

Excerpt from *CHATTER*, a novel

By Perrin Ireland

“In the soaps,” Sarah said, “the husbands never go to work, preferring to stay at home to discuss relationships.”

“I had to give a speech to the group from China,” Michael said.

“And the husbands in the soaps rent entire restaurants, with bands, to celebrate their anniversaries.”

“When I got back from the meeting, I had 243 e-mails.” He tossed his briefcase on the floor, his jacket on the chocolate-stained antique chair. “How’s Rachel?”

“I don’t understand why my friends have cancer and the leader of North Korea doesn’t.” Sarah rose from the sofa, jeans bunched at the knee, and he followed her into the kitchen, where a microwave flashed the wrong time and splashes of water surrounded the dog dish.

“Why don’t we get that thin pizza anymore?” he asked.

“There comes a point when you want a Dove Bar more than a roll in the hay.”

“When did you start calling it a roll in the hay?”

“Norma saw you at lunch with someone who looked like the saleswoman from the Harley dealership.”

“The new actuary.”

“Here,” she said. “Use my napkin. You spilled some on your shoe, too.”

They’d been married eighteen years, following divorces, and he had a daughter, Lisa, who’d lived with Sarah and Michael when she was a teenager; Sarah had no children of her own.

He was great-looking and mischievous and charming, particularly with company, and, when she was younger, Sarah looked at least as good as other young women.

Their wooden house was old on the outside and new on the inside. One realtor called it Colonial, another identified it as Greek Revival—Sarah went with that.