

# Canoodling Up North by Shawn M. Verdoni

## Excerpt

Damon MacGregor was the kind of man people noticed. Towering at 6-feet 6-inches with a shock of red shaggy hair that melded into a closely trimmed beard and mustache, it was easy to see that he would stand out in a crowd. It also helped that his preference of clothing made him look like a lumberjack most of the time; jeans, brown work boots, and a plaid cotton shirt during spring and summer switched to flannel in the fall and winter. Damon took up space when he entered a room because of his broad shoulders and muscular thighs that showed through his jeans. He didn't deliberately wear tight jeans; it was just that he always found it difficult to find jeans long and wide enough to fit his build, and he wasn't about to spend an obscene amount of money on clothes that he could easily buy at a big box store.

As much as his appearance screamed, "Notice me!!!" he had other features that were just as intoxicating. Against his creamy white skin and shocking red hair, his ice-blue eyes were striking. A person could look at them and feel like they were looking out into an immense ocean, the color so crystal clear that you could see to the bottom. Just above his beard line lay another surprise. When Damon smiled or laughed, twin dimples appeared in his apple cheeks.

With her eyes still closed, Cat tried to clear her head. However, being a firstborn child, that was hard to do. Always trying to pay attention to the details, always trying to be the best, always trying to be perfect took a toll on her in more ways than one. At least she granted herself this moment to not do anything or be there for anyone else. This was her time and her time alone. She deserved it. She deserved to not do anything at all. Though she was no longer a kid, in Marshall's eyes she would always be one, and therefore the one and only rule for Loon Lake, "kids rule," was guaranteed to Cat if she came to the cabin to visit.

After her sun-kissed meditation, Cat squinted her eyes open and looked at the sky. If she had to guess, it was getting close to dinnertime. She felt something prickly on her leg and looked down. A pale-blue dragonfly with black wings had landed on her thigh. For such a beautiful creature, she was surprised at how coarse their legs felt on her skin. Cat smiled, noticing how the dragonfly's coloring matched her swimsuit. She wondered if the suit attracted it to her. Since no one was around, Cat talked to the dragonfly as if it could understand her. "Hello, Mr. Dragonfly! I want to thank you for eating up the mosquitoes up here.