

An Allegory for All Our Lost Lakes

Every day a young girl ventures out, through an avenue of tall oak trees slowly turning as yellow as autumn's hue, to the tranquil lake near home. She swims, bathes, paddles, all in this singular lake, fascinated by the sea creatures that abound, from frogs on lily pads to ravens soaring like inkblots through a paper sky. As the frogs start sleeping, the ravens start cawing, and the lights start fading, leaving shining pebbles of footsteps. The girl takes one long glance at the lake before excitedly going back home, eager for tomorrow.

The seasons of frigid winters, fruitful springs, scorching summers, and crunchy, crisp autumns brush by. The young lady is now a teenager. Her hair has grown longer, now with several braids, and there are some wrinkles on her forehead from schoolwork pressures and from the strains of having a party-boy boyfriend. She often visits friends' homes for parties and dates, but still, she makes time to visit the lake, a comforting relief, where all stress suddenly washes away like dirt from fingertips in warm water.

The girl one day brings her friends to her home away from home, to her special lake, wanting to showcase its luminous nature. They are, however, disinterested: no one cares for the magnificent life coexisting in the lake and the wondrous scenery, preferring instead to drink and yell and view films of the outside world while ignoring the outside world around them. The girl motions for them to wait, then realizes she is lost among them, unable to connect, and so she accompanies them to a bar, taking a glimpse at the lake as it fades away in the car trip out. Months pass, and the girl hasn't seen the lake much, not lately. Instead, she concentrates on schoolwork and socializing, on the average pursuits of average youth.

This distance from the lake grows until the young girl is now grown and preparing to escape to college. The strong relationships she had with her senior year friends were fleeting: they had to split ways. She advances toward adulthood alone. As she exasperatingly lifts and organizes her boxes of things into her new dorm room, the faint memory of childhood looms along her horizon, just as the lake once did. She walks through her mind's empty void, gazing out at the lake, catching again, briefly, a glimpse of its beauty. But she's prepared to move on. This is life, always moving forward, never stopping, using what's given, and not bothering with memories of wide-open nature and the creatures within it.

Throughout her college years, she focuses her studies on personal finance and economics, earning a bachelor's degree and landing a career: banking. College years become years of working. She is now a woman and now in her thirties. She lends loans to numerous firms as a banker. She focuses on the bottom line and generates a profit. Recently, a drilling

company wanted a loan from the bank to fulfill their project of extracting oil from the ground, so she made the transaction and they were soon able to successfully pay back the loan with interest. With a small fortune now in her name, she begins dating—another expectation she finally fulfills. Her and her dates frequently walk to work together near the square, passing by the once-beautiful and once-flowering apple blossoms that have shriveled from lack of care.

Many years pass, and the woman is now in her forties, divorced, alone. She begins smoking, crying. She trashes objects she had once felt she loved but now seem worthless. She drinks, her eyes lifeless, the world now grey and bleak. The woman longs for home, someplace to heal. In a haze, she remembers her youthful years, the place where she swam, bathed, and kayaked, the place where all life was full and magnificent. The lake. The peaceful, tranquil lake. She immediately starts her car and drives to the lake. But she arrives to see everything changed: the frogs have migrated, the ravens have flown south, and the twinkling of the night sky and the rays of the setting sun no longer reflect radiance onto waves of water. A grim and lifeless absence. If only she knew how far she had taken herself from home. If only we could all return to the lakes we left for granted.