



TALES OF
SUSPENSE

3 SHORT STORIES

Sheryl Sato

Tales of Suspense

The Wall

The Flight

The Lake

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The Wall

Walter was an exceptional salesman. Everyone said so. He was quite modest about it, no splashy shows of fancy cars or gold watches. He and Ellen lived in a brownstone, entertained monthly and went to the shore each summer. Walter's salary and commissions were more than enough to support them and their three cats, so Ellen kept house and volunteered at the local animal shelter.

Walter had grown comfortable in his routine. He stepped out for a brisk morning walk on the way to the office. He met a familiar countenance on the street and had a brief conversation which led to an exchange of information. Walter then walked to the office, whistling, and drew up paperwork. His appointment arrived and a successful transaction was made. He held a variation of the daily conversation with his supervisor during the morning coffee break.

"Good morning, Mr. Jones," Walter said.

"Well, Walter, you've done it again!" Mr. Jones said, slapping Walter on the back. "Another sale, another commission."

"It's nothing, Mr. Jones, I just got lucky, that's all," Walter replied, then headed over to the mound of paperwork on his desk. Mr. Jones shook his head, wondering yet again how someone who spent so much time gazing out the window could possibly be this profitable to the company.

At the end of each day when the office emptied out and the sun was beginning its descent, Walter put his feet on up his desk and looked across to the next building. The pinkish rays crept slowly across the surface of the building and Walter waited, watching. He leaned forward and stared intently for a few moments, then sat back in his chair to make a few notes. He stapled papers together, emptied his coffee mug and locked up the office.

It was a short walk back home and Ellen greeted him happily at the door, having just returned from the animal shelter. He listened to her stories of the adorable animals she was hoping would be adopted, watching carefully to see if she was going to propose be added to their family, then relaxed with the knowledge she had no intention of turning the house into a zoo. He told her his day and of the conversation with Mr. Jones.

"You really must tell me how you do it!" Ellen exclaimed. "Some type of intuition," she said admiringly. Walter smiled and headed to the study for his nightly drink.

So the days went. Ellen began to notice Walter had shadows under his eyes. He moved restlessly each night and yawned through breakfast. She asked him about it and he insisted all was well. Concluding Walter needed a

holiday, she asked him whether they could travel to visit her sister overseas this year. He thoughtfully replied that it might be possible, he would need to put in more hours at the office for a while, but yes, they could begin planning for time away.

As the days grew longer, Walter took to staying at the office later. Ellen dropped by in the early evenings with a cold supper and would find Walter peering out his window.

One evening when Walter returned late, he told Ellen he was considering retiring. Ellen was supportive, but puzzled he would want to give up such commissions, especially as he was far from the usual age of retirement. He tried to explain that it was difficult business, earning a living from sorrow.

“Well really, darling, there are a number of people who profit from death,” Ellen said calmly. “And it’s not as though you have something to do with what happens to them or are dishonest in your work.”

“But perhaps I have been,” Walter replied. “What would you say then?”

“You’re not saying you...” Ellen gasped.

“Of course not! I did nothing directly,” Walter said. “But there is this one thing. One might say, an unfair advantage.” Walter told her everything but Ellen was disbelieving for the first time in their marriage. She would not be convinced and Walter finally gave up and went to bed.

The next day at breakfast Walter brought up the subject again.

“Ellen, please tell me you believe me. Tell me you believe I can see shadows on the wall across the street from my office, shapes which show me the faces of the people I should approach with my sales pitch.”

“It does seem a bit far-fetched, dear. You want me to believe you can see actual silhouettes of people you will then encounter who meet an untimely fate soon after?”

“Yes, I have only to remember the distinctive shadows shown to me, the profiles, and I will meet that person within hours. I never know when they will pass on, only that they will. Sometimes in a matter of days, others not for a year.”

“It does sound rather odd. Show me,” Ellen insisted.

After dinner, Walter and Ellen walked back to the office together. A service was being held as they quietly entered the side door of the funeral home.

“I sold that casket too,” Walter murmured as they walked up the stairs together. They sat, gazing fixedly out the window together as the sun’s last rays

crept across the buildings. They watched, Ellen puzzled and skeptical. Walter drew in his breath sharply.

“I don’t see anything,” Ellen said.

“Right there, near the corner,” Walter pointed, agitated. Ellen leaned forward, barely blinking. Finally she sat back, sighing.

“It’s gone,” Walter said.

“Describe it to me,” Ellen said. Walter hesitated, then began to speak.

They returned home in silence. Walter retired the next day. Mr. Jones begged him to stay, but Walter only smiled and replied, “You’ll see me again soon enough.”

A few weeks later, the coroner exited Walter and Ellen’s bedroom and home. When filling in the paperwork, he hesitated over “cause of death.” Eventually he wrote “natural causes.” He certainly couldn’t write the explanation given to him by the deceased’s wife.

“He was scared of his own shadow,” she had said knowingly.

The Flight

The airplane shuddered, dipping and causing my stomach to swirl. It had probably been a mistake to eat at that restaurant near the airport. Mysterious chunks of something distinctly not meatball-like had been floating in the ciorbă broth. I had planned to sleep on the long flight back overseas, but the plane seemed to have other ideas.

There were passengers in every other row, stretched out across multiple seats and enjoying the extra leg room. The flight attendants looked a little pale, but not particularly concerned. I settled back in the seat and closed my eyes. The gentle rocking from side to side lulled me into a lucid state and I allowed myself to think about the events of the past few weeks.

The southeastern European country was jarring in comparison with my quiet bachelor life. It was difficult to fathom that my Elena, so sweet and cultured, had been raised in this raucous place. The coarse language, bright colours and spicy foods seemed at odds with her shy personality. We had met when her family travelled to meet some distant relatives in my city. It had been difficult to ignore this family and their bright clothes, winding their way casually down the street. Elena had caught my eye and shyly smiled, all the encouragement I required. We lunched together the next day and were inseparable as much as possible for the rest of her visit.

“Bloody Mary, sir?” a voice intruded abruptly. I sat up, disoriented. The flight attendant was holding a dark bottle. I shook my head and settled back into my seat. The passenger in front of me accepted the drink and slurped it rudely. A man at the back was coughing relentlessly. I sighed, wondering if I should have a drink after all. Maybe it would help me sleep.

I walked the aisle for a few minutes. I had never been on a plane with so few passengers. By my count there were only twelve, including myself.

The plane’s loud droning was reassuring, steady and monotonous. I had just about drifted off again when a short, sharp scream sounded from the front. I bolted up, blearily trying to find the source. The flight attendants were assisting one of the passengers, holding her up as her head lolled back. They spoke calmly to her and eventually she seemed to settle, laying down in the extra seats. The attendants had a hurried whispered conversation, then covered the woman with a blanket. I was wide awake now, so opened my book and attempted to concentrate on legends of the Carpathians.

The coughing at the back of the plane continued. I was not the only passenger irritated by this as I heard someone hiss “You suck” as they walked past. I gave up trying to read and laid back again, closing my eyes and thinking

about Elena. We had finally settled on a date for our wedding. I would return in a month for a simple ceremony with Elena's family.

The plane rose and fell abruptly. My stomach rose to meet my mouth. I took a deep breath and the plane levelled again. Poor Elena would never have been able to make this trip. She had been so ill for the last days of my visit, pale and drawn, unable to eat and unwilling to leave the house except for a short while in the evenings after I had retired for the night.

I listened. Something had changed. It took a moment to realize the coughing had stopped. I smiled, relieved, then glanced back. The seat was now empty. The flight attendant was making the rounds again, this time with wine glasses.

"Red, sir?" I shook my head. How the passengers could keep down so much liquid with the plane bobbing up and down was beyond me. "Are you sure? I only have one glass left." I shook my head again. The passengers ahead of me began complaining.

"I want it!" one shouted and the other tried to jump over the seat to be first.

"Bite me!" the other shouted and they began to scuffle. The flight attendant separated them and began whispering intently. They all turned to look at me and begrudgingly agreed to share the last glass.

I decided to stretch my legs. I walked back and forth down the aisle a few times. The woman who had cried out earlier remained beneath the blanket and I envied such easy rest. The coughing man had still not returned to his seat.

I found it difficult to get used to how the people in this country stared at strangers. It did not feel unnatural to me to move around during such a long flight, yet stare they did.

I decided to use the restroom and make another attempt at sleep. When I exited the restroom and began to return to my seat I stopped dead. All of the seats were now empty. A nervous giggle sounded behind me. I turned slowly and saw all of the passengers behind me in a group, almost falling over one another, eyes glittering. I sighed and walked slowly back to my seat. As they leaned over me one at a time, I closed my eyes and thought of Elena.

It was my own fault, I suppose. I should have known better than to take the evening flight out of Transylvania.

The Lake

Eleanor had always wanted a cottage by a lake. When she saw the listing for a “Small log cabin by the lake, mountains and trees” a few towns over, she set up an appointment to drive up the next afternoon. The rustic wood cabin, beach (actual sand!) and the little dock where a small rowboat nodded were enchanting. The air was fresh, the trees towered invitingly and numerous types of birds chirped and dipped over the lake. This would be a welcome change from the small, expensive apartment, which could never quite shut out the hum of the city.

Jan, the realtor, showed her the other buildings on the property - a well house, small shed for firewood and a boathouse. All were in good condition and well maintained. There were many trails around the cottage, a small kitchen garden and sunflowers smiling down all around the fully furnished cottage. Jan informed Eleanor she could bring unneeded items to the office in town.

“Your husband wasn’t able to join you today?” the realtor asked.

“He passed away in the spring,” Eleanor replied, disloyal in her excitement about living by this captivating lakeside.

“It’s fairly isolated out here,” the realtor cautioned. “The nearest neighbour is about eight kilometers away. Sometimes wild animals come through here. There is no phone and the roads are not always passable once it starts to snow.”

“Henry used to travel a lot for work. I’ve never been uncomfortable with being on my own,” Eleanor responded. “I need a new start, and this is where I’d like to begin - I’ll take it.”

She looked across the shimmering lake at the mountains, their reflection serenely reflected. Her new home’s natural mirror appeared to stretch off into the distance forever. It was the afternoon’s calm that had the most appeal - no horns or sirens, just wildlife talking and the gentle sougning of the wind in the trees. She could hardly wait to move in here.

A flurry of paperwork followed. Selling the apartment, signing for the first ever property she had owned by herself, taking one last look around the home she had shared with her husband for so many years. She found it hard to regret leaving, knowing where she would end out her last years. She had already said a brief goodbye to her neighbours, none of with whom she was particularly close. Most of her oldest friends had long since moved away, so she was not leaving much behind in the way of relationships.

In early fall, Eleanor closed the back of her car, watching the moving truck move slowly away. A frisson of excitement scampered up her spine. Everything had been carted into the little cottage and she stretched gingerly

with the knowledge that tomorrow's backache would help her feel every one of her years.

Eleanor could hardly wait to start a cozy fire and watch night fall on the lake, her first evening in this paradise. She turned a lamp on and grabbed a lantern. The woodshed was well stocked and she breathed in the fresh scent of cedar, loading the log carrier until she could feel the strain on her back. A sudden breeze lifted her hair and she raised her head, closing her eyes. The silence was complete, the air crisp. She filled her lungs.

Eleanor stacked the wood neatly, laid a fire and admired her handiwork. She cooked up a vegetable stew, carrying it down to the dock.

A brilliant crimson line sprawled across the vast expanse and she sighed with pleasure. The only sound was water lapping rhythmically at the dock and she ended up lying on the boards, trailing a hand in the water. It was warm, as was the night. The stars blinked brilliantly and she felt as though the distant mountains were enveloping her, protecting her from anything outside of this moment. When Eleanor began to yawn, she walked back to the gentle glow of the cottage and straight for her cozy bed. She closed her eyes and fell into dreamless rest.

The next morning, Eleanor awoke in the cottage to the sounds of birds twittering, chattering chipmunks and the majestic cries of eagles. Despite the path which led her here alone, she felt so grateful to be in this idyllic place. She sat on the porch with breakfast, watching the swallows dipping over the sparkling, pristine water. There were so many things she wanted to do and by the lake, it felt like there was a blissful eternity ahead.

Eleanor started off with a thorough cleaning of the log walls. She dusted the cobwebs from the corners, holding a candle up against the cracks and edges to see if any air was moving through. The logs fit together tightly and appeared to have been hand planed. The cottage was surprisingly warm and she did not feel any drafts. The walls were covered with landscape paintings from the previous owner, so she carefully took them down and stacked them behind the door. She would have to drive down to Jan's office one day. Eleanor hung her cousin's watercolours, wiped the wooden ceiling beams and swept out the ashes from the stone fireplace.

Eleanor scrubbed the kitchen thoroughly, admired the wood burning oven and began a mental list of supplies to purchase when heading into town next. She would definitely need to check around to see if there was a ladder. The large skylights were mossy and she couldn't wait to fall asleep with a view of the starlit sky. The evening was spent at the lake again.

In the morning, Eleanor stretched happily, reaching out for Henry and sighing. He would have loved it here. Fresh bread and fruit made a perfect

breakfast on this glorious day. She decided to explore some of the wooded trails. The air was filled with song. She stepped along happily, enjoying the trails' sensational views of the lake for miles. From this angle, it looked as though the farther she travelled away from the cottage, the farther away the mountains receded.

She returned in late afternoon, tired from her exertions. She made a cup of tea and headed down to the lake. The water was so clear she could see rocks and shiny fish lures deep in the water. She looked across to the mountains, majestic and green. Lines of trees grew upward, hooded druids marching to the peaks. The beauty and warmth of this place was astounding. Eleanor missed Henry, but it felt as though she could be contented here forever without seeing another soul.

Eleanor looked at the rowboat. She had not been out on a boat in years, and Henry had always insisted on being the one to row. She gave the boat a bit of a push, and it bobbed happily, settling again slowly. It was clean and dry, so she carefully stepped in and unwrapped the rope. She needed some practice to figure out how to guide the boat, but she got the hang of it and soon was gliding rhythmically, although slowly, away from the dock. She rowed until her arms and back were tired, then sat back. It felt like she had rowed for such a short time, but the mountains seemed so much closer. Groups of trees sheltered the cozy cottage and Eleanor sighed happily. She never could have imagined herself belonging to this place.

The rowboat floated around the lake, the water extending off into the distance in both directions and the mountains moving closer. The birds sang and the occasional fish jumped. She rowed back to the dock, the mountain's shadow following slowly behind. She tied up the boat and headed back to the cottage, admiring how perfectly it sat in between the trees. Her arms were sore from rowing, but although she was approaching the age Henry had been when he had passed on, she felt herself growing stronger from chopping wood and tending the small garden beside the porch.

Eleanor took a trip into town one morning, leaving the cottage for the first time since moving in. Jan greeted her with enthusiasm and, oddly, what appeared to be relief.

"Everything ok at the cottage?" Jan asked.

"Absolutely, I love it. I brought some paintings from the cottage" Eleanor replied.

Eleanor brought the first few paintings in from the car, images of the lake's crystalline water and the mountains proudly reflecting their majesty. She set down the next pile, which showed clouds rolling in over the lake.

Jan warned her that the coming months would be a much different experience than what Eleanor was used to in the city. She advised Eleanor to lock up the cottage, to go and visit relatives or friends. Eleanor nodded thoughtfully, but didn't say she couldn't wait to see how everything looked in the winter.

She exchanged a few more niceties, then headed off to the grocery store. The cashier asked her if she was new in town, and she answered that she was living in a cottage by the lake.

"You won't be staying there in the winter, will you?" the cashier asked, giving her a curious look.

"Why not?" Eleanor said. "Surely the winters at the lake aren't much different than they are here in town?"

"Well, you wouldn't catch me living all the way out there all by myself," the cashier responded, then quickly tallied the rest of Eleanor's groceries and began talking to the next customer.

Eleanor turned into the long winding driveway with a sense of relief. She had missed the solitude of the cottage. Eleanor couldn't quite put her finger on what felt out of place. It was as though someone had been there while she was gone. Everything always looks a bit different when you've been away, she mused. She spent the rest of the afternoon on the pier, dangling her feet in the water until the sky changed to blue ombre and shadows stretched all the way across the lake.

The days were starting to take on a pleasant inconsistency. She woke, she decided what to do, she did it. She didn't miss anyone from the city, and aside from the wildlife, she went for weeks without seeing another living creature. She had to admit, the realtor and the cashier had planted some doubts in her mind about staying alone in the cottage for winter, but she squashed those thoughts. Pioneers lived in far more remote places with even more unforgiving climates without all the amenities she had at her disposal. Of course, they usually had families, but Henry was gone and Eleanor had no desire to start over with a new relationship.

Eleanor built a fire in the woodstove, luxuriating in how the warmth radiated through the cottage. It felt colder inside lately, and despite how well sealed the walls had appeared when she initially cleaned the cabin, it seemed there must be cracks somewhere which were letting in the fall chill. She hummed, preparing dinner in the woodstove. Her favourite place to sit inside was in front of the window facing the pier. The shaded porch looked out onto the beach and the pier, where the rowboat pointed at the dimming mountains. The peaked shadows lengthened, reaching toward the cottage.

As she ate, Eleanor heard a branch scratching at the side of the porch. Another branch slapped at a window, startling her.

The next morning, Eleanor armed herself with a tree saw, a hand saw and a pair of heavy duty pruners. She walked around the entire cottage without encountering a single bough near the house.

“Odd,” she said aloud. Her voice was swallowed up by an immense silence. She looked up into the trees, their branches far above the cottage. She put the tools away, pulled out plants from the garden and checked the well house. She chopped more wood, pausing once to determine why it felt different somehow. Eleanor listened for birds. There were none. The occasional chipmunk chattered off in the distance and the wind moved uneasily through the trees. Eleanor lay awake much of the night listening to the silence, trying to sleep.

The birds were back in the morning as she drank her coffee. She nodded off after the night with so little sleep. Eleanor dreamed she was out on the lake, desperately rowing to reach the cottage, which was aflame. She jolted awake, hearing a single eagle cry and her own ragged breathing. Sore from cutting firewood, she made a pot of tea and headed down to the dock.

The boat bumped against her toe, inviting her in. She stepped into the rowboat, then gasped as freezing water rushed around her feet. Despite the lack of recent rain, there were a few inches of water in the bottom of the boat. She bailed it out, waited a few minutes to make sure no water was coming in, then set off, rowing slowly. She sat in the bottom of the boat with her back against a pillow, floating lazily and watching how the mountains appeared to move along with her, overlapping each other.

She woke abruptly and sat up, looking to see how far she had drifted. The cottage appeared to be surrounded by darkness, but when she rubbed the sleep from her eyes the shadows were gone. She turned to look at the mountains and gasped. They seemed to be almost on top of her. She rowed back as quickly as she could, watching the shadow creep ahead of her path.

The days grew shorter. The squirrels and chipmunks were busy carting nuts away to their hiding places and the birds were growing plump with the seed she provided. The birds sang infrequently, so she spent the afternoons in heavy stillness.

Eleanor packed up the last of the paintings on the day the first snowflakes began to fall. She delivered the remainder of the paintings to the realtor, noting their dark colours and emphasis on jagged mountains and black tree branches. The realtor asked her how things were, and Eleanor responded that everything was perfect, she was looking forward to seeing the lake and mountains in the snow.

“You know, I do have a guest room in my house. My husband and I would be happy to have you stay with us for the winter. That way you won’t be on your own, and...”

“Thank you, but I am looking forward to some time to reflect,” Eleanor interrupted. “I’d better get going, I have some supplies to buy and I’d like to get back before this snow starts to stick.”

Eleanor had the same cashier at the grocery store and, surprisingly, she made the same offer as the realtor.

“We’d be happy to have you,” said the cashier, leaning over the counter in a conspiratorial way. “Last spring someone noticed that the woman who was living in your cottage hadn’t come into town. The sheriff took a drive up there, and it was vacant, with no sign anyone had ever been there. They even dragged the lake, but she was never found.”

“Well, I appreciate the offer, but I will decline,” Eleanor said. She packed the groceries into her car and headed back to the cottage, driving cautiously as the snow was beginning to make the roads more slippery.

She arrived before the sun set and sighed gratefully. People were exhausting. The mountains hovered near, their green becoming obscured by the layers of snow. She wondered what had become of the cottage’s previous occupant. She looked at the placid lake, finding it difficult to imagine the chaos when it had been dragged for a body.

Eleanor unloaded the supplies she had purchased, having bought a little of everything and a lot of canned goods. She took supplies to the well house hurriedly, noting evening was falling fast. She moved back toward the cottage but heard rustling in the woods behind her. Eleanor turned abruptly but saw nothing. She broke out into the cottage clearing and almost sobbed with relief.

“Silly tales. You should know better than to let yourself get caught up in that nonsense,” she scolded herself.

Eleanor settled into an armchair by the fire after dinner. She reflected on the insistence of the realtor and cashier that she should not be alone for the winter.

“A bunch of fusspots,” she said aloud, “thinking I am a helpless old lady.” She tucked the quilt tighter around her. The snow was light, but there was a definite chill in the air and the fire flicked quickly back and forth, as though a draft was coming from above. Eleanor turned out the lights and extinguished the fire.

As she walked past the window, the snow illuminated a shape moving away from the pier. She grabbed a lantern and quickly put on her coat and boots. She moved as quickly as felt comfortable - the snow was making the

boards slippery. Eleanor made it to the end of the dock just as the rope which held the boat to the dock floated just out of reach.

“All you need is to break a hip,” Eleanor laughed deprecatingly.

There was nothing to try to grab the rope or the boat with, so she resigned herself to the fact that she likely would not see the boat again for several months. She turned, and from the corner of her eye she saw a shape rise out of the boat. It opened wide wings and flew over her. Something dropped beside her foot. She bent down, illuminating the half-eaten body of a chipmunk, its rusty blood staining the fresh snow. She shrieked and stumbled, flailing at the air and landing in the icy water. The water churned, pushing her back and forth until, disbelieving, she found herself under the dock. She struggled for air in the few inches between the boards and water. She pushed off on the pilings and her hand grasped the metal ladder. It was so cold she was barely able to hold on long enough to begin climbing. She collapsed on the slippery boards, teeth chattering, shaking uncontrollably. The sky was black and it was almost impossible to see anything aside from the blazing light emanating from the cottage.

Eleanor scrambled to her feet and began to run, trepidation filling her as she realized she had left the fire unattended. She threw open the door to see the fire slowly dying to embers and the remainder of the house unlit. She shook her head, unable to reconcile what she was seeing, and felt something touch her leg. Eleanor looked down and saw a branch tapping against her foot. It had stretched all the way across the porch.

“I’ll take care of that tomorrow,” she said shakily, and went in, closing the door. She hesitated, then locked the doors for the first time.

Eleanor slept little and woke disoriented. The skylights were dark and branches hung low over all of the windows, laden with the night’s heavy snowfall. She went out to release clouds of snow from the branches, but they still swayed heavily as the snow continued to fall. She looked at the mountains, their height and beauty made more immense by the snow. They towered over the cottage, their sharp peaks menacing. The edges of the lake were beginning to freeze so they appeared to stretch all the way across to where the sand was covered with snow. The cottage was so cold no amount of wood could keep her from shivering. She tried to read but could not concentrate. She swept the ashes out of the fireplace again.

Eleanor hurried along the path to the woodshed, trying to block the voices of the realtor and cashier, telling her she shouldn’t be here alone. She admonished herself for being silly and proceeded to chop wood until she was flushed and out of breath. She filled the log carrier, jumping as spider after spider skittered out of the freshly hewn pile. Eleanor carried a full load of wood

toward the cottage, stopping to sniff the air. It smelled rotten. Her eyes were drawn to the mountains and she drew in her breath. They looked entirely different in the snow, somehow closer and hostile, threatening. The cottage was encased in branches, snaking along the ground and hanging over the roof. There was no wind yet the branches moved side to side.

Eleanor went around to the porch and stepped over boughs to enter the cottage. She heard scraping against the door as she closed it. She built the fire in the wood stove even larger and bent to put the new wood by the fireplace. She squinted, moving closer with the light. The fireplace contained a nest with three dead baby mice. She put her hand over her mouth, looking around. Nothing else had been disturbed. Silently asking for forgiveness, she laid wood over the nest and its occupants, quickly striking the match to warm the room.

Eleanor burned all the wood she had cut, but she could not stave off the cold that seeped in through the walls. She was unwilling to go out into the muffled night and so decided to go to bed early. It might not be such a bad idea to spend the rest of winter in town.

"I am an old woman, after all," she muttered to herself. She lay stiffly in bed, trying to stay warm. She avoided looking up at the skylight, keeping her eyes closed tightly, away from the darkness that seethed over the skylight.

The owl perched on the pier in the middle of the night had only a few feet to fly from the mountains which almost touched the pier. A mouse scampered out from the entwined branches and was snatched by an owl. Silence filled the air, a faint scent of smoke passing by on the breeze. The trees sighed.

The day of the first thaw, Jan made her way up to the lake property to visit Eleanor. She found an empty cottage, well-kept and tidy. The trees around the cottage had been recently pruned but there was no sign of Eleanor. The rowboat bobbed at the end of the pier, wood was neatly stacked beside the fireplace and the bed was made.

An ad appeared in the paper a week later.

"Small log cottage by the lake, mountains and trees. Available for summer months only."



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Sheryl Sato lives in Surrey, B.C. with her family. She enjoys reading, gardening and crafting. Her favourite books are classics and short horror stories. Sheryl is currently working on several writing projects in different genres.

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