was different for each Greyhound. A few never rooed and looked at the others with indignation, but most Greyhounds rooed as soon as they heard another Greyhound do it. At the same time, some Greyhounds would roo on their own. Rachel found out that Abby was one of the Greyhounds who would roo on her own—like she was doing now.

Abby was still lying on her slumber ball, a huge cushion she slept on every night. Her head was resting on her paws, and she continued to make the soft gurgling sound that would soon turn into full-blown rooing. Abby intently watched Rachel. As soon as Rachel moved even the slightest bit, Abby would jump up, ready to go outside. She loved to roo, but she loved walking even more.

“OK, Abs. I can take a hint. Do you mind if I brush my teeth and throw on some sweats?”

Abby stared at Rachel. The rooing had ceased.

“What about another twenty minutes?”

Abby’s eyes squinted.

“Ten?”

Abby cocked her head.

Rachel smiled. “I know Abby. I should just stop talking and get ready, right?” Abby jumped up and rushed toward Rachel, nudging her with her nose. Rachel savored one more moment in bed, then swung her long legs over the side.

Rachel got out of bed, gave Abby a hug, then walked down the hallway to the bathroom. After brushing her teeth and running a brush through her shoulder length auburn hair, Rachel slipped out of her cotton pajamas and put on the sweats that were hanging on a hook on the back of the bathroom door.

As she walked into the hallway, Abby was already right there, wagging her tail excitedly. “Watch it, Abs. That tail of yours is powerful.”

Abby led the way to the living room, repeatedly looking over her shoulder at Rachel as if to say, “Follow me, Mom; and be quick about it!”

“I’m right behind you Abs,” said Rachel. As they walked, Rachel thought about how much she loved this house. It had been built by a German cabinet maker in the early 1900’s. A beautiful corner cabinet stretched to the ceiling in the living room and a matching corner cabinet occupied a corner of the dining room; plus, there were smaller cabinets built into the walls throughout. French doors separated the living room from the dining room. In the living room corner cabinet, Rachel had displayed some of her favorite

family pictures: one with her mother and grandmother sitting on the deck behind this house, also a wedding picture of her grandparents and her mother's high school senior picture. Rachel had been gradually adding pieces of pottery she liked to some shelves including a bowl with blues and browns that complemented the woodwork and a matching pitcher.

Rachel walked toward the front door as Abby galloped ahead. As soon as she got to the door, Abby stretched. "Well, look at you!" said Rachel. "You've got your own version of downward facing dog going there. Or is it downward facing human?" She laughed. This was part of their morning routine before the walk and Rachel was reminded again that Greyhounds were athletes. "Glad one of us is stretching," Rachel said. Rachel was slender but not skinny. She had always preferred swimming to running. Now she got most of her exercise by walking a Greyhound.

Rachel reached for the lead hanging over the rim of an antique umbrella stand by the front door. In the closet were an assortment of Greyhound accessories: a winter coat, a raincoat, and two tummy warmers, one festive for the holidays, and one dark brown that went well with Abby's fawn coloring. Today was a cool fall day but not under 32, so no tummy warmer today.

"What do you think, Abby? A long walk today or a short one and a trip to drive through for coffee later?"



Abby cocked her head as though considering the options of a long walk or a shorter walk with the promise of a ride in the car, which was undeniably one of her favorite things to do, but there were also those amazing naps on the couch.

“Yeah, I know. Tough decision isn’t it. Let’s do the long walk. I don’t know about you, but your mom definitely needs the exercise,” said Rachel. And with that, the duo zoomed out the door.

When Rachel and Abby got to the sidewalk, they turned left past the empty house on the corner and then left again. They paused at the alley to make sure no vehicles were rushing out. When they reached the corner, Rachel saw her favorite neighbors Bernice and Nan who lived in a two-story brick house with a large garage in the back. They were having their morning coffee in the sunroom in the back of the house. “Morning neighbors,” Rachel called out as they passed.

“Morning,” the sisters said as they waved in unison. Although she liked most of her neighbors, Nan and Bernice were Rachel’s favorites. Bernice had been a widow for many years and had rented out the room above the garage in order to make ends meet, but when Nan moved back to town, they used some of Nan’s savings to remodel the upstairs bedrooms to turn the house into a bed and breakfast. Recently the room above the garage had remained empty.

“Have a nice day,” Rachel said as she and Abby continued their stroll. Rachel kept Abby tightly on lead. Greyhounds could reach their full racing speed of 35-45 miles per hour in just four strides, so unless they were in Rachel’s fenced-in back yard, she held onto the lead tightly. There would be no catching Abby if she got loose to chase a small animal. Since Greyhounds are sight hounds and can see up to a half mile away, Rachel was taking no chances she would see something a block away and make a run for it.

Besides, Rachel was still getting used to the Greyhound’s gait. Rachel had only adopted her three months ago. Plus, Abby wasn’t even four yet and was still adapting to life off the track. Abby slowed. “That’s it, girl,” Rachel said. “Relax. Enjoy the civilian life.”

Rachel and Abby turned left again past Bernice and Nan’s house. The street was lined with mature maple trees with leaves that had turned from green to red and orange. The houses were much like the ones on her block, all two-story houses, half of them brick, and most in good condition with a few exceptions. Abby sped up and jerked Rachel ahead, almost as though she were chasing something in the distance. “Hold on, Abby. This is a walk not a race.” Rachel waited as Abby stopped to sniff around a white picket fence surrounding the front yard of a two-story white house

where she knew a Yorkie lived. After a few more sniffs, Abby rushed ahead, pulling Rachel behind her.

In this neighborhood, most of the houses were brick and built in the 1920's. Several of her neighbors were retired and had lived in their houses for many years, but a few houses had been sold and turned into rentals. In the neighborhood two blocks east, however, the houses were quite substantial. Two blocks west and the houses were in various states of disrepair—some only skeletons, several needing paint and basic repair. This was symbolic of the entire town of Glen Falls, Rachel knew. Two different towns in one. One populated by people with wealth, another populated by people who lived in various degrees of poverty. The so-called “middle class” that had once been so prevalent was nearly extinct; her own neighborhood reflected a diversity Rachel appreciated.

Rachel looked at a house in the middle of the block that showed signs of neglect. The steps leading to the front porch were crumbling and two of the upstairs windows were covered with plastic. There was a stove on the front porch with the oven door hanging open. “This one's got good bones I bet,” said Rachel, as she stared at the old house. And with that, Abby pulled Rachel across the street in her eagerness to continue the walk. Their strides were hypnotic, so Rachel returned to her thoughts.

Rachel had to keep reminding herself Abby was still learning how to be a dog. Her life on the track had been totally regimented. In the crate. Out to exercise. Back in the crate. Out to eat. Back in the crate. Out to run. Back in the crate. Rachel remembered when she first brought Abby home, she had to learn the basics: what a window was, what a toy was, what a couch was. It had been fun watching Abby figure things out.

Rachel and Abby walked for two blocks passing the same types of houses, some single dwellings and some duplexes, some brick and some with shingles or siding. Most were well-maintained, but there were still a few shabby ones. They passed one of Rachel's favorites, a white house with a wraparound front porch that stretched across not only the front of the house but also most of one side. The porch was decorated for the fall season. Rachel could see two large pumpkins, orange cushions on the chairs and swing, and two life-sized mannequins dressed as Pilgrims sitting on the porch swing.

Rachel stopped Abby at the corner and looked both ways before turning right and crossing the street. As soon as they crossed, Rachel stopped for a moment to appreciate the more affluent neighborhood as Abby looked at her, wondering why they were stopping. Rachel looked to her left at a huge white house that was three stories tall and covered a double lot. The windows

were framed with black shutters and there was a U-shaped driveway in front. Rumor was the third floor was a ballroom and when Rachel looked up, she could almost imagine couples streaming into the house and climbing a wide staircase to the third floor. The house also had a large grassy area in the back where she could imagine garden parties with her Greyhound friends.

“Perhaps we will have our very own place like this one day, Abby,” said Rachel, starting to daydream. She had grown up in Glen Falls but went to college in Louisville and lived with her grandparents there during breaks. She returned to Glen Falls after earning her bachelor’s degree in social work because her mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Although it had been in remission for almost twenty years, Rachel still didn’t want to be far away.

Rachel began her career as a case worker for the Department of Child Services. She found satisfaction working with families who were struggling. Even when she had to recommend children be taken out of a home, she felt as though she was making a difference. Early in her career though, she realized she could do more, so she earned a master’s degree in leadership and became a supervisor of case workers. During the nearly twenty years after she had returned to Glen Falls, she’d had a couple of relationships that were getting to the point of

being serious, but her career always took precedence. Then three years ago, it happened.

The Incident. That's what she called it. Just "The Incident." Rachel still had nightmares of the phone call; going to the school to meet with a mother who was part of her case load and her child's teachers who were all frightened of the abusive husband; jumping into action to help the principal of the school—a good friend, when she put them on lockdown; running through the halls making sure all the doors were shut, thinking only that it was her case and the students and adults were her responsibility. She relived the moment in her memory:

*The gunshot boomed, but from where? Running and more running. Then turning a corner, Rachel saw the abusive husband standing over a body, blood pooling on the tile floor. The rest was a blur. Five strides and she was throwing her body into his, sending him sprawling. The gun was on the floor and before Rachel knew what was happening, SWAT team members had the husband on the ground and were part pulling, part dragging her away.*

Rachel later found out that the man on the floor, a school resource officer, had survived with only a superficial gunshot wound. The SWAT team had been just around the corner, just steps away and had been shocked to see the gunman knocked right into their path—the gun just beyond his outstretched hand.

Right after The Incident, Rachel had thrown herself into her work as a supervisor with the Department of Child Services, but soon she realized she no longer had the drive to put in the hours or deal with the stress. Rachel had finished out the year but then quietly resigned without a plan but knowing she needed a change. That's when she started managing properties.

Rachel's stepfather had been offering for years to give her properties to manage as he cut back on his real estate dealings so he could travel with Rachel's mother. He offered to let her buy a house on contract in return for helping with his property management, and it was as good a deal as she could get, so she took it. For more than a year, things had been going well as she learned more about the real estate business, but then she married Jeff. Oh, yes. This might very well be "The Other Incident." Rachel married Jeff after a short engagement. Just a few months into the marriage, she discovered she didn't really know him. When her friend Mary showed her the evidence of his dishonesty, she didn't hesitate to act.

*Rachel took a vacation day, and after Jeff left for work, had the locks changed. While the locksmith worked, she gathered up Jeff's belongings and threw them into the front yard into a very messy but satisfying pile.*

*“Mind if I look through his things and see if there’s anything I want?” The locksmith smiled as she wrote him a check.*

*Rachel ripped the check out of her checkbook. “I could care less,” she said coldly. “He’s a liar and a cheat, so have at it.” The locksmith stopped smiling and decided his better option was to distance himself from Rachel’s anger forthwith. He walked quickly past Jeff’s belongings, jumped into his van, and drove away.*

*Rachel left a message with the receptionist at the real estate office. She could tell the receptionist thought she was kidding at first, so Rachel explained. “You might also let Jeff know it would be a good idea to contact a lawyer as soon as he gets his stuff out of the yard. He’ll be hearing from my lawyer soon and if he contests a divorce, I’ll go public with every sordid detail of his life, and he won’t be able to sell a house to his own mother.”*

*Rachel could hear a gulp from the receptionist.*

*“And it looks like rain, so you may want to tell him to put a rush on it. I wasn’t exactly careful about throwing his clothes into the front yard. You might also add that I’ve already changed the locks so he should not bother to try to get in or even knock on the door. I’ll have my cell phone in my hand ready to dial 911 if he even comes close to the front door.”*



*Rachel didn't hear Jeff come home, but when she looked out the front door two hours later, the front yard was empty. Either Jeff had been there or someone else had, and she didn't particularly care which. Rachel filed for divorce and with the help of her lawyer was able to keep her house and most of her investments.*

Abby jerked Rachel back as a car turned in front of them, coasting through the intersection without stopping. “Nice catch, Abby. Thanks.” Rachel looked both ways and they crossed.

As the duo got close to her neighborhood, Rachel's mind turned toward her neighbors. Carol Gordon lived on the corner of her block, just a few houses from her. Carol was walking out of her front door onto the porch. The house was a two-story white house with a sunroom on the left that had a separate entrance. She waved and laughed, “Hey there, Abby! Are you walking Rachel today?” Carol worked part-time teaching music at an area college and gave piano lessons. Her husband had died a number of years ago, but she still supported some of the civil rights organizations they had worked with together. Rachel guessed she was about 60. Carol was always happy to talk with Rachel about any topic—except her family.

“Ha! Ha! You know she is,” waved Rachel. “You know she is.”

A few houses down the street lived Roy and Dorothy. They were only two houses away from Rachel. As Abby and Rachel made their way down the street closer to home, Roy was walking toward his pickup, carrying a red thermos under his arm, getting ready to leave for work. “Howdy, Rachel,” he said.

“Hey there Roy,” said Rachel. Roy worked construction jobs while Dorothy worked in a nursing home. They were also in their 60’s and looking forward to retirement. Talking to them was as different from talking to Carol as you could get. They couldn’t wait to share news about their family, especially the grandchildren, but their politics were very conservative—much different from the ideas Carol and Rachel supported.

Finally, on the home stretch, Rachel and Abby could see Charley’s house. He lived next door to Rachel in a brick house. Charley had taught U.S. and world history at the local high school for nearly forty years and was routinely nominated as someone’s favorite teacher at the annual awards assembly. In retirement he was working at two different museums in town, a county historical museum and a jazz museum. He was sitting on his front porch swing, holding Gooch’s lead with one hand and holding a coffee cup in the other.

“Great weather for a walk, Charley,” said Rachel.

“We’re enjoying the weather just fine from up here,” replied Charley. “Some of us aren’t quite as young as you and Miss Abby.” Charley took a drink of coffee. “But I suspect Gooch will insist that we partake of a walk soon.” Gooch jumped up when he heard his name. “You’re saying now is a good time, Gooch?” Charley put down his coffee cup and stood. “Have an outstanding day, Rachel.”

“You too, Charley,” said Rachel, but Gooch was already dragging Charley down the front steps to the sidewalk.

Rachel walked up the steps to her front porch. She considered herself very lucky to have such good neighbors. She wondered what it said about her that she valued a quiet life surrounded by neighbors her mother’s age rather than living in an apartment surrounded by younger people. It wasn’t that she didn’t enjoy the occasional night out, but she truly did enjoy the peace and quiet of her current life where her biggest drama was finding a plumber or checking the references of potential renters.

As she unlocked her front door, Rachel started to mentally review the jobs she needed to take care of today: houses to tour, a seminar on financing, clients to call, references to check, one possible eviction. It would take all day today to get everything done. She was already looking forward to the weekend. For a

moment she thought about her past—the things she missed: the kids at the schools, the life of a social worker and the feeling of being whole after helping someone in need. “Yes, things are different now, Abby,” she said. “It is just me and you girl! This is our world now,” she said.

*I don't miss anything at all*, she told herself. And she almost believed it.

## Chapter Two

“If thoughts could kill, they’d be arresting me for murder,” mumbled Carol Morris as she ended the call and put her cell phone on the end table. She sat in her living room at the end of a couch with subdued blue and tan floral patterns that was her favorite piece of furniture, but even flowers would not cheer her. Carol frowned. She truly wished she still had a land line so she could have slammed the phone down, hopefully causing a satisfying crash. *The nerve*, she thought. *Accusing me of stealing from my own family? Ugh!*

Carol walked into the small parlor just off her living room. It was just big enough for the piano and one upholstered chair. It had windows on three sides that provided plenty of light. She walked to the piano, pulled out the stool, then carefully sat down. She placed her hands on her hips. “Breathe, Carol. Just breathe,” she whispered to herself. She sat up straight, stared at the keyboard and lightly touched it willing herself to calm down. She thought about trying to play something. *Maybe Chopin? No. Chopin was for happy times. A Beethoven sonata? No. Rachmaninoff? Yes, the etudes.* They would remind her of the drama in her family but also help her process it.

Taking a final deep breath, she started playing from memory. A few measures in, Carol replayed the

phone call. The accusations were nonsense. Anyone who knew her, knew she would never steal. Furthermore, she wanted no part of her parents' money. She had run away from that lifestyle, unlike her sister and brother. She had married almost out of spite, enjoying the sight of her father sputtering that Phillip had no prospects, mocking his ambition to earn a PhD and teach at a university.

As she played the notes, her fingers danced, but oh how she missed Phillip. It had been nearly two decades since he died. They spent twenty happy years living a somewhat nomadic life as Phillip bounced from one college to another. He never quite found a place that would offer him tenure. And when the heart attack killed him, Carol used the insurance money to move back to Glen Falls. Not to be close to family but to be close to old friends and familiar surroundings.

Carol played the etudes and focused on her playing, lifting her long fingers from the keyboard as she finished a run of notes before carefully placing her fingers back on the piano keys. "How could Daniel even hint that I'd steal money from the family?" Carol whispered as she continued to play. "The rest of the family? Yes. But Daniel? My own brother?"

Carol's thoughts drifted as she played, and she recalled how her parents had encouraged her to play piano but as a hobby. Yes, it was at least something to

keep her busy if she married into money (likely they thought) or something to relax her if she decided on a career in business following in her father's footsteps. But music as a career? Teaching college students at a university? Giving piano lessons to children in her home? That was something they could not comprehend. She had gone from being a trusted daughter to an outcast.

Thing is, Carol could support herself—even as a widow. She had been able to buy this older house at a good price and still hang on to a good chunk of her savings. She taught some private piano lessons to college students at nearby East Central State Community College and also taught private piano lessons from home. She never had much of a surplus of money, but because she lived simply, she never had to worry about where her next meal would come from.

She finished the Rachmaninoff piece and put her hands into her lap. “Yes. Much better,” she said. She breathed a calming breath. Still, she wondered about the missing money. Her father had been dead for years, but all the family money had simply stayed with her mother. *This just doesn't make sense*, she thought.

Carol barely remembered her grandparents, but she did remember they had money. She also recalled how everyone fought viciously over money when they had died, especially on her father's side. Her

grandparents had owned an ice cream franchise that had been bought by a national chain—so there was quite a bit of money there. Although it had been a family business, all the aunts, uncles, and cousins had been cut out of the will.

The result was that Carol's father, Donald, had inherited a veritable fortune. That money, combined with the inheritance her mother, Constance, brought to the marriage had funded the Donald Morris car dealerships. Through the years, Donald had made his own fortune from the car dealership, but a routine review a few years ago had brought to light that \$100,000 Donald had inherited from the family ice cream business was gone. They were still quite rich thanks to the thriving car dealership, just not quite as rich as they had all believed.

Carol replayed the last part of the conversation with Daniel in her mind:

*"Well, I guess it's possible that Dad lost the money," said Daniel.*

*"Yeah. I agree—with the Alzheimer's and all," said Carol.*

*"Gerald and I tried everything we could to help him remember. Then after he died, we looked through all his files multiple times. I think Gerald still goes through the files at least once a year even after all this time," said Daniel.*



*“Gerald. My dear brother-in-law,” snapped Carol. “How do you know we can trust him?”*

*“Carol, we’re all doing the best we can under the circumstances and I for one, appreciate Gerald trying to help. He even asks Mom about the money from time to time.”*

*“It isn’t like she can remember anything about it now! She’s 85 for crying out loud,” said Carol.*

*That’s when Daniel really got to her. “You have always been the smart one, Carol. What do you know about the missing \$100,000?”*

*And that was it. Carol lost her cool.*

*“How dare you?” Carol choked back a sob. “How could you imply that I know something?”*

*“Carol, calm down.” Daniel, as always, was playing the role of peacekeeper.*

*“I will not calm down. You’re accusing me of stealing!”*

Carol thought the issue had been resolved years ago, that they had decided their father had simply lost the money, at least until she got the phone call today. Although Daniel had been polite when asking questions about what Carol knew about the missing money, Carol could hear the uncertainty behind Daniel’s calm words. Why was he bringing up the missing money after all this time? Did he think she had somehow stolen the money many years ago and was

hiding it from the family? She didn't think he would believe such a thing, but he had always been the self-appointed guardian of the family name. What about her brother-in-law, Gerald? Yes, he would accuse her of a theft without hesitation. He was no doubt hovering, making sure he got the largest possible share of any missing money. Her sister, Jackie? Assuming she even had moments of clarity in between her marathon drinking sessions, Carol figured she was only too happy to join in the accusation, especially if there was any chance it would bring her more money.

Carol wondered about Jackie. Drudging up an old fairy tale about a missing fortune was not like Daniel or Gerald, but Jackie? Jackie's jealousy had had no bounds when they were younger. She had been jealous of Carol's musical ability and her achievement in school and had taken every opportunity to tell Carol that spending time on music and studying were only lame attempts to mask the fact that boys didn't like her. Jackie, on the other hand, had a constant stream of admirers. Carol didn't know what Jackie told her parents, but at some point, when they were teenagers, her family began questioning her about the time she spent playing the piano and studying rather than going to social events.

Carol shook her head. Those days were in the past. Jackie no longer cared about her one way or the other.

Then Carol began to wonder. Was there a chance that there really was some family money hidden someplace, its location lost in the confused mind of her father?

Oh, well. It didn't matter. She was grateful her mother had put her back into her will, but the money really didn't matter. At least not to her.

She made up her mind. It was time for a confrontation. It was Friday. She knew if she didn't act right away, she'd delay over the weekend and then talk herself into waiting even longer. No. She knew she should face the family this instant, but it had been so long. It had been months since she had been in the same room with Daniel, and more than a year since she'd seen her sister Jackie and brother-in-law Gerald. Going back to her parents' home for a family meeting was going to be painful. It couldn't be avoided, though.

Carol picked up her cell phone to call Daniel back. Who cares if it's short notice. They would just have to make tomorrow work.

## Chapter Three

Allison Morris twisted in her chair so she could get a good look at her grandmother. Constance Morris was sitting on the sofa positioned directly in front of the picture window while Allison sat at the desk—computer printouts and ledgers in front of her—on the far side of the family room. She hated that Grams was losing her short-term memory, but she was glad she had been in good health through most of her life—at least until now when she was in her mid-80’s.

“Grams, are you okay?” said Allison.

Grams did not move.

Allison turned back and looked at the numbers one more time. She kept hoping she’d missed something that would explain the financial discrepancies. She frowned in concentration as she reached behind her, took out the hair clip and shook out her light caramel hair. Yesterday she’d been going through a box she found in the study closet looking for something that might bring back a pleasant memory for Grams. She found a letter from her grandfather asking her aunt Carol about some missing money. She had texted her Uncle Gerald, but he had basically told her to mind her own business. She had spent the morning going through the family financials, hoping to find an explanation. She looked over at her packed suitcase

wondering if she should change her plans and stay one more day.

Allison shook her head. She needed to take a break from thinking about the financials. She turned away from the desk. “Grams? Hello? You okay, Grams?”

“I’m fine Carol,” her grandmother replied. Allison sighed. That’s just the way it was: some days Grams thought Allison was her Aunt Carol and she was still living here with her. That made Allison sad. She knew her aunt had had a very stormy relationship with her parents, and they had not welcomed her back here for many years. Her grandparents had not approved of her Aunt Carol’s choice to pursue a career in music and marry someone more interested in academics than business.

Allison looked out the window. She loved looking out at the wooded area in the back of the house and knew her grams did as well. They could look out of the huge picture window to the left of the door and see the deck, the large back yard, and the woods in the distance. “It’s a great view, isn’t it, Grams?”

Her grandmother turned back to look out the picture window. “I love this view. Did we ever tell you about the old mill that was built back there near the stream?”

*Only about a thousand times*, thought Allison. “Yes, Grams. The old mill. Isn’t that one of the reasons

you and Grandpa bought this property? I know you both love reading about the history of the area. Those early settlers must have been very adventurous. Didn't you say that Shawnee and Delaware hunting parties often came through this area?"

"Oh my," said her grandmother.

A goldfinch swooped down from the large oak tree near the deck. It was no longer bright yellow, and Allison knew it was well on its way to turning gray for the winter. It landed to the feeder spilling much of the birdseed onto the ground as it ate its fill before being chased away by another goldfinch. Her grandmother turned and squinted at her. "Carol?"

"Grams, it's Allison. You remember me, don't you? I'm Daniel's daughter."

Her grandmother leaned forward to stare at her, pressing her lips tightly together, appearing to concentrate as if an answer was just outside her grasp.

"Allison?"

"Yes, Grams. I'm Allison. Remember that we filled the bird feeders this morning. We put safflower out front for the Cardinals and put thistle in the feeder out back near the patio."

"Of course, I remember, Allison. We just did that this morning." Her grandmother's tone was almost condescending. "No need to treat me like a child."

Allison forced another smile. She was used to her grandmother going in and out of her lucid moments suddenly. Who knew how long it would last? “That’s right, Grams. How silly of me. And I bet you remember what we were talking about yesterday, too, don’t you?”

“Of course, I do.” Her grandmother’s face was set, ready to challenge any attempt to criticize her memory. Allison had been with her grandmother for nearly a week. Days ago, her grandmother had seemed very agitated, and it had something to do with money. At first, Allison thought she was remembering an event from many years ago. It took several times for her to figure out that her grandmother was upset about something much more recent. After a number of conversations that had been interrupted by the predictable lapses into confusion, she had finally figured out it wasn’t just about money but about a document she had signed that related to money.

Allison nodded. “You were telling me about signing some documents and that you remembered signing them but weren’t sure what they were for.”

“Documents?” her grandmother again frowned in concentration. “Oh, yes. The documents. He had me sign another one just last week.”

Allison knew she had to take advantage of the moment. She never knew how long her grandmother would remain alert and lucid. “And it was your lawyer,

Mr. Corman, that had you sign the documents? Is that right?" Allison had no idea who had asked her to sign a document but figured starting with the family lawyer was a good guess.

"No, of course not. Why would he ask me to sign anything? It was my son."

"Your son? You mean, my dad? Daniel?" Allison was surprised.

"Daniel? No, not Daniel. Gerald. My son-in-law. Gerald wanted me to sign a document. Something about moving some money into an account with his name on it so he could make some necessary changes." Her grandmother sat back on the couch, satisfied she had proven her memory was just fine.

Allison was confused. She knew Uncle Gerald had been the executor of her grandparent's estate for years, starting years ago when her grandfather had begun having memory issues before the Alzheimer's took over totally. Her father had told her he and Gerald had set up their finances so everything was automatic. He had stressed they wanted to make sure neither of her grandparents had to make any decisions about money. But she had not heard of there being any issue with the will after her grandmother had added her Aunt Carol back. She was sorry now she had said anything to her uncle. "Are you sure, Grams?"



“Carol, is something wrong?” Her grandmother grew agitated. “Carol, we need to talk about college. Have you declared a major yet?”

“Grams, I’m Allison.” But her grandmother was staring out the window at the bird feeder again.

Allison jumped at the sound of an incoming text. She pulled out her cell phone. The text was from an unknown number. It read:

*Don’t meddle. This doesn’t concern you.*

Allison turned cold. Who was this and what did they think she knew?

*Don’t meddle or your uncle will pay. Your father is involved.*

Allison was numb. She started shaking. Her phone dinged again:

*If you don’t stop, your father will pay the price.*

Allison looked in the corner. She walked over and grabbed her suitcase. It was definitely time to go. She looked back at her Grams. The nurse was here; Grams would be fine. She opened the door and ran to her car. She tossed the suitcase in the trunk and threw herself into the front seat. She fumbled with her keys and dropped them on the floor. She reached down and grabbed them. Hands still shaking, she got the key into the ignition and turned it. She had to get out of here.

Allison followed the circular drive to the road. She drove down the country road trying to think. Should she

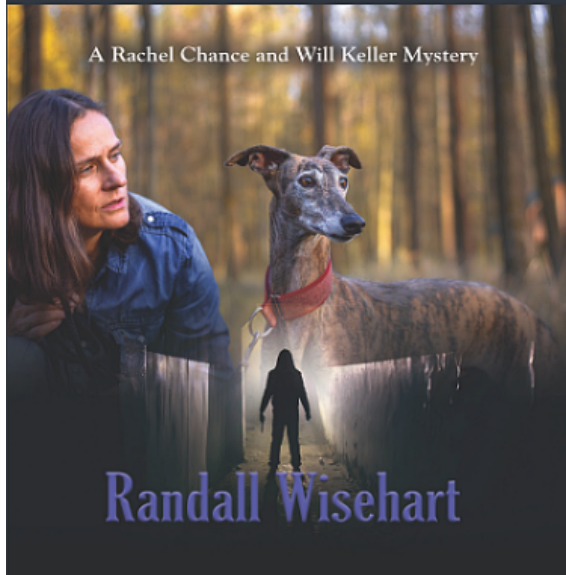
call her father? Could he be involved in something illegal? Suddenly a black SUV roared past and cut in front of her causing her to slam on her brakes. She swerved to the side of the road and jerked violently to a stop, hitting her head on the steering wheel, stopping just short of a ditch. She was hyperventilating and her heart was slamming against her chest. Her head hurt but she looked at her hands and then down at her legs. She didn't think she had any other injuries. She looked ahead of her, but the SUV was out of sight.

Her cell phone dinged. Another text:

*That was a warning. Keep quiet or someone gets hurt.*

Allison gasped. She sat silently for a few moments, confused and afraid. She looked behind her then ahead. No cars in sight. Then, slowly, she pulled onto the road and drove. She needed to go somewhere safe.

# A Greyt Greyhound Rescue



*Rachel Chance is happy living a simple life with her retired racing Greyhound Abby. When a murder occurs in her neighborhood, Rachel and her new love interest Will face a puzzle with dead ends and find danger in unexpected places.*

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