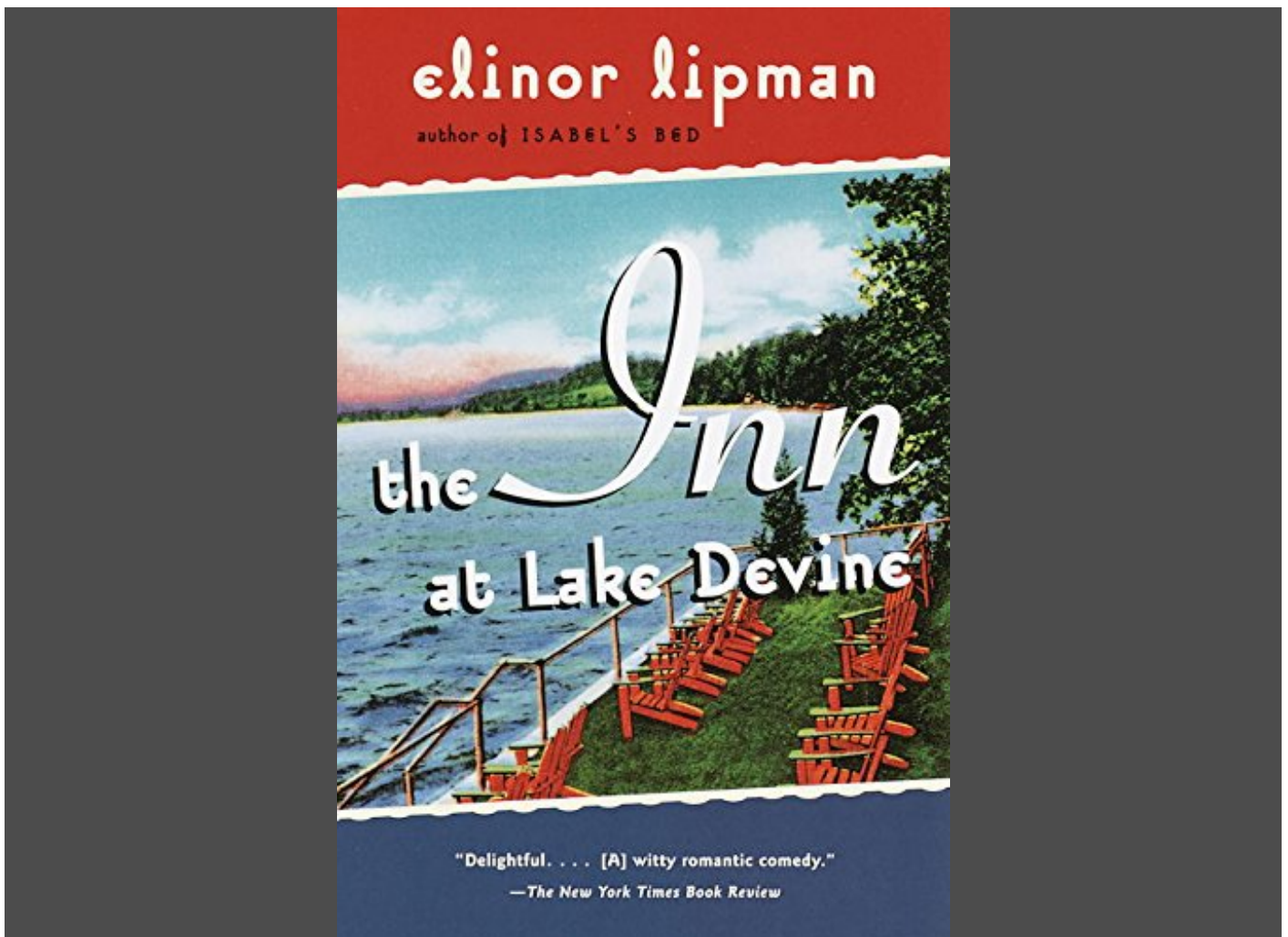


PDF | The Inn at Lake Devine
(Vintage Contemporaries)

by Elinor Lipman



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It was not complicated, and, as my mother pointed out, not even personal: They had a hotel; they didn't want Jews; we were Jews...It's the early 1960s and Natalie Marx is stunned when her mother inquires about vacation accommodations in Vermont and receives a response that says, "The Inn at Lake Devine is a family-owned resort, which has been in continuous operation since 1922. Our guests who feel most comfortable here, and return year after year, are Gentiles."

So begins Natalie's fixation with the Inn and the family who owns it. And when Natalie finagles an invitation to join a friend on vacation there, she sets herself upon a path that will inextricably link her adult life into this peculiar family and their once-restricted hotel.

The Inn at Lake Devine will enchant readers with the beguiling voice, elegant charm, and deft storytelling that have been hallmarks of Elinor Lipman's previous novels and have made her beloved by her fans. Her characters sparkle on the page and delight us with their wit and grace—even when anti-Semitism rears its head in Vermont and the tables are turned in the Catskills. Elinor Lipman is the undisputed master of the art of screwball comedy.

From the Hardcover edition.

Amazon.com Review

In the early 1960s, a Massachusetts family suffers a polite awakening. Inquiring about summer openings at a Vermont inn, the Marxes receive a killing civil response, which ends, "Our guests who feel most comfortable here, and return year after year, are Gentiles." Apparently the Marxes are not quite as ideally average as they thought, at least on the basis of their surname. So begins *The Inn at Lake Devine*, Elinor Lipman's disarming and very funny exploration of the power of pride and place. Natalie, the youngest Marx daughter, will literally spend years responding to this rebuff. At first she taunts the innkeeper, Ingrid Berry, by phone and mail, stressing by exaggeration that a system which welcomes WASP wife-murderers but not famed convert Elizabeth Taylor is both unfair and inane. In 1964, our Anne Frank adept even goes so far as to send off a copy of the newly minted Civil Rights Act: "Who knew if I'd ever exchange another letter with a documented anti-Semite?" she asks. "Just in case no one ever insulted me again--in this land of religious freedom and ironclad civil rights--I employed the big gun I was saving for future transgressors: 'P.S.,' I typed and underlined: 'In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.'"

The next summer Natalie manages to engineer an invite to Lake Devine, coming in on the coattails of Robin Fife, a good-natured, none-too-swift fellow camper whose family are regulars: "We all wanted to cross the threshold as guests and not visitors, and maybe I, in my early-teen disguise, was best suited to be a spy in the house of Devine. It was our duty to show that we--with the blood of Moses, Queen Esther, Leonard Bernstein, and Sid Caesar coursing through our veins--were the equal of any clientele." But by the end of her stay, Natalie is fed up with the Fifes' relentless good will and Mrs. Berry's covert ill will. All in all, she is relieved to return to firm social ground, and doesn't devote much thought to her "Gentile ambitions" for the next 10 years. A letter about a Camp Minnehaha reunion, however, brings Robin back into the picture, and Natalie is again invited to Lake Devine--this time for her campmate's marriage to the eldest Berry son.

But enough plot summary. *The Inn at Lake Devine* is full of sweet and sharp surprises that would be churlish to reveal. Lipman offers up sparkling scenes of serious social mischief, explorations of identity, delicious food (though a deadly mushroom lasagna momentarily clouds the picture), and a wedding party or two. All this and a pair of the menschiest WASP brothers in literary history--not to mention phrases such as *shnook*, *shmendrick*, and *shmegege*--make *The Inn at Lake Devine* the perfect, provocative comedy.

Product Description

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