

THE RENTAL CABIN

By Chrono Eclipse

Part 2

“What? I’m up! I’m up!” Chaela gasped, suddenly alert and looking around to see who was screaming.

“It’s Jenna downstairs!” Mel told her friends.

“She probably just found a bug in the shower or something...” Bailey said rolling her eyes.

The three women all hurried together down to the downstairs bathroom and crowded in the doorway as Jenna stood in front of the mirror holding up a strand of her hair.

“I have a gray!!” She exclaimed as if it was a terminal illness.

The other girls looked at her sympathetically. They all felt the dread of someday discovering a pigmentless stray hair in their mane. Chaela moved into the bathroom and pulled Jenna into a hug.

“Don’t sweat it baby girl. Lots of women start going gray in their 20s... just start dying it and nobodys gonna know... I think I even packed some in my bag to touch up my high lights. We can make you a blonde tonight, I hear they have more fun anyway – just ask Bailey.” Chaela suggested to cheer the slender brunette up.

“Yeah totally. I saw a tiktok the other day that even said that like 80% of women dye their hair so like... it’s science!” Bailey suggested.

“I just want to rip it out...” Jenna cried as moved back in front of the mirror tugging at the gray strand.

“Woah! Wooooah!” The other girls cautioned as if Jenna was holding a gun to her own head.

“You pull that out and 5 more will take it’s place!” Bailey warned.

“Oh that’s just a stupid old wives tale!” Jenna replied tugging on the strand again.

As the other girls tried to talk her off the ledge, Mel noticed something weird.

“Hey guys... why does it say we’re all in our 30s now?” The nursing student asked.

Sure enough as they all gathered around the full length mirror, the digital numbers floating above their head said that they were all 34 - 35.

“Um, I’m pretty sure it’s just listing our bust sizes today instead of our ages. I’m a 34C.” Jenna explained dismissively, trying to turn the attention back to her gray hair crisis.

“Nuh uh. This says that I’m a 35? I’m very obviously a 38DD honey. Do my boobs look like they’ve shrunk? I don’t think so... ain’t no way me, Mel and Bailey all have the same bust size.” Chaela pointed out.

The women couldn’t argue with that. The numbers floating about their 3 heads all read ‘35’ but all of them very clearly had noticeably different breast sizes.

Each of the girls self consciously cupped their boobs with their hands to see if they had grown or shrunk. What they seemed to all realize is that their breasts felt slightly lower than normal.

“Wait... everyone look back into the mirror again.” Mel directed them.

The four friends all gathered together to look into the mirror. The faces staring back at them weren’t the faces of fresh-faced girls just out of college. This wasn’t a 24-year-old aspiring model, and a 25-year-old athletic nursing student, a 25-year-old trust fund princess and 25-year-old latina party girl.

Staring back at them were clearly a quartet of women well into their 30s. They had laugh lines and stress crinkles, drier skin and puffy under-eye bags.

“Holy crap... I look as bad as I feel...” Chaela gasped marveling at her older face in the mirror.

The 34 and 35s above their heads made it crystal clear what was happening to them.

“We all aged a decade overnight...” Bailey gulped tracing a crease on her face with her finger.

The girls all looked at each other in stunned horror and then burst out laughing at the absurdity of that notion.

“People don’t just magically jump from their mid 20s to their mid 30s... This is the house or the game or whatever playing mind tricks on us! It’s like the whole theme right? Time? Aging - I mean, c’mon there’s a big hourglass when you walk in. It’s not subtle.” Chaela pointed out.

“Right! This is all just psychosomatic. We drank a ton which made us all dehydrated and bloated, and we stayed up late dancing which is why we’re all sore and lethargic, Jenna’s stressed about all of her life changes, which explains the gray hair...” Mel pointed out to them.

The women nodded thinking that this all made a lot more sense then suddenly rapidly aging 10 years.

“Okay... I feel kind of silly for panicking... of course it’s part of that stupid puzzle - they increased the numbers in the mirror and we coincidently came down this morning all looking like hot garbage so we added 2 and 2 together and came up with 35!” Bailey said reassuring herself.

“So if we just chill out today and drink a lot of water we should be back to our cute young selves?” Jenna asked hopefully.

“Absolutely! I think I even have some electrolyte packets in my bag upstairs that will help our skin revitalize and perk us all up a bit!” Mel suggested.

The women all filed out of the bathroom, not wanting to dwell on their reflections any further. Jenna drew herself a hot bath while Mel went to go upstairs and rummage through her stuff. Chaela and Bailey both headed over to the comfortable chairs and slumped down to chill out and rest a bit.

“Ugh! The reception here sucks... do you have anything?” Bailey asked her busty friend.

Chaela shook her head looking at the ‘no service’ symbol on her phone.

“Nope... Maybe Jenna figured out how to get on the wifi. We’ll have to ask her after her bath. At least I still have my playlist I downloaded!” Chaela said with a grin, turning up the volume on her phone to blast ‘Call Me Maybe’.

Bailey rolled her eyes and smirk.

“Oh thank god for that...” She said sarcastically as she shifted her body to lounge in the chair.

As she sat in the armchair bored she glanced around the cabin and spotted something that caught her eye.

“Hey didn’t you guys like... want to find flowers or something last night?” Bailey asked spying a vase and some flowers up on the mantle on the wall.

“Flowers?” Chaela asked confused as she bopped to her 2012 hits in her chair.

“Yeah wasn’t it part of that clue or whatever?” Bailey asked hopping up from her chair.

Her back protested the sudden energetic movement and the blonde woman immediately grimaced and rubbed her achey back but pressed on, walking over to the vase and pulling a fake rose out from it.

“Oh shit you’re right... what did that thing say again? Something about blooming... It was in the drawer in the table right?” Chaela said feeling around to open the compartment again.

As Bailey held the paper rose the pedals seemed to crinkle and brown until they fell away and she found herself holding just the stem that unrolled into another message.

“Hey! I think I found something.” Bailey said excited to have actually solved one of the riddles.

Chaela got up, feeling a little dizzy as she did so and noticed that her chest jiggled and wobbled a bit more than she was used to when she had perky 25-year-old breasts. She chalked it up to her hangover and headed over to see what Bailey had found.

“Your number of eyes can double in size under the feet of a crow. Though crinkle they might, don’t lose your sight in determining which way to go.” Bailey read the small scroll in her hand.

Mel came down the stairs with a bunch of bottles for an anti-hangover kit.

“I should have thought to bring all this stuff down when I first woke up this morning – guess I’m getting forgetful in my old age!” Mel said with a laugh as she came down the steps.

“Your number of eyes can double...” The other two women were engrossed in re-reading the clue and didn’t notice Mel talking to them.

The athletic woman began to pour some water into glasses looking over with curiosity as to what her friends were up to.

“What do you guys have there?” She asked them as she poured some electrolytes and echinacea powder into the glasses.

Chaela looked up excitedly.

“Bailey found the next clue!” She explained.

“Yeah you guys were talking about flowers last night and I looked up and I saw this flower and it turns out its a clue!” The blonde girl recounted proudly.

Mel finished stirring the drinks and brought them over to the other two women and looked at what they had found.

“Hmmm under a crows feet? Crows feet are what people call the little wrinkles you get in the corner of your eyes...” The nursing student pointed out as she handed the ladies their hangover cures.

As the women drank the concoctions and debated over the clue the bathroom door opened and Jenna padded out in only a towel.

“Ahh that was SUCH a good call. I feel soooo much better.” Jenna purred with a grin as she stretched her slender arms out and arched her back showing off a bit of her mature cleavage beneath the towel.

Mel and Chaela were instantly distracted by the beautiful 34-year-old woman strutting into the room with next to nothing on.

“I call dibs on the shower next!” Bailey insisted, a bit oblivious to what her friends were gawking at.

“Okay new rule – for the rest of the weekend we all shun wearing any clothes!” Chaela suggested with a big grin.

Mel cleared her throat and nudged Chaela pointedly before going over to grab Jenna’s drink.

“Oh my god, that would be so great! Can you imagine...? We’d all probably get pretty cold though...” Jenna said a bit obliviously.

“I know something that can keep us warm...” Chaela grinned.

“Cha-Cha!” Mel shouted using Chaela’s diminutive nickname that noone had called her since she was a teenager.

The sultry bi-sexual woman grinned and shrugged.

“What? I’m just saying...” She laughed and winked at Mel.

Jenna took her drink and walked over to Bailey who was still examining the clue.

“Oh cool did you guys find a new clue?” Jenna asked reading it over Bailey’s shoulder.

“Yeah it clearly has something to do with eyes or something... anyone see any eyes around?” Bailey asked.

“Nooo but that line about crows feet makes me think of the creepy crow statuette in my room...” Jenna pointed out.

The women all look at each other in excited realization.

“Race ya upstairs!” Mel calls with a grin as she books it for the staircase.

The other three women move to quickly follow her.

“Wait guys! I’m only wearing a towel!” Jenna whined as she lagged behind.

At the top of the stairs the women all stopped to catch their breath for a moment letting their less-dressed friend catch up.

“Woo - I gotta start hitting the gym I think. I’ve never gotten winded just running up a flight of stairs before...” Chaela groaned leaning against the wall.

“Yeah its probably just because we haven’t eaten anything...” Mel insisted, a bit surprised that she herself was a bit out of breath too.

Jenna pranced by them on the way to her room.

“Come on old ladies... last one there’s a rotten lay!” The amateur model called back with a giggle, spanking her own behind over her towel for emphasis.

The other girls groaned and rolled their eyes as they followed her into her bedroom where she walked up to a bookshelf and lifted a copper crow statuette off of it.

“No way...” Chaela gasped as the lid of a compartment hidden under the crow suddenly lifted up.

The four friends gathered around to look inside and see what the crow revealed. Sitting in the compartment were four sets of reading bifocals and a note.

“Uh.... what?” Jenna asked very puzzled by the kind of drab generic-looking bifocals. The kind her mom kept on her bedside table that she referred to as her ‘readers’.

“Maybe they’re like special spy glasses and we can read some ultraviolet message written on the wall or something.” Chaela suggested.

She reached into the compartment and pulled out a pair of the glasses and put them on her face. The other women giggled at the sight of their cool ‘club hopping’ friend wearing these lame granny glasses that immediately made her look older.

Chaela looked around the room but didn’t see any hidden messages. She was surprised that they seemed to make everything around her appear clearer and more in focus. She quickly took the glasses off and put them back in the compartment, wondering if she needed to go get her eyes checked for contact lenses.

“Uh no it’s a bust. These don’t do anything...” She informed the group.

“Well – there’s a note at the bottom. Maybe that explains what they’re for.” Bailey said, reaching in to pull out the slip of paper.

The note was written in the same fancy calligraphy as the previous clues. This one read 'Rapid changes can stress you out and make your frown, just remember that what goes up must also come down.' And below it was a symbol: ,/ \,

"What goes up must also come down? Are we supposed to go upstairs to the attic?" Mel offered.

The four women hurried out of Jenna's room over to the ceiling door to the attic leaving the glasses behind since they seemed to be useless.

"No it's locked... we need to find a key that fits that keyhole." Jenna said tugging on the handle to show that the door wouldn't open.

"So... downstairs?" Bailey offered and the ladies all hurried down the stairs.

"You know... I think i've seen that symbol somewhere... can I see that again?" Mel asked moving over to Bailey who showed her the clue again.

"Well... maybe if we like scour the whole cabin just looking for stuff that might be clues?" Jenna suggested.

The other women nodded and all four of them took off in various directions opening drawers and cabinets, looking under furniture and behind paintings.

"Guys! I found a key!" Chaela said excitedly.

"Is it the key to the attic!?" Jenna squealed.

"No - it's a weird octagon thing..." Chaela said holding up the small metal object.

"Ooo! I think that opens up the desk drawer in my room!" Bailey shouted in excitement, the spoiled rich girl hadn't anticipated getting so into this but was really enjoying herself now that they had solved a few of the clues.

The ladies all ran back up stairs, once again catching their breath on the landing. They hurried into Bailey's room and she pointed to the desk where Chaela stuck the key into the similarly shaped key hole.

To be continued...