The Gift

Triumphant, they return home like conquering Amazons, my two stalwart daughters. A week in the Scapegoat Wilderness and already they talk of returning, this time with me.

“Bring a book,” says Paige. “We’ll eat beside Bean Lake and we may want to read. We’ll make the lunch. Would you like me to drive? You’ll love the country.”
I surrender old roles: lunch maker, driver, decision maker, and enter into quiet acquiescence.

August twenty-second and the sky is cloudless. We leave the familiar as the horizon hints at the spectacle to come. I have waited 70 years to see the Rocky Mountain Front.

We pass an abandoned homestead and they share their imaginings about a different life, the one the farmer left, the one they could make among those faded buildings. “Visit it in winter first,” I say. Too late for me to have such dreams.

They reminisce about their recent hike, show me the trailhead and let slip scary details of the struggle and exhaustion along unrelenting trails. They laugh about that last “death march” on the final day. Such adventure means so much to them; I can’t bring myself to admonish.

We soak in sun and fiction beside Bean Lake And later, there’s ice cream in Augusta, a tiny town loomed over by mountains. Then a lazy hour beside the Dearborn River watching Ginny cast her line. Beauty is everywhere but fish are elsewhere.

Is it too late for me to join them in their ventures? I can worry and I can yearn, but I must be content with the gift of their companionship on this special day.

—Barbara Merriam