

KAYAK JACK

UNDER THE WILLOW TREES

Nathan Kippley



Pirate Island Club

PREFACE

Welcome to the treasure hunt! This is a short story about a fictional character named Kayak Jack and it is also a treasure map. Since this is a short story, I give very little backstory, but Jack and his friends have been hiding treasures in books since 2020. They are available on Amazon if you want to read more about Jack and his adventures.

But this short story, although fictional, the treasure is absolutely real and hidden in the Madison area. If you follow the map correctly, you will find Jack's treasure chest which contains a \$200.00 Amazon gift card, an authentic shipwreck coin salvaged from the Yangtze River, a jar of raw copper and a 1969 Sporting News Pete Rose baseball card.

It is a treasure and an adventure of epic proportions! The only rule is please don't break any laws, be respectful and help keep nature beautiful. We are all public landowners, let's be proud of it and clean it up even if it isn't our trash—it is our land to enjoy together!

And please, if/when you find the treasure, let us know as soon as possible at Nathan@pirateislandclub.com. Or you can post to our Facebook page, shout it from the rooftops, take lots of pictures and most importantly, have fun. Feel the adrenaline, forget your problems and live like a kid with no worries! But please let us know.

You can remain anonymous if you would like, but the sooner we know you solved it, the quicker we can let other adventurers know the hunt is over.

Thanks for playing with us. Be kind, make someone smile and read splendid books!

Good luck on the adventure!

Nathan Kippley



SULKING IN ICE CREAM

"It's hard to beat a person who never gives up," Babe Ruth

JACK HADN'T LEFT HIS oversize beanbag chair in a while—it almost looked like it had sucked him in with the bag bursting out around him on all sides. He had no pants on, hadn't worn them in three days, the very day that Marlys broke his heart by telling him she needed some space. He hadn't bathed, brushed his teeth or eaten decent since. He had a melted tub of ice cream between his legs and his sheepdog Monster had sunk his face in it. Jack didn't notice or didn't care—it was vanilla. Monster pulled his face out and the milky cream dripped off every shaggy hair. He gave Jack a big slobbery

thank you kiss across the face. Despite the milky trail, Jack stared off in the distance towards the lifetime movie on the television, but he wasn't watching it. He was lost in thought. What could he do differently to please Marlys? She told him she didn't know if she could be with a man that cried so much... Jack didn't know what to think of that. He never thought a daily cry was a bad thing? And he was a happy crier. He didn't cry when he was sad or mad very often, he usually just kept it inside until he exploded. But Marlys seemed to be annoyed when he cried at a lighthouse, or a sunset, a goodbye, or that time when a bird flew into the window... that was an emotional day, and he did sad cry that time. He couldn't understand her. He felt like maybe they were too different and maybe it was for the best; but he was still heartbroken. He grabbed another tissue, and the phone rang. A jolt of excitement hit him. Maybe it was Marlys! He grabbed the phone and the joy quickly left when he saw his friend Cliff's face, but he answered anyway.

"Jack, are you still in the chair?" Cliff asked with a chipper tune.

"Yeah,"

"Well, you got to get out Jack, come try this new sport with me, it's totally awesome,"

"I don't think so Cliff," Jack pulled his face away and blew his nose and at the same time Monster grabbed the tub of ice cream with his mouth and pried it from between Jack's legs.

"I won't take no for an answer! And what about the treasure?"

"The last hunt they found in a day, I'm washed-up Cliff, a has been."

"Nonsense, Jack, pick yourself up. Treasure hunts make you happy. It's who you are, never forget that! And you can't quit cause you got your butt kicked once."

"But I lost my touch... and... it was twice..." he paused, realizing he didn't have another excuse. He wanted to tell Cliff no, but his mind was lost in Marlys's pretty eyes, and maybe a treasure hunt would

help him get out of his funk. He watched Monster as he ripped the ice cream container into messy little pieces on the carpet; Jack just shook his head.

"Did you hang up on me Jack?" Cliff shouted through the phone.

"No, I'm here and you're right, I do have to get out."

"Great, meet me at the disc golf course. I'll send you the address. It's beautiful down here, so many courses around Madison – you'll love it!"

"Okay, I'll get ready. See you soon."

Jack hung up the phone and did the tasks he avoided doing for the last three days, like showering and brushing his teeth and man did it feel great. Cliff gave him something to do, and he needed it. He gathered his treasure, put Monster on a leash, got in the car and left the Fox Valley southbound for Madison.



TREASURE CITY

"It feels good to be lost in the right direction," Anonymous.

THE CAR RIDE WAS eventful. Monster jumped from seat to seat, putting his head out every window to bark at the passing cars. He was terrible in the car, but Jack was nearly numb to it by now, but today it was getting on his nerves. It was hot out and the air conditioning wasn't working. He had the windows down, but he found himself sweaty and irritable. To add to his frustration, Cliff never sent him the address, just a website link and Jack didn't fall for that click bait. He would have to navigate his way solely based on their conversation and assumptions. He knew what side of town

it was in, and he knew it was a disc golf course. He always enjoyed taking the unknown route. Nothing beat driving down a road for the first time, but today he needed to meet Cliff, so he tried to stay on task with a non-Jack like precision. The excitement of a new adventure gave him hope of a good day and he was trying to see the positive. He had so many token memories of bumming around the Madison Area – it made him feel good to be back. After weaving his way into the parking lot, he put it in park and let out a huge breath of hot air. It felt like Harmon the rhino had left his shoulders. Monster quit jumping, and this place was beautiful. He didn't see Cliff's car, but he and Monster needed to stretch their legs.

The sun, the heat, the soft breeze—it all felt so good. Jack had been in the apartment for too long. The vitamin D and adventure had to be good. The park was busy, a pavilion with a wood paneled top sat near the parking lot and the space next to it was stuffed with beautiful wildflowers. The purple and yellow flowers grew tall and proud and swayed in the wind. It reminded Jack of a butterfly garden. He walked down the trail to the pond and under the romantic gazebo. He thought of his love for Marlys, who he met on the last hunt, but maybe he just loved how she made him feel. He walked past the gazebo and out onto the floating dock, he leaned over and propped his elbows up on the rail. The floating dock wobbled, and Monster tugged against Jack on the leash, but Jack didn't pay attention. He stared into the water. He watched the fish swirl around the weeds. He couldn't shake it. Everything reminded him of Marlys, and he thought of their grand adventure on the Kickapoo. He slapped his hand to his face and incidentally gave Monster a giant tug at the other end of the leash. Monster turned to Jack as if he wanted to play. He ran and leaped right past Jack and plunged into the pond water with a splash. The leash pulled tight and Jack flew right over the rail and into the water thanks to the 80

lb. Monster dog.

Jack splashed into the shallow pond and sank into the green muck at the bottom. He immediately lost the leash and Monster effortlessly darted to shore after a squirrel. Jack shrieked at the top of his lungs from his butt in the mud, "Monster," thrashing and fighting to get up.

He kept yelling, "Monster," as he flailed around with his arms until he got to his feet. He was so angry at Monster for not only pulling him into the pond, but then for darting away without looking back. Seaweed dangled from his arms and pond muck dripped from his fingers. He didn't even think about his hands as he swatted at the mosquitos in his face. The black, green sludge splattered all over his eyes and hair like a whipped cream pie to the face. He was blinded, even though he couldn't see Monster he kept yelling for the dog while trudging one leg at a time through the pond muck, "Monster!"

Joggers, walkers, bikers and even families started to look over at the commotion in the pond, they all watched on as Jack struggled to get out.

Jack spun around and tried to wipe his eyes with his filthy hands, but it just got worse. Now his skin was lathered in mud and anger, he yelled louder than ever as he threw his hands in the air, "MON-STER!!" Still unable to see, he took a few more steps in an unknown direction before tripping on a rock and splashing down into the water face first. The fall ended up being a good thing as the water had cleared the mud from his eyes. He looked up at the bank and saw Monster still running the other way. He pushed off the rock with his foot and burst out of the water with an angry screeching howl, "M-O-N-S-T-E-R"!!

By now, every passer byer in the park had stopped and was staring as he flailed around. Some concerned parents shuffled their kids away from the scene or tried to block their eyes from the man

screaming about monsters in the pond. Some started pointing or looking around for an actual monster. Jack finally glanced around as he felt all the eyes on him. He quit yelling as he made his way to shore, but that didn't stop the eyes on him.

"I'm not crazy!" Jack yelled to the onlookers.

Most of them turned away as if they hadn't been watching, but no one was taking his word for it. Seaweed hung from his head, mud spilled out of his shoes and every inch was wet.

Jack watched as the people turned away, then Monster with his long hair covered in black mud and green algae came rushing over, and the dog had never been happier. He saw a small group still watching him from the gazebo.

He yelled out, "It's Monster's fault!"

They all turned away as if they weren't watching. He took a soggy step towards them,

"I'm not crazy, my dog is the Monster," he stomped his foot on the grass and pointed at the dirty dog next to him.

It was too late. They glanced back at him quickly, like playing peekaboo, and then kept walking away.

Jack grabbed the leash and gave Monster a scornful "bad dog," while waving his finger back and forth. After falling in the pond and not finding his friend he had had enough of the day already. They were wet and filthy, and he was fairly certain he wasn't even at a disc golf course. Jack walked with a waddle as his thighs were starting to chafe. Monster didn't care about Jack's problems; he just followed his nose as he tugged Jack down the trail. Monster was beautifully shameless, but Jack couldn't shake the embarrassment—he still thought people were laughing at him. They walked up the trail past the fields, but he still didn't see Cliff or even any sign of a golf course. They followed the trail the other way passing beautiful green trees, kids running and playing. Jack's thigh chafing was getting worse by

the minute from the waterlogged pants. He walked with his knees out wide and butt low to the ground to keep his legs apart. He wrapped around the far side of the park like a wide legged chimp at the zoo, but he still didn't find anything he was looking for.

"*Where the heck is Cliff?*" he said it to Monster like he could answer. Jack was getting more upset by the minute; he started wishing he had never left his chair. He muttered under his breath as he tugged Monster along on the leash with his bowlegged waddle. "*Oh, just come disc golfing Jack. But I'm never going to send you the address Jack.*" He got himself spooled up into a tizzie by the time they reached the car. He opened the door, still talking to himself, "*thanks a lot Cliff, drive all the way here to swim in a pond by myself... oh and there isn't even a golf course!*"

He grabbed his jug of water from the backseat and slammed the door shut. He poured some water in a bowl for Monster and then took a big drink himself. He looked around the parking lot as Monster lapped from his dish, still no sign of Cliff. They were both wet and dirty and it felt like he had pants made of sandpaper. He pulled out his phone to call Cliff, but it was all waterlogged from the pond. That was the final straw, he was ready to go back home.

Before he packed Monster up and got in the car, he gave the area one more glance to make sure he didn't see his friend. He scanned all around and then something caught his eye past the butterfly garden. Two magnificent weeping willow trees standing like giants looking over the garden. Their long hair dazzling in the wind, casting a beautiful shade for anyone with the fortune to sit underneath. His thighs were rubbed raw, but he knew it was worth the wide legged duck waddle over to feel their presence. Monster was panting and tired, but Jack had to see that tree.

They walked on the path through the garden and over the grass to the two majestic willows. At the first giant willow, Jack gently

pressed his palm to the bark. It was a bit smaller than the other and it had scars to show. Branches had been cut or fell off, but it didn't dim its beauty, rather the scars enhanced it, showing what the tree had overcome to become a giant in the sky. He could feel the energy, the life. It turned his face to a smile. He walked over to the other giant willow tree. This one was even larger, and it had a huge knot that took up a third of the trunk. Jack pressed his palm to it while looking up in awe. The tree couldn't heal the chaffing, but it healed his mood. He traded the rest of his anger and frustration to the Willow trees for their serenity. Jack knelt down onto the ground; he could feel the tree roots like mighty hands forming a cradle beneath. Jack leaned up against the tree and Monster rolled in the grass next to him. He poured Monster another bowl of water and took a swig from the jug. He could feel the trees energy radiating through him from all around. He leaned back while looking up and was mesmerized by the dazzling vines dangling down and dancing in the wind. He was no longer mad about not finding Cliff or the elusive disc golf course. Nor was he mad about the hot car ride, the unwanted pond swim, or the embarrassment that came with. He felt good in nature with the trees, the grass, and even the pond water.

The people of the park had scurried about, they forgot about the grown man yelling about monsters in the pond. They had things to do, maybe play with their kids, or walk a dog on the trail. Jack enjoyed being with the trees, and even like the trees, just watching life go by, not worried about a thing. He knew he had to hide treasure here, and the chest was in his backpack. He got up from the willow tree and ventured at a turtle's pace, still in pain from the only thing the Willows didn't heal... Stepping carefully to be sure not to walk in any of the beautiful wildflowers, he stayed on the grass or the trails. He and Monster walked around in circles a few

times. Jack had spotted the perfect place, but he had to wait until no one was around. Finally, the coast was clear. He kneeled down, opened the bag, and pulled out the treasure box. He had loaded it with things he finds to be treasure and he hid it in a hurry. Finally, he marked the spot with his initials and he and Monster waddled away unnoticed.

They strolled back to the willow tree. Jack would call Cliff, but his phone still wouldn't turn on. He just accepted that today was about treasure and the trees. He would have to see Cliff another time and he was still glad he got out of the house. They decided to relax in the shade before heading home. Jack put his arms above his head and dazed into the willows until his eyelids got heavy. He was just about to the point of a midday nap when he heard a loud clanking behind him.



OH, THAT'S WHAT THAT IS!

"As soon as I saw you, I knew a grand adventure was about to happen," A. A Milne

JACK SHOT UP AND looked behind him towards the sound. That's when he saw a frisbee laying in the chain basket. "Oh, that's disc golf!" Jack stood up and put his hands on his hips in surprise. He looked over to see the guy walking up to the basket in a Tommy Bahama shirt, flip-flops, and a mustache. He knew that mustache...

"Cliff?" Jack yelled in surprise.

The big mustache rose up in a smile. "Hey little buddy, you made it!"

Jack and Monster walked over to the basket to meet Cliff.

"Boy, you look different," said Jack as he was eyeing up the guy he knew as the cowboy Sheriff.

"You look good too Jack," Cliff wrapped him up for a big hug, but pulled back quickly.

"You're all wet, and you dang stink!" Cliff put his hand up to plug his nose.

"That's a long story," Jack said with half a smile.

"It always is with you." He chuckled below the mustache as he kept his nose plugged tight.

"I didn't think you were coming, so I played without you. I just finished the last hole, shot par." Cliff held his shoulders back and head high, proud of his par game.

"That's great, and don't worry, I had a great day too, Cliff. Even though you never sent me the address."

Cliff eyed him up from the muddy boots to the seaweed hair, "I love your optimism Jack, I'm trying to be more like you, but I did send you the address."

"No you sent me some web address, I'm not falling for that!" Jack poked his chin out and put his hands on his side.

"That link was to google maps Jack, just click it and it will take you here. Dang Jack, everyone knows that."

Jack's eyes started watering up, his cheeks got red, and his lips all puckered up. He didn't know that.

"No, Jack. I didn't want to make you cry." Cliff put a hand on his shoulder, and they strolled away from the tree while catching up.

Jack fought back the tears as they strolled past the tennis courts and towards the car park.

Cliff carried on about his new lifestyle since retirement from the force, then he asked, "Did you hide the treasure today?"

"I sure did," Jack faced Cliff with an ear-to-ear grin.

"Where did you hide it?"

"Ha! I'm not telling " Jack waved his finger back and forth.

"Fair enough. Had to try," Cliff gave a nod, "but I knew you'd love this place, the willows, the water, all your favorites."

"Thanks, it's just what I needed today, you're a good friend," Jack stuck out a hand to shake Cliff's.

"You helped me at one of my darkest times. You were like that annoying nightlight that wouldn't go out..." Cliff's face softened after he spoke, and his eyes were wide and sincere, "but I needed that nightlight!"

Jack wheezed a couple of times. He didn't understand the analogy, but he knew Cliff meant it as a compliment. He fought it, but his eyes began pooling up with tears again; he took some deep breaths through his nose to try to keep it in...

"Geez Jack, not with the crying again," Cliff gave his buddy Jack another hug, despite the stinky seawater.

Jack hugged him back. "I'm a happy crier, Cliff, and I'm proud to be."

"You don't ever change just for what someone else thinks, that's impressive Jack. I admire that." Cliff had long let go and was trying to wiggle free of Jack's bear hug.

"But enough of the hug already..." Cliff finally squeezed out from Jack's soggy grip.

Jack wiped his eyes, "and you showed me that you're never too old to change."

"Easy Jack, I'm not that old..." Cliff gave him a sour look.

"I meant that in the nicest way possible."

"That doesn't change what you said... but it was good to see you."

"Thanks Cliff, I haven't had this much fun down here since sledding as a kid; and I haven't even thought about Marlys since I fell in the pond." That brought a big smile to Jack's face.

Cliff dipped his head, put his hands on his hips and laughed, "I knew you had to be the guy I heard about fighting monsters in the pond."

"Why would you say that, Cliff?"

Cliff shook his head as he turned around, "see you next time buddy."

"Wait, Cliff, why would you say you should have known it was me?"

Jack stood watching as Cliff just waived and walked away...

"And who was talking about it?"

Cliff put two fingers in the air as a goodbye without looking back, and then he hopped in his car and disappeared.

"What a great day Monster, even if it didn't go quite to plan." Jack petted the shaggy dog's head and then they got in their car and headed the long way home.

GO FIND YOUR TREASURE

I HOPE I HAVEN'T lost you, but I also hope you don't find it in a day!

Please join us on our next big adventure, which will be Kayak Jack in 2024.

Snow Monster smash will be back this winter, and you never know what other treasure hunts will pop up in the meantime!

Please join us at PirateIslandClub.com and we will be sure to invite you on an adventure!

And anyone looking for other adventures, check out [@firechicken455adventures](https://www.youtube.com/@firechicken455adventures) on YouTube.

They have solved a Kayak Jack hunt and are always making great adventures of their own for people around Wisconsin.

Good luck, be safe and have fun.

Nathan and the Pirate Island Pirates