

## Chocolate Soufflé

Laura spends the next three days in her pajamas, drinking and struggling with rationalizing not drinking, watching bad movies and smoking pot until it runs out. She eats salty junk food then pukes it up. She doesn't bother writing because, *it will just be crap*. Cloud has seen this before and so has Dusty, so have all her Crescent crew. Dusty doesn't wait for Laura to call, but uses his pass key to take care of Cloud as it is clear she has gone AWOL. She doesn't even notice when he and Cloud come and go.

Cloud paces, he lays down, he paces more, and occasionally he barks at her. He is so upset he throws up his high-dollar, canned dog food on the oriental rug, but nothing gets her attention. She continues to lift her glass and juggle her intermittent bursts of reality with sweet talk to him; asking forgiveness and telling him that she will soon get dressed and take him outside. He gnaws gently on her fingers if she dozes off for too long and is hypervigilant to observe her breathing. *She is slowly killing herself and there is nothing I can do.*

Nanu pays a visit and Cloud growls at her shadowy figure because she is unable to do anything like cook some chicken soup *or talk some sense into the girl for God's sake*. Nanu is not chased off by Cloud and lingers there with her granddaughter as the days tick by. Cloud watches Nanu tenderly caress her granddaughter, who is puddled into a mass of boozy stench.

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Finally abandoning her ordeal, Laura orders a chocolate soufflé sent up and Liam builds up enough courage to confront her.

Delivering the soufflé personally, he launches into his rehearsed diatribe.

“You have absolutely got to stop this! You are killing yourself. And I won’t have it.”

Laura gives him a woozy smile and takes the soufflé from his hands. “Very endearing, my friend. Would you like a bite?” she goes into the kitchen and pulls out two spoons. She is wearing lemon-colored silk pajama bottoms, a Vassar T-shirt, and a plaid flannel robe.

“Laura, listen to me. You need help.”

She rolls her eyes at him.

“I want to take you to an AA meeting.”

“Did Sean put you up to this?”

“No.”

“Then what’s your problem?”

“You are my problem.”

“I suppose I am,” she says with a burst of honesty. “Why on earth would I want to go to an AA meeting?” she asks with unfettered snarkiness.

“It’s either that or I call your father and mother.”

She giggles, “Now that’s the first funny thing you’ve said.”

“I mean it. You are out of control.”

“If you’re not going to help me eat this thing,” she points at the righteously delectable soufflé she is hovering over, “then you probably should go.”

“I’m holding you accountable.” He points his finger at her for emphasis, but his action is wasted.

It won’t be for another two days, when Dusty finds her lying on the floor, in her own vomit, that the paramedics are called to revive her.

It is there in the hospital away from her Miss Havisham existence that a doctor is able to deliver a message she can hear. He makes a deal with her to let him pick her up and go to a meeting. After the meeting he makes another deal, "Call me if you want to take a drink and I'll join you," he says. The pleasantly graying doctor, with his gentle bedside manner, has over 28 years of sobriety. A fact she can't begin to wrap her brain around.

The Call of the Wild Turkey is too strong, and Laura doesn't make it to sobriety at first. She has six more hellish binges then it is over.