

Jane sat on the shore of Lake Michigan, squeezing sand from her palm, a strap of pink and white bathing suit slipping off her shoulder. She dripped the sandy liquid into a shapely mound, narrowing it to a turret, then did it again, until she had a small castle. She had set aside a family of stones poised to move in: mother, father, brother, sister, and their stone pets, a dog and a cat. Her father didn't like cats, but would, Jane decided, like this one. Her father had been home in Colorado all summer, working, but today was on his way up to Michigan. He would be, her mother had said, at the cottage in time for dinner. Finally.

Jane poked rooms into the castle walls, one for the parents, two close-by for the sister and brother, and a kitchen downstairs big enough to accommodate the dog and cat. She stood the parents in the kitchen, pressing them together in an embrace. The brother and sister sat at the little table made from a damp leaf, finishing their dinner, looking forward to dessert, fruit cocktail, then a board game with the father in the family room, the mother reading nearby, and then bedtime when both parents would tuck them in and hear their prayers. *Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the lord my soul to keep.* Jane hated the part about dying.

She twisted around to look at her mother, cat-eye sunglasses, book in lap, then turned back to her castle. As she did, she caught sight of her brother, his head a dot far out in the lake. Jane's chest tightened. He was past the sandbar, out much farther than he was supposed to be. He was going to get in trouble, she knew with a sinking certainty, and if he got a cramp, he would drown like the boy last summer. Panicked, she twisted around again to see if her mother saw, but she had opened her book, pen in her mouth, and when Jane turned back, squinting through the sun's glare on the ripples of the lake, his head was gone.