

Excerpt from

THE CONFESSIONAL

CHAPTER 30

By Reiny Pierson

Before David returned to the nursery to close up for the night, he told Ethan to help himself to a beer from the kitchen. Sarah went to the gift shop to close out the sales for the day and to settle the bankcard machine.

“Carol, you can go on home,” she said as she walked behind the counter. “You must be tired.”

“A little, Mrs. Tazewell. I’ve actually been too busy to think about it. There were so many people in here today. It hasn’t been like this since Christmas.”

“Well, now that spring’s here, it’ll pick up and once summer hits and tourist season gets here, it’ll be really busy.”

“I’ll be ready,” Carol said.

“You’re a good worker. I think you should have tomorrow off. Enjoy the rest of your weekend. By the way, what do you think of Ethan?”

“I think he’s really nice. He was real helpful when I needed him to carry plants to cars in the parking lot.”

“Good. I was hoping he’d work out. Take care.”

“Thanks, I will,” she said. “I’ve got a date tonight with Ethan! Bye, see you next week.”

“Have fun on your date.”

Sarah closed and locked the gift shop door after she finished the bookkeeping and walked into the greenhouse. David was turning on the overhead sprinkling system to water all the plants. He looked at Sarah and said, “Are you alright?”

“I don’t know. I feel kind of numb. Like my mind is fuzzy and I’m just going through the motions. I don’t know what to think about all this. I don’t even know where to begin.”

“Go on up to the house. I’ll inish here and then be up,” he said, kissing her on the forehead and down toward the Bay.

As she walked onto the dock, she could hear the water gently lapping against the pier and their boat in the boathouse.

Along the shoreline she heard the croaking of male frogs and the screeching of the tiny green tree frogs. She walked out to the end and sat Indian style, her hands resting in her lap. She was totally enervated; mentally and physically weary and emotionally drained.

Dusk was falling and a thunderhead was forming on the horizon as a cold front came in. Out in the distance, partly obscured by the approaching fog, Sarah could see the channel marker. Through the darkness all that was visible was the red warning light atop the marker blinking on and off—a steady reminder of the danger outside the channel.

She too was aware of danger, a danger once outside her cosmos, but now her ordered little world had been perforated and peril was seeping in, rendering her vulnerable to an unknown embodiment of evil.

She heard footsteps behind her, which got louder as someone approached. Afraid to turn around, her frightened eyes stared out across the Bay. She turned around slowly to see who it was and breathed a sigh of relief as first Max then David came to the end of the pier. David crouched down behind her and wrapped his arms around her. Max decided to trot back up toward the house.

Sarah crossed her arms and clutched her elbows. Silent tears fell down her cheeks as she continued to stare ahead.

“I want my safe, ordered little world back,” she cried.

She turned around and reached for him. He sat and hugged her. She looked at him with teary eyes.

“I feel ... I feel like there’s this hole in my bubble. But instead of air lowing out, evil is seeping in.” She buried her head in David’s chest.

“I’m scared, David.”

“Listen, why don’t we go to Tony’s house in Corolla tomorrow for a few days. I’m sure he’ll be okay with it. Lord knows we both need a break. So what d’ya say? And when we get back we should talk about selling the confessional.”

She nodded and he rocked her slowly as the wind picked up and the thunder came closer.

Out across the water, the channel marker was now completely enshrouded by the fog.

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