



MURDER
COMES *by* MAIL

A. H. GABHART



a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2016 by Ann H. Gabhart

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

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Gabhart, Ann H., 1947– author.

Title: Murder comes by mail : a Hidden Springs mystery / A. H. Gabhart.

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

[2016] | Series: The Hidden Springs mysteries ; 2

Identifiers: LCCN 2016000102 | ISBN 9780800727055 (softcover)

Subjects: | GSAFD: Christian fiction. | Mystery fiction.

Classification: LCC PS3607.A23 M875 2016 | DDC 813/.6—dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2016000102>

Scripture used in this book, whether quoted or paraphrased by the characters, is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Published in association with the Books & Such Literary Agency.

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my sisters,
Jane and Rosalie.
Sisters share lifetime memories
and make the very best friends.





1

When he was a little boy, his mother told him a drunk jumped off this bridge and survived. Jack watched the swirling brown eddies in the river far below him while his toes curled inside his shoes trying to grip the narrow strip of roadway on the air side of the railing. He didn't see how anyone could walk away from this jump, but his mother, who didn't believe in idle gossip or idle anything for that matter, never told stories unless they were true. She said Jack's father knew one of the men who went out in a boat to fish the drunk out of the river below. The man hadn't even broken a bone, or maybe he'd broken all his bones. Jack couldn't remember now which she'd said.

Jack stared down at the muddy water until there didn't seem to be anything but the water and him and wondered if that could happen to him. He supposed not. For one thing, he wasn't drunk, although he'd have bought a bottle of something as he came through Eagleton if he'd had the money. Money. He was tired of thinking about money. Maybe he should say tired of thinking about not having money. Tired of doing things he shouldn't because of money. Better to

simply end it all. Fling himself out into the air and let the river swallow him.

A tremble started in his legs, and he ordered his hands to let go of the railing to get it over with. But his mind no longer seemed to have any real connection with his body.

His eyes locked onto the water again. It was mud-puddle brown. Not the nice bluish green he'd visualized on the way here. Even when he was a little kid and lived here in Kentucky close to the river, he'd never gone swimming in water this nasty. A person could get sick swimming in the river during the dog days of summer. At least that was what his mother used to tell him.

He shut his eyes for a second. He had to quit thinking about his mother.

Besides, he wasn't going swimming. Everybody said the fall killed you when you hit the water. He'd be dead before he swallowed any of the filthy water, and what would it matter if he did? Dead people didn't have to worry about germs. About anything.

His knees practically rattled inside his skin as the trembling spread through him until even his scalp shivered under his hair. Only his hands weren't trembling as they kept a paralyzing grip on the railing behind him.

All he had to do was turn loose and it would all be over.