

Death by landscape

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The story by Margaret Atwood entitled “ Death by Landscape” is about a woman named Lois that has been haunted by the loss of a childhood friend named Lucy while camping in the Canadian wilderness as an adolescent. Lucy’s disappearance was very mysterious because she was never found. This leaves Lois with a feeling of waiting. Waiting to hear something a noise or a voice, something that will let her know what happened to her childhood friend. She is able to recall a time before the incident, but now because of the disappearance that time is as lost as what Lucy is.

She always wonders what happen and why. Were there signs to let her know along the way that day that would have shown something was going to happen? The character Lois was consumed in guilt because of the incident, which shaped her whole life. The beginning of the story told of how Lois collected landscape painting, some very valuable, while married. They were the main point of the story. She bought them because she felt a need for them and at first she could not put her finger as to the reason why. “ She bought them because she wanted them.

She wanted something that was in them, although she could not have said at the time what it was. ” She felt as though someone was looking back. That someone was Lucy. When Lucy disappeared in the wilderness the wilderness essentially symbolized the young girl’s disappearance. Lois projected her friend into the landscape painting where she could keep her close because of her guilt of what happened so long ago. When Lucy disappeared she felt everyone was blaming her. Only the two girls were on the trip to the bluff with no one else around.

Even Lois wonders why she heard nothing but the brief expression of surprise she had heard as she had gone a little ways down the path to use the bathroom. Afterwards when they finally made the trip back to camp 2 days later Lois had an encounter with the camp owner and councilor that probably did not help matter much either. Lois was in shock and sitting in the office waiting for her parents to pick her up when Cappie questions her once again about the incident basically accusing her of possibly having something to do with the disappearances.

As with any death the question why is something present on a grieving mind. But when it happens to a young girl and with no closure, I believe, it could be very traumatic. But Cappie, the camp owner, is also trying to understand what happen. Never had there been an incident like this and most of all the consequences are just as shocking. The camp she owned was already having problems because of the war the character referred to, I was thinking maybe WWII, but now the camp would close and later it did.

Lois later knew why Cappie did what she did. She was desperate, like herself, for answers for reasons. Leaving no stone unturned yet this incident in my opinion left the girl, Lois, with a guilt that would not disappear. She felt that all the other children placed blame on her. Wondering if she could really do something as terrible as push the girl off of the cliffs and Lois even admits that maybe they weren't thinking this but the seed of guilt had already been planted and the collection of paintings were the result of this guilt.

The character Lois talks of how she can barely remember having her children or even what her deceased husband looks like, but still vividly remembers what happen on their canoe trip down that river so long ago. Lois hasn't put

a closure to Lucy's death and without knowing that chapter of the story will never finish or in Lois's case the painting will never stop having the empty sound of nothing. Just like it was when she realized something had happened to Lucy. She has projected what happened in those paintings.

“ And these paintings are not landscape paintings. Because there aren't any landscapes up there, not in the old, tidy European sense, with a gentle hill, a curving river, a cottage, a mountain in the background, a golden evening sky. Instead there's a tangle, a receding maze, in which you can become lost almost as soon as you step off the path” (pg. 118) The character Lois believes that each painting holds Lucy, even though you really can't see her she is usually just out of reach, but still there. This is created from her sense of loss and unknown.

The belief that there must be clues there must be something that will tell what really happened to the young Lucy. “ Everyone has to be somewhere, and this is where Lucy is. She is in Lois's apartment, in the holes that open inwards on the wall, not like windows but like doors. She is here. She is entirely alive. ” This thought must give Lois comfort for a loss under such conditions at the very young age of 13. The author of the story used the wilderness as a symbol of consuming loss. The wilderness consumed Lucy and also consumed her in the depths of feeling loss of answers as to why it happened.