

The Lake of Bones

It's the kind of place best described by a set of coordinates (48°10'05.9"N 113°55'33.4"W); the lake is located in Montana's Flathead National Park, which is one reason why no-one's noticed it yet. The other reason is that whatever happened at the Lake of Bones happened a long time ago. A *very* long time. When they examine the bones, researchers are going to come up with a number like twenty-five thousand years ago, which will turn a lot of scholarly research into the first appearance of human beings in North America into p^{ate}.

But first the bones will need to be discovered. There are three layers to the Lake of Bones: the deepest layer is a horrible tangle of human bones at least a foot deep, all of which show signs of both pre- and post-mortem trauma. Above that is a six-inch layer of fused soil and bone, hardened and almost glazed by an unknown heat source. There is also... something... apparently chiseled into the fused soil; it's too regular to be the result of natural processes, but if it's an alphabet it's one unknown to modern scholars. And above *that* is a couple of feet of regular soil and mud and organic junk that one would associate with a regular Montana lake.

None of this is known to the locals, including the various Native American peoples still living in Montana. There are no legends, no folktales, not even a good monster story. The whole thing is a mystery: the bones are human, but with mildly unusual features. Nothing outside of the normal range of humanity, but still unusual. And, of course, the fused soil covering the bones themselves is simply flat-out weird.

It's all going to be highly unsettling, when the Lake of Bones gets excavated. Even aside from the macabre nature of the site itself, there's a definite unpleasantness that will manifest the moment somebody cracks the fused soil. And, yes, once it gets discovered eventually somebody will crack the fused soil; it's sufficiently odd on its own that somebody will want to investigate further. And, when they find the bones, the investigators will just want to redouble their efforts.

Funny how it always seems to work out that way.

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