

Prologue

Weeks before my little brother Sammy got lost, his voice took on the clarity of a boy soprano. He was six that summer, and he liked to lie in the dirt under our Adirondack cabin, singing. Sound rang through the wide plank floors, eerie and angelic, stirring the heated air.

I lay on my bed in the hot afternoon, reading the same sentence of *Anna Karenina* five times before I went downstairs to quiet Sammy, knowing he'd start again as soon as I went away. He sang at night too, a high hum from his bed across the room. I fell asleep to my brother's music and the clink of my mother making ice in the kitchen.

Down the hill from our cabin, Cloud Lake made its own music. It lapped the rocks and shimmered—dark at night, blue and sharp in the still heat of day. It waited for clouds to pass, to reflect themselves in its flat surface. Although I didn't know it then, that summer I too waited for any impression, my heart as expectant as unmoving water.

Three months from sixteen, I was only beginning to sense where I was located inside my life. But I always knew where Sammy was.