

No Place to Play.

We travelled by train for hours. A man in a car met us at the station and we were driven on to Aunt Jane's enormous house. I was 10, Tommy was 7. It was to be a grand holiday.

The day was bright, the sky was blue and the sun dazzling. Tiny clouds hung in the air like baby candy floss. The car moved easily, noiselessly, lest it disturb the peace of the day. As we crossed the bridge over the lake the water stirred uneasily. There was no wind, not even a breeze, but the water was disturbed. I looked down into the grey waves and I glimpsed a dozen staring faces, bobbing and swaying. They were children, children in the water.

"Mum look! Children in the water!" Mum laughed,

"No. It's the sun on the waves." The faces had gone. The water was blue and still. Only the sun was to be seen sparkling and dancing on the gently undulating surface. The driver moved the car faster over the bridge as if to get away from the lake.

The house was huge, a mansion. It had lawns for ball games where it was flat and for rolling and running where it sloped. It had distant gardens for flowers and vegetables, a grove of trees near the lake for hide-and-seek and then the lake itself.

It was when I was roaming near the lakeside that I saw him. My heart jumped. A boy, my age, was standing at the water's edge. He dripped water from head to toe. His flat black hair clung to his ice-white head. He wore bedraggled, dripping clothes. I stopped short in front of him, scared. The water vapour around him was freezing. I stared at him, my heart throbbing. He stared at me with unblinking eyes, then raised his dripping arm and beckoned to me. He wanted me to come to him, to be with him in the water. The eerie air exuding from him mesmerised me. His eyes did not blink. His arm moved calling me forward. I resisted. I didn't want to go near him, but I felt myself beginning to walk. He was somehow drawing me towards him. I wasn't able to resist. I relaxed and began moving steadily down to the lake. Now I felt I wanted to go with him into the lake. It was as if he needed me to be there.

"I'm coming," I whispered, stepping onto the muddy edge. Smiling faces of a dozen other children bobbing in the ripples enticed me on. Then,

"James! Come here!" It was Aunt Jane. I snapped out of the trance. The wet boy was gone. "The lake is dangerous," she explained. "It is no place to play." We returned to the house. I didn't tell anyone about the wet boy. Who would have believed me?

I didn't see the boy or any of the other lake children again. We had a happy fortnight with Aunt Jane. We had great fun in her huge house and gardens.

The night before we were to leave I gazed out of the bedroom window. I wanted one last look at the wonderful view. The full, bright moon shone on the sloping grass, the trees and the lake.

Then, there he was, the wet boy. He was on the grass, staring up at me, beckoning. Other wet, dripping children walked out of the water, all staring at me, calling me somehow. A sudden gust of wind rustled the trees and blew into my bedroom. The curtains flapped. The wind was cold, cold like the boy. I slammed the window shut, drew the curtains and I hid in bed.

When I went to breakfast Aunt Jane was busy whisking eggs.

“You`re up early,” she said.

“Couldn`t sleep,” I replied.

“It`s the excitement” she said. Mum came in.

“There you are James,” she said. “Where`s Tommy? He`s not in his bed?”

661 words, including title.