

The Castle In the Pond

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Books by A. Nation

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For more insights how this story progressed, see my
blog at: [My Blog](#).

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The Island

I walked onto the wooden pier one morning and I happen to see an old rowboat tied up to one side. The lake was calm with the rising sun hidden under the overcast sky. I come here every year to break from the work rush in the city. Watching the water ebb and flow always calms me down. I had made a few friends here over the past several years and they expect me to show up during my holidays.

Sitting on one side of a vintage shed, near the shore on a bench, was an old man with a white beard and dirty overalls deep in concentration as he repaired his fishing line.

"Beautiful morning isn't it I said, stepping on the milled planks beneath my feet. I noticed a small boat tied up to one of the posts.

"Mabbee," he muttered as I strolled closer.

"Is your row boat for rent?"

He looked up at me with his small black eyes behind his shaggy mane. His bucket cloth hat shaded his face leaving a heavy salt and pepper beard about his chin.

"Could be. Where to?" he asked.

I felt a chill and pulled my coat tighter around my chest.

"I'd like to visit that island over there," I replied. In all the years I've been coming here, I never have been over to the island.

"No you wouldn't," he said and returned to his tangled fishing line.

Taken aback, I couldn't see where he wasn't able to take me. So I asked again.

"How much do you need?"

"Not a matter of money," he replied, continuing on untying his line.

Seeing as he wasn't going to explain, I pressed on.

"Well, what will it take?"

He looked me in the eye.

"Ma'am, no one comes back from there. If they do, I haven't seen them."

"Mmm, thanks for the warning," I said and retraced my steps back to my rented cabin.

I thought about that little boat all day long. And by evening I wanted to know what is so special about that island.

The wind had died down outside but still showed fifty degrees outside on the temperature gauge. I wore a tshirt and heavy cargo pants. My shoes weren't hiking boots but sturdy enough for the terrain. Pulling my jacket over my shoulders, I gathered my flashlight, matches, and a granola bar. Sticking them into my pockets, I headed out the front door.

The crescent of the moon glided behind some high clouds preventing me from seeing the pathway. As I made my way to the pier I looked around for the old fisherman. He wasn't around. The thrill of my adventure made my body shiver as I crept toward the wooden

boat. I picked up a rock and placed a fifty-dollar bill on the bench underneath a rock where he sat earlier today.

Scanning with my small LED flashlight, I procured the oars and untied the back of the rowboat. After I stepped into the bottom planks of the craft, I untied the bow. Taking one of the oars, I pushed the small boat away from the pier.

As soon as the dinghy floated away from shore, I placed the oars into their U-shaped slots and began rowing toward the island.

The small grouping of pine trees flourish from one end to the other. As I drifted closer, the island grew. It looked smaller from shore but now seemed more than a couple of miles. I could hear the haunting 'whos' from a nearby owl. The water clicked and lashed the bow and sides as I approached the shoreline.

Waving my flashlight in front of me, I tried to make out where I could park this rowboat so it wouldn't float away. Passing clumps of rocks piled against the sandy beach, I found an opening. With one oar, I guided the craft into the slot until I heard the crunch of sand grains under the bow.

The sliver of moon peeked out behind the gray curtain above and gave me a little light to find where to step out. Undoing the rope I had from the rear, I gathered it up and climbed over the side. Once on terra firma, I tied the rowboat to an old dead tree trunk.

Satisfied that the craft should stay put, I turned on my flashlight and took the first path to my right. The growth of timber towered over my head as the trail thinned down to a single pathway. *"Maybe I should*

have listened to the old fisherman?" I thought to myself as I crept deeper and deeper into the forest.

Then I saw a light. *"Maybe someone lives on this island?"* I said to myself. The soft glow flickered as the tree trunks glided back and forth as I stepped. I began to push brush away right and left until I saw it. There before me glimmered a pond, reflecting the elusive Moon from above. The silver sheen rippled across the water.

Looking around I found a large boulder on the shore. It was the right size where I could sit and eat my granola bar. As I enjoyed the scene and the crunchy caramel of the treat, I noticed the waves on the pond were becoming rapid. I couldn't feel any wind that would cause the water to ripple. I backed off the stone and gazed at the waves increasing its undulating cadence higher and higher.

The water lapped at my feet. Unsure what was happening, I backed away from the shore. In the center of the pond, I could hear a deep gurgling and something pointed broke the Moon's reflection. Higher and higher the edifice rose with water splashing over the peaks and valleys of the structure. The thunderous sound echoed around me as I pressed my hands to my ears. I was about ready to run back to the rowboat until I saw what had risen out of the small lake. It was a castle!

I could believe my eyes—A pink and gold castle. *"Why is it here? How did it get here?"*

If that wasn't strange enough, I could hear a musical tone. The haunting melody grew until I

stepped toward the shore of the pond. That's when I heard a voice.

"Come here," the whisper said.

"Where are you?" I called out only to hear my echo repeat across the waves.

"Over here," it said once more.

I glanced over to the colorful castle sitting high on a grassy mound and saw a young boy. *"Where did he come from?"*

"Come see me," the boy called.

Since my boat was on the other side of this island, I called back, "I can't. I don't have a boat."

"Swim," he said.

"I can't swim that far and it's cold."

He spread his arms out and waved his hands apart.

"Swim, it's warm."

I must be out of my mind. I removed my jacket and shoes. Leaving them on shore I tested the waters and indeed, the liquid was warm. I jumped into the pond and began swimming.

My lungs hurt from holding my breath, so I gulped some air and swam on. Before I could make it to the islet I saw the boy swimming toward me. I couldn't hold my breath any longer. Then I could hear his voice through my thoughts.

"Breathe," he said.

"I will drown," I thought to him.

"Breathe," he said again.

I had no choice, I was going to drown. I breathed and nothing choked me. I was breathing under water. *"How is that possible?"*

The boy took my hand and we swam until we came upon some stone stairs. He guided me up the steps and onto the grass above the water. I coughed a bit, but was able to breathe air again.

I sat down at the edge of the lawn as the boy entered the castle. I looked up at the bright crescent Moon and caught my breath from the ordeal. When the boy returned, he had something in his hand. Only he wasn't a boy any longer. He was a grown man with long muscular legs and arms. He wore a white cloth about his waist.

"Where's the boy," I said, still spitting out water.

"I am he. Here eat this. You'll feel better."

He held up a square leafy item. After what I had been through, I figure this dried kelp wouldn't be so bad. I took a bite and began to feel relaxed.

"Who are you or shall I ask what are you?"

"I live here. You may call me Silvermist. I am the owner of this island. Can you stay? Not many visit me."

"It's no wonder since many of the people on the other shore refuse to come here. I can stay for a little while, but I'll have to go home some time. How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Hundreds of Moons ago. People used to bring me gifts and food, but they don't come any more. If I let you leave, would you come back?" he asked.

"Yes, I would. Would I always breathe under water?"

"Only this water and when the castle rises. The Moon is gone now. Soon the sun shall rise and I will have to descend. If you are here at sunrise, you will drown. I will guide you back to shore."

Thanking him for the food, we stood and walked down the stone steps into the water.

"Will I see inside the castle next time?"

"Yes, hurry, I see the sun glow behind the mountains."

We dove into the water. I swam behind him breathing with ease. Along the bottom of the pond I could see fish and a turtle. A glow spread across the surface of the water. I began to choke. I struggled to rise to the top of the cold pond. As soon as I did, I gasped a lung full of air. I could just make out the edge of the pond's shoreline and my bright red jacket sprawled over a tree branch. I swam and swam until my arms ached from the energy expended. The water cooled and turned cold as I touched the sandy bottom of the pond and began walking to the shore. I coughed and spit the cold water out of my lungs as I dropped on all limbs to the dry sandy ground.

Turning around, when I heard the waves lapping the shore, I saw the pink and gold castle descend under the surface of the pond. But before it vanished from view, there was a small boy waving back at me. I sat and waved back. "*Who was Silvermist?*" I asked myself.

By the time the castle had disappeared from view, the sun shined over the pond lighting up the eastern sides of the pine trees. I pulled my shoes on, grabbed my jacket, and ran back along the pathway toward where I had left the rowboat.

Hoping I wasn't lost, I turned down this path and then the next until the roadway widened. Scurrying down toward the shoreline, I could see the little wooden boat still tied to the dead timber. I climbed in,

released the rope and shoved off by pushing on one of the ores against a rock.

I rowed and rowed until I could see the pier of my hometown. *"Why were all those people out there waving at me?"* I asked myself.

As I drifted closer to the wooden pier, several men walked toward me and secured the rowboat. One of them helped me stand as I walked onto the shore.

"We thought you drowned," said one man.

"Where were you?" said a woman's voice.

"I just took a little boat ride," I replied.

They stopped talking and stared at me.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Caroline, you have been gone two years," said another lady.

"That's impossible, I just left last night."

"Come on, dear, we'll get you dried off and some food in you," said another woman.

Many years later had passed and I never returned to that island but I always thought of Silvermist.

About the Author

A. Nation travels the west with her husband. I decided to write in a futuristic fashion creating interesting adventure stories that have a moral realization. Whether from prejudice, political crime, retribution, or enslavement, the sagas shall continue.



For more insights how this story progressed, see my blog at: [My Blog](#).

To participate in National Writing month go to: nanowrimo.org

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