

**Woodson Falls:  
2 Sunrise Trail**  
*A Gaby Quinn Mystery*

by  
Andrea O'Connor



EMERALD LAKE  
BOOKS

Sherman, Connecticut

SAMPLE CHAPTER

*Woodson Falls: 2 Sunrise Trail*

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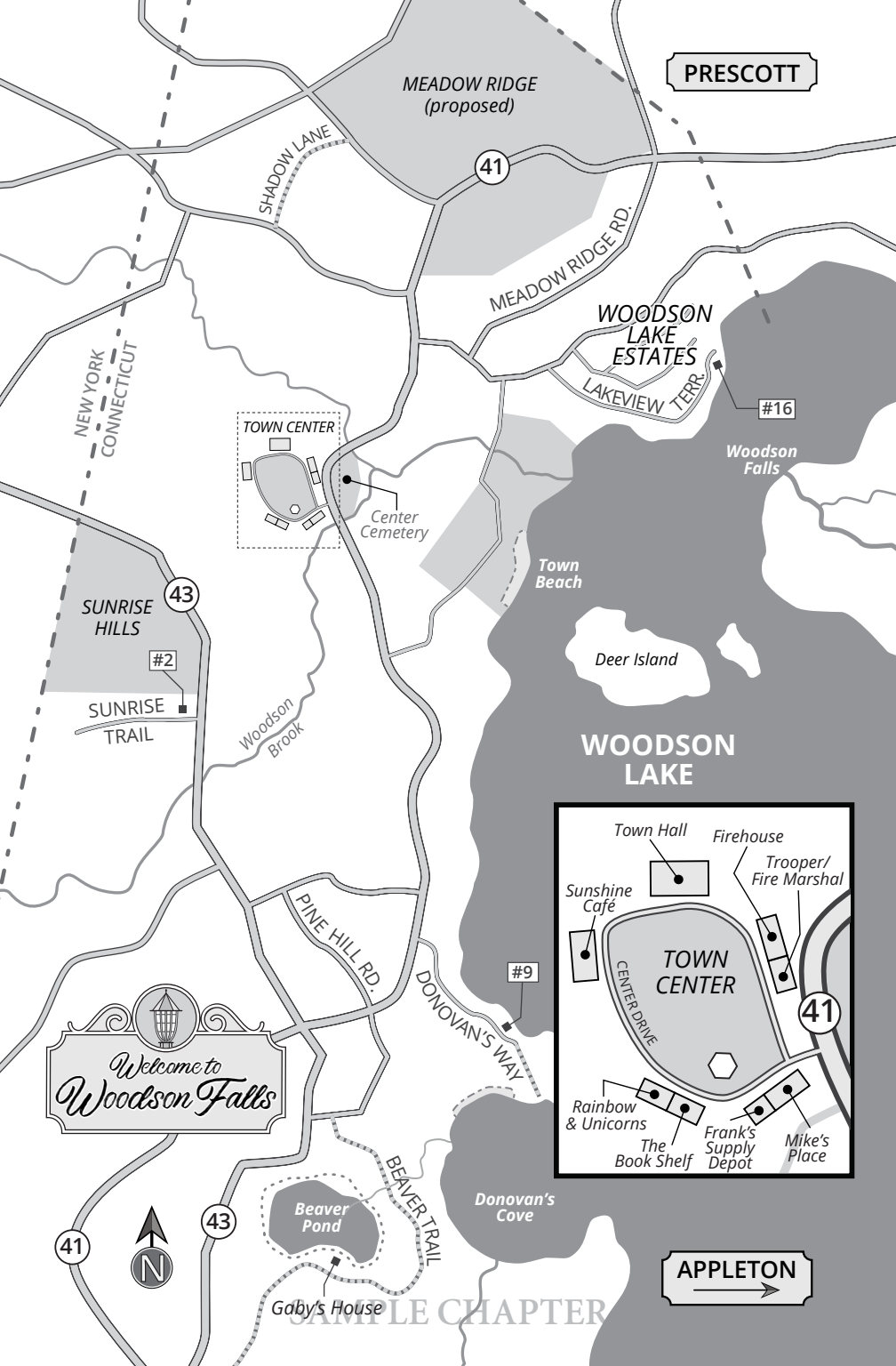
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PRESCOTT

MEADOW RIDGE  
(proposed)

41

SHADOW LANE

MEADOW RIDGE RD.

WOODSON  
LAKE  
ESTATES

LAKEVIEW TERR.

#16

Woodson  
Falls

TOWN CENTER

Center  
Cemetery

Town  
Beach

Deer Island

WOODSON  
LAKE

SUNRISE  
HILLS

43

#2

SUNRISE  
TRAIL

Woodson  
Brook

PINE HILL RD.

DONOVAN'S WAY

#9

Town Hall

Firehouse

Sunshine  
Café

Trooper/  
Fire Marshal

TOWN  
CENTER

41

Rainbow  
& Unicorns

The  
Book Shelf

Frank's  
Supply  
Depot

Mike's  
Place

Welcome to  
Woodson Falls

Beaver  
Pond

Donovan's  
Cove

BEAVER TRAIL

Gaby's House

APPLETON

SAMPLE CHAPTER

## Prologue

“PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT, Marge Devereau speaking.”

“Marge! Hello! Joe Quinn calling. I’ve been trying to reach Gaby, but she’s not picking up her line.”

“Hi, Joe! Sorry, Gaby’s been tied up in oral defenses since ten this morning. Not even sure if she took time for lunch. These graduate students always put things off to the last minute, then expect the professors to drop everything so they can clear the last hurdle to their PhD’s. But you know how Gaby is. She bends over backward to support her students.”

“It’s one of the many things I love about her. Her commitment to her work and to anything else she values—even me.”

“Ha! Especially you, as if you don’t already know that.”

“Oh, I do. I’m a lucky man.”

“Do you want me to go searching for her?”

“No, no. Just give her a message if you would.”

“Of course!”

“Ask her to call me at work when she’s done for the day, then meet me in front of my office building. I’ve got a surprise for her.”

“What is it? Not her birthday, I know.”

“No, nothing like that. I’ll let her tell you tomorrow.”

“Okay, Joe. Done. I won’t leave here until I’m sure she’s gotten the message.”

“Great, and thanks. Have a lovely evening, Marge.”



Joe was waiting for Gaby when she arrived at his office building on Madison Avenue. It was close to six, and the street was filled with people walking to the subway to go home, to the parking garage to retrieve their car, to Grand Central to catch their train, or just to their apartment at the end of a long workday.

Gaby hugged her husband of eight years, giving him a peck on the cheek. “What’s up, hon? When Marge gave me the message to meet you at the office, she said you had a surprise?”

“Indeed I do, and I’ve made reservations for us at Risotto’s to tell you all about it,” Joe responded, putting his arm around his wife and directing her down the street.

“Our favorite place! What’s the occasion, Joe?” she asked, grinning at his boyish excitement. “Must be happy news.”

“It is! But first, how did work go today? Marge said you were tied up for most of it making new docs?” Joe looked down at his wife as they strolled along Madison Avenue.

“We got three doctoral candidates over the finish line—or at least they’ll be done after they’ve made some minor editorial changes to their dissertations. Nothing too difficult, unlike the unfortunate few who have to be sent back to square one.”

“You’re too sweet to do that to a poor, starving student,” Joe said with a chuckle, giving Gaby’s shoulder a gentle squeeze.

“I hate it when we have to give a candidate that message, but sometimes academic integrity demands it, especially when it’s a Columbia University degree that’s being awarded,” Gaby said, shaking her head.

They turned the corner onto a side street. “Here we are,” Joe announced, opening the door to the small restaurant and pulling her in.

The *maitre d’* greeted them at the door. “Welcome back to Risotto’s. And how are the lovebirds this fine evening?”

“We’re just great, Lorenzo,” Joe said. “I called earlier to reserve our booth.”

“Indeed,” he responded, leading them to their usual table and offering them menus. “Will you be starting with a beverage? The usual?”

“Tonight, it’s champagne for my lady and me,” Joe answered. “We’re celebrating.”

“And may I ask what is the special occasion?”

“A big success,” said Joe.

“And what would you prefer?”

“A Taittinger rosé, if you have it.”

Nodding his head, Lorenzo announced, “I’m sure we do. Francesco will be your waiter this evening. I’ll be right back with your champagne,” Lorenzo said with a nod and a small smile as Joe reached across the table to grab Gaby’s hand.

“I love you, Gaby,” he murmured.

“Love you too, Joe,” she answered, squeezing his hand. “With all my heart.”

After their waiter had come by to fill their water glasses and place a basket of focaccia and a shallow dish of olive oil on the table, announcing the specials as he did so, Lorenzo returned with the champagne, two flutes and an ice bucket. Twisting the cork, which gave a satisfying “pop,” he poured the bubbly drink into their glasses. “Enjoy!”

Joe winked at Gaby as he lifted his glass toward hers.

“Now, will you tell me what we’re celebrating?” Gaby asked, toasting him with a clink of their glasses. The champagne was perfectly chilled and delectable.

“The people at Birch Products loved our presentation, Gaby! Especially the social media tie-in we were able to develop. Lots of ad firms are having trouble with that piece, and we nailed it. It’s a big account. Really a coup for the firm.”

“And for you!” she exclaimed. “I know you’ve been working hard on this one.”

She grinned, sipping the champagne while listening to her husband’s enthusiastic description of the creative advertising campaign the team he headed up had just completed for their newest client.

“We tried something new with this marketing project. I had a hunch my idea might be suited to their line of cleaning products. We had run several focus group sessions with people from their target audience. They were intrigued and enthusiastic. Always a good sign, but you never know how the client will react. Especially since this was a totally novel approach. I don’t want to bore you with the details, just to bask in the glory of your praise and admiration.” Joe grinned back at her, lifting his glass in a salute to them both.

“I’m thrilled for you, Joe. You’re just so brilliant!” she said with a grin. “Guess we both did good today.”

They ended up with a dessert for two following dinner to celebrate their achievements, then began walking home to their apartment. Gaby smiled to herself, treasuring her sense of comfort and security as they strolled arm-in-arm. They paused to kiss under a street lamp, absorbed in one another.



“Where am I?” Gaby asked the man seated at the head of the narrow cot she was lying on. The cot swayed as she became aware of being in a moving vehicle—the roar of traffic around them, the sound of a siren in the distance, the feel of the road rumbling beneath them.

“Where’s Joe?” she asked, struggling to sit up, suddenly aware of a sharp pain in her right ankle, aches all over her body.

“Ma’am, you’re in an ambulance on the way to Bellevue. Best if you lie still until we reach the hospital. You and the gentleman you were with were in a... an accident. Your foot was injured and...”

“What happened? Where’s Joe?” Gaby interrupted the man, her voice rising in panic, making it difficult for her to breathe. She lifted her hand to her face, feeling something bulky and foreign covering the side of her face from her forehead to her chin, making it hard for her to talk. “What’s this?” she asked, examining her hand, which felt sticky as she drew it away from her face, covered in what looked like blood.

“Please lie still, ma’am,” the attendant said, reaching over her to grab a large bandage. “Let me reinforce that wound,” he added, placing something over the bandage already on the side of her face. “You’ve been injured... seriously. Please lie still.”

“Where’s my husband?” Gaby repeated, tears welling in her eyes. “What happened to us? Is he okay?”

“The police will fill you in on the details once we’re at the hospital. We’ll be there in a few minutes. Please, just try to stay calm.”



## Chapter 1

GABY DROPPED A TWENTY beside her plate of uneaten pancakes and hurried out of the Sunshine Café. Reading the unexpected note her waitress, Helen, had given her raised all of her old fears. She rushed across the road fronting Woodson Falls' small shopping area, making her way over the town green to Center Cemetery, where she could reflect on the note in peace and quiet. The oldest cemetery in Berkshire County, Center held the remains of men who had fought in the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, and as far back as the French and Indian Wars. The engravings on the thin, weathered stones were barely visible.

Gaby had returned to Woodson Falls to escape the memories of what had happened to her and Joe in the city. The sense of community and tradition here made her feel safe. Things like how the members of the town's Veterans Association had planted small American flags on the graves of the fallen men in this cemetery just a month ago, before Memorial Day. They'd be removed after Veterans Day in November, then stored until the following May.

Gaby sat on the stone wall surrounding the cemetery and gazed out toward Woodson Lake and the sparkling waterfall tucked into its far corner. A breeze scattered the dry leaves left from last

autumn. She fingered the scar that ran from her left eye and along her cheek, usually hidden by the fall of her long black hair, as she reread the note the stranger had left for her:

*Joe wasn't who you thought he was. Better  
for you if you don't go down the same path.*

When Gaby first spotted the strange man eating at the café counter a few months ago, she thought he looked familiar. She had only caught a glimpse of the tall, dark-haired man who had attacked her and her husband Joe after they left their favorite restaurant, where they had celebrated Joe's success in landing a big advertising account. As they strolled down the sidewalk arm-in-arm, heading toward their New York apartment, a man wielding a knife killed Joe and slashed Gaby's face. Then he jumped into the driver's seat of a white van and took off down the street. The police never caught him.

Gaby's scar was a constant reminder of that night and her loss. Now this note, confirming her worst fear—that whatever had prompted the attack on Joe had followed her from New York City to the sleepy rural town of Woodson Falls, Connecticut—had come just when she thought she might be ready to love again. The note was a stark reminder of how suddenly love could be taken from you, how empty life could become.

Following Joe's death and her own recovery from the knife wound and a broken ankle, shattered when Joe collapsed on her, Gaby had resigned her position as a professor of philosophy at Columbia University. She finished law school, was admitted to the bar, and became an attorney in Woodson Falls, specializing in estate planning and probate with a smattering of real estate. She renovated the cottage she inherited from her grandfather, reconnected with old friends, and acquired an emotional support dog, a beautiful German Sheprador named Katrina.

But what to do now?

After giving her the note from the stranger, Helen had suggested she forget it, but that was impossible. How could she forget something that had stirred up the anguish she thought she had finally put in the past?

Her dear friend Emma Larson, who usually manned the deli at Mike's Place, would just ask questions Gaby would be unable to answer. Besides, as much as Gaby loved her, Emma was an inveterate gossip and wouldn't be able to resist talking about the stranger's note to anyone who knew even a little about Gaby's past.

Nell Whitney, owner of Rainbows & Unicorns and Gaby's friend and legal mentor, was the most likely person Gaby could confide in, but Gaby feared that, like Helen, Nell would encourage her to tear up the note and forget about following it to wherever it was tempting to lead her.

And that left Matt Thomas, Woodson Fall's resident state trooper, who had helped her with cases that had begun at 16 Lakeview Terrace in the early spring and ended with the more recent case at 9 Donovan's Way just before Memorial Day. She and Matt had developed a friendship that had deepened over the past few months and was poised to turn into a romance, a step she felt ready to take... until she received this note. Having lost a spouse as well as his young daughter and unborn son to senseless violence, Matt would understand the distress the stranger's note had stirred in her. But something deep inside her resisted involving him. Solving this puzzle on her own might be the only way she could completely heal from her loss.

Gaby sat a while longer, staring out at the lake, then tucked the note into her purse. She decided to begin with Carl Grant, Joe's second-in-command at the ad agency. Perhaps he could shed some light on what Joe was involved with in the months preceding his

death, other than the success in gaining the new ad account she and Joe had been celebrating.

Feeling a bit more settled now, having decided on a course of action, Gaby slid off the stone wall and headed back across the green toward her weathered Subaru, parked along the row of stores comprising Woodson Falls' shopping center. As she approached her car, the confidence she had just found drained away, replaced by a knot in the pit of her stomach at the sight of a white van with New York plates parked near the café.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

**The Gaby Quinn Mystery Series**

Woodson Falls: 16 Lakeview Terrace

Woodson Falls: 9 Donovan's Way

Woodson Falls: 2 Sunrise Trail

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