



Musing

November 2021 - "The Gift"

Anne Torrey, Lower Eau Claire Lake

There they stand, sentinels, in brilliant defiance of the fading foliage surrounding them in the waning autumn daylight. The young maple to the west is tall and limber, aflame in sunset hues, the limbs swaying in the lake breeze, refusing to release its radiance, even as the larger trees go brown and bare in the wind. The robust maple to the east, also young and no less subtle in color, clings to its leaves which burn as red as the embers of our campfire, glowing in the swirling evening air. Mother Nature has provided these lingering reminders of her beauty even as the mature maples, birch, oaks, poplars, and other deciduous trees surrounding them have lost their leaves or turned completely brown. An enigma as the days grow shorter and the cold more intense, I wonder, what is the reason for the gift, these last gasps of splendor so late in the fall...?

Although there are multiple factors involved with the colorful transition from the greens of summer to autumn's explosions of color, primarily it has much to do with chemical changes affected by the amount of water trees receive throughout the summer, whether the frost comes early or late, high winds, unseasonable temperatures, and the amount of shelter a tree receives. These lingering colors, gracing the view in both directions, are most likely a result of good shelter. As trees newly planted a few years ago, each is surrounded by mature, dense pine forest on one side, and our home on another, thus receiving protection from the elements as well as the moisture needed as it accumulates on the ground, while the rains drip off the roofline. The aged oaks and maples tower above even the stately pines, bearing the brunt of Mother Nature's tempests, and having to share the rain that reaches the ground with its forest kin. And yet, these majestic timbers give us our first glimpse of fall splendor, each changing at its own pace, providing an endless variety of rich, warm hues, intermingling with the greens of the spruces, and the golds of the tamaracks. A feast for the eyes as we make our way into the long dark days of snow and cold. Winter is coming. I know this, and I cling to the beauty of fall, cherishing each moment surrounded by the glow of these great silent friends, teaching me that no matter what stage of life we are in, there is color, beauty, loss, time for reflection and eventually, regeneration. As the brown leaves fall to the ground, I admire my 2 holdouts, in gratitude for the extension of time, knowing full well they too will lose their leaves and rest, peacefully through the winter, gaining strength for the spring when visible signs of the circle of life are seen once again in the growth of new buds.