

INDIAN SUMMER

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TRACY RICHARDSON

LUMINIS BOOKS



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*For Chris, with you anything's possible.*

*And,*

*For Mom, your spirit lives on.*

Praise for *Indian Summer*:

*Indian Summer* is a unique read middle school readers will relish.

—*Midwest Book Review*

I've been blessed in these past few weeks with young adult books that have taken me to places I have absolutely not wanted to come back from. This book will be one that will sit on my shelf for a very long time, and I will pass along to my daughter and to her daughter. I loved this book.

The writer really delved into all the areas of teenage angst. From the gut-wrenching scenes of peer pressure to the maximum, when poor Marcie has to find a way to fit into a world that she doesn't understand—and doesn't even like—to the effects that big business has on nature conservancy and preservation of the past—the author has found a way to focus on major issues in an absolutely fun and exciting way.

I look forward to reading a lot more in the future from this writer.

—*Amy Lignor, Bookpleasures*

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Unlike many stories in this genre, Richardson presents conflicts and issues that are subtly shaded, with no clear good versus bad, right versus wrong. This real-world treatment of complex social and environmental issues places *Indian Summer* a notch above similar stories.

Richardson creates complex yet realistic relationships. *Indian Summer* is a thoughtfully-written story requiring the reader to consider a number of value judgments along the way. For the YA reader . . . an entertaining and informative read—thoughtfully-written adventure with a hint of magic.

—*Thomas E. Temple, Amazon Customer Review*

An enjoyable young adult tale that focuses on how a courageous but frightened tweener sees things in an adult world. Marcie is terrific . . . middle school fans will enjoy Marcie's charming Indian Summer.

—*Harriet Klausner, The Merry Genre Go Round Reviews*

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The storyline [of *Indian Summer*] is calming, interesting, and intriguing . . . it also gives a feeling of suspense. I recommend this book to every young reader across the nation. Richardson is a fabulous author . . . and I certainly hope to read many more of her books. I thought *Indian Summer* was superb, and it kept me on the edge of my seat throughout the entire story.

—*Brenna Bales, Reader Views*

I loved this novel, which has a beautiful summer backdrop. It is fun, yet mysterious, and also delivers that all-important feeling of suspense. Certainly a book worth reading.

—*Jessica Roberts, Bookpleasures*

Tracy Richardson writes as if she remembers exactly how hard it is to fit in when you are Marcie's age. She also writes about life spent relaxing at a beach house. Marcie learns a lot that summer about growing up, and readers will learn along with her.

—*Shelley Wenger, TCM Reviews*

Is a new housing development inevitable progress, or are there important reasons to keep James Woods as it has been for millennia? Marcie's family values and the desire to be accepted by a wealthy, popular girl from school pull her in conflicting directions until she learns to choose for herself. Sailing details give a feeling of reality to this summer-at-the-lake story. At the same time, the sense of flying so strong it feels real and a bracelet that links the present with . . . Native American past lend a mystical flavor that carries readers beyond the ordinary.

—*LeAnne Hardy, author of **Between Two Worlds** and **The Wooden Ox***

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SOMETHING IS CALLING her. Something in the water. She needs to find it. Raising her arms up from her sides she rises slowly into the air. She must go to James Bay. She flies over the water toward the dense and darkly green trees of the woods surrounding the bay. It is here with her now, trying to tell her something, but just beyond the edge of her consciousness. Her thoughts are reaching, trying to understand . . .

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# œ One œ

MARCIE'S LEGS ACHE from pedaling up the Elm Street hill. She has to stand up the whole way using the weight of her body to push each pedal down, but now she's almost to the top. Only a few yards to go . . . and she's not getting off her bike to walk. It isn't really a hill anyway, but a bridge over the railroad tracks. The Indian Trail that winds through town runs beside the tracks at this point. Indians lived here long before any settlers came to this part of Indiana and the name of the town is an Indian word—Winnetka—which means beautiful land. Even the middle school that Marcie attends is called Indian Trail Middle School.

Today is the last day of school. *Maybe that's why I have the energy to ride my bike the whole way up the hill*, Marcie thinks. The last day of school means the annual Children's Fair! The entire town looks forward to the Children's Fair as the unofficial start of summer. She is so glad to be done with Mrs. Steadman's math class! The whole summer is before her. Except that there isn't much to look forward to. She's going to spend a few weeks at her Mamaw and Poppy's cottage on Lake Pappakeechee—it sounds like

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fun, and she used to love going to “the cottage,” but this year everything feels different. None of her friends are coming, and it won’t be as good with only her brothers. She’s almost a teenager, and she still has to spend part of her summer with her grandparents and her brothers! Boring.

At the crest of the hill, Marcie pauses to catch her breath before starting the ride down. She can see the village green spread out below her at the bottom of the hill. Usually a wide open space surrounded by giant maple trees, it’s now covered with tents and booths, banners and balloons, and is starting to fill up with people. School lets out after only a half day on the last day of the year, and everyone is converging on the green to enjoy the rest of the day at the Children’s Fair.

Eric, her older brother, is near the bottom of the hill veering off in the direction of the bike racks. He’s only two years ahead of her in school, but by the way he acts sometimes you’d think he was ten years older. Having an older brother is not as exciting as the kids at school seem to think. They are always telling her things like “I saw your brother at lunch,” or “There’s your brother, Marcie,” as if she wants to keep tabs on him every moment of the day. She sees enough of him at home.

After the short rest, her breathing is almost back to normal and her legs don’t feel so rubbery. She checks to

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make sure the coast is clear to begin her descent. It will spoil the ride if she has to stop to avoid hitting anyone. She starts by simply lifting her feet from the ground and onto the pedals, letting the weight of the bicycle start her moving down the hill.

The bike moves slowly at first, then rapidly picks up speed. The closer she gets to the bottom, the faster she goes. Marcie feels the wind whipping past her face and tugging at her clothes. She loves this feeling of freedom. *It feels like flying*, she thinks, and she realizes that her hands are no longer grasping the handle bars and her feet aren't touching the pedals. She can't feel the bike beneath her—she's soaring through the air—she is flying! She tentatively stretches out her arms and the wind lifts her up to the level of the treetops. Her bike is below, still speeding down the hill, and she is gliding high above it all. It feels so natural and effortless. She tries moving to the left and to the right by shifting her body and for a few moments she just enjoys the feeling of flying. Then she lowers her arms, which causes her to slowly descend back to her bike. Placing her hands on the handles and her feet on the pedals she continues the rest of the way down the hill on her bike. Just before the speed gets out of control—just before she gets afraid—Marcie puts on the brakes and comes to a stop. Turning to look back up the hill, she thinks, *did that really happen? Did I just fly?* It was only for a

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few moments, but she definitely felt herself flying. How could it possibly be real, though? She has dreamed of flying before, but nothing as real as this. It must have been some kind of daydream. The ride down the hill and the sensation of flying has left her a little breathless and shaky, so she walks her bike the rest of the way over to the bike racks.

She pulls up next to Eric as he locks his bike to the rack and slides her bike into the next space. She wants to ask him if he saw her flying, but doesn't know how to bring it up without sounding weird. Saying, 'By the way, Eric, did you see me flying down the hill just a minute ago' is just too strange. He wouldn't believe her if she told him what happened anyway. She's not really sure if she believes it herself.

Eric takes off his helmet and smoothes down his wavy brown hair. Marcie pulls her straight strawberry-blond hair back into a ponytail with the elastic on her wrist. The temperature was already nearing 85 degrees when they left the house after lunch and now she wants the hair off her neck.

"Hey, Marcie!" She turns to see her best friend, Sara, running toward them, and all thoughts of flying are forgotten. "Where have you been? The Fair started half an hour ago." Sara looks over at Eric and smiles.

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Eric quickly glances at her while he scans the crowd for his friends.

“Mom made us empty our backpacks after school,” Marcie says, “and put away all our stuff.” Marcie straightens up after locking her bike to the rack. “When did you get here?”

“Twenty minutes ago.” Sara says. “Hey, Eric, Jonathan and Will were here. They said to meet them at the hay bale maze.” She pauses and pushes her hair behind her ear. “Or . . . you could come with us.”

“Oh, uh, thanks, but . . . I think I’ll catch up with them.”

Just then someone yells, “Eric!” They turn to see Jonathan and Will in front of the snow cone stand.

“Great! I’ll see you guys later.” Eric calls over his shoulder as he practically runs over to meet his friends, his long legs covering the distance quickly.

Sara’s glance lingers on Eric as he runs off, then she sighs and says, “Well, I tried. Anyway, the races don’t start until three, so we have time to wander around first. Do you want to go to the Maze?”

“Sure,” Marcie says. The walls constructed of hay bale “bricks” are to their right. As they walk over, Marcie says, in what she hopes is a casual tone, “Sara, you know Eric isn’t much interested in having a girlfriend yet.” Marcie

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wonders why anyone would want Eric as a boyfriend, but she doesn't say so to Sara.

"I know, but I can still hope!" Sara throws an imaginary tennis ball in the air and whacks it with an imaginary racquet. Marcie and Sara are on the track team at school, and Sara is also on the tennis team. They are running in the 100-meter dash for their age group this afternoon. "In two years we'll be in the high school age group for the races. Can you believe it?! Two more years until high school." Sara says "high school" with a mixture of trepidation and excitement.

"I know what you mean." She wonders how she will ever be ready for high school. She'd been worried about starting middle school and that had been fine, but high school seems different altogether.

Marcie has run in the races and won medals every year she can remember. They are displayed chronologically in a shadow box on the bookshelves in her room. The red, white, and blue ribbon of the first medal she won at age three is tattered and dirty from being worn constantly in the first few months. With each year the rows of ribbons are a little less shabby until three years ago when she stopped wearing them and just put the medals right into the box. The condition of the ribbons is as good as any picture to show her growing up. You couldn't see her getting older, but you knew it just the same.

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Marcie gives herself a mental shake. She doesn't want to think about growing up today. "Let's go have some fun!"

THE GIRLS REACH the entrance to the hay bale maze. The walls of the maze are over their heads and it's easy to get disoriented. Sara starts into the maze first. Marcie follows a few minutes later. She rounds the twists and turns of the passageway and then stops when it branches off in two different directions.

Out of the corner of her eye she sees the figure of a dark-haired girl beckon to her to take the left hand path, but when she turns to look, the figure is gone. Thinking that it's Sara teasing her, Marcie starts running down the left-hand path and calls out, "Sara, wait up!" When she rounds the corner, the girl is disappearing around the next corner and Marcie can see that she has long hair in a ponytail and is wearing a light-brown dress with beading on it. Puzzled, she realizes that it can't be Sara. Sara has shoulder length hair and is wearing shorts and a t-shirt. As she continues through the maze the girl is always just ahead of her at the next turn, and when there is a choice of which direction to take she is there to show her which way to go, but never letting Marcie get close enough to

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really see her or talk to her. It's as if the girl is guiding Marcie through the maze, but always just out of reach. When Marcie rounds the last bend and can see the end of the maze, the girl isn't there. Thinking that she must have just come out of the maze, Marcie runs to catch her. She practically runs into Sara who is waiting for her at the exit doorway. The girl is gone.

"Hey! What's the big hurry?" asks Sara as she grabs onto Marcie's arms.

"How long have you been standing here? Did you see a girl just come out of the maze in a brown dress with her hair pulled back into a ponytail?"

"No, why?"

"I saw her in front of me in the maze. At first I thought it was you. She was always just ahead of me, and I could never catch up." Marcie pauses to catch her breath. "It was like she was guiding me through the maze. And her clothes were strange—she was barefoot and wearing a kind of tunic dress. It was really weird."

"It sounds weird, but I didn't see her. I don't know how she could have come out unless there are two ways to get to the end."

"That must be it. We must have come out by a different path than you did. That still doesn't explain why she was guiding me through the maze, though."

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“Well, she’s gone now. She was probably just messing with you. I’d forget about it.”

“Yeah, I guess so.” Marcie agrees, but she isn’t really satisfied with that explanation.

When they hear the loudspeakers crackle and pop with the announcement for the beginning of the races, Sara is fastening a silvery metal necklace with a dolphin charm that Marcie won at one of the booths around Marcie’s neck. She and Sara walk over to the monument where all the runners are gathered. They see her dad stretching against a tree. Marcie gets her speed from her dad, and he still likes to run in the annual races.

Casually, he says, “I thought I’d come by for the races since summer school doesn’t start until next week. My schedule is flexible this afternoon.” He’s an English professor at the state university. Marcie isn’t fooled. At breakfast this morning he had acted noncommittal about running in the races, but the rest of the family knew he couldn’t stay away. “Good luck, ladies. See you at the finish line!”

Marcie and Sara go and stand under the banner for twelve year olds. Some of the other girls from the track team are there too. They all do a little stretching and warming up while the little kids have their races. The “track” is shortened for the preschoolers and the moms

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and dads stand at the finish line to cheer them on—and make sure they run in the right direction.

Finally their race is called. Marcie and Sara hold hands briefly and say “Good luck.”

They line the girls up along the starting line. This race is just for fun, so there are no starting blocks, but Marcie still takes the racer’s stance on one knee with her index finger and thumb aligned along the start line. She briefly looks over at the other girls. She knows most of them, but there are a few unfamiliar faces. Can she beat them? It seems like the whole town is watching the race from the sidelines. As usual before a race, her stomach flutters and her heart pounds in her chest.

The starter begins.

“On your mark,” he shouts. Marcie holds herself still in the starting position.

“Get set.” She comes up onto her hands and the balls of her feet.

“Go!” The starting gun explodes! Marcie pushes off with her feet and starts pumping with her arms as she rises up. In the beginning of a race all movement is slow motion. Like you are in one of those dreams where you are trying to run but can’t because your legs are made of stone. Then suddenly she starts to go. Her fists are clenched. Arms reaching up and pulling back, up and back. Legs pounding—knees up, heels back, up and back,

up and back. Kick, kick, kick. Faster, faster—she feels herself pulling away. Go, go, go, go!

She focuses on the finish line, feeling the fluid rhythm and power of her body. She imagines that she is pulling herself along a rope with her arms and kicking herself forward with her feet. Just a few more yards! She crosses the finish line first, a few steps ahead of the pack. Yes!

A volunteer with a gold banner across her chest runs toward Marcie, lifts her arm in the air and shouts, “First place!”

“Congratulations!” she says to Marcie. Sara’s arm is held by a volunteer wearing a red banner that reads THIRD PLACE. Marcie gulps for air. The volunteers lead the winners over to the scorer’s table and give them water bottles. Paula, another girl from the track team, has won second place. They give each other the team “high five.” “Great job, Marce,” says Sara between breaths, “but you always win.”

Marcie feels a tug on her shirt. Looking down she sees her younger brother, Drew. “Great race, Marce, you were speedy,” he says. Drew is seven and just finished first grade.

“Thanks, Drewster,” says Marcie as she ruffles his sandy brown hair. “Mom!” she says as her mom comes up and gives her a hug.

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“First place again!” her mom says smiling, the corners of her eyes crinkling into familiar laugh lines. Her strawberry blond hair, green eyes, and freckles were passed on to Marcie, but otherwise they don’t really look alike. Marcie doesn’t really look like either of her parents. More like a blending of both of their features. “Did you see your dad?” She winks at Marcie.

“Of course—he’s by the monument waiting for his race.” She indicates the direction with a nod of her head. They reach the scorer’s table and Marcie turns to give her name to the woman seated in front of her. The woman exclaims to her mother, “Well hello, Jill. Is this first place winner your daughter?”

“Yes, this is Marcie.” Turning to Marcie she says, “This is Abby Swyndall. Her husband is the new President of the university.”

“Nice to meet you,” replies Marcie. She feels a trickle of sweat run down her back between her shoulder blades and wishes she had something to wipe the sweat off her face.

Mrs. Swyndall asks, “Aren’t you going into seventh grade in the fall?” Marcie nods. “My daughter Kaitlyn is in your grade. Do you know her?”

“Yes, she’s in a couple of my classes.” Marcie does know her, but after starting school last fall, Kaitlyn moved easily into the “popular” group, so they didn’t socialize

much. She is momentarily distracted by Drew pulling on her shirt again to get her attention and tell her about the prizes he won that afternoon.

Over Drew's excited chatter, she hears her mom and Mrs. Swyndall talking. "Oh, yes, we'll be up at the lake this summer. Our summer house is finally finished, so we want to enjoy it," Mrs. Swyndall is saying. As she talks, her hands flutter in the air with a swirl of bright coral nail polish and the jangle of charms on her bracelet. "What about you?"

"Marcie and the boys are going to stay at my parents' cottage for a few weeks. I have a dig out west, and Paul will be working with his graduate students." Marcie's mom is an archaeologist and works part time at the university. Today she looks the part in khaki shorts, a light blue t-shirt, sandals, and a straw hat to shield the sun. Marcie thinks her mom looks casual and comfortable compared to Mrs. Swyndall in her flowered Capri pants and matching top. On the dig this summer Marcie's mom is taking a group of students to work on a new discovery of Native American sites in Utah. "We're going up there tomorrow to drop the kids off." Marcie's mom glances over at her. "This one isn't too excited because none of her friends can go this year."

"I have the perfect solution!" Mrs. Swyndall exclaims. "Kaitlyn is spending a few weeks at the lake with me and

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her older brother Kyle.” She turns to Marcie. “This will work out so nicely—the two of you can get together.” She taps her fingernails on the table. “We did a lot of sailing back east. We’ve joined the yacht club, but haven’t met the other families yet. Do you sail?”

“Yes, we have a sunfish and a sloop,” Marcie says. While thinking how unlikely it is that she and Kaitlyn will ‘get together,’ she sees Kaitlyn coming up behind Mrs. Swyndall. She is wearing super-short shorts and a top with spaghetti straps that would never have passed the school dress code. The school is always having to send home notes reminding everyone of the dress code, but it is really just the “popular” girls who push it to the limit.

“Mom,” says Kaitlyn, acknowledging Marcie with a small wave of her hand, “I need more tickets.”

“Sure, hon, there’s money in my purse. We were just talking about you. You know Marcie Horton?” She barely pauses for Kaitlyn to reply as she rummages in the purse. “Marcie and her brothers will be spending a few weeks at the lake this summer while we’re there. We thought you two could do some sailing together.”

“Well . . . sure,” says Kaitlyn cheerfully but a bit slowly. She looks at Marcie. “Have you ever sailed in the Regatta?”

The Regatta is a series of sailboat races over the Fourth of July weekend—a really big deal at the lake. The summer

house crowd, or “Lakers,” usually spend July Fourth at the lake and enter the races. They mostly belong to the Yacht Club, and over the years a rivalry between the Yacht Club crowd and the local residents has grown.

Marcie wonders if Kaitlyn thinks it was her idea to suggest getting together. “I’ve raced in the sunfish category, but our sloop isn’t the right size for the big race. Eric started to crew for the Boat Company team last year.” Marcie would love to be on the Boat Company Team, but it is just “the boys,” as Eric likes to say. Eric and Marcie aren’t technically Townies, because they don’t live at the lake year round, but since their grandparents do and they aren’t part of the yacht club crowd, they qualify. She wonders if the Swyndalls are aware of the rivalry.

“Really? We’re going to enter our new E scow in the big race. Maybe you and Eric can crew with us.” She pauses and seems to notice for the first time where she is. “Did you run in the races? You look all sweaty.” She wrinkles her nose distastefully.

*That’s what happens when you exercise*, thinks Marcie, but she says, “Yes, we just finished.”

Mrs. Horton says, “She won first place!”

“Oh, right—aren’t you on the track team? Uh, congratulations. The only time I get sweaty is when I lay out!” Kaitlyn says with a laugh. “Well, gotta go. The girls are waiting!”

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“Always in a social whirl,” Mrs. Swyndall says fondly to her daughter’s retreating back. “Why don’t you bring your family over for a cookout on Sunday afternoon, Jill? It’ll be our first party at the cottage.”