

## The Cabin by the Lake

The sun had set several hours ago over Lake Huron, leaving the far northern point of Lower Michigan in a cold, dark winter night. This remote area of the state was sparsely populated with widely spaced lake cabins. At this time of year, only a few hardy souls ventured out to brave the cold.

That is exactly what Tommy was hoping for when he pulled his Jeep Wrangler into the dirt driveway of his friend Bernie's cabin.

"Here we are!" he said in excitement to his passenger.

Andrea sat still with her legs cross and arms folded across her chest. After a pregnant pause, she asked "This is it?"

"Yes! What do you think?"

"When you said 'cabin' I thought you meant a log cabin. Not the second little piggy's house of sticks!"

"This ain't the mountains," Tommy's enthusiasm would not be diminished. "It's Lake Huron. Come on! Let's go inside."

Andrea climbed out of the vehicle, bracing herself against the cold and followed Tommy to the front door of the cabin. He unlocked the door and turned on the interior light. The cabin consisted of a large single room, with a kitchen to the right and a queen-size bed to the left. A small bureau with a mirror and portable TV on it sat next to the bed. Shelves with a few books and a floor lamp were near the bed on the same wall as the front door. A tiny bathroom could be seen through a doorway beyond the bed.

In the middle of the cabin was a living room area with a comfortable couch, love seat, recliner, a wooden coffee table in their midst and a large fire place.

"It's...uh...charming," Andrea said with uncertainty.

"I think it's great," Tommy said, stepping inside. He noted it was clean, just as Bernie had promised. "I'll make a fire to warm things up then get our luggage from the Jeep."

As Andrea walked slowly around the cabin with skepticism, Tommy went out the backdoor where a stack of firewood was stacked. He managed to load several logs in his arms when a piercing scream split the night.

Tommy dropped his bundle and, because one log landed squarely on a toe, hobbled back inside. As he burst through the door, Andrea was sitting on the kitchen counter with her arms wrapped tightly around her legs, which were folded against her chest.

She pointed to the floor next to the refrigerator. "Mouse! Kill it!"

Confused by her hysterics, Tommy asked if it had attacked her.

"No! Just kill it!"

"Was it wearing a hockey mask and carrying a chain saw or something?"

Becoming angry, Andrea jabbed a finger at him. "NO! Will you just get it away from me?"

"I'm missing something here. If it's a tiny mouse..."

"What you're missing is I will kill YOU if you don't kill IT!" She held up the only weapon within reach, a wooden spoon.

Abandoning his quest for logic, Tommy began an examination of the floor around the refrigerator. "See if you can find some mouse traps in the cabin over there."

Crawling across the counter tops to keep from stepping on the floor, Andrea began searching the cabinets. The refrigerator seemed to be permanently stuck to the floor by years of spilled foods and liquids. Applying a slight nudge from his telekinesis, Tommy pulled it away from the wall. A small hole to the outside was bored through the wall near the floor.

"I think he escaped," Tommy said.

"Make sure he doesn't come back!"

Tommy found a small board, a hammer and nails in a shed behind the cabin and walled up the hole. Feeling protect from invasions of vicious mice, Andrea began to feel slightly embarrassed at her antics.

"Do you think my screaming woke the neighbors?" she asked nervously.

"I think your screaming woke King Tut."

A short time later, Tommy made a warm fire and Andrea sat in front of it on the floor.

"I'll go get our luggage now," he said wearily. Andrea made no attempt to help him. He returned a few minutes later with his duffel bag and two heavy, enormous suitcases in each hand.

"Oh, thank you, sweetie!" She was suddenly energetic as she jumped up. "Just put them on the bed for now and I'll unpack them."

Tommy shuffled under his heavy load to the bed, and with a tremendous heave, hoisted one onto the mattress. The box springs and bed frame collapsed under the sudden increase in weight. The bed dropped to the floor and the footboard fell over with a loud crash.

“Maybe I packed a little too much stuff?” Andrea asked.

“Ya think?” Tommy muttered under his breath. “I guess I owe Bernie a new bed.”

“Tell him it’s better feng shui like this,” Andrea suggested earnestly.

“How about I tell him that we were in bed when it broke and let him reach his own conclusions?”

She gave him a look of incomprehension, until her jaw dropped slowly and her face reddened as his meaning soaked in.

“I think you had better stick with the feng shui thing.” A touch of warning rang in her voice.

Abandoning that tactic, Tommy opened the suitcase and stared in shock at the sight. The suitcase was filled with shoes, clothes, make-up bags, appliances and a bag of Starbucks coffee. He peered over his shoulder where Andrea was opening the second suitcase on the floor. It contained more shoes and clothes and a small ironing board and travel iron, as well.

“We’re supposed to be roughing it this weekend, Andrea.” He knew he was venturing into dangerous waters.

She looked up at him, eyes blazing. “We’re out here in the middle of NOWhere, with NO DVD, VCR or CD players, NO radios, NO computers and my cell phone doesn’t have a signal. We’re miles from the nearest Starbucks and I doubt that TV will pick up “Desperate Housewives”. I only have my iPod for entertainment. If that’s not roughing it, then I don’t know what is.” She grabbed a large load of clothing and miscellaneous items that Tommy didn’t recognize and retreated to the bathroom.

He took the advantage of her absence to retrieve the bottle of champagne he had been hiding. He removed his clothing and donned a pair of red silk boxer shorts that hung loosely but were just tight enough that his manhood produced a slight bulge in front. He dimmed the lights so that his lean muscular body glowed in the fire’s glimmering.

He stretched out on the bed and waited. And waited.

Tommy dozed off and was awakened when Andrea finally emerged from the bathroom. She wore a thick terry-cloth robe closed tightly around her with flannel pajamas that went down her legs ending in closed footies.

“Aren’t you cold?” She asked incredulously. “I’m freezing!” She discarded the robe and dove deep underneath the covers, shivering and chattering her teeth dramatically. She started at the ceiling, not looking at Tommy.

Ignoring this, he rose from the bed. “Would you like some champagne, mademoiselle?”

Andrea hesitated, not wanting to leave the warmth of the bed, but said yes. Tommy slowly removed the foil and the wire mesh with flirtatious movements and looks. Andrea tried to keep the angry look on her face, but finally broke into a big smile at Tommy’s attempts at seduction.

Having broken through her wall of aloofness, he handed her two champagne flutes. She sat up in bed while he made a grand presentation of removing the cork. Keeping his eyes locked on hers, Tommy slowly eased the cork out of the bottle. It exited with a loud pop and Andrea let out a startled squeak.

The next several events occurred within the span of a second, but in Tommy’s mind, time moved in slow-motion.

The cork launched upward and struck the ceiling at an angle. It ricocheted off and struck a book on a shelf. The book fell, hitting the flimsy floor lamp, which fell over onto the bureau. Although it was thin, the lamp carried enough momentum to shake the bureau, loosening the mirror. The mirror fell forward, knocking the small TV set off onto the floor with a deafening crash.

The commotion startled Andrea, who screamed and dropped the flutes to the floor, adding even more broken glass to the debris.

They gazed at the mess in disbelief. Tommy knew the source of Andrea’s distress was the destruction of the TV, her last connection to the civilized world.

“Tom sweetie, I don’t feel like having champagne anymore,” she said quietly. “I think I’ll just go to sleep.” She rolled over and pulled the covers up close to her face.

Tommy stood still for a few shocked moments, champagne bottle untouched in his hand, staring Andrea’s form. Resigned to the fact she wouldn’t help, Tommy cleaned up the mess.

When the cabin had been restored to its immaculate state, Tommy found a plastic cup in the cabinet and slammed several large swallows of champagne before climbing into bed next to a sleeping Andrea. At least he got permission from his psionic brethren to drink this weekend, since they would be covering Michigan for him.

A cold rain started hitting the roof. Tommy lay in bed listening to the soft patter of rain drops. His frustration faded and he drifted off to sleep.

A short time later, he was awakened by Andrea.

“Tommy, the roof is leaking! It’s dripping on my side of the bed and down by my feet!”

It was raining harder. Tommy tried to clear his mind and a drop of ice cold water on his head brought him around instantly.

“See?”

Tommy looked up just as an old weather-beaten shingle buckled to the downpour, sending a stream of freezing water onto his face, running down his chest and arms, into his lap.

With a yelp, he leapt out of bed. He turned on the overhead light and saw leaks forming all around the bedroom area. Andrea snatched the blankets and sheets off the bed and ran for the safety of the dry couch.

Tommy pushed the bed out from under the leaks and dressed quickly. Outside in the cold rain, he retrieved a plastic tarp from his Jeep and using the hammer and nails and every psionic power he could employ, he sealed the roof in a matter of minutes.

He ran back into the relative warmth of the cabin. Andrea, eyes closed, was stretched out on the couch in the dark, in front of a dying fire. Once again he was left alone with the mess. He flipped on the light switch, but nothing happened.

“The electricity went out a couple of minutes ago,” Andrea said without opening her eyes.

It was late morning when Tommy woke up, after a fitful few hours of sleep. He had found a dry, musty-smelling blanket somewhere and leaned back in the recliner. Tommy had woken up several times to re-stoke the fire, keeping the cabin warm.

The delicious aroma of coffee caressed his nose. Tommy rolled over and saw Andrea busy in the kitchen.

“I thought the power was out,” he said sleepily.

“It came on a little while ago,” she said with unusual perkiness. “So I scrambled some eggs and made some toast. Aren’t you glad I brought coffee now?”

“You’re rather energetic this morning.”

“I must’ve been really tired last night,” she said with a little pout. “Sorry I was so out of it.”

Wisely, Tommy said nothing. She brought him a steaming mug of coffee and sat down in his lap. As they sipped their drink, a patch of white caught Tommy's eye.

"Did it snow last night?"

"Still is," she said unhappily, taking another sip of her coffee.

Tommy wrapped his arms around her, pulling her to him. "We'll just have to stay indoors and make our own heat," he nibbled on her neck.

"Oh, be serious," she laughed. Twisting out of his grip, Andrea stood up. "Let's go for a walk this afternoon! The snow looks pretty up here."

Sadly, Tommy knew that she just didn't want to be cooped up in the cabin all day. They breakfasted, savoring the simple meal. While Andrea cleaned up the dishes, Tommy carefully applied his pyrokinesis to dry the soaked mattress thoroughly.

In preparation for their walk, Andrea vanished into the bathroom again. She emerged half an hour later with hair and make-up perfectly in place. Tommy took his turn, enjoying a quick shower. When he stepped out of the bathroom, Andrea was applying layers of clothing to protect her from the cold and snow. When she finished, he thought she looked like a hockey goalie.

He dressed quickly and donned a leather jacket before they ventured out. The snow covered the landscape transforming it into a beautiful serene wonderland. They walked holding hands enjoying the pristine scenery.

"I need to take a pit stop," Tommy said at last, when they stopped underneath a pine tree, out of the snow.

"Gross!" Andrea shouted. "Don't do it here!"

"I'll go somewhere out of the way so you won't see it and I won't mess up the beauty." He walked toward a grove of trees that offered some privacy. Andrea stood where Tommy left her, waiting impatiently.

High up in the pine tree above her, a small branch could no longer bear the weight of snow and quietly bent earthward, dumping its burden on the branch below. The lower one in turn, unloaded on the branch below it, starting a silent, snowy cascade downward.

In the hushed stillness, Andrea heard a barely audible shush above her. She looked up just as the pine tree relieved itself of half its snow on her. She opened her mouth to scream as the snow buried her in a white heap.

Tommy heard her scream cut off and ran back to her. She was coughing and sputtering, trying to rid her nose, mouth and throat of the intruding snow.

If I laugh, I'm dead, he thought. Tommy ran over to her and helped her out of the snowdrift, fighting back the laughter. Andrea brushed the snow out of her hair, cursing loudly. She was still seething mad when he got her back to the cabin.

Andrea was silent for the remainder of the day and said very little during the supper Tommy prepared. While she retreated to the bathroom for her nightly ritual, Tommy changed into a pair of tight red briefs, which emphasized all of his bulges.

Time to bring out the big guns, Tommy thought, dimming the lights.

As the night before, Andrea slipped quickly from the bathroom to the bed. Not willing to give up, Tommy crawled onto the bed on all fours, creeping slowly toward her. She giggled softly.

“Do you have any more champagne?”

“I do have another bottle,” he said eagerly. He jumped off the bed and padded toward the kitchen.

A sharp pain stabbed his foot as he stepped on a piece of glass that had avoided being swept up with the rest of the mess.

He cried out in agony and drew up his foot to extract the offending shard. The movement was too sudden and he lost his balance, falling over the recliner and landed on the wooden coffee table. It splintered with a loud crash, dumping him onto the floor. He felt another sharp stab as a broken board gouged his leg.

The hospital in Mackinaw City was less than ten miles away but the short distance seemed to last for hours to Tommy. The impromptu tourniquet was already soaked with his blood. As he and Andrea pulled up to the emergency room, a doctor and nurse ran out to help Tommy from the driver's seat.

“You drove yourself here?” The doctor was shocked, when he realized the nature of Tommy's injury. “Why didn't your lady friend drive?”

Andrea turned away embarrassed. Tommy didn't look at her. “She can't drive a standard shift.”

The emergency room staff worked efficiently and within an hour, Tommy was ready to be released. As the final paperwork was being finished, he asked the admissions nurse where Andrea was.

“She got a ride back to your cabin with one of our nurses about half an hour ago,” was the answer.

“You mean she’s not here?” Tommy couldn’t believe his ears.

“Yes.” The nurse looked up at him. “She said she needed to go so she could be packed and ready to drive back to Lansing the minute you got there.”