

Skull Lake

A Writing Exercise

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this is part of my
Broken Stories Unfinished Dreams
series

But it's not really unfinished: completion was never important.
I certainly don't feel like trashing or throwing it out.
And since the web is the trashcan for all the aspiring artists of the world,
I say use it for what it is and post away...

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Lake of Skulls

by

Paul Stewart & Chris Riddel

*It's a real book, written and inked by somebody else (i.e. not me: Paul Stewart & Chris Riddel if the cover was any indication). I never did read the book. What I did was find the book at the library in the free book pile. And I just loved the way the book looked, the heft, the feel, the graphics, the glossy hardcover, the way it fit in my hand, and, of course, the pictures on the inside. And while I was holding it, in those first few minutes, I said to myself, this, This, THIS! **THIS!!!** is what I want one of my books to look like someday. It just felt right. And so, as a writing exercise, I looked at the pictures and started to write my own story, based therein. I'm not saying it's a great story. And I forget exactly how long the book is, but I stopped maybe a half or a third of the way through. But as a writing exercise, I can heartily recommend doing something along these lines. And no, I never did read the book. But as a book, **Lake of Skulls** looked spot on like what I wanted a fantasy novel to look like in my misspent science fiction reading youth.*

So, once again, this is just a made up story based on pictures. Want to know the real story, check out the real book. I seriously, never did bother to read the text. But then, as I like to say, I'm a writer; not a reader, so...

*And I'm fairly certain that if I removed the above paragraph from this posting, you would never know the source of inspiration. That is to say, this does not (IMHO) impinge on another's copyright: fair use, fanfic, homage, I'm not selling or making any money on this, and all that. And I have no reason to believe the text below has anything to do with the real story. So really all I'm doing is identifying one of my many influences. And for a book I never read, *Lake of Skulls* influenced me greatly.*

Skull Lake

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In the small farming village where I grew up there was a lake whose waters were murky and cold. It is said that the island in the middle was the scene of a tragic murder, and if you set foot on it, you could still see the bones.

The island was called Skull Island.

And the lake was called Skull Lake.

No one ever swam there.

And if they could help it, no one ever went there.

Whenever there was a scary story to tell, late at night, around the fire, the stories would invariably include Skull Island, Skull Lake, and the godless Ogre that was said to leave there. It was said there was nothing the Ogre would rather do than feast on a small boy or a young girl who happened to get too close to his lake after dark when he was about.

One day a traveling Knight, a Hero, came to our town. Of course, we all knew the reason he was a traveling Knight. It was because he hadn't yet become a Hero.

I don't think either he or us thought his luck would change and most folks just thought he'd stir up trouble with the Ogre: trouble that he -- the would be Hero -- wouldn't be able finish.

The villagers tried to scare the knight off -- telling him of all the others who had fallen before him. It looked like it would work. The hero got on his horse and road away.

Virginia -- the millers daughter, the closest our village had to a Princess -- was sad to see him go. She had hoped that this would be her chance, for that “Happily Ever After.”

She was alone in this dream.

Her father just laughed.

Unfortunately, the hero had good hearing (tuned in for young daughters), so he came back and took a room at the inn.

The Inn Keeper’s daughter... well, let’s just be honest, she was better looking than Virginia, and a lot less pretentious. She maybe served the Would-Be-Hero one too many free brews.

He started to get drunk.

He started to have delusions of grandeur.

He started to think that maybe the stories of old applied to him.

When the Inn Keeper asked him to pay his bill, the Hero punched him. He tried to apologize, say that he thought the man looked like an Ogre, but the damage had been done... and the old man was knocked out cold.

The Old Crone -- you know the type, the type that inhabits these silly tales -- she told the Hero he had no choice now. It was fate. He had to go after the Ogre that lived on the island in the center of the lake named after the skull.

The hero agreed, said that he would, but first he needed to eat -- some stew. I swear this is true. I was sitting right there. An emergency? An Ogre? Just wait, while I have some stew?

He wasn’t going to be much of a Hero.

But when he was full, he looked proud.

And he seemed pleased.

“So the Ogre?”

“The Ogre.”

And into the night, they both did go -- on the winding Skull Road that led to Skull Lake that in the middle sat Skull Island on which there were skulls.

Or so I would have thought. I followed them you see, but to the Island he did not go, nor to the Lake, simply to the Old Crone shack, where he slept like a log. Cozy and comfortable in a bed of feathers that kept on getting into his nose...

And then, I stopped at page fifty or so...

The real:

Lake of Skulls

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Is probably a lot more coherent...

And, you know, probably continues all the way till the end...