

Dear Readers,

In the early stages of writing a novel, I give myself a great deal of freedom to explore. Though I write for several hours every day, I'm not sure yet where the narrative is going, and most of those early pages end up being cut, filed away, as the novel grows and takes its shape.

This particular excerpt came from a very early freewriting I did, even before I knew that Lucy Jarrett was the narrative of this book, trying to imagine myself into Lucy's feelings about her father and his unresolved death a decade ago. *The Lake of Dreams* is set in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, where I grew up, so I started with the water, which I knew. From there I could step into Lucy's mind, and into experiences that are fully imagined--my own father is alive and well, I am happy to say, and we never went fishing together. Although this passage was eventually cut from the novel, I love this early exploration because it captures so many of the currents, images, and themes that eventually became important to the book. I'm very happy to be able to share it with you here.

Best wishes,

Kim Edwards

*She dreamed of the place where she grew up all the time. She dreamed of the lake, which was cold and clear and so deep the water turned a dark turquoise, then sapphire, and then was simply dark. Ships had sunk there, and planes had gone down, and sleighs drawn by horses had crashed through the ice, and no one had ever found them, they were there but buried, like memory, beneath the cold clear water. She dreamed of that place and that water and of her childhood, and she remembered what it was like to travel with her father out into the boat among the cattails, there were herons nesting in this shallow end of the lake and sometimes they saw these beautiful birds standing there, completely still, their legs as long and thin as reeds, their eyes wary, watching, their wings held close against their bodies. And she would stop paddling, letting the boat move softly through the reeds, whispering against the metal sides shush, shush. Don't breathe, she willed herself, yearning to touch a silvery blue wing, the bird somehow like her, not just tall and thin but also female, winged, powerful. She yearned to touch it. But the heron, startled by their soft voices, would lift its wings, spread them wide and rise up out of the marsh, into the air, such a huge bird and so beautiful against the dawn sky, paleness just edging into blue and the heron darker blue against it, rising, rising, disappearing into clouds on the horizon. She had read, much later, that they flew higher than any other bird. All across the world, ancient people had called them the messengers of the gods.*