

**THE
KEEPER'S
SECRET**

A LOGAN MCKENNA NOVEL

VALERIE DAVISSON

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

By Valerie Davisson

Copyright © 2026 Valerie Davisson

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

THE KEEPER'S SECRET is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, businesses, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Published by Vaughn House Publishing, Depoe Bay, OR

First Edition

Paperback ISBN: 979-8-9928642-0-5

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-9864774-9-7

Cover and Interior Design by Kimberly Peticolas, www.kimpeticolas.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026913129

1

MONDAY, MARCH 17

Whenever they came to the Yaquina Head Lighthouse, Logan and Ben brought the dogs. Dixon, Logan's labraheeler, and Max, Ben's still exuberant one-year-old English cream golden retriever, loved the short hike up Salal Hill, which had amazing panoramic views up and down the coast.

But this morning, Logan planned on taking her daughter, Amy, and her eight-year-old grandson, Ian, who were visiting from Southern California, to the lighthouse. She wanted to show them the new exhibits at the interpretive center and then go tide pooling. Since dogs weren't allowed in either area, she left them at home.

Gino's restaurant down at the bayfront in Newport had a dog-friendly patio, so Ben said he would bring Max and Dix with him when he met them for lunch.

Ian called shotgun and after tugging his seatbelt, his mom climbed in the back.

VALERIE DAVISSON

As Logan turned onto Highway 101, a low smear of gray clouds darkened the horizon, threatening rain, but it was clear for now. Hopefully it would hold off for a while.

Twenty minutes later, they waved at the ranger in the entrance kiosk as they drove past and parked at the interpretive center. The lighthouse itself was a little farther on, downhill and at the end of a rocky point that jutted out into the Pacific, but since the coastal gods had blessed them with a brief sunbreak, they decided to walk instead of drive down after exploring the exhibits.

Ian immediately ran ahead and pulled open one of the large, heavy, glass doors. He seemed to grow taller every time Logan saw him. Once inside, he made a beeline for the gift shop, but his mom steered him toward the museum section.

“Let’s do the gift shop after the tidepools, okay, hon?” Amy said. “That way we won’t have to carry anything when we’re climbing around on the rocks.”

Ian accepted this with his usual good nature, his attention already caught by a large whiteboard on the wall where the lighthouse keeper’s daily log entry was posted.

“Sweet!” he said.

Everything was ‘sweet’ to Ian. Last year’s word was ‘cool.’

Today’s log entry was dated March 17. Without being prompted, Ian read it aloud.

“Gray whale sighting, temperature fifty-eight degrees Fahrenheit, stormy seas, heavy rain until noon.”

He even pronounced the word *Fahrenheit* correctly. His parents, one a scientist and the other an educator, had read to him since he was a fetus and never used baby talk when speaking to him, even when he was a baby.

Amy glanced over at the large windows on their right, where rays of bright sunlight were streaming in, painting the floor a cheery yellow.

“What storm?” she said.

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

Logan smiled at Ian and waited. She knew he would figure it out. For a minute, he scrunched up his face and stared at the board, rereading the log entry, then his eyes lit up.

“Oh! March 17, 19**12**!” he all but shouted.

Logan and Ian fist-bumped and Amy nodded approvingly at the clever idea.

“Yeah, they change it every day.” Logan said. “The museum staff copies entries from old logbooks matching the current day and month, but from a different year.”

Then, turning to Ian, she lowered her voice and confided, “I have to admit I didn’t notice the year was different the first few times I came.”

Ian was pleased he was at least as smart as his Grandma Logan, who he considered to be very smart.

The tidepool tour didn’t start until ten-thirty, so they took their time wending their way through the various exhibits, which included not only the history of the Yaquina Head Lighthouse—when it was built, how many bricks were used, how the site was selected—but also, and just as interesting to Logan, the daily life of the lighthouse keepers and their families.

Watching Ian dash from exhibit to exhibit, she couldn’t imagine trying to keep an active child like Ian safe on what was essentially a hunk of black rock surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs plummeting several hundred feet down to the powerful Pacific’s crashing waves.

They could have spent hours going from display to display, but realizing what time it was, Amy corralled her son and they started walking down the short hill to the lighthouse itself. Logan had planned their trip to coincide with a minus tide so Amy and Ian would hopefully see a lot of marine life in the tidepools.

On the way she let Ian use her binoculars to check out a group of cormorants nesting on a dramatic rock formation just offshore. He asked her what all the white paint on the rocks was

VALERIE DAVISSON

for. He loved it when she explained that was not paint, but bird poop, technically *guano*. A new word for his growing vocabulary.

When they reached the set of steep stairs that zigzagged down to Cobble Beach, Amy had Ian change into his non-slip aqua booties, tucking his tennis shoes and socks into her backpack for now. Free at last, he scampered down the stairs, his mother close behind.

Logan opted to stay up top. She told them to take their time, she would be at the end of the point, on the other side of the lighthouse, past the second bench.

There was something about that spot that had inspired a fragment of music last time she was here—a few elusive notes kept running around in the back of her brain. She hadn't been able to get it out of her mind but also hadn't been able to expand it into a complete composition. Maybe today, with some time to herself, it would come to her. She could hum a few bars into her phone then try it out with her violin, Bella, when they got home.

In the short time it had taken them to walk down the hill, the sun had gone behind a cloud, and an onshore wind had picked up. No rain yet, but it was coming. She hoped it held off until Ian would have time to see his sea stars and anemones before the rain started.

Adjusting her binoculars for her eyes after changing them for Ian's, Logan let them hang loosely from her neck, ready in case she spotted anything worth looking at. A couple of orcas had been seen last week. For now, she just wanted to take it all in.

Placing her hands loosely on the metal railing in front of her, bracing against the stiff breeze, Logan allowed herself to let go and let her senses inform her brain, not the other way around. The calls of nesting murrets and gulls, punctuated by the sound of crashing waves below filled her with a calm she always felt in nature.

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

The musical notes in the back of her mind were just beginning to surface again and form themselves into a melody when a screeching, metallic sound ripped through the air. Flipping open her eyes, it took a minute for Logan to reorient herself and find the source of the grating, grinding noise.

SNEAK PEEK

2

Over her left shoulder, just off Quarry Cove, Logan saw a commercial crab boat—easily identifiable from the crab pots stacked on deck—straining to haul something up from the ocean floor. Something definitely heavier than a crab pot, even a full one. The powered winch they were using looked and sounded like it was about to break.

Logan brought her binoculars up and focused in. They must have snagged a rock or something. She couldn't make out what the crew were saying, but two of them were looking over the edge of their boat, just as anxious as she was to see what they had.

Finally, with some scraping and clanging, their large and oddly shaped 'catch' landed on the deck with a thunk. Definitely not a crab pot. It took a minute to believe her eyes, but eventually Logan realized she was looking at an old-fashioned wheelchair, the kind with big wheels in the back and little ones in the front, heavily encrusted with various forms of marine life—barnacles and mussels being the only ones she recognized.

As the crew attempted to untangle the jumbled relic from their fishing gear, something came loose and fell onto the deck. One crewmember reached down and picked it up but instantly dropped it and jumped back.

VALERIE DAVISSON

Pressing her binoculars harder against her face to cut out any stray light, Logan realigned the lenses, bringing the long, slender object into better focus. Even stained, pitted, and as colonized on the knobby ends with marine life as the chair was, Logan had a pretty good idea what she was looking at. If she was right, she'd seen one last year.

She reached for her phone.

TWO HOURS LATER **OCEAN BLEU SEAFOOD AT GINO'S** **HISTORIC BAYFRONT, NEWPORT, OR**

The rain was coming down in earnest now, but Gino's was hopping with spring break tourists. Almost all of the patio tables were filled, but Logan spotted Ben at one and waved. She lucked into a parking spot only a block away, right next to his car.

Pulling up their jacket hoods, Logan, Amy, and Ian dashed back to where Ben was holding down the fort with Max and Dixon at his feet. The server had already brought menus and a water bowl for the dogs.

Shaking the rain off her jacket, Logan hung it on the back of the chair opposite Ben and told the server they were ready to order. They didn't need a menu. She always got the fish tacos, Ian liked cheeseburgers, and Amy and Ben preferred fish and chips.

"Sounds like you had an exciting morning," Ben said, once the server left to put in their order. "Do they know for sure what they found? Where'd they take it?"

Logan had called him from the car to explain why they were running late, but she didn't have a lot of news to add.

"I don't know. I called Vern and he said they would probably send the Coast Guard out, then if that's a human bone, it would get taken to the sheriff's office, but there's no official word back from anyone yet," she answered.

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

Vern, a retired homicide detective from Colorado, was lead of the Lincoln County Cold Case Unit and Logan's supervisor. She'd been volunteering there since last fall. Her work mainly involved routine admin and scanning of old case files, but as she read through the medical reports and interviews, often written in dry, professional language, each missing person or homicide victim had gone straight to her heart. She felt their families' pain, not knowing what happened to their loved one. These weren't just names on binders, but real people. People she was beginning to care very much about.

"Did he say if it tied in with any of the missing persons cases?" Ben asked.

"Not that he knew of off the top of his head," Logan said. "But he said he'd ask around and go through the files, but he doesn't expect to have much success until they can narrow down the date range."

Logan was ninety-nine percent sure the object she saw fall out onto the deck was a human femur but didn't want to talk about human remains in front of Ian. For now, she changed the subject by asking Ian to tell Ben about his tidepool discoveries. Amy and Ben followed her cue.

Sitting next to his Grandpa Ben, Ian held up his mom's phone and scrolled through the photos she had taken, explaining the circumstances of each find and how he had used his fingers and hands next to each sea star and anemone to demonstrate comparative size. He knew many of their scientific names. Even the seaweed. But that shouldn't have been surprising as his dad was a marine botanist who specialized in restoring kelp beds.

"This green one's *ulva* or sea lettuce. You can eat it, but you're not allowed to take any from the lighthouse. It's a protected area," he informed his listeners gravely.

Ben solemnly agreed to abide by the rules next time he was there.

VALERIE DAVISSON

After lunch, Ian dragged them down the street from Gino's to 2 Kids Candy for caramel apples. When Amy was expecting Ian, she had binged on their Tsunamis—lumpy, gooey wonders of crisp, green apples coated with thick dark and white chocolate drizzles over a layer of caramel, encrusted with bits of pretzels, hazelnuts, and M&Ms. It's no wonder Ian came out of the womb with cravings of his own.

Ben sighed and said caramel apples weren't on his keto diet, but Logan laughed and said neither were the extra french fries he'd ordered at lunch and suggested he call this his weekly cheat day. He happily agreed and got his own. He wanted to split one with her to save on calories, but Logan wouldn't share. That said, he didn't seem very disappointed when he had to eat a whole one by himself.

Ten minutes later, Logan and the kids were passing Walmart and heading out of town. Making sure the heater was on for her California family, she glanced back at them in the rearview mirror. Ian, fully sated from lunch and treats, was fast asleep in the back seat, leaning his head on his mom's shoulder. Even Amy's eyes were drifting to half-mast.

Ian's stick-straight, almost white Nordic locks falling across his forehead made Amy's long, pale strawberry blonde hair look dark gold by comparison. Neither had inherited Logan's thick, auburn waves. They joked that one of her Scots/Irish ancestors must have taken a 'liking to a Viking' back in the day. Maybe that's why she fell for Ben. He was a towhead, too, and was often assumed to be Ian's biological grandfather, which delighted him to no end.

For the first few miles of the 101, scattered homes and businesses lined the ocean side of the highway, granting only fleeting glimpses of the water. When she finally hit an open stretch, Logan looked out across the sparkling Pacific and let out a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding.

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

The rain having made its point, it must have meandered south to visit another town. Clean coastal winds had scoured the sky, leaving behind a brilliant blue hung with puffy, white clouds and a butter yellow sun shining for all it was worth.

Logan absolutely never got tired of this.

Tires humming on the road, her mind turned to that human bone she'd seen fall out of the embrace of the old, corroded wheelchair onto the deck of the fishing vessel. Whose bone was that? And what had anyone in a wheelchair been doing at the Yaquina Head Lighthouse?

SNEAK PEEK

3

LATE SUMMER, 1923 SEA CLIFF NEIGHBORHOOD SAN FRANCISCO

Nineteen-year-old Eudora Crane listened carefully until she heard the front door close and the Studebaker back down the drive. She watched out the window until Earl's chauffeur cap was out of sight. Excellent! Mother was on her way to a planning meeting for the fall gala—she was chair of the decorating committee again this year—and then she would be on to the Garden Court, where she would be hosting her monthly bridge club luncheon. She'd be gone for hours—at least until mid-afternoon.

Still, Eudora knew she would have to hurry if she was going to have time to do what she wanted to do today.

Turning back into the room, she quickly removed her dressing gown and changed into the more appropriate clothing she had selected the night before: low-heeled lace-up boots, a

VALERIE DAVISSON

long, brown wool skirt, long sleeve shirt, and her favorite thick, deep green cardigan, belted to keep it from flapping in the wind.

Next, she pulled out a worn, leather satchel from under her bed. It already contained her watercolors and sketch pad, but today, she added her new Yale flashlight, a gift her father, Captain Crane, brought home from his last sea voyage.

“For your adventures and explorations, my dear!” he had whispered to her when her mother was out of earshot. Mother did not approve of Eudora’s adventures and explorations.

Bulky and somewhat heavy, the flashlight would take up a lot of space, but it was still worth bringing along. The tunnel to reach the lighthouse would probably still be dark this early in the day. Best to be prepared.

A few minutes later, stopping only to fill a thermos with hot coffee and make herself a quick sandwich, tucking both into her satchel, she was out the door and into her car, a much less luxurious automobile than her mother’s, but Eudora loved it. The open-air Dodge Touring Car spelled independence and freedom, two things Eudora valued above all else.

She’d already secured her hair into a loose bun at the nape of her neck, but when she got behind the wheel, she pulled down her wool cloche even more, knowing how the wind picked up when she got to Lincoln Boulevard along the coast.

An hour-and-a-half and one ferry ride later, Eudora arrived at her destination. Point Bonita Lighthouse. There was only one other car in the parking area, an old truck, so she chose a spot near the tunnel entrance and got out. Adjusting her coat and hat, she looped the leather strap of her satchel over her head in one practiced motion, glanced at her watch, and started off.

Fifteen minutes later, emerging from the hand-hewn tunnel, she shoved her flashlight back into her satchel and inhaled several lungfuls of cold sea air.

What a glorious day! Excited and wanting to get started as soon as possible, she picked her way across the rocks until she

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

found the perfect spot. Spreading her coat on the ground, she quickly got out her sketchbook and took in the view.

The vast Pacific lay at her feet, stretching westward through silvery layers of morning fog. Jagged cliffs plunged into the surf below, while wild seabirds wheeled overhead.

Watching incoming ships thread the needle between cliffs and currents as they entered San Francisco Bay, she automatically searched for the unique profile and custom signal flag of her father's ship but knew she wouldn't find it. Father wasn't due back until next week. They had seen him off at the Embarcadero three months ago. Usually he wasn't gone quite so long on his trading excursions, but this trip he had added a stop in Yokohama, Japan.

They knew he'd made it that far, because last week they had received a package from him. A delicate tea set for Mother and a set of hair combs for her, adorned with freshwater pearls set in silver scrollwork. The combs came wrapped in impossibly thin rice paper, nestled in a small lacquered box with mother-of-pearl inlay of intricate flower and bird designs. She liked the box almost as much as the hair combs.

Which is one of the reasons she was here today. She could have bought Father a welcome home present but wanted her gift to be special. Something he could take with him on his next voyage—a small watercolor of the Point Bonita Lighthouse, with the San Francisco Bay in the background, and the vast ocean beyond. She hoped it would honor his love of the sea, but also help him to remember home, and that they waited for him here.

Immensely satisfied with her decision, she got to work. Almost an hour had gone by when she was startled out of her concentration by someone clearing his throat. Turning her body without getting up, Eudora, shielding her eyes from the sun, squinted up at the intruder.

VALERIE DAVISSON

“Good morning,” he said. “I didn’t want to interrupt you, but that’s a nice painting you have there. And the colors are right. Looks just like what I saw this morning.”

“Thank you,” Eudora said, then placed her watercolor brush into the small glass jar she brought with her and reached up her hand.

“I’m Eudora,” she said, waiting for him to introduce himself.

“Ansel,” he replied, shaking her hand in a firm, but not harsh way. His grip was warm and dry. “Ansel Williams, Assistant Lighthouse Keeper. I wanted to warn you about not getting too close to the edge. It’s a fair way down, you know.”

The twinkle in his eyes told Eudora he didn’t really fear for her safety but was using this as an excuse to talk with her.

She didn’t mind.

“Why don’t you join me? I only have the one sandwich and some coffee, which is almost all gone, but I’m willing to share.”

A shy smile stole across his face. Somewhat wind-chapped and rough, but a handsome face, she thought. Compact and fit, the man standing before her was dressed in practical laborer’s clothes, very unlike her father, who was tall, blonde, and always wore his captain’s uniform. While she waited for him to accept or reject her invitation, she looked up into Ansel’s eyes. Dark brown, kind and intelligent, but not simple, she thought, or easy to know.

“Thank you,” Ansel said, glancing over his shoulder at the lighthouse, “but I can’t today. I have a lot of work to do before my shift starts.”

“Oh, of course,” Eudora said. “It’s time for me to get going anyway,” she added as she began washing out her brush, tapping it on the side of the glass jar.

She must have read his signals wrong.

But Ansel surprised her.

“Um . . . you’ll need to come back to finish that painting,” he said. “And unless there’s a turn in the weather or something

THE KEEPER'S SECRET

breaks, I should have some time tomorrow afternoon. You could paint in the morning, and I could give you a tour of the lighthouse after lunch. I'll even supply the lunch, if you don't mind cold ham and cheese. We get sourdough on the ferry on Wednesdays. It's really good. And of course," he nodded at her thermos, "I'll make sure to have lots of hot coffee."

Eudora didn't really need to come back the next day. She knew she could finish the watercolor painting at home, but Ansel didn't need to know that.

"I'd be delighted!" she said.

Mother would be aghast at her accepting an invitation to spend time with a man she hadn't been introduced to properly, but Eudora believed in trusting her instincts. Besides, Mother need not know. She'd think of some excuse to get out of the house tomorrow.

4

TWO MONTHS LATER

Eudora paced back and forth in front of the bay window. She'd been trying to reach Ansel all day but had not been able to get through. Father should have been home yesterday, but his shipping office had not heard from the coastal radio station. No one knew where he was.

She was nervous because this was the day they had planned for Ansel to come and meet Father. She and the taciturn assistant lighthouse keeper at Point Bonita had been seeing each other as often as they could ever since that tour of the lighthouse earlier this summer. But Ansel, at least ten years older than she was, was frustratingly conventional. He felt he should wait until her father returned, then come to her house to meet both her parents formally. Which, she had to admit, was a good idea, since her mother would not be able to be as dismissive or disapproving with her more welcoming husband in the same room.

Since Ansel didn't have a car, he probably left hours ago in order to catch the ferry, then take a streetcar or walk to get here by four or five o'clock, their pre-arranged time. No sense trying

VALERIE DAVISSON

to call again. He would be here any minute. She just hoped Father would be here, too!

If he wasn't, she would give Ansel the option of visiting another day if he so chose, but she had already had the cook prepare some special refreshments, so she hoped he would stay and visit as planned. She would handle Mother.

The door chimes rang loudly in the hall. Flooded with relief, Eudora pinched her cheeks, adjusted her hair combs, smoothed her skirt, and practically flew to the door. But when she flung it open, instead of Ansel, two grim-faced men stood on her doorstep, hats in hand.

Puzzled, Eudora tried to figure out why Mr. Tentley, her father's business manager, and Mr. Bausch, a normally cheerful soul she remembered bringing her her favorite candies when she was little, were doing there.

Mr. Tentley was the one who delivered the news.

Eudora heard him—she understood the words—but it took her a minute to absorb what those words meant. She was still standing there staring at him, her feet rooted to the floor, when she heard a sharp cry behind her, followed by a heavy thud.

The Irish girl ran in from the kitchen and after reviving Mother with rather insistent pats on the cheek and a wet rag she had in her hand, started helping her to the couch. The two men, murmuring apologies as they brushed past Eudora, let themselves in to help.

As she robotically shut the door behind them, Eudora caught a glimpse of Ansel, at the bottom of the front steps, one hand gripping the wrought iron railing, obviously torn between staying and leaving, his facial expression one of pain and sorrow—for her. She caught his gaze, her eyes brimming with tears. By the time she wiped them away and looked again, he was gone.