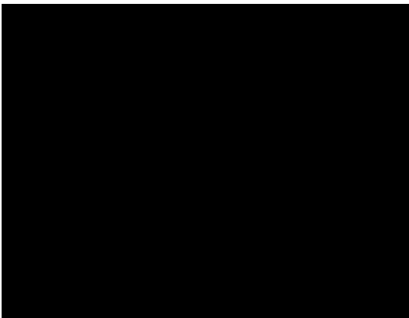


# Somewhere Close by and Far Away



Trout Fish

**1 1 1. 1 1 1. Book 1/**-----

### 1. CAST LIKE A STONE, ONLY TO LAND FAR AWAY

I awoke to the smell of blue-green spruce and sea salt, on a sandy shore so far from anywhere I had ever been before. There wasn't much for me to do besides start walking, so I picked a direction and walked a little, then picked another and walked that way along the beach. Eventually, I came across a stream flowing from the in-land forest, and getting a good feeling, I started to trek inward, inland, alongside the stream.

### 2. WALKING IN THE FOREST,

As I went further and further into the forest, I recalled how much I used to walk around the city with steep hills I lived in before I woke up in this strange place. I enjoyed the walk, to say the least, and the more I walked, the more it felt like that flower there, or the bend in the stream here, were deeply familiar, I felt like I had seen these green leaves and gray rocks along the stream bed.

### 3. A FOREST MEETING,

Lost in thought, I hardly noticed the three figures who sat upon chair-like stones next to a particularly nice part of the river. I heard something deeply electronic, and it startled me to find myself facing an unlikely trio. A hunk of amorphous metal sat next to a mass of militarized rubber and kelp, while a small leaf, upon closer inspection, revealed a small ant wearing a sailor's cap. The kelp thing hailed me and I realized it was merely someone in a diving suit. I asked them where I was and who they were and they each told me more or less in unison that this was a place of waiting and that there was nothing for me to do but wait and eventually I would be carried away, back home or somewhere else. I tried to protest, but the metal hunk bleeped and the small ant began to yell polemics. The ant was especially eager to share its story, so seeing no other option, I sat down and thought that I might wait to figure out where I was.

**2 2 2. 2 2 2. Book 2\**

---

**Preamble to the First INTERLUDE,**

And the Small Ant  
Who seemed so fiery  
With pelagic passions  
Leaped at the chance  
To tell the first tale  
Dancing around its  
Lily-pad Catamaran

The Ant's Story  
—RUE THE MARITIME ANT—  

---

1, MY CAP,

I am just a simple small ant. My whole life changed the day I found a tiny sailor's cap to fit my ant head. In the golden sunshine of the morning, the glided anchor sewed to the front reflected specks of yellow arum. From that moment, I knew I wouldn't taste the dirty green grass of the colony floor, but the windswept salty bites sailing the open sea would bring me. The moment I put on that cap, I was a maritime ant, even if the cost was ex-communication from the colony.

2, MY CRAFT, THE S.S. LIL'PUT,

My craft was a sturdy beast. She was a lily pad I retrofitted with a keel made of bark and a wheel made of small twigs. A mast of a stick, and small lead for a sail. The S.S. Lil' Put was mine and she did me good.

3, A MISSION FOR MY SINS,

Soon after setting off in my sturdy ship, I began to complete a checklist of any and all items I might need as a maritime ant. Suddenly, I remembered that I read somewhere that a good sailor always has two or three good wooden barrels on board storing one thing or another, this provision or that. I quickly recalled my cooperage classes and fashioned together a barrel from leftover bark from the keel. All I needed was something to fill the barrel with... namely those provisions. That's when I saw the large brown figure sitting on the shore among the cattails.

4, ROGER THE BEAR,

Early every morning, as I would soon find out, Roger the bear lumbered over to his little spot on the shore and sat down. This was the only time Roger ever felt peace for he was a large and formidable beast, old and not nearly as wise as he thought he out to be. Roger would look around at the trees swaying in

the gentle breeze, at the frogs hopping into the pond with their frog swim trunks on, and would listen to the song of It All. That same smooth wind Roger enjoyed brought my craft close by one day and I hailed him despite my fear. Roger sat down the jar he held and I recognized it to be a honey pot. I asked him if I might have a drop for my bark barrels, to act as provisions. Roger said he'd never seen an ant sailing a boat before. I told him that I built the craft myself and that I had turned my back on the colony I once knew as home, just to be able to taste the salty freedom of open waters. Roger paused, looked at the trees swaying, at the sun coming in through the leaves, and said he understood. Using a massive claw, he flung a drop of honey into my bark barrel.

A successful first mission, as I had gained much more than some provisions that day.

**Preamble to the Second INTERLUDE,**

And the Robot  
with a great mechanical heave  
printed a scroll  
with its story  
that I picked up  
and read aloud  
to the others:



The RoBot's Story  
—LEGEND OF THE LAKE—

---

1, OPENING, PROGRAMMING,

When the code was originally plugged into the back of the robot everyone just assumed it would work, no problem, no questions. However, what happened was something else entirely. For a few moments, the robot whirred as the code transferred. Then the lights blinked red two times, two times in quick succession when the transfer was done. A quiet ding and everyone started at the metal form, not really humanoid but rather blocky and lumpy at the same time. There was more humming and buzzing and then the creaky thing stood up on its 'legs'. It was in the center of a circle of people, some professionals, others not. They were all deep in a cave and inside the makeshift 'science' wing where these trials and experiments took place more and more frequently.

The Robot stood up and then recited a line from some scripture. The Robot held out its metal claws and spoke:

"And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.'<sup>1</sup>

2, ESCAPE, DESERT TEACHINGS,

Many months from the initial programming, the Robot stood upon the edge of a cliff of a canyon. Red and orange and brown and amber and anxious with the wind blowing across its metal ears, the Robot shed a tear. Solitude in the desert promised understanding, but years can pass on the foundation of false promises and strong convictions. The Robot was never supposed to escape, or leave, and it was never supposed to cry, these things were mechanically and functionally impossible, but the Robot was inspired, so it wept from sunrise to maroon sunset.

---

1. (Note: MARK 8:23-24)

### 3, THE LAKE, THE END,

Many years after the Robot lived in the desert, and many moons after it stood on top of snowy mountains, the Robot sat next to a lake, so big and wide and deep blue, the Robot analyzed it to be an ocean. Time went on and joints rusted, but the Robot never gave up hope.

**Preamble to the Third INTERLUDE,**

And the Subaquatic Diver  
with a pleasant sigh  
stood up wiping  
some of the soaking  
kelp from rubbery shoulders  
and began to speak  
the last story:

The Diver's Story  
—IT HAS BEEN TWO CLOSE TO THREE YEARS\* —

1. \*ibid,

since we last talked.

2. SHING THE RATTLE OF THE SABER,

A fistfight is nothing compared to getting caught in the crossfire underwater and in a war you don't care about or really understand. I know that it doesn't take a genius to fall in love; I think the dumber you are the more love you will feel (up to a point, all is a balance, etc etc etc).

3. AT THE PULL OFF,

Before I was sent on a submarine to the bottom of the ocean, to launch torpedos and clean barnacles off the rigging of a megastructure, I had once taken a friend to the parkway. You could see the entire mountain our village stood upon, viewing it from across the valley, the parkway providing a good vantage point so high in the air.

At certain points, the valley disappears as the parkway ducks behind smaller mountains and the trees obscure any view of the village. My favorite section of the parkway was tucked behind a mountain with a pull off where you can park your car and get out and walk across a bridge. There's a trailhead and a small stream and we parked and walked across the small stream using the bridge.

4. PAPER IN THE WIND,

I was trying so hard to fall in love with her but she was smarter than me in so many ways so she ended it even before we got to the parkway. "But," I told myself, "then why did she agree to come on a drive with you?" I swear I saw love in her eyes and then disappointment when I couldn't say anything and anger when I told her exactly how I felt. We never kissed but her hugs made me see a golden sunrise, every morning.

5. IN THE PRESENT DAY,

And then, I saw her walk into the bar, I love her and I'm going to ask her to dance, I'm dodging the crossfire, I'm hit, dying underwater, gunshot wound.

**333.333.Book 3\**-----

## 1. APPROACHING THE END,

Having heard their stories, I offered up my own, but the Diver shook its head and told me it was ok. I asked again where I was, and the Robot told me I already knew. I asked if I was dreaming, and the small maritime ant, who I admittedly loved the character of, said close but no cigar. The metal Robot turned to face me once more and told me that I was simply Somewhere Close but Far Away and that I should lie down.

## 2. THE ENDING,

I woke up in my bed and looked out at the hilly city I lived in. I looked at my hat and my desk with my books on it. I got up and started to write down what surely must have happened. There was something about that dream that told me those stories were telling me what I needed to hear. I just had to keep writing to figure it out. So I kept writing at my desk in the hilly city, thinking about the sun hitting the leaves outside my window swaying in the gentle breeze.

a poem  
by Trout Fish:

I heard our Fall  
whisper today, looking outside  
my window –  
im on break, my  
time has come,  
my coat -rung  
so dance with me  
all night long  
while these leaves  
wave us on