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In a Rented Cabin in the Haliburton Highlands, Oriented toward Algonquin Park

BY JAMES ARTHUR

Everything is grimy and in disrepair.
The curtains are smoke damaged, the wallpaper half-unglued.
The kitchen probably looks as it did
when the cabin was built, in 1962. The sliding door gets stuck.

But out front, the Muskoka chairs planted in the sand
seem to be paying close attention to the lake, as if bound by some power
to contemplate this one landscape
until they know it to its core: perfect watchers, scorning nothing,
absorbing all existence exactly as they should,
so they notice every little deepening of the soupy summer dark,
and the grey curl
that's slipped free of Mrs. McKechnie's bathing cap.

Ice once covered all this shield rock—for a hundred miles around—
before melting back, leaving raw granite
and these lakes. As night comes on, a kayak crawling in the dark
looks not like any physical object
but like something more abstract gliding on the surface
of the open water's mind.