

She is My Atlantis

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It is hard to imagine life through a child's eyes as it is clouded by innocence. I did not understand why we had to move back to Nana's and Papa's. I did not understand why everyone was crying in the hospital waiting room while visiting Papa. I did not even understand what life was truly supposed to be. The only thing I felt I understood was the backyard. Broly's tree; a thirteen year old dog grew up with his rope hanging from its branches. The Fort™; the chilliest place the neighborhood kids could be: with its handcrafted stick bridge to cross the deadly Hunters Creek River, the scattered broken chairs saved from bonfires, and a small bag of beer caps to skip across the river. Papa's tree; the giant maple towered over the pond, but only to protect it. It stood proud upon a hump as though the pond was lifting it to show gratitude. And the star of it all, Nana's pond; the beautiful inviting smile and warmth it gifted each day was always accompanied by its soft hum in the night. The little pond holds a special place in my heart as she will always be my Atlantis.

She created her own little world, she mothered almost everything. From hissing snapping turtles to the smallest of fish. She dedicated a section with tall thick weeds for the bullfrogs, the mucky clay for the catfish and clams, and the hump holding up Papa's tree housed the frogs and turtles within its roots. She was even gracious enough to give me my own paradise, the area in between. She often had visitors too. Geese would come with their flock and stay for days. Deer and their kin greeted her with a smile before taking a drink. Her water was a clear and shimmering blue as Papa would replenish her beauty with dye every year. He took a lot of pride in his yard, he would come home from work and continue working outside. I unfortunately do not recall everything he did, I was too young remember. My most vivid memory of him is from his battle with a wasp's nest. He had to do everything himself, no help and nothing logical. This

5'4 man climbed up a ladder to hit the nest with a stick. We could see him from the living room window, the women worried while the men and kids laughed. Papa waved us off and went to work. One swing was all it took, he lost his balance and fell. It was a blessing in disguise. If he had not of fallen, the doctors would not have been able to find It. It, the word no one wants to hear or see someone face. The cancer filled his lungs, and he did not have long. During the next few months the family worked tirelessly to make sure Papa had everything he needed and was comfortable. As they ran around, the grass got longer. The bushes merged from lack of trimming. The pond's water levels lowered and her tall weeds thinned and started to die. She never asked for help, she sat back and let us mourn in peace. That is a wonderful thing about her, even now, she is never greedy. She does not ask for anything in return besides company and someone to love.

Years went by and she watched things fall apart. Her visitors slowly dwindled and her care was no longer thought of. Slowly, the amount of people living in the house lowered. She longed for the day the children would come back to laugh and play. After the bullfrogs had left, her world fell silent. She sat back and quietly waited for the day she was no longer alone. Yet she was not alone, a smaller body of water sat only yards away. Hunters Creek ran parallel to her and he was infatuated with her. Though time was running out for him, his river was beginning to thin where it was closest to her. He had been by her side for so long he could not bear to think of life all alone. He was sick with worry and counting down the days until their last. He was so clouded he did not notice the wind pick up and the lightning come striking down. Rain poured down for what seemed like forever. Their water levels rose as the night went on and when morning came he was finally able to embrace his beloved after years of yearning. Their waters brought life together. The fish swam freely and found bountiful amounts of food. He cheered for he thought

this had saved them both and they would stay intertwined forever. Days went by and the water slowly lowered. Their final bridge had been lost, and they have been separated ever since. They were both left beaten and scarred. His river has slowly faded away, the stick bridge is now a random bundle in the mud. He knows his days are numbered.

Now the pond took a hit Hunters Creek did not see, lightning had struck Papa's tree. It was a fatal blow, he had just enough time to say goodbye. The lifeless tree stayed standing until another storm knocked it down. The boys found time to cut the tree for firewood. As the tree was being dismembered, her ecosystem was waning. Her fish were thrown into the world, their home now part of the past. Turtles had wandered into a neighboring lake and rehomed. Her vegetation was gone, all her plants had been drowned and ripped away. Her cries were not heard and she too started to fade away.

This dreary and lifeless pond now looks as if it was an abandoned painting from a dream I cannot fully remember. Broly's tree appears smaller, making it seem impossible for a dog to hang off of. Papa's tree is now a pile of ash and half burned roots. The Fort™ is a single chair with a tree growing through it. Something that was once so full of life is now the carcass of its promises. Staring out at the backyard's remains, I was able to see how brutal life can be. I was no longer looking at the world through a child's eyes. For its innocence and beauty were gone. I do not see it as a mystical wonderland anymore, it is only a reminder of simpler times. It is almost like a tease, a whisper drawing me near and then disappearing. I hardly recognize it, but I can still hear her distant hum. She is a lost world I promise to one day find again.