

Spirit of the Lake

Word count: 1291

I washed and dried the table before setting it for dinner because the tiny kitchen in the RV required frequent cleaning. I turned to get the plates from the cabinet then turned back to the table. There, on the table, were streaks of water, as if someone had dragged 3 wet fingers across the surface.

“Mike,” I yelled out the door to my husband. “Did you just mess up my clean table?”

“I’m out here building a fire,” he yelled back. “I haven’t even been in there.”

Well, if he didn’t do it, I thought, then how’d the table get wet? I know I’d dried it and anyway there was too much water for it to be left from washing the table. I shrugged off the idea that the lines looked deliberate and finished setting the table. However, what happened the next day, out on the boat, proved harder to comprehend.

We’d befriended a young couple shortly after arriving at Lake Shelbyville who’d set up camp at the site next to ours. Chris and Edy had just finished taking their finals at the University of Illinois, and, on a whim, had decided to go camping. Mike and I, on the other hand, were on the next to last stop of our two-week honeymoon.

Chris had rented a fourteen-foot john-boat from the marina and invited us to go out trolling for bass with him and Edy. We loaded up the boat after packing some snacks and drinks then we set out. Having only two poles, Mike and Edy fished while Chris steered the boat and I took pictures.

A light mist hazed the air, covering the lake in a thin fog. The cloud cover kept the temperature at a comfortable 70°, which allowed us to spend hours puttering around the serene

waterscape. I spotted a blue heron perched on the bank and snapped photos as it took flight, gliding effortlessly over the still water.

Mike and Edy discovered the only fish biting were too small to keep, but they continued to have fun trying to land a big one. After a while, they reeled in for the day and we decided to cruise around and enjoy the beauty of the rain-swollen lake. We noticed a few occupied campsites along the way and some heavily damaged sites destroyed by the recent storms and flooding. Chris mentioned a bridge that crosses a section of the lake “a few miles up that way”. He seemed to know a lot about Shelbyville Lake.

We continued to cruise along at a snail’s pace when Mike suddenly shuddered. “Brrr,” he said. “Are you guys cold?” His breath puffed out in white clouds.

Edy cried out, “How are you doing that?”

We all huffed out to see if we could see our breath and only Mike’s was visible. How could there be such a small pocket of air as to only affect one person on the boat? I lifted my camera to capture the phenomenon, but the camera kept shutting down, and then it was over. Mike didn’t feel cold anymore and we could no longer see his breath. We all agreed it was time to head back to our campsites. After unloading the boat, I invited Chris and Edy to join us for drinks later.

Sitting around the campfire, we began our evening with a toast. “To meeting new people on the journey of life,” I said.

We shared stories about how we’d arrived at this point in our lives, which turned towards talk of what we’d experienced out on the boat. Mike described the chilling sensation he’d felt, “as if we’d floated over where someone had died.” I told our new friends about what I’d seen in the RV on the day we arrived and wondered if the two events were connected. It would be

several days before I'd get the chance to research the possibility of a ghost, and what I found sent chills to my very core.

My initial research found several drowning deaths had occurred over the years, most due to carelessness. I suppose we could've passed over a place where someone had drowned, but something told me to keep looking. I wanted an answer that explained both events Mike and I had experienced and, in my opinion, an accidental drowning didn't cut it.

That's when it hit me—the bridge! Mike had shuddered from a sudden chill after Chris mentioned a bridge that crosses the lake. I couldn't remember the name of it, but it didn't take long to find. I googled “bridge on Lake Shelbyville” and found the name, Findlay Bridge. Then I searched the phrase “death, Findlay Bridge, Lake Shelbyville” and I gasped in shock upon seeing the link—The Murder of Karyn Hearn Slover. I'd found a possible answer to our puzzling experience at the lake.

I clicked on the link which took me to TruTv's website and I began reading the gory details. According to the site, Karyn's severed head had been found by people fishing near Findlay Marina. It had been wrapped in a plastic bag with a chunk of concrete used to sink it in the lake. However, the bag, duct-taped shut, filled with gases, causing the bag to surface. Authorities searched the entire lake and recovered ten more bags “which and surfaced and floated ashore.”

I looked online for a map of Lake Shelbyville to see where Findlay Marina was in relation to our campsite. The map showed the marina to be across the lake and just north of our spot at Lithia Springs Campground. We'd been idling along the shoreline when Mike had felt the chill. Perhaps we'd floated by one of the recovery sites. The article stated blood found on the

bridge during the investigation matched Karyn's DNA. Maybe the mention of Findlay Bridge had caused her spirit to stir.

Pieces to the puzzle seemed to be fitting together nicely and the more I read about the case, the more I believed in the possibility of a spirit encounter. As I continued to read, I searched for a possible connection to the three streaks of water I'd seen on the RV table. It was possible Karyn had tried to make contact and the number three had some special meaning. I scanned through TruTV's account of the murder and trial, looking for any reference to the number three.

My first discovery of the number three, in regards to the murder, seemed insignificant. It'd taken investigators three years to make an arrest, due to lack of physical evidence. However, I found the answer I'd been seeking after sifting through pages of case details. Charged with first-degree murder of 23-year-old Karyn were her ex-husband and his parents. All three suspects were found guilty of the crime despite their claims of innocence.

I've had paranormal experiences throughout my life, ranging from strange noises to taps on the shoulder. Most times I shrugged it off and thought nothing more of it. Something about the events at the lake drew me to look deeper into the experience. I suppose the streaks of water could've been there because I missed a spot. It seemed a more likely explanation than paranormal activity. The incident on the boat, however, wasn't as easy to explain away. Mike felt something the rest of us didn't and we all witnessed the moments when only his breath could be seen. I may never know whether or not we encountered Karyn's spirit at the lake that summer, but I'll never forget her tragic story.

To read more about the murder of Karyn Hearn Slover, visit TruTv's online library at <http://www.trutv.com>. Her story is located in the Notorious Murders section under the heading Timeless Classics.