

***In August we hiked to a hidden lake.***

It lay a mile off the trail, down a steep slope. We were allowed to run down that last mile and did, boots pounding pack frames flapping against our backs. The first to see the blue gleam could pull daddy's finger to make him fart: the prize. The lake lay in a vale. *Pristine* he said it was. We found a cleared space on the bank, threw down our loads. We claimed our spots with our bags. Our feet were hot in our boots. We took them off, waded in. We stuck sticks in the muck and stirred to watch it settle down. We scooped up newts, hurled them at rocks to see them writhe and die. We plundered huckleberry bushes for fruit, breaking their stems. We stirred the fire with sticks at night, making sparks fly. We toasted marshmallows and made S'mores. They gave us queasy dreams. Mosquitos sang in our ears at dawn. We woke up puffy and welted, our hair stuck to our skin. We soaped ourselves in the lake, ran from our scum. There were flecks in the pancake mix, holes in the sack. *Forget 'em* our father said, sifting and flicking. From the skillet a musky sour smell. We wet down the fire, stirred. We slammed more newts against more rocks, skipped some stones. We drank Swiss Miss until we were sick, threw up, felt fine.