

# ..... THE DEEP LAKE LURKER .....

## PRESENTING THE MYSTERY

For the working families of Deep Lake, summer means tourist money and sending kids to Pine Rock Ridge, a sleepaway camp on the other side of the lake. Generations of children gossiped in its wooden cabins and roasted smores over campfires, you all included. In 1993, however, twelve year-old Jessica Stawski disappeared while out swimming. She was the fourth camper who had gone missing in as many years, the others being Johnny Green Jr., Carlos Sanchez, and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Lewis. Like them, her body was never found. Pine Rock Ridge was forced to shut down soon after the incident, sued into financial oblivion by Jessica's father, Harvey Stawski.

The cold case of the Pine Rock Ridge campers is now more myth than tragedy, especially among elementary school students. Every year, children pass down the tale of Jessica Stawski, drowned by the Deep Lake Lurker. Some claim it's Deep Lake's own Loch Ness monster. Others say the Lurker is the previous victim, bound to the lake until they pull another victim to the bottom. The children's tale gained traction in conspiracy theory circles when Pine Rock Ridge recently opened back up under new management—and it gained the attention of the Latchkeys when Camp Counselor Emily Beaumont stopped by the house on Rodenbecker Street, asking them to look into the disappearance of her former best friend.

**Pose the following to a Latchkey of your choice:** *You know the Lurker is real because you were almost drowned by it, though you didn't get a good look. Why are you still alive?*

## QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

**Question:** Is the Deep Lake Lurker a horrid beast or a transformed Jessica Stawski? (Complexity: 4)

**Opportunity:** Unlock the next appropriate Question.

**Question:** If it's a horrid beast, where is the creature's lair? (Complexity: 4)

**Opportunity:** Resolve the mystery by finding the bodies of the missing children. Then, if you wish, find a way to contain the Deep Lake Lurker OR destroy it.

**Question:** If it's a transformed Jessica Stawski, how does the lake choose its victims? (Complexity: 4)

**Opportunity:** Resolve the mystery by confronting Jessica Stawski, and then performing a ritual to break the curse on the lake.

## MOMENTS

- > A Side Character takes a swig from their water bottle, then chokes, coughing up far more water than they drank.
- > A Latchkey catches their reflection in the lake, distorted by ripples until it looks like they no longer have a face.
- > Someone screams as a child tumbles down a hill, though staff members are distracted and do not seem to immediately notice.
- > A group of campers skips stones along the lake. A hand reaches out and catches one.
- > Stones piled into a cairn, each one containing the names of the missing kids in unsteady handwriting.
- > Three kids go swimming while the lifeguards are off duty, water wings and rubber fins catching the sunlight.

## THE KEY OF THE SHUDDER

- Each Latchkey narrates a flashback to something fun that happened one summer at Pine Rock Ridge. Why does the memory now make you flinch?

## THE DEEP LAKE LURKER

The Deep Lake Lurker is a water-bound creature of indeterminate shape and form; exact features will have to be discovered and determined by the Latchkeys. Its area of influence seems to extend only to the waters near Pine Rock Ridge, or at the very least, people have only been reported missing near the campsite. While the Deep Lake Lurker cannot leave the lake, it is strong enough to pull people beneath the water, even from shore. It also exerts a powerful supernatural influence over those it has marked, always drawing its victims back to Deep Lake one way or another through **The Next Victim** (see: Dangers).

If the Deep Lake Lurker is a beast, then it is a calculating and animalistic predator. It is dangerous, it is old, and it is insatiably hungry. It cannot be reasoned with. If the Deep Lake Lurker is really a transformed Jessica Stawski, then the Deep Lake Lurker is a cunning hunter with a human mind, though one that is ultimately young, hurt, and scared. She can be reasoned with to some degree, but she ultimately will do anything to find peace, even if it means having a Latchkey or Side Character take her place.

## If the Latchkeys ignore the Deep Lake Lurker...

After so long of the camp being abandoned, the creature is feral and desperate. The Deep Lake Lurker begins abducting the campers, this time at a more rapid pace than in years prior. Side Characters go missing, and their bodies are never recovered. Deep Lake as a whole grows more dangerous, and many popular tourist destinations all around the lake grow vacant as its reach expands.

## DANGERS

### Ambush Predator

The Deep Lake Lurker can pull people underwater at any time, whether it is from shore, from an overhanging balcony, while they are swimming, or by tipping over kayaks and canoes. Even if the Latchkeys escape its clutches, being submerged in this way counts for the purposes of The Next Victim.

### The Next Victim

The Deep Lake Lurker is looking for the next person to drag beneath the waves, either to consume them or to force the Latchkey to take its place. The first time a Latchkey enters Deep Lake, they gain the Condition: The Next Victim. If another Latchkey enters Deep Lake later on, the Condition is removed from the first Latchkey and is added to the second. Only one Latchkey can have this Condition at a time; in the event that multiple Latchkeys enter Deep Lake within a similar time frame, the one with the most Keys of Desolation marked gains the Condition.

While a Latchkey has this Condition, they replace **The Pure White Signal** with the following: *You find yourself walking to the banks of Deep Lake, and your feet do not stop even when your head dips below the water and you can no longer breathe. Tell the Keeper to play a white Odyssey Tape and then retire this character.* The Next Victim can only be cleared after the Deep Lake Lurker is contained or destroyed. Note that it is possible that the Latchkeys will resolve the mystery without doing either, thus making The Next Victim a permanent Condition.

### Billy James, the camp owner

A mustache that belongs in the 70s. T-shirt with the sleeves cut off. Orange Crocs. Billy bought the campgrounds at auction for a fraction of their true price when they went up for sale. While he renovated the rundown parts, he largely runs Pine Rock Ridge without many changes in protocol. He believes the cold case to be an unfortunate part of the past, and he does not cooperate with "so-called private investigators" as he believes it to no longer be part of his legal responsibilities. He will threaten to call the authorities on any trespassers.

**Quote:** *"Tell you what. I'll give you the same spiel I gave the last guy who came here. We didn't find anything when we were digging up the foundations. Or when we repaired the boathouse. Or when we redid the cafeteria. So, you can either buy the day pass for the public part of the camp, or you can get back in your car, or I can pick up this phone and call some folks. Do we have a deal?"*

## LOCATIONS

### × Cabin 7 - Loon

Wooden bunk-beds built into the cabin walls. Crumpled up sleeping bags in pinks, purples, and reds. Hair-care sets and fingernail polish strewn about. An old TV and VCR on a rolling stand.

**Paint the Scene:** *Jessica supposedly slept in Loon Cabin. How do the girls currently staying here show that they would rather be sleeping anywhere else?*

**Special Rule:** The first time the Latchkeys watch an Odyssey tape in Loon, they each take the Condition: I Dream of Deep Lake. Thereafter, they each have regular dreams of wading into the lake and making an offering to the deep waters. Ask each Latchkey what kind of offering they make in the dream. I Dream of Deep Lake can only be cleared if the Latchkey wades into the lake and makes this offering in real life (or a close approximation of the offering). Once the Condition is cleared, they can unmark **The Chromatic Desert** and **The Wandering Monolith** if either are marked.

### Pinecone Hall, a mess hall

Long tables with stackable chairs. Prayers hung up on walls in a mixture of Christian and bastardized Native American faiths from the Southwest. An overabundance of fish wall hangings. Pinecone Hall has an open air deck that hangs over Deep Lake alongside the indoor dining space.

**Paint the Scene:** *The food here seems a bit... nutritionally suspect. What's on the menu?*

### The boathouse

Kayaks and canoes stacked in neat rows. A fresh coat of paint over the rust. Paddles and life jackets strewn about the floor.

**Paint the Scene:** *What indicates to you that the lax boathouse policies haven't really changed since you attended camp?*

### Black Rock Beach

White sand beaches formed from imported sand. Slippery dark rocks large enough to climb onto. A cordoned off swimming area, marked by buoys and a white and blue rope.

**Paint the Scene:** *What is your best—or worst—memory of swimming here?*

### Blue Marsh Loop, a walking trail

Well-worn footpath with wooden markers. Names and lovesick woes intermittently carved into trees. Water licking at eroded rock and soil.

**Paint the Scene:** *Children and tweens come out here to escape the less than watchful eyes of camp counselors. What have they been trying to hide?*

# ..... THE DEEP LAKE LURKER .....

## LOCATIONS (continued)

### Deep Lake

Dark waters, deep enough to not see the bottom. A calm, still surface. A stark absence of mosquitos, dragonflies, and other bugs.

**Special Rule:** The first time any Latchkey enters Deep Lake, they gain the Condition: The Next Victim (see Dangers).

**Paint the Scene:** *Just from touching the water, how do you know the lake is greedy?*

### The swimming pier

Floating wood and plastic raft, anchored to the bottom of the lake with a chain. Corroded metal ladder. Swimming toys and goggles piled into one corner.

**Paint the Scene:** *This pier is the last place Jessica Stawski was seen alive. What makes you think you are being watched as you approach her makeshift grave?*

## SIDE CHARACTERS

### Harvey Stawski, a desperate father

Gone gray early, from stress. Five o'clock shadow. Worn green and brown baseball cap with an embroidered sturgeon. Harvey Stawski was the owner of a successful car manufacturing plant. The loss of his daughter, Jessica, changed Harvey almost overnight into an anxious and despondent man. He has spent the last eleven years searching for answers, using up all of his savings to hire private investigators and sue Pine Rock Ridge's previous—and current—owners. He's frequently found arguing with a member of the camp staff. He and Mary, his ex-wife, have been divorced for seven years, as the toll of their daughter's death broke their marriage.

**Quote:** *"I just want answers. Who let my little girl go out swimming all on her own? Who wasn't watching her? Where'd she go? Give me some answers, damn you!"*

### Mary Stawski-Bell, a tired nurse

Dark circles under dull gray eyes. Blue nurse's scrubs. Bulky orthopedic shoes. Mary has tried to little avail to move on from her daughter's death. Her marriage did not survive the trauma, and she drinks heavily when not at work. Part of her still cares about Harvey, however, and she will try and talk sense into him when she's around. She comes to the camp once a year to pay her respects.

**Quote:** *"You know, sixty, seventy years ago, this would've been normal. Losing a kid. Granted, it made everyone angry and mean. Certainly made me angry and mean. Angry and mean at God and the world and that bitchass campsite."*

### Emily Beaumont, a camp counselor

Blue and purple dyed hair, tied up in a ponytail. Decorated vest with the Pine Rock Ridge logo across the back. Big sunglasses. Emily and Jessica were best friends as children, and Emily was one of the last people to see her alive. Now in her mid twenties, she has returned to the camp as an experienced counselor. The job pays well enough, but Emily is clearly haunted by her experiences, refusing to go anywhere near the water.

However, she is willing to help the Latchkeys in any way she can stand to.  
**Quote:** *"Now remember kids, pack extra snacks and water while you're on the trails, and always keep next to your buddy. That's what Piney Pinecone says! Two and two, stick together like glue! ...god I hate that stupid rhyme."*

### Joseph "Joey" Keene, the head lifeguard

Well tanned skin. Dirty blonde hair pushed back by a visor. Bright red (and very short) swim trunks. Joey is a few years older than Emily and was working as a junior lifeguard the day Jessica went missing. He's worked other lifeguarding positions around Deep Lake since, always with a laid back attitude, and is a well-known fixture across the town's pools and beaches. He knows there's something off about the water, but he doesn't care to elaborate much beyond that.

**Quote:** *"Never swim alone. That's the first thing we teach. Never go off alone, even if you know what you're doing, even if you're a strong swimmer. We've already seen that this lake doesn't like giving up its dead. No need to add to the tally."*

### Josephine Gonzalez, a soft-spoken tween

Braids tied off with butterfly clips. Striped shirt and bright pink skirt. Kid-sized hiking boots. Josephine is ten years old, and being away from her family is taking its toll, making her a little skittish at best. She is shy, but she sees a lot. Josephine completely believes in the legends of the Deep Lake Lurker, and she will be scared of any Latchkey who is The Next Victim.

**Quote:** *"I saw it. Last night. The light near the docks was flickering, and I looked out, and there was a fish head sticking out! I haven't told anyone else, though. People will just think I'm crazy!"*

### Daniel Kwan, a curious child

Finger paint under the nails. A basket full of rocks and leaves. Disposable camera around a lanyard. Daniel is eight, the youngest age Pine Rock Ridge will take for sleepaway campers. He loves exploring and showing up in all the wrong places. More than anything, he wants to get a photo of the Deep Lake Lurker for show and tell at school this coming fall.

**Quote:** *"I've been saving the film for this. Just gotta sneak out after dark and snap a quick picture. Just like that! Just gotta not wake up anyone. And not fall asleep before everyone else. Again."*

### Other campers and counselors

There are lots of children and tweens at Pine Rock Ridge, ranging in age from eight to thirteen. They are curious about the Latchkeys, and they might talk about the Deep Lake Lurker if pressed. Camp counselors range from sixteen to mid-twenties, and are largely looking for any excuse to take a break. Some names, if you need them: Lauren, Collin, Samantha, José, Connor, Maddie, Patrick, Kayleen.

## REWARDS

- A conversation with either Harvey or Mary Stawski on Deep Lake's banks where you tell a story about your time at Pine Ridge Rock. Unmark a Key of the Child you have already answered. This Reward is only available to a Latchkey who has the Condition: The Next Victim and the requirements to clear it were not met.
- Emily Beaumont becomes a recurring Side Character; you get 1 extra Clue on the Meddling Move when you consult her about matters related to Deep Lake's natural environments.
- A Pine Rock Ridge-branded multitool; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A lifeguard whistle; add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.
- A memento from the investigation; ask another Latchkey what it is and then add it to Your Corner of the House.

## CLUES

- Pictures of the four missing children, each containing the same item (pick one: a strange idol/woven bracelet/pendant necklace/something else).
- Two rows of bite marks in a floating branch.
- A glowing light submerged deep under the lake.
- Wet, undulating flesh slapping against the rocks.
- A ritual circle, half hidden by the murky waters.
- A wailing, vaguely feminine voice coming from the lake late at night.
- Three large posts in the water, each carved with a different symbol.
- Jessica's diary, filled with the same repeating phrase: *"I am next, I am next, I am next!"*
- A rumor that a Side Character was dragged underwater, then thrown back out.
- Scratch marks indicative of long claws somewhere (pick one: the side of a building/someone's back/inside a canoe/somewhere else).
- A water fowl, bitten in half.
- If a Latchkey has the Condition: The Next Victim, a lock of their hair is noticeably missing.
- A map of Deep Lake Nature Preserve, covered in symbols (pick one: pentagrams/eyes/fish scales/something else).
- A path-like gap in the weeds that choke the bottom of the lake.
- The bones of a human finger, perfectly cleaned.
- Some campers mention preparing for the annual "sunken ceremony."
- If a Latchkey has **The Wandering Monolith** marked, a long-lasting yellow haze hangs over the lake.
- Rotting organic refuse—fish, plants, human flesh—washed up on shore.
- A collection of soaked children's toys, lovingly cared for (pick one: Cabbage Patch Kids/G.I. Joe action figures/stuffed animals/something else).
- The wind blowing over the lake whispers, "Help me!"

## NOTES
