

The Fan

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The summers blend together now. The years slip from memory. My mother hated bug spray. I remember that much. I'll never forget the fan in my bedroom window. It didn't help on humid nights. The breeze always failed to find the bottom bunk. But its hum held my secrets. And if I listened closely, I could hear the giggles of ghost stories and apologies from long, water-logged days. I told my cousin, Sarah, there were eels in the lake that day. It was a harmless prank. But that fan huffed a pattern all night. A constant drone. Sleep dodged me.

The next night was cooler. Or maybe it was the next summer. The fan masked the sound of my grandmother stumbling into my bedroom. Sarah and I woke to the beacon of a flashlight. I was hit with a burst of chilly air as soon as I stood. She spoke of an intruder, a large spider on the center of her sofa bed in the living room.

"Have any clean sheets?" she asked.

We quietly followed her and stood in horror at the sight of a doused sheet and a freshly used can of bug spray. It smelled as if someone mistook a can of deet for a can of room freshener.

"I hope it won't wake your mother." Grandma stated what we were all thinking.

I glanced toward the sound of heavy snoring down the hall.

I whispered, "Stay here. I'll get everything we need." I meant it, too.

The cabin had a soul of its own after dusk. And I knew every corner. I had extensive experience in undetected galivanting. I took the mission seriously. I returned with a fresh sheet and detergent.

Terror stole our breaths when the sounds of my snoring mother stopped for a moment, yielding to the faint sounds of the fan. We stood, frozen, until the snoring gradually continued. We laughed, small at first, but it spread like the water on the bedsheet as we washed it in the sink. We kept quiet as we snuck out to drape the sheet on the line to dry. We were hushed enough to hear that familiar hum from my window, barely audible under the cacophony of katydids. I came back into my room and stood in front of the fan, warm with stifled laughter. And then the blades lulled me to sleep.