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III AJ TUK Martin Lastovka The Lake

I don't like swimming that much; it makes me anxious whenever I am somewhere where I can't see where I step. I've had several different reasons for it over the years, some being far more serious and traumatizing than others.

Of course, there were always the very common reasons. The fear of something lurking just below the surface. Brushing against your leg, biting, and pulling you under. The snakes of the freshwater and the often-exaggerated childish concern about sharks come to mind as well. Then there's the very real concern about drowning that comes standard with any deep body of water.

These concerns have all played at least some part in contributing to my lifelong fear.

However, there was one particular incident that took my fear to an entirely new level. It was a summer day like any other, and I was at a remote lake in the countryside. The lake was known for its crystal-clear water and serene surroundings. Despite my trepidation, I decided to give swimming another chance, hoping to conquer my fears once and for all.

As I waded into the water, the coolness enveloped my body, and I forced myself to take deep breaths to calm my fast-beating heart. The fear was still there, lingering in the back of my mind. But I was determined to push through.

As I ventured further from the shore, the water became darker, and the sunlight coming through the trees above casted eerie shadows on the surface. My heart rate increased, and I could feel the familiar grip of anxiety getting tighter around my chest. But I pressed on, convincing myself that it was just my imagination.

I started swimming, trying to distract myself by focusing on the surroundings of the lake. It seemed to be working, and for a brief moment, I felt a glimmer of triumph. However, that fleeting sense of victory over my fears soon gave way to a deep sense of unease.

As I looked around, I realized something was off. The once tranquil lake had grown unnervingly still. Not a single ripple disturbed the surface, and the sounds of nature had faded into an unsettling silence. My heart began to race again, and I felt a sudden urge to turn back.

But just as I was about to go back, I noticed a strange object floating in the distance. It was a small, old and tattered doll, its lifeless eyes staring back at me. A shiver ran down my spine as I recalled the countless horror stories about haunted dolls. It felt as if the doll was watching me, taunting me, urging me to come closer.

I reluctantly and cautiously swam towards it. The closer I got, the more the water seemed to thicken, making it increasingly difficult to swim. Panic began to rise within me, but I couldn't shake off the feeling that I needed to reach that doll.

Finally, I reached the spot where it was floating, only to find it had disappeared. Confusion and fear consumed me as I frantically looked around searching for the doll. But what I saw next sent a chill down my spine that I can still feel to this day.

A pair of small, pale hands emerged from the water, their bony fingers reaching out towards me. I froze in terror, unable to move as the hands moved closer, their grip tightening around my ankles. The water around me turned icy cold, and an overwhelming sense of dread engulfed me.

With a sudden jolt of panic fueled strength, I managed to break free from the grip and swam as fast as I could towards the shore. I stumbled out of the water, gasping for air, my body shaking uncontrollably. I dared not look back, fearing what I might see. The lake that had once seemed peaceful and inviting had turned into a dark, malevolent force.

Since that day, I have never stepped foot in any body of water again. The experience scarred me deeply, intensifying my fear of swimming. I often wonder what would have happened if I hadn't managed to escape, if those hands had pulled me under, into the depths of that ominous lake.