

Interlude

Toledo Bend

In second grade, you remember crawling over the muddy banks to reach a rope swing at the edge of Toledo Bend. The swing would cast you clear over the surface, and you could dive or flip into the warm Louisiana water. But you had to endure the oozy texture of muck that caught under your fingernails as you clawed your way up the steep, slick embankment. The minerals and sediment of the water turned your bathing suit to an auburn hue.

Two alligator-size bullfrogs by the dock struggled against a pair of large hands putting them into an Igloo. You had never seen creatures like that before.

You normally wore an earplug for protection. A tube to drain fluid was inserted that year. But you forgot it in its red plastic pouch at home. Dad fashioned you a cotton ball with some kind of wax-like texture on it. The rope swing was pushed in your direction. The twined rope was slippery and gritty with lake sediment. You pulled it back as far as you could, back a step up the slippery bank, and leaped onto a knot in the rope where you scraped your pressed thighs that were vice-gripped around the rope.

You swept over the water in a pendulum arc that hung in an apex just enough for your release into the glassy surface. As you crashed into the dark water, you furiously stroked toward the surface in mid-descent, prying yourself away from the furry bottom.