

Now and Forever 5, Love's Journey

By Jean C. Joachim

Chapter One

The Caldwell house on Lake Onondaga in Pennsylvania just over the border from New York.

The August heat was still oppressive at midnight, but Callie Caldwell's nerves made her shiver as she and her husband, Mac, tiptoed down to the edge of the water.

"Mac, are you sure no one can see us?" Callie looked around. The only house with lights on was theirs, almost directly across the lake from where they were standing.

"Shhh! The Wilsons aren't home. Come on." He ripped his T-shirt over his head and dropped his shorts then his boxers.

Callie pulled her shift up and off. She stood stark naked, trembling.

"You weren't wearing anything under that all this time?"

She nodded.

"Damn! Now you're cold?"

"Scared."

"It's fine. Come on." Mac took her hand, and they slowly waded in.

The water cooled her skin, reducing her body temperature and relaxing her as it swirled around parts usually shielded by cloth. When they reached the deep part, Mac lifted Callie. She wound her legs around his waist, and he continued out toward the middle. He cupped her bottom with one hand and brushed her long, chestnut hair out of her eyes with the other.

Callie clung to Mac's shoulders. The hair on his chest tickled her nipples, sending pleasing sensations through her body. She leaned over and kissed his neck, then put her lips on his shoulder, sucking before licking.

"You taste good."

He laughed and stopped. "This is far enough." Moonlight shone down on the couple, making Mac's hair a shiny blue-black. His deep-set, blue eyes were darkened by shadows, but Callie felt the heat of their stare on her body.

"Shameful." He shook his head. "Skinny-dipping in front of the neighbors to be alone with

my wife.”

“Do what you gotta do.” She chuckled.

Mac slid his hand up to her back and pressed her against him. His mouth descended on hers in a hungry kiss. His tongue explored, possessing, while he moved to massage her breast.

Callie reached down to find him hard as a rock. Before she knew it, he had slipped inside her and they were joined. She gasped and closed her eyes. Even after ten years of marriage, Callie found lovemaking with Mac exciting. And to be doing it wantonly in the lake at midnight was intense. He moved her up and down, trying to keep the splash to a minimum. Lost in their ecstasy, neither one noticed lights going on in the Wilson’s house.

Mac’s mouth was buried in Callie’s neck, muffling his grunts and groans. But Callie got carried away. She raised her head high and gave out a short, guttural cry as she climaxed in his arms. Mac followed. For a moment, there was silence. Then, the creaking of a rusty screen door hinge alerted them. Callie dropped her legs and sank down until only her eyes were visible above the water.

“Hey. Someone out there?” a male voice called out.

“It’s probably a coyote, Herb. Close the door before he gets you.”

“I heard a human cry. Mebbe someone needs help,” the man said.

“Close the damn door, you’re letting in mosquitoes!” the woman yelled.

Mac crouched down slowly to avoid making noise. A sudden cold spot surrounded Callie. She trembled then it happened. She sneezed.

“That’s it. I heard it again, only different this time. I tell you, it’s human!”

“For God’s sake, go investigate, Herb, or I’ll never hear the end of it.”

Callie’s heartbeat raced as the man moved through his front door, brandishing a big flashlight.

“Mac! Crap!” Callie whispered. She panicked like an animal caught in a trap. She gripped Mac’s arm with all her strength.

“Ow, Callie. Easy,” he whispered. “Stay where you are. Don’t move.” Mac quickly hid Callie behind him.

“Who is it? Who’s out there?” Herb called as he approached the lake.

Closer and closer he came. Terror filled Callie’s heart as the prospect of total humiliation grew. The beam of light whipped back and forth across the water until it hit Mac’s face.

Instinctively, he raised his hand to shield his eyes.

“Well, I’ll be goddamned! Who the hell are you? And what the hell are you doing in my lake at midnight?” Herb’s tone got belligerent.

“Herb. Quiet. It’s okay. Only me, Mac Caldwell from across the lake.”

“What the hell? Why aren’t you swimming on your side?”

Slowly, Mac moved aside. Callie waved briefly before ducking behind her husband again.

“Well, shit for brains! Callie, is that you? Better be Callie, Mac, or I’m gonna have to blow the whistle on you.” Herb shone the light in Mac’s eyes again.

“Of course it’s Callie, Herb. Don’t be ridiculous.”

“Get on out of there. It’s too late for this stuff.”

“It’s hot.”

“But why aren’t you on...” Herb stopped as his shoe hit something. It was one of Callie’s sandals, lying next to a pile of discarded clothes. He looked down on the ground, then up at Mac, then down again and burst out laughing. His guffaw was so loud two more lights went on.

“Quiet, Herb!” Mac hollered from the water, but Herb kept chuckling.

“Why the hell didn’t you say so, Caldwell. Carry on!” Herb doused his light and turned around.

Two other neighbors came out on their front porches and called to Herb.

“Go back to bed. Nothing but a coyote,” he called out. As soon as everyone was gone, Mac and Callie started wading back to shore.

“Last time I listen to you, Mac Caldwell. ‘We’ll have an adventure. No one will know. They’ll be asleep. Come on. It’ll be fun.’ Fun? I’ve never been so humiliated! I’ll never be able to look Joan Wilson in the eye again. And who else are they gonna tell? I’ll have to wear a disguise to the grocery store!”