

Nikon

I was six when we left. Old enough to remember, young enough to not really understand. Papa always had talked about leaving - he always said "Some day," but each time he said it with more urgency. He would read the newspaper in the morning, or listen to the radio in the evening, and say to Mother "Very soon we will get away, before it's too late." Too late for what? I didn't know what he meant. Even though he said it every day, I didn't think it would actually happen. Until it did. One day...we just left. Papa blew his whistle. He had us drill, packing our sacks, so we could be ready to leave at a moment's notice. It seemed like a game at the time. The whistle would blow, and in four minutes we were supposed to be assembled at the door, ready to go. He wouldn't check our packs, he just assumed we had done it correctly. He had told us what would happen if we didn't do it correctly. If we forgot something...too bad. That was it. So we practiced. But then one day...it was October...we actually left. The whistle blew, papa opened the door...and we left. I remember that he didn't lock the door. That seemed odd. He was always locking the door. But this time he didn't. There was something final in that act. Or lack of acting.

We piled into the car. Father always had the back filled with crates of supplies, and a two-wheel cart he had built. The canoe was strapped to the roof. We drove for days...for days and days. Then we pulled into a small turnoff, next to a river. Father and Mother pulled the canoe off the car, and then loaded everything into the canoe. I was last, nestled in among our things. We started to paddle, and again it seemed like days and days we were on the river. Finally one day papa stopped paddling, and let us drift in the water while he looked around eagerly. "This is it." He said. "We'll be safe here," Mother said. Father pointed us towards shore. We stepped out of the canoe to begin our new life. And that was how we left, and came here.