

OMG, that looks like Mom. I am not thinking clearly and my head hurts, really hurts.

The last thing I remember was this incredibly deep tone - like the stereo sound from that car next to you that rattles the windows – only much, much louder. We, the girls from Cabin #8, were walking down to the lake for an hour of forced fun; no cell phones allowed. We knew the drill and we also knew that only the first ten minutes would be painful. Once we got past the awkwardness, the games and activities would be fun. Shaboozey will need to wait as we navigate the old wooden stairs down to the lake. Need to be careful with the shaky, YOLO handrail. The sun was out and I love the – what is that sound?!

I open my eyes to see a group of girls walking toward me, lost in their own world. Embedded in their excited conversation, I hear “she’s totally awesome” and “as if.” Plus, every fifth word is “dude.” Who talks like that? I see neon-colored shirts, white-washed jean shorts, Vans® shoes, and jelly bracelets. I like the Vans®, but everything they’re wearing seems weird, maybe vintage. The gaggle is surrounding this loud, gangly, blond girl. She looks like me! Not me but looks like me. I am staring, I know it. They walk right by me. Somebody says, “That’s rad Jenny,” to my lookalike. Jenny... That’s my mom’s name. Jennifer Ann Walker, but everyone calls her Jenny... Is that Mom?

I find myself turning to follow Mom? and the girls down the stairs. I can’t look away. How is this possible? She is the center of attention. I have always noticed that about her. She has something that makes it easier for her to engage with people. She makes friends casually and seems to move easily through social circles. Whatever that something is – I know I don’t have it. I always feel self-conscious in group settings. It feels uncomfortable to start conversations and I struggle with small talk, more like Dad, I guess.

I reach out for the old handrail, and it seems new and steady. That’s not right. What is happening? Where am I? When am I? Am I me? That noise again. It hurts.

“Can you hear me?” *“Everybody at the bar gettin’ tipsy.”* I open my eyes.