

THE SECRET OF STARLIGHT GROVE



The Waters of Change

shaun terry

BY LARA WOODS



Leo and his eight closest friends trek through a dense, ancient forest, their backpacks heavy but their spirits high. They are searching for the legendary Hidden Lake, a place whispered about in local folklore for generations.



They break through the thicket to find a breathtaking, secluded lake that glows with an ethereal blue light under the midday sun. Near the shore, a moss-covered wooden sign bears a clear, startling warning about the water's transformative powers.



The group gathers around the sign, reading the ancient script that promises a complete change to a female form for any man who dares to swim. Leo looks at his friends, seeing a mix of daredevil excitement and nervous wonder in their eyes.



Driven by a shared sense of adventure, the nine friends discard their gear and dive into the warm, shimmering depths of the lake. The moment they submerge, the water begins to swirl with a magical, golden radiance that envelops them all.



Beneath the surface, the magic takes hold, wrapping each of them in a cocoon of soft, pulsing light. They feel their bodies shifting and changing in the weightless environment, a surreal sensation that feels like a gentle, waking dream.



Leo is the first to swim back to the surface, gasping as he feels long, silken hair flowing behind him in the water. He reaches the shallow shore and looks into the still reflection, seeing the face of a striking young woman looking back with wide eyes.



One by one, the others emerge from the lake, transformed into a group of nine beautiful women with diverse features. They stand in the shallows, looking at one another in stunned silence before breaking into fits of amazed, high-pitched laughter.



On the grassy bank, they struggle to adjust their oversized hiking clothes to fit their new, more slender frames. Despite the radical physical change, they quickly realize their personalities and shared history remain perfectly intact.



They spend the rest of the afternoon exploring the lakeside, testing their new voices and laughing at the strange novelty of their situation. The experience brings them closer together, forging a unique bond that no one else in the world could ever truly understand.



As twilight falls over the enchanted valley, the nine friends stand together at the water's edge, watching the stars reflect in the lake. They don't know what the future holds or how long the magic will last, but they are ready to face the world together.