



Don't Close Your Eyes: Don't Trust Your Friends. Don't Believe What You Hear. And Whatever You Do...

By Carlene Thompson

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Nestled on the shores of Lake Erie, the small town of Port Ariel, Ohio, is a welcome haven for Natalie St. John. Back home for the first time in years, she plans to visit old friends, mend a broken heart, and take a break from her busy veterinarian practice. But her peace is shattered her first night back, when she discovers the murdered body of her friend, Tamara Peyton.

Was it a random act of violence...or something personal? The answer becomes clear as Natalie is stalked by the voice of "Tamara," whose terrifying phone calls warn her that she too, is going to die.

One by one, the people closest to Tamara are being savagely murdered. But neither Natalie nor Sheriff Nick Meredith recognizes the face of the devious killer who walks among them, hiding behind a well-crafted lie. Now, a murderer's deadly act of vengeance demands one more sacrifice-and Natalie has been chosen to pay the price...

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Don't Close Your Eyes* has all the gothic sensibilities of a Victoria Holt novel, combined with the riveting modern suspense of Sharyn McCrumb's *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*. Don't close your eyes-and don't miss this one!" --Meagan McKinney, author of *In The Dark*

About the Author

Carlene Thompson is the author of *Last Whisper*, *Black for Remembrance*, and *Nowhere to Hide*, among other books. She attended college at Marshall University and earned her Ph.D. in English from Ohio State University. She taught at the University of Rio Grande before leaving to focus on her writing full-time. Besides writing, she spends her time caring for the many dogs and cats she's adopted. A native West Virginian, she lives with her husband Keith in Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

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1

SATURDAY NIGHT

Tamara dried the last crystal wineglass, held it up to the fading summer light shining through the kitchen window, and nodded. Spotless. She hated spots on glasses, particularly crystal. Tomorrow night, when Warren came home from his conference in Cleveland, they'd share a bottle of Chateau Latour Blanche on their sixth anniversary. Tamara was not a wine connoisseur, but he'd assured her the Latour Blanche was expensive and should be properly appreciated. When she'd fussed about spending a lot of money on a bottle of wine, he said it was a gift from a patient. Tamara knew better than to ask which one. Warren was a psychologist and never discussed his patients.

Tamara looked around the pristine kitchen. The whole house was spotless. With no children and no job, she had more than enough time to keep the house perfect.

Tonight, however, she had nothing left to clean. She'd even reorganized the kitchen cabinets and put down fresh shelf paper. She could work on her latest quilt, the lovely one with the hummingbird design she'd created, but she wasn't in the mood. She could drop by the headquarters of the suicide hotline Warren had forced her to organize, but tonight she didn't want to hear any sad stories. She didn't enjoy Saturday night television and she felt too restless to read. Usually she took an evening walk, but a storm was predicted.

Tamara looked out the window and sighed. Daylight Saving Time extended light until nine o'clock. So far it was a lovely evening, a bit cloudier than usual, but still nice. Surely the storm wouldn't hit for over an hour. That left plenty of time for a walk.

She grabbed an old white sweater off the coat tree beside the back door. It was mid-June, but Port Ariel, Ohio, sat on the edge of Lake Erie, which sent cool breezes off its water all year. The comfortable temperature was what drew so many tourists to the beach area every summer. Warren hated tourists, but Tamara spent most of her time at home and rarely had contact with them. Besides, they were good for local business and therefore good for her twin sister Lily, who owned a successful antique store downtown.

Tamara was making the hummingbird quilt for Lily's shop. "People like old furniture but not old bedding. Only bedding that looks old," Lily always said. "I could sell three times the number of these gorgeous quilts you make!" Tamara was pleased by their popularity, but she never increased her production. Haste made for sloppy work.

As she automatically locked the back door and descended the porch steps, Tamara glanced at her watch. Eight-thirty. Warren always called promptly at ten when he was out of town. She frowned. She mustn't be late for the call. Things were rocky between them. Warren had been irritable, quiet, and aloof for months. Tamara felt he was disappointed that she hadn't been able to give him a child, although he never mentioned it. Lily contended that Warren didn't want a child—not everyone did. Tamara told her sister she was being ridiculous.

To be twins, they were so different, hardly like sisters at all except for their looks and their love for each other. Lily wasn't even religious in spite of their strict Catholic upbringing. Ignoring Lily's good-natured skepticism, Tamara had begun attending mass every day, praying for the child that would draw Warren back to her. Now she knew her prayers had worked. Her periods were always irregular, but this time she was over a month late. She'd taken a home pregnancy test this morning and she had wonderful news for Warren, which she'd save until tomorrow evening when he returned.

Humming beneath her breath, Tamara crossed the lawn and walked down Hyacinth Lane, a wide dirt road running north through a wooded area. She delighted in the towering oaks, locust trees, and scattered dogwoods and crab apples. When the dogwoods and crab apples were in bloom, this place seemed like a fairy world.

She took a rubber band out of her sweater pocket and pulled back her long blond hair in a ponytail. Delicate silver filigree earrings set with amethyst stones swayed in the breeze, tickling her neck. She tilted back her head, closed her eyes, and drew a deep breath. Clean, clear air tinged with the scent of approaching rain and the water of Lake Erie filled her delicate nostrils. When she was young, she and Lily had spent countless hours on the lake in their parents' cabin cruiser and their sleek twenty-foot inboard motorboat. The girls were excellent water-skiers. Warren went out with the family sometimes on the cabin cruiser, but he always stayed on board. He didn't even fish.

Something rustled in the underbrush. Naturally timid, Tamara grew motionless, her gaze scanning the sides of the road. She knew the sound probably came from a small animal. Most of them were perfectly harmless except for poisonous snakes, although there weren't many of those around. Besides, a snake wouldn't make so much noise and it certainly wouldn't attack unless threatened.

Her mind knew this. Her body didn't. She felt cold, imagining a sleek head rising up to bury venom-filled fangs in the skin of her ankle.

The rustling grew louder. Tamara stiffened. She was ready to turn and dash for home when a large dog burst from the greenery on her left. It bounded to her, panting.

"Well, hello there!" Tamara exclaimed, laughing in relief. This was the fourth evening in a row she'd seen the dog on her walk. It had wiry black-and-tan hair, mostly black, and seemed to wear a perpetual smile. She called it "Happy Face." Showing no fear of humans, the dog approached her on slender tan legs with white paws, its curled tail wagging. Tamara bent to pet it. She had no idea what breed it was, but she thought it would be beautiful if it were bathed. Instead its hair was matted and slightly oily. It wore no collar, and a fresh scratch ran down the right side of its tan face.

Poor thing, Tamara thought. She'd love to have the dog, but Warren had firmly pronounced they could not take it in. He didn't like animals. The dog was so endearing, but it was getting thinner. She decided to buy dog food tomorrow. At least she could keep the dog well fed even if she couldn't give it a home.

Happy Face walked beside her for a while, glancing up as if for approval. Wild violets grew along the edges of Hyacinth Lane. Tamara stooped and picked a few while the dog waited patiently. A slate-gray catbird emitted its lonely mewing call to the evening. A few ambitious fireflies were already hard at work, blinking gaudily against the darkening sky.

Tamara looked at her watch again. 8:45. She should return home. She could be bathed and ready for bed by the time Warren called. She smiled. When she was ready for bed, Lily would be ready for a night at trendy Panache. Their old friend Natalie St. John was back in town and Lily wanted to show her a good time. She'd invited Tamara along, but Tamara declined, telling her she would be waiting for Warren's call. "You're hopeless," Lily had teased. "I might get married some day but I'll never be as settled as you. Hovering

around the phone at ten for a husband?" Apparently Lily thought hovering only justified in cases of handsome, unpredictable boyfriends.

The dog looked up at her expectantly. She'd forgotten their game. "Okay, Happy Face." Tamara bent and picked up a stick. The dog shifted from paw to paw in anticipation. Tamara threw the stick far into the trees. The dog shot after it. Usually it returned in less than a minute with the stick, which it dropped at her feet. This time Tamara heard it barking. The barking grew fainter. Obviously it had spotted a rabbit and was giving chase. At least she hoped it was a rabbit. She didn't want to be greeted by a dog reeking of skunk. She stood on the road for a few minutes. Up ahead reared the remains of Saunders House built back in the early nineteenth century when Port Ariel was called Winthrop. When the senior Saunderses died, their beautiful daughter Ariel became the lover of Captain Zebediah Winthrop, whose father had founded the town. Ariel was labeled a "scarlet woman" after she gave birth to Zebediah's son Thaddeus out of wedlock. In his youth Zebediah had been forced to marry a homely crab of a woman inaptly named Mercy. While Zebediah sailed Lake Erie, Mercy and her pious friends delighted in wreaking petty vengeance on Ariel and the baby, terrorizing the young mother. Then, when Thaddeus was barely one year old, Captain Winthrop's ship, the Mercy, caught fire and foundered on the shore near Ariel's house. Ariel had spotted the wreck from her widow's walk and rushed to the rescue, single-handedly saving two injured sailors and her beloved Zeb from drowning.

Mercy died shortly afterward, mostly from bitterness and jealousy and pure meanness, people claimed. She was barely in the ground when Zebediah married Ariel. Most citizens had forgiven her in light of her bravery and did not object when Zebediah changed the name of the town in her honor. Together they had two more children. Zeb died long before Ariel and she had a large monument built to him in the town square. Although she lived to be eighty, she never remarried.

As children Tamara and Lily were entranced by the story of Ariel who had lived alone on the windy shore of Lake Erie, tormented yet strong and loving. They thought she was beautiful, wonderful, courageous, and all that a woman should be. Unbeknownst to their parents, they used to dress up and play for hours in the Saunders house, taking turns at pretending to be Ariel. Sometimes Natalie St. John played with them. Tamara had seen pictures of Ariel and thought that with her long black hair and dark eyes, Natalie made the best Ariel, but she never told Lily. Natalie was the only one of their friends with whom they shared the secret of the game. Natalie could alw...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Pamela Pinkham:

Reading can be called imagination hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book mainly book entitled Don't Close Your Eyes: Don't Trust Your Friends. Don't Believe What You Hear. And Whatever You Do... your thoughts will drift away through every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a reserve then become one form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get ahead of. The Don't Close Your Eyes: Don't Trust Your Friends. Don't Believe What You Hear. And Whatever You Do... giving you another experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful facts for your better life with this era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

Lisa Maurer:

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