



A ROMANTIC SUSPENSE FOR EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR

CLARE REVELL

*Water Lily
in July*

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Dedication

For Monica Schwartz (Ginny).

What People are Saying

Thursdays Child

This is the best one yet. What a great story! Ms. Revell keeps you on the edge of your seat either emotionally or in suspense throughout the story. Every emotional tug between Jared and Niamh will pull at your heartstrings. Your heart will break for them, hoping she will recover fully and he can reclaim her heart.

The suspense, the mystery, the danger — it's all as hot as the worst fire he battles. You won't want to put this one down! Oh, and keep those tissues handy.
Donna B. Snow

*Carnations in January shake the foundations
Violets in February are an aid to salvation
Daffodils in March bring betrayal and loss
Sweet peas in April consume all the dross
Lily of the Valley in May brings danger untold
Roses in June show hope in a heart filled with gold
Water lilies in July a town will submerge
Gladioli in August love from the ash will emerge
Forget-me-nots in September are on the front line of fear
Marigolds in October will test her career
Chrysanthemums in November show the burden of choice
Holly in December lets a broken family rejoice*

Water lilies in July a town will submerge

*From the ends of the earth I call to You, I call as my heart
grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For
You have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.*

Psalm 61:2-3

1

White surf pounded against the jagged rocks surrounding the red-and-white striped Wolf Point Lighthouse, sending spray several feet into the air. One hundred and fifteen feet above the rocks, sunlight shone on the paneled glass as Kaylie Wells cleaned.

What was it her mother always said? Never clean the windows when the sun shines full on them. Kaylie had to admit that, once again, her mother was right.

The problem was the lantern room was 360 degrees wall-to-ceiling glass on two levels which needed cleaning daily. No matter what the weather was like.

She was five weeks into a six-week shift as lighthouse keeper and loved every minute of it. The ocean surrounding her was vast, unchanging, awesome and powerful.

Just like her God.

From the top of Wolf Point Lighthouse she could

see for miles on a good day. Even during the height of summer the weather could change instantly bringing rain, wind, and even fog rolling in off the sea onto the town, necessitating the light by day as well as by night.

She looked over the view loving the fact she could see for miles in each direction. Behind her, twelve miles to the west, lay the small coastal town of Wolf Point, from which the tall red-and-white striped lighthouse, bay, and vicious rocks took their names. The English coastline extended on either side of the town, stretching into the distance. The remaining three sides were the Atlantic Ocean.

Heavy footsteps clomped up the steps behind her. "We dinna pay ye to look oot the windows an' admire the view, lassie."

"You don't pay me at all, Angus." Kaylie turned to grin at one of the other two keepers currently on duty with her.

Angus McTavish's grizzled red face was framed by grey curly hair and an unkempt beard. His blue eyes twinkled as he fisted the blue cap that matched his navy sweater and tilted his head. "Aye. An' iffing I did..."

She chuckled. "I know. *I'd pay ye tae work, no to slacken off. Now git.*" She mimicked his Scottish accent perfectly and was rewarded with a grin.

"Exactly." He cast his gaze seaward. "I shall miss the view."

Kaylie carried on polishing the last glass panel. "How are you spending your retirement?"

"I'm moving back tae Perth. My sister and her family live oop there."

"That's Morag?"

"Aye. She and Hamish have been married forty

year now and the wee bairns are all grown up."

"Kids have a tendency to do that."

"Aye, they do. Craig made DCI this past year an' I remember when he were just a wee bairn kickin' a ball about the glen. Anyhoo, as that's the only family I have, that's where I'll go."

"So long as you come and say goodbye before you leave."

His final tour would end during her downtime, and he'd already cleared out his room in the keepers' cottage to make way for his replacement.

"I would nae dream of doing anything other, lassie. Now clean."

Kaylie fired off a mock salute. "Aye, aye, cap'n."

Angus tugged his hat on, nodded, and headed outside onto the lantern gallery.

Kaylie made her final swipes of the panel. The sooner she finished here, the sooner she could get down to the radio room. It was almost time for *him* to call. *Her fisherman*, as the rest of the team called him. He'd first radioed for a weather update five weeks ago when her duty shift began. And he'd called every day since, sometimes more than once. Always asking for the weather, but gradually just wanting a chat after. Some days a conversation was all he wanted.

His name was Rob, and he was a fisherman who spent days at a time out at sea. But his voice was—she studied her distorted reflection in the glass—*intoxicating* was the best word to describe his voice. Smooth, deep, something secret and hidden. If she had to guess what an angel sounded like, she'd guess it'd sound like Rob.

She finished the panel and put the cleaning equipment back in the cupboard, and then she trotted

down a level to the library and radio room. The smell of beef and onions wafted up the stairs from two flights below. Crispin was on cooking duty this week and was so good at it Kaylie often teased him about being in the wrong profession.

Kaylie checked her watch. It was almost time for him to call. She sat at the radio desk ignoring the kaleidoscope of butterflies that fluttered through her. She flipped on the CD of hymns. As it filled the air she pulled over the log and wrote up the latest entry. Then she turned to the radar and weather reports.

Nothing happening out of the ordinary for this time of year.

Which was exactly the way she liked it.

~*~

Rob Peacock sat on the deck of *Seascope*. The fishing vessel might be small, but she was his. Before that she'd belonged to his father. He'd been a fisherman, as had his grandfather before him. Fishing was in their blood and went back several generations. The way he fished may differ vastly from the old days, but the love of the sea and tranquility of the job never changed at all.

Rob whistled as he sewed the net on his lap, the last hymn from Sunday still stuck in his brain. The overnight catch had been heavier and bigger than he'd anticipated. Not necessarily a bad thing, except he'd torn the net and it'd taken him the best part of the day to fix it. Still, the fish were safe in the icebox inside the hull, and if he fixed this soon, he would be back working before nightfall.

His shirt lay tossed to the deck, his already tanned

skin reddening in the hot July sunshine. He glanced across the sea and pushed a hand through his long brown hair and grimaced. He needed a shower.

He'd finish the net and then dive overboard for a swim before it was time to radio in. Salt water was better than none and he was running low on fresh water. He'd only intended to be out for one day, not three. Food he could cut down on. Water he couldn't.

His fingers grazed his stubbled chin. Maybe he should shave before he spoke to her. Then he shook his head. *It's radio, Rob, not video.*

She wouldn't see him, so it didn't matter how he looked. Her name filled his mind. Kaylie, the lighthouse keeper. He knew she went to church as a few times she had hymns playing in the background when he spoke to her. He didn't know what she looked like, or what she read or which church she went to when she wasn't working.

But her voice—oh, how he loved the sound of her voice.

It was soft and melodic, like silver bells on Christmas morning, a breath of wind on a hot summer's day and a healing balm on his tortured soul.

He could get his weather reports from the radio, and he got them over the Satcom anyway, but he needed a reason to talk to her.

The net finally finished, Rob tossed it to the decking and stood. He stretched his aching back and shoulder muscles before shedding his jeans and diving over the side of the boat. The water was cold after the heat of the sun, and he rose to the surface, gasping yet invigorated. He pushed the water from his face. The Lord was so good to him. A job he loved, with the chance to thrive in an environment he adored,

surrounded by the vastness, awesomeness and beauty of creation.

Hauling his dripping body back on board, Rob dried off before pulling his jeans and shirt back on. He headed into the wheelhouse. It was way too small to be considered a bridge by any self-respecting sailor. He picked up the radio and thumbed the mic. "Wolf Point Lighthouse, this is *Seascope*. Are you receiving? Over."

Kaylie responded almost immediately. "*Seascope*, this is Wolf Point Lighthouse. Receiving you loud and clear. Over."

Rob's face broke into a huge grin, and a surge of joy filled him. "How's my favorite lighthouse keeper today?"

"Don't let the others hear you saying that. They might revolt, and I'll have to man this place on my own."

"Don't you mean *woman* it on your own?" he teased, trying to make her laugh.

She giggled. "Do you practice your bad jokes all by yourself?"

"All the time. Until they sound right, then I practice them on you. Have you got the forecast?"

"Wind west to southwest three or four, increasing to five at times. Sea slight to moderate. Weather is fair with occasional rain and fog later. Visibility is moderate, but occasionally very poor."

Rob read the same information on the screens in front of him. "Thank you. So, do you ever get time off?"

"Yes, a whole month."

"Really?" It wasn't that he didn't believe her, but that seemed like a really long time.

"Work six weeks, get a month off. There are

always three of us here to cover the whole day."

Rob looked out the window. "That must be hard. Locked in a tower of men for weeks on end."

Kaylie laughed. "They're all old men. Well, one's married, one has this adorable mother who makes us cakes each week, and the other is really, really old."

"I heard that, lassie." Another voice came over the radio, and Rob imagined Kaylie blushing.

"Ignore him," Kaylie said. "He'll miss me once he retires in a few weeks."

"What do you do when you're not being Rapunzel?"

"I have a room in the keepers' cottage on shore."

"No family?" There was a long pause, and Rob wondered if the radio had stopped working or if he'd said too much. "Wolf Point, are you receiving? Over."

"Yes, *Seascope*, I'm still here. No, no family, which is why I have almost the loneliest job in the world. So for the next month it's just me and no cleaning and a lie in."

A shaft of disappointment speared him. A whole month without speaking to her stretched into an eternity. "When do you leave?"

"Some point on Saturday morning, just as soon as the launch and my replacement get here. Right now I'm so tired I might not get out of bed for a week."

He smiled. "I know how that goes. I'd better get on. I have a load of fish to catch, and I don't want to miss the turning of the tide. Speak tomorrow. Over and out." He put down the mic and looked to where the top of the lighthouse was just visible in the distance. "What do you look like?" he asked rhetorically. "Are you really the tall, leggy blonde I imagine or someone totally different?"

~*~

"Kaylie and Rob, sitting in a tree..." Crispin's singsong voice came from the doorway, his fingers tapping out a rhythm on the wooden frame.

Kaylie spun around on the chair, shooting him the dirtiest look she could manage. "That's hardly fair when I don't even know the guy." She shook her head. "You just wait until your wife calls next time."

Crispin laughed. "You were sitting there with this sappy look on your face, and you reckon you don't know him. You know his name and what he does. And you like him." He straightened. "Anyway, enough of the teasing. Dinner's ready."

Kaylie stood and walked to the stairs with him. "And how much did you know about Sophie before you fell for her?"

"A little bit more than you know about our friendly fisherman. You've fallen in love with the sound of his voice. We all think it's sweet."

Kaylie groaned and flicked his ear as she followed him. "Enough already."

He grinned at her as they entered the kitchen. "You know I'm right though."

Kaylie looked studiously out of the window, ignoring his reflection. "Yeah, but nothing's going to happen. I can't let it."

"Why?" Crispin turned her to face him. "Kaylie, you're not the first person to have loved and lost. Loads of people remarry or find love a second time around. You think God wants you to be alone for the rest of your life? Phil's gone, Kaylie. There's nothing you can do or say that'll change that."

"I know he's gone." She plonked herself at the table and sighed. "We had three days of married life. I wish he hadn't taken his phone with him on our honeymoon because then..." She broke off. "Still it's pointless going on about it. God wanted Phil with Him rather than with me, and I just have to trust He had a reason for that."

Crispin grinned. "Maybe He wants you with Rob."

"Maybe you should drop it while you still have a head on your shoulders," she teased.

"Maybe Angus should say grace and we eat before this gets cold," he shot back. "I haven't spent all afternoon cooking to see it go to waste."

"So what are you going to do on your leave?" Angus asked, once he'd said grace.

"Sell the house." Kaylie slid her wedding ring off her finger and laid it next to her glass. "It's time I started living again."

"Does a certain fisherman come into this somewhere?" Crispin grinned.

"No. I'm simply letting God's light direct my path and go where He leads me."

~*~

Kaylie gratefully disembarked the launch after a choppiest crossing than normal and carried her bags through the base to the car park. The four keepers shared the one car as it made things so much easier. She unlocked it and loaded her bags into the boot. She drove the short distance to the four-bedroomed keepers' cottage in the small coastal town.

She'd lived here since taking the job three years ago after Phil died. The job and town had become her

refuge in the storm that had overwhelmed her. Normally, the four keepers shared the cottage, having it to themselves during their off-duty month, but Crispin lived with his family farther into the village.

Kaylie dumped her bags in her room and ran a hot bath. She always found the first couple of days lonely and longed for someone, anyone, to talk to. But this time she was looking forward to doing nothing for two or three days, before she contacted the estate agent, who was currently letting her house in Ashford, and put the property on the market.

One long hot soak in the tub later, a luxury she didn't get in the lighthouse, Kaylie put on a long floral dress and checked the store cupboards. As usual, Lucas had left them empty, aside from half a loaf of bread and a pint of milk. That left her a choice. Drive three miles to the supermarket, or eat out. No contest. She tied her cardigan around her waist, grabbed her bag, and headed to the local quayside bar which doubled as a café.

Despite the fact it was almost seven in the evening, the day was still hot. Boats bobbed on the water along the harbor wall. Seagulls swooped and cried overhead.

Kaylie took a deep breath. Salt water, fresh air, fish, all the scents of the beach and home. This was now home, not the small house she and Phil owned in Ashford.

Not that he'd ever lived there. She glanced down at her left hand. There was a very pronounced ring mark there. Perhaps it would fade in time.

Kaylie pushed open the door. The familiar scene greeted her, and she made her way over to the bar. She slid into a seat. To her left the jukebox played, and people chatted over drinks. Pool balls clicked to her

right, while just behind her the darts championship was well underway.

The barman, Frank, smiled her way as he cleaned glasses. "What can I get you, Kaylie?"

She studied the menu for a second. "The shepherd's pie, no peas, and a pint of cola with ice and lemon, please."

"Would you like cauliflower with that instead?" He winked. "The food, that is."

"Please."

Frank gave her the drink. "That's seven-eighty."

Kaylie handed over the money and ran her finger around the rim of the glass. She took a sip, glancing around.

The door opened and a tall figure came in. Long dark hair brushed his shoulders and by his round-neck sweater and oilskin trousers she could tell he was obviously a fisherman. He had narrow-set dark eyes, thin lips, and oozed testosterone, yet wasn't unattractive. He slid onto the stool next to her. "Hey, Frank."

"Good to see you, Rob. Are you going out tonight?"

"Nah, just got in. Going back out again Tuesday."

Kaylie started. She knew that voice. Her heart pounded. Her breath caught. It was *him*. Her fingers tightened on the glass in her hand.

"What can I get you?"

"A pint of bitter and...I think I'll have the steak with chips, corn on the cob, and peas."

"Sure. How do you want that?"

"On a plate." The man laughed. "Seriously, medium-rare please."

Kaylie glanced sideways at him as he spoke. He