H

Sleeping Beauty

A NOVEL

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BOOKS BY JUDITH MICHAEL

Deceptions
Possessions
Private Affairs
Inheritance
A Ruling Passion
Sleeping Beauty

Judith Michael Michael

For Ronald Barnard in friendship and love



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Chapter 1

nne stepped from the limousine and stood beside it, gazing at the massive, carved doors of the chapel, willing herself to go inside. The driver drummed his fingers on the steering wheel, and she knew he was wondering what she was waiting

for after an hour of sitting impatiently in the backseat while he fought the expressway traffic to get from the airport to Lake Forest by ten o'clock. She was late, but still she stood there, staring at the cold, Gothic stones of the chapel, grayer and colder beneath dark clouds that hung over the town. Chauffeurs in other limousines parked along the length of the block looked up from their newspapers to watch her. All right, I'm going, she snapped at them silently, and walked to the front steps. They seemed to stretch ahead of her, rising to the heavy double doors with large brass rings for handles. I have to do this, she thought; I want to do this. For Ethan.

She pulled on one of the brass rings and the door opened noiselessly. She walked into the anteroom and an usher opened an inner door and stood aside for her. The chapel was full; all the seats were taken and people stood along the side aisles and at the back. A large man with a briefcase made room for Anne and she slipped in beside him. Someone was speaking, but she barely heard him. She stood still and looked at the backs of the Chathams, all the generations of Chathams, rows and rows of Chathams and their friends and business associates and even a few of their enemies, and beyond all of them, at the front of the chapel, the coffin of Ethan Chatham, dead at the age of ninety-one.

The room rustled and swayed like a wheat field under a prairie wind as people bent left and right to whisper to their neighbors and listen to speakers reminisce about Ethan. They all knew each other; many of them had grown up together, and gone to private schools together, and now they were bankers, executives of multinational companies, owners of industries, commodities brokers, and presidents of insurance companies. They were the warp and woof of Chicago society, and Ethan Chatham had been one of them, and they had tolerated his eccentricities, even his running off to the mountains of Colorado, because, after all, he had made so very much money.

Quietly, Anne moved to the side aisle and made her way unobtrusively toward the front, to look at all the faces. Most of them were strange to her. But in the two front rows was the Chatham family, and as she looked at each profile, each one was so familiar she named them all in an instant. It was astonishing to her. But why would they change? she thought. I was the one who ran away. They stayed where they were; comfortable, smug, the same. For so many years.

"He was a great builder," said Harrison Ervin, president of Chicago's largest bank, "a creator of houses—of whole towns, in fact—that won him awards and brought prestige to all of us. And then he went west, as restless men always have done in America's history, and discovered Tamarack, in the mountains of Colorado, and made it a world-famous resort. He was a man who knew what he wanted and knew how to achieve it. That was his greatness."

Charles Chatham stopped listening. It wasn't greatness, he thought, for his father to turn his back on his family and spend the last twenty-some years of his life concentrating on a private paradise he'd built from the ruins of a little mountain ghost town. Turned his back on Chatham Development, too, the company he'd built; behaved as if it could rot in hell, and Charles—trying to run the company, trying to run the family—could rot, too, for all his father gave a damn. That wasn't greatness; that was obsession.

"I visited him in Tamarack," Ervin went on. "He was building