



Laurentian Divide

Sarah Stonich

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Sarah Stonich's *Laurentian Divide* continues the story of northern Minnesota's Hatchet Inlet, a vacation town whose residents are deeply rooted in a place dependent on transience. Poised on winter's trailing edge, everyone waits for Rauri Paar's return, for when he navigates his way into town from his remote island, he heralds the spring thaw. When the ice melts and Rauri doesn't come, the search for him knocks loose an emotional lost-and-found, with the meltwaters of the town's past flooding the present and propelling everyone toward a changed future.

The traditions of Hatchet Inlet's populace aren't partisan or anachronistic in the way that urban-rural divisions are often portrayed. "You will not find climate-change deniers in Hatchet Inlet, where extremes are felt and seen daily;" neither will you find a homogeneous block of ideologies behind the scrim of shared heritage. The residents wryly watch the world flock to fashion trends and social capital; they know how to make a buck, running their businesses with tourists in mind without ever selling themselves.

Thanks to Stonich's keen depictions, this is a small town peopled with actual people: diverse individuals united by a common experience of place. An alcoholic veterinarian struggling post-divorce, a retired schoolteacher turned bold and brassy in her dementia, a famous artist retrenching her family's rundown resort, a widower falling for a waitress, a Vietnam veteran who crafts antler chandeliers, and many others—they are the ones found in the corners of America's middle, or any place with little room to hide differences.

Stonich knows that everybody comes from somewhere, and when that somewhere is rural, there's a whorled particularity to the story. *Laurentian Divide* transports attention to a "scrap of near-nowhere" because "life isn't something that happens to you—how you choose to react to what happens is life."

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (University Press 2018)

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