



Once in a Blue Moon Lodge

Lorna Landvik

University of Minnesota Press (Apr 11, 2017)

Hardcover \$25.95 (312pp)

978-1-5179-0269-8

The story is full of the warmth and humor that Landvik is known for.

The ladies of Lorna Landvik's *Patty Jane's House of Curl* are back and just as eccentric as ever. In *Once in a Blue Moon Lodge*, the focus shifts to Patty Jane's daughter, Nora, but the drama and laughter remain.

Patty Jane has decided to close her beauty salon and community education center, which leaves Nora wondering about what to do next. A solo retreat into the Minnesota woods seems like a good way to regroup, but a chance meeting with a brash lodge owner, and a one-night stand with a French-Canadian camper, send her life careening off in a direction she never could have imagined.

On top of this, her grandmother, Lone, receives a letter from her homeland, and Nora is brought along on a trip to Norway that reveals the secrets that shattered Lone's life.

With these characters, "eccentric" is almost an understatement; it really doesn't evoke the full extent of the weirdness involved. Nora doesn't just meet the lodge owner; she nearly hits the woman as she stumbles out of the woods. The owner demands a ride home, makes Nora carry her bag inside, directs her to make hot cocoa, and then unceremoniously kicks her out in time for *Jeopardy*.

Similarly, campground characters include a group of "Stanitors," led by a financial guru/outdoor enthusiast named Stan, who believe their movement is the key to "Stanity." Bongo drums, howling at the moon, and drinking Lake Water Wowies heavy on gin feature prominently in their get-together.

Over-the-top characters and situations are tempered by the palpable love Nora's friends and family have for each other, and by the tight bond that holds their community together through highs and lows. Scenes where characters share heartfelt dialogue are some of the best, imbuing the story with the warmth and humor that Landvik is known for.

Things may get weird at *Blue Moon Lodge*, but they never get boring, and the many twists and turns in the story will provide excellent fodder for book-club discussions.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (May/June 2017)

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