

ROCHESTER LAKE

By James Leach

Genre: Folk Horror / Supernatural Thriller

Logline: After inheriting her aunt's lakeside home, a woman uncovers an annual ritual sacrifice and, when she and a terrified fourteen-year-old boy are chosen, must break the cycle before the lake claims them both.

Synopsis

Following the death of her aunt Margaret, Lucy Ward returns to the isolated community of Rochester Lake to settle her estate. Almost immediately, she senses something is wrong. Neighbors watch from behind curtains, bowls of salt and black candles guard every home, and wind chimes ring across the lake even when the air is still.

Inside Margaret's house, Lucy discovers the Book of Offerings, a hidden journal documenting the town's rituals, and an antique mirror capable of revealing disturbing fragments of the past.

Rochester Lake is preparing for Founders' Week, culminating in the annual Founders' Walk. Each year, a mysterious List appears inside a locked display case naming residents chosen to participate. Local conspiracy theorist Mr. Greeley captures the impossible on camera—the List simply materializes without anyone placing it there.

With help from Margaret's old friend Nella Raye, Lucy uncovers the truth. During the community's construction, a bulldozer and its operator disappeared into a massive sinkhole. The developer concealed the accident by flooding the area, creating Rochester Lake and awakening something the residents call the Watcher.

Since then, the Watcher has demanded an annual offering. Three ceremonial chimes control the Founders' Walk, ultimately drawing the Chosen into the lake.

Then the new List appears.

Lucy's name is on it.

So is Troy Finch, a terrified fourteen-year-old boy whose parents have been conditioned to accept his selection as an honor. Lucy promises Troy she will not let the lake take him.

Using Margaret's mirror and another once owned by former victim Tenner Daltry, Lucy discovers her family's connection to the ritual. Years earlier, Margaret was chosen. Lucy's

mother came to Rochester Lake and took her sister's place. Margaret attempted to sabotage the chime tower but failed, and Lucy's mother disappeared into the lake. Margaret spent the rest of her life burdened by guilt and searching for a way to break the cycle.

On the night of the Founders' Walk, torchbearers surround the lake. When the second chime sounds, the Chosen fall into a trance and Troy begins moving toward the water. Lucy resists the Watcher's pull after hearing the voices of Margaret and her mother. With Nella holding Troy back, Lucy races to the chime tower and destroys its mechanism before the third chime can sound.

The ritual collapses. The lake convulses, the Watcher's hold breaks—and a woman emerges from the water.

Lucy's mother.

Their reunion is brief. She tells Lucy that Margaret tried to save her and asks that her sister be forgiven before dying peacefully in Lucy's arms.

At her mother's funeral, Lucy confronts the townspeople who justified generations of sacrifice as the price of their own safety. The Founders' Walk is over, Troy has survived, and the cycle is finally broken.

But as Rochester Lake settles into an uneasy silence, a faint chime sounds from Tenner's hidden mirror.

Then silence.