

Chapter 1

She'd Always Wanted to Live in San Francisco

SELMA COHEN made the decision on the spot.

She hadn't even planned to visit. "What's this place?" she asked her son as they walked down Post Street, their bellies full of sashimi, their minds trying to forget the mediocre documentary they'd seen at the film festival.

"An old folks' home," Robert said. "Jewish."

Two hours later Selma had signed the paperwork, and two weeks after that, she had moved in.

Her other children demanded explanations.

Selma was wildly inconsistent in what she told them.

She'd always wanted to live in San Francisco.

There was lots of natural light.

She was tired of the East Coast.

The people seemed friendly.

It was three blocks from the best Japanese food she'd ever had.

She enjoyed saying these things, enjoyed surprising her kids, enjoyed changing her explanation.

But when she stopped to think about it, there really was no good reason. It was a lark. It was a whim. And when some part of herself wanted a better answer, she pushed the question away and remembered Robert's surprise when she asked to see the room, and then his happy grin when he realized she was serious.