

*T*he family vacation. Heat, flies, sand, and dirt. My mother sweeps and complains, my father forever baits hooks and untangles lines. My younger brother has brought along his imaginary friend, Charcoal, and my older sister has brought along a real-life majorette by the name of Nan. My brother continually practices all-star wrestling moves on poor Charcoal. “I got him in a figure-four leg lock!” he will call from the ground, propped up on one elbow, his legs twisted together. My sister and Nan wear leg makeup, white lipstick, and say things about me in French. A river runs in front of our cabin, the color of bourbon, foamy at the banks, full of water moccasins and doomed fish. I am ten. The only thing to do is sit on the dock and read, drink watered-down Pepsi, and squint. No swimming allowed.

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Beard, Jo Ann. “In The Current.” *The Boys of My Youth*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1998. 3-5. Print.