**Disclaimer:** I own nothing; the characters are all Richie Tankersley Cusick. I am just borrowing them for a creative outlet. Also any words that are bolded are not mine – I have copied them out of her book ‘Walk of the Spirits.

He had meant everything he had said back there. He really had. Parker had meant what he had said when he had told Etienne he had wanted to do this and he had *really* meant it when he had told Ashley he would be back, but now, now he wasn’t so sure. He still meant that he wanted to do this me but as he struggled through the current and rain he started to become doubtful about getting back.

The flashlight was useless against the dark night and murky water. The rain was coming down harder than ever, and the bayou water was trying to swallow Parker whole. He and Etienne had seriously misjudged the simplicity of this trip.

“Come on, Wilmington,” he whispered earning himself a mouth of muddy water, “explorer, adventurer, super-swimmer,” spitting out another mouthful he added, “and mud-drinker.”

*Gage is going to ow me big time,* Parker thought grumpily as he propelled himself forward; then guiltily added, *if he survived this… if* I *survive this.* A sudden gale of wind pushed him back and he fell back into the water. He struggled to pull himself back up.

The rain was coming down in buckets, no oceans. Parker had never been so wet in his life; he had forgotten what it was like to be dry; he was never going to be dry again. *I sure as hell am not swimming ever again.*

It was enough to make anyone disoriented. The flashlight was as waterlogged as Parker; the glow was coming from it was dim; it might as well not have been on. Parker could barely see his hand in front of his face, let alone where he was going.

Parker had lost all track of time; he could have been out there for hours or for minutes; he had no idea anymore.

He was so tired and he hated to admit it but, he was lost too. Everything had blurred into one. Parker had no idea where he was. The water was riding as quickly as his energy was draining.

*I’m going to die here,* Parker thought mournfully his usual bravo gone from fear and exhaustion,  *In this watery hell world. No more games, or beer, or Ashley… No!* Parker wasn’t going to give up with out a decent fight. Gage needed help, and god knows what will happen to Ashley and the others if that water started to rise over the cement of the shelter *I have to keep going. I have to get help.*

Parker’s new found determination wasn’t long lived though.

He dashed forward determined to move, to get there or die trying, when suddenly the bottom dropped out beneath him. Whether he tripped or it the ground just suddenly dipped off, Parker never knew; all he was aware of was that one moment he had been moving in a direction he hoped was right and the next he was submerged in murky water and was sunk - both literally and figuratively.

*I really am dead this time,* Parker thought as he flailed around in the dark water. The water was as black as the sky had been. Parker tried desperately to pull himself to the surface but he was so tired; and the water was strong. It was pushing and pulling Parker without his will.

He managed to come up coughing and sputtering for a few moments before he was manhandled back by the water again.

*Goodbye,* Parker thought giving up. He didn’t have the energy to fight anymore. He just couldn’t the water had won. He hoped someone would find the others before this water fate became theirs too.

That’s when he saw it. A light, it was moving towards him through the dark.

*A light?*  Even in his confused defeated state of mind Parker could help but think the joke, *Don’t go towards the light!*

Parker watched the light come closer. It was swinging, not like a flashlight, but more so of an old fashion lantern. The kind his mother – or Ashley – would have loved. A chill that had nothing to do with the water or wind gripped him as he realized this and that except for a misty swirl Parker couldn’t see anything holding the lantern up.

*No, not possible,* Parker tried to rationalize as he sunk back into the water, *their not real, they aren’t. I can’t see them because they aren’t there. I’m delusional. I’m dead.*

Despite the murkiness of the water Parker saw the light come and hover about him.

He panicked and splashed through the water trying to move away from the phantomlike glow. *I’m not seeing thins; I’m not seeing this,* Parker chanted in his head. He couldn’t accept this, *go away. You’re not real! Let me drown in peace for God’s sake if I must drown!*

Parker was more scared of this new spectral appearance than he had ever been of the water. There was just no way; Miranda and the others were crazy, they were, he wasn’t because he didn’t believe in ghosts. He *didn’t.*

Suddenly, Parker felt something cold grab him under his arms and he was slowly pulled upwards. He could feel the cold on his arms and his neck.

Slowly he began to hear the voice. It was a female’s voice; it was a musical voice. She could have been talking; she could have been singing.

“My, sweet, sweet, Nathan,” the voice sang as it pulled Parker up.

A cold hand grasped his heart. *Nathan,*  Parker wanted to hold his hand over his ears and block the sound out like a small child, but his arms wouldn’t move,  *no, no, no, this is* not  *happening; not real, not real … but how could something unreal pull me out of the water?*

Parker didn’t ant to believe these things; he couldn’t it wasn’t a Parker thing. It was a Miranda thing, an Etienne thing, a *Roo* thing. Defiantly not a Parker thing; *so why am I seeing non- Parker things? Why am I believing non-Parker things?*

He wouldn’t believe… but how could he not?

Suddenly, Parker was free. The water no longer had control over him; the only thing that controlled him now was Parker.

He saw it out of the corner of his eye. He didn’t want to see it but he couldn’t help put look. The lantern was being swung in a certain direction, as if showing him the right direction.

He told himself not to do it, do just keep going forward but he had to. Parker followed the spectrally arm up to the face. He told himself he wouldn’t see anything; he was proving to himself he was insane, imagining stuff.

The face was there. An unearthly hollow face, surrounded by red hair and the unearthly dead eyes were, Parker tried to block it out, two colours; a green one and the other blue.

Parker froze for a second; he couldn’t process this, he wouldn’t process this. He didn’t want to let the word into his head but they came just the same.

***She had red hair and different colored eyes – one green and one blue.*** That was what Miranda had said; she had described that woman in just those words.

Parker broke free of his trance then and just ran. He let his fear move his legs. He ran from that form, he ran from what he didn’t want to see, he rand from what he didn’t want to know.

Z”… Nathan,” Floated back towards him as he ran.

He ran further and faster. He ran, he swam, he wasn’t sure which action he used to propel himself but he had to get away; he had to be free.

His hear was beating wildly; Parker had never been more terrified in his life. But under all that, he was also relieved. He thought he was going to die. He hadn’t expected to survive.

How he got to Etienne’s he didn’t remember. He just knew he ran, swam, through the bayou, along the bayou than found himself standing by Etienne’s home, breathlessly explaining what had happened to a very confused and shocked Miss Nell.

He tried not to think as they went back to the falls. Parker tried to focus on his friends; he did anything he could to keep from confirming what had happened in the water. It came to him just the same

*No, I hadn’t seen anything,* he told himself, *I was just delusional... I made it up… Miranda just and her crazy ghost talk just got into my head.*

He couldn’t accept it. He hadn’t seen anything; he couldn’t admit it to anyone, least of all himself.

He hadn’t just seen his fist ghost. He hadn’t; and he sure as hell wasn’t going to see anymore.