

# READERS' GUIDE

## *Lake Effect* by Dayle Furlong

### INTRODUCING *Lake Effect*

This collection of stories charts the emotional lives of characters in the midst of private sorrows and triumphs. Each story, set in the cities and towns around the Great Lakes, reveals the author's fierce love for a landscape merciless and opulent, yet speaks with eloquence about its inhabitants.

The humanitarian crisis in Thunder Bay is seen from the perspective of a police officer whose stepson is missing; fearing he will be found, like so many others, in the McIntyre River, his mother's grief causes an insurmountable rift. Crumbling buildings, high rent and condo developments in Toronto are playfully satirized. A young mother waits inside a Chicago-area prison to find out if funding for the Prison-Mother Baby program will continue. A man drives from Traverse City, Michigan in the midst of a lake effect storm to transport his Iranian-Canadian girlfriend across the border illegally. A Canadian mother befriends an American woman, employed at Target, whose desperation for a baby leads her to seek the advice of spiritualists in Lily Dale, New York.

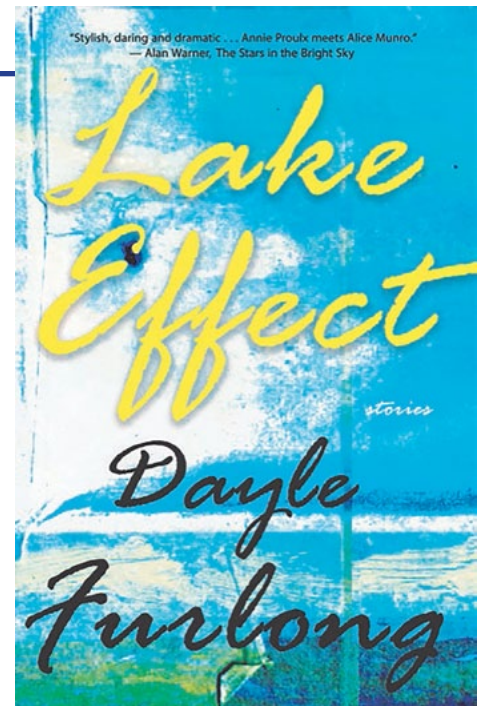
Topical and arresting, these tales showcase an author who writes with insight and sensitivity.

### IMPORTANT THEMES

**Parenthood and Family** – A number of the stories (e.g. “Tributaries,” “Lake Effect,” and “Shoreline”) explore parent-child relationships and how the actions of a parent can affect their child long after they've become an adult.

**Trauma** – Some of the characters (like those in “The Fresh Coast” and “Ebb”) experienced trauma as children it has affected their development and sense of self.

**Happiness** – Stories like “Adamantine” and “Muddying the Waters” explore the search for happiness and what it feels like to lose it for a while.



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In “Tributaries,” how did Belmont’s relationships with his mother and Lorraine influence his relationship with Lionel?
2. Discuss the author’s use of irony in “Skin Island.”
3. In “Lake Effect,” is Fiorella’s reaction to her mother keeping her father’s address from her justified?
4. Discuss the concept of parenting in “Shoreline.” What makes a good parent?
5. Discuss the cycle of violence present in “The Fresh Coast.” Is North capable of breaking the cycle?
6. How has the death of Aurora’s mother in “Ebb” shaped Aurora, her father, and her sisters, respectively?
7. In “Muddying the Waters,” why do you think Oops lied to the police about whether or not she saw John be violent with Pauline before?
8. Discuss the cultural differences between Canada and France in “A Duck to Water.” Will Emma “take to France like a duck to water”? (p 126)
9. Condo and commercial development are explored in “Differential Settlement,” discuss the pros and cons of it.
10. In an act of desperation in “Adamantine,” Lindsay pawns a friend’s engagement ring to recover from her husband’s debts. Would you do something similar if you had to?
11. The mother in “The Pier” dives into baking after her husband leaves her. What is it about baking that someone might find comforting? What activity do you find comforting?
12. Do you agree with the narrator’s suspicions regarding the kidnapping in “What Follows the Falls”?
13. Discuss the role of water in the stories. What does it symbolize for the characters?
14. Discuss which stories spoke to you the most and why.



### ABOUT DAYLE

Dayle Furlong is the author of the novel *Saltwater Cowboys*, a 2015 Toronto Public Library Dewey Diva Pick, and a collection of poetry entitled *Open Slowly*. Her short fiction has appeared in *The Great Lakes Review*, *The Puritan*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. Her fiction has been awarded an Award of Merit from the Summer Literary Seminars international literary competition and was a finalist for the 2018 Curt Johnson Prose Awards in the USA. She is a graduate of the Humber College School for Writers and has a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.