

## **Metamorphosis**

By Shawna Schwalenberg

I was floating in an innertube in the water far from the shore, thinking about how much I've always loved this lake, Lake Michigan. I have always felt somehow more whole and more myself outdoors, and in the water in particular. Swirling my hand around slowly on the surface, I was thinking about how much this lake has given me and I said the words "I love you" out loud. In that moment, a blue dragonfly landed on my foot to rest for a moment before flitting off into the distance. A few moments later, several dragonfly nymphs climbed onto me.

The first one surprised me and I shook it off my hand back into the water...you know...a wiggly unknown thing climbing onto you in the lake is a little disheartening, even for a bug lover like me. The first one was persistent and came back. It climbed onto my hair band that I had around my wrist and shed its skin! I sat there and watched it actually grow and change right on my hand. In the meantime others were on my legs and one was on my toe doing the same thing. I was awestruck.

I had to get out of the water because it started to downpour and thunder, so I figured lightning wasn't far behind. Once I left the water and still had two on my hand continuing to change, it clicked for me. They were changing...it was metamorphosis happening right on my body and it took me a while to understand. I cried.

Lately I've been making (and thinking of making) a lot of changes in my life. It's been a little scary and a lot huge. I realized this weekend (in part because of the dragonflies) that those times in my life I've feared a change but made the leap anyway have been the most rewarding.

Again, I'm thinking of the lake I've loved all of my life. The fear each year of jumping off the dock into the cool, dark water for the first time that season. I think of that often and realize all you have to do is take that first step and there's no turning back. Cold or not, murky or not, scared or not....you're going into the water.

I brought books and magazines with me that had topics related to self exploration. I didn't touch them once. The experience of just being still was all I needed. I sat on the sand, swam in the lake, played with my dogs, had campfires, grilled meals, took naps outside on a bench swing while listening to the waves and wind. I fell even more deeply in love with life, the outdoors and with the lake than I thought possible. It occurred to me that this is what life should be like always.

I keep/retell this story a reminder for me to persevere and have courage even when I'm feeling like nothing will be ok ever again...because that's never true...you just have to accept that change can be a beautiful and necessary part of life and step just that one foot off the dock, trusting that it will be alright.

