

**Fatal as a Fallen Woman**  
**A Diana Spaulding Mystery**

by

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SAMPLE CHAPTER

## Chapter One

April, 1888

The contents of the lodgers' rooms at Mrs. Curran's boarding house on Tenth Street in Manhattan were simple—a narrow brass bedstead, a washstand with all the standard furnishings, and a small, comfortable chair flanked by a pie-shaped table surmounted by an oil lamp. Diana Spaulding had filled the remaining space with a Saratoga trunk, a large Gladstone bag, a crocodile-skin gripsack, the capacious tweed bag she sometimes slung over her shoulder for ease in carrying, and assorted boxes.

"Cart ahead of the horse," she muttered as she surveyed the chaos. She should not begin to pack her belongings until *after* she mailed the letter accepting Ben Northcote's proposal of marriage.

Diana could feel a smile blossom on her face at the thought of Ben. They'd had such a whirlwind courtship, filled with so many extraordinary events, that at first she'd been afraid to trust the strength of her feelings for him. She'd made the mistake of marrying in haste once before and had lived to regret it. Life with Evan Spaulding had consisted of soaring highs and dizzying descents into misery and had quite literally brought her to the brink of ruin.

This time would be different, Diana thought as she reread the brief missive one last time, then folded the single sheet of paper and tucked it into an envelope on which she'd already written "Dr. Benjamin Northcote, Bangor, Maine." Like Evan, Ben was charismatic. Like Evan, he was handsome. Six feet tall, dark of hair and eyes and superbly well coordinated and fit, Ben had a deep, resonant voice and a face sculpted by a master. But it had been his gentleness that had won Diana—his kindness. Ben was a man to whom hearth and home mattered more than fame or fortune. He loved his family above everything, and a fortnight earlier he had asked her to become a permanent part of that intimate circle.

She had not given him an answer at the time. She'd felt she needed to take a step back, to think. And so she'd left him in Bangor and returned to New York City. Since then she'd examined both her mind and her heart and realized that her love for Ben was no passing fancy, no enchantment, no foolish young woman's misguided romantic daydream. What she felt was real and lasting.

He'd never shared her doubts. She smiled again as she remembered how he'd looked on that most memorable of days. Weary but confident, his eyes full of love for her, he'd made her a promise: *If you haven't returned by the end of April, I'll come to you.*

Each day's mail had brought a new declaration of devotion until finally, yesterday, she'd made her decision and resigned her position as a journalist at the *Independent Intelligencer*. Last night she'd composed the most important piece of writing of her life. This morning she had only to take that letter to the post office and send it on its way north. She'd spend a day or two saying goodbye to a few old friends and shopping

for a gown in which to be married. If all went well, she'd be ready to depart by the end of the week.

Humming softly, Diana tucked the letter into her skirt pocket. The latest spring fashions were on sale at Redfern Ladies' Tailor on Fifth Avenue and in the shops on West Twenty-third Street—Best and Company and nearby Stern Brothers, who'd advertised newly arrived imported walking dresses. She did not have a great deal of money to spend on clothing, but she wanted something special for her wedding to Ben. When she'd eloped with Evan, she'd been wearing a white dotted Swiss dress, the most bland of schoolgirl frocks.

She grimaced at her reflection in the mirror above the washstand as she released and recoiled thick, mahogany-colored hair. With a few deft movements, she shaped it into a neat bun at the nape of her neck. She'd just added a small green hat with feathers when someone rapped at her door.

"That man is here again," Mrs. Curran called.

In an involuntary movement, Diana's hand clutched the cameo brooch she wore at her throat, a gift from Ben. The scalloped edges of the gold setting bit into her palm. "That man," to Mrs. Curran, meant only one person—Horatio Foxe, editor and publisher of the *Independent Intelligencer* and Diana's former employer.

"I've put him in the small parlor," Mrs. Curran added, making Diana chuckle in spite of her sudden anxiety. Her landlady would have shown a valued guest into the more formal drawing room. She hadn't forgiven Foxe for all the trouble he'd caused Diana with unauthorized additions to her column. In a quest to boost the newspaper's sagging circulation he'd gone after scandal, heedless of the harm he might cause to those whose foibles he revealed in print.

"I'll be along directly." Diana removed the hat and hung it on a peg alongside the dark green, fur-trimmed coat she'd been about to collect. It might be mid-April, but there was still a chill in the air.

As she left the room and walked briskly along the corridor, where a hint of lavender lingered to mark Mrs. Curran's recent passage towards the stairwell, Diana told herself it was foolish to feel nervous just because Foxe had come to call. She could guess what he wanted. He planned to make one last attempt to convince her to stay.

Her column, "Today's Tidbits," was popular with readers, even without the scathing reviews and theatrical gossip Foxe had tried to persuade her to add. More significant, the news stories she'd written during the past two weeks, reporting on criminal activity in New York from a woman's point of view, had drawn new readers to the paper.

Foxe would try flattery first. Then he'd attempt bribery—he'd already offered her a generous raise and a permanent spot on the police beat. Finally, he'd work on her sense of guilt, demanding to know how she could think of leaving him in the lurch after all he'd done for her.

It was true she had reason to be grateful to him, but Diana knew she'd more than repaid his many kindnesses. In fact, he was the one who should feel guilty. He could be unscrupulous when intent on getting a story and just recently his pursuit of headlines had ended by putting her life at risk. She owed him nothing more than the courtesy of hearing what he had to say.

The small parlor doubled as Mrs. Curran's sewing room, where she displayed her collection of thimbles in a special glass-fronted cabinet. Copies of the latest *Godey's Ladies' Book* and the E. Butterick & Co pattern catalogue for summer 1888 were scattered here and there, even on the looped carpet. An adjustable dress form wearing a pale blue silk afternoon dress stood in one corner. Next to it was a sewing machine with a nightgown draped across it. It appeared that Mrs. Curran had been interrupted while making repairs. The fabric, although still held in place by the needle, trailed down over the treadle as if it had been abandoned in haste.

Horatio Foxe sat perched on the edge of a plush-covered settee, plainly ill at ease in these surroundings. He'd taken off his hat and run ink-stained fingers through his sand-colored hair, a nervous habit that meant he was either irritated or upset.

"What's wrong?" Diana demanded.

Foxe bounced to his feet, both hands outstretched. In the depths of his hazel eyes, Diana encountered an emotion she'd never seen there before. It was pity. "Bad news, m'dear. I'm so sorry."

*Please, God—not Ben!*

A suffocating anguish engulfed Diana at the possibility that something terrible had happened to Ben Northcote. She knew too well how easily, how suddenly, a vital life force could be snuffed out. As she fought for breath, her limbs turned to ice and frozen muscles refused to carry her farther into the room. Only with great effort did she manage to speak.

"Tell me quickly," she begged. Whatever news Foxe had brought, it could not be more dreadful than the appalling scenes crowding into her head. She had a very good imagination and more than a passing acquaintance with the stuff of horror stories.

He reached into the inner pocket of his four-button cutaway suit coat and drew out a sheet of paper. She recognized it at once as the typescript of a news dispatch sent by way of the special telegraph wires the Press Association leased from Western Union. Foxe regularly reviewed everything that came in "over the wire" to decide which items would most interest his readers. "I recognized the name," he said as he handed it over. "William 'Timberline' Torrence."

*Not Ben!* Relief broke over her like an incoming wave before the undertow caught at her ankles and sent her staggering again. No, not Ben, but someone who had once been as dear to her . . . her father.

As she took the paper, Diana's fingers trembled. The headline read, "Silver Baron Murdered in Denver Hotel."

"Dead?" she whispered in a shaky voice. "Murdered?"

It did not seem possible. Her father was a monolith, as unyielding and immutable as a rocky cliff. Nothing short of an explosion should have been capable of bringing him down.

"I'm sorry, Diana," Foxe said, "and it gets worse. You'd best read the entire dispatch for yourself."

The page rustled in her hands. She knew there were words written on it, but they swam in front of her eyes. The tears surprised her. In the past she'd shed so many because of her father that she hadn't thought she'd have any left to mourn him. With icy fingertips, she dashed the moisture from her cheeks.

William Torrence hadn't been one to grieve, or to forgive. When events moved beyond his control, he reacted with cold anger.

*"You are dead to us now,"* he'd said to her the last time she'd seen him. *"Your name will never be spoken in this house again."*

On that fateful day six years ago, when Diana had brought her new husband home to meet her parents, her father had seized the family Bible, taken up a pen, and blacked out her name. While she stood still stunned in appalled silence, he informed her that she was no longer his daughter. He'd never *had* a daughter. She was not just dead to him from that moment on. She had never even existed.

And now he was the one who was dead. Diana had expected to feel nothing when this day came. Hadn't she already mourned his loss? But she had to swipe one hand across her eyes before she could bring the text of the dispatch into focus.

The facts were brutally clear, even if the details were sketchy. William "Timberline" Torrence had been stabbed to death. The person believed to have killed him was his former wife.

*Former wife?*

With each word Diana read, her chest constricted. Her heart was hammering so loudly in her ears that she scarcely noticed when Foxe grasped her arm and steered her towards the settee.

"Sit before you fall," he ordered.

Since her knees were about to give out, she obeyed. She shook her head in an attempt to clear it, then wished she hadn't. The room spun wildly.

"Thunderation, Diana! Are you going to faint on me?" Foxe sounded equal parts alarmed and annoyed.

"Not if I can help it." She swallowed convulsively, then took several deep breaths. She flattened the dispatch on her lap and held the edges in a white-knuckled grip.

Regrets assaulted her, along with a sense of guilt. She had made no effort to see either of her parents again after that hideous confrontation in the parlor of the Torrence mansion, not even during the month she and Evan had spent in Denver before moving on to Leadville. She could have attempted a reconciliation. Why hadn't she? Even if her father had refused to acknowledge her, she might have talked to her mother. She might have . . . what? Ended the estrangement?

More likely she'd have created greater dissension among people who were already bitterly unhappy. She stared at the lines of print. The words were a blur again, but it hardly mattered. They'd been imprinted in her memory. According to the dispatch, the "former wife" who had killed Diana's father was her mother. Sometime during the six years since they'd disowned their only child, her parents had also rejected each other. An agonized sob escaped Diana in spite of her best efforts to hold it in.

"Mrs. Curran!"

Foxe's shout made Diana jump. Her thoughts fragmented, leaving her light-headed.

"Fetch smelling salts!" Foxe bellowed. "Confound it, woman! Get a move on!"

His fingers bit into Diana's shoulders as he shoved her head into her lap. The pounding at her temples had begun to diminish by the time the swish of bombazine and a whiff of lavender heralded Mrs. Curran's arrival.

"And what is it you've done to her now?" Diana's landlady demanded, the lilt of Ireland stronger than usual in her speech. It got that way when she was agitated.

"Did you bring smelling salts?" Foxe demanded. "She's had a shock."

"I did, yes."

"No," Diana protested. "No smelling salts." The mere thought of being forced to inhale Mrs. Curran's powerful homemade blend of liquid ammonia, rosemary, lavender, bermagotte, and cloves was sufficient to bring her bolt upright. She blinked away the last of the dizziness and straightened her spine. "I am quite recovered now."

Horatio Foxe and Francesca Curran turned on her with identical beady-eyed stares and suddenly Diana felt an overwhelming desire to laugh. The two of them had the look of a pair of buzzards contemplating some poor soul lost in the desert and dying of thirst. Her lips quirked but she managed to fight off the bubble of hysterical laughter.

"Oh, dear," she murmured when she'd recovered a little. "I must be more overwrought than I realized."

The thin and wiry Foxe strutted closer. She'd always thought he resembled a bantam rooster.

"You're white as a sheet," he informed her.

Diana glanced at Mrs. Curran. With her bright curious eyes and tendency to collect shiny objects like those thimbles, what else could she be but a magpie?

"You look," said the magpie, "as if a goose just walked over your grave."

The words put an end to Diana's strange flight of fancy and vanquished every trace of humor. She sobered instantly. "So it has, Mrs. Curran. My past has come back to haunt me."

And the past, she realized, must be dealt with before she could go forward into the future. One finger at a time, she released her grip on the dispatch until her right hand was free to search out the letter in her pocket. Slowly and deliberately, she ripped it in half. She would not be mailing her acceptance of Ben Northcote's proposal of marriage. Not today. Perhaps not ever.

\* \* \*

Horatio Foxe insisted on accompanying Diana as far as Weehawken Terminal, where a combination of five ferry slips and sixteen passenger tracks linked New Jersey to every conceivable destination. She meant to catch the first train headed west.

Ordinarily, she'd have spent the ten-minute crossing watching the variety of water craft on this stretch of the Hudson River—everything from oyster sloops to transatlantic liners. But on this trip, she scarcely glanced up from the point on the rough wooden railing in front of her where silk-gloved fingers occupied themselves worrying loose a splinter. For the most part, this activity also allowed her to ignore Foxe's fulminating glare.

"You're a fool to rush off half-cocked like this." He stood close beside her, one hand on her elbow and the other clamped to the rim of his bowler to keep it from being blown away. Diana's brown straw hat was securely anchored with pins, but her thin gray illusion veil filled and deflated with every gust of salt-tinged air.

"What else would you have me do? My mother is suspected of killing my father. I can scarcely ignore her plight." Diana risked a sideways glance and saw that irritation had scrunched Foxe's features into a formidable scowl.

"Send a telegram to Denver."

"To say what? And if she's in jail, she may not be able to receive or send messages." *Arrest imminent*, the dispatch had said. Denver's police chief had been quoted, vowing to have Elmira Torrence in custody by nightfall. That had been two days ago.

Diana's grasp of the legal system was shaky. She didn't cover trials, had never visited a prison, and didn't want to. She'd stuck to writing about the commission of crimes and the capture of the criminals. Though she supposed it was short-sighted of her, her interest had always stopped with the villain's arrest.

"If she's already in jail, you may arrive too late to be of any use," Foxe said.

Diana's hands tightened on the rail, causing the splinter to imbed itself in her thumb. "There will have to be a coroner's inquest, and a grand jury indictment." She knew that much about the law. "And a trial."

Stories of "frontier justice" swirled through her mind as she extracted the shard of wood, removed her glove, and gingerly sucked at a small bead of blood. The breeze seemed suddenly colder, raising goose bumps on the newly exposed flesh of hand and wrist.

The Denver Diana had known as a child had been a wild and unsettled place, full of gamblers, saloons, and the occasional lynch mob. A well-brought-up female wasn't supposed to know about such things, but servants talked and girls just approaching womanhood were curious.

Diana remembered *all* the details of the most scandalous event of the year she'd turned thirteen. Two fallen women had fought a duel over a man. It had taken place on the outskirts of Denver and when it was over it had been the man who lay bleeding from a gunshot wound. That victim had lived, though. There'd been no arrest or trial, let alone a lynching.

Diana wanted to believe that Denver was more civilized these days, but she had her doubts. If Elmira Torrence had sufficiently outraged the local citizens by brutally murdering her former husband . . . or if they *believed* she had killed him . . . anything could happen.

Foxe gave Diana's arm an awkward pat. "Have you considered that your mother might be guilty? Accusations of murder are not made lightly. What if she did kill him?"

Diana did not want to think about that possibility, let alone talk about it, but Foxe's question deserved an answer. "My mother is not a demonstrative woman, but she's always had strong views on duty and loyalty. She supported my father in anything he wanted to do, even disowning me, because she was brought up to believe it is a wife's duty to defer to her husband in all things. She'd never strike out at him, no matter what the provocation."

Foxe gave her a sideways glance and a sardonic smile that showed far too many tobacco-stained teeth. "People change, Diana. You haven't seen her in years. You didn't even know about the divorce. What if the sheer disgrace of it pushed your mother into an uncharacteristic act of revenge?"

Diana frowned. Foxe's words reminded her that she and her mother had never been close. Diana's impetuous marriage had been all it took to shatter the tenuous familial bond that had survived her years away at school. Did she really know her mother, or what Elmira Torrence might be capable of doing?

An incident from Diana's childhood surfaced, unwanted, to taunt her. She'd been five or six. The Torrences had not been wealthy then and Diana's mother had been obliged to take in laundry to make ends meet. One of the miners had made a suggestion—the adult Diana understood what it must have been even if the child Diana had not—and her mother's reaction had been to clout him on the ear with one of the heavy iron tongs she used to fish clothes out of boiling water. He'd bled profusely and there had been talk of an arrest for assault—and a great deal of cussing—but most of the men in the mining camp had felt Elmira's action was justified and nothing further had come of the incident.

The memory made Diana shiver. It was proof her mother's prodigious self-control could crack, releasing pent-up frustration. But kill William Torrence? Murder the man she'd have continued to regard as her husband, divorce or no? Never. Diana wouldn't believe such a thing unless she heard it from Elmira Torrence's own lips.

A sudden shift in the wind carried smoke into Diana's eyes. Foxe had lit one of his noxious cigars. "She won't look for your help," he mumbled around the obstruction in his mouth. "She may not even want it. You don't have to go."

"She'd contact me if she knew how. That she doesn't is my fault. I could have written to them at any time. Besides, it hardly matters if Mother expects me to come to her or not. She's all the kin I have in the world. What else can I do but offer her support in her hour of need?"

"So you're rushing across the country out of a sense of duty?" Foxe sounded skeptical.

"That's as good a reason as any." Diana hoped there might be more left between them, even after a six-year estrangement, but no matter what happened when she saw her mother again, she knew she would not be able to live with herself if she didn't go to Denver.

"Balderdash!" Foxe turned away from her to stare in the direction of the rapidly approaching New Jersey shore. "You don't owe your mother a thing."

"I owe her life," Diana snapped. "She gave birth to me, raised me, loved me in her own fashion. And if she was obliged to divorce Father, she has suffered enough. You know how divorced women are reviled by society, and the good opinion of Denver's upper crust—the people they call the 'sacred thirty-six'—was important to her."

"So you're hell-bent on haring off to Denver when you'd planned, in a day or two, to board a train for New England. Does this mean the engagement is off?"

"It wasn't on. Not yet." She smoothed a hand down the skirt of her gray flannel traveling suit. The feel of the soft fabric soothed her.

"Did you send for him?"

"Of course not. There's no time to waste waiting for him to get here. Besides, I can't ask Ben to leave his brother when Aaron was near to death such a short time ago."

"He'd come if he thought you needed him."

"That's precisely why I can't let on that I do. And I don't. Not really." She put temptation behind her, along with Manhattan's shoreline. She could handle this crisis herself. "I'll deal with my family's problems on my own. Ben and I aren't married yet, so the Torrences shouldn't be his concern."

"He'll see things differently," Foxe warned.

"That can't be helped."

"At least send him a telegram before you leave." The ferry had docked but neither of them left the rail.

"I already have."

"You told him what happened?"

"Only that I have to go away for a little while." His brows lifted in an expression of mockery that exasperated her. "Do you intend to help me with my bags or not?"

"Why else am I here?" Foxe reached for the heaviest pieces in the pile by her feet and followed her toward the gangplank. "If he's expecting a letter agreeing to his proposal of marriage, he won't be put off by a telegram."

"He'll have no choice. I didn't tell him where I'm going."

"So you're running away without an explanation? Northcote's not going to like that." Foxe made a tsking sound.

"I won't involve Ben in this! It's not his problem."

She'd considered dispatching a detailed explanation to Maine, but there was very little to report until she discovered what had really happened in Denver. Worse, if she told Ben what she did know, he'd want to rush to her rescue. She couldn't allow him to make that sacrifice. He was a physician with patients who needed him.

More importantly, his family needed him. Diana refused to deprive Aaron Northcote of either his brother or his doctor. Aaron had suffered grievous injuries because of her. The least she could do was make certain he had the best of care until he was fully recovered.

Foxe escorted Diana to the platform where her train waited before he spoke again. He made a valiant attempt to inject a teasing tone into his voice. "I think you're just looking for a reason to get out of marrying into the Northcote family. A few minutes in that old woman's company would give anyone second thoughts."

By "that old woman" he meant Maggie Northcote, matriarch of the clan. Diana's smile was genuine if rueful. "She'll turn you into a newt if she thinks you've insulted her. She was doing research into magic spells when I left."

Foxe gave a theatrical shudder. "Woman's mad. Ever think Northcote might like an excuse to visit Denver?"

"Maggie's merely eccentric," Diana informed him, echoing the opinion she'd heard over and over again during her time with Ben. "And such comments won't make me change my mind. I don't want any of the Northcotes involved in this. You're not to interfere." She jabbed him in the chest with one finger for emphasis. "No letters or telegrams sent to Maine on my behalf. Understood?"

Foxe threw his hands in the air and cast his eyes toward Heaven. "I won't write a word to him, not even if he tries to contact me."

"Good. See that you keep that promise." She had to shout to be heard now above the noise on the platform, and fight not to cough as they were engulfed by a shower of gritty cinders and billowing black smoke from the engine.

Foxe cleared his throat. "Might help if you kept your position with the *Independent Intelligencer*. Make it easier to get information if you go in with a reporter's credentials." He could not quite hide the cunning look on his narrow face or the speculative glitter in his eyes.

"Are you by chance suggesting I send you a firsthand account of my mother's trial?"

Foxe feigned surprise at the suggestion, but Diana was not deceived. This was what he must have had in mind all along. Annoyed, she gripped her tweed bag more firmly in one hand and seized the hatbox with the other, prepared to stalk away the moment she located a porter to collect her Gladstone bag and gripsack. She'd packed her books, additional clothing, and assorted memorabilia in the Saratoga trunk and left it in Mrs. Curran's basement.

"You'll need money," Foxe reminded her.

"I have what I'd saved for my wedding gown." Mentally she bade farewell to the confection of white corded silk and point lace that had featured in recent daydreams.

"Cost of a wedding gown, eh? Well, that might last a day or two."

Diana whirled around to glare at him and found herself staring at the train ticket in his hand. "I am perfectly capable of paying my own way!"

"Part of the deal if you're still in my employ." He talked right over her sputtered protests. "Diana, listen to me. As far as I'm concerned, you never left your job at the *Independent Intelligencer*. File whatever reports from Denver you wish and I will pay you for them. Return to New York when you can. Anytime you want to reclaim it, your desk will still be there in the city room."

"You just want a juicy story."

"Scandal sells newspapers," he reminded her, but with a sheepish look on his face.

In spite of herself, Diana was touched. In his own way, he was trying to look out for her. "You are a terrible man, Horatio Foxe."

She kissed his cheek, tacitly accepting the arrangement. What choice did she have? She had almost no money of her own. That was why she'd been working for him in the first place.

Foxe mumbled an excuse about needing to get back to the office and retreated, setting off at a brisk pace along the platform. He hadn't gone ten yards before he abruptly reversed direction. By the time he reached Diana's side once more, he'd produced two magazines from a bulging pocket.

"Something to read on the journey," he said, shoving them into the open outer compartment of her tweed bag. She caught a glimpse of the masthead of one and saw that it was the latest edition of *The Journalist*, a professional periodical for those in the newspaper business.

The second offering was also unmistakable, thanks to the eye-catching color of its pages. *The National Police Gazette* was wholly inappropriate reading material for a lady. Even gentlemen claimed they only read it while they waited at the barbershop for a shave or haircut. Torn between annoyance and amusement, Diana thanked him and boarded the train.

Like it or not, it seemed she was still writing about crime and scandal for Horatio Foxe. And if her father's killer turned out to be anyone other than her own mother, she *would* file that story. In fact, it would be the best piece of reporting she'd ever done. She owed Foxe that much.

"Here you go, miss," the conductor said, indicating a private compartment.

"This can't be right."

But it was. Foxe had booked first class passage for her all the way to Denver. Although notoriously tight with money, he had spent a hundred and twenty dollars when he could have gotten her a standard-fare ticket for only eighty-five.

She sniffled audibly as she stowed her possessions and took her seat. She would need all her wits about her when she reached her destination, and she might not get much rest en route, even with one of Mr. Pullman's beds to sleep in each night, but Horatio Foxe's generous gesture would make a difference. Instead of arriving in a state of total exhaustion, she might just get to Colorado with a modicum of her ability to function still intact.

Diana fought against weeping, but it was no use. Now that she was alone, the emotions she'd been holding at bay forced their way to the surface. As the train pulled out of the station she succumbed to tears, indulging in a good long cry. Memories of her childhood came thick and fast as she sobbed. So did worries and doubts.

When the bout of despair and self-pity was over, Diana mopped her face and straightened her shoulders. Oddly, she felt better, but the improvement did not last. Before long, her vexation returned. What would she find in Denver?

She closed her eyes, attempting to put worry about her mother aside long enough to think calmly about the practicalities of journey that would occupy the next few days. Ben's face swam into the darkness behind her eyelids, his expression conveying both hurt and reproach.

She sought diversion in the passing scenery next, but the view from her compartment was not sufficient distraction to keep her from worrying about Ben's reaction to her telegram. Finally Diana resorted to giving herself a pithy lecture comprised of trite but true sayings.

"No sense crying over spilt milk," she muttered. It would be best if she tried not to think about Ben at all.

She retrieved *The Journalist* from her tweed bag and forced herself to concentrate on reading an article chosen at random.

Diana's train was halfway to its first stop, at Rochester, before she turned in desperation to her only other choice of reading matter and discovered that her cantankerous, treacherous, sneaky editor had been even more generous than she'd realized. Tucked between the pale pink pages of *The National Police Gazette*, next to a story about a young woman's disconcerting experience in a dining car on the New York to Baltimore line, was an envelope with her name on it. It contained a bank draft for a hundred dollars and a letter of introduction to the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*.