

## *Morning at the Cabin*

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Wake up. Quaggy consciousness. Feather pillow over your head, soft calico sheets surrounding you. Hear *plish-plop* of raindrops closely overhead and stay bundled in. If not, turn over and look out the glass; Gray shadows with a whisper of pale yellow light. Silence. It is early yet, before six.

Weigh comfort against morning's wonders and rise. Goosebumps as you climb out of bed.

Robert's asleep. Dad may be up. Try not to wake anyone, not because you are polite- just the opposite; you are selfish and do not wish to share with others. Clothes smell smoky and pure. Your favorite pocket knife slides home. Light wool socks warm your feet. The fishing vest, filled with treasure, warms your heart. Soon you forget you were chilled.

On the balls of your feet down the stairs- No coffee down here, but Dad may have some in the shed if he is up.

Swing the storm door open and step out; remember it bangs and hang on 'til it closes. Down the stoop, to the right. The north woods delight your nostrils and fill your lungs. You smell it. You feel it. Damp and clean, the dew drips off the cabin onto pine needles and red loam. It cleanses what's inside you and there has never been a newer day.

Past the whispering ashes of the fire pit. Pick up the *Leinenkugel* bottle, the half empty soda cans, and the tumbler- a trace of water in the bottom, smelling vaguely of scotch. Straighten the benches.



- Debra Goehring

Head for the shed.

The door's open, and the white porcelain coffee pot is half full. Dad's up. The quiet static of AM radio reveals who's having a garage sale in town and who's catching what out on Lac du Flambeau. The old filson is lifted from its hook, in the corner by the light switch. It is not needed this morning but it feels good going on anyway.

Pour a cup of black coffee; oily, bitter- Dad's been up for a while. The tepid pinnacle of comfort food still tastes good out of the hand-painted ceramic mug your sister gave you last Christmas.

Pick out your fish pole. Which one this morning?

The Mitchell with the ten pound test looks good, but this morning you choose the old Penn with the six. The cork handle warms your hands.

You grab your binoculars and a camera. Another splash goes into your cup, then out you go.

Stop at the chalkboard near the fire pit, over the makeshift bar and under the eight point rack. Pick up a piece of damp chalk and scribble out the breakfast menu, which you will be scratching out of the big skillet, blackened by the new day's fire. Soon everyone will make their way to the fire and your spatula, according to their own constitutions and inclinations. In the meantime, update the leader board for fish weight and disk golf scores.

The proximate call of a loon pulls you up like the breath of an apparition against your skin, and you turn towards it .

Down the short trail to the lake. Past the lonely ancient red oak, past the white pines you helped your father plant into the ground when you were not much taller than a sapling. No deer at the feeder, but they were here shortly ago. What was your transgression?

The lake is silent, a steamy slate. You preempt the weather, causing the first ripple by stepping on the dock. The lines at the end are slack; Robert can check them when he wakes.

Go to the canoe, the one you turned over without a life jacket on, resulting in the rest of the day spent collecting kindling wood countless years ago.

Place your gear under the rear seat and position your cup of joe on the spare paddle blade.

You shove off.

That first glide through Eleanor's halcyon clear water, setting you free, while anchoring you to the earth and what moves you.

It's morning at the cabin.

