

## Chapter 1: The Lighthouse Keeper of Pear Island

By Carol Denise

Sebby's voice begins to narrate: "*So what had happened was...*" as the voice-over fades.

### LAKE MICHIGAN

*September. Ten years prior.*

BLINDING FLASH!

DEAFENING BANG!

Lightning flashed over the entire sky from one horizon to the other.

Thunder crashed like a bomb and rumbled across the surface of the lake. The wind bellowed around in a violent swirl, creating waves taller than the mast—so vicious that the schooner was no match. The vessel couldn't take one more blow as it exploded with the next flash of lightning and crackle of thunder! The entire vessel fractured into bits, each fragment catapulting outward in various directions.

Hands, feet, heads, voices—flashing, screaming, gasping, fingertips reaching for anything that would keep their heads above water, hands clutching floatation devices. And as quickly as it swept in, like a giant hand sweeping across the water, the late summer storm swept out across the Great Lake on its way to terrorize anyone else in its path. The contrast of quiet and near-calm water felt like a vacuum. The water was frigid. Lake Michigan water is always cold. The air was unusually warm, humid. It was so dark.

Was the storm over? Would there be another one?

Screams and cries lingered as the passengers of the sailboat tried to find each other in the dark water.

"Here! I'm over here!" Hhenri cried as she found herself clinging to a large piece of wood from the fractured boat. Her arms and legs had gashes from hitting debris from the boat and sharp rocks below. The water was just so cold. The black sky and the dark water stretched as far as the eye could see.

"Are you okay?" Sebby asked as he swam over to Hhenri's voice.

"Hhenri, I can't see you. Keep talking!" yelled Sebby.

"I'm over here!" yelled Hhenri as she waved her free arm in the air.

"Where's Nina? Nina!!!" Panic started to set in as Hhenri began screaming for her best friend.

"Nina!!! Where are you!"

Nina assured Hhenri, her voice gradually coming closer. Bumps, bruises, gashes—shivering, each with a life preserver and clinging to some random piece of floating debris. The trio swam closer to one another.

“Is everyone okay?” Sebby asked in a reassuring voice in an effort to calm the others.

“We’re all here,” cried the others in tandem.

Nina and Hhenri were crying and coughing.

“What in the world...???” cried Hhenri.

“What happened? Was that a storm? An explosion?” Nina asked her cousin Sebby.

“I don’t know. I’ve never seen anything like that before. That was the biggest wave I’ve ever —  
The weather report didn’t mention anything.

“I NEVER would have—” Sebby’s voice cracked as he realized the danger they were still in.

“Come on, we have to get out of this water,” insisted Sebby.

But none of the group moved in any direction. Each continued to bob, float, and look around.

“Whatever happens, we have to stay together. Do you hear me?” instructed Sebby through the splashing waves. “Grab onto one another’s life preservers. Look. We can tie them together.”

Each floatation device had multiple attachments so they could clip onto one another’s devices. They each followed instructions and began strapping themselves together.

“I’m s-so cold,” shivered Nina.

“Me t-too,” said Hhenri.

“I know,” agreed Sebby. “We have to get out of this water,” he said as water splashed into his mouth and nose.

Cough. Cough.

“Which way do we go? It’s—it’s so dark. I can’t see anything,” Hhenri murmured. “Sebby, can you see anything?” she asked.

“No,” he said quietly, pondering, looking for anything—a star, a moon, a landmark. “I lost my phone, which had my compass on it, of course,” he exclaimed with an air of defeat.

They were quiet for a while, bobbing up and down as the now calm waves batted them around playfully. Each of the castaways were trying to think, trying to figure out a path forward.

“It’s going to be a long time until morning. We can’t stay in this water all night. What if another storm or explosion or... or whatever that was...?” Nina said, trying not to sound angry, or too

scared. This wasn't anyone's fault, but she was scared. She was shivering. The realization hit Nina, she, her best friend, and her cousin could very well drown.

No. This can't be happening.

"God help us!" Nina finally cried out loud with sincere desperation.

After what felt like an hour, Sebby fixed his attention off into the distance.

"W--what is it?" asked Nina.

"Look." Pause. Sebby pointed into the darkness.

"Do you see that light? It's green." Said Sebby, trying to focus.

Pause. Silence. Hope was rising.

"Is that a boat?" Sebby was mostly thinking out loud.

"Where? I don't see anything," came a barrage of replies.

Sebby gradually started moving in the direction of his fixed gaze. He pulled Nina and Hhenri. They began to help him swim over to—well, they didn't know. They didn't see anything.

Finally! "I see it! A green light. Look! It's bobbing up and down," murmured Hhenri.

"Maybe it's a buoy," Nina and Hhenri discussed among themselves so as not to distract Sebby from his keen gaze.

As they swam closer to the light, their legs and feet scraped against sharp rocks below. Nina gasped as the tethered trio yanked and pulled one another forward.

At one point, Hhenri was able to stand on top of a rock with her toes. Even though a sharp pain shot through her leg, she felt positive that they were coming closer to a shoreline.

Finally, towering into the sky like a mighty giant soldier was an elevated structure. Majestic. Sinister. Ominous. Was it friend or foe?

As it came into view, it finally became obvious.

A Lighthouse!

Sebby yelled and laughed as he looked around at his companions. He knew for sure they were going to be out of the water and safe very soon. The expression on his face said it all. Nina and Hhenri were relieved, though not as confident as Sebby.

Hhenri asked Sebby, "Why is the lighthouse so dark? Isn't there supposed to be a light at the top?"

“Yeah, normally. It must have gone out. Maybe because of that weird storm. There must be a lighthouse keeper around with that green light.”

As they swam closer to the giant tower, they felt more rocks. Eventually, they reached the shoreline, which was slimy, slippery. It smelled like mildew and overgrown vegetation.

There was a raised, short but steep incline onto a grassy area filled with trees and bushes. Clearly, no one had cut back the greenery recently. It was wild and unruly. The green grassy area was just above eye level for the trio as they climbed onto the shore and up onto the elevated land. Just about the time that Nina was reaching her hand onto the grassy ground in front of her,

She heard rustling nearby.

Nina stopped and jerked her hand back.

“Nina, come on. Why are you stopping?” came protests from Sebby and Hhenri as they stood behind her on the rocky shore. Cold waves continued to lap at their feet and legs.

Out of nowhere, exactly at eye level, came a monster—a rodent running directly at Nina’s face.

The creature was terrified and leaped toward Nina! The creature was clearly as surprised by seeing Nina as Nina was at seeing this mouse, careening out of the darkness, widened eyes coming face to face with widened eyes!

The mouse screamed!

Nina screamed!

Sebby and Hhenri screamed!

The mouse fell on a small rocky ledge, just above Nina’s waist, skidded its feet faster and faster into a tight circle, and high-tailed it back up the embankment and back into the overgrown vegetation.

Sebby and Hhenri stood quietly with wide eyes. Their voices were stuck in the back of their throats, mouths wide open as Nina continued to scream, jump, and batted at the mouse with a shrill.

“Shew! Shew! Noooo! You go away!” Nina commanded!

Then she was quiet. Slowly, Nina looked behind her at Sebby and Hhenri, who were still staring wide-eyed at Nina, all three hearts pounding out of their chests.

After a second of silence, they all burst out in laughter—relieved that the mouse was scared enough to run away, relieved that they were on solid ground, relieved that they were saved by the lighthouse keeper and his green light.

As the friends climbed upward and onto the embankment, they looked around, high-fiving one another.

### **THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER**

After some chatter about the freaky storm and the scary mouse, Sebby interjected. “Let’s go find the lighthouse keeper. Do you see his light?” he asked.

“No, I don’t see anything. It’s still so dark,” said Nina.

“At least we’re out of that cold water,” said Hhenri.

“Stay together,” reminded Sebby.

They all nodded in agreement.

The three friends clung to one another and slowly walked through the overgrown brush to a gravel path. The bright stones of the path helped to illuminate the ground in front of them—just enough light for the next few steps.

They continued to watchfully work their way toward the giant tower, which was white in color, making it a little easier to see in the dark. They made their way around the structure to a door. It looked like a normal door on any house. It just happened that this house was attached to a lighthouse.

“Maybe the keeper went inside. He probably couldn’t see us or hear us,” Sebby reassured.

Sebby turned the knob on the door. Thank the Lord, it opened. But it was so dark inside that Sebby had to give his eyes time to adjust.

While they were all still hovering around the outside of the open doorway, Nina pointed upward.

“Look. The green light is coming from up there.”

“It’s coming from that window way up on top.” She pointed to a faint green glow.

Sebby began knocking and shouting, “Hello. Hello! We need help out here!”

No reply.

He tried again.

They all shouted, “Please, Mister, help! Help us!”

Still no response.

Finally, as Sebby’s eyes adjusted to the doorway, he pushed the door open further with one hand and clasped Hhenri’s hand with the other.

Sebby made sure Hhenri was holding onto Nina's hand as he began leading them into the doorway.

Immediately, there was a small set of stairs. They crept up the stairs to a landing where there was another door. Sebby turned the knob and slowly opened the upper door while calling out to the lighthouse keeper.

"Hello? We saw your light from outside. Please don't shoot us. We need help," Sebby stated matter-of-factly while shushing Nina and Hhenri. They protested at Sebby's suggestion, refusing to entertain the idea of anyone shooting anyone. Eyes rolled. Heads shook. Sighs were audible.

As they walked into the second door, they could see that they were walking into a kitchen. Even though there were no lights on inside or outside of the house, they were able to make out the shapes of the kitchen, countertops, walls, and another open doorway on the other side of the kitchen. Beyond the kitchen was a living room. At the far end of the living room, straight ahead, was a prominent wooden staircase.

Sebby motioned to Hhenri and Nina to "Wait here." He wanted to find a light switch.

"Nope!" they responded, shaking their heads vehemently, clinging to Sebby's shirt, as he felt his way around the wall.

Sure, he found an old-fashioned button light switch on the wall to their left, but it didn't work.

"Okay, that staircase must go up to the lighthouse tower." Sebby judged.

Torn, all three of them crept over to the wooden staircase, also painted in white. The bright, white paint somehow illuminated just enough of the path in front of them to take a few more steps. When they got to the first landing, which then turned at a 90-degree angle toward the next incline of steps, Sebby motioned to the ladies and whispered emphatically, "Shhh! We don't want to scare him. You guys wait HERE."

Nina and Hhenri agreed with nods.

Then, as they continued to cling to Sebby and creep up the next set of steps with him, it was apparent Hhenri and Nina were NOT going to stay put.

Sebby looked back at them with surprise. Their faces said, "Sure, we'll wait here," while their arms, legs, and terrified expressions continued to inch upward WITH Sebby.

Sebby started to grumble at them, then thought better of it as he felt their fear. He continued his ascent with his buddies behind him.

As Nina and Hhenri clung to Sebby, the trio crept up the next level of steps and came to a landing. In front of the landing was an open doorway to a bedroom. They slowly tiptoed over to the bedroom. More light was coming in from outside now—stars were out, and the moon shone.

They could see that this was a bedroom for children. Twin beds on either side of the room were neatly made up, with a breathtaking panoramic view of the lakefront. They stood in wonder for a moment, taking in the magic.

“Wow!” whispered a reverent voice.

“Come on,” said Seby as he gripped Hhenri’s hand and motioned to Hhenri to do the same with Nina’s hand.

Toward the back wall of this level, around the staircase they had just climbed, was another staircase, this one rounded, also painted white. They had to let go of one another’s hands in order to hold the rails of the iron staircase. They made their way to the next level of the house.

Straight ahead of the next landing was another room. The door was closed.

“This must be it. This must be the keeper’s quarters.” Seby assured them.

They moved over to the door. Seby knocked quietly at first.

“Hello? **HELLO???**”

Knock, knock, knock.

“Are you the lighthouse keeper?” Seby’s voice was escalating. “We had a boat accident. We need help.” He knocked a few more times, faster, louder.

Silence.

Seby could see what looked like a peephole.

Pause. He looked back at his comrades.

More silence.

Seby peered inside the peephole, concentrating, trying to focus.

“I see. I see that light—”

Before he could finish, a green light **RUSHED AT SEBBY FROM INSIDE THE DOOR**, causing him to lose his balance and fall backward into Hhenri and Nina.

Seby screamed. He **PUSHED** Hhenri and Nina toward the staircase.

“Let’s get out of here!” he insisted as they all shrieked and flew down all of the stairs and outside. Quietly murmuring, panting, hopping around, they each were asking one another, “What happened? What was that?”

“Seby, what did you see?”

Once Sebby composed himself, he looked at his friends somewhat sheepishly. “I don’t know. The green light—it rushed to the door. But I didn’t see the lighthouse keeper. I don’t know what happened. It... scared me,” he confessed.

“Sebby, don’t you think we need to find the lighthouse keeper? Maybe he left. If he left... we can use his light. We need to find a telephone or radio,” pressed Nina.

“I know, that light was just so creepy.” Once Sebby caught his breath, he took a deep diaphragmatic breath, exhaled, got up his courage, and proclaimed, “Okay, let’s go back.”

The hairs on the back of Sebby’s neck were standing up; he was chilled, scared, and shivering.

“Maybe he left. We need that light. We need a phone,” he sighed.

“And blankets or a fire,” whimpered Hhenri. “I’m freezing. Look, this cut on my leg really hurts.”

As Hhenri modeled the deep gash on her injured leg, Nina took a deep breath. She winced with empathy for her friend. Nina didn’t want Hhenri to get sick or to get an infection. They were all still scared, but Nina knew what she had to do.

“Sebby, I’m going to go first this time,” Nina said, taking the lead.

Once again, the trio made their way into the outer doorway, up the short set of stairs, and into the inner doorway. Just to be sure, Nina tried the button light switch again. Nope.

They worked their way up the stairs and back to the door with the peephole. Nina had to stand on her tiptoes in order to peer inside. She saw the glow of the green light.

Nina took another deep breath. She turned the doorknob. The door creaked. As Nina opened the door, the green glow filled the room. She could see a lantern with a green light on a nightstand next to a bed, on the far side of the room.

The bed was made up, though it looked lumpy and low to the ground.

“Hello? Is anyone in here?”

The room was large, more like a suite, with hardwood floors, clean, whitewashed walls, and windows that stretched all around the room. There was another spiral staircase leading to yet another level. The hatch door at the top of that staircase was sealed.

The furniture looked and smelled old and dusty. It made Nina sneeze.

“Bless you!” said Hhenri and Sebby as they looked at Nina with wide eyes as if to say, *What did you do that for?*

“I’m sorry,” Nina explained vehemently.

Now, the band of three inched past the bed, over to the nightstand. They continued to look around for any sign of the lighthouse keeper.

The three gazed at the bed. They all looked at each other as though to say, “You don’t think he’s under the covers, do you?”

They never said a word, but the thought was unanimous.

Sebby moved closer to the bed and poked a little at the covers.

“Hey, mister. Are you in there? Are you sleeping?” he implored the lump to respond.

Sebby respectfully pulled the lumpy blanket back, and TO HIS HORROR, there was a SKELETON in the bed with a big SMILE on his face, GRINNING back at the trio.

They all screeched, arms flailing, and ran, helping each other out of the room.

Sebby had the foresight to run back and grab the lamp. He sprinted back out of the room. Sebby started down the stairway, then ran back to THE ROOM AGAIN to slam the door shut.

“I don’t know! I guess so the skeleton wouldn’t follow them?” whispered the narrator.

Nina and Hhenri were already outside by the time Sebby got to the large staircase. He ran out the door, and all three of them ran across the grounds to the middle of what was apparently an island. They were panting and gasping, catching their breath.

## **THE LIGHTHOUSE OF PEAR ISLAND**

### *Present-Day Summer*

The scene cuts to the same island and lighthouse in the present day. As Nina, Hhenri, and Sebby sit around the firepit with their guests, they continue to tell the story of how they all came to be junior lighthouse keepers of Pear Island.

Their guests were Polly, a lady truck driver who liked to vacation in Door County when she wasn’t out on the road.

Helen and Walter were Nina’s niece and nephew. They liked to visit Auntie Nina at the lighthouse over summer vacation. And then there was the quiet groundskeeper guy who kept the fire blazing. What was his name again?

There is nothing more relaxing than a fire on the beach in Door County at the end of a long summer day—sharing stories, sharing the ups and downs of the day. This was as close to heaven on Earth as any of them had ever come.

“There’s no such thing as ghosts, Auntie Nina,” said nine-year-old Helen with a sly look on her face, waiting for Auntie Nina to confirm her skepticism.

“I don’t know, Helen. It’s a mystery. How did the lighthouse keeper manage to rescue us long after he was dead? How did the green light continue to illuminate a path to the lighthouse?” Nina made an exaggerated *I don’t know* gesture.

“Old stories, legends, and folklore usually have some amount of truth in them,” Hhenri said to the wide-eyed, intrigued Walter, who was five years old.

“But you know what? I never actually saw the skeleton guy.” Hhenri shook her head to accentuate her point. “When Sebby and Auntie Nina screamed and ran out of the room, I screamed and ran out of the room with them. I never looked back to check and see if there was a ghost or a skeleton,” explained Hhenri.

“So YOU believe what you want to,” she said as she tapped on each of the children’s noses.

Sebby interjected, “Hey, you’re ruining the effect. That’s not how you tell a ghost story.”

Everyone laughed. The fire glowed.

Polly was one who liked to squash the mystery. “Oooh, that’s just an old Lake Michigan ghost story. The real story happened on St. Martin Island... The lighthouse keeper was a very good lighthouse keeper. An exceptionally good man. He rescued a lot of people.

According to his logs, his wife passed away when his children were very young. The keeper had two children, a boy and a girl, just like you two. They had to take a ferry to Washington Island to go to school. Because he was such a good dad, the lighthouse keeper made sure his children went to school every day.

One time, out of nowhere, a big rogue wave capsized the ferry, and everyone on it drowned, including the lighthouse keeper’s children. Wow. Imagine! He was so heartbroken that he searched and searched the shoreline of all the surrounding islands to try to find his children. He never found them.

The only thing that brought comfort to this kind, grieving soul was helping to rescue other victims from the perils of Lake Michigan. He believed that his children were his guardian angels and that they would protect him as he went out to rescue others, no matter how dangerous things appeared.

According to legend, the lighthouse keeper stopped writing in his log in 1937, so he must have died almost a hundred years ago. But his spirit continues to search the shorelines for those who need help.”

Helen said, “That can’t be true because how could the light stay on for a hundred years?”

Nina intervened, “I told you, it’s a mystery. Nobody knows. And yet... here we are.”

In a whisper, Nina said slowly, “To... this... day..., there are reports of people seeing a glowing light—a flickering green light—off the shorelines... of the islands... surrounding Death’s Door Peninsula.

Especially where the lighthouses don’t work anymore, or, you know, where they’ve been decommissioned. Or where the islands have no lighthouses, and it’s unusually dark and dangerous.

Plum Island, Pilot Island, and St. Martin Island—all have had lighthouses and keepers over the years. Now this island, Pear Island, has a functioning lighthouse, too. We’re the junior lighthouse keepers nowadays, but back then, this lighthouse was not being maintained. It had gone dark like so many other lighthouses. Such a waste.

There are so many stories about miraculous rescues involving a bobbing green light. Can all of the stories be fake? How can they all be fake? I don’t know. I think there’s something to this legend.” Nina finished her ghost story.

Walter said, “What? I don’t get it!”

Helen responded with, “Walter, don’t be such a dork.”

Walter replied, “I’m not a dork. YOU’RE A DORK!”

Sebby finally interrupted the squabbling children. He asked, “Hey, wait a minute. Wait, wait, wait! Do you guys even know what a DORK is?”

“No!” replied Walter while roasting his marshmallow.

“No!” answered Helen, waiting for someone to inform them.

After no one dared to answer, Polly chimed in with “It’s a whale’s vagina!”

The kiddos were stumped, raised their eyebrows, and sat quietly as they assembled their s’mores.

Walter asked loud and proud as he licked the marshmallow off of his hand, “What’s... what’s a GYNA?”

After a brief silence, Sebby spat out his fuzzy water as it went up his nose and burned!

Everyone but Walter grabbed their bellies, laughed, got up, ROARED, and walked away. Helen smiled and whispered into Walter’s ear.

“Well, let’s not call each other a dork anymore, okay?” implored Sebby as he tried to compose himself.

Once they were all done crying with laughter, they began to settle down. Nina continued, “I think the lighthouse keeper loved his job as a lighthouse keeper.” She paused, then continued. “Even

after he lost his wife and his children, saving people was his purpose in life. The only thing that gave him joy.”

After another pause, Nina continued, “I believe the old lighthouse keeper of Pear Island, this island, is a Guardian Angel now. He graduated from his Earthly trials and lessons. Now, he gets to be a lighthouse keeper forever and help rescue people for all eternity, along with his beloved wife and precious children. I think that’s amazing.” Concluded Aunt Nina.

“Incredible,” “Beautiful,” and “I like **THAT** ghost story,” could be heard around the firepit.

All of the faces around the illuminating fire were smiling with ooohs and aaahs as the fire and fireflies flickered.

*(Based on the tale of The Green Lantern, St. Martin Island, retold by S. E. Schlosser)*

