

Winterkill Book Excerpt  
by Joyce K. Walsh



**CHAPTER ONE**

“Thou know’st ‘tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature onto eternity.”

Snow was still piled high as hedgerows on the sides of the narrow road as a Model-B Touring Car careened 12 m.p.h. downhill around the frozen lake. As the young driver chattered amiably away at his silent passenger, the elderly woman had a stricken look on her face. Not only was she apprehensive about the driver paying cavalier attention to his driving, the redoubtable Madeline Abbott was even more dismayed that someone of his station in life

was attempting to converse with her.

Out of view of the road, the afternoon sun bounced off the lake ice like a bullet, sending shafts of frigid light deep into the woods and, along its trajectory, illuminating the bronze statue of an Indian woman just above the shoreline. Set on a marble base, she stood erect in fringed deerskin and boots, with arms stretched out over the lake towards the west. The plaque at the base was inscribed with:

Muskataqua

b. (?) - d. 1887

The last of her kind.

There were sizable footprints emerging from the woods to and around the statue, then back through the trees. The snow had been brushed from Muskataqua’s upturned face and the icicles that had hung from her arms like stalactites had been knocked away.

Oblivious to her surroundings, Madeline finally arrived at her destination, paid the driver from her coin purse, and closed her navy leather pocketbook with a decisive snap. She walked briskly up the path to the green house and knocked three times with the brass doorknocker monogrammed with an ‘E.’ She waited briefly, then continued to knock steadily until the door was opened.

“My goodness, Georgie, what took you so long? I could freeze to death waiting on the doorstep!”

Georgie Skates looked at a loss for words, his eyes downcast in a face whose features resembled those of the bronze statue. His shoulders hunched, he mutely stepped aside.

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It was slightly later that same afternoon that David McKay drove his blue Plymouth coupé the five miles from town towards Celia Eastman's house. His tire chains crunched and rattled over the packed snow atop the dirt and gravel beneath.

It was early spring in the year 1932, five months after he first arrived in Raleigh , New Hampshire to research his new novel. He had weathered his first New England winter, made a dear friend with a useful library, and fallen in love, as yet unrequited. Because of the latter, his eagerness today to share good news with Celia was overshadowed by his impatience to see her companion again. David's eyes brightened as he contrived how this time he might manage to be alone with Mira, no matter how briefly. Mira, the embodiment of the woman he had conjured in fiction who was as real and as beautiful as he had ever imagined her. Mira, his Maria. A smile played on his lips as he thought of her raven hair, her gentian eyes—

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Winterkill is the story you've been waiting to read--a compelling tale finely written, spun out in suspenseful, unpredictable, thought-provoking and unforgettable style.

In the stone cold heart of a 1932 New England winter, Madeline visits her oldest and closest friend who resides directly across the lake, just over the New Hampshire border from Vermont.

Celia is seriously ill and seems walled away from reality by several people who have seemingly won her confidence: Matthias, a lawyer; David, a writer; and the very attractive Mira, playing the unlikely role of nurse. Celia's one protector appears to be the loyal but hapless handyman Georgie.

Celia soon dies, and Madeline's every instinct cries out foul play. She vows never to rest till the truth of her friend's death is revealed.

Matthias in particular is in her sights; money inherited from Celia is funding his ambitions to win election along with the upstart Democrat running for the presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Madeline, in her zeal, cannot imagine the series of events she will set into motion--or how drastically they will alter the lives of every single person in Celia's house that fateful day of Madeline's visit.

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