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Lake in the Clouds

By Sara Donati

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In her extraordinary novels **Into the Wilderness** and **Dawn on a Distant Shore**, award-winning writer Sara Donati deftly captured the vast, untamed wilderness of late-eighteenth-century New York and the trials and triumphs of the Bonner family. Now Donati takes on a new and often overlooked chapter in our nation's past—and in the life of the spirited Bonners—as their oldest daughter, the brave and beautiful Hannah, comes of age with a challenge that will change her forever. Masterfully told, this passionate story is a moving tribute to a resilient, adventurous family and a people poised at the brink of a new century.

It is the spring of 1802, and the village of Paradise is still reeling from the typhoid epidemic of the previous summer. Elizabeth and Nathaniel Bonner have lost their two-year-old son, Hannah's half brother Robbie, but they struggle on as always: the men in the forests, the twins Lily and Daniel in Elizabeth's school, and Hannah as a doctor in training, apprenticed to Richard Todd. Hannah is descended from healers on both sides—one Scots grandmother and one Mohawk—and her reputation as a skilled healer in her own right is growing.

After a long night spent attending to a birth, Elizabeth and Hannah encounter an escaped slave hiding on the mountain. She calls herself Selah Voyager, and she is looking for Curiosity Freeman—a former slave herself, one of the village's wisest women and Elizabeth's closest friend. The Bonners take Selah, desperately ill, to **Lake in the Clouds** to care for her, and with that simple act they are drawn into the secret life that Curiosity and Galileo Freeman and their grown children have been leading for almost ten years. The Bonners will do what they must to protect the Freemans, just as Hannah will protect her patient, who presents more than one kind of challenge. For a bounty hunter is afoot—Hannah's childhood friend and first love, Liam Kirby.

While Elizabeth and Nathaniel undertake a treacherous journey through the endless forests to bring Selah to safety in the north, Hannah embarks on a very different journey to New-York City, with two goals: to learn the secrets of vaccination against smallpox, a disease that threatens Paradise, and to find out what she can about Liam's immediate past and what caused him to change so drastically from the boy she once loved. The obstacles she faces as a woman and a Mohawk make her confront questions long avoided about her place in the world.

Those questions follow her back to Paradise, where she finds that the medical miracle she brings with her will not cure prejudice or superstition, nor can it solve the problem of slavery. No sooner have the Bonners begun to rebound from

their losses—old and new—than they find themselves confronted by more than one old enemy in a battle that will test the strength of their love for one another. Hannah faces the decision she has always dreaded: will she make a life for herself in a white world, or among her mother's people?

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this overly long and melodramatic sequel to *Into the Wilderness*, Donati continues the saga of the Bonner family as they struggle to survive in the wilderness of New York in 1802. They live on a secluded farmstead, high up on a mountain; the nearest town is named Paradise, a cruel joke for a place full of suspicious, fearful gossipmongers. Nathaniel and Elizabeth Bonner are solid citizens and loving parents, a kind of Ward and June Cleaver in buckskin. Hannah, a bright, courageous young woman who dreams of becoming a doctor, is Nathaniel's half-Mohawk daughter by his first wife. The plot involves all the Bonners, and their white and Indian relatives and friends, in the dangerous scheme of smuggling escaped slaves north to freedom in Canada. Add spurned lovers, bounty hunters, scheming women, colorful crackpots, racial prejudice, cruelty, murder, robbery, illicit sex, smallpox and an epidemic of scarlet fever, and 600 pages go by pretty quickly. There is little suspense, despite the smuggling plotline, and the reader is left merely to keep track of scores of characters (many of whom die during the epidemic). Hannah is the most compelling figure, as she tries to combine Indian and white man's medicines and be accepted in an insular, male-dominated profession while also dealing with an old flame who's tracking a runaway slave. Donati's descriptions of early 19th-century medical procedures, remedies and primitive vaccination techniques are graphic and authentic. Although the story could have been trimmed by at least 100 pages, it will still please fans of soap-opera-style historical fiction.

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From [Booklist](#)

Set in late-eighteenth-century upstate New York on the edge of the frontier, Donati's latest novel continues the story of Elizabeth, Nathaniel, and Hannah (Nathaniel's half-Indian daughter) Bonner, other members of their extended family, and the various cast of quirky, ill-behaved, or good and honorable characters inhabiting the lonely town of Paradise. The Bonners have been through quite a lot in Donati's past two books; the action this time centers on Hannah, a beautiful and independent-minded young woman who also is celebrated in Paradise for her exceptional healing skills. When a dangerously ill and extremely pregnant runaway slave is discovered near the Bonner home, Hannah insists on nursing the woman back to health, despite the fact that hiding and helping the runaway slave puts her and her family at risk. A further plot twist arrives in the form of a bounty hunter looking to capture the runaway slave. He turns out to be Hannah's childhood friend and first love, the handsome but troubled Liam Kirby. Donati's fans have been eagerly awaiting this third installment in the dramatic lives of the Bonner family, and they will be pleased, for this is a sweeping, enjoyable historical adventure-love story. *Kathleen Hughes*

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Review

PRAISE FOR SARA DONATI:

"Donati's engaging characters, her strong sense of place and the lively escapades pull readers along."

--*Rocky Mountain News*

"The author [has] a gift for capturing the history and the lives of the people of that time and place."

--*The Tampa Tribune*

PRAISE FOR **INTO THE WILDERNESS:**

“Exemplary historical fiction, boasting a heroine with a real and tangible presence.”

--*Kirkus Reviews*

“My favorite kind of book.”

--Diana Gabaldon, bestselling author of **The Fiery Cross**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raymond Llamas:

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Helen McCleary:

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