

Falling For Dee

The Sig house was also on stilts. That is where the similarities between Yellow Lake's two houses began and ended. The Sig's stilts served to elevate the front of their home above lake water. The back of their house was sunken into a hillside. A terracotta roof swept upwards where the house met water. Beneath the roof's eave was a rounded porch. This porch sat right on top of the lake.

Trama observed the Sig house as he and Tim paddled closer. From any one angle it was impossible to tell how truly odd of a building it was. Perched on top of its roof was a disheveled hut. Another makeshift addition combined the openness of a lean-to with the haughty formality of a Grecian temple.

A stern figure watched their approach. From the Sig porch, the figure threw them a rope. Tim moored their canoe. Without a word, the figure turned and walked around the side of his house. Trama and Tim followed. They walked between marble pillars and entered the grecian lean-to.

The lake reached into the lean-to and filled its center. Opposite sides of the lean-to were lined with stone benches. On the third side, a podium looked out over the lake. The stern figure approached the podium. Tim and Trama sat down. A girl sat on the opposing side of the lean-to. The stern fig-

ure began speaking. He looked outwards towards the lake with a thousand yard stare.

“We are gathered here today to discuss a strange phenomenon occurring on our lake. Our discussion will be limited to that phenomenon. Each college will present testimony by Westminster rules of order. Potential remedies will then be discussed.”

“Sure, Dave,” said Tim. “We’ll each say what we know. Then we’ll decide what we’re going to do about it. Sounds good.”

Trama was very interested to see how this meeting would play out. Unbelievably, Tim wasn’t the most rule-bound and officious person in the room.

Dave said, “Point of order! I have the floor. But yes, your summary is accurate.” Dave paused. Dave was trying to think of more official sounding things to say.

Dave settled for, “As host, our college will present testimony first.” Then he stepped down from the podium and gestured for the girl to approach.

The girl wore horn-rimmed glasses. A long, silver telescope crossed her back on a leather strap. Her dress and manner were eccentric. She was a counterpoint to Dave’s rigid formality.

“Hi, my name is Dee,” said the girl. “I collected some samples of the black liquid on our lake, and took some measurements. The black liquid occupies a narrow and deep band of water. The liquid has unusual alkalinity, no silica, and is very oxygenated.”

“So, what were your findings?” said Dave. Dave was enjoying showing off Dee’s knowledge.

Dee said, “Well, whatever the black liquid is, I’ve never seen anything like it. There’s a handbook called Common Methods of Limnology in the library-”

“Limnology?” said Dave.

“Aquatic ecology,” explained Dee. “The handbook might help me figure out what we’re dealing with. I’ll look at it later today.”

“Excellent, Dee,” said Dave. “We will now hear the opposing college’s testimony.”

Dee began walking out of the lean-to and then hesitated.

“There’s one more thing,” said Dee. “At one point, I dove into the lake to calibrate one of my tools. While I was underwater, I could have sworn I

heard a train whistle.”

Dee left. Trama walked up to the podium. Trama felt a little distracted. For some reason his mind was comparing oak leaves and train whistles. Trama couldn't remember exactly what he was supposed to say.

“I uhh.. I flew my glider for the first time yesterday,” said Trama. “On my way home I saw a black streak on the lake.”

Trama fell silent. Dave looked at him expectantly. Trama remained silent. Tim gave Trama a glare which was usually reserved for Sushi Man.

Tim said, “I think what Trama was getting at is that we deployed an advanced gliding technology. We obser-”

“You don't have the floor, Tim,” interrupted Dave.

“Come on Dave, lets drop the whole ‘floor’ business. We're just having a discussion,” said Tim.

“No, Tim. We're having a meeting, and there's supposed to be rules,” said Dave.

They weren't having a discussion or a meeting. Tim and Dave were having an argument. Each was trying to one-up the other. It was petty and boring. Trama walked out of the lean-to.

Dee was fishing. Her feet dangled off the porch. Her telescope lay on one side of her, and a tackle box sat on the other side. As Trama approached Dee, she slowly wound in her reel. Her line and bait emerged from the water without a bite. She sighed and laid the rod down. Trama sat next to her.

Trama searched for a conversation.

“So, what do you think that the black streak is?” Trama said.

“I don't know,” said Dee. Then she said, “You really built a glider? Pretty impressive.”

“Yup,” said Trama. “All those things you knew about lakes were cool too.”

“Yeah, well, I sailed for a long time. Those things aren't too complicated,” she said dismissively.

From someone else, that comment would have rubbed Trama the wrong way. But the way Dee spoke wasn't condescending, insincere, or humble. Dee said what she thought.

A shouting match was starting inside the lean-to. Tim and Dave's argument grew heated while Trama and Dee shared an easy rapport.

At one point Trama said, “I'm glad I got to see your house up close. This place might be stranger than the house on stilts.”

Trama pointed both of his arms upwards, imitating the tall stilts which supported his home. Trama couldn't help but smile when Dee imitated the gesture.

Dee said, "putting your house on stilts must have been a very interesting problem."

Trama wasn't quite sure why he responded the way he did. He said, "I think that's where we differ. Maybe you see problems that need to be solved, and I see things that need to be built."

"Maybe," said Dee, wearing a look that seriously considered what Trama had said. Quietly, she continued, "I feel like we've met before. You seem familiar."

Trama said, "maybe." Then, after a pause, "I wonder when we'll see each other again."

"We'll figure something out," replied Dee. She cast her fishing line back into the lake.

Something about Dee's body language made saying goodbye unnecessary. They understood each other, just as they both knew that they had never previously met. As Trama walked away, he began to think of how and when they would spend more time together. Action interrupted him.

"Hey, you're Trama, right? The guy with the glider? I'm Action," said Action. Action shook Trama's hand and gave him a broad smile. Trama's focus wasn't on Action. If it had been, Trama would have seen something nasty in Action's gaze.

"Come on, I want to show you something," said Action. Trama followed Action. They scrambled up a hillside. They jumped over a small crevice and onto the Sig house's roof. Across from them was a hut filled with kegs and brewing equipment. One keg was covered in flaking golden paint. Action walked over to the golden keg. Action tapped the keg. He poured a beer with smoothness of motion that rivaled Sushi Man. He handed the beer to Trama.

Nonchalantly, Action said, "I overheard you talking to my sister." Trama still hadn't drank any beer.

Action said, "You left me a note saying that you liked my beer. Go on, take a sip."

Trama took a sip. It was the best beer that Trama had ever tasted.

Action said, "That keg is the last remaining beer my father brewed. The rest sunk in a shipwreck. Interesting factoid, eh?"

All friendly pretense dropped from Action's expression.

"I bet that scummy brewer of yours would die to get his hands on what you're holding. My beer is better than your beer. My sister is better than your women. Stay away from Dee." Trama put the beer down.

"Oh, and see that over there?" Action said, pointing out of the hut. Mounted on the terracotta roof was a crossbow the size of a catapult.

Action continued, "You can fly. I know how to make things fly too. You aren't allowed on Sig territory. You aren't allowed over Sig territory. Next time you forget that, I'll make something fly into you."

Trama nodded and absently turned his back. He walked back down to his canoe. Action had seemed threatening, but Trama's mind was mostly preoccupied. He was picturing the memory of meeting Dee.

Much had been immediately obvious. Dee was small. Her hair was long. Her glasses were like a punctuation mark, underlining a searching curiosity which radiated from her eyes. Even when she had talked, she had seemed to be listening. She hadn't spoken loudly, but she had been articulate and interesting. She embodied quiet self-confidence.

When Trama had talked to Dee, she had drawn her mouth inwards and upwards. Trama found that he couldn't remember whether or not she had smiled. Her lips had definitely been playing with the idea of a smile. Trama was certain that he had been very happy while meeting her. He suspected that she had been happy too.