

An Excerpt from Naked Beneath the Midnight Sun (Chapter: TIME & TIDE)

Suchu had begun posing questions even as she was certain of the answer. Posing queries to her friends lent them a sense of power, the power of knowledge. It mattered not that they thought her silly occasionally. Did they? she wondered. They freely doled out information, seized with self-importance. That they knew more than someone was enough to boost their morale. Suchu watched the expression of the friend she sought either advice or information from, and marvelled at how easy it was to bolster a person's ego and sense of self-worth.

At about nine o'clock, a troop of young boys sauntered in, appearing to be drunk already. They spied Suchu on the ramp, and one of them shouted out in Norsk, "What's this we have here, an alien from Neverland?" and the entire lot guffawed. Suchu turned nervous and fidgety, taken aback at this sudden onset of attention upon her persona. What was this? Being at school shrouded her in security, but out there, it was frightening. Suchu watched agape, as Elin, without blinking, shooed them off, telling them to go grab their drinks and leave them in peace. She had not been rude,

just firm, smilingly so. Ah the ever-confident Elin! But they were onto her and asked her who her brown friend was. She gently explained where their group was from, and introduced Suchu to them. The change was dramatic! They queued up on the ramp, and held out their hand to Suchu, bowing as they did so, introducing themselves with much reverence, dramatizing their every movement. As frightened as Suchu had been by their boisterousness earlier, she was quickly charmed by this stagey transformation. Sam and Catherine, who had been inside the pub, also appeared and giggled at the scene that met their eyes, clearly drunk. Sam scrambled up to Suchu and linked his arm with hers, proclaiming tenderly, “She’s ours, don’t you dare claim her!” Suchu was astonished, and a thrill coursed through her. She trembled with delight at his touch and manner. The evening turned out to be far more fun than Suchu could have dreamed up, and she ended up finishing an entire beer, as a sip was offered from each boy’s glass, under the guise of it being a tradition for all newbies, some sort of rite of passage. They egged her on, clapping and cheering, and telling her that the time to develop a taste for Norway’s favourite beverage of the youth was upon her. By the end of the evening, she was completely inebriated and euphoric. What an unforgettable night it had been, and in bed, she dreamt of a passionate interplay with Sam, in Catherine’s bikini. She woke up ashamed of it all, as if she had not yearned for all of

this. She was wet with desire, even as she awoke and ran to the shower to wash away her guilt.