

CHAPTER ONE

She looked at the house and the skinny Indian girl standing in front of it. The house looked like an open graveyard and the girl with the harsh face looked like she had been buried in one.

Hawk Sees Jane dropped her suitcase and squared her shoulders. The girl in front of the house made no move to approach her. The sullen girl just stared at her with evident hostility.

“Is your name Elkdancer? Mary Elkdancer?” she asked when the girl made no move to speak.

“It was when I got up this morning,” said the girl.

“I’m Hawk Sees Jane. But just call me Sees Jane. I’m your cousin.”

“Couldn’t prove it by me!” said the girl. “But where are my manners?”

Hawk Sees Jane was sure the girl didn’t have any.

“I guess you oughta bring your stuff inside. Since you went to all the effort of showing up.”

The girl laughed unpleasantly . “And besides, we are so looking forward to your little visit.”

The girl turned and went through the door of the house without waiting to see if Sees Jane followed. It was rude and Sees Jane knew it was deliberate.

This was going to be the worst summer ever.

Sees Jane stared at the house. It was badly in need of paint. The windows looked like empty dark eyes shut against the wind. Whatever life or joy the house had once known, seemed long since dead and buried. There was a sinister trace of failed grandeur in its crumbling frame.

She lifted her suitcases and walked up the path. The door was heavy and hard to open and

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when she finally got it open and staggered through with her bags, she was as close to tears as she could be. Not that she would cry. She was too tough for that. But this was going to be a bad place to be exiled for the summer, there was no doubt about that.

Her cousin Mary was waiting there, her arms akimbo, staring at her with coldness and disdain.

“Where do I put my stuff?”

“Your room’s at the top of the stairs. It’s the first door on the right. I could draw you a map but you’ll probably be able to find it, sooner or later.” Mary Elkdancer seemed to be amused by her own words.

Sees Jane dropped her bags. This had gone on long enough. Time to have it out. She wasn’t going to do this why-don’t-you-drop-dead-thing all summer long. Her heart just couldn’t stand it. When it came to something primal like flight or fight, her choice was always fight.

“You want to tell me why you hate me? We’ve never even met before. Am I’m getting all these arrows in the air because I’m half white or are you just having a bad day?”

Mary didn’t flinch. “Who says I hate you.”

“Well you don’t like me, that’s plain.”

Sees Jane squared off in front of her.

“You want to explain why?”

The girl shrugged.

“Okay, you wanna know. Grandfather says your mother hated your father. Which is why she never brought you out to visit us, even though Grandfather asked every summer to see you. I’m not shy. I’m just going to ask. If what grandfather says is true, did she hate us too?”

“She hated my father. I don’t think it meant that she hated all of you.”

“Did she hate him because he was Indian? If that was it, she’d have hated us too,” said Mary calmly. “Hatred is like that.”

“She has so many reasons to hate that that was probably only some of it. If it helps any, I loved my father. When he was with us, it was the best time of my life. Even though my mother hated him for reasons I don’t understand, I never did. And I miss him a little bit every day.”

“I didn’t know,” said Mary awkwardly. “See your mother is, uh,” But she was unable to finish the thought.

"My mother is an angry white person," Said Sees Jane. "But holding that against me isn't fair."

“Well, I don’t hate you because you’re half white,” said Mary. “I’d have to be a pretty crappy person to do that.”

Mary looked distressed. “Hey. I’m sorry.” She bent and picked up one of the suitcases. “Let me carry that upstairs for you.”

“You don’t have to do that.”

“Yes I do. I’ve been rude. Sorry, I just, I don’t know, I guess I had it in my mind that you hated Indians. Which is why grandfather has never seen you, why I’ve never seen you.”

“I’ve been curious all my life. Wanted to see you all ever since I was little. But my mother has been against it until now.”

“Sometime you are gonna have to explain to me about your mother,” said Mary as she began to carry the suitcase up the stairs. Sees Jane moved up the stairs behind her.

“My mother is not something anybody can explain!” said Sees Jane bitterly as she moved up the stairs. The sudden change of the girl’s mood had taken her by surprise. Maybe this wasn’t going to be combat every day of the week. She tried to be a little more cheerful as she ascended

the stairs which lasted until she got to her room.

A tomb for black plague victims was probably better decorated. The walls smelled heavily of damp and decay. The wallpaper hung in tatters like the shedding skin of a snake. The walls were stained and discolored with lamp black from the days when kerosene lanterns had lit the room. And her room wasn't exactly empty either.

Something scurried when the door opened and a large grey rat ran across the floor and disappeared under the bed.

Mary dropped the suitcase and put her hand over her mouth. "Oh, I'm so sorry you had to see that! It's kind of a problem but we're working on it! I bet you are just so freaked out!"

"It was a rat. It's not the end of the world," Said Sees Jane, more upset by the condition of the room than its inhabitant. Wildlife almost made every landscape more interesting.

"You're taking this pretty calm."

"I'm from the city. I've seen cockroaches bigger than that rat," bragged Sees Jane.

"You mean you're going to be alright with this?"

"Well, I'm bigger than he is, right? I think I can probably beat him in a fair fight," said Sees Jane with a knowing smile.

"It's so cool that you are not scared!"

Sees Jane put her suitcase on the bed and bent down to look under the bed. There was a hole in the wall and the rat was in it, staring back at her with beady eyes. Sees Jane jumped and backed away from the bed.

She pretended as if nothing was wrong.

"And why is it so cool that I don't let a little old rat scare me?" she asked.

"Cause the rat's not half so scary as the dead girl that lives in this room."

CHAPTER TWO

The easy thing would have been just not to believe it. Easier to think about sharing a room with a rat than it was a ghost.

“And I believe it’s true, exactly why? Chalk outline on the floor where the body used to be?” said Sees Jane. “Or do I look for ghostly footprints on the ceiling?”

“You don’t have to take my word for it,” said Mary. “You’ll find out for yourself soon enough.”

“That sounds like a threat.”

“If it is, I’m not the one who’s making it,” said Mary ominously. “I DID try to warn you.”

“Well thanks a bunch,” said Sees Jane. She looked around the room. If there was a ghost here, probably even the ghost found it depressing.

“I don’t believe in ghosts,” said Sees Jane. “But I do believe in rats.”

“You might change your mind,” said Mary. “Can I help you unpack?”

“No. I’ll do it later. Let the rat wait to get used to seeing my things about, is my philosophy.”

“Are you hungry? Would you like something to drink?”

Sees Jane nodded. It had been a long bus ride and breakfast was only a faint memory.

“I’m starved.”

Mary started out the door. “Join me in the kitchen. Grandfather already has food laid out for

us. He's real excited about you being here. And he's kind of nervous about meeting you, if you want to know the truth."

"I know the feeling," said Sees Jane, remembering her first sight of Mary outside the house and the dread and feeling of desperation that had been with her through much of the bus trip that brought her here. She wondered if she was ready to meet a grandfather she had never met before. She wondered what she should say to him. Would he have some of the same resentments Mary seemed to have. Sees Jane's mother had put a lot of cold out in the world. And the ice harvest had spilled over into Sees Jane's life in a lot of ways.

"I'll be down in a second," said Sees Jane. She sat on the end of the bed. At least the bed was fairly new. She bounced up and down and it seemed pretty solid to the touch. It amused her that the bouncing was probably scaring the rat under the bed. Wake up mister rat, there's somebody new in the neighborhood. She heard a noise from somewhere near the floor, a kind of rhythmic rasping exhaling sound as if somebody was short of breath. Oh no, she thought I've scared my little rat friend into cardiac arrest.

She got up and bent over to look under the bed. Something touched her face and she almost screamed. It wasn't the rat, it wasn't anything she could see. But something had touched her and not lightly. It felt like a hand moving over her cheek but there was nothing under the bed. Nothing.

Sees Jane backed away from the bed. I'm tired and I'm hungry and I'm just not thinking straight she said to herself. No need to panic. Nothing happened.

She turned and walked slowly out of the room. It was just a creepy room and she wasn't going to let it get to her. She went down the stairs with a smile on her face, steeling herself to meet the Grandfather she never had met.

The tiny cut on her cheek oozed a drop of blood as she entered the kitchen.

An old man with long hair braided on each side of his head was standing beside a battered old refrigerator. He was dressed in jeans and a bright colored shirt. Mary was sitting at an wooden kitchen table with mismatched chairs. They both looked up when Sees Jane came into the room.

Sees Jane hesitated, not sure what to say, not sure what to do. The old man looked at her with a strange intensity. He lifted his hands out toward her and they trembled. There was an awkward silence.

Mary got up from the table and was the first to speak up. "Well, don't just stand there like a couple of idiots!" She got behind Grandfather Elkhorn and shoved him in Sees Jane's direction. The old man stumbled forward awkwardly and Sees Jane saw that there were tears in his eyes.

Suddenly and not knowing just why she did it, she moved until his arms were around her and she hugged him. And his tears fell on her shoulders and his whole body shook when he held her. And then she cried a little bit too. He looked a little bit like her father, so long gone from the world. And the sorrow and the loneliness that always rode with her which she never let anyone see, spilled out just a little bit.

After a little while, they backed off and looked at each other.

"Hello, grandfather," said Sees Jane, suddenly shy in his presence.

"Hello, granddaughter. My heart rises to see you after all these years."

Mary took Sees Jane by the hand and led her to the table. "Sit! Eat! And then you can talk all you want."

"Yes. Yes," said Grandfather Elkhorn, hustling back to the refrigerator. "Food first. You are thin as paper. Eat!" The table was already heaped with food but he brought plate after plate to the table and spread it all out in front of her. They sat and ate and there was a silence now as they

each thought their own thoughts, but now it was a comfortable one.

The two girls were about the same age, although Mary was a little shorter and much darker. Sees Jane was pale, with the kind of complexion one gets from living in a big city. They both had brown eyes and hair black as a raven's wings. They were thin and had small bones and delicate features. The family resemblance was striking in the planes and angles of their faces

"You have your father's eyes," said Grandfather Elkhorn.

"And my mother's skin," said Sees Jane, studying the old man quietly to see how he would react to that. If he resented her mother, there was no trace of it in his face.

"Which means what?" said Mary.

"I get sunburns and you probably never do," said Sees Jane. "It's the white man's burden."

The old man laughed.

"You even have your father's sharp tongue," Grandfather Elkhorn said with obvious delight. "It is like having him here with us again."

Jane turned to face him and the smile on her face was genuine. There was something so familiar about him. He was so much like her father in looks and appearance that it almost hurt. It was even the same voice that she remembered as a child. Mary looked at her with sudden alarm.

Mary reached out and her fingertips grazed See Jane's cheeks. Startled, Sees Jane pulled back. "What are you doing?"

"Your face. You have scratches on it that weren't there before," said Mary.

"There's nothing wrong with my face."

Mary held the tip of one her fingers up for Sees Jane to see. It was red with blood.

Sees Jane put her hand to her cheek. It came away faintly red with blood.

"I...uh....it was the latch on my suitcase. It was open and the...uh suitcase shifted on the bed

and I guess the metal latch hit me when it fell against me. It's just a little scratch," She wasn't sure why she was lying about it but it was easier to think about it this way.

Mary nodded in solemn agreement.

"Those flying suitcases can be really dangerous," she said, clearly not believing a word of it.

"I'll get you a special ointment," said the old man. He rose from the table and started to leave the kitchen.

"No, it's nothing really. I'm fine," said Sees Jane.

"It's good medicine," he insisted. "You wait and see." And before she could protest further, he was up and out of the room.

"He moves pretty quick for...someone his age," said Sees Jane. "I really wish he wouldn't do that. It's just a nothing scratch. It's no big thing."

"Indulge him. His ointment is one of his specialties. He's very proud of it. It smells like old socks but it does work, if the smell doesn't kill you first!"

Mary looked thoughtful. Jane pushed her plate away. She was stuffed.

"You know, if you had a mirror and you looked at it," said Mary being cryptic, "I'd bet that you might say a suitcase latch can leave a mark on your face that looks just like fingernails!"

Sees Jane looked stricken.

"What do you have to say about that?"

"What do you want me to say? Evil spirits from beyond the grave shredded my face with a sharpened boomerang?" said Sees Jane sarcastically

"Is that what really happened?"

"How do I know? It's not supernatural. I don't believe in all that stuff. Maybe I fell into a lawnmower when I wasn't looking. Give it a rest will you?"

“Sorry,” said Mary looking contrite. “I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“Well, you did a little. People you meet for the first time shouldn’t try to scare you half to death. Dead girl living in my room! Not a great image if you know what I mean!”

“Well, excuse me,” said Mary sharply. “I’m sorry you see it that way.”

Sees Jane struck a conciliatory tone. “Listen, you already did enough by providing me with the rat. That’s pretty much all the entertainment I need. You can save the ghost for somebody else.”

“I wouldn’t make a joke about something like that if I were you,” said Mary.

“Well, we’ve established that you’re not me, so let’s talk about something else.”

“You know what your problem is?” challenged Mary.

“I got so many it’s hard to pick out just one.”

“You’re not scared enough yet. You wait and see. You’ll get to that point,” said Mary and her eyes mirrored a terror that was all too real for her.

“Well, if it says boo loud enough it will probably scare my rat away. So I’ll try to see that as the bright side of the experience!” Sees Jane laughed. The whole idea was pretty funny when she thought about it.

CHAPTER THREE

The ointment was soothing which was good because the scratches on her face had started to itch. It smelled like acres of old socks worn by people who never bathed. Sees Jane tried not to breathe anywhere near her face which was both difficult and impossible. The smell probably killed mosquitoes and small house pets but she didn’t want to hurt the old man’s feeling by

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refusing it.

They were all still in the kitchen and Grandfather had come back in time to overhear Mary talking about ghosts in the house and he was not very happy about it.

The old man shook his head in dismay.

“You’ve been telling stories again, Mary. You’ll scare Sees Jane out of her hair before her visit has even begun. We should not talk about the dead. They do not visit us here.”

Mary Elkdancer frowned. “I told you we shouldn’t rent this house for the summer but you wouldn’t listen.”

“Don’t make noise about nothing, child.”

Mary was angry. “I’ve been in this house two nights longer than you, grandfather. You just arrived this morning. When you’ve spent a night in this house, you’ll know why I say what I say.”

“It is all in your stomach. You eat too much food at night before you go to bed and it gives you bad dreams,” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

Mary started to protest but Grandfather Elkhorn help up his hand. “Enough! We are not going to talk about this again.”

Mary’s face was red with sudden anger but she did not speak again.

Grandfather put his hand on See Jane’s arm. “Granddaughter, it pains me but there are things I must ask you. Do not take offense.”

“I’m tough. You can ask me almost anything.”

“Too long you’ve been gone from our hearts. We are glad you are among us, that we are going to spend the summer together. It is a great blessing of the spirit but I want us to start off right.”

Somehow See Jane knew the talk was going to be about her mother. And she steeled herself for the coming unpleasantness.

“Could I speak first before you ask me anything?” When it came to questions about her mother, sometimes the best defense was a good offense.

The old man nodded kindly. He waited patiently for her to speak.

“Well, it’s all these years and you never saw me once and you’re thinking, what’s wrong with this picture. Well, believe me, it isn’t me. Just so you know, I always wanted to come out and visit you. I wanted to know what my father’s people were like. But my mother never would let me come.”

“Every year I have written to her, to your mother and I have asked to see you,” said the old man quietly. “And although the reasons were different, the answer was always the same. It was not to be.”

“I’ve seen the letters,” said Sees Jane. “She at least let me read them, even if she wouldn’t let me come. And I’m just so sorry she is the way she is.”

“She has kept you from us and that is a crime. I do not think it is in my heart to forgive her,” said the old man. “Although these are not good thoughts to have about another human being.”

“Well, you shouldn’t. I don’t forgive her so why should you!” said Sees Jane with a flash of sudden anger.

“Why did your mother even let you come this summer if she is so anti-Indian?” said Mary. “Why is this summer different than all the others?”

“The truth is, she found another boyfriend, one of those super-possessive types who doesn’t want a teenager around taking attention away from his own incredibly adorable self. Your letter came offering to put me up for the summer, and he talked her into it. Imagine that! All those

years I fought for the right to come here! It was absolutely hopeless and not going to happen ever! But boyfriend says, dump the kid so you can concentrate on me! Suddenly it's a lightning bolt and there I am on a bus, heading your way. With a promise not to come back too soon, to boot."

"Are things really that bad between you and her?" asked Grandfather Elkhorn.

"I seem to be a major inconvenience. Eventually the boyfriend will go as they all do, and then things will get a lot better between us. Sometimes it's nice living with her when she's between boyfriends. It's not all bad. We have our moments."

"If I could fix her heart with my ointment, it would be a gift to the world."

"I think it's more her head is screwed up than her heart. I think she sees too much of my father in me, the Indian part, and maybe that's why we fight most of the time. I'm too much like him and not enough like her."

The old man really liked that thought. "I can't think of a better reason not to get along with your mother."

"You should tell her that," said Sees Jane. "But don't stand too close when you do. She bites."

"We will not think about these things any more. We will have the best summer we can make for ourselves," declared Grandfather Elkhorn.

"Sounds like you have it pretty rough," said Mary and there was a look of sympathy on her face. "Guess its been bad for a long time too. You were only seven when your father got killed in a car accident."

"I remember a lot about him though. Which is good because my mother would never talk about him after he was gone." She looked at Grandfather Elkhorn. His eyes seemed to see into the past to the time when his son was alive and there was faint soft smile on his face.

“My son was a good man. I will talk about him all the time, all summer long. It will be as if he was in the room with you. That will be my gift to you.”

“I’d like that very much,” said Sees Jane and her lips trembled and she had to make herself not cry. How different the world seemed suddenly. “It’s kind of like a dream I’ve always had but knew it wouldn’t ever come true. But here I am and it’s all so sudden it almost doesn’t sound real.”

“It is real. You have my word on it,” said the old man and his eyes flashed with old memories. “And I promise you a good summer.”

“He means it too,” said Mary. “And if we survive the ghosts, maybe it’ll happen too.”

“Did you not hear me say not to talk about ghosts and bone grabbers and such stuff? Moon dust dances in your head!”

Mary ignored him. She turned and said to Sees Jane, “But other people believe in these bad spirits, too. Jason Two Elks who lives above the trading post says....”

“That you need some firewood,” finished Jason, as he came into the room with an armload of cut wood. “And that you shouldn’t talk about somebody who’s not even in the room.”

Mary blushed. “I was just going to say what you told me about the ghosts....about the evil spirits that....” But Grandfather Elkhorn spoke quickly to cut her off.

“How’s your bones, Jason?” asked Grandfather Elkhorn, moving forward to help Jason dump the cut wood into the fire box. The old man frowned at Mary and motioned for her to be quiet. It was obviously not something he wanted Sees Jane to hear.

“Since you ask, good in this weather, Grandfather Elkhorn. Sorry there wasn’t room for you to stay at the trading post again like you did last summer. It’s not a good omen.” He turned away from the old man and stared at Mary. He spoke to her. “Anything I might have told you, was for

your ears alone. Everybody talks too much.”

Sees Jane looked at him. Jason was her age or a little older, burned dark by the sun, dressed in faded jeans that had seen a thousand washes. He had a wild untamed look about him as if he hunted something or something hunted him. He seemed to hold himself almost defensively and the way he moved around the room seemed to suggest stealth.

Grandfather Elkhorn brushed it off.

“No need to worry, Jason! We’ll be fine here and besides we need the extra room. Have you met Hawk Sees Jane, yet Jason? She’s my almost lost granddaughter, here for a summer of life lived good.”

“Only nobody uses my whole name. Just call me Sees Jane, everybody does,” said Sees Jane shyly.

Jason shook his head. He did not smile at her, just kind of clenched his teeth and frowned. Sees Jane tried a smile but the look on his face was so uninviting that it faded away as quickly as it had been born. She wondered if she was supposed to shake his hand. Tentatively she held her hand out to him. He just stood there, staring at her hand as if it posed some kind of threat he had no intention of meeting.

“She’s from the city, come back from the bad place where her father went all these long years gone by. He never came back but she’s here now like a gift from his hand,” said Grandfather Elkhorn, talking a little too much to cover the awkwardness of the meeting.

Jason nodded at her. “I guess I’m supposed to say welcome then. All summer is kind of a long stay ain’t it?” Jason stood there like someone with his back to the wall and under some inexplicable duress. He seemed quite noticeably uncomfortable in her presence.

He was tall and wore his hair long. It was parted in the middle and held in place with a red

head band. Sees Jane thought he was good looking but there was something remote and distant in the way he carried himself. She thought he really doesn't seem to like the fact that I am here. It was almost territorial as if she had broken some kind of unspoken rule just by the fact of being here.

Jason stared at Sees Jane with a marked show of distrust, perhaps even a measure of implied contempt. It was almost as if he had disliked her upon first sight. Sees Jane blushed and her face felt hot.

“Not much use for city ways around here,” said Jason. “Or people from the city for that matter.”

“Don't be your usual sullen self Jason, she's family,” said Mary. “We'll teach her country ways.”

“And Indian ways,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “All things in the fullness of time. It is good to have her with us. We shall chase the city right out of her heart.”

“What was that you were saying about evil spirits?” Jason asked, a worried look darkening his face. “Has the trouble started then?”

“Just too much young people's imagination,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “It comes from watching too much television or it would if we had a television.”

Jason looked grim. He walked up close to Grandfather Elkhorn and crossed his arms and stood towering over him. He seemed angry and the way he stood looming over the old man seemed almost threatening. “Yeah well, say what you like. I told you all this before, Grandfather Elkhorn. All the white people who rented this house in the past, all left mighty quick. I told you it wasn't a good idea! I expected you to listen to me.”

“We had to stay somewhere,” said the old man calmly. “What white people do is no concern

of ours. I bet no Indians were ever scared off.”

“You’re right about that but it’s because Indians won’t even stay in this house. There’s too much death here,” said Jason. He leaned in so that his face was almost touching the old man’s face.

“Stories to scare children,” said Grandfather Elkhorn with scorn, taking an involuntary step back from the intimidating young man in front of him. “I’m not afraid. Nothing in this house scares me!”

He turned around to look at Sees Jane and Mary and meant to speak to them but he was suddenly struck by something hot and liquid that splashed on his face. Sees Jane had her head tilted back, her eyes wide in horror as she stared up at something above her. Mary too was transfixed, mouth opened wide in terror as her eyes turned up to the ceiling. The old man put his hand to his face, touching the place where the drop had fallen. His hand came away red.

His eyes drifted upward, seeking whatever it was that impelled Sees Jane to look upward.

A pool of blood as large as a dead man’s head, spread across the ceiling and seeped down into the center of the room. There was a steady plink plink as the blood dripped down on Sees Jane’s face. And for a second, they were all trapped in that moment, in a terrible dark silence broken only by the steady rain of blood.

Sees Jane screamed as if a demon had stepped on her heart.

And then she fainted.

CHAPTER FOUR

They were all stunned for a second and just stood there with Sees Jane lying there unconscious on the floor. Jason reacted first. He left the room rather abruptly as if the fainted girl was their problem.

They were bending down over her when Jason reappeared with a mop and ladder and a bucket of cleaning solution. He had a roll of paper towels under one arm and he took several sheets and began daubing at the pooled blood on the ceiling. Nobody had said anything yet.

“Somebody is trying to scare us away. Juvenile delinquents who do not mind their elders,” said the old man grimly. “It will take more than children’s tricks to drive us away.”

“I’m not so sure kids did this,” said Mary somberly. She looked worried.

“I have seen them lurking about,” insisted Grandfather Elkhorn. “With too much time on their hands and too little in their heads. What else could it be?”

“It’s a warning,” said Jason sternly. “I gave you warnings too. But you didn’t listen to mine. Maybe you should listen to this one.”

“I listen to the wind,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “When my nose gets wet, I heed the warning that it is raining. Otherwise, if children make noises, I do not notice them.”

The old man put his hands in a cradle under Sees Jane’s shoulders and motioned for Mary to take her feet. They lifted the unconscious girl up and started out of the room.

Jason’s dire warnings seemed to have little effect on the old man. Jason seemed strangely angry about that as he swabbed away the blood.

Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn carried Sees Jane up to her room as Jason worked grimly at his task.

Just as they laid Sees Jane gently down on the bed she regained consciousness. She seemed dazed and disoriented. She stared around the room in confusion. Mary got a wet wash cloth and

delicately wiped the blood from her face. Sees Jane was confused and tried to speak but Mary wouldn't let her talk. "Shhh..." said Mary. "You fainted. Take it easy, ok."

Grandfather Elkhorn said, "Just lie back. Rest."

"But I saw," she began.

"It was a prank. A kid prank," explained Grandfather Elkhorn. "I am sorry if it frightened you. It was just red paint. That's all it was. Do not think about it any more."

Mary held the wash cloth up to the old man. "Grandfather it's not paint it's..."

"It's paint and children playing tricks! And we will not speak of this again!" said Grandfather Elkhorn sternly. "I have promised this girl a good summer and this is not how we begin one!"

"Suit yourself," said Mary and left the room. There was a sharp whap as she slapped the wash cloth angrily down in the bathroom sink and opened the tap to rinse it off.

"We have paid our rent for the summer," said the old man. He had a determined look on his face. "We have no place else to go. We'll have our summer here like always."

Jason came into the room. He had a bucket of bloody towels in one hand.

Jason said. "Maybe you don't believe in evil spirits but there's been a lot of talk about this house. Smart people stay away from it."

"White people are afraid of mice," said Grandfather Elkhorn scornfully. "It takes a lot more than mice scampering in the walls or tree branches moving in the wind to scare Indians. I'm not afraid of any dark walkers, not even white people's ghosts. I have powerful magic of my own, strong stuff."

"I hope you're right," said Jason.

Grandfather Elkhorn said "I'll go downstairs and put a few logs into the fireplace and lay out a fire for later. And as for ghosts, if I catch any, I will tie ropes on them and train them to cut

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firewood.”

Jason laughed. “You hope you will but maybe you won’t.”

“I’m starving,” said Mary suddenly. “And I bet Sees Jane is hungry too, after that long bus ride.”

“I could eat something,” Sees Jane admitted. She started to get up from the bed but her legs were wobbly and Grandfather Elkhorn had to help her stand.

“You need food to chase away the fright. You two show Sees Jane around the house and grounds. I’ll see if I can cook up something for us all to eat.”

“Are you staying to eat? You’re invited,” Mary said to Jason. There was a strange urgency about the way she asked that question.

Jason glanced out the window, looking at the clouds forming in the south.

“Storm coming. Don’t think I ought to risk it.”

Mary grabbed him pretty firmly by the arm and seemed to have no intention of letting him go. “You can spare a minute or two.”

“Long cold walk if I get caught out in it,” said Jason reluctant to stay. “I should go.”

“You can stay long enough to show her around. You must know a lot about this place,” said Mary, making it sound like a challenge. She held Jason by one arm and took Sees Jane by another. “C’mon outside Sees Jane. We’ll show you the lake.”

Jason let himself be dragged along. As they walked down the stairs and went out the front door, Mary said, “And maybe when we’re away from Grandfather you can tell us what you REALLY know about this place. Grandfather doesn’t want to hear any bad news but it sounds like you know plenty Jason.”

“Enough not to want to spend the night in this house,” said Jason. “Too bad the old man

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won't listen to reason."

Mary smiled. "Grandfather Elkhorn can be a very stubborn old mule when he wants to be. He's spent almost every summer here since grandmother died. You really can't blame him."

"But why here? You don't mean in this house?" Sees Jane asked.

"No. This is our first time here. We always stayed at the trading post. They had a couple rooms we'd rent for the summer."

"He could go some place else for the summer," insisted Jason

"But he can't. It was down at the lake that Grandfather Elkhorn first met grandmother. He talks of her so often and of the summers they spent here at the lake. Coming here is his way of being close to her again, to live a little in the past," explained Mary patiently. "And as much as you try to warn him off, evil spirits aren't enough to scare him off. He says it's good to walk in a place where his heart was once alive."

Sees Jane thought about what it must be like to love somebody that much, the way Grandfather Elkhorn did and then lose that person. "Grandfather must be very lonely," she said.

"Not as lonely as he would be if he didn't spend his summers here where they were so happy together," said Mary and she smiled in spite of her fear.

"He could trade good memories for bad ones if he stays on this side of the lake," said Jason. "It makes no sense to stay here. Maybe he's just too old to understand the danger."

"Too old? The longer he stays here, the more like a young man he gets. You'd swear he was twenty years old again. Sometimes I forget he's seen 70 summers when we're in this place," said Mary. "You can understand why he might not want to give up that feeling."

"Not smart enough to be scared, is how I see it," said Jason. "And that's all I have to say about it."

“Maybe you should tell us what there is to be scared of,” said Sees Jane.

“You’ll find out for yourself,” said Jason, shaking Mary’s hand off his arm and walking off abruptly, heading down toward the shore of the lake.

“Jason doesn’t sound very friendly,” said Sees Jane. “And I don’t think he likes me much.”

“He’s hard to read. If you ask me, he’s just scared,” said Mary. “I know I am.”

Sees Jane was looking at the lake and it made her sad.

“I think it’s nice for Grandfather Elkhorn to have been so much in love. And to have one place in the world that is so special because of it,” Sees Jane said. “I just hope I have something in my life like that someday.” As she said it her eyes followed Jason as he paced along the shore of the lake. Jason had about as much romantic potential as a dead tree. He certainly wasn’t a possibility. She sighed. Maybe nobody in her life would ever be.

Mary pointed down at the lake.

“You couldn’t pick a better place to be terrified in. I’ve always loved the lake.”

The lake was beautiful. It was shaped like a half moon and they stood on the rounded side. From where they were standing, they could see both ends of the lake. On one end was the highway and the trading post. Beyond that, behind a long line of pine trees which hid it from view, was the reservation where Grandfather Elkhorn was born.

On a hill overlooking the lake, stood the old Indian burial ground. It was hip high with long grass and looked calm and peaceful.

At the other end of the lake was a long dock with rental boats and a small marine gas filling station for the pleasure boaters. Trees came down to the edge of the water and on this side of the lake it was unspoiled by houses.

They walked until they were standing beside Jason at the edge of the water. He looked up at

the sky, watching the clouds in the distance. The sun which had been shining so brightly was fading fast.

The sky was edged with grey and ominous thunderclouds were forming in the southeast. A wind had sprung up and waves lapped the shore of the lake.

“I can’t believe how fast the weather changes out here,” Sees Jane. “When I got off the bus this morning, the sun was shining and there wasn’t a cloud in the sky.”

“Not like the city here,” agreed Jason. “Country round here is flat so a storm can move real fast. Makes the lake dangerous during the stormy season. You can be out in the middle fishing and the lake is like a sheet of glass. Wind can come up before you know it and you row like crazy just to make it to shore. We’ve had a few accidents here. Some fatal ones. Folks from the city rent boats and get caught in a storm. Doesn’t take much of a wave to swamp a small boat.”

“Is there any thing around here that is not dangerous?” asked Sees Jane.

“There are some wild flowers by the lake that aren’t actually poisonous,” said Jason. “But you might not want to eat them.”

In spite of herself, Sees Jane laughed. He actually had a sense of humor. Buried by all the doom and gloom but a sense of humor none the less.

“It’s not like me to get so scared so easy. I think I was just hungry and stressed and maybe a little tired. I’m not exactly the fainting type,” Sees Jane said with some embarrassment.

“It’s ok to be scared if there’s a good reason for it,” said Mary. “Don’t apologize.”

“Red paint dripping from a ceiling! That’s almost the opposite of scary. I feel like an idiot.”

Mary and Jason exchanged a look. It was clear both of them knew that it had not been paint.

Mary frowned. “Grandfather should have called us in to eat by now. I better go see what’s keeping him. Jason! Tell her all about this place,” she said and started to walk back to the house.

She had a further thought. "But don't tell her any of the scary parts until I can hear them too."

Jason frowned as Mary walked away.

"She seems to think you have turned to the dark side of the force," said Sees Jane.

"She watches too many movies. It makes her head soft," said Jason.

"Tell me about the lake."

"It makes you wet if you fall in it," said Jason.

"Was that one of the scary parts?" asked Sees Jane. "Maybe you should have waited until Mary gets back. I'm sure this is something she would like to know."

Jason actually smiled although it seemed like he was trying not to.

"Ok, truce," said Jason. He pointed to a small island in the middle of the lake. It was a brilliant green patch in the blue water, and it bristled with short pines and small trees. A huge outcropping of rock, sere and weathered by the sun stood on one end of the island. There was a small ruined chimney broken at the top where a house must have once stood on the other end of the island.

"The island in the center was once sacred ground to our people. Long ago before the coming of the whites that is. Back in the 1800's, somebody built a cabin out there and tried to live there. You can still see part of the chimney."

"What happened to it?"

"There was a big storm. Lightning hit the chimney and set the house afire. You can see scorch marks on the bricks where the lightning struck," said Jason. "I don't know what happened to the people who lived there. Nobody does. Nobody ever saw them again."

"Great! More doom and gloom! But I don't care what you say, this side of the lake is beautiful. Like something out of an old book," said Sees Jane.

Jason had to at least agree with that. “This side of the lake looks pretty much the way it must have looked in the old days, when Grandfather Elkhorn’s people lived here, before the white people came and made them move back into the bad land around the swamp.”

Across the lake, in sharp contrast, the trees had been cut down and row after row of summer houses dotted the shore of the lake. But even so the houses were brightly painted and did not look as bad as they could have looked. Most of the houses were older in style with high roofs and gables and the ornate stylizations of an early time and had a certain charm of their own.

“You’ve been out to the island?” asked Sees Jane. “You’ve seen the ruins?”

“Lots of times,” said Jason. “I have a canoe. I fish out there and camp out on the island too. It’s a great place to spend the day.”

“I’d like to see it some time,” said Sees Jane, hoping that he would offer to take her there but he looked troubled at the idea and just looked away. She had never been on an island, never even been in a boat for that matter. It all sounded like fun which was something she had not experienced much lately.

“You should stay away from the lake,” said Jason.

“Oh yeah. And why is that?” said Sees Jane. He really was the most infuriating person she had ever met.

Jason stared at the island. He did not answer. Sees Jane waited for him to say something, to say anything but he just kept his back to her. Sees Jane looked up and down the shore. The house they had rented was the only house on this side of the lake. That struck her as odd. “Why are there no other houses on this side of the lake?”

“I don’t know,” said Jason. “Maybe they got scared off.”

She sighed. Either Jason was the biggest coward who ever lived who saw danger everywhere

or there was really something about this place that was dark, scary, maybe even terrible. Trying to figure it all out made her head hurt.

“You know maybe you could clue me in. If you know what’s going on around here, why don’t you just tell me?” said Sees Jane.

“I could tell you but you aren’t scared enough to believe me yet,” warned Jason.

“Ok,” said Sees Jane. “Be a jerk. I don’t care.”

Jason had a haunted look on his face. He seemed to be weighing certain things in his mind. He wanted to talk, the impulse was plainly there but something killed the words in his throat.

A sudden gust of wind struck them and a peal of thunder crashed.

They both looked up at the sky in alarm.

The first huge drops of rain began to fall.

“We better hurry back or we’ll get drenched,” said Jason. “When it rains here, the sky just opens up and it’s like a river falls on you.”

They turned and began to run back to the house. But Jason’s description seemed all too true.

They were soaked before they were halfway back to the house.

She reached the door first. She threw the heavy oak door open and stepped inside. Jason stopped on the front step. Sees Jane turned and looked at him. Rain plastered his long hair against the sides of his head, dripping off his face. He was already soaked clear though but he made no move to come inside out of the rain.

A flash of lightning silhouetted him against the doorway. The air seemed to crackle around them as if it were alive. A bolt zigzagged through the sky and it was suddenly daylight bright.

“That was close. That one hit the lake,” said Jason.

“Come on,” she said. “Supper is probably ready and you’re getting soaked.”

“Can’t get any wetter,” said Jason. “I better get back to the trading post. Tell them I said goodbye.”

“But wait, you haven’t...,” she began but he was already going.

Jason Two Elks turned his back on her abruptly and began to run. He moved quickly and powerfully, with the long ground-covering strides of an athlete. She admired his grace as he loped off in the pouring rain but he kept looking back over his shoulder as if something was chasing him. Giving his strange state of mind, thought Sees Jane, maybe he thinks something is.

Sees Jane stood by the door for a time, watching him go. She was puzzled by him and infuriated too. Her presence here seemed to upset him in ways she couldn’t quite understand. Jason was himself a bit of a mystery. One thing was certain. He knew dark things about the old house and what had happened in it. And whatever it was, it was something to be afraid of.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sees Jane glanced at a mirror in the hallway. She was a sight all right. She was soaked right down to the bone. Her face seemed distorted in the old mirror and in the dim light she looked deathly pale. She shook her head in dismay at her appearance when she heard a sudden noise behind her. Startled, she turned but it was only Mary coming up to stand behind her.

“It’s raining cats and dogs and it looks like a kennel’s worth fell on you,” said Mary with a laugh.

“I have that casual but drowned look, don’t I?” said Sees Jane and she turned to look in the mirror again. Her eyes widened in terror.

Her hand went out toward the wall and it trembled badly.

“But I.....there was a.....” Her voice was edgy with fright and shock.

Mary moved up beside her. “What’s wrong?” Her eyes looked where Sees Jane was looking but she saw nothing to be upset about. “What happened?”

“The mirror! It’s gone!”

Mary simply didn’t understand. She put her hand out and took Sees Jane’s shaky hand.

“Are you ok?” Mary was beginning to really worry about her. Sees Jane seemed to be freaking out. “What mirror?”

A large painting hung on the wall. The painting itself was a portrait of a young girl from the last century. It was framed in a fancy carved wooden frame and whoever had painted it had done an incredible job. The girl in the painting looked so life-like, so alive with the persona of the young girl, that it looked like she might step off the canvas and speak.

“There was a mirror here!” insisted Sees Jane. “I saw myself in it!”

Mary didn’t know what to make of it. She shook her head.

“But I did! I tell you there was a mirror here!”

“It’s a painting,” said Mary. “It was here when we rented the house.”

“But that’s.....that’s.....” Sees Jane didn’t know what to say about it. Mere words weren’t enough to explain anything.

Mary put her arm around her shoulders comfortingly and said, “Hey! This place is definitely spooky. If you say you saw a mirror, I believe you. But this painting was always here.”

“But I just don’t understand how I could have seen....” she began but Mary cut her off.

“It’s a painting of the dead girl who lives in your room,” said Mary with absolute conviction in her voice. She believed strongly in what she was saying. “And if you ask me, she’s playing a

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little trick on you.”

“Are you trying to scare me?”

“Sure. It’s what we do to all our relatives who come to visit,” said Mary trying to make it a joke.

“Well, you’re succeeding. Color me scared!” admitted Sees Jane.

“Color me the same way. I knew this place was haunted,” said Mary, fear in her voice.

“Grandfather Elkhorn hasn’t slept in this house yet but when he does, he’ll know too. An Indian can always tell when somebody has died in a house.”

There was a loud bang from the kitchen and the sound of something crashing to the floor. Muffled curses came from the direction of the kitchen.

“What was that?” Sees Jane asked, in sudden alarm.

Mary just laughed. Another crash and another curse came from the kitchen.

Mary drew Sees Jane away from the picture, propelling her toward the kitchen. “Evil spirits are not the only danger around here, Sees Jane. When Grandfather Elkhorn is cooking, the whole world is in danger! If there is anybody who can make more mess, more noise and more confusion in a kitchen than Grandfather Elkhorn, I never met him.”

Sees Jane looked back at the picture as she was being led away. The figure of the young girl in the painting seemed unnaturally bright, almost glowing in the dim light of the hallway. And then the image seemed to darken and Sees Jane suddenly didn’t want to look at it anymore.

“When he lived with us at the trading post, sometimes the old men would stand outside the window just to listen to him cook. He used to cook like he rode in the rodeo. Lots of things flying around in the air. And you risk biting the dust, which is what everything he cooks ends up tasting like,” said Mary.

“I heard that!” roared Grandfather Elkhorn, sticking his head out of the kitchen door. He waved a pan at Mary menacingly but there was more humor in the gesture than anger.

“I guess dinner is delayed?” asked Mary.

Grandfather Elkhorn shrugged. “It takes as long as it take.”

Grandfather Elkhorn went back into the kitchen and the sounds of pots rattling and curses began again.

“You need to rest a bit,” said Mary. “You’ll need all your strength to eat his cooking. We’ll go up to your room and kick back a bit. And oh yeah, I forgot to tell you, the electricity isn’t turned on yet.”

Mary lit a kerosene lamp which cast a feeble glow in the gloom of the living room. “Some of the old wiring is being replaced so what little light we have for now is these lamps and some candles.”

She lit a tall red candle in a heavy holder and handed it to Sees Jane who laughed suddenly and abruptly.

Mary stared at her with alarm. “What’s funny?”

“I’m thinking I’m going to have a hard time plugging in my electric toothbrush.”

They both laughed like idiots

CHAPTER SIX

“This has been quite a day,” Sees Jane said as she flopped wearily on the bed. She just barely stopping herself from yawning. “I’m kinda exhausted.”

The storm outside was still lashing the house with wind and rain. Quick flashes of heat lighting starkly lit the room. But when the lightning subsided, the kerosene lantern and the small candle on the night side table seemed feeble against the growing dark.

“Listen I’m really sorry about the way I acted when you first arrived. I mean I was so totally out of line,” said Mary. “I’ll try to make it up to you.”

Sees Jane ran her hand alongside her body as if searching for something. “Let me check! Hmm! No bullet holes! So it’s probably gonna be alright.”

Mary laughed. “They grow them funny in the city don’t they!”

Sees Jane shrugged. “The thing is, bullet holes really wreck your wardrobe. So any day without bullets is pretty much a good day.”

“Well, all kidding aside. I did mean what I said,” said Mary earnestly.

Sees Jane looked around the room. Usually, she found candle light warm even romantic but here in this old house the glow it cast seemed small, as if the house ate the light. Weird shadows seemed to dance on the walls. Sleeping in this room by herself with only a candle to chase away the dark was a real bad dream. Just thinking about it gave her the creeps.

It was a relief when Grandfather Elkhorn bellowed up the stairs that dinner was ready.

They ate dinner in the kitchen. Sees Jane’s fears about the house seemed to dissipate in the presence of Grandfather Elkhorn and Mary. It was hard to be afraid around Grandfather Elkhorn. He seemed a man who was proof against any harm or hurt. He was just as Mary had said.

He told funny stories and made fun of his own cooking and threw a mock tantrum when Mary pretended to die of food poisoning at the table. Sees Jane saw a lot of her father in him. The same laugh, the same way his whole face crinkled up when he smiled. For a second there, it made her ache to be little again and have her father back in the world and in the times when they were all

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happy.

Maybe her mother had sent her off into exile for the summer. But in these two people there was a cheerful touch of a home she thought she had long ago lost.

“Stabbed by my own flesh and blood!” roared Grandfather Elkhorn, when Mary grabbed her stomach and pretended to choke. “If you don’t like the way I cook, maybe I ought to just go out and drown myself in the lake.”

“I’ve been poisoned,” gasped Mary, struggling to keep a straight face.

“Eat those biscuits!” yelled Grandfather Elkhorn. “There’s nothing wrong with my biscuits! They are as light and fluffy as clouds.”

The kerosene lantern on the table made the room seem cozy. The food didn’t taste nearly as bad as Sees Jane had been led to expect it to be.

Grandfather Elkhorn took a biscuit and chewed it with every indication of great gusto. “Mmmmm!” Then he stopped chewing, swallowed once uncomfortably and suddenly looked as if he was in mortal agony. He clutched his stomach, his head wobbled and started to fall toward the table.

“Oh no,” he said weakly, his voice barely audible. “I didn’t....didn’t put enough gunpowder in the baking soda! I’m POISONED!”

His head hit the table and was still. His shoulder shook convulsively.

Sees Jane stared at him with alarm, her face transfixed with sudden fear. She stopped with a biscuit half way to her mouth.

Mary was struggling to keep a straight face.

Then Sees Jane realized that Grandfather Elkhorn’s shoulders were shaking because he was laughing. Muffled peals of laughter leaked out as his face lay hidden on the table.

“Didn’t I tell you he acts like a nine year old?” said Mary. “Well, welcome to the second childhood of Grandfather Elkhorn and don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Sees Jane laughed with them. Grandfather lifted his head and let the laughter roll out of him until tears leaked from the corners of his eyes.

“Heeeyaa! I got you a good one that time!” wheezed Grandfather Elkhorn as the tears streaked down his face. “You should have seen the look on your face!”

“Stop teasing her, you silly old man. What’s she going to think of us?” said Mary but there was no real anger in her voice. It was plain she loved the old man very much.

Sees Jane relaxed for the first time. She was amazed how in such a short time they had made her feel at ease. It was impossible not to like them both.

The kitchen seemed to radiate a cloud of friendly feelings, so much so that Sees Jane had to mention it.

“I appreciate that you are both trying to make me feel at home here,” Sees Jane said. She wanted to say more, maybe even tell them about how troubled her own home was with her mother but those were hard things to say. She was eager too to ask about her father, but she sensed rushing into it was somehow not right. Now wasn’t the time to find out all the things she so desperately wanted to know. They’d have all summer to talk and she was glad about that now.

“You are home,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “And that’s the way you should feel about it always.”

“Or until his cooking does you in,” said Mary with a laugh. “We lose a lot of relatives that way!”

There seemed to be an ease and grace about both of them, as if talk came easy from hearts that were open and carefree. A part of Sees Jane ached for a life like that, for something that was

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not walls and silences.

Sees Jane bit into a biscuit. To her surprise, it was delicious, every bit as light and fluffy as the old man had said it was.

“We may just keep you and never let you go” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “When we get done uncivilizing you, Sees Jane, you’ll never want to go back to that stupid city. This is where you ought to be. Best place for a young person. You just ask Mary, she’ll tell you.”

“Don't ask me,” said Mary, getting up from the table. “I've got to get ready for my date.”

There was a flash of lightning outside. Sees Jane jumped.

“Great weather!” said the old man with delight. “I love it when the thunderbird shakes his wings and makes us all dance around dodging his magic thunderbolts! No time to grow old around here! Too busy dodging lightning!”

“Should Mary be going out on a night like this?” Sees Jane asked, realizing suddenly that with Mary gone, the house would be just one person emptier.

“This little storm is nothing. Wait till you see a real air-whipping, frog strangler! This storm isn't even three feathers of the thunderbird's wing,” said grandfather.

“It would take a lot more storm than this to keep me in,” said Mary.

“You’ll get used to it. Do you think you’ll be ok your first night here? I can stay in if you want?”

“No really, I’ll be fine. After the bus ride, all I want to do is sleep.” Sees Jane said it but she wasn't sure she really meant it. She did not want to impose but she would much have preferred Mary's company.

Sees Jane got up and started to clear off the table. “I’ll help with the dishes.”

Grandfather Elkhorn took the dishes out of her hand. “I’ll give you about three seconds to scoot out of this kitchen and make tracks upstairs for a good night's sleep or I’ll....I’ll....Well, it's

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just too horrible to mention!”

He scowled at her, trying to look ferocious but the effect was ruined by the twinkle in his eye.

“Are you still here?” he growled.

Sees Jane smiled. “No. I left two minutes ago.”

Sees Jane knew better than to argue. Besides her eyes were feeling heavy and her whole body cried out for sleep. Tired is sometimes stronger than scared.

Mary handed her a lit candle. “Really sorry we haven’t got the electricity on yet. Maybe tomorrow it will be on. Want me to walk up with you?”

“Sure. I know I turn in the hallway, but I wasn’t really paying attention when we came downstairs before.”

“You weren’t noticing much when we carried you up there either,” said Mary.

“As long as I didn’t snore,” said Sees Jane as she moved carefully up the stairs behind Mary.

Sees Jane was glad of the company. They went up the winding staircase until they reached a darkened hallway. They followed it to the left and then turned into another hall longer than the one they had been in before.

“I hope I don’t get lost in here. This place is bigger than I realized,” Sees Jane said.

“We don’t use most of the rooms. In fact, we don’t even have keys to all of them,” said Mary as she led her into the second room. “You’ll like this room in the morning. Mine is the next one down and Grandfather Elkhorn’s is the one beyond that. There’s a great view of the lake from your window.”

Sees Jane touched the neatly made bed which despite the tailed tenant underneath, felt soft and inviting. After the supper, her fears had abated to the point where she no longer felt completely uncomfortable. Edgy maybe but relaxed enough that she might even sleep a little.

Perhaps tiredness had just made her too numb to be afraid. The candle cast a rosy glow in the room, and was cheerfully dim so that not much of the room could be seen. Sees Jane imagined that the morning sun would make the room a bright and warm place. Well, she could hope anyway.

Mary left and Sees Jane went to the window. The lightning still flashed in the distance but it was far away now and no longer seemed so frightening. The rain was letting up and Sees Jane could see the lake clearly when the lightning flashed.

She turned and looked back at the room. Even in the dim glow of the candle she could see that the room had been recently cleaned. A bowl of fresh cut flowers sat on a small table beside the bed and their spring-like smell lingered in the room. A brightly colored Indian blanket covered the bed and another blanket of the same design was stretched out on the floor as a rug.

She thought about the rat under the bed and wondered if he had a little Indian rug in front of his hole too. If he didn't, maybe she ought to get him one. Well, they were room mates after all.

Sees Jane undressed for bed and combed her hair out in front of a mirror set atop an old dresser. She looked at herself in the mirror. Do I have my father's eyes? Do I have his smile? All the things in the world that belonged to him, how much have those things become me? It was a mystery that was a tiny but constant ache. She knew there were answers here to questions too long hidden from her. She found it comforting, to know that a part of herself she did not understand might make more sense.

She studied her face. It was very different from her mother's face. Sees Jane didn't look like her at all. Her mother's skin was a fine thin white like new chalk and she couldn't go out in the sun without getting a sunburn.

Sees Jane touched her face. Her skin was like her father's, dark, thick and quick to tan. That

was a source of further discomfort. She could see the things on the outside that had belonged to him but she did not understand the inner life that must have been his. Maybe this summer would change all that, if she lived through it that is.

Her hair was stringy and damp still from the soaking she had got in the rain. Tomorrow would be soon enough to do something about it. She wondered how she must have looked to Jason. Probably horrible. Maybe that's why he ran away in the rain.

Convinced that the room was probably too scary to sleep in, she got into bed anyway and was asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow.

But she dreamed. And things came rushing at her in the dark.

She was on the bus again but the sun had gone dark. Thunder and lightning crashed all around her. Someone in the back of the bus was screaming for help.

“Help! Please! Somebody help me!”

She was afraid to turn and look. Something about the voice frightened her. Something terrible was happening back there. The bus doors opened and she rushed forward, frantic to escape the bus. She stepped out into the lake. It was ice cold and went up her waist and she gasped in terror.

She tried to get back on the bus but the doors slammed in her face and the bus roared off. Her suitcase floated away on the waves. Another voice came from behind her, a quiet voice that rose in the wind.

Something stirred beneath the lake. Something rose out of the green depths of the water. It was a huge painting in a heavy frame. It danced on the surface like a water spider, moving toward her. A young girl stared at her from the painting. Her hands raised up and beckoned Sees Jane to draw near.

Sees Jane backed up in the water, stumbling, trying to escape but the painting towered over

her like a swooping bird of prey.

The girl in the painting had raven black hair. It was wet and plastered against her scalp. Her ruffled dress trimmed with lace in the style of another century, was a sodden tangle about her.

The girl spoke in a lilting strange voice. It was icy with a touch of the grave and sounded child-like and inhuman.

“I am drowned. I am far beneath the cold cold water.”

Sees Jane wanted to run but her legs wouldn't move. They seemed frozen in the water.

“You can't be pretty any more... when you're drowned. He won't like me not pretty.”

The girl in the painting lifted her arms and they rose out of the painting like two dripping obscene sticks

“But you're so pretty. You can be pretty for me. Come little sister. Let me touch your pretty hair.”

Sees Jane put her hands out as if warding off a blow.

The girl in the painting leaned forward and her face and arms and shoulders came out of the painting. Her fingers like thin bloodless worms writhed and clawed the air, reaching for Sees Jane.

“Make me pretty. Give me your hair!” demanded the voice. “I can't meet him at the burying ground looking like this!”

The hands were almost on her face. Sees Jane tried to push them away but the girl in the painting was too strong. “Don't fail me,” the voice whispered and then thunder loud, it shrieked. “Don't fail me!” Sees Jane screamed and stumbled back, deeper into the water. Now it was up to her chest.

The girl in the painting lunged forward. Her hands seized Sees Jane and held her. Sees Jane

twisted in her sleep, trying to break free. The girl's hands clutched at her. Gripped her brutally and relentlessly dragged Sees Jane closer and closer to the ruined face of the girl in the painting. The stiff canvas of the painting pressed against her face. Sees Jane felt cold hands circling her neck, tightening, tightening and she twisted away and the painting fell backwards and was gone.

Sees Jane sat up in the dark, her face wet with sweat.

"That voice! That awful terrible voice!" she cried and her voice was shaky.

She was trembling and her hand reached for the table lamp. She frantically looked for the switch but stopped when she remembered there was no electricity. A distant lightning flash lit the room. There was no painting, no lake, no drowned girl reaching for her in the dark.

Her heart was pounding. Another lightning flash lit the room briefly and now she was glad for the storm. Even a little light was better than total darkness.

"I'm so glad it was just a dream!" she said to herself. And she swung her feet out of the bed, determined to get the candle and get it lit.

Then she heard it. Above the wind she heard that voice again! It came from outside, from the direction of the lake.

She ran to the window. The lake was still visible by lightning flash. The window was covered with wind driven rain and it was hard to see.

In one particularly bright flash, she thought she could see something dark moving on the surface of the lake.

A boat.

But a very strange looking boat, not like any boat she had ever seen before. She peered closer but the window pane was too obscured by rain. She remembered what Jason had said about people being caught out on the lake by sudden storms. Maybe somebody was in trouble. She

heaved the window open, rain and wind stinging her face as it slid up.

Now she could see the boat. It was wildly tossed by the waves and a lone figure stood on one end, dressed in white, a young woman with long black hair.

The lightning subsided and she could see nothing for a time.

Cold rain pelted her face as she peered out at the storm-racked lake.

The lightning flashed and the lake was day-bright for just a brief second. No more.

Still it was enough for her to see that no boat was on the lake.

Only waves driven by the onslaught of the wind.

She must have dreamed it again. It was the only explanation.

But something about the boat bothered her. It seemed to evoke a strange half forgotten memory. Had she ever seen a boat like that before?

She was convinced she had once seen something like it. The high prow of the boat had looked like a carved statue. And it was long, much too long to be like any modern boat she had ever seen but where had she seen it before.

She slammed the window shut and rested her head against the cold window pane, trying to remember. And then suddenly, she could see it again in her mind.

Once at the Smithsonian Museum. There was an exhibit about her father's tribe, a recreation of what life was like for them before the coming of the white men. There she'd seen a boat exactly like the one on the storm shrouded lake.

It was a boat from ancient ceremonial times. And it was built for only one purpose.

It was the burial canoe of the dead!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sees Jane was awake and dressed. She sat by the window and looked out on the lake. The sun made the room bright if still shabby and the lake was calm, like a blue gem surrounded by a forest of green.

She had slept finally but it had not been a restful sleep. She had tossed and turned fitfully. And again that night, she thought she had heard the voice. It might just have been the storm, howling around the eaves of the house. She told herself that it had all been just a bad dream and there was nothing to really worry about. But she couldn't quite make herself believe it.

She washed her hair and combed it out, tying the long black hair into two thick braids. Her thick black hair framed her dark eyes, that were even darker now, from too little sleep.

It was a cold day, the air still crisp from the storm so she dressed in a heavy sweater and blue jeans. She wore the turquoise rings that were one of the few things she owned that had belonged to her father.

She had kept them in a box for years until her fingers got big enough to wear them.

There was a knock on the door and Mary came bursting into the room.

"You're up early for someone who got in so late," Sees Jane said turning with a smile to watch her.

"Don't I know it!" said Mary ruefully. "Grandfather Elkhorn was fit to be tied too when I got in. But it wasn't my fault the car broke down. I told him at least a hundred times there was something wrong with it but he never listens to me. If I told him the house was falling down, he wouldn't listen until the roof hit his head."

"I had a kind of strange night myself," Sees Jane said. "A world of bad dreams and things sort of chased me in the night."

Mary looked at her. "You look like you haven't slept at all! What happened?"

Sees Jane felt reluctant at first to talk about it. She shrugged. "Nothing really, just dreams."

Mary smiled reassuringly at her. "Listen you should have been here the first couple of nights I stayed in this house all by myself. Talk about nightmares! I had a couple of real screamers. If you tell me yours, I'll tell you one of mine."

Sees Jane laughed in spite of herself. "It all seemed so different last night in the dark with the storm. Now that the sun is out, it all seems pretty silly."

"This strange old house has secrets. You'd have to be made out of wood not to get the creeps. Tell me what happened?"

"Remember the painting of the young girl that I thought was a mirror?"

Mary nodded, the smile fading from her face.

"I saw her. I mean I saw the painting. It all seemed very real. I was on the bus and then I was in the lake somehow. I heard a voice and when I turned around, I saw the painting rising up out of the lake. And the strange thing was..."

"Was her hair wet and jet black and did she have on an old fashioned white dress that was all tattered and soaked?" asked Mary.

Sees Jane's eyes widened in horror. "Yes," she breathed.

"And did she reach out for you?" asked Mary, looking every bit as scared as Sees Jane felt then. "And did it seem like she wanted you to come with her?"

"Don't fail me," Sees Jane said and their eyes met and Mary nodded, once.

"We both had the same dream," said Mary. "Only I wasn't on a bus. I saw the painting in my room. I had the same dream, not once but twice!"

"There is something very strange about that painting," Sees Jane said and shuddered as if

something cold had laid its clammy hands on her. “But what does it mean? Who is the girl in the painting?”

“I know that much at least. Jason told me her name is Celena Darkland. She’s the daughter of the man who built this house.”

“Why is the painting still in the house?”

“I don’t know. But there’s some really old furniture stored in some of the rooms I don’t have keys for too. I guess it was all abandoned.”

“What do you know about the girl?”

“Not as much as I can guess. Something terrible must have happened to her. And it perhaps it happened right here in this house!” said Mary with a shudder. “I wish I could talk Grandfather Elkhorn into going back to the farm.”

“Do you think he would? It would be great to spend a summer on a farm, that is, if I am invited too. I’ve never been on a farm before,” Said Sees Jane.

‘You’d have a great time there and of course you’re invited but I don’t think he’ll do it,’ said Mary. “Being here in the summer means a lot to him. So much in fact that he leaves the most important summer farm work to his hired hands. Coming here keeps him young. He’s superstitious about it. He thinks it would be bad medicine, that maybe he would even die if he couldn’t be here for the summer.”

‘Then if we’re stuck here for the summer, we’ll just have to do the best we can,’ Sees Jane said. “At least I don’t feel so alone. Not like I would have felt if I spent my summer with my mother.”

A shout came from downstairs.

“It’s Grandfather Elkhorn. It must be time for breakfast,” said Mary.

‘Let’s go down and eat and afterwards I’ll take you for a walk along the lake. Maybe we could even walk to the trading post. If you’d like to see Jason again, he’ll probably be there.’

“I’m not holding my breath on that one,” said Sees Jane. “If we never see him again, that’s fine with me.”

“What is it with you two?”

“Ask him. I’m just an innocent bystander.”

“Don’t you find him attractive?”

“Not so anyone would notice,” Sees Jane said and she flushed. Mary thinking that she had some special interest in Jason made her uncomfortable. “Jason doesn’t care much for city people. He made a point of letting me know that.”

“It’s a good beginning. People who don’t like each other at first sight, usually are the ones who go totally nuts about each other.”

“Sounds like a bad movie, the kind I never want to watch,” said Sees Jane. “I’d rather read a book.”

“Jason’s hard to figure. He keeps things to himself. Maybe he likes you and is just being weird about how he shows it. You just have to guess when it comes to what Jason’s thinking. It runs in the family. I ought to know. I’m dating his brother.”

They joined Grandfather Elkhorn in the kitchen for breakfast.

“How did you sleep, Grandfather Elkhorn?” asked Mary.

The old man shook his head. He looked troubled. ‘I must have eaten too much. I slept restless. I had night dreams and they kept waking me up.’

Mary and Sees Jane exchanged a worried look.

“What kind of dreams?” Mary asked.

“I don’t know,” said the old man. “Bad dreams I am sure but by morning, I was dreaming of Bessie, my wife of long ago and so the bad dreams went away and I do not remember them now.”

Mary and Sees Jane hurried through breakfast.

“Go out and enjoy the day,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “I’ll take care of the dishes and then get to work on this worthless house wiring. Maybe by the end of the day, I’ll have this blasted electricity hooked up!”

They went out the front door and into the garden. They were quiet, each lost in their own thoughts. Mary was worried about Grandfather Elkhorn but she didn't come right out and say it. Despite the fears of the night before, Sees Jane found herself thinking about Jason and what his life must be like out in the world by the lake where her father’s people had always lived. She wondered if this was a place where she herself belonged. The lake beckoned and they moved down toward it.

As they walked past the squash garden, Sees Jane found her eyes straying in the direction of the trading post.

As she looked that way, she saw someone walking down the hill by the Indian burial grounds. Sees Jane thought it might be Jason but it was too far away to be sure.

“Maybe we should walk toward the Indian burial ground,” Sees Jane suggested, not really eager to meet Jason again but curious about him none the less.

“Did Grandfather Elkhorn warn you about that place?” asked Mary. “I’ll bet he forgot and after I warned him twice about it too.”

“Is it taboo?” Sees Jane asked. “Living in the city all my life, I haven’t learned much about the customs of our tribe.”

“Its sacred ground but it isn’t forbidden. Grandfather Elkhorn goes there a lot to visit grandmother’s grave. The real danger is the hillside around the burial ground.”

“Are there snakes?” Sees Jane asked, distrustfully eyeing the tall grass they walked through.

“Not poisonous ones, if that’s what you’re worried about,” laughed Mary. “The hills are undercut with limestone caverns. It’s very dangerous. You have to stick to the old paths or you get into real trouble. There’s sinkholes. It looks like good firm ground but it isn’t. The ground gives way without warning and you fall down into the caverns beneath. Some of those caverns are hundreds of feet deep. If the fall doesn’t kill you, you’d starve to death down there before anybody found you.”

“There should be signs up, warning of the danger then,” Sees Jane said. “I didn’t realize just how dangerous it could be to live in the country.”

“There were signs once. I don’t know what happened to them,” said Mary. “People from around here know all about it and avoid the place like the plague. And tourists to the lake are told straight off about not going to the burial grounds. The tribe tells everybody the burial grounds are forbidden to white people and that keeps most of the people away. Some people don’t listen and some of them never come back.”

“Never?” Sees Jane said with a shudder. “What a horrible way to die!”

“It happens to cattle and sometimes deer get caught there too. I saw a deer drop from sight once there myself! Believe me, Sees Jane, it’s not some place where you’d want to go wandering around by yourself. I’ll show you the paths though and you’ll be safe if you stay on them,” said Mary. “Come on. It’s on the way to the trading post anyway.”

They walked on through the long grass. Sees Jane kept her eyes on the solitary figure walking through the burial grounds.

It was Jason, she could see him clearly now. He had a dark red shirt and blue jeans. As he reached the crest of a little hill, a tall girl in white walked out of the trees and stood almost in the path that Jason was walking on. Sees Jane wondered who the girl in white could be. She seemed to be waiting in the path for Jason.

Sees Jane felt a sudden twinge of jealousy. No, that couldn't be the feeling because Jason was a jerk. She watched the girl and Jason. Maybe Jason already had a girl friend and that was why he didn't much care for Sees Jane.

"Look over there," said Mary, pointing towards the lake. Sees Jane turned and looked where Mary had pointed. A silver colored aluminum canoe glided over the lake, expertly guided by a dark-haired Indian, not much older than Mary. It glided up alongside the dock behind the trading post. The boy dropped his canoe paddle, jumped out on the dock and hauled the canoe up on the shore.

"That's John Two Elks, Jason's brother. He's always borrowing Jason's canoe to go who knows where," said Mary. "Darn! I bet by the time we get to the trading post, he'll be gone. He's just like smoke. Half the time I can never find him anywhere. If you get to know Jason, he's just the same way. Hard to find and hard to hold onto."

Sees Jane turned back to look at Jason and the girl in white. The girl was walking beside him. She moved in a strange way. She leaned in until her head was almost touching Jason's shoulders, her dark hair brushing against his red shirt. She seemed to stagger then as if it were difficult for her to keep pace with Jason. She fell behind him. She held her hands out toward him and seemed to be shouting at him.

"HEY YOU!" Mary's booming shout echoed across the lake. Sees Jane turned startled and looked at Mary. Mary was waving frantically at the boy across the lake. The distance was too far

and her voice had not carried. The boy disappeared into the trading post.

“The idiot!” said Mary.

Sees Jane turned to look back at Jason. He was walking alone on the path. There was no sign of the girl. In the mere second that Sees Jane had looked away, the girl had vanished.

Jason started to run toward them. Mary’s shout had alarmed him. He raced down the path towards them.

“There’s Jason,” said Mary. “And his feet seem to be on fire.”

Jason came to a halt, chest heaving, panting in front of them.

“What’s wrong? I heard you shout! Is everything . . .” he began.

“Your idiot brother is what’s wrong,” interrupted Mary. “I was yelling for him to wait for me but he has butter in his ears.”

Jason looked sheepish. “Oh. I thought something had . . .that . . .” He left his thought unfinished.

Sees Jane smiled at Jason, as if glad to see him. “Who was the girl up on the burial ground?” she asked and wondered as she said it if she had any business even asking.

Jason stopped smiling. His face became wary. “What girl?”

“The girl in white. The one I saw waiting for you on the hill and walking beside you on the path,” Sees Jane said.

“There was nobody up there. Nobody!” There was sudden anger in Jason's voice.

“But I saw her. You must have seen her,” Sees Jane said, feeling a little afraid of Jason.

Mary looked first at Sees Jane and then at Jason. She was beginning to suspect that something had happened that she had missed.

“There wasn’t anybody up there but me. If somebody else was up there, I would have seen

them,” said Jason with a dark look on his face.

“Well, I saw her,” Sees Jane insisted. “I saw the girl as plainly as I saw you.”

Jason looked both angry and frightened.

“There’s nobody else up there except dead people!” shouted Jason. “And if you saw one of them...” Jason's eyes flashed wildly and he suddenly stopped speaking.

Jason turned and began to walk away from them. His back was stiff with some inner fury and the planes of his face were tense and hard.

“Why is Jason so angry?” asked Mary, amazed at his behavior. “Why is Jason acting this way?”

“Maybe because Jason knows who it was I saw up there on the burial ground,” Sees Jane said.

“Maybe because Jason knows I saw a ghost!”

CHAPTER EIGHT

“I want to change clothes if we’re really going somewhere,” said Sees Jane. They had been sitting beside the lake for quite a while, talking about all sorts of things. The hours had passed quickly in pleasant talk about the lake and the kind of things that were fun to do in the summer.

Mary didn’t respond. Mary was staring openmouthed in the direction that Jason had gone. Sees Jane noticed and then shaded her eyes and looked where Mary was looking. Jason was coming back up the path. He was running full tilt.

“He just can’t get enough of us, can he?” said Sees Jane. “I hope he’s not expecting a big hug.”

Jason thundered up and raced past, heading straight for the house. Mary and Sees Jane stared

at him in alarm. He was moving so fast they barely got a glimpse of his face.

“What the....” began Mary.

“Oh my god!” gasped Sees Jane.

Now they both saw what Jason saw. Thick black clouds of smoke roiled out of the eaves of the house. Every window was dark with smoke.

They ran after Jason. Jason was at the front door. He threw it open and black smoke boiled out in dense waves. Jason coughed, pulled his white shirt up over his face and disappeared inside the house.

Mary and Sees Jane were at the door now, breathing hard from the intensity of their dash.

“Grandfather Elkhorn!” screamed Mary.

There was no answer. Mary ran through the door. Sees Jane hesitated but only for a second. She too plunged into the thick choking cloud of smoke. The opened front door was sucking a good deal of the smoke outside. The room had cleared enough that Sees Jane could dimly make out Mary standing beside the kitchen door. Sees Jane coughed rackingly as the smoke hit her lungs.

“I’ll check the kitchen, you check upstairs!” yelled Mary. “We’ve got to find him!”

Sees Jane ran up the stairs, taking them two at a time.

The smoke was thicker here and she gasped as it penetrated deeply into her lungs.

She quickly ran through the rooms but they were empty. Some of the rooms were locked and she could not search them. The smoke burned her eyes and lungs mercilessly.

She raced back down the stairs in a panic. She was terrified of the thought that she might be trapped in the house! Every bone in her body ached to escape from the house but her worry for the old man pushed her own terror to the back of her mind.

Sees Jane heard Mary yelling her name from the kitchen.

She ran into the kitchen. The smoke was thick here too, so impenetrable and choking that she couldn't see Mary at all.

"Where are you?" Sees Jane cried.

"By the back door! Hurry! Help me with Grandfather Elkhorn!"

She stumbled forward through the smoke until she reached Mary's side. Her eyes teared and she was stumbled across the floor, dizzy from the smoke.

Grandfather Elkhorn lay face down on the floor by the back door. Obviously he had been trying to make it outside and had been overcome with smoke.

"We've got to get him outside fast!" gasped Mary, as she rolled him over on his back. "The whole place must be burning!"

They grabbed him under each arm and lifted him up as high as they could. Half carrying, half dragging, they got him through the back door and outside. They carried him as far away from the house as they could before they laid him down on the grass. Both of them were coughing and short of breath.

Their clothes and hands were blackened with smoke.

Mary fell down beside the still figure of her grandfather. "I don't feel so good," she said and she was very pale. Her eyes looked glazed. "I think I'm gonna be sick."

Sees Jane felt sick herself but she knew Grandfather Elkhorn needed help.

She bent over to give him mouth to mouth resuscitation just like she had learned at school.

But he opened his eyes just then and smiled up at me.

"Am I roasted?" he asked and then coughed. "Did all my pinfeathers get burned off?" he went on, weakly.

“Almost,” Sees Jane said with a smile. “But you’re safe now.”

“Seems to me, somebody ought to phone the fire department,” said the old man. “And quick too! Must be a real bad fire!”

“I’ll go!” said Mary, grimly getting to her feet. She seemed weak but she was able to shakily stand.

Sees Jane said, “Maybe I better go. You don’t look so good.”

“No. You can’t ... And oh no! I can’t either!” wailed Mary.

She sank back down to the ground beside Grandfather Elkhorn.

“What’s wrong?”

“Cars busted! The nearest phone is across the lake at the trading post,” said Mary bitterly. “It might as well be on the moon.”

“But can’t we...”

“You could swim across,” said Mary. “That ought to take only a day.”

Sees Jane looked back at the house. Black smoke was still pouring out of the eaves and the opened door. But she didn’t see any flames.

Mary turned and spoke accusingly at the old man. “See what happens when you don’t believe me when I say the car is busted!”

The old man shook his head.

“Well, I didn’t know it was THAT busted. I thought it was only a little bit busted,” explained the old man. “I thought it was you could still drive it busted, not busted busted.”

Sees Jane helped Grandfather Elkhorn to his feet.

“Are you ok?”

“I feel like I’ve been smoking cigars for forty days and forty nights!” he coughed weakly.

“Thanks for saving me. Thought I was heading for the big beyond. That was a close one!”

Mary asked. “How did the fire start?”

“I saw no fire. I went from room to room. Smoke yes, too much of that but heat and fire, that I did not find!” said the old man.

“Where there’s smoke there has to be a fire,” said Sees Jane.

“One would think so,” said Grandfather Elkhorn, as they looked back at the house. Black smoke still poured out of the open back door in a thick cloud. The old man looked frightened.

“But there is something very strange about that old house. Very strange. I feel it in my bones.”

Sees Jane looked at the house too and shuddered. With the black smoke darkening every window, it looked like the doomed House of Usher in the old horror story by Edgar Allan Poe.

“We have to go back in there!” cried Sees Jane suddenly. “Jason never came out of the house!”

Mary remembered it too with a look of horror. “Oh my god! Maybe he’s trapped!”

They both started back towards the house in a halting run. They got to the open door and Mary put her arm out and stopped Sees Jane from going through the door. “Wait!” she said. “Let me try this first!”

She screamed. “JASON! JASON CAN YOU HEAR ME! JASON YOU HAVE TO COME OUT NOW!” Nothing moved inside the house except the smoke. “JASON!”

Her calls were not answered.

The old man was beside them now. He put his hands on their shoulders and tried to drag them out of the doorway.

“You are brave girls but I won’t let you go in there again!” said the old man. “If anybody’s going in there after him, it’s me!” He wasn’t strong enough to pull them away from the door.

It was then that they heard the distant scream of sirens. They could see two county fire trucks rushing down the road that led to their side of the lake.

“Somebody must have seen the smoke and called!” said Grandfather Elkhorn excitedly.

“They’ll find Jason. And maybe they’ll be in time to save the house too!”

Black smoke still poured out of the opened back door.

The fire trucks came to an abrupt stop beside the house and the firemen quickly and efficiently connected hoses and donned masks, and approached the house at a run.

The fire chief, a man named Maddox, came rushing over to them. “Anyone inside? Anyone hurt?”

“There’s a young man in there. Jason Two Elks. He hasn’t come out!” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

The fireman nodded. “No problem. We’ll find him! Better stand back, give us room!”

Two firemen in smoke gear rushed inside the house. The fire chief signaled for more men. He held up a finger as they approached. “3 safe outside, 1 still in the house! Go! Go!” The men responded to his urging by rushing past him, each of them brandishing fire axes and wearing smoke gear over their faces.

“Don’t worry. You people move back now. We’ll find him. Let us do our job now!” snapped the fire chief. He motioned to another fireman, and then indicated with a jerked thumb the two girls and the old man. “Clear them for me, Tate.”

The fireman all but shoved them away from the open door.

“You heard the chief. Get back away from the house.” He put himself between them and the house and saw to it that they marched away from it. He stayed with them until they were quite some distance from the house.

“Park yourself here,” said the fireman. “And don’t go back to the house until we say it’s safe.”

With that, the fireman ran back to the house. The chief motioned him toward the truck and he joined the crew that was unfolding a fire hose. When they had it reeled out, it was quickly connected it to the side of the tanker truck. One of them threw open the water valve and they rushed forward with the hose.

The hose wriggled like a powerful snake in their hands as it filled with water. They passed through the front door, hose at the ready. The fire chief stood anxiously by the back door, waiting for a report, ready to send in whatever was needed to help. The men with the hose were in there only a few minutes when several of the firemen came back out. One fireman ripped off his mask. He looked puzzled. He had a terse conversation with the fire chief who looked back at Grandfather Elkhorn and the two girls with a certain amount of suspicion.

The fire chief came back and stood in front of them, his arms crossed. He addressed the old man

“Where did the fire start exactly?” he asked.

“I don’t know. I couldn’t find it. Just plenty of smoke,” admitted the old man.

There was a sound of metal against metal and wood rasping against wood. The windows on all floors of the house were all being systematically forced open by the firemen, dispelling dark noxious clouds of smoke .

“That’s strange,’ said Grandfather Elkhorn. He stared at the fire chief. He seemed deep in concentration. “I am thinking if there was a fire, opening the windows would be the worst thing to do.”

“Yes. You’re right about that,” said the fire chief sternly. “It would fan the flames with more

oxygen. But uh, that's true only if there was an actual fire."

The fire chief had a grim look on his face.

"Is there no fire?" asked the old man.

"You tell me," he said and looked angry. "No fire anywhere. Just smoke! Which makes me wonder if this isn't some kind of prank? And no sight of the boy whose supposed to be in there either." He turned to face the two girls.

"Are you sure he was in there?" he stared at their faces with disbelief.

Mary said, "Positive. Jason Two Elks saw the smoke before we did. He had the door open and was inside before we could even get to the house."

"Are you sure about that?"

Sees Jane said, "I saw him too. He pulled his white shirt up over his face before he ran into the house. He's gotta still be in there."

The fire chief turned to the old man.

"You see Jason in there?"

The old man shook his head.

"Not that I know of," said Grandfather Elkhorn. "But then I was out cold. If it hadn't been for these girls hauling me out of the house, I don't think I would be around to tell you about anything."

The fire chief acted like he didn't believe what Grandfather Elkhorn was saying.

"It's serious business to call out the fire department on a false alarm. If somebody set off a smoke bomb just for fun, I'd make it pretty hot for him if I caught him at it," said the fire chief.

Mary insisted. "We both saw Jason. I swear. Only," she hesitated for second, "he was wearing a red shirt, not white when he was...." She didn't finished the sentence. Both girls just stared at

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each other with alarm.

“So your story is Jason Two Elks was in the house. And you’re sticking to that!” said the fire chief. “Well, you both are lying!”

Mary was offended. “Don’t call us liars! We saw what we saw!”

The fire chief laughed bitterly. “Well then how do you explain this? We got a call from the trading post reporting a fire.”

The fire chief paused for effect. “Thing is, the guy making the phone call said his name was Jason Two Elks. Now I happen to know Jason. They patched the call in to me. It was his voice on the phone, no mistake about that.”

“But that’s impossible!” insisted Mary. “I tell you he was standing right here with us. He couldn’t be at the trading post. And we saw him, we both saw him run into the house!”

The firemen began coming out of the house, dragging the hose behind them. They started putting their fire gear back on the trucks.

“We got a suspicious fire. I’m thinking somebody lit off some kind of smoke bomb and then took it away. Removing the evidence,” said the fire chief.

“I still say Jason was in the house. You must have missed him,” Mary wasn’t going to give in on this point.

“No. We didn’t miss anything. We covered the attic, the basement, every nook and cranny in the house. There were three or four rooms with locked doors. My men broke down the doors and entered all of those rooms too. We were in every room, top to bottom. We found no one.”

“We saw what we saw. It couldn’t have been Jason,” insisted Mary.

“Which bring me to my next question. Have any of you seen any kids hanging around in the neighborhood? This is just the kind of stunt some of those town kids have been pulling lately!”

“No. No kids,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “I don’t think it was kids. It is in my mind, that it was the house. Giving us a warning.”

The fire chief looked at the old man suspiciously.

“What do you mean, it was the house?”

“Spirits!’ said the old man, staring at the house, as the firemen began stowing their gear on the fire trucks. The heavy smoke was going away, almost gone now, as the fresh air drove it out the opened windows and doors. “There are things that walk the night in that house. At first I did not believe it, but now I know. There is an unhappy spirit in that house. And we will not be safe there until we have met it. Until we have seen its dark face and understood the pain in its black heart.’

The fire chief snorted. “Nonsense!” He stared at Grandfather Elkhorn as if he was not quite right in his head. He systematically gathered his men together and they packed up the last of their equipment.

“I’m gonna put it down in my report that it was an act of vandalism,” said the chief. “Those town kids from across the lake. It’s just the kind of crap they like to pull.”

He stared across the lake at the summer houses on the far shore. He saw something that made him smile. He turned and said sarcastically to the two girls.

“Still insisting that Jason was in the house?”

Both girls nodded. The fire chief lifted his hand, pointing at the lake. Something was moving across the lake, coming in their direction.

“Then it’s kind of hard to explain why Jason’s just left the trading post in a canoe and is coming this way,” said the fire chief disgustedly. “I don’t know what kind of thrill you get in lying about it. Frankly I don’t care. We’re done here.” He climbed into the tanker truck. The fire

trucks backed out of the yard and headed back to town.

The canoe was speeding across the water. Jason was paddling hard, putting his back into it.

His red shirt contrasted sharply with his blue jeans. Both girls stared at each other, not saying a word but their eyes flashed with the same dark thoughts.

“I think the fire chief thinks I am crazy as a crooked dog,” said the old man. “But I know I am right.”

Mary and Sees Jane did not think the old man was crazy and they told him so.

“If it wasn’t kids, what caused the smoke?” asked Sees Jane. “What kind of warning is it supposed to be?”

Grandfather Elkhorn said, “Dark walkers are creatures of smoke. They are lit by hidden fire. When their ghost smoke comes into this world, somewhere lost and alone a spirit burns in a fire.”

“The smoke seemed pretty real to me,” said Mary, touching her soot darkened face.

Sees Jane was looking across the lake. The canoe with Jason was nearing the shore.

“The Jason who ran into the house seemed pretty real too, white shirt and all,” said Sees Jane. “But he couldn’t be Jason.”

Jason gave one last hard swing of the paddle and the canoe beached against the shore.

“It’s Jason. The real red shirt wearing Jason in that canoe,” said Mary. “That’s for sure.”

Jason jumped out of the canoe and came toward them.

“If that’s Jason, then who did we see? Who ran into the house?” asked Sees Jane.

Nobody had an answer to that.

“Is everyone ok? Anybody hurt?” asked Jason worriedly, staring at their soot blackened faces.

“We’re burned to a crisp,” said the old man with a grin. “No wait. We’ve just been on the meat smoking racks too long!”

Mary said. “Don’t listen to him. We’re fine.”

Jason looked back at the house. He seemed puzzled. “Didn’t take them long to put out the fire.”

The old man snorted. “They didn’t put out the fire, they put out the smoke.”

“What?”

“It’s a long story,” said Mary. “Don’t ask.”

“What do you mean, don’t ask? What happened?” insisted Jason.

Sees Jane spoke up. “We don’t have any idea what happened. That’s why it’s a long story.”

“You aren’t making sense,” said Jason.

“That’s because you were here and you weren’t here. And there was a fire that wasn’t a fire,” explained Sees Jane. She looked at Mary and said to her. “That about covers it right?”

Mary smiled impishly, enjoying Jason’s growing confusion. “I couldn’t have put it better myself!”

Jason scowled and searched their faces for some kind of clue but they weren’t giving anything away.

Dissatisfied, he turned to Grandfather Elkhorn for an explanation.

“Don’t ask me,” said Grandfather Elkhorn who had been following the exchange with amusement. “I was out cold for most of it and glad to be that way! It was probably restful.”

Jason shrugged. “Ok, whatever. I’m glad I saw the smoke and called the fire department. But

maybe I should have stayed at the trading post. I paddled pretty hard thinking you were all in trouble. I just wanted to help.“

Grandfather Elkhorn put his hand on Jason’s shoulder. He adopted a more serious tone.

“Your concern for us warms our hearts. We thank you for the call and for coming to see if we were all right. You are a good friend, Jason.”

Jason shrugged. “I’m just glad you’re ok. Is there anything I can do for you?”

Mary and Sees Jane were staring intently at Jason as if there was something very strange about him.

“Come into the house with me,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “When the smoke is gone, I am going to need help shutting some of those windows the firemen opened. It takes a lot of strength to open and close them and I am not as strong as a young fireman.”

“Sure thing,” said Jason, glancing at the two girls, aware that they were staring him in an odd way. “Glad to help.”

Jason turned his back on the girls. He and Grandfather Elkhorn went back inside the house.

Mary and Sees Jane stood there for a while, lost in thought.

“Definitely Jason,” said Mary.

“Red shirt, definitely not white,” said Sees Jane.

Mary nodded and then suddenly laughed. “Speaking of clothes, maybe we ought to change. We look like a couple coal miners at the end of their shift.”

“And on a very dark night too,” said Sees Jane.

They went back inside the house.

Sees Jane took a quick shower and got most of the black out of her skin and hair. She changed her clothes. She decided to wear one of her best dresses even though jeans might have been a

better choice. She picked a dress that was sun yellow and kind of expensive. She always thought it made her look older and more sophisticated. In any case, it was one of the best dresses she had.

She wasn't exactly sure why, but she hoped Jason would notice it.

While Mary was showering, she spent some extra time on her hair, not that she could think of much to do with it except comb it out and wait for it to dry.

There was a frantic knock on her door. It was Jason.

"Hurry! Come with me!" he said. "Grandfather Elkhorn is sick!"

Jason turned and was already going. She followed closely after him. They raced down the stairs into the living room. The old man was sitting on an old chair, face pale, eyes closed. He looked drawn and frail.

He opened his eyes. He lifted one hand and tried to take something hanging from a cord out from under his shirt but his hands were so weak he couldn't get it free. Sees Jane moved quickly, catching the cord and pulling. A small leather pouch was on the end of the cord.

"My heart medicine," he said. "I need a pill."

Sees Jane fumbled the pouch open and a tiny bottle fell out. She opened it. It contained only one tiny white pill.

"Put it under my tongue," gasped Grandfather Elkhorn weakly. "Then I'll be alright."

She did as she was asked. The old man winced at the bitterness of the pill. The effect was almost immediate. Color returned to his face and his hands stopped trembling.

"Thank you," said the old man. "I'm ok now."

"Do you have any more pills?" asked Sees Jane, still holding the empty bottle.

The old man shook his head. He looked worried. "I need to get some more. The doctor man says I must always have them with me. I believe he is right about that."

Jason said, "I'll paddle back across the lake and get them for you."

"That is a kindness," said the old man. "The car is busted. And this does not seem like my day to walk very far."

Jason smiled. "I'm glad to do it."

The old man pulled a battered leather wallet from his front pocket. He lifted out two crumpled twenty dollars bills. "They know my medicine. They have my doctor papers at the trading post." He handed the money to Jason.

"I'll be back as quick as I can," said Jason. "Let me tell Mary what happened and then I'll go."

"Tell me what?" said Mary, standing dripping at the top of the stairs. "I heard people running down the stairs. What's wrong?"

"I had one of my heart spells," called out Grandfather Elkhorn. "But everything is fine now. I took my medicine!"

She came running down the stairs and threw her arms around the old man.

He pushed her away. "No fussing! I had my pill and I am fine."

Jason nodded. "He really is ok now. The pill really worked. I'm going across the lake to get him some more pills. You want to come with me Mary? It goes faster if two people paddle."

Mary shook her head emphatically. "I should stay with Grandfather!"

She turned to face Jason. "But you should take Sees Jane. She can help paddle."

"What!" He stared with dismay at Sees Jane. Jason plainly hated the idea.

"You said it yourself, it's faster if two people paddle. So take her."

"I'm not going to....." began Jason but he stopped himself.

"Is there some reason why she can't go?" said Mary.

Jason looked trapped. Mary stared at him. "Well is there?"

Jason just looked away.

"It's ok, right?" Mary said and she made it sound like a challenge.

Jason conceded with poor grace. "Fine. Whatever. I'll meet her down by the lake."

Mary came up to Jason and put her head beside his ear. She whispered something so only he could hear. He shook his head as if not agreeing with her. She whispered again, this time with more intensity. Jason shrugged.

"Ok. No problem. I'll take care of that too," said Jason, backing away from her.

"Don't forget," said Mary.

Jason looking none to thrilled, left rather abruptly.

"This is gonna be some fun boat ride," said Sees Jane. "Maybe I should put a bag over my head so he doesn't know its me."

"Jason is just being Jason," said Mary. "He'll get over it."

She thought about it. "Or maybe he won't."

Sees Jane sighed. She went reluctantly down to the lake. They certainly had the weather for a canoe ride. The sun was shining and the sky was clear and the surface of the lake sparkled like a million jewels.

Jason was already in the back of the canoe, looking somewhat distressed.

"Ready for a guided tour of the big water?" he asked sarcastically.

"As ready as I'll ever be," she said.

He motioned for her to get into the canoe. She'd never been in one before. She went to one side and lifted one foot and started to step in.

There was a sudden look of alarm on Jason's face and he yelled. "Whoa! Stop!"

She stopped, one foot dangling over the canoe, wondering what was wrong.

“Haven't you ever been in a canoe before?” asked Jason, sitting disgustedly in the back of the canoe, with the oar across his lap.

“Sure. Hundreds of times,” she said. “Where I come from, I practically lived in one. Everybody in the city has one, don't they?”

Jason looked even more put upon. “Ok great! So you've never been in a canoe! Let me tell you how to get in, ok?”

“You mean, there's a way you...” She started to ask.

“A canoe is very unstable. You can't stand up or step into one until you make sure everything is in balance. Standing isn't really ever recommended,” Jason said. “Unless of course, you want to get very wet.”

“So what do I do?”

“Bend over, put both hands on the sides of the boat,” said Jason, putting his own hands on the side of the boat in demonstration. “Use your hands to steady the boat, and then shift forward, keeping your weight in the center of the boat. Step in slowly, keeping your feet near the middle of the boat, but use your hands to keep your weight evenly distributed towards each side of the canoe. Sit down in the center of the seat, then you can take your hands off the side.”

She did like he said but it was difficult. She overbalanced a little bit too much to the left and Sees Jane felt the canoe rolling. Jason thrust his oar in the water on the side and paddled sideways, which steadied the boat. She was half in the canoe. She tried to get in quick and hit the seat so hard she almost bounced off it. But at least she was in the canoe.

Jason seemed to think that was pretty funny. He had a kind of superior smirk on his face. Sees Jane was way past beginning to regret she had come along. She was regretting she had even been

born. Maybe now was a good time to mention that she couldn't swim.

"Ready?" said Jason. He took another paddle from the floor of the canoe and passed it over to her. "Don't you have any jeans?"

At least he had noticed her dress. She stuck her tongue out at him and stared at the paddle.

"What am I supposed to do with this?" He was really beginning to irritate her.

"Well, if our intent is to actually go across the lake, I'd guess you'd use it to paddle with," he said. He went on. "I hope that wasn't too complicated an explanation."

"I didn't think I was going to knit with it," said Sees Jane bitterly. Under her breath she called him a jerk and four or five other things that were even worse.

Jason thrust his paddle deep into the water until it touched bottom and shoved. The canoe backed off the shore and floated free.

He paddled steadily on one side of the canoe, turning it expertly in the water until it faced the other shore.

"Besides," said Jason. "The exercise is good for you."

"Yeah, well, I don't want to get muscle bound or anything," Sees Jane said. She wasn't sure how to hold the paddle and she glanced back to see what Jason was doing with his. He was just staring at her. Not doing anything, not rowing just staring at her. As if he expected her to start paddling first.

"What happens if this canoe turns over?" she asked still not ready to actually try paddling.

"Happens all the time," he said with an indifferent shrug. "But this canoe has airtight hulls. One of the modern improvements in an all aluminum canoe. So if it tips over, it doesn't sink. You just hang on to the bottom of the boat until you either paddle it ashore or can turn it over and climb back in. Course that takes a lot of doing."

“Boy the fun just never quits,” said Sees Jane. She lifted the paddle and tried a stroke. Water hit her face in a sudden cascade as the blade whacked the water and bounced. The side of the canoe hit the paddle where her hand was and she skinned her knuckle.

Jason had a hard time keeping a straight face. She waved her stinging hand in the air. It actually hurt quite a lot.

She thought about how much she was really loving this romantic canoe trip across the lake. And that if she actually drowned later that that would probably be the fun part.

Jason began paddling. He took long deep strokes and the canoe shot forward rapidly in the water. She turned around and watched how it did it. Paddling a canoe looked easy when Jason did it. But not for Sees Jane. She kept splashing water. Even Jason in the back of the canoe was getting drenched.

He seemed to do it with an effortless ease while her paddle either went into deep or not deep enough and she threw up big sprays of water. She managed not to slam her hand against the side of the canoe again but that was about all she managed.

“Just relax,” said Jason when she had failed to show any improvement. “You’re trying too hard. Don’t grip the paddle like you’re trying to strangle it. Try to move the paddle evenly and slowly. At the end of each stroke, turn the paddle so you can put it back into the water edge side first.”

Sees Jane thought she was doing what he said. She took her best shot but she got the paddle in so shallow that when she tried to stroke, it came flying out of the water and whacked against the side of the canoe. She skinned her knuckles on her other hand this time.

“Ouch! Wow that hurts! I really hate this you know!” She rubbed aching knuckles.

Jason just smiled. “You’ll get used to it.”

She looked back at Jason. He was pretty wet from paddle spray but it didn't seem to bother him. In fact, he seemed to find the whole thing pretty funny.

“We don't exactly have much time to go canoeing where I come from. It's not one of our basic city survival skills, if you know what I mean,” she said with some anger.

“I guessed,” said Jason. “I'll take it from here. Just sit back and let me do the work.”

He smoothly paddled first on one side of the canoe and then on the other. The canoe shot across the water, like something shot out of a gun. Jason really knew how to make a canoe do its stuff.

He had a look of amusement on his face, as if he had heard a good joke and was trying hard not to laugh.

Sees Jane knew in her heart he was secretly laughing at her.

She turned around very carefully in her seat so she wouldn't have to look at him. From the way she hunched over in the seat, Jason could tell she was angry.

“What do you think of the lake?” asked Jason after the silence between them had become uncomfortable.

She looked out over the deep blue water, silvery and shimmering in the sun. She saw the tall grass and dark green pine trees as they glided silently along.

“Not much,” she said.

Jason paddled on for a time. He tried again. “I like your end of the lake where the trees and grass grow wild right down to the edge of the water. It's almost like it was before any people were here.”

She turned and looked back at him. He pulled in his paddle and laid it across his lap. He flexed his shoulders which had stiffened from paddling. The canoe drifted while he rested.

“It looks pretty wild up there by the burial grounds too,” she said.

“The old burial grounds are sacred to the people who live here. Time stops there. Nothing has changed. I hope it never changes.”

“What’s it like?” Sees Jane said suddenly.

“What’s what like?” said Jason, sounding confused.

“Being Indian? Having some place that is sacred?”

Jason was shocked. “You’re Indian aren’t you? Don’t you know?”

“I only know what I read in books. And I haven’t even read all that much about it yet. I might be Indian by blood, but I sure haven’t been raised as one. So what’s it like?”

Jason put the paddle in the water, letting the drag of the oar slowly turn the canoe back toward the trading post.

“I can’t tell you,” said Jason, and he shifted his head and looked away toward the center of the lake.

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t know you.”

“Or is it because you just don’t like me?” Sees Jane turned and stared at him to see how he reacted to that. Might as well be direct.

“Those are not my words. I never said anything like that,” said Jason.

“You implied it a bunch of times,” she said. “I’m not thick, you know. I can take a hint.”

“I think it is dangerous for you to be here. I wish you weren’t here. That isn’t the same thing as not liking you.”

“You want to explain that? It makes no sense.”

“No.” The word just hung there between them. Jason put his paddle back in the water and

began pulling hard in the water. The canoe shot forward like a startled bird.

“Is that it? Just no?”

“The lake is dangerous,” said Jason, paddling harder. “That’s what you should know. I say it again. You shouldn’t be out here.”

“Hey. No problem. Why don’t I just get out and walk.”

“Suit yourself,” said Jason.

“Did I mention I can’t swim?” she said.

“I guessed it already,” he said. “By the way you paddle a canoe.”

She muttered quite a few unkind things about him under her breath.

The canoe sailed effortlessly across the lake and they fell into an uneasy silence.

Sees Jane tried to stare into the depths, trying to see fish in the clear water. In places it was so shallow she could see the sandy bottom. They were about three quarters of the way across the lake. Now the water was a darker green and she couldn’t see the bottom. She let her hand trail through the water like a tiny paddle.

She shivered suddenly and she heard Jason gasp. The sun had been hot on their heads, mirrored by the surface of the lake. But now that they were in deeper water, a sudden chill seemed to rise from the depths. Sees Jane shuddered. It was as if they had stepped into a freezer.

She turned to look at Jason to see if he felt it too. He looked stricken. He paddled even more fiercely, bending his back to the task. His breaths were ragged with the effort.

Sees Jane saw his breath in the air, as if he were in the coldest of winter days. It was eerie and frightening. An intense cold sharp as an Artic wind settled over the canoe.

Before Sees Jane could react, something under the water, touched her hand.

She looked down and screamed. A hand closed around her arm. She screamed again and

struggled to free herself. She struggled to break free but whatever it was in the water did not relinquish its grip.

“Help me!” she screamed. She was being pulled by something incredibly strong. Now her whole arm was in the water and her head was over the metal edge of the canoe. Her hair trailed in the icy water. Jason shipped his oar, and began crawling forward in the canoe.

A pale white hand came out of the water. It groped blindly, found her hair and seized it. There was a splash as something furiously lashed against the bottom of the canoe. With a mighty heave, the thing under the water yanked Sees Jane out of the boat and into the water.

The canoe tilted and almost went over.

She thrashed, face down in the water. Fighting against whatever held her but unable to beat it off. She began to sink.

Jason dove for the front of the canoe. One arm lashed out and went down into the water. His hand closed on Sees Jane’s leg. He had her.

He heaved with all his might. She came up to the surface. He held on to the far side of the canoe with one hand for leverage. His muscles bulged with the strain as he threw his back into another hard pull. She turned in the water, thrashing wildly. Her head broke the surface and she took in a frantic gulp of air.

Jason let go of her leg abruptly and lunged. Now he had her by the arm and he pulled her to him. Her face was pressed against the aluminum side of the canoe. She tried to scream but her throat was tight from lack of air. Her eyes were wild with terror.

Her one arm was still deep in the water. Something still had her, and Jason could feel its hideous strength.

Jane kicked frantically at something under the water. The arm Jason gripped thudded hard

against the canoe seat. Her free hand clawed futilely at metal, trying to find purchase on the side of the canoe.

Jason held on. He tried to pull her higher out of the water, to bring her back into the boat but he was no match for whatever lurked beneath the water. His back convulsed with the strain. Slowly, inexorably she was being drawn back down into the water. He heaved grimly with arms that felt like they were going to break. Sees Jane lashed out, twisting and turning, trying desperately to keep her head above the water. But it was already up to her eyes and she was going under again.

The wind picked up, turning the canoe broadside in the wind. It drifted toward shore even as the life and death struggle continued. The wind pushed the canoe beyond the deeper water.

The feeling of winter, the sense of its icy breath, dissipated.

Now the sun was back, the air hot and still and then Jason cried out in pain. He was losing her! His grip was failing. The darkness was winning.

And then it was over. Sees Jane came rushing up to the surface. She came up so quickly that she half fell into the canoe. Jason lost his grip on her arm.

Her arms were up in the air flailing wildly and she seized Jason. She climbed up him hand over hand, using him like a human tree. Her frantic frenzied climb into the canoe almost overturned it.

As soon as her legs were in, Jason rolled against one side of the canoe, counterbalancing it, keeping it from going over. There was a bruise on her face where it had hit the side of the canoe.

She fell into the bottom of the canoe beside him. They did not move.

For a time they just laid there. Afraid to speak, uncertain how to put into words what had just happened.

Hesitantly, almost timidly, she finally said. "Jason. I think I'm scared enough for you to tell me things now," she said.

"Yes," said Jason. "Now you're as scared as I am."

The boat drifted ahead of the wind. The sun was warm on their faces and it could have been a beautiful summer day but inside they remembered the awful cold. And everything that had just happened.

Jason got up slowly, rising to a half crouch, both hands firmly on the sides of the canoe.

"You feeling any pain? You're not hurt too bad are you? Are you alright?" said Jason, bending down over her. "Can you get up?"

"I just want to lie here for a while," she said but that feeling didn't last more than a second. She moved with sudden panic, bolting upright, staring wildly all around the boat. "Is it out there? Is it following us?"

"Don't know," said Jason. "Doesn't seem to be. But I'm not waiting around to find out either," With that Jason moved backwards, half bent, scuttling like a crab. He sat in the back of the canoe and began paddling with quick hard thrusts. The canoe shot across the waves.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Jason, breathing hard.

"No. Yes. I don't know." Her voice cracked and she was close to tears.

"Did you see what was under the water?" asked Jason.

"Yes.....but I.....I can't....." Just trying to put it in words brought all the terror back.

"It's ok. You don't have to talk about it," said Jason. "A couple more minutes paddling will take us in. You'll feel better when your feet are on the ground."

His words seemed to help. She turned around, moving her legs, so that she now sat facing the front of the canoe and the land they were making for.

Sees Jane tried to look ahead, to see only the rapidly approaching shore but her eyes kept edging back to stare at the water around the canoe. She kept in the middle of the canoe, as far away from the water as she could get. Water dripped in a steady cascade from her hair and clothes until there was puddle in the canoe beneath her.

“Some dry clothes and some hot food and you’ll feel better,” said Jason. “I promise.”

“You saved my life,” she said. She turned and looked back at him. “I know that ...that you don’t like me. But.... I just wanna say...that I...am so...so grateful....” And now she couldn’t help it. The tears streamed down her face

Something thumped against the side of the boat. Sees Jane screamed and dove back towards Jason, her protector. She sprawled in the bottom of the canoe at Jason’s feet.

Jason stopped paddling. He put the paddle down and reached over the side of the boat, trying to grab something in the water. His hands closed over the object and started hauling it up over the side of the canoe. Sees Jane watched in abject horror.

It was thick tree branch about four foot long and still green with leaves.

“Oh,” said Sees Jane, her face reddening with embarrassment. “That’s not a....”

“No it isn’t. It’s storm wreckage,” said Jason with a smile.

“No teeth, no guns that you can see?” asked Sees Jane.

“The region is famous for trees that are not cannibalistic,” said Jason. “So I think you’re pretty safe from this one.” He lifted his arm and tossed the tree branch back into the water.

He reached down and helped her sit up. The smile on his face faded and he put one hand on her shoulder. She looked up into his face.

Jason was serious. “Let me say this again. I like you fine. I don’t want you to think I am a bad or hateful person. Because I’m not,” he said.

Sees Jane lifted a hand and touched his hand on her shoulder.

Jason went on. "I just didn't like it that you are here. And now you know why. You do know, don't you?"

She kept her face upturned to his. A single tear unbidden, streaked down her face and fell on Jason's hand.

"Down there under the water...I saw the drowned girl in the painting!" she cried.

"I know. It's ok. It's over now," said Jason and he put his arms out and around her shoulders.

She knelt there in the shelter of his arms.

She trembled, the terror rising in her again.

"She held me and she wouldn't let go!"

. "Don't try to talk about it," soothed Jason but no words could reach her.

"I felt her cold hands on me! She screamed at me!"

Jason just held the trembling girl.

"But there was something...something more awful!"

Her face was a mask of horror.

"Yes," said Jason transfixed. "What was it?"

Sees Jane shuddered as if something stabbed at her, something icy and sharp that pierced her heart.

"When she screamed, she called out my name!"

CHAPTER TEN

The canoe stopped with a thud against the shallow beach next to the dock behind the trading post.

Sees Jane got out of the canoe without any help. She almost leaped headfirst in her eagerness to be on land. She had never been so glad to get out of a boat

Jason stayed in the canoe until she was safely out. Then he jumped out into the water, put his hands on the side of the canoe and ran it far up onto the beach until it was completely out of the water.

“I’ll get you a ride back in a car,” he said. “I don’t think you need another canoe ride.”

“You couldn’t get me back in that canoe with a gun,” she said.

“How about two guns?” he asked.

“Maybe a cannon,” she said. “But only if you shot me out of the cannon and then I accidentally landed in the canoe. Maybe only then.”

“I’ll keep it in mind,” said Jason with a smile.

“We actually do that around here. And pretty much on a regular basis too. We call it tourist launching. The lake is a fun place.”

“Yeah. And you’re an idiot too,” she said with a laugh. “If I wasn’t so scared, I’d probably think you had a sense of humor.”

“If I wasn’t so scared, I’d laugh at one of my own jokes.”

On that note, they walked side by side toward the trading post. Jason helped her up the steep wooden steps to the dock and led her to the back door of the trading post.

“I should warn you before we go in,” said Jason as he reached for the door and pulled it open.

“Don’t! I want to be taken by surprise!” said Sees Jane boldly, and she stepped past him and walked quickly into the dark hallway. There wasn’t much light and she stumbled and almost

tripped. She threw her hands out to catch herself against one wall. But the wall was all fuzzy and smelled bad. She raised her head up and huge japing jaws and fierce bulging eyes bore down on her. She screamed and backed away in horror, tripped and fell flat on her back.

Jason yanked on a dangling cord and a weak 40 watt bulb cast a feeble glow in the hallway.

The giant stuffed bear looked scruffy in the dim light. It was crooked on its pedestal and its coat was shedding and one leg was loose and looked like it might fall off. One outstretched paw had been used as a coat rack. A couple jackets were draped over it and somebody had tossed a battered fishing hat on its head.

“I hope the surprise was big enough,” said Jason. “I know how much you like surprises.”

“YOU....you.....” she sputtered but there was no point trying to finish the sentence because after all he did try to warn her. “Oh! Help me up!”

“If it helps any,” said Jason bending down to haul her back on her feet. “I thought you were very graceful when you fell over backwards and landed on your backside. I thought it was very nicely done.”

She got up and shook his helping hand off angrily and motioned for him to go ahead of her in the hall. He smiled and moved past her. She thought about kicking him in the seat of the pants when he walked by but he moved too fast. She hurried after him. She had no wish to spend too much time in a darkened hallway with a dead bear.

“Hey wait! I can’t go in there. I’m still wet and my clothes are a mess.”

“It’s the lake. It’s summer. The beach is fifty feet from here. Almost everybody in there reeks of lake water. You’ll fit right in.”

Jason opened a door at the end of the hallway and ushered her through it into the trading post. It was brightly lit and cheerful inside and there were no dead bears.

Sees Jane looked around and was confused. It didn't look like an Indian trading post. It didn't look Indian at all. There were short aisles stocked with groceries in the center and all along the sides were fishing and hunting supplies. A counter at the end of the building said US POST OFFICE and there was somebody behind the desk passing out bundles of mail. Next to it was a large hand printed sign that said PHARMASY. Somebody had crudely crossed out the misspelled S and written C in red crayon above it. There was a counter for that and shelves in front of it that carried toothpaste and cough remedies and aspirin and all sorts of health related stuff.

"Stunning, isn't it." said Jason. "Kind of takes your breath away."

"It doesn't look like a trading post," she said.

"Have you ever seen one?"

"Well no."

"Then how do you know it doesn't look like one?" He held up his hand before she could ask any more questions. "It's just a store. Groceries, prescription drugs and there's even a lunch counter where you can buy food. If you can call fried baloney sandwiches food, that is. And you can even order a beer. There's another room that leads off this one. The beer's usually warm but it's cheap."

"Why do they call it a trading post? There's nothing Indian about it," complained Sees Jane who had an entirely different picture in her mind of what she thought a trading post would be.

"There's a shelf back there somewhere with some Indian crafts. Stuff that we make here. And sometimes when Indians are a little short of money, the old man who runs the place lets them barter some of the craft items for food."

"And that's why you call it a trading post."

“Yep.”

“I’m not impressed,” she said, feeling somehow cheated.

“Judging by the way you danced with the bear back there, I thought you were very impressed.”

“Oh shut up!” she said trying to be angry but smiling in spite of herself.

“Look around. Take in the sights,” said Jason. “I’ll go get Grandfather Elkhorn’s medicine.”

Jason left her there and walked to the counter under the sign Pharmacy. He talked to a grey haired woman and she went back behind the counter. Jason turned and leaned back against the counter and watched Sees Jane wandering through the store while he waited for the prescription to be filled.

There were lots of people in the store. Mostly summer people and a lot of them wore wet bathing suits and left damp spots on the floor when they walked by. Sees Jane found the shelf with the Indian crafts. It was only three feet long and most of what was on the shelf was dusty.

There were some nice wood carvings. Some bead work, in bags and on moccasins. There were feathered long pipes and a small tray of Indian rings. There were some beautifully woven baskets. But mostly what was on the shelf were authentic Indian souvenirs made in Hong Kong. There were fake tom toms, rubber tomahawks and plastic sets of bows and arrows.

It made Sees Jane sad and she moved away. There was a door along one wall. She thought it must be the lunchroom. She opened the door and went on through.

There was a scarred bar along one side of the narrow room. All of the people in the room, three of them to be exact, were Indian. The woman behind the bar had thick grey braids and had a couple of missing teeth when she smiled at Sees Jane.

“Can’t serve you a beer. Cause you’re underage.” she said.

"I was just looking around," said Sees Jane. "We're waiting for a prescription."

"Well, this here is the scenic route. Lookings free," said the woman with a gappy grin.

"Want to sit and have some soda water?" She said. "You look about half drowned."

Sees Jane shuddered. The memory of what happened on the lake flashed through her mind.

"I fell out of a boat," she explained. "I don't usually go swimming with all my clothes on."

"Happens a lot around here," said the old woman. "Summer foolishness."

One of the Indians got up to leave.

The woman looked down at the counter and shouted at him.

"Hey you!" The man turned.

She held up a greasy dollar bill.

"This is an Indian bar. Ain't no tipping allowed."

The man came back and took the bill from her hand. He ducked his head apologetically as if he had forgotten something important.

Unnoticed Jason had come through the door and stood behind Sees Jane. He had a small white bag in his hand.

"Tipping," said Jason. "More of the white man's burden!"

The old woman behind the bar heard him and she laughed openmouthed.

"Them white people got plenty of burdens, don't they just!" she said.

"C'mon, let's go." Jason put his hand on her arm.

They left the bar and went back through the trading post and out the back door.

Jason dropped down on the deck and motioned for her to take a seat on the dock beside him.

"I gotta go home by canoe. But if you wait here by the dock, somebody will come and pick you up and take you back by car."

“Aren’t you scared to go back out on the lake?” asked Sees Jane feeling the icy cold fear rising in her again.

Jason thought about it for while. He had a somber look on his face

“It’s not me that it’s after,” he said finally. “What’s in the lake doesn’t call out my name.”

Sees Jane couldn’t bear to think about it any more.

“Lets talk about something else!”

“Ok.” Jason understood her distress, her need not to talk yet about what happened.

“I understand now why there are things you don’t want to talk about. I get that, ok. But the other thing I asked you about. Why can’t you tell me about what it’s like to grow up Indian? Why is that such a big secret?”

“It’s not a secret.”

“So tell me about it.”

Jason tried to be patient with her.

“It doesn’t work that way.”

“Well how does it work then? You’re being a jerk again.” He was really the most infuriating person to talk to. A clam probably gave up more secrets than he did.

“I’m not. You just want too much without having first earned it.”

“You’re a real ray of light, is what you are!” she said.

Jason didn’t want to fight with her.

“Listen it’s nice here. The sun’s drying your clothes. Try to enjoy the warmth of the sun and the cool breath of the wind. Now's just not a good time to talk. Learn patience.”

“Well, excuse me for asking!” she said sarcastically. And for living too, she almost added.

“There is a time and a place for everything,” said Jason. “Everything is connected to

everything else. But you have to know when to ask and when to answer. Just be easy on yourself.”

Another brush off but his tone was different somehow. True, he still wasn't answering her questions but he was treating her less like a stranger. The experience in the canoe had changed them both.

The hostility towards her that she had long sensed in Jason seemed gone.

“I do need to relax,” she said in response to what he said. “Maybe I just need to feel the sun on my face, like you said.”

Jason smiled at her. He threw his head back to catch the sun full on his face and she did the same.

They sat there in silence for a while.

The welcome warmth of the sun beat down on the water, making everything sparkle. It was a beautiful place and summer held full sway here, pushing back all the terror of the time before

In a place this beautiful, it was hard to be angry with anyone or anything.

Jason seemed to be thinking about something, as if uneasy about the way he had spoken to her.

“Look, I'm sorry. I'm not trying to hurt your feelings. But you can't just ask what it's like to be Indian. It's not about questions. I can't ask you what it's like to be you so I can learn to be you. Do you know what I mean?”

“I think so. I'm not sure.”

“If you eat an apple, it doesn't make you understand the tree. Being Indian is like getting to know the tree. You plant it, spread its roots out evenly in the soil, trim the bad branches and water it and feed it and watch it make its journey to the sky. If you are with it long enough, you

begin to understand the tree. Your heart and the tree's heart become the same thing. That's how you have to learn about us," said Jason.

"I'm too eager, aren't I. I'm sorry if I was sarcastic. I'm not in a real comfortable part of my life right now," apologized Sees Jane.

"Don't feel bad. Grandfather Elkhorn always says "We can't help how we are only how we are going to become."

"I like that. That sounds hopeful." She also found it hopeful the way Jason really talked to her and listened to her now. He seemed to care about what she thought. And had been patient and tried not to hurt her feelings.

"Mary says you have kind of a sad life. You and your mother don't get along all that well," said Jason.

"It's too early in the day to talk about my personal situation. Besides it'll get better," said Sees Jane. She didn't know if she completely believed that. Everything that ever seemed to get fixed always came unfixed.

"Indians have kind of a sad life too. Just so you know. We have trouble in our world. Life is hard for our people." Maybe that thought sparked something in him because his shoulders stiffened and his face tensed.

Jason looked up at the sun, shading his eyes and judging the sun's position in the sky.

"Listen, I have to go," he said suddenly. He dropped the paper sack with the medicine in her lap. "I have things to do."

He got up quickly. "You gonna be ok if I leave you here until your ride comes?"

"Sure," she said but she didn't really mean it. The good moment was fading fast. She didn't want to be alone. She thought he should know that but he was already dragging his canoe back

into the water. He had moved even before she had fully answered him. He seemed in a pretty big hurry all of a sudden. It was like they were strangers again.

Jason stuck his paddle in the water, until he hit bottom and used it to pole the canoe off the beach. It glided back. Jason deftly maneuvered the paddle on one side to slowly turn the canoe until it was headed away from the trading post. He waved at her as he began to paddle off but she didn't wave back.

She stared at him. She had hoped that he would turn and look back at her but he didn't.

That feeling that always seemed to be with her, that simmered under her skin, came back in a rush.

She felt abandoned.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The ride back by car was uneventful. The Indian woman who drove the car was very old and had glasses as thick as Coke bottles. Other than saying, "Get in," the old woman hadn't said a word the whole trip, just muttering and groaning the whole way back to the house. The car was even older than the woman. Sees Jane could see the ground rushing past through holes in the floorboards. It was not a thrilling ride. The old woman's legs were too short to reach the gas pedal. She just turned the car on and let it go on its own. Maybe the car went four miles an hour, if that. When they reached the house, the old woman ducked under the dashboard so she could clamp both feet on the brakes. The car shuddered to a quivering halt with the old woman's head hovering completely under the steering wheel.

“Get out,” said the old woman. “When you hear horn. You come quick. I don’t wait.”

“What?” It made no sense whatsoever.

Sees Jane got out and barely got the door closed and was trying to say thank you through the open window when the old woman jerked up, her feet shot off the brake and the car lurched forward.

Sees Jane shook her head in bewilderment as the car sputtered away in the distance. She was definitely not in the city anymore.

She turned around and began walking toward the house. The closer Sees Jane got to the house, the worse she felt.

What had happened in the boat had scared her, really scared her, and now she was going back to the house that was no more comforting than the thing that dwelt under the surface of the lake. Would she be any safer there than she had been in the canoe?

Sees Jane stood at the front door and couldn’t make herself open it.

She looked up at the dark windows of the house. She saw something move at one window. She almost screamed.

A dark face appeared at the window.

“In my day, a date wasn’t over till the sun went down,” said Grandfather Elkhorn, with a big teasing smile. He leaned out the open window and winked at her. “Course maybe you city kids, do it different.”

She held up the bag with the medicine in it. “I got your stuff! Who says it was a date?” she asked. “I don’t date! It wasn’t a date!”

The front door opened and Mary stood there. “Well we were hoping it was a date!” she teased. “But it looks like you let him get away!”

“IT WASN’T A DATE!”

Mary flinched and stood aside as Sees Jane stormed into the house. Mary was going to mention that Sees Jane looked a bit damp but considering her mood let her pass by without further comment.

“Is she alright?” called out Grandfather Elkhorn from somewhere inside the house.

Sees Jane thundered up the stairs and disappeared into her room. There was a loud banging of drawers and the sound of the shower starting. Every room in the house still reeked from the fire that was not quite a fire. Even the bathroom had a sharp tang of smoke.

Mary called back. “She’s fine!” But Mary thought she didn’t look fine at all.

Later, after showering and changing her clothes, Sees Jane came down into the kitchen.

Grandfather was messing around with the stove when she walked in. He turned and impulsively grabbed her and gave her a big hug which took her by surprise. She was so glad to see him she almost cried.

“Are you hungry?” he asked.

Sees Jane started to say no. But then to her surprise, she realized that she was starving. Maybe terror did that.

“I think I could eat a horse,” she said and she plopped down in a chair at the kitchen table.

“That’s terrible!” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “Cause I’m not cooking horse, I’m making chicken salad.”

“Chicken salad sounds great too,” she said. “I’ll eat anything that isn’t moving.”

Mary came into the kitchen and saw Sees Jane at the table. She looked at the stove and wrinkled her nose. Grandfather was cooking something and it didn’t smell good. She sniffed disapprovingly and left the room.

Sees Jane wanted to jump up and follow her. She felt a sudden frantic need to tell Mary everything that had just happened on the lake. She heard Mary's footsteps as she went up the stairs. But the thought of going up those stairs, to the dark rooms above chilled her. She sank back in the chair. The kitchen was warm and sunny and felt safe. Later in some sunny room where the terror seemed far away, she would tell Mary everything. Right now, the kitchen seemed the only safe place to be.

"You really shouldn't eat horse anyway. I always choke on the saddle! That part is just too darn tough," said the old man with a gleeful cackle.

It was hard to stay scared around someone as cheerful and full of life as Grandfather Elkhorn.

Sees Jane sat patiently at the kitchen table watching him cook. He turned around and looked at her intently. He could tell something was not right. He turned the burner down on a pan on the stove, put his spoon down and came over and took a chair across from her at the kitchen table.

"So tell me what is wrong? Something has happened?"

"I'm not sure I feel like talking about it." Sees Jane said.

"Oh, then it must have been serious," He folded his hands together on the table and smiled at her.

"Serious enough I guess."

"Big fight with that boy Jason?" He teased.

"No."

"You are not happy about who you are?" He looked at her kindly.

"I never said that. This isn't about that."

"I think it is," he said. She knew he was wrong but she did not want to correct him. She hoped he would talk about some of the things she was confused about, about her own identity and her

father and all the things she did not know about herself.

“You were very young when your father died. Knowing your mother, your father was not much talked about when you were growing up. Am I right?”

“If she mentioned his name at all, she was probably only complaining about something,” I said. “Or cursing at him.”

“Are you curious to know what he was like?”

“Yes. It’s part of the reason why I wanted to come here.”

“Your father was a good man. He had much that was good in him. He was wild but then many young people have that kind of wildness.”

“Did he hurt my mother? Was he bad to her?”

“He was my son. I would want only to think the best of him but I know he sometimes had the selfishness of the young. Did he hurt her? I would think so although I do not know. He was not a perfect human being.”

“My mother really seems to hate him, so much I think sometimes she hates me for being his daughter.”

The old man hesitated before he spoke again. It was plain that what he was about to say was painful to him.

“Do not think badly of me but I do not like your mother.”

Sees Jane looked startled. His directness surprised her.

He was quick to explain. “It is not because she was white! No! Not that, but because your mother thought a great deal of herself and cared very little for anybody else. She did not seem like a woman a man could share a life with. That has nothing to do with being Indian or white, it is just a sad truth about her.”

“I can’t disagree with you.” said Sees Jane regretfully. “I wish I could.”

He tried to soften the blow. “But I do like her for bringing you into the world! That is one thing she got right!”

“My mother is kind of a long sad story,” she said. “I want to believe everything is ok when it comes to her but it just isn’t. My mother has other priorities in life more important than me. She has her boyfriends. Most of the time, I’m just in the way. That’s just the way it is.”

“I am sorry. If you had lived with us, if your father had brought you to live with us, your life would have been very different.”

“Why did my father marry her?”

“Your mother was beautiful to look at. Your father was young and foolish. It’s a bad combination.”

“Her boyfriends still think she is beautiful. Only none of them ever end up staying too long.”

“Why is that do you think?”

“If you want me to be honest, it’s because she’s selfish. Because she just doesn’t have anything to give anybody. Not me, not her boyfriends.”

“You are wise for a child your age.”

“No. I am stupid about a lot of stuff. But I try. It’s kind of you to tell me all this stuff. And to be so honest with me. I kind of need that now in my life. If my father was like you, I would have loved him even more.”

“No granddaughter could have ever said a finer thing! If only my wife could be here with us to see you. My heart would soar then.”

He wiped at something in the corner of his eye. His voice seemed softer now, as if it were harder for him to speak.

“Why do you think your mother is like she is?”

“Not loved enough as a kid? I can’t even guess.”

“Do you hate her?”

“I used to think I did. For a while she even made me believe father was as bad as she said he was. But she lies a lot. She lies to her boyfriends and to me and she does it so casually and easily I don’t think she even knows she’s lying half the time. It’s just her nature.”

“But you don’t hate her?” It seemed important to him to know.

“I feel sorry for her, and I don’t want to end up like her,” Sees Jane said.

“But it’s just too sad to hate her.”

“Did she love you?”

“She must have, cause as much as we don’t get along, I love her. And I probably wouldn’t do that if she didn’t love me some of the time. When I was smaller, I even think she was better. Now that I’m older, it’s kind of like she thinks I’m competing with her or something.”

“You are more Indian than you know. I can almost hear your father when you talk,” He seemed proud of her, as if she had done something particularly well.

“I just survive the best I know how. Nothing special in that.”

“Plenty special. You are your father’s child.”

“Really. I wish more than anything that I could have known him better,” Now she felt like she was really getting the blues.

“I have so often thought about you, growing up there in the city. I did not think it was right. I felt an Indian should grow up where the trees reach for the stars. I always resented the fact that your mother never brought you to visit us.”

“She never mentioned you. It was like she wanted me to forget you even existed.”

“We wrote and called every summer. Always we asked if you could come for a visit. But now you are here and it does my heart good. We had such great hopes to see you.”

“I hope I don’t disappoint you,” Sees Jane said, feeling suddenly shy.

“You have already exceeded my expectations,” he said with a smile.

He stared down at his hands as if thinking about something worrisome. He seemed to hesitate before he spoke again.

“Try not to think too badly of your mother. She has done some things well. She raised you, fed you and brought you to this time of your life. I am only sorry that my son did not live to see what a fine human being you have grown into,”

“Did my father love me? I seem to remember that he did, but I was so little and it seems like such a long time ago.”

Grandfather Elkhorn looked so incredibly sad. “My son thought you were the light of his world. He was very unhappy with your mother for much of the time he was married to her, but you he loved from the first day and always.”

“Sometimes I remember when he held me. I think I felt very safe then.”

“It is difficult to describe him to you. My own love for him might make him seem better than he was. My soft old heart might put too much sugar on my memory. He had flaws. He drank, you probably have heard all that from your mother. Sometimes he got into other kinds of trouble. He had too much of a temper. But the important thing was his love for you. A man who loves his own child carries much rightness into the world.”

“Am I like him? I mean the Indian part of me? That’s the part I don’t really understand,”
There was a longing in her voice.

“You have his eyes, but you are like yourself. That will some day be enough,” said

Grandfather Elkhorn. “Be patient. It’s your own heart you have to find, not his. A man brings a child into the world but the child makes his own journey through it. So it will be for you.”

Sees Jane had never had anybody talk so directly to her about things before. He seemed to just say what he felt, say whatever he believed. And he wasn’t embarrassed by anything. He didn’t talk as if everything was black or white. Sees Jane’s mother said things but only at gunpoint and all things for her were black or white and there was nothing in between.

But Grandfather Elkhorn seemed to know about all the things that fell in between. That made Sees Jane feel better about herself. Because most of the time, she felt she was just one of the things that fell in between.

“Now you scoot while I finish up this cooking.” He got up and went back to the stove. “I can’t concentrate with young people underfoot. Besides, there is always a chance you might get accidentally swept up and end up as one of the mystery ingredients in my chicken salad.”

“It sounds like a dangerous dish,” Sees Jane said as she got up from the table.

“Only if you are foolish enough to eat it. Now scoot!”

Sees Jane scooted. It was funny. She had meant to talk about what happened on the lake, not the problems of her own life. But this was better somehow. The terror had retreated, replaced with a warmth and light that touched her.

But the feeling only lasted half way up the stairs.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Mary stood at the top of the stairs. She was pale and drawn and her eyes were dark with dread and uncertainty.

“I think you better come upstairs,” she said. “There’s something you have to see.”

“What is it?”

Mary didn’t answer. Her face was stiff. She turned abruptly and walked down the dark hallway. Sees Jane went the rest of the way up the stairs. She moved slowly, almost reluctantly. She felt like she had seen too much already.

At the top of the stairs, she looked up and down the hallway but Mary wasn’t in sight.

“Where are you?”

Mary stepped out of a doorway at the end of the hall. She beckoned for her to come and disappeared inside the room. Mary’s silence seemed chilling.

Sees Jane moved cautiously down the hallway. The last door was open. The door was broken and splinters of it were sticking out of the doorjamb. The door was badly scarred and had a wedge shaped hole near the handle where an ax had hit it.

Mary was in the middle of the room, looking at something by the dim light of a heavily curtained window.

“This was one of the locked rooms,” said Mary quietly. “One I didn’t have keys for. The firemen broke it open.”

Sees Jane couldn’t see much. She hesitated in the doorway.

“It’s pretty dark in there,” she said and she could feel the panic rising in her.

Mary turned and looked back at her. She could see the fright in Sees Jane’s face. She wondered why she seemed so upset.

Mary moved to the window and threw back the heavy curtains. Sunlight flooded the room.

Now the details in the room stood out in sharp contrast.

Time had stopped in the room. It was a completely furnished bedroom in a style that had been

popular in about 1860. There was a black onyx fireplace along one wall. It was crafted of heavy steel and dominated the room. A brass and leather bellows used to stoke a fire lay atop the mantel. A row of heavy pots with the remnants of long dead ferns in them stood near the window. A four poster bed with a heavily draped canopy overhead sat in the middle of the room.

There were massive pieces of hardwood furniture scattered throughout the room. There were brass handled chests of drawers of varying sizes, intricately carved cupboards, sea chests with brocade tops and two matching armoires with forest scenes hand painted on the front and sides. At the foot of the bed was a flame mahogany serpentine chest with elaborate borders and moulded edges.

A heavily mirrored Victorian breakfront fitted wardrobe cast an eerie reflection of Mary standing beside the bed. As Sees Jane moved farther into the room, she caught a new reflection in the dark side panels of the mirrors. It was of two white coffins lying side by side on the floor at Mary's feet.

Mary moved to one side so that Sees Jane could stand beside her. The room was full, crammed from floor to ceiling with artifacts and personal items. Lacy fans hung in profusion from the walls, old paintings covered every wall. The people who had lived in this house had been rich and the trappings of what money could buy was everywhere evident. It was a museum where time had stopped. But the only thing that the two girls seemed to be able to look at were the two massive coffins at their feet.

The air inside the room was stale as if nobody had been in there for a very long time. There was a heavy coating of dust on everything. Cobwebs festooned the dark heavy wooden furniture and both of the coffins beside the bed.

Sees Jane was trembling as she came slowly across the room and stood beside Mary.

The coffins were ornately fashioned with heavy scrollwork, a tribute to the craftsmen of another age. The heavy lids were both closed.

“What do you think this all means?” asked Sees Jane.

“The room that seems to be stuck in 1860 or the coffins?”

“Both, I guess.” said Sees Jane.

“I don’t know. Maybe I don’t even want to know,” said Mary with a shudder. But even as she said it, her eyes were staring around the room as if the walls themselves would speak.

Mary put her hand on one of the coffins. “I wonder what’s inside,” she said. “Do you think we should open.....”

Sees Jane screamed and ran out of the room. The dark thing in the water that wouldn’t let go, the feeling of being pulled down into the shadowy depths, all of it came rushing back at her.

Mary ran after her.

Sees Jane paused in the hallway. She felt dizzy, her legs wobbled and she had to lean against one wall until the trembling passed. She was having difficulty breathing.

“Hey! I’m sorry. I didn’t meant to freak you out. We don’t have to go back in there.”

As if to demonstrate her point, Mary grabbed the shattered heavy oaken door and tried to close it. It was sprung from the jamb and did not move.

“It’s not the room,” said Sees Jane finally as some of the panic faded.

Mary stood in front of her, looking very concerned. She sensed something had happened, had had that feeling ever since Sees Jane had come back from the lake.

“Well, then what is it?”

Sees Jane tried to swallow the last of her panic, to push it deep inside her. She looked at Mary’s earnest face. She knew it was time to tell her what happened on the lake. And so she did.

Mary listened to the story with a kind of grim intensity. She said nothing until Sees Jane had finished with a final question. “Do you believe it?”

“Yes. Every single scary word of it!” said Mary. “And you’re sure it was the girl in the painting?”

“Yes. I saw her as clear as I see you,” said Sees Jane. “I would be dead if it hadn’t been for Jason.”

“I tried to warn grandfather about this place! You’re lucky to be alive!”

“Why is she doing this? Why did she call out my name? What does she want?” The questions just came spilling out of Sees Jane in a rush.

Mary shook her head. She didn’t know any more than Sees Jane knew but she knew that was something they had to fix.

“I think the answers are back there in the room,” said Mary. “And as scary as it is for you to be in there, maybe we need to go back in. Maybe we need to find out just what it is we are dealing with.”

“I don’t know,” said Sees Jane.

Mary took her hand. “I’m with you. We’ll do this together.”

Sees Jane allowed herself to be pulled along until they were back in the doorway to the room.

“I don’t really want to go in there,” said Sees Jane. “But I’m more scared of not knowing what this is all about.”

“Good for you,” said Mary.

They went back into the room. They avoided the coffins for now. Mary opened a cupboard and looked inside. It was filled with neatly folded clothes. A moth fluttered up out of the clothes and flew into the room. Mary sneezed. Dust was everywhere.

Sees Jane walked to the far side of the room by the window. There was a short chest of drawers on which a wash basin and a pewter water pitcher rested. She pulled open the first drawer and peered inside. She saw a small bundle of letters tied with a scarlet ribbon.

“I found something,” she said, picking them up and taking them out of the drawer.

She turned and waved them at Mary.

“Old letters! Maybe there’s a clue in here.”

Mary stared at her in an odd way.

Sees Jane moved to the bed. She eased the ribbon off the letter bundle and took out the first envelope on top. She was trying to open it when Mary’s hand closed firmly over hers so tightly Sees Jane couldn’t move.

“What are you doing?” said Mary.

“Just opening the letters,” said Sees Jane. “What’s wrong with you?”

She struggled to free her hand but Mary wouldn’t let go.

“You have a letter in your hand?” asked Mary.

“Are you stupid?” said Sees Jane. “What’s wrong with you?”

Sees Jane tried to wrest the letter away but Mary was too strong. Mary shoved her suddenly and Sees Jane stumbled and almost fell. She lost her grip and the letter fell out of her hands.

“Hey! What’s the big idea!” Sees Jane was angry.

Mary was standing there with an old fashioned straight razor in her hand. It’s blade was half open and gleamed dully in the sunlight from the window.

Sees Jane’s eyes widened in confusion. She glanced at the bed. There were no letters on the bed.

“But where.....”

Mary folded the razor carefully.

“I don’t think you should be in this room,” said Mary. “I don’t think it is safe.”

“But....I.....saw....it was letters....” Sees Jane just shook her head in disbelief.

Mary crossed the room. She opened a cupboard and tossed the straight razor in it and slammed it shut.

“I don’t understand what just happened!”

“You opened a cupboard, took out a straight razor and were just about to run your fingers down the blade. You would have been very badly cut. That’s what happened.”

“Ok then!” She bit her lip and tried not to react, tried not give into the terror that was creeping up her spine. “Well, that’s not so good, is it!” Sees Jane looked down at her hands as if they had betrayed her. The letters had seemed so real when she had touched them. She looked up at Mary.

“I think I will go back to my room now.”

“That’s a good idea,” said Mary.

“Are you coming with me?”

“No. I want to find out what I can.”

“I don’t want to go back to my room. If you’re staying....then...” Sees Jane’s voice faltered...“I guess I’m staying too.”

“Bad idea.” said Mary.

“Can I just wait out in the hallway?”

“Maybe,” said Mary. “But out of sight, ok? I can talk to you from inside the room. I can tell you what I find. But don’t come back in. Think you can do that?”

“Yes. I can do that. But I wish you could just come back to my room.”

“I want to open the coffins,” said Mary. “I want to know what the hell is going on in this

house before we have to spend another night in it.”

“Me too,” said Sees Jane but what she was really thinking was she wanted to be on a jet flying as far away from this place as possible. But that wasn’t any more real than the bundle of letters had been.

Sees Jane came out of the room. She moved quickly as if something was pursuing her. She went down the hall quite a ways and stopped. She put her back against the wall and called out.

“Is this far enough? Can you hear me?”

Mary’s voice was muffled and came from a distance. “I can hear you.”

There was the sound of footsteps and Mary was in the distant doorway. She leaned out so she could look at Sees Jane. She was just checking to see if Sees Jane was alright.

“Are you sure you have to do this?” Being alone in the hall was making Sees Jane nervous.

“I don’t like the idea of opening coffins any more than you do,” said Mary. “But there’s just too much we don’t know. You’ll be ok out here. This won’t take long.” Mary disappeared back inside the room again.

Sees Jane thought that if it took even one second it was already too long. She tried not to think about the coffins or what might be in them. Maybe there were answers in there to all the things they didn’t know. But she was dead certain she didn’t want to be there when the coffins were opened.

The answers to some of their questions was just about to knock on the front door.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Grandfather Elkhorn heard the car before he heard the knock. Curious, he was already headed for the front door when somebody knocked on it. The old man swung the door open.

There was a big old black ancient Lincoln Town car, holed with rust sitting in front of the house. A uniformed man was pushing a black metal wheelchair towards the house. In the chair was a very old man with a face much wrinkled by the years and with a shock of white hair.

Grandfather Elkhorn had never seen either of them before.

“House appears to be still standing,” said the old man without a preamble.

“Yes,” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

“Heard there was a fire,” said the old man in the wheelchair. “Came to see if the place was gone. It ain’t. Suppose I should be glad about that but I ain’t.”

Grandfather Elkhorn rubbed his jaw He had absolutely no idea who the old man was or why he was here.

“Would you like to come in?” he asked.

“No sir! I don’t for a fact!” The man in the wheelchair seemed almost angry at the idea.

The man in the uniform, who was undoubtedly the chauffeur, bent and whispered in his ear. The old man looked annoyed.

“Do you know who I am?”

Grandfather Elkhorn shook his head no.

“Pardon my manners,” said the old man. “My name is Samuel S. Darkland. I own this house.”

Grandfather Elkhorn moved down a few steps and put his hand out. He began, “I am..”

The old man batted his hand away. “Drat it! I know who you are. You rented the house from my real estate agent. This ain’t no social call!”

Grandfather didn’t like his manners.

“Well, then why exactly are you here then? The rent’s all paid.”

“I know it’s paid. What you think I am, some kind of idiot. Wouldn’t let you in the house if you hadn’t come up with the money. I am not simple, let me tell you. I come out here because I heard there was a fire. Got a right to come and see to my property.”

Grandfather stepped back and opened the door. “Might as well come in and inspect it then. It was just some smoke. No fire.”

“Shut that damn door!” screamed the old man.

Grandfather looked at the chauffeur who was smiling, apparently used to the old man’s attacks of irascibility.

Grandfather shut the door.

“You’re an idiot,” said the old man. “I ain’t going in that house. Only an idiot would go in that house.”

Now Grandfather Elkhorn was curious.

“What makes me an idiot?”

“Cash money. Cash money to rent this house!” cackled the old man with an explosive laugh.

“I don’t understand.”

“Want me to ‘splain it to you?” wheezed the old man. “It’s the curse of the Darklands. The house is haunted. Haunted bad. Didn’t nobody tell you that when you rented it?”

“I heard stories. Stories don’t scare me.”

“Well they ought to. Nobody in his right mind ever lived in that house! Probably no one ever will. I ought to know what I’m talking about. Yes sir. I’m 90 years old. I know a lot, yes sir, I do.”

“The house was not damaged. Just some smoke,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “And I’m paid up

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for the summer.”

“And I’m keeping every penny of it when you skedaddle. Oh, you’ll run like a scalded cat just like the rest of them. All my renters never stay beyond one night. Some don’t even make it for that long.”

“I paid for the house. I’ll leave when I see fit and not before.” said Grandfather Elkhorn quietly. He did not like this old man in the wheelchair.

“Fool, that’s what you are. Unless you’re crazy. Are you crazy? Why if you are, why then you just might get your money’s worth. See, there was old Aunt Maddie. She lived in this house eighty years! Course she was bug eyed and mad as a loon. Guess ghosts don’t want much truck with loonies else they would have run her off too.”

“I’ll be here all summer. And I’m not crazy.” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “And I don’t have to take sass from you even if you are my landlord.”

“Well, you’re a shirty one. For a fact you are,” said the old man. “Listen, if Samuel Darkland says you are going to turn tail and run like a dog’s chewing your rear end, then by God, it’ll happen just that way.”

“Listen. I don’t have time to jaw about this. I got stuff on the stove.” said Grandfather Elkhorn impatiently. “If that’s all you have to say, I’ll be getting back to it.”

“Say! Let me tell you something! Tell you a story that’ll turn your hair white as mine! How ‘bout that! Give you the facts and then maybe you won’t be so sassy!”

Grandfather Elkhorn had heard enough. He turned to go back in the house.

“The angry dead!” roared the old man. “That’s the Darkland curse.”

Grandfather paused with his hand on the doorknob. “Her name was Celena Darkland. Wild she was! Father couldn’t do a thing with her. Fierce will. All the Darklands got it. Got her killed

The old man was excited now. He leaned forward in the wheelchair, his face animated and his gestures vivid as he told the story.

“Her father was Calrod Darkland. He married a daughter of an Iroquois chief from upstate New York. Family hated his wife but Calrod did whatever he wanted. Wife pretty as sin they say. She died giving birth to little Celena. Made him crazy with grief, it did. Hard times those days. He was wicked mean to the girl. Blamed her maybe. Who knows.”

The old man coughed violently. The intensity of the story was getting to him.

“He was a cursed man. All the Darklands are cursed. Even me!” the old man laughed. “Buried everybody who ever was in my life, that’s my curse. But I’m still here!”

Grandfather Elkhorn wanted to go back inside but despite himself he was fascinated by the strange old man.

“Just like this old house. Evil old things just won’t die.”

The old man wiped his face with one sleeve of his coat and went on with his story. “Rich they were. Railroad money and timber money and mining too. All the land on this side of the lake, they owned it. Still belongs to the Darklands and will till I die.”

“Calrod built the house to forget about his dead wife. Bought up everything in sight so he didn’t have to be reminded what people looked like. Built this house like a prison. Guess he thought his daughter was the criminal because this is where he caged her up.”

Now Grandfather Elkhorn was glad he stayed. He turned from the door and moved down towards the old man. He stood in rapt attention in front of the wheelchair as the old man went on with his story.

“Got your interest now, don’t I?” said the old man with wizened glee. “Well, you won’t think

so much of it when the angry dead come for you in the night!”

“We’ll see about that,” said Grandfather Elkhorn calmly. “What happened next?”

“Love and murder!” said the old man. “It’s what always happens when people are in the mix!”

“The girl fell hard for some boy from across the lake. Father wouldn’t allow it. That’s where the story gets hard. Aunt Maddie, Calrod’s little sister, took the girl’s side. Tried to help. It’s there the Darkland name goes black.”

“What happened?”

“I’ve heard the story a hundred ways and everyone of them black as the heart of evil itself.”

“Which of them is true?”

“I couldn’t say. Some say Calrod Darkland murdered the boy and dropped him down a well, never to be seen again. Then the girl Celena drowned herself in the lake out of grief. They say that.”

“And is that what happened?”

“They also say Calrod was in such a rage, he killed them both and buried them deep in the woods. His own daughter dead by his hand!”

“They say she was drowned. They say she was burned in a fire. They say buried alive, for no one liked Calrod Darkland and was willing to believe the worst. He was capable of any of those things and there was none to doubt he hadn’t done something terrible.”

“If any of those things happened to the boy and the girl, what happened to the father Calrod. ”

The old man laughed wickedly. “Go ask him yourself. He’s hanging in a tree out there on the island in the middle of the lake.”

“Killed himself,” said the old man and he laughed. “But he did leave a helpful note. Kind of

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explains it all.”

“What did it say?”

“Just four words that are the entire family history. “The Darklands are cursed.”

“And you know this to be true?”

“I don’t know spit! The dead know what happened and it must be fierce. Cause they won’t leave the living alone! That’s all I know and all you need to know. As for true, well I know upstairs in one of those rooms, you’ll find the coffins for two people in a room set for a honeymoon that never happened. Mad Maddie kept it that way for eighty years, waiting for God knows what. She’s gone to dust but that room is there.”

“You’ve seen it?”

“No.”

“How do you know it’s there?”

The old man laughed.

“Take me home Simon. I’m worn out from talking to this fool.”

The chauffeur gripped the handles of the wheelchair. He pivoted the wheelchair and began pushing it back toward the old car.

“How do you know it’s there?” insisted Grandfather Elkhorn.

The old man turned in his chair. His voice was just strong enough to carry back to the old man.

“Calrod told me on the hanging tree. Maybe he’ll tell you too!”

His fierce laughter echoed and was only stilled by the slamming of the car door behind him.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Sees Jane found it incredibly difficult to wait in the hall while Mary was in the room with the coffins. She was afraid to be too far away and afraid to be too near. Despite all that, she found herself inching her way along the hall.

“Talk to me,” she said nervously. “Tell me what’s happening!”

Mary did not answer.

It made Sees Jane frantic.

“Mary! Are you ok? Mary!” She moved faster and now she was almost at the doorway.

Sees Jane heard Mary groan and she couldn’t stop herself. She bolted forward and into the doorway of the room.

The sound was Mary trying to lift the heavy coffin lid. It wasn’t hinged. It was grooved and inset and had to be lifted from the end. It was surprisingly heavy and Mary strained. It resisted because the wood had swollen with the damp and fitted tightly against the coffin edge.

It came free suddenly and clattered to the floor with a bang as it slipped out of Mary’s hands. Mary put her hands to her mouth and looked down in the coffin with a perfect O of terror framed behind her hand.

Sees Jane raced headlong into the room. She hadn’t meant to come inside but curiosity about whatever it was in the coffin drove her unthinkingly forward.

Both girls stood side by side, staring at what lay inside the coffin.

No bones, no moldering remains. No feast for worms and decay lay before them.

It was a white wedding dress. Faded and grey with time. Matching shoes and a hat that must have been jaunty in the age it had been made were there too.

No one spoke. They exchanged a look.

“I’ve seen that dress before,” said Sees Jane.

“In the painting and in my dreams. I’ve seen it too,” said Mary. “What does it mean?”

Sees Jane put her hand on the coffin. “Maybe the answer is in the other coffin.”

Mary said suddenly with alarm. “You shouldn’t be in here.”

“I know. I just had to know.” She motioned at the other coffin. “But since I’m here. Let me help with the other coffin lid and then we can both get out of here.”

“Ok. But as soon as we get it open, we’re out of here!” said Mary.

They each grabbed the edge of the other coffin lid and tugged. It came off easier with two of them pulling. They laid it down carefully on the floor.

No body, no bones just like before. But now an expensive suit from long ago complete with shoes and hat was laid out in the coffin. There was a white handkerchief where the head would be if there had been a body. Perfectly centered on the white cloth was a small golden ring.

It was sad. It was not what they had expected. They lingered for a little bit, uncertain what to make of their discoveries. It wasn’t terrifying to see those clothes so carefully placed in the coffins but it was unsettling.

Mary turned and motioned for Sees Jane to follow. They walked slowly out of the room.

“Help me with this,” Mary had hold of the door. Sees Jane grabbed it just above Mary’s hands. It took most of their strength but they forced the damaged door to move until it was almost closed.

“I’ll come back later with some boards and nails,” said Mary. “I’ll shut this door permanently so that everything in this room, stays in this room.”

The thought of what might be in the room, seemed to scare them both.

They fled suddenly and didn't speak again until they were safely back in Sees Jane's room.

"I guess the wedding dress is the one the girl wore in the painting," suggested Sees Jane.

"I thought so too. But who belongs to the other coffin?"

"Don't know. Looks like somebody planned a wedding and didn't get one."

"Well we have some answers," said Mary.

"But not the right questions."

"Listen, you stay here. I'm just gonna run down and get some boards and nails and fix up that room, ok? We both wanna sleep tonight and I think we'll both feel better when that room is sealed up again."

Mary rushed out of the room before Sees Jane could say anything. Being alone in the room made her uncomfortable. She had not forgotten about the lake and now there was that strangeness with the razor. It was just a little bit too much to handle all by herself. She decided not to linger but went quickly downstairs and back into the kitchen. Better to risk getting chopped up in a chicken salad than sitting in her room scaring herself half to death with thoughts that just wouldn't go away..

Grandfather Elkhorn was standing at the stove, stirring up something thick and white-reddish colored and very lumpy. It looked like a huge slushy pot of melting snow that someone had scraped off a rusted-out car fender.

"Is that chicken salad?" she asked.

"You back again? This stuff? Special recipe," said Grandfather Elkhorn with a frown. "But I must have left something out."

He put a wooden spoon to his lips and tasted some of the concoction. He grimaced. His face got red and his eyes began to tear up.

“Too much spice!” he gasped. His forehead began to sweat.

“What kind of chicken salad is that anyway?” she asked. The smell coming from the stove was not one that inspired confidence.

“Texas-style hot chili pepper sage-and-savory barbequed deluxe chicken salad with buffalo gizzards for that,” he paused to cough, “extra special,” he coughed so hard his braids flew back and forth over his shoulders, “kick.”

When he got his breath back, he offered a spoonful of it to Sees Jane. When it was under her nose, she got a whiff of chili pepper that made the front of her face burn. Oh my!

“Uh...” She was wondering what the politest way of saying no was short of just running out of the kitchen screaming. Fortunately she was saved at the last moment.

“Don't eat that!” cried Mary from the doorway behind her.

Grandfather Elkhorn got a stricken look on his face as if he had suddenly been caught doing something wrong.

“You promised me you'd never make that stuff again!” said Mary and she seemed just pretending to be angry.

“But this is the milder version!” protested Grandfather Elkhorn.

“Ha! It's so mild that if it hasn't completely ruined the bottom of that pan, it's a miracle!”

Grandfather scraped at the bottom of the pot with the wooden spoon.

“Well, the bottom of the pan IS a little gummed up but ...” he began. The spoon seemed to stick on a thick clump in the middle of the pot and he struggled to push it across the bottom of the pan but it just wouldn't budge.

From outside the house there was the loud insistent beep of a car horn. Mary looked down at her watch. “Right on time too.”

The car horn beeped again.

“That stuff would peel the asphalt off a highway!” said Mary.

“There you go!” said Grandfather, regarding the pan ruefully. “Young people always exaggerate too much. I tell you this is good, good stuff.”

Even he didn’t look convinced.

“Consider your life saved, Sees Jane,” said Mary. “We’re eating out.”

Sees Jane was relieved.

“But what do I do with all this chicken salad?” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

“Just leave it on the stove. Maybe later we can find a landfill that will take it,” said Mary.

Grandfather Elkhorn looked thoughtful.

“I suppose I’ll just take it down to the lake and feed the fish with it.”

“Shame on you,” teased Mary. “That’s what’s killing all the fish.”

The car horn beeped again.

“C’mon. Aunt Tuckee waits for nobody.”

The old man turned off the stove and the three of them went outside.

Sees Jane discovered that Aunt Tuckee was the old Indian woman who had given her a ride in her old car back from the trading post.

The horn beeped again, louder and more insistent as if it had the power to hurry them on their way. Sees Jane and the old man got into the backseat of the dilapidated car. The floor of the car was littered with candy bar wrappers and broken fishing bobbers.

The old woman slid over on the front seat. Mary took her place behind the steering wheel.

“Made me wait. Don’t like that,” said Aunt Tuckee which was the last thing she said for the entire night.

Mary put the car in gear and it started off with the customary lurch.

“I told Jason to send for Aunt Tuckee. I figured your first night here, you shouldn’t eat what Grandfather cooks. That would be just too scary.”

The old man stuck his tongue out at Mary but she didn’t see it.

“Besides I figured we could use some time away from the house. It smells like somebody has been burning Egyptian mummies in there anyway.”

“Nothing wrong with the way I cook!” grumbled Grandfather.

“It’s not the cooking that bothers me, it’s the trying to eat it afterwards without actually catching on fire that is the hard part,” said Mary.

Mary drove which was good because she could reach the pedals and the car actually went at something close to a speed limit. The trip around the lake was a fairly short one. They ate in a battered building called the Lumdee Swamp Hut. It featured fresh fish probably caught in the lake and burgers that had more grease in them than meat.

Aunt Tuckee went into the bar from which she wouldn’t re-emerge until it was time to go home.

Sees Jane laughed through much of the night. Mary and her grandfather were like a comedy team. She forgot again all about being scared on the lake. They seemed to have so much fun with each other. They were always joking, seeing the comic side of things.

Maybe that surprised her the most, that they had this wonderful sense of humor and none of the Indians in movies ever did.

It was fun. They talked for hours and she got to know them both a lot better. Grandfather Elkhorn talked about his wife Bessie, dead in his life but not in his heart. The way he talked about her, it was plain that she had been the one true love of his life. Sees Jane was sorry she

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never got to know her.

Sees Jane came away with a sense that the father she had never known came from very good people. Grandfather Elkhorn was pretty rugged despite his age, with a certain strength, a kind of inner toughness. But also he had a kind of peaceful quality which Sees Jane admired. Maybe he was not the best educated person in the world but he seemed to understand the world he lived in pretty well.

Sees Jane admired that because she did not understand the world she lived in. Not her mom or herself or who she was supposed to become. Sometimes she felt she was half not anything.

She found herself talking about her life, talking about things she never told anyone. Both Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn were easy to talk to and they really listened to her. They did not ask any dumb questions or tell her how to do this or how to do that. Grandfather Elkhorn said it was her life and that she would someday be wise enough to answer all her own questions. She could tell they cared about her.

Again Sees Jane almost forgot the lake and the old house and the razor that cuts and the face of the drowned girl. Almost.

While they were eating dinner, a storm blew up around the lake. In the distance they could see a flash of heat lightning and hear the distant rumble of thunder as they left the restaurant.

“Big storm coming,” predicted Grandfather Elkhorn as they got back into the battered old car. “It’ll get bad later. We’d best be getting back.”

They got home pretty late and Sees Jane felt really tired. She went up ahead of them and got ready for bed. She was barely able to keep her eyes open. Already rain was beginning to pelt the windows of her room.

She sat on the edge of the bed and combed out her hair. She thought about these new people

in her life. Both Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn seemed to have such a different sense of what life was supposed to be. They seemed to see and think about things in their lives with more clarity than Sees Jane could. Mary was her age for instance but she didn't seem to be so concerned about who she was.

Sees Jane worried all the time about who she was supposed to be but Mary didn't seem to care. Maybe because she already knew her own answers. A lot of what she knew, seemed to come from being Indian.

Sees Jane did not see how she could ever grow to be like them. Or like the father she did not know.

Mary came into the room.

“How you doing?”

“I'm thinking about a lot of things.”

“Is that good or bad?” asked Mary with a smile.

“It's mixed, I think. But mostly it's good. I've been thinking maybe it's all the windows we spend our lives looking out of that make us who we are. I live in the city and look out windows that don't let me look at much. Here you and Grandfather Elkhorn seem to have a whole world beyond the glass.”

“You are really taking things too seriously. You should try to relax and let some life just happen to you.”

“No. I can't do that. I'm broken and I'm trying to fix myself. This is important to me. Cause this is what I'm really thinking. I mean if people were houses and our eyes were windows, you and Grandfather Elkhorn would open up to the sun and summer would come into the room. It's just how I feel.”

“And if Sees Jane was a house, what would your windows be?” said Mary.

“I’d probably be all fogged up with a crack in the pane and smog and the sounds of traffic would be trying to get in.”

“We just have to change your windows. Take down the storm windows and put windows of summer up so you can hear the birds sing. You get some sleep and we’ll let tomorrow be the day for new windows, ok?”

“Thanks for caring,” said Sees Jane. “I mean that. I means a lot of me.”

There was a crash of thunder, closer now than before and there was a steady beat of rain striking the window. There was a brief flash of lightning that lit the room.

“We’re just glad you’re here. Now you get some sleep. If the thunder gets too loud, I’ll ask Grandfather Elkhorn to turn it down,” Mary said with a smile and then went back to her own room.

Sees Jane almost had too much to think about. She was tired enough that her fears seemed smaller. She put her comb down, rolled back the covers and crawled into the bed. She leaned over and blew out the candle. It’s small warmth against the dark vanished.

She supposed she should be too scared to sleep but the terror she had felt at the lake seemed like it had all happened so very long ago.

It did not even seem so real anymore. She knew something in the lake had pulled her out of a canoe and tried to drag her under the water. If Jason had not saved her she would have drowned but he had saved her. That was all real. It wasn’t a dream. But a danger escaped was somehow a little less a danger. I’m safe and I’m going to be alright. There’s really nothing to be afraid of.

She almost had herself believing it as she drifted off to sleep.

In her dreams, the dead girl came for her.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

She tried to dream herself awake but there was no escaping.

Against her will, she moved down a long dark hallway. At the end of it a light flashed. The painting of the drowned girl moved into the light, pushed by an unseen hand. It floated down the hallway. The face of Celena Darkland moved with strange life on the painting.

The surface of the painting bulged, pale arms came out to Sees Jane, reaching off the canvas.

The body of the girl in the painting writhed and swelled, taking on form and substance. The drowned girl in the ruined dress stepped out of the painting, came gliding down the midnight hallway toward Sees Jane.

“Meet me at the burying ground,” the voice whispered as she came closer and closer. “Don’t fail me.”

Sees Jane wanted to turn and run but she couldn’t.

Now the shadowy one was upon her, face rushing to meet hers. Sees Jane felt something cold as night against her body and then the ghostly figure moved again Sees Jane felt the dark one’s body passing through her own flesh as if it were not even there.

Sees Jane struggled to turn her head but it no longer belonged to her. She tried to lift her hands but they answered to somebody else. A scream was in her, struggling to rise in her throat but something wanted to laugh instead. The laughter was shrill as a knife, bursting from her throat in an eerie stream. The scream died inside her. All of that which had been Sees Jane was

now just a tiny flickering light, forgotten and lost in the growing dark.

Now at long last freely can I move. My hands throb with life again. I feel the wet folds of my ruined dress. Oh, how cruelly the water has ruined it! Oh, I am killed once but I will not be killed again!

When I am unburied my true love will buy me dresses aplenty! No matter the grave's ruin, my true love will rise up and buy me new and better.

In that dark where he sleeps, I do love him so! What right had my father to keep him from me! I care not for father's harsh realm! My bones ache with love.

I run down the dark hallway. The storm that murders is almost upon us! Tarry not. My true love waits by the burying ground!

I hear a young girl's voice screaming. "NO! NO! PLEASE LET ME GO!"

Now that is odd! Hear it so plain in my head. Her words are nothing! Nothing!

I heed only my true love's voice calling me from the dark places of the night.

Silently now, down the stairs, yes, now down the dark hall, careful not to trip. Mustn't wake papa and his hateful rage!

Ever so quietly open the big oak door. It falls open with a terrible bang. I hear shouts in the house. Papa's coming! Oh, I've failed, failed! I go through the door and it slams behind me. I run with the devil at my heels. If I reach my beloved I know we shall be free. I must not fail him!

It's just a dream. Soon Sees Jane you will awake.

You'll be back safe and sound in your bed. Wake up! Wake up! Sees Jane kept willing herself to stop this dream. The heavy front door slammed shut behind her. She heard Mary's voice,

pleading with her, beseeching her. She can't make out what she's saying but Mary doesn't need to worry. It's only a dream!

The dream takes Sees Jane outside the house.

Funny, the sky seemed so clear when she went to bed. Now the world seems to be nothing but storm and thunder and lightning. Sees Jane is just dreaming but the rain pelts her face, cold enough to reach the bone.

I run down the dark path toward the burial ground. Lights on in the big house behind me. Caught out! Tis papa and the servants hasting after me with lanterns! Oh, they mean to stop me, that's clear. Perhaps they'll even use the dogs again! Oh, I must flee like a bird awing!

Lightning flashes my only light. Tis comfort for the path runs dangerous close to the sinking places I so greatly fear. Bitter cold rain comes down so hard. It strives against my heart's wish. I can barely see my hand atremble in front of my face.

I hear the baying of the dogs, the shouts of the men on horseback. And the voice of a girl. She doesn't belong here! This body is mine now, all mine!

I'm at a turning in the path. Which way? So dark, so hard to see! Is it this way? God's mercy, they're almost upon me!

*So close, so near to him, I must run! There! This must be the way,
I...NOOOOOOOO!*

The dark water closes over my head and the weight of my dress, oh, how I ached for him to see me in it, pulls me down. Oh, you would do me up again but I'll not have it!

I call out to him! I so desperately strive! I scream out his name but the cold water rushes into my mouth. The dark waves of the lake crash over my being, hiding him from me. Stone is my

heart if I fail my beloved! I feel myself sink into its dark stormy waterous embrace. Oh, my love!

I seek you in the depths!

Sees Jane willed herself to sit up now. Time to get up. She doesn't like this dream. This had gone too far. Let me go now. Sees Jane heard herself thinking but the one inside made it so hard that she could not quite feel what her body did.

It seemed all too maddeningly real. Why, she could even feel the water on her ankles. She plunged ahead and now it was up to her knees. The dream moved her deeper into the lake and now it went up to her waist and it was icy cold! Something waits and wants.

Now Sees Jane heard Mary shouting at her. She sounded so very far away, so frantic. Doesn't she know she doesn't belong here.

Sees Jane hoped she wouldn't try to stop her. Sees Jane had to obey the voice, heed the darker desire.

Run. Had to run. Don't catch me. So hard to run in water.

Something caught Sees Jane from behind. Strange, this wasn't part of the dream. Sees Jane felts an arm around her, holding her back. Somebody pulled on her now, firm and unyielding, dragging her back the way she had come. No, not back to the land, no the lake, the lake!

There was something waiting for her in the lake? Don't stop her!

Mary has hold of her and won't let go. It's Mary, soaking wet in the lake up to her waist, arms firmly wrapped around Sees Jane's shoulder. She drags her back out of the dark water, struggling to bring her back to shore. Sees Jane fought but she couldn't get free. She stumbled and was forced against her will into shallower water.

Mary called out to her. Her words filled the night. Called out that name again and again. Sees

Jane you have to listen. Sees Jane you have to come with me. Sees Jane please don't fight me....

Words and names! The one inside didn't want to hear them. Who was Sees Jane? What business was it of hers to want anything?

And what is inside suddenly lashed out. "I will not be dead again!" screamed the one within.

Sees Jane jerked free and her hands seized Mary by the throat. She lept forward, knocking them both into the water and they went under and it closed over their heads When they resurfaced, Sees Jane had Mary by the throat. Her knees pressed into Mary's chest and slowly and relentlessly she pushed Mary under the water. The spluttering girl struggled and tried to scream.

She fought to get free but Sees Jane was too strong. Mary's head stayed under the water. Her struggles got weaker. Sees Jane bore down even harder, slamming Mary even deeper under the water.

Grandfather Elkhorn's voice cried out behind her. A hand tried to break her grip but the one inside was too strong. This man's voice didn't belong in this dream. Mary moved feebly in the water. The one inside would not be stopped. Her eerie laugh tumbled out into the night.

A hard fist struck Sees Jane's face. The strength of the blow toppled her into the water. Mary gasping, freed suddenly, came up gulping desperately for air.

Grandfather Elkhorn grabbed Mary and lifted her to her feet. The choking air-starved girl leaned against him weakly.

"Go to shore!" yelled Grandfather Elkhorn, his voice rising above the storm. "Get out of the water!"

Mary backed away, terrified by what had happened. She needed no further urging. She stumbled forward, legs churning unsteadily as she ran awkwardly back to shore.

Grandfather Elkhorn bent down with one hand and seized the still body of Sees Jane floating in the water. He rolled her over until her face was turned up and above the water. He held onto the unconscious form and turned and began to drag her to shore.

He stepped up on the beach. He spun around and put both hands on her shoulders and dragged her up onto the beach. There was a lurid bruise on one side of her face where he had hit her.

His heart was racing and his chest hurt. The terror had taken all of his strength. He shuddered. If he had not been too restless to sleep, if he hadn't heard Mary's screams, this would all have ended in a terrible way.

He glanced back down at the still form of Sees Jane, unconscious on the ground. Even now it had not ended in a good way. He regretted that he had hit her. It was a thing that would trouble him for the rest of his days but he did not know what else he could have done.

The storm continued in its fury. He stood there for a while, feeling the fierce shooting pains in his arms and chest. Time for another one of his heart pills.

Mary was a sodden figure crouched farther down the beach. Grandfather Elkhorn waved at her to come nearer. She was pale and shaky but she moved forward and stood before him.

"Is she ok?" she said.

"I don't know," admitted Grandfather Elkhorn. "It scares me not to know."

The still form on the beach did not move.

"I hit her pretty hard. But she's alive, still breathing."

"She tried to kill me," said Mary with a shudder. "But it wasn't her. It's not her fault. I looked and saw somebody else behind her eyes."

"Somebody else was there," agreed the old man.

"Are you ok?" asked Grandfather Elkhorn. "I was so afraid for you."

“I was afraid for me too,” said Mary. “But I just swallowed a little lake water, that’s all. I’m cold as anything! And soaked right down to my spine but other than that I’m fine.”

“Not scared?” asked the old man gently.

“Very scared,” said Mary, shivering with the cold. “But I’m scared for her sake too.”

“Me too,” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

“We should try to get her inside,” said Mary.

“Yes,” said the old man, feeling his heart thumping irregularly in his chest. “Soon we will. But first I want you to go in the house and get me one of my heart pills.”

“Oh my god! Are you alright!”

He smiled and lied. “Yes. It’s just a little flutter. A little pill and I will be fine. I’ll just wait here until you get back.”

Mary trudged back through the rain to the house.

A sudden bolt of lightning made the lake as bright as day. Grandfather Elkhorn gasped. He had seen something in the lake. He waited until there was another revealing flash.

It was Jason. He stood a little ways out in the lake, his back to the shore. The water was up to his knees. Despite his pain, the old man waded a few steps out into the water.

“Jason!” The old man yelled loud enough to be heard over the wind and rain. “Jason! What are you doing out there?”

The boy turned his rain soaked face towards the sound of the old man’s voice. He began to walk slowly, moving deeper into the water.

“Wait! Jason!” The old man called out to him again.

The boy stopped and turned and stared back at the old man with a strange intensity as if seeing him for the very first time.

“Jason is dead,” he said.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

By the time Mary came back with the old man’s heart medicine, the solitary figure in the water was gone. The Jason who was not Jason had vanished in the wind and rain.

Grandfather Elkhorn took the pill from Mary and put it under his tongue. It dissolved quickly and the small war that seemed to be going on in his chest subsided. The pain eased and the old man felt that he was himself once again.

He was not the only one to feel that way.

Sees Jane opened her eyes suddenly and saw Grandfather Elkhorn standing over her. A shivering Mary huddled beside him. Sensing that she was coming awake, they were both bent down to her. She saw their faces looking at her with evident worry that was close to fear.

Her eyes opened wide in amazement. Her mind reeled in a bigger storm than the one that thundered over the lake..

“What? Where am I?” she gasped and she sat up. She stared at the muddy ground. She lifted a wondering hand to her face and it came up clumped thick with mud. “How did I....What happened?”

The wind plastered her hair to the side of her head and the hard rain pelted her face.

She felt the pain then as wind driven pellets of water hit the spot on her jaw where Grandfather Elkhorn hit her.

She touched her jaw tenderly, wincing with pain. Her muddy hand painted the bruise with

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black mud.

“You took a little walk,” said Grandfather Elkhorn, trying to explain.

“But I....I don’t....”

“Did I fall? Did I hurt myself? Why don’t I remember....”

“Let’s get you inside and out of the wet,” said Mary and she grabbed Sees Jane’s muddy hand and helped pull her to her feet. Sees Jane staggered and almost fell but Mary held onto her. Grandfather took her other arm.

“Can you walk under your own power?” asked Grandfather Elkhorn.

“A little muddy. A lot wet. I’m fine,” said Sees Jane but she felt far from fine.

“I’m not so sure about the last part,” said Mary. “But we’ll all be better when we’re out of the storm.”

The three of them trudged through the rain and the mud back to the house. Rain splashed down so hard it was difficult to even see the dark looming shape of the old house.

Sees Jane felt dizzy and so cold her teeth were chattering. She shivered and wrapped her arms around her to keep warm. All Sees Jane had on was the long thin cotton nightdress that she slept in. Her face ached, the jawbone sore and tender under the darkening bruise.

“You have to tell me what happened,” said See Jane as soon as they were back in the house. “I must have been walking in my sleep but I just can’t believe I did it. I’ve never done anything like this before!”

They all tracked mud in three wide streaks across the living room floor.

“Talk is for later,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. His face was a sickly blue and he looked cold and tired.

“I’ll start a fire! Mary go up quick and get us some warm clothes and blankets,” said

Grandfather Elkhorn. "We can talk all we want after we've all warmed up a bit."

Mary rushed upstairs to get blankets and a robe for all of them. Grandfather stacked wood in the fireplace. He quickly lit some dry kindling with folded up newspapers and got a fire started.

Sees Jane stood shivering in front of the fire, basking in the quickly rising heat.

The steam rose off her wet clothes.

Sees Jane started to speak but Grandfather, busy stoking the fire, motioned for her to wait.

"Get yourself changed and warm, then you can talk," he advised.

Mary came down with some warm clothes and Sees Jane went into the downstairs bathroom and got out of her wet things and into dry clothes. Mary had brought a thick Pendleton blanket which Sees Jane gratefully wrapped around her. Her hair was soaked but that would dry in front of the fire. Sees Jane was still painfully cold.

In dry clothes and wrapped securely in heavy Indian blankets, the three of them sat huddled around the healing warmth of the fire. The storm still lashed the house, rattling windows and shaking the walls.

There was a long uncomfortable silence with each of them lost in their own thoughts. When she was warm enough, and no longer felt the sting of the storm, Sees Jane asked, "What happened to me? How did I hurt myself? What was I doing down at the lake?"

"Sees Jane, think. Do you remember leaving your room and going down the stairs?" asked the old man. "Do you remember opening the front door and then running down toward the lake?"

Sees Jane shook her head. She was scared now. It was the dream, it was the cold scabbling thing that was inside her. It crawled up her bones and peered through her eyes. No! That was just a dream.

"I...had a dream...but I didn't....it wasn't me...." She began but she was confused. Her

memory seemed jumbled, as if she'd been in some deep dark sleep from which there was no waking.

She closed her eyes. There was a brilliant flash of lightning and she was opening the door but it was not her hand that pushed it open. The heavy door crashed with an enormous bang against the outside wall as the fierce storm caught it and tore it from the hands of the other. She looked back in fright and saw her reflection in the mirror.

No. Not a mirror. It was a painting with the screaming face of Celena Darkland.

A hand shook her gently and Sees Jane opened her eyes. The face of the drowned girl faded and it was Mary she saw instead.

“Are you ok? Where did you just go?” Mary was staring at her.

“What do you mean? Where did I go? I didn't go anywhere!” said Sees Jane but she wasn't sure of that, she wasn't sure of anything. Except that she should try to keep her eyes open because it was just too scary when she didn't.

Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn sat in chairs they had pulled up beside the fire.

They both looked grim, even a little frightened.

“Do you remember anything that happened?” asked Grandfather Elkhorn.

“Just fragments,” Sees Jane said. “Was I just walking in my sleep?”

“You were talking aloud. You did something that troubles us,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “I do not think you were just walking in your sleep.”

“Have you ever walked in your sleep before?” asked Mary.

“Never. My mom and I have always lived in pretty small apartments and she has boyfriends around all the time. If I had ever walked in my sleep before, somebody would have noticed.”

“Tell me what you remember about this experience, anything at all, even the tiniest thing. I

think it is important,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “And then we will tell you what you did.”

“What did I do?”

Mary touched her throat uncomfortably and started to speak but Grandfather Elkhorn put his hand on her arm and shook his head no. Mary nodded in agreement and did not speak.

“I’m not sure I want to remember,” said Sees Jane. “It scares me.”

“It’s important,” insisted Grandfather Elkhorn.

She closed her eyes and tried to remember the dream.

Suddenly it all came back to her. Sees Jane heard the frantic voice of the girl calling her outside. Sees Jane felt the bite of the wind and the slashing rain on her face. The men and dogs in pursuit. The need to be with her love, the dark path and the wrong turning that led to oblivion. All the things that must have happened to Celena Darkland, on some long ago night.

“I remember now. It’s all kind of hazy. I was the girl in the painting. I was Celena Darkland.”

Sees Jane looked at their faces. Grandfather Elkhorn was strangely calm. Mary looked very scared.

“I think I relived the last night of Celena Darkland’s life in my dream. But it didn’t seem like a dream! It was all very real. As if she were inside me and it was all happening to me,” Sees Jane shuddered.

“It was more than a dream. The spirit of this dead girl walked in you. She moved about in the world and saw the night,” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

“I’m scared!” Sees Jane said. “I’m not going crazy am I?”

“No!” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “A spirit has reached out to you. Only someone with a great heart can be so touched by the spirits.”

She touched her face. “I must have fallen. My face hurts. I saw it in the bathroom mirror. I’ve

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got a huge bruise.”

“I’ll explain that,” said Grandfather Elkhorn with a touch of sadness in his voice. “But first I want you to tell me as much as you can remember. There are things I want to know.”

“Was I...Oh yes, I was going into the lake. I remember now,” said Sees Jane. “Am I in danger again?”

She bit her lip and looked at Grandfather Elkhorn. “Because something happened before. There is something you don’t know. I told Mary but....”

“She told me when you went to change your clothes. I know what happened in the lake,” said Grandfather Elkhorn calmly. “It is why I must ask you questions.”

“I’m sorry. I thought he should know,” said Mary. “Don’t be mad I told.”

“It’s ok,” said Sees Jane. “I’d have told him first chance I got anyway.”

Sees Jane sneezed. It started a chain reaction. Grandfather Elkhorn sneezed too.

“I probably gave us all pneumonia. I’m sorry you had to go out in the storm after me,” apologized Sees Jane. “I’m dangerous to be around.”

“More than you know,” said Mary quietly.

The old man frowned and shook his head. Mary understood and didn’t say anything else.

“Did you feel that the spirit of this girl was evil?” asked Grandfather Elkhorn.

“No! She’s not like that!” Sees Jane said, surprising herself by the strength of her feelings, remembering how it all had felt. “She was frightened. Even more than I was. If I felt what she experienced the night she died, she was just scared and alone and in love. She felt like the whole world was against her. It’s hard to think she’s evil. A part of me feels sorry for her.”

Grandfather Elkhorn looked thoughtful. “You have a generous and sympathetic heart. It is a heart bigger than fear. But I do not think the dead are so blameless!”

“Is Sees Jane in danger?” asked Mary.

“We all are,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “The angry dead do not understand the living. Until they are appeased, we must all be wary.”

“Maybe you should go back to the city where it’s safe,” said Mary, concern evident in her face. “I’d hate to see you go, Sees Jane, but this is just too scary.”

“I’m not leaving.” Sees Jane was fiercely determined. “I’ve come a long way just to get here. My mother wouldn’t be thrilled to see me back so soon.”

“Unless you want me to go that is,” said Sees Jane looking desolate at the possibility.

Grandfather hastened to reassure her. “It would trouble us more if you go. If I had my wish, you would stay with us always. Never doubt that you are welcome.”

Sees Jane was cheered by that, and she said almost happily, “Besides, I mean, it isn’t like I was going to drown. I just walked into the lake. I’m sure the cold water would’ve snapped me out of it.”

Grandfather Elkhorn looked very troubled. “Ten more steps and you’d have been in deep water. There’s a hole twenty feet out, that drops down deep. I know because I’ve fished that part of the lake many times. If Mary and I hadn’t stopped you, this night would have ended badly.”

Mary looked away. “I think we should all get away from here,” she said. “Maybe next time I won’t be so lucky. Maybe next time Sees Jane will really drown me!”

“What?”

Mary couldn’t stop herself from saying it. “You had me by the neck and held my head underwater! I was drowning. I couldn’t get loose. You were just too strong!”

“But I...I....”

“And you would have killed me! I was almost gone...and I would have been if....”

Grandfather Elkhorn spoke up. "If I had not hit you, hit you hard enough to knock you out.

For this I am truly sorry. But it had to be!"

"You hit me?" Sees Jane touched her face in sympathetic shock. "But I...."

"I did. As hard as I could, but I make no apology for that because it was not you I hit. It was the one inside you."

"You didn't mean it!" Mary was quick to say. "It wasn't your fault. We knew it wasn't you!"

"With that blow I vanquished the spirit that moved in you. I brought you back to yourself. It had to be done for your life and Mary's life," explained Grandfather Elkhorn. "And now you know why I speak of the angry dead."

"I'm so sorry that this happened! I didn't know I did it. I swear I didn't know!" said Sees Jane. "Is Mary alright? Isn't it too dangerous. Shouldn't we all just go away?"

"We could," said Grandfather Elkhorn. "if we have the hearts of a mole who hides under the ground. But that is not my way!"

"You don't want to leave?"

"I'd rather have the heart of a hawk that faces into the dark wind. Let the dead hide underground! Let them flee from the living. Running away does not appeal to me."

"If you're staying, then I want to stay too!" said Sees Jane. It was a kind of defiance that filled Sees Jane. She had been invaded, forced to act against her will. It terrified her but it made her mad too. She wanted to push the darkness away. To battle against it and emerge victorious and somehow in the doing, be more completely herself.

"As someone half drowned, I don't mind running away," admitted Mary. "I feel like I got a college degree in scared!"

"When I left the city, I told myself that this trip was not about running away. It was about

running toward something. I'm scared too, really I am, but just not enough to run away yet," said

Sees Jane.

"We will take steps. We will put the spirits to rest. They will not have dark dominion over us. I promise you that our lives are stronger than theirs. We shall prevail and the spirits will know that it is so," said Grandfather Elkhorn.

"I think you're both crazy," said Mary. "But I might as well stay and be crazy right along with you."

"It is settled then. We are three against the dark!" said Grandfather Elkhorn. "But to fight, we must know as much as we can. Tell me as much as you remember of this dream that took you down to the lake," asked Grandfather Elkhorn.

Sees Jane told them everything she could remember. The dream had been very vivid and now that she was no longer in its grip, she could see some of it now with a new clarity.

She tried to finish the tale with. "And all of this tragedy just because her father will not let her marry," Sees Jane picked out the part of the story that made her sad. "And she does love him. He seems to be the whole world to her."

"Sounds like she'd kill anyone who tries to stop her from being with him," suggested Mary unsympathetically, "Whoever he is."

Something else, an image tugged at Sees Jane.

It was not part of the dream, but it was something she just suddenly knew.

"The painting! Of course, that explains a lot. He painted the picture. It wasn't in the dream but I know that's what happened. He painted her picture, the one that hangs on the wall! That must be how they met and fell in love."

"You say it is not part of the dream but just something you know?" asked the old man.

“Yes. It has to have happened that way. I don’t know how I know it but it seems as certain as knowing my own name.”

“Go back to the dream. To the part where Mary seized you and tried to drag you out of the water. Tell as much as you remember,” instructed Grandfather Elkhorn.

Sees Jane told them about taking the wrong turn in the dark and the storm and that sudden awful moment when she as Celena drowned. Mary gasped and the old man shook his head, deeply troubled by her story.

“Did you feel that this spirit meant you harm?” asked Grandfather Elkhorn again. “Are you sure you felt no ill will?”

“I don't think she knew I was there.”

“And when Mary tried to stop you, when Mary tried to pull you out of the water. You attacked her. You had your hands around her neck and tried to drown her. What then? What was the spirit thinking?” insisted Grandfather Elkhorn. “This is what I most want to know.”

Sees Jane spoke but it was not her voice. *“Do you steal him from me? You hold me back to have him for yourself! Oh, I stopped you once in the canoe and I’ll stop you again! You tavern slut! You oozing breathy thing! He’s mine! And none may have him! Oh, you’d wade out and think to have him! Well, the water is cold and that’s the only kiss you’ll get! He’s mine!”*

Mary backed away in terror and even Grandfather Elkhorn was taken aback with the sudden reappearance of the one who was inside.

The fire crackled and a hot spark landed on Sees Jane’s blanket. She brushed it away and turned to stare into the depths of the fire. She kept looking into the flames, her back to them.

The old man and Mary both felt the stab of fear that Sees Jane was gone and that the other had taken her place.

Sees Jane suddenly threw off her blankets. "It's hot in here!" she declared and she turned to look at them.

She saw the terror on both their faces and did not understand.

"What's wrong?"

"Are you ok?" asked Mary.

"I'm fine," said Sees Jane. "Just a little hot. Where did I leave off? What was the last thing I said?"

Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn exchanged a look.

Grandfather said, "When the dead girl looks through your eyes, what is she looking for? What is it that she wants?"

"I don't know how to really tell. She's dead but doesn't seem to know it. She feels just so lost and helpless and filled with this terrible longing."

"When we know what she wants, we'll know how to end her trouble, to bring her to the quiet at the end of the road." said Grandfather. "Until we know that, there is danger for us all."

"So I say this. I would not think badly of you if you wanted to go back to the city," said Grandfather Elkhorn. "That would be the safest thing to do."

"I came to spend the summer. I came to find out things about myself and who I came from," Sees Jane said. "If I let bad dreams chase me away, I'll never learn anything. Unless you make me go, that's what I intend to do, ghosts or no ghosts."

"There is great danger!" insisted Grandfather. "These are dark walkers. I would not see you come to harm for all the world!"

"It's scary, I grant you that. But my own ghosts are important. The father I never knew. The Indian world you live in. My two ghosts and both of you. You know so much about my ghosts

and I know so little,” Sees Jane felt like crying suddenly at the thought that she might have to go away.

“You have a fierceness, a fire and a courage and your father would have been glad to see it and know it. You have the heart of a warrior.”

Grandfather Elkhorn rose from his chair and came over and gave her a big hug.

“The women of our tribe have always been brave. Even life in the city has not changed that in you. Together, the three of us shall find out what this spirit wants. We’ll make peace with the one who walks by night.”

There was a world of confidence in his words and Sees Jane could tell that he was proud of her. Even Sees Jane felt good about her own show of strength. She hadn’t fallen apart or come unglued. She faced up to terror but hadn’t given in to it.

Sees Jane tried to remember the last time her mother had been proud of her for something she had done or faced up to but she couldn’t remember even one instance.

“Mary will stay in your room until dawn which is not that far off. If you can’t sleep, at least rest for we have much to do tomorrow. When the sun is up, we shall face the spirits. And we shall put an end to their troubles and ours!” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

“I for one, won’t sleep a wink!” said Mary.

“I’ll watch you watching me not sleep,” Sees Jane said with a smile.

The storm raged the rest of the night. None of them slept but eventually, as it always does, the stormy night passed into day.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

They ate breakfast together in the kitchen. They all looked tired. But the end of the storm and the first hint of sun peeping through the fleeing clouds seemed to cheer them all up. Things that had terrified in the night before did not seem so frightening now.

“You sure you don’t want any more biscuits and gravy?” asked Grandfather Elkhorn. He looked tired, even more tired than Sees Jane and Mary. His cowboy boots were stiff with dried mud. The kitchen floor was a mess where he’d tracked dirt all over it. He’d been out on a mysterious errand in the early hours of the morning long before Sees Jane and Mary awoke.

“Not unless you want me to explode,” Sees Jane said. She couldn’t believe how many biscuits she’d had already.

“Guess the ghosts didn’t scare away her appetite,” said Mary, who had put away quite a bit herself.

“I’ll help with the dishes,” Sees Jane offered.

“Leave them for later,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “We’ve got more important things to do today. We have the dead to see to. This day must not pass without our intervention.”

“What do we do first?” Sees Jane asked.

“I’ve already done it. At dawn I walked to the trading post and woke up Jason. He’s bringing some things I need.”

“What kind of things?” Sees Jane was curious.

“You’re from the city. You wouldn’t know of these things even if I told you. There is no time to explain. The most important thing is tobacco.”

“What?” Sees Jane almost wondered if he was kidding.

“Not the kind you buy in the store. This kind is sacred. It was grown with the right kind of prayers said over it. I needed the feathers of a Snowy Owl and a ceremonial prayer bundle which belongs to my family. It is a sacred thing that never leaves this land. Jason knows who has it and has gone to fetch it and the other things I require,” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

“What are you planning to do?” asked Mary.

“You’ll see. I can’t talk about it yet,” said Grandfather Elkhorn, acting mysterious. “But when Jason comes, I don’t want you tell him what we’re doing. Not a word! Do you understand?”

“I don’t,” said Mary. “If you sent Jason to get all that....”

The old man interrupted. “Not a word! He doesn’t know why I want those things and I don’t want anyone to tell him either.”

“But why keep it a secret from Jason?” asked Mary.

“Because Jason has secrets of his own. Dangerous secrets!” said Grandfather Elkhorn ominously. “No more questions about it! The two of you go outside and do something suitably foolish. I have things to do and I need to be alone.”

“Don’t worry Sees Jane. He knows what he’s doing,” said Mary reassuringly but she looked scared as they both got up from the table. “Let’s get our jackets and go down to the lake. The fresh air will do us good.”

They were glad they had their coats. The wind blowing in off the lake was cold. The lake was choppy with waves and the sun had not yet won out over the last few clouds in the sky. They stood by an ancient beech tree which was scarred by an old lightning strike. The tree was half dead and somewhat sinister with its dead grey twisted branches and fire blackened trunk. The top branches creaked ominously in the wind.

Mary was looking at the sky. She focused on a line of dark clouds in the distance.

“Another storm?” Sees Jane asked. Mary shook her head no.

“Part of the same one I think. It’s hard to tell sometimes. It may get real calm and the sun will come out a little bit like it is now and you think the worst is over but then the real center of the storm comes in and it’s twice as big as the storm that’s already hit.”

Sees Jane turned and looked at Mary. She didn’t know her, not really, but she felt like she could ask her things.

“Are you happy?”

“That’s a strange question,” said Mary. “Especially after a night like last night.”

“It’s important to me or I wouldn’t have asked.”

“Sometimes I am. Sometimes not,” said Mary.

“I would have thought you would be happy all the time,” Sees Jane said. “You seem so secure, so sure of who you are.”

“Whoa! Hold it right there. I have all kinds of problems. I fall in love and it hurts and I fall out of love and that hurts worse. I want things I’m not ever going to have. I’m afraid of what tomorrow is gonna bring sometimes. I’m lonely lots of time. Sees Jane, I may look calm to you or something but this isn’t heaven and I ain’t exactly an angel. I have my share of troubles. Maybe even some bigger ones just because I am Indian.”

“Somehow I just kind of thought you had a perfect life,” Sees Jane said and in some way she did not quite understand, she was disappointed.

“Believe me, my life is far from perfect. Sometimes we’re dead broke. And if you ever lived on a farm, you’d know just how at the mercy of the weather and insects and a hundred other kind of natural disasters you are. I mean you can lose your whole year’s crop in one afternoon of hail or watch it dry up to dust when it rains a week too late.”

“I didn’t know,” said Sees Jane. “It just seemed like you had it all and I had nothing. You even have a boyfriend”

“My boyfriend ! Let’s not even go there. During fishing season I’m lucky if he even remembers my name! Jason’s brother isn’t exactly the catch of the century. In fact, if my boyfriend was a fish, I’d probably have to throw him back.”

“Too small?” suggested Sees Jane.

“No. Too bony to be edible,” said Mary with a laugh. She went on, “And Grandfather Elkhorn, he’s fun but he’s a lot of work too. Two years ago he was laid up pretty bad when a bronco which he had no business being on in the first place threw him over a fence. I had to work like a dog for three months doing his work and my work just to keep us even.”

She held out her hands to Sees Jane. They were rough and scarred. “Look how pretty your hands are. If I had hands like yours, maybe I’d be happy. But look at these hooks of mine.”

Even the palms of her hands were scarred and thick. “With hands like these, I look like I was born to shovel coal. There’s a little too much hard work in my life if you ask me.” She went on.

“And maybe you don’t know about this, living where you live in the city but out here in Indian country, life isn’t exactly fair. I’ve met my share of hatred and bigotry. A lot of what happens to Indians, doesn’t get on post cards for the tourists to take home. Beatings, shootings. And continual harassment. We all pay a price for being Indian. The bad with the good.”

“Still, at least you know who you are,” Sees Jane said. “Even if you aren’t happy all the time.”

“What does that mean?”

“You’re Indian and you know what that means.”

“Life isn’t like a movie. Grandfather says you have to live your whole life just to understand

even a little bit of it. I'm not wise like he is but I know there's a river of stuff I don't understand, Indian or otherwise, and most of it I'm never going to understand."

"I was hoping to find a lot of answers"" Sees Jane said feeling somewhat blue.

"That's the city talking. Just be Indian instead. Dazed and confused and lost in all four directions, that's us!" said Mary with a smile. "Forget about the answers. Live and look for the questions. That's the Indian way."

It sounded like a joke but Sees Jane thought Mary meant it as the truth. She suddenly wondered if it was how her father had looked at life. Thinking about him suddenly made her feel better, as if she had suddenly remembered that she'd come from somebody after all. It was strange to walk in places where he had once walked.

Sees Jane shivered in the cold wind. Even with the sun beginning to break through the clouds the sky still looked menacing. The wind was beginning to blow harder now.

"Look!" said Mary, pointing toward the other shore of the lake. The sun had burned through the clouds now so Sees Jane shaded her eyes and looked in the direction Mary was pointing. She saw a solitary figure in a canoe pushing off from the other shore.

"That's Jason, bringing the things Grandfather asked for," she said.

They watched Jason paddling toward them. It was a rough journey and he was obviously having a hard time of it. The wind was against him and the waves seemed to toss the canoe wildly.

"Is it dangerous for him to be out on the lake when it's like this?" Sees Jane asked.

Mary was watching the sky. "It would be real dangerous for me and you but Jason is one of the best canoe handlers on the lake. He's used to rough weather canoeing," She was watching the dark clouds come in from the North with a worried look on her face. "Still, I'll be glad when he's

here. I don't like the looks of those storm clouds."

Although the wind seemed to pick up in intensity and the waves on the lake got choppier, still Jason made good progress and was soon within hailing distance.

Jason yelled something at them but it was hard to hear it over the wind.

"What?" Mary yelled at him. The clouds obscured the sun now and it was growing darker and darker.

Jason lifted his paddle and waved it at them. They could just make out the expression on his face. He seemed terrified.

He screamed something and waved the paddle. A wave hit the boat broadside and the canoe almost rolled over. Only Jason's quick thrust of the paddle in the water kept it from capsizing.

Sees Jane grabbed Mary and started to pull her away from the shore.

Mary was about to yell again at Jason but Sees Jane roughly shoved her away.

"Wait!" Mary gasped, trying to break free from Sees Jane's grasp. "He's trying to tell us--"

Sees Jane had her arm firmly and yanked so hard Mary had no choice but to stumble headlong in the direction Sees Jane was dragging her. Sees Jane forced Mary into a wobbly run away from the shore. Mary was stunned by Sees Jane's relentless and unexplained behavior. The wind roared in the branches of the dead beech tree.

Mary screamed.

There was a loud cracking sound, fierce and sudden like a rifle shot, and they looked up and saw the ruined top of the ancient beech come hurtling down toward them.

It crashed on the bank of the lake, half in the water, half on land. Slender branches from the very top of the tree smashed against the two girls. Sees Jane stayed upright but her face stung with the force of the glancing blow.

“Oh my god!” screamed Mary, driven suddenly to her knees by the impact. Sees Jane stood beside her, trembling with the sudden fierce effort she had made in dragging Mary away.

The thick trunk of the dead tree smashed against the bank in the exact spot where they had been standing seconds before. They were only a couple of steps away from certain death.

Mary got up slowly and turned to look at Sees Jane. “You saved my life!”

Sees Jane shook her head. In the distance they heard the sound of thunder. Soon the storm would be upon them again.

“You heard Jason. He must have seen it coming down and warned us. You heard him and boy did you act quick! If you hadn’t grabbed me, I’d be dead for sure!” said Mary with wondering admiration.

The prow of Jason’s canoe edged around the top branches of the fallen tree. He was paddling like a madman. His strokes were so frantic and so hard his canoe smashed against the sand and rode up high on the bank. He was out of the canoe in an instant and running towards them.

“Are you ok?” Jason cried.

“A little shaky,” Mary said, speaking for both of them. “But mostly undamaged.”

Mary looked at Jason. “How did you know it was coming down?”

Jason shook his head. “I wasn’t sure. The tree was moving very strangely in the wind. Can’t say how I knew. Just had this overwhelming feeling that you two were in danger.”

Jason rubbed his arms and shoulders as if they ached. “I think I broke the record for crossing the lake.”

“You and Sees Jane must be on the same wavelength,” said Mary with wonder. “I couldn’t make out what you were saying but Sees Jane did and she practically threw me out of the way.”

“I didn’t know what Jason was saying,” Sees Jane said calmly but the look on her face was far

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from calm.

The sky was dark over their heads now and the sound of thunder rolled and boomed in the distance. The air turned bitterly cold and the storm clouds were dark and ominous and racing in the sky above them.

“I heard a man’s voice from the lake. It wasn’t Jason’s voice. The voice screamed, ‘GET BACK CELENA! RUN CELENA!’ said Sees Jane. She tried to be outwardly calm but she felt a thousand miles from calm. She felt a wild urge to run but had no idea of what it was that threatened to chase her. The voice had come unbidden from beyond the grave and it had chilled her to the bone.

Jason turned his head and looked away, as if he didn’t want to hear what Sees Jane was saying.

Nobody said anything. The thunder crashed and they felt the first drops of rain.

“Help me gather up the stuff I’ve brought,” said Jason abruptly, almost angrily. “And let’s get in out of the rain. This is gonna be a real sky splitter of a storm.”

They didn’t talk as they unloaded Jason’s canoe and carried the things he had brought into the house. Even though they weren’t saying anything, they were all thinking the same things.

“Whose voice was it that warned you of the danger?” Mary finally just blurted it out.

“I don’t know. It doesn’t matter,” said Sees Jane, looking away from them as if afraid her face would show too much. “As long as we’re safe, that’s all that counts.”

Finally Mary said, “Just being alive is good enough for me. Celena Darkland knows whose voice it was. Maybe she’ll tell you Sees Jane and then we’ll all know.”

Jason seemed both angry and scared. He avoided Sees Jane’s eyes although she found herself staring at him and wondering about him. Jason had too many secrets and there was this

unmistakable something in his eyes.

Jason knew who the voice had belonged to.

That was the one thing Sees Jane was sure about.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The storm was raging in full force. Sometimes the flashes of lightning were noon-bright. The thunder crashed so loud it seemed to almost come from inside the house. Grandfather Elkhorn was outside somewhere. He'd said he needed to watch the storm for a while for signs and omens.

Sees Jane shivered and was glad to be inside where it was cold but dry. The sky was so dark, the clouds overhead so thick, that it could almost have been the middle of the night instead of late morning.

Mary and Sees Jane were in the big front room. They had moved the furniture back and cleared a large circle on the big Navaho rug. The things that Jason had brought for Grandfather Elkhorn were laid out on the rug.

Sees Jane was curious about the bundles Jason had brought. All of them were wrapped in beaded deerskin pouches but she didn't touch anything.

Mary handed her some candles and together they stuck them in the ends of several pop bottles. "Chase away the gloom. With a storm like this, we'll need these and a whole lot more," said Mary.

The thunder crashed so loud Sees Jane involuntarily ducked. It sounded like the roof was going to fall in.

“Relax. You have a look on your face like the world’s coming to an end,” said Mary with a smile. “Are you having second thoughts about staying?”

“More like third and fourth thoughts. I’m only pretending to be brave,” admitted Sees Jane.

“Well, if it’s any consolation. If you weren’t here, I’d probably be cowering under a bed myself.”

“Is there a rule about that? That nobody should be a coward in front of guests?” said Jason. He had come into the room so quietly nobody had heard him come in.

They turned to look at him.

“I just have one word for you,” said Mary. “Just one word.”

“What word is that?”

“Firewood.”

“Are you crazy! It’s raining hard enough to drown fish.”

“I have three more words,” said Mary. “Get wood now!”

Jason shrugged. He tried to think of something sharp to say in retort but words failed him. He turned and with a curse they could hear but not quite understand, he slammed out the front door into the wind and the rain.

“He’s well trained,” said Sees Jane with admiration.

“I just wanted him to go out and come back when we’re both braver,” said Mary.

“So you’re saying we’ll probably never see him again.” said Sees Jane.

Mary laughed. “Maybe not.”

Mary scratched a kitchen match against the box and lit a candle.

It was eerie, in the dark front room, with only one candle. Mary used the first candle to light several more. She went around the room until she had five candles lit.

With the candles lit, some of Sees Jane's confidence seemed to return. Somehow in the glow of the candles, the old house seemed less menacing.

"Jason will bring out kerosene lanterns for us too," said Mary, noticing her discomfort. "We need lots of warm cheerful light."

"I'm cold," Sees Jane said. "Did it suddenly get cold in here?"

Mary stared at her. "Is something happening?"

"*It's so cold,*" said Sees Jane and her eyes flashed with something behind them. "*The water is so cold.*"

Mary put her hand to her mouth. Something was wrong with Sees Jane. She had that strange look in her eyes and her face was like a mask.

Jason came in from the outside with a stack of wet wood. The few minutes he had been outside had been enough to thoroughly soak him.

"This looks like a real bad one. We may need a couple days worth of wood. This stuff is so wet already it's gonna take a while to dry it out," said Jason. "Man! It's really cold out there!"

"It's cold in here, too," said Mary as if trying to warn him.

"*The world is cold that does this to me,*" said Sees Jane and she walked over to the fireplace and put her hands out to warm them at the fire that was not there.

"Jason, I think you better go get Grandfather Elkhorn. Tell him to come right away!" said Mary frantically. Jason did not sense her growing panic.

"Let me get a nice big roaring fire going first. We'll need it to dry out the wood," said Jason.

"No!" said Mary loudly.

Jason looked up at her in surprise.

"Just go get him!" she commanded.

Sees Jane turned and looked at Jason. Her eyes saw him and seemed to see past him to another place. She put one hand out.

“Why do you speak to her? What hold has she on you? Are you not spoken for?”

Jason backed away. He started to speak, to answer her but the cold that seemed to well up around her, touched him. He saw his breath in the air, as if the room itself was in the heavy grip of winter.

Mary urged him frantically. “Go Jason! Get him now!”

Jason needed no further prodding. He spun on his heel and fled the room.

As he opened the door, the lightning flashed and lit the whole room.

The wind from the door rushed in and blew out all the candles. The room was suddenly plunged into darkness. Mary almost screamed. She was alone in the dark with the one who had tried to drown her.

The frigid rush of air in the room was palpable. She put her hand out in front of her, afraid of where Sees Jane might be, afraid that she might be coming for her. It was like reaching out and touching frost. Lightning flashed and Mary looked where Sees Jane had been standing. In that brief flash, she saw that Sees Jane was gone. Mary’s panic deepened and she clawed at the table at her feet, frantic to find the matches and relight the candle.

Mary heard a noise. Then she heard the noise again. Louder this time. It sounded like something being dragged across the floor, something heavy. Her trembling fingers got a match lit and held it cupped in her hand. A shadowy figure moved beside her. She screamed and dropped the match. Again darkness closed in on her.

Jason, please hurry! Please hurry! She said to herself with the intensity of a prayer.

Somebody was standing beside her. She could make out the faint outline of a body hovering

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over her. Mary almost screamed.

There was the scratch of a match against the box. The cold that had invaded the room had not diminished. It had deepened and intensified.

Sees Jane bent with a lit match and lighted a candle. She turned and looked at Mary in the dim light. Mary had a look of abject horror on her face. Sees Jane smiled but her eyes did not.

“A candle is poor comfort against the cold but how else to see the face of my beloved?” said the one inside Sees Jane.

The front door opened and Grandfather Elkhorn with Jason at his back came into the room. Both of them were storm drenched and dripping. The old man had a lit kerosene lantern in one hand which gave off light and steam where rain hit the hot globe of the lantern.

“Jason said there’s trouble,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “What happened? What is...”

“So cold is my beloved. I beseech him, come to me out of the wet!” said Sees Jane interrupting him and in so doing, answering his questions. Sees Jane stared at a wall, seeing something far beyond it and in another place.

“She’s.....” began Mary.

“It’s ok. This is what’s to be expected but we must control it. I must bind her to me,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. He handed the lantern to Jason and went through the room and out into the kitchen.

“Stay with her,” said Grandfather Elkhorn, calling out to them. “Watch her!”

Mary and Jason stood there uncomfortably. Mary struck a match and relit all the candles. The room brightened noticeably.

Jason put the lantern down on the table.

“What’s going on?” said Jason. “What is Grandfather Elkhorn trying to do?” His breath was

visible in the frigid air. He looked troubled and his eyes darted about the room with suspicion and perhaps even anger.

Remembering Grandfather's warning, Mary did not answer him..

Grandfather Elkhorn came back into the room with a long rope made of deerskin. He approached Sees Jane. She did not look up. He reached out and took her wrists and lifted them up. She did not respond to his touch. He quickly looped the deerskin rope around her wrists. He tied it in such a way that her hands were bound together with one end of the rope. He held the long cord at the other end. He wrapped it firmly around one of his wrists and tied it off so that he and Sees Jane were tied together like climbers going up a mountain.

"What's going on? What are you doing?" It was Jason.

"Patience, Jason," cautioned Grandfather Elkhorn and he stared intently at Jason, watching how he held himself, how he moved.

"I got a right to know," demanded Jason, his eyes flashing with animosity. "You should tell me what's going on!"

Mary stared at Jason. He was acting very strangely, very unlike himself.

"Is it Jason who must know these things, or is it answers for another?" asked the old man. His words were clearly some kind of challenge.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" said Jason with a disdainful voice. "I don't have to listen to this!"

He crossed the room and threw open the front door to the wind and rain "I'll get more wood before it gets too drenched to light." With that, Jason was through the door and gone.

"What's wrong with him?" asked Mary

"We will find out," said the old man grimly. "That I promise you."

Grandfather Elkhorn busied himself getting a fire started. He had a difficult time because the wood was wet. He finally got a small log to burn and then kept adding more and more paper until the other logs caught fire too.

Soon he had a roaring fire and its heat and light spread through the room. The breath of winter that seemed to center itself around Sees Jane began to dissipate.

Grandfather tugged gently on the rope. Sees Jane turned and looked in his direction. He tugged again and she began to walk toward him.

“Warm your self by the fire. It will take away the cold,” said the old man.

She was almost to him when she stopped. She looked down at her hands in amazement.

“Why...why are my hands tied?” Sees Jane was herself again and back among them.

“For your safety child,” explained Grandfather Elkhorn gently.

“Take it off,” she said, holding out her hands to be untied.

“I can’t do that,” said the old man. “It isn’t safe. Come warm yourself by the fire. Forget about the rope. Don’t let it worry you.”

She frowned but let herself be convinced. She moved in front of the fire

It was very warm and pleasant there.

“I’m scared,” said Sees Jane suddenly. “I’m really scared!”

“I know,” said the old man soothingly. “We all are scared. But we will get through this together.”

Mary came up to the fireplace.

“Jason’s acting....” She started to speak but Grandfather put his fingers to his lips and shook his head violently. Mary stopped talking.

“Don’t trouble her with that now,” he said. “Jason will explain himself, soon enough.”

The front door banged open and Jason staggered in with a large load of firewood. His thick dark hair was plastered to his scalp and he looked about half drowned.

Grandfather stared at him. "Jason, you look like you fell in the lake."

Jason's eyes flashed with anger. He dropped the firewood suddenly and it crashed to the floor with a bang.

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

"Jason did you consult the storm for signs and omens? Did you see things in the wind?"

Mary didn't know what to make of this, this sudden hostility between Jason and Grandfather Elkhorn. What was it all about?

"Leave me alone! I'm not speaking to you," said Jason.

He stalked across the room and threw himself in a chair. He left puddles everywhere he walked.

"You don't have to talk to me but later I may have to talk to you," said the old man mysteriously.

"Whatever," said Jason sullenly.

"You can leave if you're not comfortable," said the old man.

"Leave?"

"Take the car and go. You don't have to stay."

Jason looked scared. He was evasive. "I got you everything you asked for."

"Yes."

"But you never said what you wanted them for."

"Does that trouble you?" asked the old man.

"Why are you chasing me? What have I done to you?" Jason almost screamed out the words.

Sees Jane and Mary stared at Jason in confusion. What he said made no sense to them.

But Grandfather Elkhorn seemed to understand and to read great meaning into it.

“I will not be driven away!” Jason hurled the last words like a curse.

“Yes, that’s right. That is how it should be,” agreed Grandfather. He turned to Mary. “Bring me the things Jason brought. It is time to begin.”

Mary laid a number of deerskin wrapped bundles at the old man’s feet.

The old man bent over and slowly began to unwrap the bundles. He laid them out reverently in neat rows on the thick Indian rug in front of the fireplace. He handled each bundle as if it were fragile as a baby bird.

Mary and Sees Jane watched him lay out his long red stone pipe and antler noisemakers. Some of the things were fetishes. They seemed very old. Jason feigned disinterest and did not look at anything. He kept his head turned away but he was restless and thrashed about uncomfortably in his chair.

Sees Jane had seen pictures of fetishes like this in books about Indian beadwork but had never seen any of them outside a museum before. As old as these were, and with their delicate porcupine quill beading, they must be priceless.

Grandfather opened a dark pouch and scooped out a handful of yellow dust. He held out a handful in each of the four directions, chanting words in the old language. Sees Jane looked at Mary and wanted to ask what the chanting meant but Mary just shook her head. She put her finger to her lips, motioning her to be quiet. The old man bent over the fire place.

The chant rose in pitch and intensity and then the old man blew into his hands suddenly and the yellow dust went into the fire. The fire burned up higher, flashed and flared and gave off a strange smell.

The old man motioned for Sees Jane to come forward. She hesitated, not knowing what to do. She looked at Jason and Mary but they both were looking away which made her feel strange.

Grandfather Elkhorn put a necklace of stringed green corn around her neck and began a new chant.

And then he stopped suddenly, the chant breaking off.

He turned and rushed up to Jason. He blew dust in Jason's face.

Jason breathed it in and it stung his eyes.

Grandfather seized him by the shoulders and shook him roughly.

"CELENA'S NOT FOR YOU! KEEP AWAY FROM HER!" Grandfather screamed it in Jason's face.

Jason rose up from the chair, throwing the old man's hand off his shoulders.

But it was not Jason.

"Fancy me dead, do you! I don't kill easy!" The words seemed ripped from his throat. The cold that had been in the room, manifested itself again. It came in waves from the body that was Jason but was not him.

Mary gasped and moved back in terror. Sees Jane raised her bound hands toward Jason and something in her seemed to respond, something in her moved because of that voice. That voice. Was it not the voice of her beloved? Her eyes were wide and she looked but the one she sought was nowhere to be seen.

The old man moved quickly. Now he was back by the fireplace, standing beside Sees Jane. He stared at her intently, trying to see something in her eyes but what he sought did not seem to be there. Desperately Grandfather Elkhorn lifted his arms and chanted in a different voice, in an almost pleading tone. The storm raged outside the house, thunder crashing in the distance and

lightning slashing the sky. The old man looked terrified.

The old man bent suddenly over the fire and seemed to snatch at the flames. His hand passed in front of Sees Jane's face and a little puff of smoke blew into her eyes. Her eyes teared up and Grandfather Elkhorn put his hands over her eyes and gently closed them.

Sees Jane felt the heat of the fire but still shivered. All the terrors of the past days were with her now. And with her eyes closed, what she saw was through the eyes of the one within who began to stir, to rise and begin.

"I invoke the dead as one who needs their help!" cried out Grandfather Elkhorn. "Let them walk out of the darkness. Let them come among us!"

He put his hand on Sees Jane's shoulder and pushed gently until she sank down to her knees. But it was not to be. Sees Jane rose up with a scream. Her eyes were open wide with horror and she ran back into the depths of the house. Jason reached out for her but she evaded his touch and would have fled the room but for the rope. It caught when she had reached its full length and jerked her to a stop. The old man cried out in sudden pain as the thong bit into his wrist.

"I'm scared!" cried Sees Jane. "She wants to get in me! I can't! I can't!"

The old man held the rope. He looked grim and uncertain. "I was afraid of this!" he said

"What's happening? What's wrong?" asked Mary.

Jason moved through the room, as if searching for someone. He studied Mary's face and moved on. He stared at Sees Jane and lingered but she was not who he was looking for her.

"Hide her from me and I shall make you pay for it!" raged Jason and he stalked around the room, like a hunter seeking its prey.

"Grandfather! What's wrong?"

"I have one among us but have lost the other," he said. "And I don't know how to fix it."

Mary stared at Jason. He continued to circle the room, obviously not himself but who was he?

She turned to Grandfather for an answer to that.

“It’s not Jason anymore!” she said. He passed close by her and she recoiled in terror. “Who is he? What’s his name?”

Grandfather shook his head. He did not know.

But the answer came from an unexpected place.

Sees Jane came back into the room. She stood in front of Jason. He made a move to go past her but she put her bound hands out and stopped him, keeping him from moving. She stared at his eyes, seeing the one inside.

“His name is Steven Andrew,” she said. “He is Celena Darkland’s beloved.”

“You know,” said Grandfather Elkhorn simply.

“She knows and I know some of what she knows,” said Sees Jane.

Jason threw her restraining hands off and began stalking through the room again.

“They want to be together,” said Grandfather. “That can’t happen until you let her back in the room.”

“I can’t. She’ll kill me if I do,” she said and her voice was laced with stark unreasoning terror. “I don’t want to die!”

Grandfather Elkhorn collapsed in a chair. His face was flushed and he did not look well. Mary moved forward in sudden alarm, convinced he was having another attack. He waved her away.

“Why do you think that?” he asked.

“She’s done it before. She’ll try again!” said Sees Jane.

“Why did she try to kill you?” The old man did not want to give up now.

“Because she doesn’t want me to have him!”

The old man tried to be patient. She had to believe him now. Everything depended on it.

“But you won’t have him. If we can bring them together, she will have him, not you.”

“You can’t know that.”

“I sense it in my heart. It is their peace. It is there great longing. You must feel it! You have to believe me.”

“I don’t want to die.”

“She needs to be in you, to find him. You have to try. You have to let her back in!”

Sees Jane lifted her bound hands. “Untie me. I can’t. I want to go home.”

But as she said it, Sees Jane realized that there was no home to go to. That like the dead girl she was between worlds and between places and that she was not really anywhere at all. Until she found herself, that would always be true. And maybe it was that way for the dead too.

Grandfather stood up. He seemed frail and old. He made one last plea.

“If you think of spirits as beings who had once lived and loved and felt things, then there is no terror in it. They are an echo of a life, and we need not be afraid of echoes. Not all Indians think so. I know brave men with wise hearts, who can see nothing but the horror, feel only the clammy embrace of the dead. But you are far along in this journey. You must go on.”

“I understand but I am not brave any more. Maybe I never was.”

The old man smiled. He said gently. “There’s no dishonor in feeling fear but there is much honor in denying it.”

“Maybe an Indian can do this, but I can’t!” Sees Jane looked desolate and lost.

“You are your father’s daughter. You can do anything that he could do and more.”

“Is that why you believe in me? Is that why you think I can do this?”

“Your father would have great pride in his heart to see you among us. He is here in you too

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and that is why I believe in you.”

The storm had increased in intensity and the house shook with the hammering of the wind.

She couldn't say what it was that had decided it for her. It was not a sudden surge of courage because she was quaking with fear and she was so scared she could barely breathe. Maybe it was the thought of her father, of what he might think of her if she stopped, if she ran from this. She held up her hands and moved toward the fireplace where the old man was.

“Ok. But keep me tied. Don't let me go.”

Mary was beside her. She put a comforting hand on her shoulder and Grandfather Elkhorn looked up at Sees Jane with a relief that seemed to revive him. He rose up and drew her to him. He positioned her in front of the fireplace. The warmth of the flames was reassuring. The old man stood over her with a feathered bundle. He held out a dark leaf of tobacco toward the flame and chanted slowly in the old language.

“What should I do?”

“Close your eyes. Call her name.”

“What do I say to her? What if she won't listen?”

The old man looked at Jason, still lost in the room, not himself.

“Whisper to her. Tell her Steven Andrew is here. She will come.”

And that is what she did. The lure was enough to reach beyond the grave. The name of her beloved was an irresistible flame. The dead girl rushed to warm her heart in it. Sees Jane blinked and her eyes opened and Celena looked out.

And she would have stayed in the room for she sensed the one who tugged at her heart. But it was not to be.

There was another who came into the room unbidden. He was angry and vengeful. Winter

came behind him and his dark face loomed in the shadows on the wall. Grandfather Elkhorn rushed forward and thrust a medicine bundle at the wavering figure. There was a scream as the sacred bundle touched it.

“I’ll kill you! Kill you all! Kill you!” The insane voice was a knife cutting through the night. “Any who defy me! Will die!”

The shadowy outline became clearer in the dark, it was etched more sharply in the shadows thrown by the fire. It was a man with a rope stretched tight around his neck.

The one in Sees Jane shuddered. The hated voice was reaching out for her again. And Celena fled. Love died, hope was crushed and she fell back into oblivion and was lost.

Sees Jane saw with her own eyes the thing upon the wall and her heart sank. She had failed somehow. Evil would win. She was back in the room and she might die. Her fear took her breath away.

The vengeful spirit stalked the room and Jason aware of it now shrank back in fear.

It loomed above Jason, threatening to crush him in its darkness. There was a knife in its hands and it raised and struck. The blade came through the air and plunged towards Jason’s face. But it did not strike home. The raging thing moved closer. It raised its arm again and now surely it could not miss.

Grandfather Elkhorn thrust the sacred bundle deep into the shadows and chanted. A fire seemed to spring from the bundle, a hot blue flame that lanced out in all directions.

The dark one seemed to melt and shrivel as if scorched by fire. Jason cowered, his arms up to fend off a blow.

Grandfather leaped into the air and snatched a handful of darkness and nothing. He put it to his lips and blew on it. A wind seemed to spring up at his back and it roared and whirled and the

dark shadow on the wall was picked up and chased before it and vanished as suddenly as it had come.

Mary was cowering against the back wall, transfixed in horror.

“What was it? Is it gone?” she cried out.

“It was Celena’s father. The one who hung himself on the island,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. The strain was showing in his face. He clutched his chest, feeling the first warning stab of pain. “It was the ravenous spirit of the man who schemed to put these two lost ones forever in the dark.”

“Will he come back?” Mary’s voice trembled.

“He is in the wind and can never come back,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “The dark has him now and will never let go.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

They tried to start again but the damage had been done. Jason denied everything. And Sees Jane was herself again. Sees Jane and Jason sat side by side in chairs in front of the fire.

“I don’t know anybody named Steven Andrew!” swore Jason.

Grandfather Elkhorn shook his head. He was tired and the pains in his chest were worrisome. He stared at Jason and sighed.

“I have tried to do the best I can. I have tried to settle this thing. Maybe I have done some good. There is an evil that is no more!” Now the old man looked back and forth between Jason and Sees Jane. “But for you to deny what we all know is pointless.”

Jason said nothing to that.

“Steven Andrew is a spirit that sometimes walks in you, just as the ghost of poor dear Celena Darkland has walked in Sees Jane,” said the old man. “Let us not fight about the truth.”

Mary sensed some of Jason’s problem. “We’ll never tell anyone. Your secret is safe with us. No one will ever know.”

“You have our word on that,” agreed Grandfather Elkhorn.

It seemed to be what bothered Jason the most. He looked up at them in relief.

“It’s not something I’m proud of,” he finally admitted. “And it’s not something I can stop either. It just happens.”

“Today was about ending all of that,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “But it seems in that desire we have failed.”

“How did you expect that to happen?” asked Jason. “And if that’s what this was all about, why weren’t you telling me what you were doing?”

“It was your secret. As long as that is what it was, we couldn’t tell you anything,” said Mary who now understood why Grandfather had not wanted her to tell Jason anything.

“I’d like to know how it was going to end. How exactly was it supposed to happen?” said Sees Jane.

“Easier to do than to explain. The dead wanted to be together. They died apart while trying to reach each other. This much we know,” explained the old man.

Jason guessed. “So it’s just about finding each other?”

“More complicated than that. But yes, that’s what it is. To make the spirits who forever wander apart, touch and be for once in the same place.”

“If Steven is in Jason and Celena is in me,” said Sees Jane, “and they meet finally, if they find each other, it will end?”

“That was my hope and belief,” said Grandfather Elkhorn.

Jason said, “Then we should try to do that.”

He looked at Sees Jane and took her hand and said earnestly to her. “But only if you’re not too scared to try again.”

Sees Jane smiled shyly at him, aware of his hand in hers.

“Let’s try,” she said but it was far easier to say it than to bring it about.

Grandfather called out to them but the spirits did not hear him. He chanted, he invoked them in every way he knew but nothing seemed to work.

To herself Sees Jane whispered the dead girl's name and willed her to come. But she felt only the heat of the fire and the crashing sounds of the storm. Even the name of Steven Andrew was not enough to wake the one within.

They sat there for some time until the fire began to burn low.

The old man kept looking at Sees Jane expectantly but she just shook her head. She felt no spirit, heard no voices. She tried every way she could to reach out to the spirit, to open herself to another visitation of Celena Darkland, but Sees Jane had the feeling that she was never coming back.

The old man looked at Jason but there was no help there either.

Jason said. “I can’t call him. I never know when he’s coming. You can’t expect much help from me.”

Mary lit some more candles but it did not lift the gloom in the room.

"Maybe we could try to do this tomorrow?" suggested Mary and was astonished to see her breath.

The cold was back. Dense and ice cold, in a wave that penetrated every corner of the room.

Something was here. Sees Jane sensed that. But it did not speak to her, it did not touch her.

Whatever it was that entered this room, seemed far away from her.

She could not touch it nor could it touch her.

The old man stiffened, his eyes searching the room for some ghostly presence. Mary's hand clenched Sees Jane's hand so hard Sees Jane thought her fingers would break.

“I sense the door to another world has opened,” said Grandfather Elkhorn but he was troubled and uncertain.

He was stood between Sees Jane and the fire, bending down to look into her eyes. He sought the presence in Sees Jane but it was not in her.

“Spirit, I call your name!” he cried out and his voice echoed back from the shadows but was not answered.

Sees Jane shook her head. She felt nothing. Nothing.

Jason strode forcefully across the room, and his hand closed on Sees Jane's arm and he pulled her abruptly to her feet.

In a rough voice that was not his own, Jason spoke, “*Celena! You must come tonight! YOU MUST! It's our last chance! Please! I beg you!*”

Jason put his arms around Sees Jane, as he had once put his arms around Celena Darkland on a stormy night long ago. ‘*Come lass, we'll take our luck in the storm tonight! Then, my love, we'll be ever together!*’

Jason stared into Sees Jane's eyes and saw some other face.

Sees Jane was in a panic. Steven was here. Why didn't Celena come?

His hand was on her arm, urging her to her feet. Sees Jane stumbled but Jason caught her and steadied her. Dragging her along helplessly, they crossed the room and he threw the door open

and the full fury of the storm hit them.

They went through the door and out into the storm.

A frightened Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn raced after them. The rope that still tethered Sees Jane to the old man tightened then loosened again as they caught up with the fleeing pair.

Sees Jane tried to turn back but Jason was too strong, his grip on her arm unbreakable. She found herself running against her will to the lake.

Grandfather and Mary were close at their heels.

At the water's edge, Jason spun her around until she faced him in the wind.

"Give me a kiss love!"

His arms went round Sees Jane and drew her in. He leaned in and kissed her and Celena felt it on her lips.

It was Celena now, awakened by love and moving in her new body. But Sees Jane knew what was in her mind, the flight into the storm, the fatal race down the darkened path. Celena's dark thoughts surged through her.

Sees Jane had to quell them, for the end of the girl's thoughts led to death and separation and it could not go endlessly on as it had gone before. But it was there.

That terrible lure, the mindless relentless need to go into the water. The overpowering urge. The all encompassing abyss that tempted and beckoned and would not be denied.

Sees Jane felt the waves lapping at her feet, like snakes coiling around her ankles. They were angry things that pulled at her, urging her toward the dark water.

She pushed against Jason, shoving at his unyielding bulk. His rain lashed face darkened in confusion but she had to break free. She struggled in his grasp. Celena spoke, trying to still the body that seemed to rebel against her.

"Tis a lifetime of kisses I want!" Celena's voice came out of her mouth. There was more, much more she meant to say while she had him in her arms but her body betrayed her.

The body of the girl shoved with all her might.

Jason stumbled, the embrace broken by the writhing body. She moved away from him.

Sees Jane moved back from the lake. There was panic and fear in the eyes of the one within .

"Don't leave me!"

The anguished cry was wrenched out of his throat

But she did not heed him. She moved again until she stood far apart from him. The wind and rain whipping her face and streaming body but she stood up to the blast as she now stood up to Steven Andrew.

She put her hand out and beckoned to him. He turned and looked behind him, fearing pursuit but she did not relent for she knew his terror because it had been hers too.

"What are you doing? Are you not coming with me?" The loss and the hurt in him were awful to see but the girl did not relent.

"No!" the words echoed louder than the rain and the wind and seemed harsh as thunder.

He almost staggered under the force of it.

Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn stood behind them. They watched it all unfold but understood none of it. The useless deerskin rope was in the old man's hands but he had no idea what to do with it.

"You're coming with me," said the girl in that strange new voice and she held her hand out toward him. The boy shivered and looked troubled and lost.

"What's wrong? Why does your voice has such strangeness in it? What's come over you?"

Sees Jane knew what it was but the girl inside did not understand. The one inside was lost and

heard only the siren call of the water and the icy depths. Her face kept turning away, seeking the water but Sees Jane was alive and she knew and she would not relent.

Celena spoke but they were not her words again. It was strange and she willed it away but she could not stop herself.

Her bound hands were out to the boy and she said. "We're safe. We are far beyond the reach of my father. He's dead. His hatred is scattered on the wind. Come!"

He wanted to believe for the words warmed his heart and meant everything but how could all this be true. Waves crashed on the shore, driven by the storm. It was the lake calling out again.

For a second she almost broke. The lake had a hand on her heart. Its watery fist closed tight around it and she tried to turn and run towards the lake but the body stopped her. And the words wouldn't stop.

"Trust me. Come with me, love, come back in out of the storm and we'll make our life together."

It made his heart ache so, and he wanted to believe. The fear, the things that chased him in the storm, faded. And he moved closer, towards that sweet face with the pretty words that promised so much. And he had to believe her for she was everything in the world to him.

The lightning flashed and they were but a few steps apart. Her rope tied hands came out and he took them in his.

Together, both her hands cradled in his, Steven Andrew and Celena Darkland walked back to the house. They did not see the old man and Mary standing there miserably in the rain. They did not see them move after them or follow them back into the house. They only had eyes for each other.

The cold moved back into the house with them. They moved as one, not daring to let go of

each other. They stopped in front of the fireplace. Its warmth did not reach them.

Mary and Grandfather Elkhorn closed the door behind them, shutting out the storm that raged beyond it but the storm inside Sees Jane and Jason had not subsided. That struggle was still going on but it was fading. The darkness of the past was losing its ascendancy.

“What’s happened? What does it mean?” Mary asked.

But the old man just shook his head. He sensed a change, that something had happened but he did not understand it or what it meant.

“We’re happy now,” said Steven. “We have all the world and more.”

“We’ll always feel this way,” said Celena and she took hold of him and she led him away from the fireplace. Two glowing spheres with human faces streamed out of the bodies of Jason and Sees Jane. The cold in the room seemed to lessen.

Jason and Sees Jane were still standing by the fireplace. The dying fire sent up a small cheery glow and they could feel its sudden warmth on their faces. The storm inside the room had passed.

Two glowing shapes moved across the room. They hit the far wall and seemed to coalesce. The two balls of ghostfire brightened, became one, and passed through the wall and out of their lives forever.

To chase the memory of the cold away they all moved wearily toward the shelter of the fireplace. They threw big blocks of wood on the fire and huddled gratefully in front of its fierce warmth. The pains had subsided in Grandfather Elkhorn’s chest. They were all rain soaked and chilled to the bone but grateful to be alive.

“Are they really gone? Will they ever come back?” asked Jason.

“They have again what they once lost. Their spirits will not trouble us again,” said

“It seemed so easy,” said Mary. “I thought there would be more of a struggle.”

It had been a life and death struggle but only Sees Jane truly understood it. She didn’t quite know how to explain it.

“There was just enough of me left to save them both,” she finally said. “I spoke for her. My words instead of hers. I told them they were safe. That they were beyond the reach of her father and that they would be together forever. I made them come away from the lake.”

Jason shook his head with amazement. “I never remember what happens when the ghost comes to me. I only know a little bit and I can’t do anything. I’m helpless until he leaves.”

“I didn’t want to be helpless. There’s been too much of that in my life,” said Sees Jane.

“That was brave and strong,” said Grandfather Elkhorn. “What made you want to do that?”

“I didn’t. I wanted to walk out into the lake until the water closed over my head.”

“But you didn’t do that,” said Jason.

“I couldn’t let it happen.”

“Why?” asked Jason.

Sees Jane held his hand and looked into his face. It was the kind of thing you would say when you had a sense of who you were or who you might become.

“Because I didn’t want to lose you like she lost Steven Andrew.”

The End