

## INDIAN LAKE

by

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The house perches on huge granite boulders overlooking Indian Lake, New York. Flanked by pine trees and pencil-like white birches that march down to the water's edge, the lake dominates the view. The water can be sleek glassy blue/black, electric sparkling blue, or stormy grey.

My husband, daughter, son and I flip-flop down to the boathouse for a boat ride on Indian Lake. Prepared for sun, wind, or rain, we push off from the dock in the trusty aluminum boat guided by an outboard motor, moving at the speed of spit, ready for an adventure. At least half the lake is part of the Adirondack Park. Designated picnic areas and campsites spot the shore. The four of us swivel our heads, scanning the water, looking out for loons. When we glimpse one, we excitedly point, cut the engine, and silently watch as it dives and finally resurfaces waves away.

As the sky opens up, we slip on rain gear and eat our picnic in a hurry. Back in the boat, we continue down the lake as the rain pelts us, pulling over to shore occasionally to seek the umbrella protection of trees. We wait, hunkered down in our seats, until the squall passes or mosquitoes become too fierce to bear. Then we continue our journey, pointing out destinations we recognize: the campsite where cousin George lost his pants or the trailhead to Baldy or the river flowing into the lake.

When the weather blooms, we linger at the picnic spots, swimming, building sand castles, chucking rocks into the water. On the ride home, I sit in the bottom of the boat

holding the smallest child asleep on my lap, collecting family memories we never tire of reviewing.

Summer of 2006 we made our annual trek back. Our family of four has expanded to include one spouse, one fiancé, and a granddaughter. Our son quickly measures his daughter's height in the furnace room, a yearly rite of passage. Two of my husband's brothers arrive, one sister-in-law, various children and their spouses, two more infants, my in-laws, and three dogs, the smallest a Golden Retriever. Twenty of us sit around the table; three beasts pant under it. We stage the annual hot dog roast at Norman's Cove, take early morning runs in the osprey nest area, paddle or sail various water craft on the lake, canoe on the Hudson River, manage long stretches of reading, and engage in the nightly family games complete with ping pong tournament. We swim across the lake and back, another tradition, adding newcomers this year.

Of all the activities, the long putt down the lake as far as we can go, depending on the water level, is my favorite. My daughter, her fiancé, my husband, and I set off. The end of the lake shines bright steel grey in the late afternoon sun. We see a loon and watch as it surfaces around us. Smiles flash as the wind blows our hair into tangled strings. The water grows choppy. We motor on until we have to turn back. As we spin the boat around, we are surprised to see we had been chased by dark, heavy clouds that quickly explode. The rain drenches us. My daughter, in her red rain jacket, tightens the hood snug around her face. I pull my hat over my ears, having left my jacket in the house. My daughter's fiancé, in only a cotton shirt, braces against the elements. My husband holds the boat on a steady course. Then as if on cue, we throw back our heads, letting the rain massage our faces, and laugh heartily all the way home.

The first week in October my husband and I return. This time we invite five couples, who had heard tales of the place but never been there, to join us. Early mornings a light fog hovers on the water and then drifts off to expose glassy-smooth water. Spectacular blue skies and air full of the scent of balsam energize the group. We hike, roam the Adirondack Museum, watch in awe the full moon rise over the bay, eat delicious meals, paddle a flotilla to Norman's Cove, take part in lively discussions, build fires at night to ward off the chill, and pour ourselves into bed. The weather holds for four days—blue skies, warm days, and cool nights. The only boats other than ours on the lake drag docks to the calm winter safety of Norman's Cove.

And then the air becomes late fall/early winter and water slate grey. Wind whips frothy waves; trees relinquish their color. My husband and I share the putt down the lake with our friends, our familiar journey all the sweeter for us seen through their fresh eyes.