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# The Bone Boy

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# The Bone Boy

## **Cover Page Footnote**

This piece was presented as a branch to "The Funeral"

## The Bone Boy

Once upon a time there was a boy. Once upon a time there was another boy, too. Over the long hot summer of their eighth-or-so year, the two boys became great friends, as two young boys are won't to do.

Perhaps their friendship began thanks to mere circumstance—they two creating and co-starring in each other's adventures simply because there were no other neighborhood children or siblings of appropriate age with which to do so. But quickly bonds formed between the two, bonds of the sort that don't break when one goes away. It may well be that mere proximity to each other was the beginning of their friendship, but nothing so ordinary could possibly have been the end.

Together they discovered new lands in the woods, pioneered artistic styles with sidewalk chalk, and battled heroically with the curmudgeonly dragon next door. Sometimes they lost battles, and the first boy disappeared into his house, presumably to get the same sort of dressing down the second boy received when he slunk home, vanquished by the setting sun and the scoldings of their angry neighbor.

In all things they were a team, one boy balancing the other's boldness with caution, curiosity with bookishness, ruddy cheeks with pale features, charisma with admiration.

The second boy had a name. It was Chris. Sometimes when Chris knocked at the door of the first boy's house, no one would answer. The first boy always returned before long, so Chris didn't think to ask until well into their second year of friendship.

"Where's your family always at?"

"They went away."

The first boy would say no more than this, but Chris was placated with visions of spontaneous vacations and whimsical adventures. His family would never do such interesting things, not if Chris waited his whole entire life.

It was the summer before Chris was to start the sixth grade, the hottest day of that summer, the laziest, most humid, least suggestive of a sprint through old Mr. Jackson's yard kind of weather when Chris suggested they go down to the river. It wasn't really a river, more of a stream that wound its way across the county between trees and along a few roads. One bridge crossed it in a particularly fanciful manner, a perfect playsite for goblins and trolls and gremlins and little boys. Only the first boy did not appear to think so.

"Why not?" Chris insisted. "We hardly explore down there ever."

"It's not a good place."

"Nuh-uh, I heard Sam talking last week about how many cool rocks are down there."

"I'm not going back there."

"Fine! I'll go without you."

At barely eleven years old, this was the most powerful argument Chris was capable of producing, and it was hardly a convincing one. The first boy went away, and Chris, too used to playing the role of unquestioned leader, made his way down to the bridge alone.

The water was cold and glassy, too cold to swim properly. As for the fantastic setting the bridge provided, Chris found it was hard to be a hero without a sidekick; it turns out loneliness is a shallow well from which to draw inspiration. Instead he settled for a thoroughly mundane experience, taking some small pleasure instead in the variety of rocks which were indeed "cool".

One knobbly white one caught his particular attention. It was lumpy, as rocks are, but surprisingly light when he picked it up. Another one close by was straighter, and smooth when he

ran his thumb over it. And something he'd thought was a rotted branch snapped in half seemed instead to be made of the same strange stuff—

They were not rocks.

Chris wished desperately he had not come alone...