

Le voyage dans la lune

I let you take me up, convinced you'd lied;  
A moon is only dust, unfeeling rock.  
You break our orbit, wheeling like a hawk  
That's sighted prey. Dissolve. Cut to: Nightside.  
The frame is filled with white — your ship's airlock —  
and then a slow zoom out. Out of sun's sight, you guide;  
follow, tethered, in your steps and, weightless, walk.

The Clock Would Drop

*Time sped up and flew around the bend  
Never knowing when,  
The clock would drop and the walls would cave in...*  
— Brandon Dickerson

This is the dream:  
My mother finishes washing the last dish. I wake, and step into the living room, and watch her. She works in the tiny kitchen of our summer cottage, rubbing her wet hands on the apron tied around her waist. I feel groggy. Muddled. I need some coffee. I make my way to the kitchen but can barely push myself forward. My feet feel like lead as I drag them, one in front of the other, struggling toward the coffee pot. Mom is busy wiping off the counter tops, paying no attention to my progress. When finally I make it to the refrigerator, I pull out a gallon of milk and fill my coffee cup with it.

That's not right. I turn to empty it into the sink. Lumps of green mold pour out with the thick white liquid. Mom turns with her hands on her hips and glares at me. I rinse the cup again and again, but each time I dump it, milk pours out and goes down the drain while globs of mold remain in the sink and get stuck in the strainer basket. My mother snatches the cup from me and grabs the pot of coffee, then fills my cup and hands it back.

"For God's sakes, Sarah! What's wrong with you?"

I feel so foolish. I take the cup from her. It is now brimming with gray, ashy clay-like mud. I carry my mud-filled cup to the deck where my father and sister are sitting in the one place warmed by sunlight. Neither are speaking; they are both looking out over the cliff at the bay.

The lake is its beautiful morning blue, a deeper blue than any

other time of day, and the air is cool and damp. I set my cup on the railing and look down into the ravine where the small foot bridge crosses to the path down to the beach.

My brother, Brandy, still lies there, partly covered with wet dead leaves from last fall and surrounded by newly sprouted green ferns. I stare down at him, examining his features. He looks perfect but evenly gray. Like an unglazed clay sculpture.

I shift my stare from my brother to my father, Dad's gaze still fixed on the sun-speckled surface of the lake.

"Shouldn't we get rid of him now?" I say to him.

"Oh," he awakens from his trance. "You think so?"

I walk back into the cottage to get a garbage bag. I don't care what anyone thinks anymore. Enough is enough.

But Brandy is standing in the kitchen next to my mother. She stands by the stove cooking the ground beef that we didn't have a chance to grill the night before — or was it the year before? He stands with his knees bending awkwardly inward, locked in place, dressed in dirty blue jeans and a leather jacket. Mom gives the beef a quick stir and turns the burner off. She hurries out the back door to take the clothes off the line and Brandy follows close behind her. I am holding my newborn baby in my arms.

"Look." I call out to him. "Look. See? It's my baby — Emily. Brandy? See her?" He nods, smiling approvingly as he follows my mother out the door. I watch them in the backyard, Brandy standing quietly beside my mother, stepping down the length of the clothes-line with her as she deftly removes the pins and tosses both the dried laundry and the clothespins into the basket.

I rush back to the deck and lean over the railing. He's still there. I see Bethy brushing the dead leaves off of him. He isn't clay-like anymore, but looks asleep. He wears nothing but swimming shorts, his dark hair soaked and flattened against his scalp, his eyes partly open. Bethy lifts one of his arms over her shoulder and wraps her other arm around his slippery waist. grunting, she pulls him up off the ground. His head flops against her cheek and falls onto her shoulder face first. She turns her face away

from his and stops for a moment holding her breath. She pushes his head away from hers and stubbornly drags his dead weight out of the ravine. "I'll take care of him," she says, heading around the cottage to the driveway. "I'll take him home."

In early June of 1971, we are at our cottage on the shores of Grand Traverse Bay. Just as we are every summer. It is before the neighbor kids arrive for the summer, before the lake warms up for swimming. We are stuck with each other — my oldest brothers Travis and Lindy with Brandy, and Bethy with me. My sister and I sleep in the main cottage with our parents, and my brothers in the single-room, A-frame cottage out back. Bethy and I are rarely allowed in the little cottage. Our brothers tell us to go away, go play in the traffic. Bored and lonely, we have only each other, and we sit on the beach watching sand spiders, picking up handfuls of sand to bury them and watch them escape.

Sometimes, if Travis and Lindy won't play with Brandy, then Brandy will play with Bethy and me. Most of the time he teases us and tells dirty jokes. He pretends to crack eggs on our heads, or shows us how to carve our initials into our skin with a safety pin. Sometimes he lets us take puffs off his cigarette.

This time, he announces himself by throwing a garter snake over the cliff. It lands belly up beside Bethy and quickly flips upright in panic, wiggling frantically and sithering in the sand.

Bethy screams, runs to the steps off the beach, and begins to cry. I leap to my feet and see Brandy standing on the cliff, pointing at us and holding his belly in mock, spoken laughter. "Bah! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Get it away! Take it away!" Bethy cries in fear on the steps. Brandy comes down to the beach, and passing Bethy he says, "Don't be silly. It won't hurt you." He goes after the snake and grabs it, and holding it in his hands he carries it toward her on the steps.

"See? It won't hurt you," he holds its head up close to her face.

She screams again, louder. "Get it away!"

Brandy sits in the sand, holding the snake loosely, and I sit down beside him. He looks back at Betty still shivering in fear on the steps. "Look. I'll even put it down my shirt. You'll see. It won't hurt me." He pulls out his collar and sticks the snake inside. We watch as it crawls out from under his shirt and into his lap.

"See?" he says to Betty. She comes off the steps, curious and suspicious, and sits in the sand beside us to take a closer look.

"I can even put it down my pants," he says, standing and pulling the waist of his pants away from his belly and dropping the snake in. He jiggles and dances around on the sand, and we laugh, both of us saying "geezi" and "ew!" and "yuck!" until it appears at his ankle and crawls out onto the sand.

"See?"

Sometimes when things get really dull, he'll entertain us by contorting his skewed body into strange positions, placing one leg behind his head, or extending his elbows and knees so far in the wrong direction it looks as though they were put on backward. The weirdest thing is the way he can jitter his eyeballs. He puts his face up close to mine and stares. With every muscle in his face still, his blue eyes jitter into a blur. It freaks me out every time.

Brandy's body is weird. He is tall and skinny with an elongated torso, his legs strangely short in comparison, and crooked. His shirts can't be tucked into the waist of his pants, and his pants are too long for his short crooked legs. His face is too long and his mouth too small. And in the middle of his long narrow chest is a deep crater-like hole — a caved-in sternum. When he lies in the sand on his back, Betty and I fill the hole with water from a plastic toy bucket.

*External examination: Body length: 74 inches; Weight: estimated 200 lbs; Hair: long black scalp hair; Skin: unremarkable. Group circular and semicircular defibrillator paddle application*

*sites are clustered around the left areolar area.*

Just like the television show. One of them yells: "Clear!" and then you hear an explosive, jolting thud. They check for a heartbeat, then do it again. "Clear!"

*Rigor Mortis: present; Head: symmetric; Eyes: Corneal donation has been carried out as requested.*

They removed his glittering blue eyeballs, cut them out of his head. We get a thank you note. *Facies: symmetric; Nose: unremarkable; Neck: unremarkable; Chest: slight pectus excavation. Slight, my ass; we filled it with water.*

*Internal examination: Liver: weight 2600 grams; Spleen: 300 grams; Pancreas: 250 grams; Testes right: sperm present, descended bilaterally. The right testes is removed and sampled.*

I wince.

*Brain: 1510 grams. Cerebrum, right and left hemispheres: Maintenance of normal cortical ribbon with unremarkable white matter beneath brain. Sampled brain: unremarkable.*

I heard once that they neatly slice the scalp under the hairline and stretch it all the way back so they can saw off the top of the skull. That way, they can put the brain back in, stick the top of the skull back on, and pull the scalp back in place. You'd never know.

*Stomach: intact viscous containing an estimated liter of partly masticated food content, part of which looks to be of fruit appearance.*

I don't remember him eating fruit that day. We drank whisky slushes.

*Heart: left ventricular myocardium is site of subendocardial scar deposits which are not accompanied by necrosis ... Sampled aorta bears evident recent hemorrhage on adventitial surface which is partly hyalinized .... Elastic stain reveals diminished and irregular elastic fibers.*

What?

*Final Anatomic Diagnosis: Dissecting aneurysm thoracic aorta with rupture, pericardial hemorrhage and tamponade. Left ventricular myocardial hypertrophy and scar deposits. Fatty infiltration*

*tion of liver.*

They write this up in a foreign language. Later, we understand. He went off like a time bomb, programmed to die prematurely. It is Marfan's Syndrome — a rare genetic defect that caused his connective tissues to weaken, his ligaments to become loose and stretchy. They think Abe Lincoln had it. Paganini too.

The real danger was hidden. The walls of his aorta, the main artery leaving the heart weakened and frayed until it ripped like worn fabric — it was inevitable. He was gone within a heartbeat, maybe two, the doctors say. It could have happened at any time.

He is a funny looking baby, strangely skinny and long with a deep little crater in his tiny chest. My mother affectionately calls him her *little war orphan*. She tells us, thirty-five years later, that he wasn't put together right. We knew that.

Pediatricians are concerned about his chest; afraid it will obstruct the functioning of his heart or lungs. They keep an eye on him for a little while. One of them warns my parents that he may have problems with it one day. Another says he is fine, there is no need to worry. So they don't.

Mom tells us that Brandy used to play alone for hours on end, rarely needing her attention. By the time he is speaking it is a language my mother can't understand, a language all his own. My parents listen to their frustrated son as he tries to explain—who knows what — himself, the world, what's up with the dog across the street. As he grows older, the neighborhood children tease him because he is odd, a kid with a constant runny nose which he forever wipes on his sleeves. His school teacher thinks he's retarded and he never listens in class. By third grade Mom tells Brandy to simply smile, look up, at least pretend to pay attention to his teacher like his older brother Travis does. He comes home a week later and tells Mom "But if I do that, then I really can't understand what she's saying."

An elementary lab school teacher at the university spots Brandy's intelligence. They test his I.Q. and suggest he attend a

school for gifted children. He'll have a difficult time in a regular school, they explain. Most of his teachers will not understand him and other children will tease him for being an oddball. He may suffer until he was old enough to understand and accept that he is different. The nearest school is in Detroit, and my parents can not afford to send him.

As he enters junior high school many of his days are spent in the principal's office. He sets off the fire alarms, smokes in the bathroom, skips school constantly. He does as he pleases and not what he's told. I see him walk to school one day, barefoot and wearing slacks designed after the American flag with stars on his butt and red and white stripes down his legs. He is not rebellious, just oblivious to mundane concerns like shoes.

By the time he is in the eighth grade the school system is fed up, and because Brandy refuses to participate in detention, they make him do janitorial work. They give him a broom. He looks at it, leans it against the wall, and walks out the school's doors.

"You have to do something about him," the principal tells my parents.

"No. You have to do something about him," they respond. Nevertheless, my parents are losing their minds. When he comes home from school that day, my mother is yelling at him upstairs in the house. I hear a scuffle and Brandy is crying. She is so frustrated she is kicking him, missing his butt and bruising his crooked legs.

Brandy drops out of high school in the tenth grade. Two years later he announces he is going to Hollywood to find his fame and fortune as a rock-n-roll star. My older brothers Travis and Lindy join him a year later, and they all form a rock and roll band they call "Mr. Wilson."

I've always thought of my brothers as a trio, all of them born eighteen months apart. There are a lot of pictures of them — the three of them sitting or standing according to height and age, sleeping in beds in a row, eating on one side of the dinner table, playing together on the beach. Later, they all play the guitar, and

like the Beatles, they all grow their hair, then mustaches, then beard. Then they all shave and get hair cuts again.

Still, Brandy was odd, the odd third-born son. Someone we knew, somehow, was never meant to be.

Mr. Wilson plays together for ten years, always hoping for that big break. At the same time, Brandy catches up, gets his GED, earns a bachelor's degree in philosophy at UCLA. I still have a photo of him with scraggly long black hair, proudly wearing his cap and gown. He looks terrible.

After he graduates, he doesn't know what to do. Just once, he puts on a suit for a job interview and gets a haircut.

"I hope you didn't tell him to clean his fingernails," I tell my mother.

"Oh my God, I had to," she replies. "He never would have thought of it on his own."

And he wouldn't have. He didn't get the job and delivered pizzas instead.

In August 1992 we join together at the cottage on the shores of Grand Traverse Bay, just as we do every summer. Everyone except Travis, who shuns these family get-togethers. This is the fourth day of our vacation — Thursday, and we are at Ken and Sandy's house on nearby lake Bellaire. Brandy cheated at golf yesterday. He kept sticking his ball up on a tee no matter where it landed. I said, "You're not supposed to do that. It's cheating." He said, "Bah! Who cares?"

Typical.

Ken is our cousin, and every year he and Sandy have everyone over for the day. I am four and a half months pregnant and lying on my back in the grass talking with Betty, my hand shielding my eyes from the sun. It is quiet by the lake; a gentle breeze glides across the surface, rippling the otherwise flat calm of the blue water. Puffy clouds float overhead below blue sky — perfect for waterskiing. Aunt Jane and Uncle Warren are talking to Mom and Dad up on the patio, and my husband David is playing with

Esther on the bit of artificial beach a few feet away. I am glad he is keeping her occupied.

"Hey!" A pack of cigarettes drops from above me and lands next to my head, held up on blades of grass.

"Jesus, you scared me!" Brandy plops down next to his cigarettes, pulls one from the pack, and lights it.

"Ken's getting ready," he says. "Are you gonna ski?"

"No," I awkwardly pull myself up into a sitting position. "Doctors say I'm not supposed to take on activities I'm not used to."

"That's ridiculous." He blows smoke carelessly into the warm air. I suddenly want to smoke. He thinks everything is ridiculous. He leaps up off the ground and I see him looking over the edge of the lawn where it hangs over the shore line. "Man! Look at the snakes!"

I look over and see water snakes, two of them — three of them, slithering along the top of the water, disappearing under the bank where the lawn ends abruptly and reappearing again. I hope Esther won't see them, and I know now that Betty won't ski. She hates snakes.

"I am NOT going into that water!" Betty remarks, as I knew she would. She sips on a whisky slush. Sandy makes a whole pitcher of them when we get together.

"Well that's just ridiculous!" says Brandy. Everything's ridiculous.

He takes off his shirt, and then his shoes and socks and leaves them next to his cigarettes on the lawn. I can see the deep indentation in between the two small nipples of his bare chest. His knees are cocked strangely backward. He's always been that way. He's getting heavy now though; he's gained a bunch of weight working at Dominos in L.A. He and Betty flew back together. Lindy and Rose and their kids came on their own.

David comes over with Esther and leaves her with me, and Brandy and David wade out to the boat. Lindy goes too, and so does my step-son Thomas and the rest of the kids. One by one, Lindy lifts the children into the boat. I stand up and take Esther's

hand. We head up to the patio to join the relatives, and Bethy follows.

David is first. The boat idles as Ken hollers instructions to David and designates Lindy and Brandy as spotters. "Ready?" he yells and David, with his head back in the water and his skis up in the air, nods. We watch as the boat speeds off down to the far end of the lake with David successfully in tow.

"Charlotte?" I hear Sandy sing from within the house. "You want a whisky slush?"

"God no, I'd fall off the deck," says Mom.

"You're not drinking, Sarah?" asks Aunt Jane.

"I'd better not."

"They're good," Bethy says and slurps on her drink. She takes a seat in a white plastic patio chair and props her feet on another in front of her. I think she's on her third. Rose sits next to her holding a pair of binoculars. Esther hand-feeds Uncle Warren potato chips. He opens his big mouth to accept each one from her little hand and then grins stupidly.

"Hal" cries Rose.

"What?" I say.

"He can't get up on the skis," she is looking through the binoculars and laughing.

"Who?"

"Brandy, he keeps falling down."

And then it is quiet. The boat drifts silently at the other end of the lake.

Aunt Jane and Mom are talking and I hear Rose speak again.

"There's something wrong down there."

"They probably gave up on him," says Mom. "He's too klutzy to get up on those skis." She laughs and Aunt Jane smiles. The boat remains floating at the far end of the lake. We wonder what could be holding them up.

Time passes, and finally, the boat heads back. No one is skiing.

"I guess they did give up," I say to Dad.

Now the boat is speeding toward shore, full throttle, the tow rope left in the water. It is bouncing and skimming crazy along the surface, showing no signs of slowing even as it approaches. How odd. Ken is going to slam the boat into the shore. Everyone's arms are waving and crossing wildly over their heads.

The engine cuts, and the boat continues to skid motorlessly toward the shore. I see arms still waving, and a distant sound of the children crying.

And then a sudden, screaming shout:

"CALL 911! NOW!"

It echoes loudly over the flat blue water and across the lawn.

We remain motionless on the patio. The few puffy clouds suspended in the air above us seem to stop drifting along. I can still see what a beautiful day it is — sunny, blue sky; the lake calm, quiet. I hear the children crying.

Someone repeats:

"CALL 911!"

The boat's motors scrape the rocky bottom of the lake and make a dull crunching sound. Sandy turns suddenly and, tripping the sliding screen door off its frame, runs inside. Sobs erupt from behind me and grow into arrhythmic wailing. Loud mournful crying pierces the silence that just a moment earlier surrounded me. "Oh my God!" Mom cries out, sobs catching in her throat. "Oh my God, he's dead!" She repeats it. "He's dead, isn't he?" I've never heard anything like it before in my life.

Who? What?

Bethy kicks the chair in front of her out of the way and goes to Mom. "It's okay, it's okay. They can jump start him. They do it all the time. It's okay."

Jump start him. Children are lifted one by one out of the boat, including Thomas, and walk toward the shore.

Jump start him? I stand. Dad rushes across the lawn and into the shallow water, flinging his arms in the air. "Oh my God!" The cries of the children mix with the horrible noise my mother is making and all I can hear is "It's okay. It's okay. It's okay." It's

Betty's, and she has her arms around Mom's heaving shoulders. I grab Esther to protect her. From what? She straddles my swollen belly, and I carry her inside to the kitchen.

Sandy stutters into the telephone. "We need an ambulance...he's not breathing and...." She looks out of the kitchen window. "And he has no heart beat."

No heart beat. With Esther still on my belly I look out too, and see Ken in the boat pushing. Ken is pushing and dipping below the rim of the boat: one, two, three, and then dipping and then pushing: one, two, three.

No heart beat? My legs wobble, and the kitchen turns on its side, uprights, tips the other way. Esther slips from my arms. I focus on the image outside the window, the boat, and Ken pushing still, and Dad in the boat with him bent over, looking down.

"They're working on him now," Sandy talks on the phone. "Please...."

"Mommy?" It is my daughter, and I shift focus, blankly looking at her inquiring face. "Mommy," I hear her say. My own mother's wailing noises in the living room are growing louder. I never heard such a thing.

"Mommy?" I see her, my daughter next to me, but she is far away.

"It's okay," Betty is saying. "They're taking care of it. Ken knows what he's doing."

"Mommy?"

I have to go. I make my way to the bathroom and struggle, my hands shaking, to pull off my shorts, and before I sit my bowels begin to empty and run into the toilet. My heart thuds and I feel myself suck in air and then hold it. I hear Dad yelling "Brandy!" Other voices join his. I hear Lindy's, and then David's: "Brandy!" Their voices echo in the silence of the motionless afternoon.

And I sit on the toilet, holding on for dear life to my hard belly. I pull sheets of toilet paper from the roll and wad them up. The bathroom fills, then rocks, and to stop it, I focus on the wad in my hands.

I get up off the toilet and go back into the kitchen.

"Mommy, I want some pop."

Esther wants pop. Red pop. I find some on the kitchen counter and pour a paper cup full.

I hand it to her and usher her into the living room. Betty has moved Mom inside and has given her a glass of water.

We sit.

Finally. The sound of helicopter can be heard growing louder, thundering overhead. I step outside. The rhythmic pounding as it nears vibrates the house and shakes the ground. It produces a powerful wind that ripples the still water of the lake and flattens the grass as it lands in the yard. It is almighty. The windy enormity of its presence and the words "Life Flight" spread across its body offers reassurance and relief. Just like television.

The rescue team leaps out. "We can't work on him in there! Get him out of the boat! Get the kids inside!" I turn away. Then look. They have lifted him, lifeless, out of the boat and put him on a stretcher. I hear shouts and the thud of the defibrillator paddles. The helicopter's propeller whirrs and chirps quietly nearby. After the third jolt of the paddles, the rescue team scoops up the stretcher, slides it into the helicopter, and one by one, they jump in behind it.

The helicopter's engine grows loud and shrill, and the propeller revolves into a blurry circle blowing wind into our stunned faces. It lifts off the lawn and swings rapidly around just above the rippling lake, simultaneously climbing higher and speeding south.

Little time elapses after my parents and Betty and Lindy leave for the hospital thirty miles away. Painfully little time, maybe fifteen minutes, since the helicopter took off. A sheriff from Antrim County calls, and David answers the phone. His voice quavers. "Okay... okay... yes... thank you for calling...thank you." He hangs up, and turns to us. "He's dead."

He is dead. We cry and hug each other appropriately. Esther spills her red pop on the carpet.

We decide to leave and go back to the cottage to wait for the

others. Aunt Jane hands me the package of ground beef Mom brought for the burgers. I hand it off to Rose, and go down toward the shore to pick up his things — his shoes and T-shirt, his pack of cigarettes. I light one and smoke, my heart stubbornly beating in my chest, and I stare across the still water of the lake. A few boaters are out there; motors buzzing softly along the surface of the water in the distance. The late afternoon is dead peaceful.

I feel blank, empty of feelings except for physical ones. My belly is heavy and pushed against my knotted stomach, though I forget, for moments at a time, that I'm pregnant. The cigarettes are giving me a headache. I experience an overwhelming fatigue laced with aimless energy, like I need to get up and move around, but when I do, I need to sit down and rest.

It begins to grow dark. As the sun sets over the bay, they pull into the driveway — Mom, Dad, Bethy, Lindy. One by one, four car doors open, then close, and they walk separately and quietly through the back yard and around the cottage to the front deck.

"Are you all right?" I ask my father.

He erupts in tears and holds onto me. "Oh shit!" he cries.

"Shit. Shit. Shit!"

David and Rose move in and out of the kitchen, taking care of the kids, taking care of us. David makes toast with peanut butter for my parents. Mom takes small bites, sips a glass of milk. She is slouched over and sounds stuffed up. Lindy sits in a chair beside Mom and Dad. Bethy sits next to me on steps leading to the foot bridge, her head down, her elbows on her knees.

"Did he pay you back for golf yesterday?" I ask her.

She chuckles softly. A sob catches in her throat. She stares at the ground and Dad pulls Brandy's wallet out of his shirt pocket and hands the money in it to Bethy. She waves it off, but he insists. I wonder at what point he got Brandy's wallet.

"What are you gonna do with it?" I ask. All the details matter.

"Throw it out. We don't need it," Dad says.

We sit. It is so careless of Brandy to be absent during this

trauma. He's always been so careless; it used to piss everyone off. This is his fault and he is being unfair. Typical.

On Friday, Travis arrives from Los Angeles. Lindy and David go to Elk Rapids to make cremation arrangements. According to my parents' wishes, there will be no funeral, no disposal of remains. There will be an autopsy today.

When they return, Lindy comes out on the deck and tosses a billing statement on the table. "The funeral director offered to take the ashes and put them in the bay Saturday. Says he does it all the time for people."

Mom stands up and groans, then marches into the cottage. Lindy looks around.

"What else could I do?" he says. "He said if we didn't pick them up, he'd have to shelve 'em. I figured it was better than sticking them on a shelf."

I look down at the billing statement. "Transportation from Munson Medical Center to the American Crematory in Gaylord: \$400. Crematory requires container. Corrugated pine box: \$400. Crematory's fee: \$1000."

On Saturday, Mom gathers Brandy's stuff, including an old tennis bag, and gives them to Dad. He takes it all out back to the burning barrel, and I watch from a distance as Travis and Lindy and Dad stand quietly while the flames consume my brother's belongings.

I wonder if ashes float and disperse on the surface of water or if they sink and settle to the bottom. I wade out into the water. The bottom is rocky until I'm in up to my waist and then I can feel the texture of the rippled, sandy bottom. The lake is freezing. I hold a bottle of shampoo in one hand and a bar of Ivory soap in the other, but it is too early in the summer to tolerate going all the way in. By the middle of June, I can manage a quick dunk, lather my hair, and make another quick dunk to rinse. In July it warms up and makes bathing easier, and by August it's

perfect for swimming and riding waves on inflatable rafts.

I know Brandy is out there somewhere, or everywhere. He was thrown in at the end of last summer. I thought about the lake last fall when I was home, and how it must have grown colder, and again in January and February when it would have silently frozen over with huge mountains of icy, rocky snow piling up as far as you can see across the bay. It was as though we left him behind, alone in the water, after the cottage had been closed down for the season and we'd all gone home.

I've never been certain where my brother went or where I was supposed to put him. He waded out to the boat and that was the last I ever saw of him. If not in the ground, if not somewhere in heaven, where was I going put my brother now that he was dead? Grand Traverse Bay is big, though it's only a small cove carved into the northwest corner of the lower peninsula. Our cottage sits on the shore at the mouth of the bay, where it opens up into Lake Michigan and connects with all the other Great Lakes that wrap around the state. They divide the U. S. from Canada until they dwindle down and out into the St. Lawrence Seaway and leak into the Atlantic. All those oceans cover three-quarters of the earth. Everybody knows that. So where is Brandy?

I throw the shampoo and soap back on shore and I look up at the cliff. I imagine Brandy there, dressed in faded blue jeans and a leather jacket, holding a snake and laughing: "Bahl Ha, ha, ha, hal Don't be silly! Just dive in!" My legs are numb, and before I have time to think about it, I plunge into the icy water.

### Suzy Spraker

#### The Cook and the Cashier

The cook's answer is to reprimand the cashier. This time they'd do it in the spring, maybe June. The cook slides his soda can from one end of his dining room table to the other. He's still in his whites, slouching in the chair, planning the wedding. Outdoors. How could he go wrong with a wedding set on a manicured lawn, marigolds and lilies budding at every turn, the cook in a gazebo waiting for his blushing cashier to step into the sunshine.

A whiff of cold air slaps the cook and he squints at what's before him. The cashier is standing at the front door with it wide open in the dead of winter talking to Stephi. He rubs his eyes, but it's all still there. Figures. Now that the cook has the answer, the cashier is busy at the front door acting like the cold air doesn't exist.

"Fran, you two talk all night at work," the cook yells from the table. The cook, the cashier and Stephi all work at the same restaurant, but the cashier and Stephi work out front; the cook is in the back. The cook pushes the chair off the floor, balancing on two legs. "Tonight's my anniversary."

"Don't you mean *our* anniversary?" the cashier asks. They have to be cold standing outside. Stephi will break first because the cook knows how relentlessly his cashier can hold out. The cook has his jacket on and he's shivering. That's why this time the wedding will be in the Spring; no one is happy when they're shivering. The cook has all the answers tonight. The reception will be outside too. He can almost hear the toe-tapping, finger-snapping music from the five-piece band.

"Hey, I'm getting frostbite over here," the cook says. He drains the last of the soda and shakes the can for more. It's a good night for a beer. It has been six months, but there's really no reason