Chapter One

The room wasn’t very large; there was an espresso machine in one corner and ten chairs lining two walls. Several women were seated, some nervously looking at the script in their hands, a couple glancing out of the corners of their eyes at the others, and one with a bored expression flicking through a magazine. All of them were young, none of them older than twenty-three. A woman with a clipboard entered through one of the room’s two doors, scanned her list of names, and called out, “Cynthia Tomes?”

The girl put the magazine in her purse, rose, and followed the woman with the clipboard back out through the door.

The door opposite opened hurriedly, and a girl rushed in. She was patently out of breath. Everyone looked up at her. Blushing, she closed the door behind her quietly and then slipped over to a chair in the corner.

She was pretty with a slight frame and small features; her hair was smooth and a rich red. She had non-descriptive blue eyes with dark eyebrows and lashes. She’d pulled her hair into a ponytail in a desperate attempt to save time before rushing out the door and pulled on a brown jean blazer to hide her wrinkled shirt.

The door opened again, and the woman and clipboard reappeared. “Holly Woods?”

The newcomer leapt up. “Present!”

The woman looked over her clipboard at her. “This way,” she waved towards the doorway.

Running a hand along the top of her head, as if smoothing her hair, Holly hurried past the woman. She found herself in a large room. There was a long couch at one side and several armchairs next to it. A camera was placed along the other side. Sitting on the couch were two men and in one of the armchairs a thin woman with grey-speckled hair and a clipboard of her own.

The younger of the two men smiled at Holly and indicated one of the chairs. She sat down.

“Miss Woods,” the man said with a smile, “I’m Abel George, the director. It’s a pleasure to meet you. Kate,” he gestured towards the woman, “has told us so much about your previous audition. I can without hesitation say I know exactly who she’s rooting for.”

Holly shot a small smile in Kate’s direction.

“And this,” continued Abel, gesturing to the man beside him, “is Victor McCall. He’s one of our producers.”

“It’s good to meet you,” murmured Holly.

McCall was older. He looked somewhere in his sixties. He wore a three-piece suit and had grey hair and a lined face. He smiled back.

“What Kate’s told us about you already has us very excited,” continued Abel. “I have a couple of quick questions before we go ahead if that’s alright.”

“What would you like to know?”

“Looking at your résumé here, you don’t have a whole lot of experience: a couple of commercials, and I don’t see any acting training on here. Is that correct?”

Holly shifted nervously and nodded. “I’ve been taking classes since coming out to L.A., so for about six months, but my interest in acting is fairly new.”

“Okay,” Abel nodded to himself. “Well, the character we’re interested in you for is Katie Woodward. She’s very young, very naïve. The fact that you haven’t done a lot of acting might work in your favor here. Are you at all familiar with the book?”

Holly nodded. “I read it after the last audition.”

“Great, well here’s the script for the boat scene. I’ll go over it with you once. I’ll read Charley’s part, and then we’ll do the screen test.”