

Driftwood Bay

A Hope Harbor Novel

IRENE HANNON



a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2019 by Irene Hannon

Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hannon, Irene, author.

Title: Driftwood Bay / Irene Hannon.

Description: Grand Rapids, MI : Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group,

[2019] | Series: A Hope Harbor novel ; 5

Identifiers: LCCN 2018038038 | ISBN 9780800728816 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: | GSAFD: Love stories.

Classification: LCC PS3558.A4793 D75 2019 | DDC 813/.54—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018038038>

ISBN 978-0-8007-3563-0 (Casebound)

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In loving memory of my mother, Dorothy Hannon—
my favorite afternoon tea companion.

As I wrote this book,
I thought of all the wonderful teas we shared . . .
and our special outing on that June day six years ago
to the lovely local lavender farm for tea and scones.
That treasured memory is tucked in my heart for always.

I miss you so much, Mom.

Every. Single. Day.



1

.....

Chaos.

That was the only word to describe his new home.
And his new life.

Logan West ran his fingers through his damp hair, exhaling as he surveyed the mess in the kitchen.

Shredded paper towels covered the floor like springtime petals from the Bradford pear trees that had lined the streets in the small Missouri town of his youth.

Eggshells were scattered about, the residual whites oozing onto tile that had been spotless when he'd stepped into the shower less than ten minutes ago.

Soup cans, peanut butter jar, bread wrapper, OJ carton, the open container from last night's takeout dinner, and other sundry food packaging items rounded out the inventory—all of them pristine. As clean as if they'd never been used.

Meaning Toby had gotten into the trash.

Again.

The happy-go-lucky beagle might be cute as the proverbial button, but he was wreaking havoc on a life already in disarray.

Logan wiped a hand down his face.

What on earth had he been thinking when he'd decided to add a dog to the mix?

Or maybe the problem was that he *hadn't* been thinking. Not straight, anyway.

Because getting a dog was flat-out his dumbest idea since the day he'd convinced his kid brother it would be fun to jump off the porch roof into a mound of raked autumn leaves that wasn't nearly as cushiony as it appeared.

Man, their parents had never let him forget *that* escapade—or the subsequent trip to the ER to get Jon's broken arm set.

Skirting the mess on the floor, Logan edged toward the counter as a familiar sense of panic nipped at his composure.

How could his well-ordered existence disintegrate into such bedlam in a mere four months? ER doctors were supposed to be pros at dealing with turmoil.

However . . . hospital trauma centers were *managed* chaos, with protocols for every kind of emergency, while his new life in this small town on the Oregon coast hadn't come with a procedure manual.

But who would have expected to need one this far away from the hustle and bustle of San Francisco and the complications of big-city living?

Go figure.

All he knew was that based on his first thirty-six hours in Hope Harbor, his dream of a quieter, simpler life in a small seaside town seemed destined to remain just that—a rose-colored fantasy with no basis in reality.

With a resigned sigh, he retrieved a garbage bag and began collecting the debris. Once the kitchen was clean, he'd have to round up Toby and—

A swish of movement in the doorway caught his attention.

Smoothing out the frown more than one intern had deemed intimidating, he straightened up and turned toward Molly.

The five-year-old stared back at him, eyes big, expression solemn, feet bare, her strawberry-blonde hair in desperate need of brushing, her ratty baby blanket clutched in her fist.

“Hey.” The sticky goo from the eggshell in his hand leaked onto his fingers, and he tossed the fragment into the trash bag. Or tried to. He finally resorted to shaking it off. “I think you forgot your shoes.” He forced up the corners of his lips.

Hers remained flat as she watched him in silence, then stuck a finger in her mouth.

His stomach twisted.

If there was a secret to coaxing a smile out of a grieving little girl, he’d yet to learn it.

He set the garbage bag on the floor, crossed to her, and dropped to one knee. Moisture spiked her thick fringe of lashes, and he swallowed past the lump in his throat.

She’d been crying again. In private—like he and his brother had always done. One more trait she shared with them, in addition to the distinctive cleft in their chin and wide-set blue eyes.

He took her small hand and gentled his voice. “Did you brush your teeth?”

She gave a silent nod.

“Why don’t you put your shoes on and I’ll tie them for you? Then we’ll go down to the beach. Would you like that?”

She slowly removed her finger from her mouth. “Can Toby go?”

Not if he had his druthers. One glimpse of the leash at the end of their outing and the beagle would race off in the opposite direction, sand flying in his wake. After their stroll yesterday, it had taken ten minutes to corral the pup, who seemed to think they were playing a game of tag.

But if Molly’s request meant she was beginning to warm up to the new addition to their family . . .

“Sure. You get your shoes while I clean up the kitchen.” He stood. “Is Toby in your room?”

She shook her head.

A quiver of unease rippled through him, and once again he furrowed his brow. Come to think of it, the playful pup was uncharacteristically quiet.

“Do you know where he is?” He kept his tone casual.

Her gaze slid toward the back door.

Uh-oh.

“Molly, sweetie”—he dropped back to the balls of his feet—
“did you let him out?”

She dipped her chin and wiggled her toes. “He wanted to go.”

Great.

With his luck, the dog would come back covered in mud and dragging another gangly plant, as he’d done yesterday.

“We talked about this, remember? Toby has to stay in the house unless we’re with him. He could get hurt if he runs around by himself.”

The finger went back in her mouth.

His stomach clenched.

Again.

He was so not cut out to be a single parent.

“I’ll tell you what. After you get your shoes, we’ll look for him together, okay?”

Unless the dog responded to his summons, eliminating the need for a search party.

Like that would happen.

“Kay.” The soft word found its way around the finger that didn’t budge.

She retreated down the hall, trailing the bedraggled blanket behind her.

As she disappeared, Logan moved to the back door and called Toby.

No response.

Of course not.

That would be too easy.

Shaking his head, he shut the door, dampened a fistful of paper towels, and dropped to his hands and knees to scrub at the stubborn egg whites clinging to the tile.

They were stuck as fast as the glue he'd used in the ER to close minor lacerations.

In fact, *stuck* pretty much described the situation he'd found himself in four months ago.

But he'd made a promise—and he'd honor it.

Whatever it took.



Aha.

She'd found her culprit.

Yanking off her garden gloves, Jeannette Mason kept tabs on the dog intent on digging up yet another one of her flourishing lavender plants.

The plants she'd nurtured from tiny starts, potting and watering them with TLC until they were sturdy enough to be tucked into the beds she'd painstakingly prepared.

Based on the pup's location, the lavender now under siege was a Super French.

Lips clamped together, she tossed her gloves on the workbench in the drying and equipment shed and stormed toward the door.

Enough was enough.

If that dog kept uprooting her stock, Bayview Lavender Farm would be out of business less than three years after she'd opened her doors.

And that was *not* happening.

She'd invested too much effort in this place to let anyone—or anything—jeopardize it.

Snatching a long-handled trowel from the tool rack as she passed, she charged out into the light rain falling from the leaden sky. She should have grabbed her coat too. Now that the sun had disappeared, it was cooler than usual for mid-April.

But coastal Oregon weather could be capricious in any season—a lesson she should have learned long ago.

Brandishing the gardening implement, she sprinted toward the tri-colored dog, weaving through the symmetrical beds.

“Hey!” She waved the trowel in the air. “Get out of there!”

The pup lifted his dirt-covered snout. Started to wag his tail. Reconsidered the scowling woman racing toward him with weapon in hand and skedaddled toward the tall hedge that separated her farm from the adjacent property.

Within seconds, the white tip of his tail disappeared as he wriggled through the dense greenery.

Huffing out a breath, Jeannette gave up the chase. The dog was gone—for now. Her time would be better spent repairing whatever destruction her unwanted visitor had wrought.

She continued to the bed, muttering as she surveyed the damage. Two of the plants had been uprooted, and the pesky beagle had started in on a third.

This was as bad as the last attack—except he hadn’t absconded with one of her plants this go-round.

Gritting her teeth, she stalked back to the shed to retrieve a shovel. The ripped-up plants had to be her top priority.

But once they were back into their beds and watered, she was going to march next door and have a little chat with her new neighbors.

Shovel in hand, she retraced her steps to the pillaged bed, casting a dark look toward the hedge that hid the small house on the adjacent property.

She should have inquired about buying that lot too, when she’d purchased this one.

But the three acres she'd bought were already more than her plants and tearoom required. An acre or two would have sufficed.

However . . . none of the other parcels of land she'd viewed had had a path at the rear of the property that led to the dunes, which provided access to the vast beach and deep cobalt sea of Driftwood Bay. Plus, the microclimate in this particular sheltered spot was perfect for lavender.

So despite the excess acreage, the location had been too good to pass up—especially since the land on one side had never been developed, and the house with new owners on the other side had been occupied by an older man who kept to himself as much as she did . . . and who'd long ago planted an insulating privacy hedge.

She dug into the bed she'd augmented with truckloads of rotted fir bark and aged horse manure, casting another glance toward the shrub border.

Strange how she'd had no inkling her former neighbor had sold the property until the moving van showed up a week ago. And he'd done nothing more than flick her a brief, disinterested look as she'd driven past while he was directing the moving crew from his front porch.

Then again, she'd never gone out of her way to be sociable, either.

A twinge of self-reproach niggled at her conscience, but she quashed it as she resettled the first lavender plant in the fertile earth.

There was no reason to feel guilty. On the few occasions their paths had crossed, he'd barely acknowledged her.

And just because she didn't attempt to engage people didn't mean she was antisocial. She was always polite to her customers at the town farmer's market and in her tearoom, and she smiled and waved at familiar faces in town . . . even if she rarely stopped to chat.

But she was never *unfriendly* to anyone.

Although that was about to change.

She eased the second traumatized Super French into the hole she'd dug and doused the roots with water. If fate was kind, all of the plants would recover from the shock of their abrupt extraction.

Wiping her palms on her jeans, she detoured back to the workshop, snagged her jacket, and cut across the gravel parking area at the front of her property that was empty of customers' cars on this Wednesday morning.

At least the pup hadn't launched his sneak attacks on a weekend, while she was busy serving afternoon tea to a roomful of people paying a hefty sum for a couple of hours of peace and genteel elegance.

She circled around the end of the hedge that lined her drive and strode through the adjacent yard, toward the front door of the small bungalow that could use a fresh coat—or two—of paint and some landscaping.

Maybe it was better she hadn't known it was up for sale. The temptation to buy it—and protect her privacy—would have been strong.

And more maintenance would only have added to her already long to-do list.

As she approached the door, the muffled sound of yapping penetrated the walls.

Apparently the dog was a barker as well as a digger.

That figured.

She stepped up onto the porch, took a deep breath, and pressed the bell. It was possible the new owners would be nice. Apologetic, even.

One could hope, anyway.

Confrontation wasn't high on her list of favorite activities.

But these people needed to get control of their dog—and she intended to make that crystal clear before she returned home.

Whether they liked it or not.