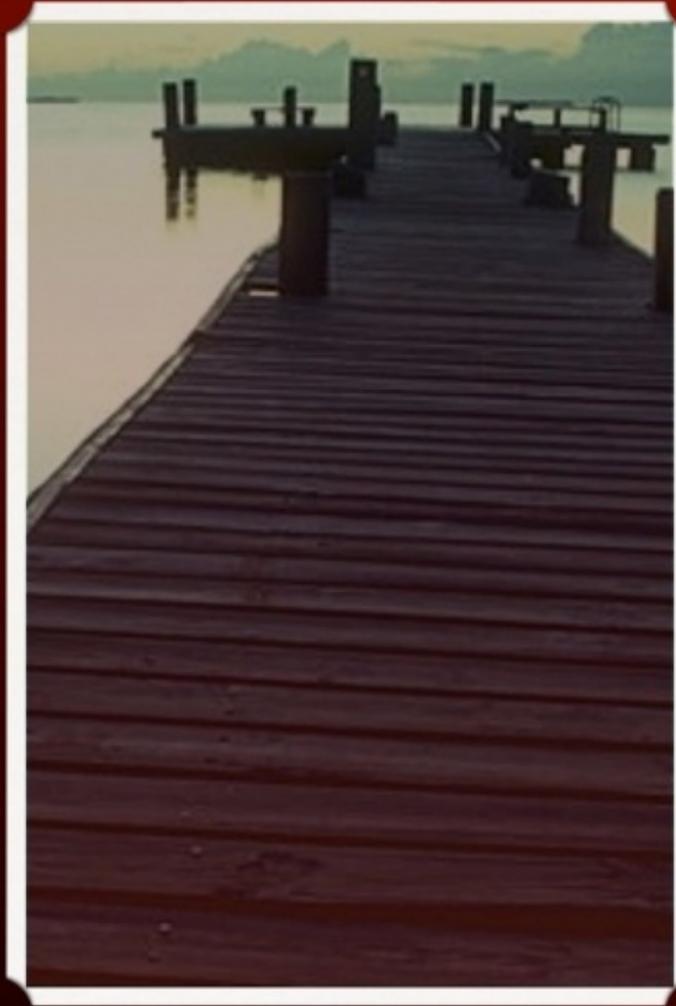


Flash Fiction



Samhain at the Lake

Bobby W. Lee

Samhain At The Lake

The Landers family was well to do, due to Dennis' hard work selling tire machines to different companies. He was the sales leader for his company five years in a row. He bought a houseboat for the family to enjoy, and a slip up on Lake Lanier in North Georgia. It was an hours ride from the new home they had bought in Marietta.

He had transferred from Ohio; and moved his wife and two kids out to Georgia, to be close to the Atlanta office. Sherry got a job with a retail store, and they scheduled their vacations, together. Occasionally, they would have a weekend off with each other; and would take the kids to the lake and enjoy swimming, and taking advantage of the excellent striper fishing Lanier provided. Nancy, the oldest, was nine and Danny, (Danielle, when she was in trouble!) was six and they loved the lake and going out on the boat. They were at that fun age before teenism made it too cool to be a kid and have fun.

They got to know their neighbors at the Marina, and spent several pleasurable afternoons grilling out and chatting amiably about work and life in general. Everyone looked after each other at the Marina even though it was gated and had full-time security guards.

Tom Kerritt was next to them on the right. He was an architect for a commercial firm in Atlanta, not far from Dennis's office. Beside Tom, was Wayne Brock, a famous comedian; but they didn't see much of him as work kept him traveling most of the time. Beside Wayne was Bill Lee, the author, who wrote horror and fantasy novels. He was reclusive, but friendly when they saw him occasionally. The slip beside Mr. Lee was empty, and the next one was Elrod Jenkins, a retiree from the aviation plant.

He lived on his boat year round, and you could count on him to update you on where the stripes were holding, and whether they were hitting live shad or cut bait. He had several grand kids, and it wasn't unusual to see a bunch of kids playing around his boat and slip any time of the year. He had an old pit bull his nephew had given him that was chained to his boat. The chain was just a precaution as the pit was eight years old and mostly slept in the sun all day, but he kept the old man company and made him feel safer.

You see Mr. Jenkins was sightless due to a chemical splash at the aviation plant; Mr. Jenkins made one call to a local lawyer, and found himself with enough cash to make his dreams of living on the lake in a house boat come true. If you didn't know Elrod was blind you would never guess it. "Zep," the pit bull had been a gift from his nephew, Max Kick, who found himself incarcerated due to some misunderstanding about his other dogs and lost a promising career in sales.

On the other side of the Landers was Shane Ramone, the flamboyant gay hairdresser from Atlanta who's reported to be worth millions.. And probably so, as his clientele list was a star studded who's who list of famous actors and rock stars. He owned twenty two salons and rarely cut hair himself anymore, opting instead to hang out on his boat and throw lavish shindigs; inviting different celebrities and half the state of Georgia.

His events were never dull, and the food was always excellent. The remainder of the slips were empty, as the price was a little steep, but Dennis didn't mind because of the coziness and interesting company around the Marina. Even Jack Russell, the security guard that worked weekends for the Marina; was friendly and always waved and had a kind word, though it was rumored he drank on duty sometimes.

It was a close knit little community, and a big improvement, from the wild going on in the camping lot they owned on a lake in Alabama. The first weekend they had lain awake all night listening to their neighbors argue and curse each other, and they left the following morning. The next time they went down, a drunken fight had broken out two campsites down, and the law had been called. Dennis and Sherry sold the campsite for considerably less than what they had paid for it, and were well satisfied with the deal.

October was unusually warm that year and the workload for September and early October grueling, so Dennis was already thinking about getting out to the lake and spending time on the boat when Tom dropped by Dennis's office to take him to lunch and tell him about the Halloween party that Shane was throwing. Everyone at the Marina was invited, and there were rumors that a famous singer himself might be there.

Dennis told Tom that he would check with Sherry to see if she could get out of work, besides, he needed to winterize the boat before cold weather set in. They ate and had a good conversation about the awesome fall striper bite on Lanier, then each headed back to their respective offices. Dennis called Sherry, and she put in for time off, and everything was set to go to the lake the next weekend.

Dennis ran all his routes that week and even managed to finish up ahead of time, Thursday, so he got everything ready to go so they could leave early when Sherry got off work. The kids were excited about going to the lake for Halloween, staying up late in the evening the night before they left, telling each other ghost stories and talking about all the good candy that they would get Trick or Treating at the Marina.

Even Sherry got excited, as the singer was one of her favorite performers, and given the chance of meeting him was a huge thrill. The big day finally came, and they left Marietta in the large Ford Expedition heading for Lanier. Dennis pulled in a retail store, and they bought the kids costumes and candy, and a few supplies they needed. They made it to the Marina in the early afternoon, and Dennis winterized the big houseboat while Sherry fixed them a late lunch. The girls played around the slip and fed the ducks bread. The party was scheduled for midnight after all good little boys, and girls would be fast asleep in their bunks. Sherry had a bit of a headache after lunch, so she lay down for a nap. Dennis was busy working on the boat and listening to the football game on the radio.

Elrod Jenkins had not been feeling well. He thought he might be coming down with the flu or a virus. He fed Zep and unchained him to go potty, and went back to lay in his bunk, as he was nauseous and feeling queezy.

Zep hobbled off to do his business. Squatting, to do what a dog's got to do, he lifted his grey snout to the breeze. A strange scent wafted on the breeze. Being a dog, he followed his nose across the road and through some woods coming upon an ancient cemetery. The tantalizing smell was coming from somewhere in there, so he wriggled under the fence and headed for it.

Several graves were cracked open, and a strange red mist was flowing up out of the cracks in the ancient cemetery. Some of these materialized into vaguely human form, and drifted away on the breeze. One took a distinctive wolfish shape, and drifted toward Zep. He growled menacingly and turned to run, but he was aged old dog, and not as fast as he used to be. The mist caught him. Zep howled mournfully as the red vapor entered his nostrils, and into his elderly body. He fell kicking and thrashing, slobbering and howling, for a few minutes then became still as stone except for his hind left leg, twitching and slowly proceeding through the motions of a kick. A second later it still, and Zep lay as if dead. His tired old brown eyes closed.

Minutes later they opened, blazing with the very fire from hell itself! What used to be Zep, rolled over and got up, shaking himself violently, and raised his slavering muzzle to the sky.

The howl that ensued was something never heard on this earth except by the truly damned. He trotted slowly back toward the Marina, eyes blazing in the late-afternoon light.

Nancy and Danny were getting into their costumes. Nancy was dressing as a witch and Danny was a scarecrow. They were cute as buttons, and Sherry made Dennis get the camera and take their picture, but something was wrong with the camera. It distorted their faces every time. Maybe the thing set in the sun too long or something.

Dennis made a mental note to buy a new one. Sherry was in the bedroom about to change to go take the girls, when Dennis walked in. They had been married for a while, but Sherry always looked good to Dennis. He kissed her and unintentionally, the kiss got a little deeper.

"I think the girls are old enough to go around by themselves this year, besides, we're in a gated community, and we know everyone well. We haven't had any time alone in a long time." He breathed huskily.

Sherry started to say no immediately, but thought about it. They were in a gated community with an armed guard, and they knew everyone here; plus there were only a few houseboats, and they hadn't had any time together alone in forever.

"Okay." She said. "Just this once, but let me talk to the girls for a minute." She slipped her terry-cloth robe on, and called Nancy and Danny. "How would you two like to trick or treat by yourselves just around here tonight?" They both shook their heads yes, jumping up and down from excitement. "Nancy, you have to hold Danny's hand the whole time, and you can only go to the houseboats on our row, okay?" They squealed with joy and promised to be careful. "Stay out of the road, and Nancy, you can't let go of Danny's hand! Not even for a minute!" Sherry told them.

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