

# **LAKEVIEW ARKANSAS**



# LAKEVIEW ARKANSAS

THE UNKNOWN PARADISE

Emmanuel E. Egar



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*Lakeview Arkansas: The Unknown Paradise*

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PART ONE

**RAPTURES**





CHAPTER ONE

# **THE NOBILITY OF PLANTS**



Whoever thinks plants have no nobility has only to take a trip to Arkansas, USA. To a little obscure town: Lakeview. Lakeview is unique and even peculiar. Unique because the town has no name. And yet, it has a name that it draws from the lake. Peculiar because of that funny synergy that unites the town and the lake. Without this curious synergy, the town would not exist. Without it, the lake would not exist. How do we separate the lake from the town or the town from the lake without inflicting mutual damage to both? This reminds us of the beauty from W.B. Yeats: How can we know the dancer from the dance?

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What brings the mysterious and almost mythical beauty to this town is the lake and its paradise of plants. These plants have a natural nobility. A beauty and nobility like the Mona Lisa. These plants sit naked on the belly of the lake, all spread out almost with geometrical distances between each other. Their shapes and even demeanor are simply beyond words. They sit naked on the lake like the Mona Lisa sitting on a flat pavement, naked, with her back to the curious audience. These plants should be fresh because they sit on water with all the natural nourishments. Yet, they appear starved and malnourished. Malnourished because each plant has a large hole, a furrow that runs through the stem, the body. And yet, even though starved and malnourished, they refuse to die! Why would death not come to these plants, malnourished and yet noble? How can these plants die? And why should they die?

Any traveler, artist, poet, or novelist should be excited from observing and consuming that sumptuous beauty from this paradise of plants and vegetation on the lake. But instead of joy, I am conflicted.

I am conflicted because of that morbid nobility of the plants and vegetation on the lake. Conflicted because despite all the apparent beauty of the scenery, that beauty seems severely inflicted on unwilling participants. It seems like an angry beauty that questions and even mocks itself.

The trees sitting there, erect and grim, respecting no wind nor thunder like the angry faces of a defeated and angry army. That morbidity is contagious because even I too became a victim!

Maybe I was conflicted in Lakeview because I came with a mind-set expecting something different. I came here expecting the childish, joyful, bouncy, and almost abnormal jubilation of the daffodils in William Wordsworth's poem on the lake. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."



CHAPTER TWO

# **THE SHANTY FISHERMEN**





**W**hat motivates a man to move his family from the comfort of their home and drive 300 miles to a lake buried deep in the country?

The motivations may be different, but the endgame is the same. The endgame may be the excitement of the adventure and a joyful camaraderie of the fishermen. One motivation may be breaking away from the week's boredom. Another may be the curious anticipation of the bountiful feast at the end of the harvest. But whatever the motivation, there is preparation, because as every footballer knows, the game is usually won two hours before the game: in the warm up, in the revisions, and in the pep talk! The preparations have their own rituals, nuances, and even perversions.

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Every fisherman took meticulous pains in the preparation for the trip. The first was cleaning and sanitizing the truck for the kill. The boat and transient houses were tacked to the trucks. Food was selectively picked; some cooked and some raw for three days of sustenance. Someone picked up the phone and summoned all the participants for the trip. It was like the sound of the bugle summoning gladiators to the Roman colosseum. Then there was time for prayers, with everyone praying to their gods. I say gods because there was a mixture of religions in the group. There were Christians, Jews, Muslims, and even Greek Orthodox! Here I must make an innocent comment: I do not know why people in the southern United States seem to have such fervent love or fear of God. Is it because of poverty or the lingering anxiety of slavery with all the fear, doubts, hopes, and anxieties about the dread of the master's whip? Does this not mean that the poor have more need for God because he alone seems to offer them their easy hope and sanctuary? Now, we will return to our places.

To the caravan of fishermen getting ready for their trip. And there is joy in their voices. Joy in their music. Joy watching the young, beautiful girls with bikini pants, hot pants, and see-through bras! There was joy even in the air as this crowd started their journey in the morning like a caravan of donkeys hustling for positions. And very soon the street and highway were furious with savage trucks hauling boats and loads like hungry tigers dragging home

their precious kill. You could hear the loud, riotous music like that of an angry or discordant orchestra. They drove for miles before they spotted a resting place: a pizza parlor! And here these pilgrim fishermen rushed into the restaurant like savage animals. Suddenly, the service was not fast enough! The food was not plenty enough! The servers were not plenty enough! But there was one thing they could all agree upon: The food was simply delicious. So they showered the servers with a flow of liberal tips! And the lake was only four miles away!

And as the fishermen sighted the lake from a distance, there were screams of laughter and joy. Screams that rose deliriously as they got to the bank of the lake. Screams that rose in intensity and scale, rising deliciously to a pitch! And the pitch, as any lover of the orchestra knows, is what draws the crowd to the music—the pitch calculatedly seems to control and shatter your balance like a carefully managed orgasm.

And yes! This musical pitch should remind the reader of that music from the samba!

The samba, a drum, is played only in one part of the world: in Lagos, Nigeria. It is music perfected by blind beggars who supply their music freely to every market stall in Oyingbo market. As these musicians approach the stalls, their music starts slowly, trying to discern the musical taste

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of the shop owner. Then it rises furiously and dramatically to a pitch! And at the pitch, the music suddenly cuts! And as listeners you wonder, why? Why inflict this terror, this pain? In Oyingbo market, the music stops so that it can go on! There may not be a rational explanation as to why the samba drummers cut the music at the pitch. But the pitch of the laughter and joy of the fishermen came from a mounting intensity from the highways. This intensity drew the fishermen deliberately to take part in a sumptuous feast at the master's table: the lake!

That evening, at the bank of the lake, the fishermen scuttled around capturing the best locations to lodge their trucks. But why are human beings so territorial? Because instinctively, they shared every piece of land around the lake—without boundaries—before they would start fishing. The scene was like the pioneers capturing and planting authority on innocent landscape. The fishing started ceremoniously with songs and roaring from boats on the lake. And when the first man caught a tinny catfish, he screamed and shouted as if he had just caught a whale. The joy of this first catch spread and reverberated from one part of the lake to the other like a miasma. But after this symbolic break there was silence. And the fishing continued like this for two days from sunup to sundown! But the painful thing about human joy is that it must come to an end. And Sunday evening was it.

The end also had its ritual, its anxieties, joys, and even pain. The fishermen made a big burning fire on the field. Sat all around it! Shared their joys, their stories, and their frustrations about the life they left in the city to which they must return! And I could hear the sad, nostalgic melancholy of Prufrock:

I shall wear white flannel trousers,  
and walk along the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing,  
each to each.  
I do not think that they will sing to me.

This fire party ended not with a prayer, but with a brave and stoic song by Frank Sinatra: "I did it my way!" On Monday morning, the boisterous sound and fury of the lake had died. Silenced! Dead! And it is that terror and pain of the silence that every great athlete dreads. That deadliness when all the screams and the shouts from the crowds suddenly stop: dead! Can they wait for another death?



CHAPTER THREE

# **THE WHITE FOGGY NIGHT**





**W**e lived on the bank of a Spread Sheet of white blanket lake. But this story is not about the structure or content of the lake. That should come later.

There were occasional drizzles and showers towards the early hours of the morning. And as if by invitation or impulse, these drizzles woke me. I looked out through the cracks of the crumbling window. And what did I expect to see? But what did I actually see or what was I unable to see? The lake, of course, with some mysterious plants growing out of its belly. But I had to be careful not to run into the skinny motor road that coiled along the bank of the lake.