



# **SILENT LIGHT**

BY JOHN NAA

Copyright 2020 JOHN NAA

## CHAPTER ONE

She ignored the sign that told her to please knock before entering and pushed the heavy door open, scowling at the brass nameplate; Dr. Allison Curran.

‘Michaela,’ Dr. Curran looked up from her computer screen. ‘Come in. I’m glad you could stop by, I need to talk to you.’

‘You’ve been ignoring me,’ Michaela said. She stepped into the room and shoved the door closed. ‘You haven’t returned any of my calls. We were supposed to meet on Friday and you didn’t turn up.’ She forced a calming breath. ‘I waited for two hours for you, Allison.’

The other woman looked surprised. ‘Why did you wait so long? I couldn’t make it.’

Michaela shook her head. ‘And let me guess, your cell battery was dead and you weren’t anywhere you could plug a charger in. You’ve been ignoring me, Allison.’

Dr. Curran perched on the side of her desk, legs long and shapely. She cleared her throat. ‘I don’t know exactly how to say this, honey,’ she started.

Michaela suddenly wanted to close her eyes. ‘Don’t honey me,’ she said, feeling tired. ‘Just say it. Just tell me what it is you called me in here for. I know it’s not about my thesis. I got the message that you’ve palmed me off onto Professor Grayson.’ Michaela leaned back against the door, now wanting to just turn around and leave. She did not want to hear this.

‘Michaela,’ Allison was saying, ‘I’m sorry about that really, but it’s for the best. I don’t think this is going to work between us.’

Michaela watched her through narrowed eyes and said nothing.

Allison cleared her throat and carried on. ‘We had a terrific time, you and me. It’s been amazing; you know that. I know that. But it can’t go on.’ She gave a sigh that sounded to Michaela a touch too theatrical. ‘I should’ve known better than to get involved with you.’

Now Michaela was gaping at her. ‘What?’ she said. ‘What are you talking about? You’re the one who made the first move. And now you’re thinking it’s a bad idea?’ She shook her head and stood up. ‘You’ve got to be kidding, Allison.’

Allison smoothed her skirt down over shapely hips. She raised a perfectly shaped eyebrow. ‘I’m not in the habit of this, you know.’

‘No?’ said Michaela. She hesitated, then nodded. ‘Okay, I’ll give you that.’ ‘You are an amazing young woman,’ Allison carried on. ‘I’ve never met anyone with so much potential.’ She stood up and took Michaela’s hands in her own. ‘I have

to end this. Do you have any idea what would happen to me here, if people found out

about us? My reputation would be in tatters. I’d be lucky if I managed to keep my job.

‘I’ve worked too hard and too long to risk it this way,’ she said. ‘You’re young, just starting. There’s a different path for you. You won’t have to pretend the way I have.’ She sat down at her desk and stared at the neat piles of paper there. ‘This is the way it is for me, and I’m stuck with it and I’m sorry, but I can’t risk it.’

Michaela leaned back against the door again and stared at the view through the window. ‘Okay,’ she said at last on a sigh. ‘Okay.’

Allison opened one of the desk drawers. She pulled out a key ring and sorted through it, removed one of the keys.

‘I know we’d planned a few days away,’ she said. ‘There’s no reason you shouldn’t go anyway.’ She held out the small silver key. ‘Please. I would feel better knowing you were enjoying the place. It’s beautiful there by the lake. You can go for walks, do some work on your thesis, relax.’

Michaela looked at it. ‘Won’t you and your husband be wanting to go there now?’ she asked, bringing her gaze away from the window and onto the woman’s face.

Allison flushed. ‘Gerald and I are flying out to Paris on Saturday. Please, Michaela, take the cabin for a while. There’s everything you need there, it’s a lovely spot. Drive-up there, pick up some food on the way, and when you get there, just relax. Do a bit of work and otherwise just relax.’ She stood and pressed the key into Michaela’s hand, curled the fingers around it.

Michaela stared at the woman who had been her lover for the last three months. ‘Flying out to Paris?’ she repeated. She held up the key. ‘Sure Allison. That’ll be great. No problem.’ She pulled open the door. ‘Have a terrific time,’ she said and left.

## CHAPTER TWO

She packed her books into two plastic crates and hefted them into the trunk of the rental car. Boot it was called back at home, the boot of the car. On the other side of the world. But she couldn't go running home. She had to finish out the year here.

Graduate. She stared at the books in the *trunk*. Slammed it closed and went back inside. Fetched her laptop computer and sports bag full of clothes and went back to the car.

It was fall break. Another difference, she thought. Not autumn here. Fall. Fall, falling, fallen. She had fallen. Right on her ass this time. What an idiot. Her fingers were white where they gripped the steering wheel.

It was late in the afternoon when she reached the town before turning off to the cabin. The air was crisp and she pulled her jacket closer as she got out of the car. She had to buy food, she remembered. Her stomach clenched. She hadn't eaten since breakfast the day before. She stood beside the car and closed her eyes. Not hungry, she decided. Can't eat.

But she walked across the road into the general store anyway. The town wasn't more than a couple of buildings from a Stephen King novel. A bell tinkled as she pushed open the door. A young woman stood at the checkout, snapping gum in a sugar-pink mouth. She didn't look up as Michaela picked up a basket and walked up and down the aisles. It was warm in the shop and Michaela wiped a slick of perspiration from her forehead. She picked up bread and milk, added cheese, bacon, eggs, coffee, some fruit and called it job done. The girl at the counter served her without any attempt at conversation, returning to her gum and magazine before Michaela even let the door fall closed behind her.

She found the turnoff with difficulty. On the map, it followed the curve of the lake for two miles, but there were no enticing glimpses of calm lake water. Only trees. She pulled up in front of the cabin and got out. Thrusting her hands in her pockets she stared at the cabin. It was picturesque. A quaint log cabin amid a clearing, edged by trees making offerings of red and gold leaves to the breeze.

Michaela looked up at the porch, gazing at the reflections in the French doors. She imagined for a moment Allison behind them, coming forward to open them for her, smiling, reaching to grasp her hands. She stood still, waiting.

Letting out a puff of held breath she turned and reached back into the car for her bag and the key. She could hear her boots on the steps as she climbed up to open the door. Overhead a bird shrieked and she looked up, startled. She pushed the key into the lock.

She wished she hadn't come. It was a stupid thing to do.

The main room was large and warmly furnished. Rugs on the floor and Native American hangings on the wall, colorful throws draped over the couch. Pine

shelves along one wall held neat rows of books along with a stereo and large selection of CDs. Everywhere was warmth and comfort. Vivid paintings on the wall and small, dainty carvings on the surfaces.

Michaela shuddered. She was a fool. This was why Allison had left her. She looked around the room again. All this was why. No competition. Outside the damn bird shrieked again.

She went back and sat in the car. Looked through the front windscreen at the cabin. Twilight was falling and shadows were gathering comfortably around the building. She shivered. There was a chill in the air. She hunched round in the seat to look behind her. A slight mist was rising between the trees. Somewhere down there was the lake.

She got out and walked down the track to the lake, footsteps muffled by pine needles. There was a small jetty pushing out above the lake while a stony beach edged its way around the water. The lake was a deep bowl of water, rimmed with trees and brooding inwardly. She shivered at the uncanny mist rising from the lake's surface and stepped out onto the jetty. A small rowboat tugged gently at its mooring. Michaela walked to the edge of the wooden boards and peered down into the water. It lapped against the pilings with slight, animal-like sounds. She looked around. It was a beautiful spot. She breathed in the piney, briny scent. It would be a magical place in the Summer.

She walked back to the cabin. Newspaper and pine cones were in a basket beside a large stone hearth. She laid a fire and looked around for something to light it with. Matches were on a nearby shelf. She took one and struck it, staring at it a moment before setting it to the dry paper. The flame caught and spread. She leaned back on her haunches and watched. She fed the fire from a pile of logs and warmed her hands.

There was enough wood for the night. Tomorrow she would have to find more. There was probably a stack of it somewhere. She walked across the room and tried switching a lamp on. Nothing happened. She tried it again, flicking the switch on and off and on. Nothing. She tried to think of all the books she had read about cabins in the wilderness of America. A generator? A glance at the window told her the sun had set while she'd been busy. She shivered, despite the fire. She went through to the kitchen and looked around. She picked up a torch (*flashlight*). It worked. She shrugged back into her jacket.

Listening to the sound of the night she walked around behind the cabin. The bird from earlier was no longer calling but somewhere there was a softer, haunting sound, an owl hooting perhaps? She pulled open the door to a small lean-to and swung the light around. It was stacked with firewood and had that sweet pine smell again. There was no generator. Must be a mains board somewhere.

'I should have known,' Michaela said out loud. Allison would never go without the creature comforts. She picked up an armful of wood and went back inside to look.

The lights were on and Michaela stood in the kitchen. She wasn't hungry but fixed a sandwich anyway and wandered back through to the couch to eat it. She sat down and chewed slowly. She wondered what Allison was doing. An image of the two of them on the couch here came to mind. Soft hair and soft skin. Whispers and laughter. Leaning back she stared up at the ceiling. Allison was flying out to Paris tomorrow. With her husband. Michaela closed her eyes.



## CHAPTER THREE

Michaela zipped up her jacket and walked down the path to

the lake. The sun was caressing the tips of the trees now and she raised her face to catch its warmth. She breathed a deep lungful of the warming air. It was going to be a stunning day out in the country. She would walk for a while, the trail around the lake for half an hour before going back to the cabin. She thought she'd probably do some work for a while then. She needed to map out her thesis, make sure all her notes were in order.

She came back invigorated, high on the smell of pine.

The door to the cabin was open.

Michaela frowned. She was sure she'd closed it when she left. She felt in her pocket. Yes, there was the key. She'd locked the door behind her. Swallowing, her mouth suddenly dry, Michaela walked up the steps to the cabin and looked through the door.

She couldn't see anyone about. Was she sure she'd locked the door? She'd been so taken with the view, maybe she'd forgotten. She shook her head. No. Someone else was here.

Realization hit. Someone else was here – someone with a key. Allison!

She stepped into the room. 'Allison?' she called. 'You changed your mind?' She pushed open the door to the main bedroom and stopped still.

'You're not Allison,' she said.

'No shit, Sherlock,' the stranger said, rummaging around in an old backpack. 'Ah-ha!' she said, pulling a pack of cigarettes from the bag. 'Knew I'd brought another packet with me.' She looked up and saw Michaela there still staring at her. She grinned, a sly feline smile.

'You're Allison's latest then are you, Sherlock?'

Michaela backed up a few paces. 'What are you talking about? And what are you doing here? In fact,' she said, gathering steam now, 'Who the hell are you anyway and how did you get in? I know I locked that door.'

The stranger shook her dark curls and rolled her eyes. 'Steady on there Sherlock, you don't want to go blowing a gasket.' She stuck out her hand. 'Trisha. Our esteemed professor's conquest circa '07. How are you doing? You're her latest, yeah? Cool accent by the way. Where you from?'

Michaela was choking. She ignored the outstretched hand. 'What are you talking about?' she demanded.

Trisha smacked her forehead with the heel of a hand. 'Having a slow day, are you?' She shoved past. 'Place smells good, like coffee, how 'bout you make us some? I'd kill for a coffee.' She rolled her shoulders. 'Been hitching rides since five, trying to get here.'

Michaela was shaking her head. 'I'm not making anyone coffee until I know what's going on here.' She parked herself in the doorway and folded her arms.



Trisha, if that was her name, hoisted herself onto the dining table and fished a cigarette out of the packet. ‘Suit yourself then,’ she shrugged. She blew out a plume of smoke and eyed Michaela. ‘You’ve been having a good time with Allison, right? Doing a bit of running around behind that poor sap Gerald’s back? A bit of dancing between the sheets?’ She smiled and again Michaela was reminded of a cat. Trisha took another drag at the cigarette when Michaela didn’t reply.

‘So,’ she continued. ‘You’re not the first, and you sure as hell won’t be the last. Our darling Allison has quite a thing for the girls. She chats them up, beds them until they get boring and whiney, then dumps them and offers them a few days away here as a consolation prize.’ She gestured around at the cabin they stood in. ‘Most don’t take her up on it though. Or at least, this is the first time we’ve double-booked like this.’ She opened her eyes wide and appealed to Michaela. ‘Can I have some coffee now?’

Michaela could feel the color leaching from her cheeks. She walked over to the kitchen bench and measured out coffee, not because she wanted to be nice but because she needed to do something. She kept her back turned, feeling a tension headache crawling its way up her neck. She heard Trisha take another breath but didn’t turn around.

‘Bit gobsmacked, huh?’ Trisha said, and a kinder note crept into her voice. ‘Hey, don’t give yourself a hard time about it. Allison’s a pro. She sucked me in.’ Michaela turned back around. She opened her mouth. ‘I don’t believe it,’ she said, but she didn’t carry on. Because she did believe it. She closed her eyes. ‘How

could I have been so stupid?’ she asked.

Trisha hopped off the table. ‘Don’t beat yourself up over it, Sherlock. She’s not worth it. Neat cabin though, huh?’

Which reminded Michaela. ‘How’d you get in?’ she asked.

Trisha opened a cupboard and took out a coffee mug. ‘Had the key copied.’ She grinned and poured herself a mug full. ‘I’ve had a few holidays here thanks to the professor. You should see it in the summer. Now that’s something.’

Michaela was intrigued despite herself. ‘Haven’t you ever been caught?’ she asked.

‘Nah. You wouldn’t believe it, but Allison hardly ever uses the place. That’s why she’s so happy to send us all up here. Every time one of us suckers comes to stay, the place gets an airing.’ She shrugged and sipped at the coffee. ‘There’s no one around to ask questions, and like I said, hardly any of us take her up on her offer anyway.’ She wandered back to the table, gestured at the laptop. ‘You one of her students? What’s your major?’ she asked.

‘English modernist literature,’ Michaela replied. ‘Yours?’

‘Yeah, I was never a student. Just someone she picked up one night.’ Trisha stubbed out her cigarette in a saucer and picked up a carved wooden owl. ‘Cute fella,’ she said and turned to Michaela. ‘So Sherlock, what’s for lunch?’

## CHAPTER FOUR

The low autumn sun drifted in through the window onto the dining room table where Michaela sat bent over her computer. She let out an exasperated sigh and leaned back in the chair. Having trouble concentrating. She needed more of her notes. They were in the trunk of the rental. She shoved back from the table and went outside.

Trisha had disappeared after lunch. Lunch that Michaela had made. Michaela grunted at the memory. Trisha hadn't even brought any supplies with her. Not that Michaela could tell anyway. They'd have to have a word about that later. She was not going to take on the job of chief cook and bottle washer. No way in hell.

She decided as she walked down to the car, she would have to suggest that Trisha left. After all, Michaela was here first, and she wasn't exactly in the mood for company. And certainly not Trisha's company. She hadn't even been able to find

out what Trisha did. Or get her to stop calling her Sherlock. The woman was aggravating.

There were a whoop and a wild splashing from the direction of the lake. Surely that crazy Trisha wasn't in the water? Michaela shook her head. It was too cold for swimming. No one in their right mind would get in the water at this time of the year. Any colder and it would be nice for Christ's sakes.

Michaela hooked her thumbs into her belt and stood to look in the lake's direction. Here in the sun, it wasn't too bad. She walked past the car and down the path to the jetty, the pine needles muffling her steps. She stepped onto the jetty.

Trisha was a pale streak in the water, dark hair fanned out behind her like some pre-Raphaelite undine. The sun danced golden on the surface of the water and Michaela couldn't help but smile when Trisha burst up to the surface, sending gold and diamond droplets everywhere.

'Come for a swim!' Trisha called. 'Water's great!'

Michaela stood on the jetty and shook her head. 'You have to be kidding me,' she said. 'The water must be bloody freezing.'

Trisha grinned and shrugged, launching herself onto her back then suddenly flipping over into an underwater somersault. She burst to the surface again, her skin marbled with the cold, nipples standing erect and brown. Michaela was suddenly conscious of staring.

Trisha swam up to the jetty's edge. 'Come on Sherlock,' she purred.

Michaela narrowed her eyes and Trisha threw her hands in the air and laughed.

'All right already! You win.' She waggled a finger in a come hither gesture.

'Come for a swim. Michaela.'

Michaela gazed down at the mermaid in the water. 'It's cold,' she said.

Trisha laughed again, a throaty purr. 'It's invigorating,' she said, treading water. She threw back her head. 'Oh come on Sherlock! You know you want to. Loosen up a little, why don't you.' She took off, slicing through the water in a smooth breaststroke.

Michaela stood hesitating a moment longer. What the hell, she decided. She'd either die of a heart attack from the cold, or she might enjoy herself. Shaking her head, she kicked her boots away and peeled her jersey off, throwing it down on the jetty and adding the rest of her clothes to the pile. She dived into the water before she could change her mind.

She surfaced screaming. 'Oh fuck fuck fuck it's cold!'

Trisha laughed. 'Not enough to take your breath away, obviously – that's an impressive scream, Sherlock.'

Michaela lunged toward the other woman. Trish laughed and swam away. Michaela dived and twisted through the water. Maybe if she moved around a bit she wouldn't die of exposure. She looked up at the sky from beneath the water, letting the strange underwater silence wrap itself around her. She blew out some bubbles and a hand reached out and grabbed her wrist.

Trisha hauled her to the surface. 'What're you trying to do down there?' she asked. 'Grow gills?'

Michaela laughed. 'Grew up swimming every day at the beach. I could hold my breath the longest of any of my friends.'

'Well,' Trisha said, 'I guess some talents are just never lost.' And rolled her eyes.

Still laughing, Michaela reached out and tugged at a wet lock of Trisha's hair.

'You have mermaid's hair,' she said.

Trisha grinned. 'Would you like to hear my siren song?' she asked, brushing a leg against Michaela's as they paddled to stay afloat.

Michaela looked at her. Then up at the sky, back toward the cabin. 'Some other time,' she said at last. She pushed away and swam back to the jetty, pulling herself out of the water in a sudden cascade. She avoided looking at Trisha and picked up her clothes, walked back to the cabin.

She was dressed by the time Trisha padded in; dressed and sitting back at the laptop, frowning at the screen.

She cleared her throat and Trisha stopped, dripping lake water onto the floor in a spreading puddle.

'I think you should leave,' Michaela said. 'I was here first and I'd rather prefer to be here on my own.' She looked up at Trisha and realized the woman was still naked. She looked away again.

'Get over yourself,' Trisha said after a moment. 'I'm staying. You leave. You're the one with the wheels, Sherlock.' She walked past.

Michaela stood up. 'Stop fucking calling me Sherlock,' she yelled.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Michaela sulked in the kitchen for the rest of the afternoon. She knew she was sulking, but didn't care. Why shouldn't Trisha leave? she told herself. She ignored the little voice that asked why exactly should Trisha leave? The cabin didn't belong to either of them.

Finally, as the sun sank below the lake, and the crackling of the fire in the living area drew her, Michaela stood in the doorway and looked at the woman in question, sprawled on the couch, cigarette in one hand, book in another. Trisha didn't look up. Michaela bit her lip.

'What are you reading?' she asked after a minute.

Trisha glanced over. 'Oh,' she said. 'It's talking again. Have you decided I can stay yet?'

Michaela walked over to the fire and put another log on it, stirring the flames until they reached little tongues of fire out at her. She turned around. 'I'm sorry,' she said. 'You're right, neither of should have to leave.' She shrugged. 'It's not our place. I guess we could both stay.'

Trisha cocked an eyebrow at her. 'My word, Sherlock, how generous of you to allow that we can both stay.'

Michaela groaned. 'All right,' she said. 'I was a bit of a bitch to say you should go. Can we leave it at that?'

Trisha stretched on the couch, sleek and languid. 'Sure, apology accepted. This time,' she said, and a sly smile slid onto her face. 'How about you fix us some food and I'll fix us some drinks?' She stood up and moved close to Michaela. 'I might even be persuaded to remember your name if you're nice to me.' She smoothed down Michaela's collar then walked away, throwing a grin over her shoulder.

Michaela smacked herself on the head. 'How come I always get stuck with kitchen duty?' she complained.

Trisha walked back in holding a bottle of bourbon aloft. 'We don't want to mess with a good thing, baby,' she said. 'You've already proved you can do the food thing,

and honey,' Trisha waggled her eyebrows in a parody of suggestiveness, 'honey I know I can do the drinks thing.'

Michaela groaned. 'Better make mine a double then,' she said. 'What're you wanting to eat?'

Trisha plucked a crystal tumbler from a display cabinet and poured a generous measure of bourbon.

Michaela eyed it. 'Mixer?'

Trisha handed the glass over and came back with lemonade.

Michaela held out the drink. 'Ice?' she asked.

‘You like it all, I see,’ Trisha said, disappearing back into the kitchen. ‘I’m spending more time in the kitchen than you so far.’

Michaela followed her and waited while Trisha got the ice cubes. Her glass tinkling, she tipped it toward Trisha in a toast. ‘All or nothing,’ she said.

Trisha laughed. ‘Cheers,’ she said. ‘Now tell me where that gorgeous accent of yours comes from.’

‘New Zealand,’ Michaela told her, taking a sip of her drink. ‘Whoa, that’s one mean drink,’ she said.

‘Better get on with the food then, baby,’ Trisha said, filling her glass. ‘Then you can tell me all about yourself, Sherlock.’

Michaela considered the fact that she was fairly well drunk. She giggled as she tried to find the couch to sit on. Trisha was fumbling around with the stereo.

‘Ah-ha!’ she crowed. ‘Listen to this! We can dance to this, Whaddaya say?’

Michaela groaned and collapsed back against the cushions. ‘I’d have to have feet to dance with,’ she said. ‘I’m not sure I can find them.’

Trisha laughed and came over to pull her up. The sounds of Gary Miller’s band playing ‘In the Mood’ swelled out into the room. Michaela fell giggling against the other woman.

‘You have to be fucking joking,’ she stuttered.

‘No kidding. Come on Sherlock, dance with a woman won’t you?’

They swayed around in front of the fire. Michaela struggled to concentrate through the alcoholic haze, thinking she was doing a pretty good job as they boogied to the music. The song ended and something quieter came on. Michaela pulled Trisha closer and leaned against her.

‘You want to be Watson to my Sherlock?’ she whispered into Trisha’s hair.

They swung almost gracefully around.

‘Shit! What the hell is that?’ Trisha’s fingers tightened on Michaela’s arms.

Sudden goosebumps climbed up Michaela’s neck.

‘What?’

‘Look,’ Trisha hissed, pulling Michaela around to look out the window. ‘That’s fucking freaky.’ Her fingers tugged at Michaela’s sleeves. ‘What is it?’

Michaela stared through the window, feeling suddenly, frighteningly sober. She grabbed Trisha’s hand and stumbled forward to have a closer look. ‘What is it?’ she echoed.

## CHAPTER SIX

It was hanging suspended over the lake. Not that they could exactly see the lake.

But between the trees, where Michaela knew the lake was, there, that's where it was.

She strained her eyes to make it out and wiped her breath from the window.

'We have to go outside, get a closer look,' she said.

Trisha backed up. 'No way,' she said.

'Come on,' Michaela answered. 'It must be a ghost light or something.' She was dragging Trisha towards the door. 'I've read about them. Never thought I'd see any though.'

'What are you babbling about?' Trisha said, following Michaela out onto the porch. 'What is it?'

Michaela looked over at Trisha. 'Don't know,' she said. 'Not for sure, anyway. But it looks like a ghost light. You know, caused by gases rising from the ground?'

She stopped a moment. 'Or something like that.'

They stood on the top step watching the light bobbing in the air over the lake.

Almost a perfect sphere, it glowed a soft white.

Trisha reached out for Michaela. 'It's pulsing,' she said. 'Is it supposed to do that?'

Michaela shrugged. 'Let's go closer,' she said and twined her fingers in Trisha's.

They walked down the steps, both of them only in socks. Michaela didn't even notice; she focused on the light, which was bobbing gently as if in a breeze over the lake. They walked down the path to the water.

Trisha squeezed Michaela's hand. 'I'm not going out in the open,' she said. Michaela nodded. 'We'll stay in the trees.'

They veered off the track and kept to the shadows.

'That's spooky,' Trisha said when they were peering out over the lake at the light that hung above it as though suspended from an unseen string. Michaela watched it, wishing she hadn't had quite so much to drink. The fresh, cold air was making her feel a little unsteady.

Even so, she decided, it was the light that was swaying. As they watched, it dipped and dived over the water. Michaela poked Trisha in the ribs.

'Shit!' squealed Trisha. 'Are you trying to give me a goddamned heart attack?'

'What's over the far side of the lake?' Michaela asked.

'Well, there's another place over there. Bigger than this one though. Don't know whose place it is or anything. It'll be empty this time of year anyway.'

Michaela was frowning. 'There's something weird about this light,' she said, shaking her head.



‘No shit, Sherlock,’ Trisha replied in her now-familiar refrain. ‘Something spooky, you mean.’

‘Maybe,’ said Michaela.

Trisha grabbed her sleeve. ‘Let’s go back inside okay?’ ‘In a minute. Look, it’s moving away.’

It was drifting over to the far shore, growing fainter as it moved. It reached the tree line and exploded in a shower of sparks and a loud bang.

The women grabbed each other.

‘Fuck, that was loud,’ Trisha said. She pulled Michaela back toward to cabin. ‘Enough freaky stuff,’ she said. ‘We’re going back inside and I’m going to have another goddamned drink.’

Michaela cast one last glance at the spot where the light had exploded, then turned and let Trisha lead her back inside. She realized her feet had gone numb.

Back inside, Trisha held up the bourbon, waving it at Michaela who shook her head. She put it back and dropped down onto the couch. ‘Yeah, me neither,’ she said.

Michaela sat in front of the fire and put another log on, stirring it back to flames. She felt woolly-headed and her mouth was dry. She got up and went to the kitchen for a glass of water. She stared out of the window, back toward the lake, but the night was dark and quiet. She drank down the water.

‘So that was a... what did you call it?’ asked Trisha when she went back into the main room.

‘Ghost light,’ Michaela replied. She sat down in one of the armchairs and fingered the fringe of a purple throw. ‘I’ve never seen one before, only read about them.’ She looked over at the fire as it spat sparks onto the tiled hearth. ‘I didn’t know they exploded like that though.’

Trisha moved. ‘But you said it was what, caused by gases or something, right? So even though it was as freaky as shit, we don’t have to bolt the doors and stay up all night waiting for giant alien insects to break their way through the windows or anything, right?’

Michaela snorted out a laugh. ‘And I thought you would be wondering about the sort of stuff I read,’ she said. ‘Yeah, it’s a natural phenomenon.’ She thought for a moment. ‘I’d like to go have a look at the spot where it exploded tomorrow though.’

Trisha shrugged and held her watch up. ‘Later today, you mean.’ She stood up. ‘I’m hitting the sack, Sherlock.’ She winked at Michaela. ‘Bit of a shame the night ended the way it did, it was warming up in here.’ She blew a kiss and headed for one of the bedrooms.

Michaela sat back in the chair and gazed at the fire. Something bothered her about the light they’d seen, but she couldn’t put her finger on it. Trisha was right though, it had been spooky for sure. Trisha. Michaela closed her eyes and rubbed her face. Trisha had been right, things had been getting just a little too



warm in here. Michaela groaned, pushing the thought away. Time to get some sleep.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

They slept in. The sun was inching towards its noonday position when Michaela squinted out the kitchen window. Trisha appeared behind her.

‘Can’t you keep the noise down?’ she asked Michaela, standing in the doorway her hair falling over her eyes. She groaned. ‘Feel like death warmed up. How much did we have last night anyway? I feel like I drank five large Russians under the table.’

Michaela would have been amused at that if she weren’t so busy agreeing with it. ‘That’s hardly politically correct,’ she said. ‘Got any Tylenol?’

‘No,’ said Trisha, lowering herself onto a kitchen chair. ‘All symptoms, no cure on this end of things.’ She pushed her hair back. ‘Bloody hell, who turned the sun on high?’

Michaela laughed and immediately put a hand to her head. She headed toward the bathroom and sifted through the cabinet in there. Jackpot. Untwisting the lid she palmed two tablets and chewed them, grimacing at the bitter taste. She plonked the bottle in front of Trisha.

‘Water,’ demanded Trisha. ‘They’ll just stick to my tongue otherwise.’ She groaned. ‘Who’s the brilliant idea was it to drink so much anyway?’

Michaela brought her a glass of water and patted her on the shoulder. ‘Yours, I believe.’

‘Huh. Water. You’re an angel after all.’ She swallowed two tablets, looked at the bottle of Tylenol, then took an extra one. She peered up at Michaela through the thick tangle of curls that had fallen back over her face. ‘So tell me why we didn’t sleep together last night?’

Michaela gaped at her, then burst into laughter. ‘God loves a trier,’ she said, shaking her head. She bent down over Trisha at the table and whispered in her ear. ‘You might be bargaining for more than you would get in that area.’

Trisha raised an eyebrow and looked Michaela up and down. ‘Baby, I don’t think so,’ she said.

Michaela laughed again. ‘I’m going to cook up a fry up. My mother swore by it as a cure for a hangover.’ She ignored the sound of Trisha groaning. ‘Then we’re going for a walk. See if Sherlock and her loyal sidekick Watson can do a bit of detecting.’

Trisha banged her head against the table and groaned again. ‘I thought I’d dreamed that,’ she said. ‘Do we have to? I’d rather just lie around here today.’ She propped her head in her hands.

Michaela broke the eggs into a pan. ‘Yes, we have to. Or at least, I have to. I want to check it out. I want to see if there’s anything there, you know, where it went bang.’

‘How are we even supposed to find the spot again anyway?’ Trisha said, drooping even lower over the table.

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

