

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM WITH NOT-REAL PEOPLE

“I’m not sure about this latte thing, Rachel,” my elderly neighbour said. Steam billowed from the bright blue-and-yellow mug in her hands that read, BEST GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER, the second “great” having been scribbled above the other with a black marker. She sniffed, her face uncertain.

“Go on, Mrs. Saunders,” I urged. “I think you’ll like it. Where’s my mail?”

She shot me her signature “don’t rush me, missy” look before saying, “It’s in the basket by the microwave. I got Amy to pick it up from the post office for you every few days.”

“I’ll give her a call tomorrow and thank her.” Amy was Mrs. Saunders’s great-great-niece who lived three villages down the road and was such a sweetheart about running errands for people. I retrieved the wicker basket from the counter. The mail was six inches high, so I carried the entire basket back to the table. Mrs. Saunders took a cautious sip of the steaming beverage. No reaction yet. She took another sip.

The old lady lived next door and was perhaps my best friend since I’d moved to Newfoundland. I’d never called her by her first name. As the oldest woman in the entire Northern peninsula of the province, she received the Mrs. honourific; no one used Mrs. Saunders’s first name. It was one of those Newfoundland rules, or so I’d been told. I’d met eighty-year-olds who called her “Mrs. Saunders.”

“Well?”

She shot me a look. “It’s too hot and it has frothy stuff on top.” She took another sip and smacked her lips.

I grinned and turned to my mail pile. It consisted of a month’s worth of bills, junk mail, and a postcard from the dentist reminding me I was overdue for a visit. In other words, perfectly normal.

I looked at the old lady suspiciously. “Well?”

Mrs. Saunders ignored my glare and pointed at her kitchen counter. “Be a good girl and put a spot of gin in this.”

I had meant the question in reference to the mail, which she bloody well knew from that impish smile on her face. I shook my finger at her, but I walked over to the kitchen counter again, where a near-empty bottle of gin sat in the corner, under one of the dozens of crucifixes scattered throughout the hundred-year-old house. Next to the gin sat a bag of molasses cookies, an apple pie, and two jars of homemade raspberry jam, all neatly arranged like a pagan offering to the gin god.

I gave her a disapproving glare. “I thought the doctor told you to lay off the sweets.”

She swatted at my butt when I walked by her. “Don’t start with me, missy.”

I dribbled a few drops of the pungent booze into her hot drink. Gin latte. The baristas would not approve. While I gave her a hard time on occasion, I didn’t want to harp on her. No point to it. She had a great-grandchild my age. What did I know?

She tsked at me. “Oh, that’s not enough for a baby with colic. Give me a proper shot’s worth,” she chided me, swatting my butt again. When I jumped, she giggled with her hand over her mouth. “You’ve been putting on weight. You didn’t get pregnant in Mexico, did you now?”

“Women don’t carry babies in their bums, Mrs. Saunders. You should know that, seeing how you’ve had thirteen of your own.”

“Only because birth control was illegal back when I was poppin’ out the youngsters. Now, top that thing up.”

I shot her my best annoyed look and poured enough gin into her coffee mug to raise the liquid inside by a good centimetre. “You’re not having any more.”

She sipped at the beverage. “Ah, that’s better. Latte, you said?”

I nodded and put the bottle in the middle of the small kitchen table, circa 1970s, complete with polished chrome. It was my Christmas gift to her. I wanted to buy her a new one, but she insisted on this garage-sale table.

“So, where is the rest of my mail?” I asked accusingly.

She took another taste and smacked her lips. “Gin makes everything better. I’m happy you’re back ’ome.”

I knew she was putting me off, but I decided to go along with it for a bit. I smiled at her and stretched my rather short legs as best I physically was able and propped them up on the adjacent chair. “It’s good to be back. Mexico was nice, though.”

The old woman scowled, sipping her beverage. “You young people travel too much. Until you came along, I hadn’t left the Peninsula in forty-seven years.”

I smiled. “Let’s drive into St. John’s this weekend and see your great-great-grandson. He should be crawling by now.”

She waved off my suggestion, like she always did. In a couple of days though, she’d bring it up again and ask if I wanted to go for a drive. It was her way and I loved her for it. I had nothing else to do anyway, other than dodge my mother’s voicemails over why I didn’t have a job yet.

I rifled through the mail again, just in case I missed something, while Mrs. Saunders talked about the latest gas prices (even though she didn’t drive), the cost of apples (even though she had no teeth), and the general gossip that circulates around a small town.

I peered over at Mrs. Saunders and cocked an eyebrow. “All right. Where is the rest of it?”

A moment passed before she said, “I burned it. I ran out of kindling and starting a fire is about the only good use for that foolishness. It poisons me to see that nonsense goin’ on.”

I knew she’d taken it. “It’s a crime to steal mail, you know. I should have Jeremy arrest you,” I said, trying to keep my tone light. I wasn’t upset she burned the stupid religious tracts that kept showing up in my mailbox; rather, I was upset a woman approaching a century old had to even see that level of hate.

I frowned, recalling that the mysterious “they” had taped an anti-Catholic tract on my front door before they started with their “pagans work for the devil” propaganda crap. Inaccurate, since I’m neither Catholic nor pagan. “They didn’t send the one about Catholics and the Pope

burning in Hell did they?" I prayed they had not; Mrs. Saunders was a devoted Catholic. I figured a woman her age shouldn't have to read anything hateful or upsetting about her religious beliefs; she'd earned the right.

Mrs. Saunders looked genuinely disappointed. "I would have kept that one to put on the fridge. This one was the 'burn the witches.' It had Bible verses and everything. Shame on whoever is turning the holy word into that . . ." she lowered her voice, "shit."

I let out a frustrated sigh. "I wish they'd send something new. Or, stop sending them all together. It makes a woman feel unwelcome when she gets regular hate mail from her neighbours."

"Now, now, your neighbours aren't the ones doing this. We're good Christian folks around here. It's no one from Wisemen's Cove, I'll tell you that right now. It's one of those fools from St. Anthony, coming up here to cause trouble."

Mrs. Saunders shivered and put her mug down. She made her way to the cast-iron stove at the opposite end of the kitchen. It was the old-fashioned style you usually find in pioneer school houses, as opposed to someone's kitchen. Hers was fancier than most, coated in white ceramic on the sides with a large top hutch where bread was kept warm for supper. She cooked on the stove top and still used the old oven to bake her cookies and molasses buns.

I didn't offer to help her. I've been haunted by thousand-year-old ghosts that weren't as strong and determined as her. The last time, she yelled at me and smacked me with the wood poker. Only, she forgot it had been inside the fire and singed my jeans.

She didn't look at me when she spoke. "I told Father Frank about all this, just so you know. I spoke to that new Pentecostal fellow, Pastor Roberts, too, said he won't be gettin' any souls saved letting his crowd harass harmless folk like you."

"Mrs. Saunders," I said in a patient voice, "I have no interest in converting to Christianity. I'm suspicious of the lot of them."

She shook the fire poker at me. "I'm a Christian, young lady. Watch your mouth."

"You know what I mean. I've just had bad experiences with some."

"Can't paint us all with the same brush."

She turned her back and I picked up her mug and sipped. My throat burned. Gin latte, indeed.

“And you working with the policemen, persons, whatever you feminists call yours.” She gave an indignant grunt. “No respect these young people have today for the law.”

I smiled, even though she couldn't see me. My own mother didn't meddle as much as this woman. “I'm not working for them anymore, remember? My contract expired. I'm unemployed now.” I left out as my mother reminds me daily. “Besides, I was a grief counsellor. It wasn't like I was a cop or anything.”

Mrs. Saunders waved me off. She reached down and, using one hand to brace herself against the wall, picked up a piece of birch firewood from the neat stack next to the stove. Using a hook, she pulled up a circular insert from the top and stuffed the log into the hole. Smoke puffed and curled up from the stove when she poked at the fire to stir up the flame.

“Mrs. Saunders . . .” I started, but gave up almost as fast. I knew she meant well, and I didn't want her to think I was ungrateful. I wasn't. “It doesn't bother me that people are afraid of me. I'm used to it. Maybe moving here wasn't the best choice.”

She shook her finger at me. “None of that foolishness. Back in my time, we had no problem with sensitive people like you. Even the Church recognizes that angels and demons and bad spirits are out there. You just happen to feel them more than the rest of us. No 'arm in that.”

The weariness lifted from my soul a little. When I first moved to the northern Newfoundland town, a number of the older people called me “sensitive.” I took a bit of offense to it, at first, until Jeremy, a local Mountie and good friend, told me it was shorthand for “sensitive to the paranormal.”

If that didn't sum me up, nothing would.

If only I could pop that skill into Mrs. Saunders's stove like a piece of birch firewood, life would be a whole lot simpler, to say nothing of quieter.

My cell phone buzzed. I grabbed my purse from the floor and answered.

“Ah, Miss Mills?” a shaky, young man's voice asked.

“Yes,” I said. The voice sounded familiar, but I couldn't quite place it.

“Um, it's Manuel O'Toole. I'm really sorry to call, but I heard you're back in town and I'm . . . I need help.”

I glanced at the wall clock. The arms of Jesus read 8:25 p.m.

“It's a bit early for needing a ride from a party, isn't it?”

I rolled my eyes at Mrs. Saunders who clucked her tongue. The town teens knew they could call me and I'd give them an anonymous lift home to avoid them drinking and driving. While I had a lot of support from all the tiny towns around the area—some parents even joined me in offering rides—some became very angry at me for doing it. It probably had something to do with my driving home some of their drunken kids.

No matter, I was a grown up and I wasn't letting a silly thing like crazy parents prevent me from stopping kids killing their drunken selves on the highway. I'm a trained social worker. My dad's a retired Mountie. My mom's a holistic healing hippie. I'd never be able to look myself in the mirror again if I let a kid drink and drive and die. "Where do I need to pick you up?"

"It's nothing like that. There's a bunch of, um, people in the house and I can't get rid of them. Mom and Dad are gone for the weekend to Deer Lake, see, for a church thing, and these guys are trashing the place. They're supposed to be back tonight. Dad's going to skin me alive if these guys are still here."

He had that right. "Who's there? I can have their parents meet us."

"Ah, see . . ." He hesitated. "They're not real people."

CHAPTER 2

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND ZOMBIES

I've lived in and around a lot of small, quiet towns in my life. None were as creepily quiet as the entire Northern peninsula of Newfoundland. Perhaps it was the nor'easter wind that blew through the tuckamores on a regular basis, twisting and bending the spruce and balsam into leaning towers of woodland. Or maybe the palatable salt that lingered in the ocean air. But the entire area was just damned quiet. Not sleepy. Quiet.

Kids get into trouble, especially kids like Manny with too little to do and too many restrictions from well-meaning parents. It was never real trouble, though. Mrs. Saunders never even locked her doors at night. God, folks left their keys in the ignition when they ran into Ricky's Convenience Store to buy a pack of smokes.

I drove along the highway to St. Anthony and the O'Tooles' home—all of twenty minutes away. The wind gusted against the car and I had to drive below the speed limit to stay on my side of the road. The makeshift scarecrows along the roadside gardens shook, as the gales ripped at the bags and fabrics meant to scare away the crows.

I passed my vegetable patch. The wind had already ripped the scarecrow away. I'd not been back in a month, so I needed to dig out the potatoes soon. When I'd first moved to Wisemen's Cove, I thought it strange that people didn't garden on their property. That was before I realized how pervasive the wind was. Inland, behind the tree barrier, was the way to go.

As I approached St. Anthony—pronounced Sant'ney by the locals—the dense presence of something other hung in the air of the centuries-old fishing town and pressed against me. It wasn't at Mrs. Saunders's, but, as soon as I pulled away from view of her two-story, royal-blue house, the other hung in the air, growing thicker like the morning fog that often blanketed the area.

I tried justifying it away. It was my first day back, after all, and my senses probably hadn't adjusted to the . . .

My intuition said Manny's house crashers were a part of the supernatural that unsettled the air. I was humble enough to listen to my intuition's wisdom. It was never wrong, unlike me. It said something was up. Something was, then, up. I pushed aside the mounting unease in my soul. I refuse to let spirits dictate my emotions and sense of peace.

Being a bad example for driving and talking, it being illegal and all, I flipped open my cell. I took a deep breath, steadied my voice, and went for nonchalant. "Hey, Jeremy."

"Hey, Rachel," came the voice from the other end, muffled by chewing, "How long you been back?"

I sucked in a breath. Jeremy was the reason I went to Mexico for a month. Casual, Rachel. He's taken. Go for casual. "I just got back. Listen, David O'Toole's kid is in some kind of trouble. Can you meet me at his house?"

He snorted. "Bit uneasy going to David's, huh?" He slurped his drink empty, though I could detect the faint snicker in his voice. "My shift just ended. I don't mind."

I nodded, even though I was on the phone, keeping things serious. "The kid's in some sort of trouble and with David away—"

“It’s no problem, Rachel,” Jeremy said, cutting me off. “I’m at the Kozy Korner, so it’ll only take me a couple minutes to drive there. I’ll meet you.”

“Thanks.” I hung up. Okay, that went all right. I blew out the lungful of air I held. See, Mom? I can be a grown up.

A few minutes later, I pulled into Manny’s driveway, gravel crunching under my tires. Chills pricked my spine and whispers enveloped me. My heart pounded and the hairs on my arms stood on end. Movies and books always present the paranormal as spooky because, frankly, it is. Even to folks sensitive to it.

Especially to us sensitive types. Three calming breaths and a few words in Cree I’d learned from my grandmother surrounded me in an insulating blanket that buffered the spiritual unrest from Manny’s house. I stepped out of my car, slowly, cell phone in hand, adjusting my own spirit to the voices in the evening air.

The September wind pulled at my jacket, cutting through my jeans, and it muffled the sounds around the O’Toole house. Manny’s home was just off the town’s main drag, an average, fifty- or sixty-year-old house, a two-story building painted bright pink. A Newfoundlander’s house wasn’t a proper house if it was painted plain ol’ beige. The street was quiet, not surprising considering the weather.

Echoing voices, too low to understand, floated in the wind and made my skin crawl. I heard the metallic clang of an aluminum door and Manny came running from the side of the house. He was a pudgy kid of fifteen or sixteen, wearing Toronto Maple Leafs sweatpants and a Boston Bruins jersey.

Manny ran up to me, panting. “They’re inside, in the basement,” he whispered, though he was breathing so heavily, it wouldn’t have mattered.

I eyed Manny for a moment, looking for evidence of drug use or intoxication of any form. A bad drug trip, or to some a good trip, could make you hallucinate almost anything. I knew a girl in high school to whom the Virgin Mary appeared and cooked her bacon and eggs every Sunday during church. Then, we found out she was also doing a double hit of acid before the sermon. Hell, I believe in the spiritual and supernatural and I’m convinced that most of the sightings out there are drug induced.

With enough experience, a person could generally tell by a four-second look into someone's eyes. I'd learned that growing up in the north where too many of my friends fell in with the troublemakers. He looked clean, even though his eyes were wide and his face flushed.

Sensing what I was doing, Manny rolled his eyes, "Come on, I'm not on drugs. Can you just come in? Please?"

I hid a smirk. Apparently, his father had tried that technique out on him a few times. "I'm just waiting for Constable Garratt."

Manny's jaw dropped. "You called the Mounties?"

I heard the rumble of a vehicle and looked over my shoulder. A white RCMP vehicle with the standard Mountie-on-a-horse-holding-a-flag emblem painted on the door pulled into the driveway. I waved at Jeremy, who joined us quickly.

He was still in the navy blue uniform, though his Kevlar vest and radio earbud were notably missing, no doubt discarded in his car as soon as his shift ended. He was a good-looking man, with easy features and a sly grin. He was around my age, late twenties, and taken. Very, very taken. Hence my solo vacation.

I wasn't sure if the mounting headache was from the other or from seeing Jeremy. I really needed to move away from this man. Too bad lesbianism wasn't contagious; I'd be open to almost anything to get me over that idiot. Either way, the pressure behind my eyes built momentum.

Manny was clearly less impressed with Jeremy than I was because he went wide-eyed and glared at me. "He's totally going to tell Dad! I'm so dead."

"Murder is illegal and I doubt your father would do anything to break the law." Jeremy said, giving me a wink. I did not collapse into a puddle on the ground because, you know, danger and spirits and all that fun stuff.

"Besides," Jeremy said, turning back to Manny, "I didn't tell your father about the time I picked you up on the side of the road after you'd passed out and a moose was licking vomit off your chest."

I made a disgusted sound. "Eww."

A loud crash came from inside the house. The three of us snapped our heads around to face the house. "What on earth was that?"

“I have no idea.” Manny sighed, as though resigned to the gallows. He looked at me, pensively. “No one else would have believed me and I figured you’d know what to do. I don’t know anyone else into witchcraft.”

“I don’t practice witchcraft,” I mumbled. Muffled drumming drifted from the house and I shifted my gaze to Jeremy, who shrugged. “Okay, let’s go.”

Manny let out a deep breath, as though he’d been holding it. “Okay. Um, thanks, by the way.”

I frowned. “All I know is that there’ll be hell to pay if this is Billy Watkins dressed up to scare you.”

Manuel frantically shook his head. “It’s not Billy.”

The three of us walked towards the house. I’d never been inside David O’Toole’s house. He was the local deacon at the Pentecostal church and had never been overly nice to me. Oh, sure, he was always inviting me to church and smiling whenever he came across me at the grocery store in town, but I knew he called me “witch” behind my back.

I’m not even Wiccan.

Having Jeremy with me would make it legitimate. Besides, it’s never a good idea for an adult to go visit a teenager when their parents are away and when those parents think you are in league with the Devil, capital D. Jeremy was an RCMP officer. That made it all nice and tidy for the paperwork in case these were home invaders.

As we approached, the drumming grew louder. Laughing and singing spilled up from inside the basement. I crept in behind Manny who pointed down the stairs to a finished basement.

When I reached the bottom of the stairs, my jaw dropped. Manny’s parents, Irene and David O’Toole, belonged to the local welcoming committee. But I was certain that they’d never purposely invite a dozen drunken Vikings, in full fur-and-sword regalia, into their home to drink Black Horse Beer and Newfie Screech.

“What the hell . . . ?” Jeremy said.

The Viking horde more or less ignored us, opting to clang their bottles together or drunkenly pour the potent Screech into empty glasses, spilling half on the floor. I watched the

burly men gasp and grimace as the rum went down. If a Viking struggles with it, you know it's strong.

Jeremy stood there, mouth hanging open. "Did the guys from L'Anse Aux Meadows forget to take their costumes off?"

I held my breath; the headache caused spots across my vision. These weren't costumed locals, dressed up for the tourists visiting the Viking site. These were real Vikings. A ball of dread formed in my guts.

Jeremy obviously didn't realize this, as he cleared his throat and said, "All right, boys. Party's over. Move on home, now."

The party continued without acknowledging him.

"Jeremy, stop speaking."

Jeremy gave me a puzzled look. "Why? Who are these guys?"

"I'm not sure that they are guys in the biblical sense of the word."

Jeremy had talked to me about the paranormal on various occasions when we'd been working or went out for dinner together. He'd seen a ghost when he was a kid, but it wasn't like he was a firm believer or anything. I'd have to tread lightly. Not to mention poor Manny, whose upbringing would have had him convinced that the very depths of Hell were opening to swallow him whole.

Manny gulped. "That's why I called you. They're spirits or ghosts or zombies."

"Zombies aren't real," I said, annoyed. I eyed Manny, suspicion filling me. He didn't seem overly shocked by all this. He was upset and terrified, sure, but considering that a horde of drunken Vikings were standing in his basement, he seemed rather calm about the entire thing.

"Um, Rachel," Jeremy said, shifting his weight and I imagined he'd moved his hand to settle on his sidearm. "What do you mean, 'not in the biblical sense'?"

Whispering angry voices echoed inside my head. It was difficult to even hear Jeremy through all of the chatter. Cold spread through me. I shivered. "These are spirits."

"Shouldn't they be, you know, see-through?" Manny stammered out.

I shook my head, not taking my eyes off the Vikings who didn't seem all that bothered by our presence. They were aware of us. They'd pointed at us a few times and leaned in to whisper

to one another. But, other than indulging in what appeared to be Viking gossip about our weirdness, they didn't seem bothered by our presence.

"Rachel, what's going on?"

I ignored Jeremy's question, though I touched his forearm lightly. "Manny, have they spoken to you?"

Manny shook his head. "Not really. They pushed me out of the way a few times and saluted me with their bottles. But, mostly, they just grabbed the rum off the table, raided the fridge, and carried on talking to each other. I don't know what they are saying."

"Um, Rachel, if they aren't real people," Jeremy said, his dark features ashen, "How exactly do we convince them to leave?"

I shook my head. "I can try a few things."

"Exactly what are they?"

"Remember the green, misty people in Lord of the Rings?"

He nodded.

"Like them, only with flesh instead of green mist."

"Oh." He looked back at the Vikings. "Rum-drinking spirits. Great."

A thought struck me and I turned to the young man at my side. "Manny, where did they get the liquor?"

Manuel turned red. "Um, ah, see, um—"

"Your mother will skin me alive if she finds out I knew you were drinking and didn't tell her," Jeremy said.

"Come on, man. I'm sixteen."

"It's illegal for you to purchase alcohol. I know for a fact that this isn't your father's. Who bought this for you? And, if you bought it yourself, I want to know who sold—"

"Shut up, you two," I said, grabbing Jeremy's arm. I pointed. "Look."

The Vikings had stopped their drinking. A broad, bearded man held up a hand, and the bone, shell, and bead ornamentals dangling from his clothes clicked against each other. He did not speak, but the gesture was clear. The others responded instantly. All chatter ceased. A cold breeze blew my hair, even though no windows were opened. Chills went through me. I knew that feeling. Oh, Christ above, I knew that feeling. "I think we have a rather large problem."

Jeremy rolled his eyes. “You think? We have a gang of Viking zombies in a Pentecostal deacon’s basement. We might as well break out the pentagrams and the goats.”

“They aren’t zombies. They’re solid ghosts.” My hands shook and my back muscles shuddered, as though I’d been in a freezer. “There are more coming. Lots more.”

I tentatively stepped towards the leader. I flicked my gaze at the basement window and then back at him, giving what I hoped was a quizzical look, hoping the facial gesture was universal across time.

The Viking leader leaned towards me. I didn’t understand most of what he said, but one word stuck. I swallowed hard. “Did you say skraeling?”

He shushed me before nodding his head, eyes widening. The men around him stiffened into attack postures. Axes, swords, and clubs slipped out from scabbards and belts.

“Manny,” I said as calmly as possible, keeping my voice low, “is there a room down here with a lock on it?”

“Yeah, the bathroom.”

In the same steady, low tone, I instructed, “Lock yourself in there and don’t come out until I call.”

“Why? What’s a skraeling?” Manny asked.

I looked at Jeremy’s confused face, which seemed to be asking the same question. “Know what a Beothuk is?”

“Well, yeah. I’m not stunned or anyt’ing,” he said with teenaged exaggeration.

Everyone in St. Anthony would. The Beothuk were an extinct group of aboriginal peoples, who died out a couple centuries ago. Their ancestors were the reason that the Vikings didn’t stay a thousand years before.

I took a deep breath. “I think their ancestors are outside.”

The man pointed at the window, and pushed a protective arm in front of me. Spirit energy surged through me and I gasped in a breath, nearly collapsing under the pressure. My own soul and mind screamed in agony.

As he withdrew from me, I heard his whisper, “Skraelings.”

CHAPTER 3

VIKING HORDES ARE US

When a thundering horde of drunken Vikings rush a person, it's only natural to flinch. Unfortunately, I flinched so much that I tripped over several cardboard boxes and fell on my ass. Pamphlets fell out of a box and covered my legs with messages of doom, destruction, and hellfire.

I stared at the pamphlets, stunned. David was a lot of things, but I couldn't see him going door-to-door taping "burn in hell, you witch" tracts to my door. For pity's sake, the man had a job and these were always delivered to the house.

But, there was no time to ponder the personal virtues of David O'Toole, when there was a Viking spirit infantry assault happening three feet from my face.

With the exception of heavy footsteps thumping on the wooden stairs and the creak of the closing aluminum door, I couldn't hear the spirits. I'd expected their charge to involve drunken singing, shouts, and chants. Wasn't that the stereotype? They were quiet, though I knew they were still there, even beyond their lingering presence touching my soul.

I looked up at the basement window and saw the shadows of boots passing by the window as the Viking spirits hugged the house.

I turned back to Jeremy and Manuel, the former's mouth hanging open and the latter pasty white.

"Jeremy, we need to figure out where they're going."

Jeremy stared at me like I was a raving lunatic, his blue eyes wide. "Why?"

"Because," I said, in that slow, steady tone reserved for terrified dogs, "a dozen spirits just manifested themselves into solid form in a kid's basement. They were interacting with their surroundings. That means they can hurt people."

Manny had not moved like I'd told him. "I'm serious, Manny. Into the bathroom," I snapped.

He looked at me, up the stairs, and back to me. "Dad says you're a devil worshipper."

I rolled my eyes. “No. I just happen to be buddies with the spirit side.” I blew out a breath. The supernatural pressed against my soul but I pushed it to the side. I focused on the steps necessary for everyone’s safety.

“All right, first, Manny get yourself in the bathroom and lock the door. Don’t open it until you recognize the voice on the other side.”

He nodded automatically, staring about the room. “Mom’s gonna kill me,” he repeated several times as he surveyed the trashed basement.

Boxes of crackers littered the floor, their contents crushed and strewn everywhere. A tetra pack of wine lay on its side, most of the contents spilled on the carpet. The amber-coloured Newfie Screech still dribbled from its bottle, splashing on a DVD case. Pizza and what looked to be crushed pieces of ketchup-flavoured potato chips were strewn everywhere. . The beige carpet would need a good steam cleaning to remove the stench and stains of alcohol, let alone the red smears from the food.

“Good Lord,” I said, looking around the room. Irene really was going to kill him. But there were bigger issues to worry about than Manny’s perma-life grounding.

“Manny, get lost. I mean it,” Jeremy said, his tone stern. “We don’t know if these things will come back, and they still might hurt you.”

Manny shot Jeremy a sullen teenaged look, but did as he was told.

“Jeremy, we should probably call for some help,” I said, looking at him.

He looked back up the stairs, shaking his head. “I can’t call in and say a group of Vikings are rampaging through town. That’s a trip to the evaluation board.” He frowned then said, “Gangs.”

“Huh?” Shadows blocked out the dying twilight from the window. Say what you want, those Vikings were silent as the grave, no pun intended.

“Gangs are the ‘in’ thing right now.” His voice grew stronger. “Yup, gangs it is. Come on.” He motioned with his head for me to follow him.

With Manny locked in his bathroom, Jeremy and I cautiously crept outside. I scanned the several-meters-wide space between the side of Manny’s house and the neighbour’s neatly stacked woodpile: no sign of either the Vikings or anyone else; however, the chills stabbing

down my spine announced the presence of something my eyes could not yet see. Nausea threatened the contents of my stomach.

“Why would these ghosts, or whatever, show up at Manny’s house?” Jeremy asked, his tone low, hand on his holstered gun. “Let me call this in and . . .”

Just then, a red, four-door Camry turned into the driveway.

My heart sank. “Christ almighty,” I sighed.

Jeremy snorted. “Ask and ye shall receive.”

We quick-timed it to the driveway, where a well-dressed man stepped out of the car. His hair was cut short and he wore a crisp dress shirt, tie, and slacks. The cold, evening air that swirled around me was from the stare he gave me and not from the other side. David O’Toole stood next to his car, its door still open, and stared at us. For a bigot, he was rather handsome. Silver streaked his brown hair. He slammed the door and looked at both of us cautiously.

Jeremy was the first to acknowledge him with a nod. “David, we were just about to call you.”

“Constable Garratt, Miss Mills,” David said with a heavy emphasis on the Miss. Jackass. “Can I help you?”

I gulped down my anger. This jerk might be the one helping to make me feel oh-so-welcomed. Bigger issues right now, Rachel. I pushed aside the desire to scream at him; instead, I exercised great maturity and said in a tight voice, “Manny called me.”

David sighed. “What have you got my son into now?”

“Excuse me?” I said, taken aback.

David narrowed his eyes at me. “People like you encourage bad behaviour in our young people. There’s enough going on with the all the drugs and gangs.”

Anger rose inside me, and several regional town hall shouting matches, err . . . meetings, came back to me. I jabbed a finger at him. “Look, my dad is a Mountie and there is no way I’m going to let teenagers die on the highway because they’re too scared to call their parents.”

Jeremy cleared his throat before David could answer. “Your son called Rachel because . . . um, gang members broke into your house and he was too afraid to call the RCMP.” Jeremy coughed. “She called me.”

David’s eyes went wide. “Gang? Manny is in a gang?”

“No!” Both Jeremy and I said. We traded a glance.

That was when the other hit me.

Echoes of words in an unknown tongue, screams and rage and terror filled my mind. I clamped my hands against my temples, trying to brace against the blistering pain. My vision darkened and I collapsed to the ground, my own shrieks sounding distant and muffled.

“Rachel? Rachel, what’s wrong?” I could barely hear Jeremy over the screams of agony in my head.

I gasped several times before successfully choking in a lungful of air. The blackness that spread over my vision faded and I could see again. Whatever had come over from the other side hadn’t left; I had merely adjusted. Whatever it was, it was powerful and there was a lot of it.

The Beothuks.

“Rachel? Are you all right?” Jeremy asked, crouching next to me, offering me his hand.

I nodded and whispered, “Trouble’s coming.” I took his offered hand and let him help me to my feet.

The flash of fur and swords caught my attention. Two of the Vikings I’d seen in Manny’s basement, crouching low, ducked behind the woodpile before sprinting across the road towards the dock where the whale-watching tours launched off with their overeager, city tourists who’d never been on a boat before.

David’s eyes widened. “Wha—stop!”

I waved him silent. “They don’t speak English.”

That surprised him. Everyone spoke English in St. Anthony; it was a small town. “Who are they?”

“We found them in your basement. They said something about Skraelings and took off. They’ve been outside ever since.”

“What’s a Skraeling?” He looked at me.

“It’s a Viking word. People believe they were referring to the people who came before the Beothuks.”

David snorted. “Well, you Newfies killed off all the Indians, so we don’t need to worry about them.”

Right. I'd forgotten he wasn't a Newfoundlander. That's why he didn't talk with an accent. And why he was such an asshole.

"That was rather hateful," I said, keeping my voice low and steady. "I was adopted by a white man and a Cree woman."

"I wasn't saying it was a good thing." His words might have not had hate in them, but his eyes did. "It's not like they are going to rise from dead before Judgement Day, at least."

"Ah," Jeremy's voice shook. I looked up the road where he was pointing. "I wouldn't be too sure about that."

Sneaking down the road, in full red paint, was something that looked rather like a Beothuk. An instant later, Hell unleashed its terror.