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workshops

The Invisible Man

a timed exercise by Mari Syrad Grieves

I visited the lake every Saturday because I had to collect proof of what I'd seen. I had to get proof so that maybe they would leave me alone, stop running stories about the mad local woman who had spotted a hundred-foot man standing in the middle of the lake. But the heat didn't die down.

Even months later, the national news having picked up the story, I was being stopped and jeered at in the street. So every Saturday I returned to try and find evidence: a photo, a footprint, another eyewitness, anything. But no matter how long I stayed, I found nothing.

I sat on a bench from 7am 'til dusk, still and attentive so as not to spook him, then perhaps he would come out of hiding and speak to me like before. I wondered if it was possible to spook a hundred-foot man. I wondered what it would take, why he was there, why was he hiding, why me? I stood on the edge addressing him, pleading with him. Nothing.

I waded into the lake, scrabbling around the bed with my hands before pushing off to snatch some air before submerging again, opening my eyes despite the grit and algae that angered them. Nothing. Nothing but the police pulling me from the murky water after dark, my hair matted to my red, frozen cheeks. I fought them. There was another news story after that but it only made me more determined.

Twelve Saturdays after I'd made contact with the man in the lake, I was ready to give up. Not just looking for him, but give up entirely. I sat on the same bench where I'd waited for him all this time and looked at the gentle flurry of the lake as it rippled with each gust of wind. The colourless sky gave nothing away as to the significance of the day but instead matched my cheeks drained of blood as I saw the surface of the water break.

This invisible man, this Mr Manhattan, glowing sapphire as he rose with no expression to his monolithic height, was there. I knew I wasn't mad. He beckoned me over to the edge and into the water.

After that, the local paper ran a final story about the mad woman who drowned in a nearby lake.