

Fishin' in the Dark

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4/29/14

Ever wonder what Seth and Jessica do in their spare time besides play chess and stroll around town? In this Murder, She Wrote Slice of Life, the two of them go fishing at night because, according to Seth, the fish bite better at night. They banter and laugh, and Seth finds a whole new way to make Jessica laugh later on!

Side note: For some reason, I can picture Seth listening to country music. It just seems to fit his personality so well. And please, do check out the songs I've listed here in the story, especially "Another World" by Gary Morris and the awesome Crystal Gayle. 80s country/pop at its best!

It was a peaceful summer night in Cabot Cove. The air was warm and balmy, the moon was full and shining as white as a pearl, and not a sound could be heard in the quiet little hamlet on the coast of Maine... unless one counted the slightly off-key voice singing somewhere in the woods.

"Seth, *hush!* You're going to scare the fish away!"

"Pshaw! I'm not singing that loud!"

"Maybe not, but even fish are sensitive to whether or not someone can carry a tune."

"Woman, are you saying I can't sing?"

"Not in so many words, but yes."

"Oh yeah? I'd like to hear you do better."

"Oh, you're on. Just not now. I'd like to actually catch something tonight."

"You mean other than a case of poison ivy?"

"Seth, that is not fair! I avoided that patch, and you know it!"

"And a darn good thing you did, too. Otherwise I'd be slathering you with calamine lotion right about now."

"And rubbing an *I-told-you-so* in my face."

"You are bound and determined not to let me have the last word, aren't you?"

"No, I am bound and determined to make a catch, so hush up and fish!"

"All right, you win. Can I at least whistle, though?"

"All right, whistle."

A merry whistling rendition of "Fishin' In The Dark" began, the perfect accompaniment to the outdoor symphony of chirping crickets and croaking bullfrogs. This peaceful harmony was punctuated every now and again by the flick and swish of a fishing line being cast and the whir of the reel as it was pulled back in by its owner. The pond itself, tucked away among the trees like a hidden jewel, lapped quietly against its shore, and the smell of evergreen and wild roses permeated the air. It was the perfect escape for anyone, and the duo relaxing at the pond's edge were escaping, each from different things: Seth Hazlitt from the bedlam of hospital work and medical crises, and Jessica Fletcher from deadlines, murder, and the clickety-clack of typewriter keys. No matter how hectic their professional schedules got, Jessica and Seth somehow always managed to find at least one day or night when they could spend some quality time together, to relax and enjoy each other's company. Sometimes it was antiquing, other times it was a game of chess. Tonight, it was good old-fashioned fishing at their favorite location - and, according to Seth, the fish always bit better at night. And there was no better night to fish, if you asked the good doctor.

Jessica smiled and shook her head at her best friend as she returned to her own fishing pole. Granted, the two of them had only been there all of fifteen minutes, but if the fish were biting as well as Seth said, there should have been at least some nibbling at the bait by now. Ah well, it didn't really matter. As much as she wanted to catch a fish, her true joy was in the peace of the night and in Seth's company - and his whistling, believe it or not. She wasn't familiar with the tune he was piping out, but she had to admit it was pretty catchy. And she was also willing to wager her next royalty check that it came straight from the airwaves of Cabot Cove's

country station, which Seth listened to nonstop. "What song is that, Seth? I like the rhythm of it."

Seth stopped whistling, pleased that she had asked. "That, Jess, is 'Fishin' In The Dark' by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. The two of us out here doing just that, fishing in the dark, made me think of it. And now I can't get it out of my head."

"Nor can I, thanks to you!" she laughed. "I don't mind it, though."

"You like it?"

"Yes. Enough to wonder whether I shouldn't give country music another chance."

"You really ought to, Jess. There's some great songs out on country radio, and that's just one of them."

"Hmm. Like what?"

"Oh, 'Islands In The Stream,' 'The Sound of Goodbye,' 'No Stopping Your Heart,' 'Ocean Front Property,' 'Miami, My Amy,' and 'I Love A Rainy Night,' among others."

"My goodness," Jessica said. "I hope you know the artists as well as you do the songs."

"That I do. The songs I just rattled off are by Kenny Rogers & Dolly Parton, Crystal Gayle, Marie Osmond, George Strait, Keith Whitley, and Eddie Rabbitt, in that order."

Jessica's brow furrowed. "Crystal Gayle? Why does that name sound so familiar to me..." She snapped her fingers. "'Another World.' She sings the theme song from *Another World*. I love that song, and she has a beautiful voice."

"See?" Seth chuckled. "You've been listening to country music without even knowing it, and you love it!"

Jessica shook her head. "Sometimes I even surprise my – oh! Oh!" she cried, making a grab for her now twitching fishing pole, which was unreeling with a loud whirring sound.

"You've got one!"

"So do you!" Jessica cried, jerking her head in the direction of Seth's own pole, which was also going haywire with a fish on the line. Jumping to action, Seth seized his fishing pole and the two of them reeled in trout with shouts of triumph. After that, the fish seemed to bite as though there were no tomorrow, and the two of them ended up catching enough for a splendid fish fry the next evening. With the promise that Jessica would keep the fish frozen at home and that Seth would come over to help her cook them up, the two of them stocked their prizes in a cooler and set their poles aside. It was time for a rest, and lying on their backs to stargaze was just what the doctor ordered.

"Draco the dragon's out tonight, still windin' himself around the sky."

"There's Hercules over there, and Scorpius right behind him, trying to strike his heel."

"Hey look, there's Cygnus."

"And Aquila. My heavens, look how bright Altair is tonight."

"It sure is a beautiful night."

"It is. Peaceful, too." Jessica closed her eyes and rested her arms behind her head, stretching herself out on the grass.

Seth couldn't help smiling as he gazed at her. She'd tied her shirt at the hem due to the heat of the night, exposing part of her midriff... and stretching out to her full height made her belly button play peekaboo over the waist of her jeans. The opportunity was just too perfect to pass up, and he seized it, snaking a hand over and tickling her stomach.

Jessica shrieked with laughter and batted his hand away, which only gave him the encouragement he needed to pin her legs down and scuttle his hands across her belly like a pair of spiders.

"Seth... Seth, stop it!" Jessica pleaded through helpless laughs.

"Nope." Seth dove his hands under her arms and worked her into screams of laughter, that wonderful laugh like no other.

"Seth! I'm begging you, please!" she cried, tears of mirth beginning to stream down her cheeks.

"*Please?*"

"Please!"

"Well, since you said *please*... but I need one for the road first." He tickled her midriff one more time and blew a raspberry right on her belly button. "Gotcha."

Jessica laughed again and wiped the tears from her eyes. "Oh, gracious. That's the first time in a long time that I've been tickled."

Seth gave her stomach a playful poke. "Serves you right for letting your belly button show, woman."

Jessica looked down at her stomach and blushed slightly, putting a hand over her navel. "Believe me, I have no plans to show it off. One of my students keeps telling me I ought to have it pierced, just because, quote-unquote, 'everybody's doing it'."

"No way," Seth said firmly, shaking his head. "Piercings like that are way too risky. There's a greater chance of infection with a navel piercing, and it can be torn too easily. I've treated a few girls with navel rings, and believe me, that kind of piercing is just not worth it."

Jessica grinned. "Not even during bikini season?"

"Not even then." Seth looked at her thoughtfully. "You don't, uh... wear a bikini, do you?"

Jessica's eyes twinkled. "Come swimming with me tomorrow afternoon and you just might find out!"

Seth laughed and, slipping an arm around her, hugged her close as they laid back against the grass to watch the stars once more. A starry night, a

cooler full of fish, and his best friend snuggled up in his arms... no sirree, it didn't get much better than this.