

THE RIVER

To celebrate the end of the school year, we took a trip to the river. My father drove us. It was only a few of us. We packed a picnic lunch,

Where we met the river, it emptied into a lake. This was hardly an ideal area for swimming. It was more of a scenic excursion. It was nice to get away. The temperature was not too hot so that made it the get away more hospitable. Later in the season, and we would have to deal with insects. As it was the area seemed teeming with life. Where we lived was much more severe. We pretended that we were in the tropics.

I loved to look at the water. I didn't mind wading in and getting wet. But I had never learned how to swim so I had a natural fear of going too deep. Where we stopped was too marshy to be a good beach location. But it didn't seem to be too big a deal to dip our feet in. I rolled up my pants and walked a little ways in. The waters were cleansing me of my former confusion. I was celebrating life.

On the farm, there were a host of creatures to pique our curiosity. But everything was much more ordered. There, the swarm was a disruption of that order. By the river, things were so much different. I couldn't contain all this life in my mind. I did my best to take snapshots with my brain. And I tried to keep track of what I saw.

After going in the water, I felt a little bit of a chill. I found a towel and dried off. Then I wrapped myself in a blanket. I feared that I might get sick

"Are you doing well?" asked Helen.

She brought me a sandwich and a drink.

"I feel OK."

"I wish that I could swim across to the other side."

"The currents are pretty treacherous out there."

I was offering her a warning. Helen didn't like to heed the advice of others. Besides, I was her younger sister. So what did I know?

"Nothing scares me."

"You didn't even go in the water."

"I didn't feel like it."

Helen was able to make every occasion uniquely her own. I let her babble on.

"If you're really so excited, you should test the waters."

Helen was a pretty good swimmer. She was daring in whatever she did. She would almost taunt me to follow her lead. I knew what would happen if I drifted out to far. If I got pulled under, I would be done for. This was such an immediate confrontation with my fear. Helen only saw it as a challenge.

"I've heard of ships going down during storms."

"Alida, you're making that up."

"No, really. I clipped the article from the newspaper. I can show you."

I don't think that even that would have been enough for her. She was completely on her own agenda. She had no room for my suggestions.

"If I wanted to, I could just swim across. And no one could stop me."

I wanted to inform her that we were never completely independent from the forces that

acted upon us. And in the water this lesson went doubly so. But Helen needed experience to be her teacher. That only made her more independent.

“Alida, what’s wrong.”

“Oh, it’s nothing.”

It wasn’t one of my dizzy spells. But I was feeling light-headed. With birds flying all around me, there was so much activity to keep track of. There were so many different plants. And I imagined the fish swirling around in the water. I was losing my concentration.

“I’m going to be all right.”

I pulled the blanket tighter around me. The day was warm, but it was not satisfying enough.

We had left the younger ones at home, It would have been too difficult trying to watch them around the water. They would have enjoyed the journey, but we could do that later in the summer.

I looked at the golden rod and high grasses. They almost seemed like rows of people. They were all beckoning to me. I jumped.

“There is something going on.”

“I just think that I’m tired.”

My breathing seemed a little halted. Perhaps, I was catching a cold.

Life seemed much more blurry here. Everything was thrown into the mix. It seemed difficult to maintain my stability. Anything could happen. It was a place of shared biologies. I felt infected.

I couldn’t explain it to Helen. She only saw this as another scene from her show. It wasn’t affecting her in a deep way. She wished that a camera crew had accompanied her so that she could capture her time on film. My experience was much more organic. I could feel all this life getting under my skin. I was a little afraid. I felt as if I was in the midst of a lab where they created these freaky mutations. I felt as if I was included in the experiment.

Helen stood in front of me, posing. She distracted me from what was happening around us. That made me feel a little better for the time being.

I pretended that I was looking at a crane. And she made the most bird-like gestures. I did what I could to get her to follow my directions. Thus, she entertained me even more.

The river was teaching me a fundamental lesson about life. I had formerly thought about the actual conditions for existence as being much more rigid. I could notice similarities between sparrows and chipmunks. But the essential form of these different species was markedly distinct. Around the river, everything seemed more in flux. That feeling was much more disruptive than I noticed with all the changes that occurred with the oncoming of spring. It wasn’t as if dogs could metamorphose into horses. But each individual species seemed much more susceptible to any threats which affected its stability. Such a breakdown suggested that more severe conditions could indeed alter the nature of the species.

If I gave in to my imagination, I could simulate the very conditions that would transform the species. So the river offered hints of our primeval state. At the same time, the immovable nature of our experience was enough to insure that the individual did not diverge widely into a mutation. Around the river, there was this hint of something more variable. Even the possibility of disease could be so extreme that it would alter the balances of life.

I had to admit that the river seemed frightening. This was way beyond the power of its currents. It had a serious message about who we were. Left to the surrounding influences, we could easily succumb to the life-altering effects. That was why I could feel disease all around me. The marsh was like a cauldron that mixed together all substances that could poison life.

There was a sickeningly sweet appeal to staying here. This was totally the opposite of the asceticism that I had exposed myself to at church. We spread out the blanket so that we could absorb the heat of the sun. Except for my bare feet and my rolled up pants, I was completely covered. I had even put my sweater back on. So the heat truly warmed us up. I thought that this would be good for me. I was getting rid of my chills. But it also made me feel a little queasy. I pretended that I was doing something that I wasn't supposed to be doing. The air made me feel reckless. I loved the sense of daring.

It would be so easy to lose control. Not only was our biological integrity threatened, but I could feel the effects of desire. I felt about to lose all control. I felt that my sister's characteristics were rubbing off on me. I wanted to prance around under the hot, midday sun.

The others stayed closer to the car. We had our *hiding place*.

After months of bundling up, this seemed almost sinful. I was giving in to the pleasures of the body. This was so unlike me. Was I even allowed such joy?

I just let go. This wasn't meant to be some kind of puzzle. I was meant to enjoy it for what it was. It still didn't make sense. Why should I be rewarded for doing nothing whatsoever? It seemed wrong.

"What's bothering you, Alida?"

"What do you mean?"

"You're like a busy bee. You just can't sit still."

"I'm OK!"

"You don't need a reason to relax."

"I'm just so used to doing things. This seems like it's bad."

"If it's a little naughty, that's OK."

I couldn't figure out exactly what Helen meant. She was encouraging me. But we were both up to mischief. I wonder if this would lead us anywhere. Or we were just acting crazy in our minds. Otherwise, we were the harmless school girls that we already were.

"I thought that you'd be bored here. There's nothing glamorous."

"We're like movie stars vacationing on the Riviera."

"I never thought of it that way."

Helen was feeding my imagination. The way that it started out, it all seemed like a good thing. I just had the strangest feeling that things were going to get more bizarre.

"Alida, you're always worried about something. That doesn't make you more adult."

I tried to mull over her point. I saw it the opposite way around. Children didn't have a care in the world. They could just splash in the water. As we became older, the world became more confusing. Our bodies told us one thing, and our minds told us something else. I needed to unravel all the parts to recognize what was actually occurring.

"Don't worry about it! Relax."

Did I really have this much trouble unwinding?. I felt as if I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. I didn't say anything more about it. I was trying to follow Helen's

advice. Why did I feel that some kind of punishment was waiting for me around the corner. It wasn't as if we were sneaking communion wine. We were lazing around in the sun. We deserved it after a long school year. There would be time enough for doing serious things.

I closed my eyes, and didn't let anything bother me. It wasn't supposed to be complex. It was what it was. The blood rushed through my body. I never felt so healthy. My fainting spells were a thing of the past.

We were called back to the car. We were going to have something to eat. I took a sandwich from the picnic basket. Then I took a bite. It really hit the spot. If there was a little residual tiredness in me, the food got rid of that feeling.

"When are we going back?" I asked my father.

"Are you ready after lunch?"

Helen, spoke up, "I'm enjoying it too much. Let's stay another hour."

I seconded her request. After lunch, we took a walk around. Everything was wonderful. It was warm out, but it was still early in the season. There was a cool breeze off the lake. It made us feel so refreshed.

"I wish that we had a house down here."

I agreed with Helen. "Although it could get brutal in the winter. There is really no protection from the wind."

There were some trees. But if the wind really whipped up a gust, it would be treacherous.

"There's nothing to worry about today," she said.

I was thinking too far ahead. I wasn't enjoying the moment. We watched a flock of gull in formation over the water.

"This is why we're here! We are meant to witness things like this!"

I was usually much more observant. Helen reminded me of powers to see. What was distracting me?

I looked out in the distance and noticed a large boat making its way with cargo. Anything could find its way in these shipping lanes. This was a way of life for the man who ran goods up and down the river.

The others stuck by the car, but we continued on our adventure.

"You're never going to see anything new if you don't explore."

"I thought that I saw deer over there."

I pointed her in the right direction. She looked over, but she was too late.

"I missed her."

"There's so many things all around us."

"It's a lot wilder than at home."

"Helen, you're right."

This sense of infinite possibility was something new to me. Here was an experience that was so different than what I was used to. My ideas seemed to come to life.

"This is what man felt like when he first walked through the garden."

We both smiled.

At night, all the ghosts would come out of the woods to scare us.

"I wonder if there are bears here."

"Maybe there's a serpent in the water," Helen remarked.

Now we were laughing. The joke was getting a hold of both of us. Helen made a swimming gesture as if she was the monstrous serpent.

I bit my teeth in the air as if I was hunting the serpent. We both clashed in the scary night. I liked our make-believe.

I still hadn't seen enough. I was understanding something new about life. At home, I had been exposed to all the different stages. But here it all seemed to happen at once. It was all out in the open. Now wonder the shadows were more enticing; they offered a mix of revelation and fear.

There were times when I found the farm peaceful. But it always reminded me of my confinement. I could never get over the fact that it would destroy me if I stayed there too long. Being near the water rejuvenated me. It told me that this was how my life was meant to be. It spoke to me of a time before human existence. I visualized the path of a single drop of water as it made its way from the melting snow through the Great Lakes to here. Then it followed a path all the way to the mouth of the mighty river where it met the sea. All these drops together told a story. And they etched their faith into the land. When I understood this story, I realized that it was the book of my life. Each one of these locations held a meaning for me. There was a legacy waiting for me there. I could peer into the future as a way of digging deep in the past. I was projecting a constellation onto nighttime sky. The river wove its path through all these places. It subsisted in all the locales that fed its flow. But it also had a presence in the nighttime sky. The sky was the map of its intention. Beyond that record, it also pulsed in the heart of everyone who has observed its route. Thus, the early *coeur-de-bois* had discovered the magnificent force unleashed in these waters. Even at Niagara, the waterway reached deep into its recesses to cough up its nature. Here was a truth too awe-inspiring to contemplate. The complex rhythm bellowed throughout the universe. In its proudest moment, it was this rugged current that best expressed a universal understanding of the cosmos. Everything was water. Everything was the St. Lawrence.

I was awakening to a profound realization about myself. I would have to venture outside my world to accord all these places touched by the river. For the time being, I barely had the motivation. The farm was land-locked. Each time that I plotted my escape, my present reality returned me to the same place. But this time was different. I could finally visualize a world outside of myself. The chain was permanently broken. This was hardly the first time that I had left the farm. We had visited relatives in both Montreal and Ottawa. Each time we had made the trip by train. Just as we pulled away from our familiar world, the rigid path of the tracks had pulled us right back to home. The river provided a completely new way of seeing. It was so much more all-encompassing.

This was my chance to experience the immediacy of the magical waters. I cupped my hand and reached to pull in some. I splashed it across my face. I could feel that sense of unity with the full length of the seaway's path. I was discovering something deeper about my own origins. Helen had gone back to the car. But I didn't want to leave this find. I needed to stay here.

I was learning something about my own fear. I was being told that I would have to become part of this energy that moved the universe. I had been existing in a parallel world where I could not make the full use of my faculties. I wasn't using all my senses. Here I was tapping

into an understanding as deep as the cosmos. I was learning how to project myself onto the stars. If I left the river, would this connection remain in me. Would I have to pay some kind of price simply to remain in touch with the my present feeling?

I wanted to cast myself into the waters and become one with its currents. But to drown in the river would end my speculation. I only wished that I could dive in and swim. I wanted to make it all the way to the ocean. I wanted to simultaneously be in all the oceans. My blood pulsed through my body with a greater confidence than at any moment in my past. I could feel myself plunge deep into the waters. I was no longer afraid. I was living my forever.

The sun burned down on me. I was intoxicated. There was no obstacle to spreading out completely in the sky. Momentarily, I disappeared completely in the expanse.

“I think that everyone want to go.”

“Helen, I don’t feel ready.”

“When are you going to be ready? I might be able to convince them to delay a little longer.”

“I never want to leave. I want you to drive off without me.”

“You want me to tell Dad that you want to remain here.”

“Yes!”

“You’re kidding. You know what he’s going to say.”

“I wish that I was completely serious. Give me fifteen minutes.”

“I think that it will take them that long to pack up. I’ll tell them that you’re coming.”

In the time remaining, could I soak it all in? What did I have to do so that I could hang on to more of my present. I could feel the transition in my bones. But that feeling seemed so transitory.

I watched Helen walk back to the others. They were not so much in a hurry as she made it seem. I pushed off a little further so that neither of us could see each other. This was even further beyond the place where we had hidden ourselves earlier. I again felt as if I was out her on my own.

I reviewed everything that I had been thinking about. Helen had interrupted my train of thought. I wanted to see if I could carry on where I had left off. I looked at the reflection off the water. The pool again beckoned to me. It was telling me something more about myself.

I wondered how deep I could descend in those waters before I had to let go completely. I couldn’t learn how to swim that quickly. I would have to accept the judgement of the water. I didn’t have a desire to end my life. I wanted to trade my mortality for a permanence on the earth. I thought of the lopsided pacts offered by the mythic gods. I could mourn for a lost love by becoming a tree. I could take bloom every spring. Or I could drown in these waters. Then every poetic soul would see me looking back when she looked at her reflection. I tried to do the same for myself. It would be impossible to see any better if I didn’t get closer. And once I was that close, it would be impossible to maintain my balance. Perhaps it was much deeper here. I imagine a whole world of ghosts on the bottom of the lake. Each one was beckoning.

Helen would pull me from the edge. She would grasp what I was doing. But there was no one here who could help. I was completely on my own. If I ventured in, no one could stop me. My greatest fear had nothing to do with the water. It was about a knowledge of myself. I wasn’t sure what I would do if I threw myself into life. That was why I found such appeal in the

map that the river offered me.

There were other physical types who didn't have to worry about the consequences. They were able swimmers. And they could challenge the currents. But even among this lot, there were money who were undone by their own pride. The river was a place of fright. The lucky ones believed that the relative calm of the lake could resist the relentless tide of the seaway. But the truly gifted knew the risks. They would never take the plunge. Instead, they were prepared for a riskier dive. I counted myself among those souls. They needed a pretext for their lofty gesture. I imagined that I was stepping into one of their poems. I was only a word among many. I needed to learn how to speak.

I moved back to my former vantage point. And they were about to pack up completely. I wandered over nonchalantly. I didn't want to appear as if I had been rushed. Everything was happening in good time.

My thoughts were becoming confused. I found myself back standing by myself. I wasn't sure if it was a dream, but I recalled a story of a girl who had drowned in the river near where we visited. I saw an image of a girl's body floating past me. I had waded deep enough so the water was at waist-level. I reached out to pull her in. But she kept floating past me. I was having trouble keeping my balance. A step or two, and I would be over my head. I kept flapping my arms in the effort not to go under. But I could feel myself sucked out further. It was almost as if the girl was reaching out to me. I wanted to do what I could to help her even though I knew it was too late.

I watched her recede from my view. I had done everything that I could to save her. I knew that if I ventured out further that I would get pulled under. I still felt that it was my fault. I should have grabbed a branch for her to hold on to. But she would have only taken me in the opposite direction. Since I was holding on so tightly to the branch, I couldn't maintain myself. I was falling in the water.

The rocks were slippery underneath my feet. I could barely stand up. And now I was losing myself. There was no way that I would be able to float. I was going to slide down completely.

I did what I could to work my way back to the more shallow waters. It was too late. The currents were working against me. I was hardly in the water, and now I was almost over my head. What was I thinking? I had no training in life-saving. And the girl was probably dead to begin with. But I had wanted to do my part. I didn't want to see her lose her life like that.

Did my family even know that I was this far out? They knew that I couldn't swim. They must have realized that something was wrong when they didn't see me on the shore. I was nowhere to be found. Would they realize that I was out here? I was barely floating. I didn't know how to float.

This girl had pulled me out here. She had tempted me. I had wanted to do my part. Indeed, I had flung myself in these waters to help. Now there was no way back. If I didn't swim back, I would be finished.

I looked back at the shore. There was no one there to rescue me. I couldn't even see the car where it had been previously. They had left me like this.

Didn't they realize that I wasn't with them? This was shocking. I had come out in the water to rescue a girl. And now I was floating off with her. I was waiting for an unsuspecting

sort who might have been waiting along the shore.

“I’ve been waiting for you!”

I had waited all this time. It seemed like an eternity. No one knew that I was out here. No one ever would. I had to attract the attention of someone waiting at the side of the lake.

“Do you know who I am?”

I wanted to venture into the water. What could I do to change the situation. I couldn’t swim. If I tried to help, I would only get myself too deep. Then I would get pulled under. I didn’t come to the river to drown.

There was so much life around here. I heard a buzzing. Something was inviting me into these waters. I didn’t want to get my clothes wet. I didn’t want anyone to know that I had gone all the way in. I tried to submerge. She needed my help. If I went down this one time, I wouldn’t be coming up.

She was reaching for me. I was afraid to take her hand. I had come here for a reason. I wasn’t doing what needed to get done.

On the way home, I started to feel cold. I tried to bundle up. But there was a draft from the window. It was still quite warm outside. It didn’t make any sense to me.

“Alida, you are sick.”

“I’m not sick. I’m just freezing.”

“I’m sweating. It’s so hot in here.”

Maybe the winter had never left my body. I had tried to warm up in the sun. But it hadn’t helped me. Things only felt worse now.

I had enjoyed our journey. But now it was getting to me. I wondered what I had done wrong. I was sure that all that I needed to do was to get home.

The ride down the gravel roads seemed bumpier than ever. It made me nauseous. I usually didn’t take it this way. All this only added to my discomfort.

I stuck my head out in the window in the hopes that I might feel more refreshed. It wasn’t really doing the trick. I crossed my fingers in the hopes that it might speed us along. I tightened up my body. The ride was making it worse. It seemed interminable.

I wished that we could just stop the car. I could collect myself. But I wanted to get home. I didn’t want to get left out here.

I started sneezing.

“I think it’s the dust.”

“Maybe you caught a cold. You didn’t go in the water again, did you?”

“Only that one time when you were with me. I can’t swim. I’m not going to go in the water by myself.”

“I can swim, and I wouldn’t go in there alone. Besides, it was really cold.”

It had been really cold. But I couldn’t resist. Now I was paying for it.

“I think that you’re right. I am catching something. Mom is going to be mad at me. We shouldn’t have gone to the river. She says that no good happens down there. She told me a story of a girl who drowned. It was someone we knew. Not directly, but we know her family.”

Helen gave me a strange look. “I don’t remember that story. Are you making it up?”

“It’s a true story. I even looked it up. I have the clipping from the newspaper.”

“Alida, it’s that imagination of yours. You’re making it up.”

I didn't want to believe that I was making it up. I tried to remember my mother's words. But the more that Helen challenged, the less that I felt certain about what had really transpired.

"I don't think that she would lie to me."

"I'm just not sure if you're remembering things correctly. Not in your state."

What was Helen saying about me. Could she see something about me that I couldn't see. I was sure that I was pale as a ghost. What had I done? I curled up in my seat. Helen held my hand.

"We'll be home soon."

"We better. I don't want to get sick in the car."

"Are you going to get sick that way?"

"No. I don't know what it is!"

I was doing what I could to hang on. We would eventually be home, and most of it would be forgotten. I took a deep breath. And I held on the door rest.

"Do I look that bad?"

"I've seen you worse. Some days in church, you look as white as snow!"

"Do I really?"

We both smiled.

When we arrived home, I immediately went up to bed.

"Are you all right?" my mother asked.

"I just feel weak. That's all!"

As I tried to get to sleep, I could feel the water rocking me back and forth. The sound of the waves slapping the shore was hypnotic. But it left me in this lull between sleep and wakefulness. I was feeling groggy.

The river had become part of me. It was something that I needed to cast off. All the while, it was moving within me. I tried to synchronize my rhythms to its incessant currents. But I was being dragged along with it.

I tossed and turned to no avail. I wasn't getting any closer to falling asleep. I tried changing my position on the bed. I'd lie on my back and stare up at the ceiling. Nothing seemed to help. All this was happening inside me. Whatever I did, there was that same unsettling feeling. My body just felt like a rock on the bed. And my thoughts were just swirling around me.

I tried to calm down. I did what I could to think about restful thoughts. That didn't stop the constant swaying that I was feeling. It turned over on my side and put the covers over my head. That seemed to work momentarily. Then I felt hot. So the benefits were short-lived. I had to strip the covers in order to cool down.

I definitely had the chills. When I started to shiver, I again pulled the covers over me. I felt as if I was never going to get to sleep. I had no great plans for the next day so I was fortunate. I didn't feel particularly anxious. But I needed to sleep. I just felt drained.

I thought if I got up, I might have a better shot at getting to sleep on the second try. But I was too weak even to get out of bed. Maybe if I took some aspirin, I would feel better. It was worth a try. I just couldn't move.

I still believed that I had spent too much time by the river. I had no idea what it had done to me. If I could only get to sleep, I was sure that things would be right me in the morning. But

sleep wasn't something that I could achieve by concentrating. The simple desire to get to sleep was itself an impediment to actually going under. I was caught in this strange circular trap. As I lay there, I only felt more exhausted. I was almost too tired to sleep.

I needed sleep just to take me on its own. I was sure that Hypnos could do his magic upon me. Intervention from above was my only hope. What did I have to do to prepare myself? I tried to put everything out of my mind. But the desire to sleep had an infernal way of working its way into every crevice of my brain. My whole body was screaming with my need.

I could feel a quaking which originated in the heart of my gut. It was no longer nauseousness. It was simply an overall discomfort. I didn't know how to get rid of the feeling. This was at the cause of my insomnia. I was meant to pass out. I just couldn't.

Formerly, I had trouble staying conscious. Now, I seemed condemned to this world. It was a sorry exchange. What had the river done to me?

I felt delirious. At this point, everyone was asleep. I wanted to call out. But I didn't want to make any noise and wake everyone. Somehow, I was going to fall asleep. What did I have to do?

I was all about going under. My inability to sleep was becoming the death of me. It was now a curse. Maybe I would never get to sleep again in my life. I should have tossed myself in those waters. They were restful waters.

I had slept for over ten hours. I was still exhausted. I had never felt this weak. I told myself that I had just done too much the day before. But for most of the time, I had been lying around. That shouldn't have made me so completely fatigued,

I took a drink of water, and it went down the wrong way. I began to cough. A couple of minutes later, I coughed again. This seemed strange. Had I not coughed up all the water? I was again feeling cold. But it was very warm outside, almost a heat wave for this time of year. This was crazy. I figured that it was a little damp inside. So I stayed out in the hopes that it would dry out my cough.

Danny found me. "I thought that you were lost for good. Helen told me about your adventure. They let you sleep. Are you doing all right?"

"I think so."

As I was talking to him, I started another fit of coughing. My cough was deep.

"Maybe it's a summer cold."

"Late spring."

"Yeah! You're right."

My voice was hoarse. And it was a hacking cough. Even when I caught a cold, it was never this bad.

"You're going to have to rest up if you want to get rid of that cold."

"I guess that you're right."

I was too weak to stand up. I watched as Danny went over to play with Bobby. I felt helpless.

I tried to move. I went right down.

"You're not looking good., Danny said. "I'm going to take you back to bed."

He carried me all the way upstairs. My mother came up.

“You’ve hardly been up at all today. You look pale. I’m sure that you have a fever. I’m going to make you some soup.”

My stomach was still upset, but the soup calmed me down. I lay on the bed about to fall asleep.

“Close your eyes. You need the rest,” my mother said.

I had trouble quieting down because of my coughing fits. But they seemed to dissipate after a while, and I was out again.

I awoke in the evening. Both my mother and father were standing over my bed.

“We’re going to check on you in the morning. We may have to call the doctor.”

I had no idea what was going on. I was slipping in and out of consciousness. I wanted to tell myself that this was just a cold. But it seemed so much worse. What was happening to me? I no longer felt like myself. I was the ghost.

That night I would sleep for a while then I would wake up to cough. My cough echoed through the house.

There didn’t seem to be much of anything that they could do for me. Even in the morning, I didn’t seem any better.

“Just let me rest some more.”

My parents were quite stubborn about calling the doctor.

“I don’t need a doctor.”

But they could hardly hear my words.

“We’re going to have to get him over here soon or later.”

My father agreed, “We have no choice.”

I could tell that they didn’t want to alarm me. It was getting serious.