

PROLOGUE

Monday, September 19th, 2022

When I was eight years old, an hour could seem like a week and a summer could seem like an eternity. But Mama would say to Rose and me, “Time is flying.”

When I was eight, what I wanted to be was ten. A two-number age. When I was ten, I wanted to be twelve. When I was twelve, I wanted to be sixteen. I wanted to be an adult, I wanted to drive a car, I wanted to have a job, I wanted to be independent, I wanted to be a mother.

The years rolled by and eventually I realized that they were rolling faster and faster, and that Mama had been right after all. Time was flying.

I’ve gotten a lot of things I wished for — children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. And I’ve experienced a few things I wouldn’t wish on anybody. Pop once said it’s a good thing we don’t know what’s around the corner. I didn’t understand what he meant then, but I do now. It’s better to wish than to know.

When you have the pleasure of being one hundred years old, when your mind is clear and sharp and you can revisit an afternoon that's ninety-five years past as easily as you can visit yesterday afternoon, then you can piece together the kaleidoscope bits of your life. But like a kaleidoscope, the picture is different every time. Fred is there and then he's gone and then he appears again. Zander swirls into focus slowly and disappears with a great swoop that is unexpected, even now. And Mama and Sarah and Adele, they come and go. Love, too. And money. It's crass, but you can't forget about the money, although it means more to some than to others.

Generation following generation, the little ones who didn't make it, the grown ones who stuck around longer than maybe they should have been allowed. And the secrets. The things hidden and the things unsaid that sometimes cause more trouble and more grief as the years pile up, more than the things brought out into the sunshine for all to see.

But even secrets have their place.

Sitting by the window now, in the shadow of a chestnut tree, longing for a view from a different window in a different time, I dig through my memories and choose one from Lewisport, my first home.