

## ต้นฉบับ

### Chapter 1

For some reason, the drive from D.C. into Arlington was less hair-raising than usual this morning. Loran Kimball tried to put her worry aside enough to be happy about it.

She wanted---needed---to see her mother today, and for once she might actually arrive only minimally stressed by the Beltway traffic.

She never knew what to say to Maddie these days, what to do. She didn't know if coming to visit so often was making things easier for her or not. She couldn't tell without specifically asking, and even if she did ask, she could never be certain of the accuracy of the answer.

Maddie was so adept at seeming to indulge an inquiry, but, truly, she was the quintessential self contained "private person." Not standoffish. Not rude or unfriendly. Just private.

She didn't respond with precise answers to the things people asked her; she responded with whatever she wanted them to know.

And, as far as Loran could tell, Maddie's illness hadn't made her any more forthcoming. She was quite willing to make some morbid joke about her imminent demise, but she was typically sketchy regarding what was actually happening to her body and how she felt about it.