A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a blue sleeveless dress and a gold headband, stands in a dimly lit room. She is looking over her shoulder towards the camera. In the foreground, there is a silver tray with a teapot and cups. In the background, there is a lamp and a decorative archway.

AN ANNALEE SPAIN MYSTERY

*"This story of Professor
Annalee Spain seeking
to solve her father's
cold case murder
is one you won't
want to put down."*

STEPHEN CURRY ON
ALL THAT IS SECRET

DOUBLE THE LIES

PATRICIA RAYBON

PRAISE FOR PATRICIA RAYBON

“This story grabs you right at the beginning and takes you on a ride full of plot twists and turns, keeping Annalee Spain—and readers—constantly wading through waist-high trouble that’s ‘determined,’ ‘insistent,’ and ‘insidious.’ Yet Raybon makes it clear that all the answers can be found by seeking Jesus, a search that mirrors our own need for ultimate Truth and a deeper relationship with the One who knows and loves us best.”

ROBIN W. PEARSON, Christy Award–winning author of *Walking in Tall Weeds*,
on *Double the Lies*

“In Annalee Spain, Patricia Raybon has given us not only an unflinching perspective of reality for many African Americans in the 1920s but also a self-determined heroine intent on fulfilling the role to which God has called her—regardless of the social landscape. This richly layered mystery set against the backdrop of Klan-run Colorado will leave readers breathless, guessing, and desperately awaiting the next installment. A truly magnificent read.”

JENNIFER L. WRIGHT, author of *Come Down Somewhere*, on *Double the Lies*

“Patricia Raybon’s second adventure for her intrepid sleuth, Annalee Spain, is historical mystery at its finest. Annalee’s unique voice propels us through her Sherlockian detective work, the mysteries of her past, and her place in a hostile world of racial injustice. *Double the Lies* is double the action, double the intrigue, and double the insight into the human heart. A must-read!”

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“Inside masterful storytelling, Patricia Raybon conveys a critical lesson of what transpired when the KKK used its powerful influence to sew racial hatred and segregation throughout Colorado’s very fabric. A suspenseful and enlightening read about dangerous and ignorant times. Annalee Spain is an unforgettable protagonist.”

DONNELL ANN BELL, award-winning author of *Until Dead*,
on *Double the Lies*

“This story of Professor Annalee Spain seeking to solve her father’s cold case murder is one you won’t want to put down.”

STEPHEN CURRY on *All That Is Secret*

“A fast-moving story that’s rich with romance and spiritual searching and sumptuous descriptions of 1920s fashion, buildings, and culture.”

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“This fast-paced mystery beautifully evokes life in 1920s Denver. Spunky Annalee proves a resourceful and intrepid heroine and her allies are fully fleshed individuals. Raybon’s lively style keeps the novel moving while shining a light on a sad epoch in American life that still reverberates a century later. I’ll look forward to Annalee’s next case!”

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BTS CELEBS on *All That Is Secret*

“An engrossing, thrilling 1920s murder mystery. Patricia Raybon’s novel races across its Denver landscape at an exhilarating pace with an unforgettable protagonist, Professor Annalee Spain, at the wheel. The story of Annalee’s murder mystery is captivating, the history of the western city’s racial divide enlightening. This intrepid sleuth would certainly give Sherlock Holmes a run for his money.”

SOPHFRONIA SCOTT, author of *Unforgivable Love*, on *All That Is Secret*

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RHYS BOWEN, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Molly Murphy and Royal Spyness mysteries, on *All That Is Secret*

“Readers will be hooked from the first line of Patricia Raybon’s captivating debut novel, *All That Is Secret*. This well-respected nonfiction author proves her worth with fiction as she delivers rich characters and a page-turning mystery set in the beautiful wilds of Colorado.”

JULIE CANTRELL, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of *Perennials*

“A winner. Patricia Raybon’s *All That Is Secret* is a fast-paced, intriguing mystery that grabs and holds the reader from the opening.”

MANUEL RAMOS, author of *Angels in the Wind*

“It’s the rare journalist who can succeed at also crafting compelling fiction. But that’s what Raybon has done here with *All That Is Secret*, an engaging, evocative period piece as timely as tomorrow’s news. Brava, Patricia, for weaving a tale as instructive as it is captivating.”

JERRY B. JENKINS, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Patricia Raybon is a masterful storyteller. She is a standard-bearer for honesty as she takes her readers on a journey with an amateur sleuth who has the potential to change our perspectives and help us solve the mystery of how to come together and heal. I highly recommend it!”

DR. BRENDA SALTER McNEIL, author of *Becoming Brave: Finding the Courage to Pursue Racial Justice Now*, on *All That Is Secret*

DOUBLE THE LIES

AN ANNALEE SPAIN MYSTERY

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PATRICIA RAYBON



Tyndale House Publishers
Carol Stream, Illinois

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Designed by Lindsey Bergsma

Edited by Sarah Mason Rische

Published in association with the literary agency of WordServe Literary Group,
www.wordserveliterary.com.

Scripture quotations are taken or paraphrased from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

Double the Lies is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-855-277-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-5842-1 (HC)

ISBN 978-1-4964-5843-8 (SC)

Printed in the United States of America

29	28	27	26	25	24	23
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*To my beautiful sister, Laretta.
For every wonderful thing you do for me, I thank you.*

“And God spake all these words, saying . . .

Thou shalt not kill.

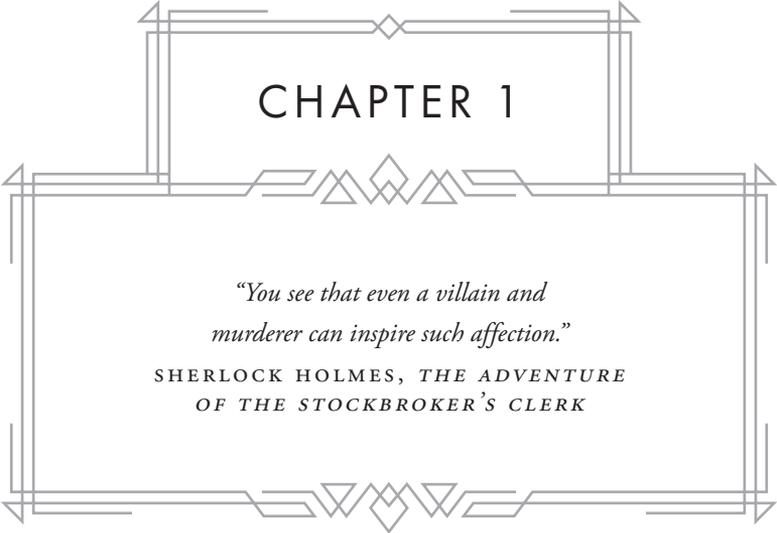
Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness

against thy neighbour.”

EXODUS 20:1, 13-16



CHAPTER 1

*“You see that even a villain and
murderer can inspire such affection.”*

SHERLOCK HOLMES, *THE ADVENTURE
OF THE STOCKBROKER’S CLERK*

MARCH 1924

The husband was handsome. A good liar, too. Maybe too good. Annalee Spain could tell that right off, see it in the man’s arresting green eyes, his never-quiet hands, hear it in his blatant, bold lie for leaving his wife alone yet again.

“Meeting with the boss.” The busied young man shrugged into his cheap spring raincoat. “I just remembered the meeting . . .” He worked at buttoning the worn, shiny coat, his hands too shaky for calm—making him miss some frayed openings. “Sorry, honey. I’ve got to run.” His voice caught. “Can I drop you off somewhere for dinner?”

Shifting in her seat at a reading table in the glittery Warren Branch of the Denver Public Library, detective Annalee Spain

pretended not to watch the couple's strained early evening standoff. On its face, it looked trivial. Tensions, oddly, often are. But this couple's strain felt somehow ominous. Annalee couldn't put her finger on it. She also couldn't look away—ignoring, therefore, every warning bell clanging like crazy inside her curly-haired head.

Seated at the cubicle end of the plank walnut table, she tried to force her eyes to stay down, to read again the Sherlock story she'd just finished, to close her ears to an unknown couple's curious friction. But her heart could feel danger brewing. This man named Jeffrey M.—according to the name badge pinned to his suit lapel—was leaving his wife behind for yet another long, confounding evening, and in a town trembling with trouble. This had happened before.

“Again?” The young wife looked grieved. She frowned at her husband. Her name, according to the badge on her worn but pretty spring dress, was Rebecca M.

She gave her husband a tense-looking smile, her red lipstick faded, gone to smudge in the waning day. “Well, if you must.” She sighed. “Gracious, he works you too hard.” She stiffened. “Not to mention too late.”

She had a childlike voice—some holdover, perhaps, from an unresolved past. Or worse, Annalee thought, from an unkind present. Jeffrey, preoccupied, didn't reply. He ran a hand through his tight, dark curls, took a glance at the important-looking book he'd been half reading, shut it, and tossed it down.

“In fact,” the wife went on, “I'll just read a while longer and then walk myself home.”

Annalee glanced up, watched the young woman give her Jeffrey another conflicted smile. But it was clear to Annalee, and

probably to anyone else looking, that Jeffrey wasn't listening. He, in turn, leaned over to peck a middling kiss atop Rebecca's light-blond hair. Then in an awkward rush he was gone. His footsteps echoed across the library's glossy marble floor, then down the foyer steps. With a whoosh of the massive front doors, Jeffrey M. was off for another away-from-the-wife evening—and Rebecca M. was alone.

The young wife watched him go, her eyes making her look lost.

Then she started to weep silently—or as silently as she could. Her sobs made an obvious echo under the cavernous marble ceiling looming above.

Annalee could've ignored the weeping, willing to give Rebecca her privacy. They were in a public library, after all.

But other people's trouble had become Annalee's life. Small trouble for now—like tracking down a neighbor's stolen calico cat. Or convincing two squabbling sisters-in-law to start talking to each other again.

As the newest detective in her corrupt "Mile High City," Annalee had prayed to God she could help confused people unravel their dramas and hurts—giving them her brave help. *Even if I don't always feel brave—or helpful.* But as she had learned, help isn't about feelings. Nor is being brave. Help is offering people what they need when they need it.

Thus, at a public library on a cold spring night, young Annalee Spain decided to help a crying wife. Just a small gesture. A little kindness. Or might it become something more? Even a fine puzzle for her to solve?

Setting her jaw, Annalee opened her small, worn, second-hand pocketbook, looking inside for what she could offer. The

humble contents weren't promising. Her crumpled-up business card. A half-eaten peppermint sweet. Her run-down purse seemed half-useless. Only one thing of true value peeked out at her: a gorgeous new white-lace handkerchief, her initial *A* embroidered on one corner in fancy red script. Its silk thread lay smooth and perfectly stitched just for her. So in truth, she hesitated to lend it. Sure, it would seem a little bit of nothing—just a handkerchief. But she'd received it only the night before, the most beautiful gift she'd ever known.

Accepting it with trembling hands, she'd lifted it from its white tissue paper, offering her thank-you to the young man who'd presented it to her with one shy but longing kiss. He'd held her a bit too close, which she allowed. But he was her "one and only," as she saw him. So she snuggled closer, showing her thanks—certain she'd treasure his handkerchief, if not him, surely forever.

"I'll never let it out of my sight," she'd promised him.

But now, here she was one night later, and a woman named Rebecca M. was sobbing.

Annalee could've decided not to get involved. No crime was afoot. No dangerous hurt unfolding here. But she felt a delicious tension between the young wife and her husband—and in a city of secrets and hurts like Denver—it appeared to Annalee like a daring new case.

She wanted it.

I'll solve it, she told herself—whatever it turned out to be.

Besides, she'd felt an odd alliance with this young woman. With her husband, Jeffrey, too? He even looked familiar. Where in the world had she seen him? Or was that too flimsy a reason to offer help?

“Pardon me . . . Rebecca?” Annalee’s voice was a whisper. She reached into her purse. “Here’s a fresh handkerchief.”

The woman shook her head, trying between sobs to say no, but her cries—getting louder—wouldn’t stop.

Other people were looking their way now, shifting in their seats, cutting their eyes. An annoyed balding man, one table over, glared. A frowning mother wrangling two restless toddlers, her eyebrow hiked, showed not just contempt but, mercy, full-out hatred? In a public library?

Annalee didn’t react to any of them. She knew she wasn’t welcome in the library by many in town. As a young Black woman, she’d be seen as out of place. At this sparkling branch, however—named for one Henry White Warren, a Methodist bishop famed for doing good works for freed slaves—the clear-eyed librarian had told Annalee to patronize her place “when-ever you want, as long as I work here.” She’d slammed a fist on her library counter to show she meant business. “I dare *anybody* to object.”

Thus, Annalee slipped to the end of her reading table, acting as if she belonged because she’d come to believe that she did, and offered the sobbing woman her help. In her plain black dress and starched white collar, Annalee herself could’ve been a young do-gooder, maybe a college teacher offering kindness and sympathy—which just a few months ago, as a poorly paid professor at a Chicago Bible college, she had been.

Now she was offering a crying stranger in Denver her gorgeous lace handkerchief.

The young wife Rebecca grabbed for it, ready perhaps to say thank you. But looking up at Annalee, she froze. Annalee, reacting, froze, too.

“It’s clean,” Annalee assured her, still in a whisper, seeing Rebecca had noticed she was colored and maybe poor—meaning she’d assume the worst?

But Rebecca didn’t look put off. Instead, she looked stunned. She stared at Annalee.

“You’re the detective.” Her whisper sounded surprised. “The colored detective. The one in the newspapers.” She searched Annalee’s face, circled as usual by its mass of wild black curls. Her bounce of coils and ringlets gave her away almost every time.

“Annalee *what . . . ?*”

“Annalee Spain.” She swallowed. “But I’m just starting to be a detective.” *Because it’s demanding and scary. Some days I feel plumb crazy to even try.*

“Still, the papers said you caught that rich woman for murder, got her sent to jail.” The young wife made a face, raised her voice. “And good riddance. She got just what she deserved.” She straightened in her chair. “And now, here I am, bothering you with my trouble.” She started to weep again. “Oh, this hateful town!”

“Well . . . let’s not disturb everyone,” Annalee whispered, trying to quiet her.

“Corrupt judges, cops, even your neighbors.” This woman Rebecca hissed her words, provoking louder weeping. “Oh, Jeffrey! I hate this town!”

Annalee took a deep breath. *Gracious, what is going on?* She scooted into the chair next to the young woman. “Here, wipe your face.”

Rebecca’s nose was running heavily now, her face looking gloppy and unbecoming, her cheeks streaking with tears. But

the young wife didn't seem to care, refusing the handkerchief with a shake of her head. "I can't. It looks brand-new. A gift for your Christmas? Your birthday?"

"Well, not for my birthday." *Even if I knew my real birthday.* Annalee loosened her grip on the handkerchief, not wanting to show her uncertainty—or was it eagerness?—to let it go. Detectives use what's in their hands . . . *right, Sherlock?* "It's just—"

"From your nice young man probably." Rebecca swiped her nose with the sleeve of her pretty purple dress, its cheap fabric frayed at the cuff. "A *nice* young man. That's so lovely." Then suddenly she was sobbing again.

"That's enough," Annalee whispered. "You're upset." She pushed her handkerchief into Rebecca's trembling hands. "Yes, it's a gift from a young man. But he'd want you to use it. I'm sure of it." Of course, she wasn't sure at all. What would Jack say about her lending his hard-earned gift—created special for her—to a crying stranger?

But too late. Rebecca was grabbing at it, pressing the lacy handkerchief against her mouth, crumpling it to stifle her sobs, her fading red lipstick smearing the spotless white square.

"Oh, what a day. I'm so sorry—"

Annalee waved off the apology. "Do you need help?" She heard herself speak those words, knowing she could choose to stay out of it—whatever "it" was. But in her short and humble experience of working as a detective—only a few months—people's trouble still found her anyway. She found her voice.

"I can help you." She spoke her offer, thinking, *This is how it starts.* A new detective sometimes has to insist on helping, especially people who don't go looking for it—indeed, those

who seem to need help the most—even if that detective doesn't know what she's doing. Not always anyway.

"But I can't pay you much." Rebecca looked weary. "Not much of anything—even if I knew what to ask you to do. Or how I'd pay."

"I'm not worried." Annalee cocked her head, knowing she was more worried than she wanted to be. "The Lord provides." *Please, Lord.*

Rebecca swiped at her eyes with Annalee's beautiful, soiled, no-longer-new handkerchief. She cocked her head, too. "Then why won't he provide for *me*?"

That's what Annalee let Rebecca wrestle over after the library closed. She'd tried to nail down the reason for her crying but didn't get far. So she returned to her reading, left Rebecca to hers. But now it was just after 8 p.m., the long day over, the library dark, the streets churning with nighttime traffic. The moon was barely waxing, hardly a thin crescent. But glaring lights from Model T cars and trucks, fancy sedans and other vehicles brightened the dark streets.

Annalee buttoned her coat, hurried toward the intersection in front of the library, turned toward Five Points, the humble but busy neighborhood where she lived.

"May I walk with you?"

Rebecca again?

The young wife tried to match Annalee's pace. "Here's your handkerchief." Rebecca held out the damp hankie but still looked distressed, tears still trying to fall.

"Keep it for now." Annalee slowed. "You might need it later."

Rebecca didn't argue. Instead, she added: "Thank you." She pulled her light spring cardigan tighter around her shoulders,

stuffed Annalee's handkerchief in her sweater's pocket, watched the passing cars. "Goodness, where in the world are so many people going at this time of night?"

"Searching for answers." Annalee allowed herself a laugh. "Just like us."

"That's what we're doing?" Rebecca frowned. "If only I knew where to look."

Annalee weighed that more deeply. The young woman seemed to speak in riddles. She'd try a direct question. "Is that the reason you were at the library? For answers?"

"No, my husband's job. Something for his boss." Rebecca sounded unsure. "At least . . . that's what he said."

"Where does he work?"

"Out at the airfield."

Annalee frowned. "A barnstormer?" Trick pilots were rule breakers, living on the edge. That made them hot tickets. "I've seen his picture on a poster, out east past Colorado Boulevard—on every other lamppost."

"No, that's his brother, Buddy—Buddy Mann. That's our last name. Those two look almost alike. But Buddy's the rising star." Rebecca went on. "'Handsome young daredevil!' That's what all the posters say."

"Then what does Jeffrey say?" Annalee had seen the tension on his face.

"Not enough. But something's on his mind. Sure, he's finally a stunt pilot. He got approved at the airfield last month. They both fly there. But Jeffrey's scheming for something more. I can feel it . . ." She frowned.

"Feel it in your bones?" Annalee understood.

Rebecca tossed her hair. "Maybe deeper. But I've said enough

about those two.” She scrunched her face. “Why were you at the library? For your next case?”

Annalee pressed her mouth. Rebecca’s question hit close to home. She’d longed for a fresh, tough case. But there was more.

“I went to the library to find my mother.” Annalee blinked in the dark. *Why am I telling a near stranger this?* But she went on. “I grew up . . . without her. So I’m hunting for her in a census record. I figured the library might have something. Then I got distracted by a detective story.” She tried to laugh. “But I was there for my mother. She lived in a mining town in the mountains—a little place called Annalee.”

“Like your name? The ghost town?”

Annalee peered at the sliver of moon. “It’s abandoned now. And so was I.” She stiffened her back. “Up near Telluride.”

“Telluride?” Rebecca pulled at her woolen scarf. “My dad owns an old cabin near there.”

“Your dad? Small world.”

Rebecca slowed her pace to a stop. “May I tell you something?”

Annalee gave her a look, showing she was listening.

“Jeffrey steals. That’s one reason I was crying. He stole my late mother’s jasper necklace.”

Annalee took that in. “Steals jasper?”

“It’s not even worth much. I know.”

“You want me to find it?”

“I know where it is. It’s in the window at the big pawnshop in Five Points. I saw it there.”

“So what’s going on?”

“Gambling, probably. Jeffrey has a job, but we’re always short. He’s always in debt. Something’s always missing. Even

my wedding earrings.” Pain crossed her face. “They’re small pearls—small but real.” She glanced away. “He lies, too. He’s not going to meet his boss. That’s just some excuse. I checked once. He goes somewhere else, but I don’t know where or what he’s doing, staying out all hours.”

“Have you talked to him about it—the stealing and lying, the debts?”

Rebecca half laughed, sounding bitter. “A talk?” She looked at Annalee. “How about now? Can you come in? I’ll make us tea.” She blinked hard. “For a real talk.”

They were at Franklin Street, not quite to Five Points—the city’s colored neighborhood. Rebecca pointed to a small house. “This is me. Jeffrey won’t be home for hours. Please come in and warm up.”

Annalee licked at her lips but hesitated. Something didn’t feel right. Barnstormers were high-profile trouble. Some were, anyway. If one was having money woes or marital worries too, she should steer clear. That wasn’t her kind of case.

But the airfield angle stirred her like a bad itch. Half the folks in town were fighting to get in early on airport deals. High rollers battled to put up the cash for Denver’s new municipal airport, just being planned. Others fought to be the builder, some already testing fleets of planes. But why? To appear modern and smart? Catch the excitement of flight? Annalee didn’t know enough about it yet, but she could confess to being intrigued. Flying around in fancy machines? It offered thrills. Maybe a crazy freedom, too. Rebecca might have an inside scoop.

Still, Annalee pushed back.

“The colored detective visiting your house? Having a cup of tea? Now that’s a sure way to start trouble.”

“I’ve already got trouble.” Rebecca gave the bitter laugh again. “So please come in. Just one cup. It’s the least I can do for someone today. I won’t cause us trouble.”

But of course there was trouble.

Trouble is a determined thing. Insistent but also insidious. Her steadfast old Bible confirmed that. Trouble and anguish find us out, its psalmists said. In this world, Jesus himself declared, you’ll have trouble as sure as you live, even though he offered a remedy. Annalee knew that more than most.

Thus, as she stepped onto the porch of the Manns’ darkened house, trouble met them with full force.

“*Rebecca!*” Annalee tensed. “A break-in!” She froze. What was this young wife getting her into? “Watch out! There’s glass.”

“What break-in?” Rebecca gaped at the smashed window on her front door. It stood ajar, glass jagged.

Annalee pushed back the door.

“Wait.” Rebecca reached for Annalee’s arm. “Should we go in?”

But Annalee was stepping inside, her eyes checking every corner, hands grabbing at the wall for a light switch, which didn’t work. The electricity turned off? Light bulb burned out? Bill not paid? Finally she reached for a small lamp, its shade missing, and yanked its fraying cord, groaning at what met her.

The front room of Rebecca’s small house was a smashed, glass-splattered, vandalized, frenzied mess. Furniture upturned. Curtains ripped. Mirrors broken.

Rebecca gasped, stepped into the chaos. A small, pretty desk lay overturned, one leg broken, its contents—papers, mail, bills, advertisements—strewn across the floor. Annalee pointed the

lamp's bare bulb at the trouble. A mantel over the fireplace was swiped clean, its glass whatnots thrown to the floor. Shattered vases, cracked statuettes, chipped glass candleholders, broken picture frames of family photos.

"*Papa.*" Rebecca grabbed up a photo of a harsh-looking man, his picture now encased in shards of glass. Even a small painted picture was ripped from the wall, its pastoral scene slashed with a sharp object, the frame jagged. This was sheer violation, and Annalee hated the cold meanness of it. Rebecca's place looked modest. Now it was in shambles.

"My house!" Rebecca whispered at the mess, stumbling from room to room, moaning at the sight of her two upturned bedrooms, the smashed bathroom, the upended dining room—finding the same sickening mess at every turn.

"Who did this?" Annalee stepped over debris, suspecting Rebecca must know—or at least have a decent guess—who'd broken in and trashed her earnest-looking home. An angry neighbor? Some riled "other woman"?

Annalee tried to think like a detective. "Is anything missing?"

"I don't know!" Rebecca looked lost. "Please no, Jeffrey! Why aren't you here!"

Annalee pushed through the dining area into the kitchen, Rebecca following. They both froze. Stopped cold. Because unlike the others, this room was neat as pie. No dishes smashed and broken. No pictures or calendars or whatnots ripped from the walls.

Two breakfast bowls still sat in the sink, the faucet not dripping. A clock still hung on the wall, still ticking proper time. A table and chairs also didn't appear moved. Clean plates and glasses sat unbothered on a wooden shelf. The small icebox

stood closed and upright. The stove, too, still stood in its corner, awaiting its next meal.

But in a narrow hallway off the kitchen, leading to the back door—standing ajar—lay the night's worst trouble. Annalee saw him first. Shaking her head, sad and with a knowing she hated to feel.

Rebecca screamed.

It was Jeffrey. Sprawled faceup, still wearing his shiny raincoat, the buttons half-done, name badge pinned on his lapel, he lay silent and unmoving—no sound or breathing—void of evidence of the precious essence of treasured life.

“Oh, Rebecca, I’m so sorry.” Annalee’s pained words might’ve sounded empty, but she knew this hurt. That’s why she’d pushed past the broken glass—to discover what was wrong and maybe try to stop it.

The young wife screamed again. *“Jeffrey! God, no! Jeffrey!”* She sank to the floor, falling across her husband’s still body, death leaving him crumpled and silent, a final and harsh insult. Rebecca’s sobs were moans, then shrieks, then repeated screams piercing the jumble of her wronged house, breaching far beyond the walls, out into the night.

Annalee felt every shriek and sound, her heart pounding, her mind racing. What was she seeing? A murder? But what else? Indeed, she could’ve avoided this, headed straight home, curled herself in a chair to read another Sherlock story. Or she could’ve tracked down Jack, letting him tease her about being his upstart detective “lady friend” who solved little crimes. Instead, a real murder had happened. Here she stood, in fact, right smack in the middle of it.

Annalee fought to stay calm, to think of the dead man’s

wife instead. Kneeling beside Rebecca, she cradled the woman's shoulders, letting her cry, watching Rebecca reach blindly in her frayed sweater pocket for Annalee's thoroughly crinkled lace handkerchief, the embroidered letter *A* soggy with Rebecca's tears.

Consoling her as best she could, Annalee watched the young wife cry, forgetting about herself. She then understood her new case—to figure what had befallen this Jeffrey. Who did this awful thing? In their crazy town, what kind of messy, stupid anger had left a young, barnstorming husband dead on his kitchen floor?

In death, Jeffrey gave nary an answer. His handsome face looked oddly peaceful, its tension wiped fully away, his deep-green eyes staring up in a soft emptiness, unable to see his distraught wife nor hear her anguished sobbing. Then Annalee saw the trouble: blood oozing from behind Jeffrey's head onto the linoleum floor. A mortal wound for certain, although no weapon was apparent. But it had been wielded to its effect. Annalee felt her stomach squeeze, but her spirit ignited. This killing needed answers. This wife did, too.

"I'm so sorry, Jeffrey. It's all my fault." Rebecca was sobbing.

"You've done nothing wrong, Rebecca." Annalee tried to console this stranger.

"But *I have*."

Annalee felt confusion, but as well, she felt strangely alert. Something wild and horrible had happened here. But what exactly, and what was Rebecca saying? "*It's all my fault?*" Annalee helped her to stand, setting her in a kitchen chair, trying to focus herself.

"Is your telephone working? You have to call the police."

“No, please. Not the police—”

But it was too late.

Annalee heard sirens screaming toward Franklin Street, then a screeching stop—car doors flinging open and slamming. Neighbors must have heard Rebecca’s awful screams and called the Denver Police Department. Annalee stood quickly, knowing she needed to leave now. A young colored woman at a murder scene would have no defense.

“Police! We’re coming in!”

Annalee gripped Rebecca’s shoulders, jerked her around hard, making the young wife face her—and hear her. “I’m leaving *now*.”

Rebecca panicked, grabbed Annalee’s hands. “What shall I say to them?”

“Tell them what happened. What you found.” Annalee pulled as kindly as possible from Rebecca’s grasp, moved toward the open back door, slipping past Jeffrey’s sad body. “Show them your ransacked house! Your husband—*dead*. Rebecca, he was murdered!”

“But I can’t!”

“What do you mean?” Annalee searched Rebecca’s eyes, now strained clearly by fear. Rebecca had oddly stopped crying, but she still clenched Annalee’s handkerchief in her hands.

“I invited you in,” she told Annalee, “because of what happened!”

“Tell me! *Hurry, Rebecca*.” Annalee breathed hard. The police were shouting from the front room. Annalee, at the back door, couldn’t wait. “Rebecca, I can’t let the police find me here.”

“We’re coming through! Denver police! Detectives!”

“Rebecca. *Tell me*.”

But detective work, no matter what people believed about it, was never about hurrying people who can't be rushed. Or demanding answers that can't seem to be spoken. The detective story in the library had told her exactly that, reminded her that crime fighting could be tough and complicated—so she'd have to be alert and shrewd.

She flung the back door wider, knowing she couldn't wait another second to hear Rebecca's remorseful words.

"Please, Annalee. You have to help me—"

"Tell me, Rebecca. *Now!*"

Rebecca shook her head.

"Tell me!"

"I think I killed somebody."