

## Red Lake - Excerpt

I made my way to the back of the shed. I kept my eyes on the ground for the hatch, searching the area for it. As I neared the back of the shed I quickly spotted it. It looked as if it had recently been set there, bringing me a sigh of relief that other life forms had existed in the space beyond its conception.

As I reached the hatch, the still air somehow grew cooler as if to ward me off. I felt goosebumps line every inch of my arms. The air not only affected my arms but also my eyes, for they sent them glancing forward towards the trees. I froze still in my tracks as my breath caught in my throat.

Somewhere deep in the woods I could see what looked to be a figure, almost indiscernible beyond the hundreds of trees that surrounded it. I swallowed and squinted my eyes to make out detail, but it proved useless. However, there was no doubt in my mind that what I saw was a figure, human or not.

“M-m-mi...” I began to stutter.

I swallowed again.

“Mi-michael?”

“What’s up?”

I could hear Michael still working away at the generator behind me. I did not dare take my eyes off the figure.

“Michael, c-come here.”

I heard Michael stop. I knew he could sense the shakiness in my voice. The ground below him groaned as he stood up and made his way towards me.

“Sabrina, what is it?”

I thought of raising my finger to point, but for some reason found that that would give it away to the figure that I could see it. Nevermind the ceaseless staring. Pointing at it would only confirm what I saw. I could be staring at anything out in the distance. If I couldn’t make out the figure’s features, how could it make out mine? It had no idea I noticed it, and I was intent on keeping it that way.

“I see something. Someone. I don’t know.”

Michael now stood beside me, the heat from his body doing nothing in warming the chill that occupied my own.

“Where at? Can you see who it is?”

I shook my head.

“Here, point to it.”

I shook my head again. *No way in hell am I doing that.*

“We need to go.”

I could sense Michael looking at me and the trees, glancing back and forth between the two, waiting for someone to respond. If only he knew that the trees only laughed.

Blood rushed to my head and adrenaline pumped throughout my entire body. I suddenly gained a new sense of urgency, one that warned me that staring was the worst possible answer right now.

“Michael, we need to go now. Just leave the tools. We’ll tell Mr. Shelby that we couldn’t fix it.”

“Are you sure? We can always-”

*Shut the fuck up, Michael.*

“No. We are leaving now.”

And with that I turned around, removing my gaze from the figure. I knew there was no point in staring. The only way out was to run as fast as possible, to remove myself from these woods at all costs.

I heard Michael’s heels spin behind me as his footsteps followed mine.

“Okay, let me get my flashlight.”

Michael’s words, and perhaps my own sense of security, told me to grab something myself. A weapon, a tool of some kind, anything to defend myself in the worst case scenario. Once I reached the generator I quickly bent down and picked up the crowbar. I heard Michael grab his flashlight.

“We need to run, get out of here as quickly as possible.”

“Sabrina, are you sure there was someone out there? It’s not that I don’t believe you, I just-”

Against better judgment, I stopped and turned around all in one quick motion to face Michael. I couldn’t believe what he was saying to me. Under less intense circumstances, I would’ve been less aggressive. I had no time to screw around in this circumstance.

“Michael, listen to me. I am not staying here or going any slower than my fastest speed possible right now. If you do not share the same sentiment, then I am not waiting up on you.”

Michael’s eyes were wide and intense, but also sorrowful. He looked at me and nodded, straightening his posture.

“Okay.” He replied softly.

I stared at him for a moment and nodded. I began to turn as my eyes moved past and beyond Michael, to the trees.

The trees gifted us with the figure, who was sprinting full speed towards us.

In the moment I saw it, I made no effort to make out its features. I couldn't see anything in that blur in time, and I was perfectly content with keeping it that way if it meant more time to move.

I tugged at Michael's sleeve and began sprinting.

“SHIT!”

The word escaped my mouth against my will. I didn't even conjure up the thought to say it. It was more of a reaction in of itself, one that needed no thought to justify it.

My reaction gave way to a soft cry from Michael as the two of us began sprinting into the trees. I could hear two pairs of footsteps against the dry, now soft, ground. The shudder of our breaths and the wind air rushing past my ears were the only discernible sounds, only bested by the pounding of the blood in my skull.

We made it about a hundred yards from the shed, if I had to guess, when Michael let out a loud yell followed by a hard thud. I made it about fifty more feet until I realized Michael's footsteps were no longer following mine. I shredded to a halt and quickly yanked my head backwards.

Michael lay on the ground with his right hand stretched out towards me, his other hand reaching for the handle of a red axe rising above his back. The blade had lodged itself deep into his spine, a red crimson already blotting up his coat. About fifty feet behind him was a man sprinting towards him, the one the trees had unleashed upon us. The one I had seen standing among them.

Not only could I tell it was a large, jagged man, but I could now make out what little features he had. He seemed burly yet lightweight. Every part of him was covered by clothing save for his face and hair, the latter of which was frizzed out and shot around in all directions. It was a dark, almost unrealistically black color. He donned a white coat which had been torn up and dirtied, his large blue jeans now a deep dirt brown color. His sleeves had been rolled up and he was wearing long black gloves that stretched halfway up his forearm. The worst part of it all was his mask. It was the hardest to make out, but its dark, endless black eyes and open mouth burned itself into my brain. It was something I knew would never leave the back of my mind.