

# The Lake House

By Haley Robertson

Every summer for as long as I can remember, my mother and father wait till the day just after the last day of school, and then together, we jump in the car and are off. For weeks in advance, all we can talk about is the summer, and how this one will be better than all the summers in the past. How this summer will be magical.

When our bags are all packed, the doors are all locked, and our dog, happy, is safely in the back of our old blue Volvo, we are off. Only looking back to admire the beautiful home we will be returning to in just a few months. But, now, I am not thinking about our return, I am thinking of the fun I will soon be having on the lake.

My father has had the lake house in his family for years, constantly empty and waiting for someone to warm its walls with life. It is a small house, perfect for mother, father, Happy, and I. My father is always talking about how old and rickety it is, and how he should bring his tools and get to work on it. But, I am always right there to fight him. “The house is perfect!” I blurt out hastily, hoping my persistence will delay his ideas.

But, it is not the house that he longs to fix. I know he just wants an excuse to take apart “the layer”: a small fort perched within a tree that hangs ever so slightly over the lake. The tree is just left of the house, only a short walk from the blue side door, along a small path made from my many journeys to and from the layer over many years.

During the long, hot drive, the layer was all I could think of. I could see the path before me, the plants moving their branches out of the way to let me through. I could see the wood floorboards, cracked and mangled, but sturdy none-the-less. I could feel the soft breeze on my hot skin, the birds chirping in the trees above, and the twinkle of the sun reflecting off the water before me. It is going to be a good summer.

Right as the car came to its final stop, I ripped my door open, and jumped out. The air was warm, the sun was slowly descending over the treetops, and, as I took a deep breath, I could taste the freshness of the wilderness.

It was exactly as I had remembered. Absolutely beautiful. If only we had arrived sooner in the day. Now I was in a desperate race against the sun, watching it drop from the sky inch by inch, the colors changing rapidly from cool pinks, to deep purples. When the sky was almost completely dark, my mother called me into the house. I wanted to fight her, to argue her that it was our first night, but I knew she wouldn't give in. So I had to be content with waiting to explore this paradise.



After I ate all of my dinner, I went back to my room, a small den with a bed just my size, a reading chair, and an old wooden dresser with a mirror hanging above it. As I changed my clothes, and got in bed, I looked around the room, remembering the time I have spent over the years. The room in all seemed to have gotten smaller, but when I thought about it, the whole house seemed smaller somehow.

That night, I dreamed of giant squid, slimy eels, and fish with razor sharp teeth chasing me through the water as I swam helplessly, trying to find the lake's edge. I had always been somewhat afraid of what lay beneath the gray gloomy water. My mother and father have always told me I have nothing to worry about, that there are only plants and

small fish. But, I always hesitate. I have, in fact, been swimming in the lake. But never more than a second, quickly in and out.

The next day, I woke to a bird chirping right outside my window. It was early, before 7:00, but the sun was already high in the sky. The smell of eggs and bacon wafted from the kitchen, and I could hear the faint hum of my mother's sweet singing voice.

After breakfast, I made a break for the side door, desperate to be reunited with my fort. I ran down the narrow path, almost tripping over my own feet, eager to meet the clearing. Finally, I came to the end of the path. The site of the old structure made a smile appear on my face. I took a second to take it all in, then began to climb the rickety ladder up to small hatch in the floorboard. The hatch was stiff, weathered by time, but I was able to rip it free from its clench. I hopped up into the small room, and looked out over the water from my perch. The water was glistening, the trees were lush and green, and there wasn't a cloud in the blue sky.

But something was different. Directly across the water, there was an empty patch of land, where the trees were no longer. It looked as if a giant razor had shaved the trees from the earth. And at the base, where the water meets the land, there was a big brass tube. I could see the faint motion of liquid pouring from the tube into the lake.

As I leaned over the side, to try and get a better view, shifting the weight under my feet, I felt a small crack below my feet. Before I had any time to move, the wood floor below me, cracked and I fell. I held my breath, unable to move, waiting to hit the glossy water below.

Boom. I hit the water with maximum velocity, plunging to the depths of the lake.

I watched the sun slowly fade as I

sunk deeper and deeper towards the depths of the lake. I moved my arms and legs, pushing the water in all directions around me, hoping that I will end up at the surface. But, I looked around and realized that the water was pitch black around me; I had no idea which way was up. Fearing for my life,



I took a couple last strokes, and then gave up as the air leaked from my lungs. It was a funny feeling I had; terrified from not being able to breath, but also relaxed in the total silence of the lake. I closed my eyes and thought of my mother and father, and how sad they would be when I went missing and no one could find me. Then I thought of Happy. Who would give him hugs? Who would feed him and scratch his ears? Whose bed would he sleep in if not mine? Thinking these things made me very sad.

Just when I had given up all hope, I felt a gentle touch on my arm. Then out of nowhere, I was being pulled, and soon was able to see the sun glinting above the water. I wanted to help by kicking, but I couldn't move my body. The taste of fresh pond water lingered in my mouth, running down my throat as I tried to take a much needed breath.

It seemed like ages, but I eventually reached the top, gasping for the crisp afternoon air. Once at the top, I struggled to keep afloat, but could still feel the gentle pull on my arm. I floated on my back, looking up at the never-ending blue sky, taking as many breaths as I could. Finally, I felt the slimy floor of the lake brush my legs, signaling that we had reached our destination. The gentle touch was now a rough pull as the unknown person tried to hoist me onto land.

The sun was pouring down onto my wet body, as my heartbeat began to slow. I no longer felt scared or worried. I was now filled with curiosity. Who was this person who had saved me?

When I felt that I had enough strength to stand, I got up weakly, my legs shaking below me. I looked around, searching for any signs of my rescuer. But no one was there. I searched and called for them, but no one responded. Until finally, I found a clue. I saw small footprints walking towards the lake and disappearing into the water. I went down to the edge of the lake and touched the water softly with my fingertips.

All of a sudden, a small boy appeared in the water right in front of me. Taken by surprise, I fell back, landing on my butt. He was about 7 years old, with brown hair and shiny green eyes. He wore ripped jean shorts, and nothing else.

“You scared me!” Patrick said hesitantly. The boy said nothing, but moved the water around in a circular motion with his hands. Patrick knew that this must be the person who saved him when he fell.

“Thank you for saving me.” Patrick continued to say. But the boy simply nodded his head. Maybe he didn’t speak English.

But as Patrick began to give up on him, the boy spoke slowly, but clear.

“You must not the fear the water. For, you will always be safe in the lake.” He said. With that he slowly walked backward and disappeared into the blue water. Patrick was no longer scared to go swimming in the lake. He was safe.

