

# Second Chance Cruise

A Short Story and Discussion by Sheri Barile

In this story, we join Jean Chancellor for one of her fondest memories and forms of recreation. She is about to take a cruise along the coast of Lake Michigan from the quaint western Michigan town of Saugatuck north to Holland. It's something she used to do with her husband each weekend years ago, and she misses the summer cruises very much. Today, her son and his family have invited her to join them on just such a cruise aboard a boat his friend has lent him for the weekend. Will the experience be just as she remembers?



## Preparations and How-to's

- Print this copy of the story with tips and discussion questions for the group leader.
- Print [large-print copies of just the story](#) and distribute them to participants. Individuals can follow along or even read aloud parts of the story.
- Encourage people to close their eyes and see the story in their mind like a movie.
- Use the discussion starters at the end to get a conversation going.
- Print a copy of the [pictures](#) to display during the activity if not showing the slide show.
- To add more sensory detail and make the activity more interactive, bring in some lemonade, chocolate fudge, or ice cream cones to taste. Use a fan and a spray bottle filled with water to simulate spray from the lake and wind on the face. Fragrant suntan lotion can be passed around to smell.
- Download this [PDF slide presentation](#) to show in place of reading the story. Show it on your [widescreen TV](#). **Note:** The PDF slide presentation can be used as a stand-alone activity.

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## Second Chance Cruise

### The Story

As Jean Chancellor dressed on the morning of August 12, she was brimming with anticipation. Her son, Todd, and his wife, Abby, would be picking her up soon to drive her to the city of Saugatuck. There, they would walk around town a bit, have an ice cream cone, and buy some delicious chocolate fudge at a local sweet shop. At noon, her two grown granddaughters would meet them at the marina, and the group would board a cabin cruiser to take out on the lake.

It had been nine years since Jean had boated on Lake Michigan, but it was once the highlight of her summers. She'd loved traveling up the coast from Saugatuck Harbor to Holland and Grand Haven with the sun on her shoulders and the wind and lake spray in her face. But when her husband's health started to decline nearly a decade ago, they made the painful decision to sell their boat. Now all she had of those days were photographs and beautiful memories.

She had pulled out her photo album the previous night to reminisce about boating with her husband, whom everyone called Chance—a nickname for Chancellor. His given name was Glen, but he liked going by Chance, and when he bought an Egg Harbor cabin cruiser after retiring in 1993, he named it *Takin' a Chance*.

Today's trip would be on a boat that Todd's friend was lending him for the weekend. Jean didn't know what it was named, but that didn't matter. She just wanted to get out on the water. They went aboard, and Jean sat in a deck chair as she watched Todd climb up to the flybridge to start the motor. The engine roared to life and then settled into a slow and steady "glub, glub, glub." The deep, throaty sound of it flooded Jean with memories.



Abby emerged from the cabin with a glass of ice-cold lemonade. "Here, Mom," she said. "You must be thirsty after that ice cream." Jean took a sip. Its sweet tartness complemented her happy and excited mood.

As the boat idled through the channel heading out toward the lighthouse, Jean's granddaughters began to slather suntan lotion on their arms and legs. It smelled like coconut. Jean put on a light sweater and a sun hat to protect her skin from the rays.

Soon, they were on the open lake, and Todd throttled up until they were cruising at a brisk pace. The sun was warm and the breeze was cool. Beaches along the shore were crowded with swimmers and sunbathers. At times, the oily scent of charcoal burning in portable grills wafted to them.

After a time, Todd slowed to a stop and anchored the boat to allow his daughters to take a refreshing dip. Jean hadn't gone into the waters of Lake Michigan in many years, but she remembered that even in August, they were quite chilly. While the girls swam, she nibbled on a square of rich, creamy fudge.

Later, as they returned to Saugatuck Harbor, Jean sighed, realizing she didn't want this beautiful day to end. Todd docked the boat and came down to the deck.

"Mom," he said, "did this take you back to your days of boating with Dad on Lake Michigan?"

"It certainly did," she answered. "This was the most enjoyable day I can remember in years. Thank you, Son."

"Well, what are you doing next weekend?"

"I don't know," Jean said. "I have no plans. Why?"

"When I told you a friend lent me this boat, that wasn't exactly the whole story," Todd explained. "He let me take the boat out for a spin last month because he was selling her, and I told him I was interested. I bought her, Mom. There are plenty of boat cruises in your future."

"Oh, that's wonderful!" Jean exclaimed.

"And I want your input on something," Todd added. "Abby and I have been considering a name for her. We're thinking about *Second Chance*. How do you feel about that?"

Jean felt tears pricking beneath her eyelids. "I think it's perfect," she said, beaming. "*Second Chance* is the best name in the world for this boat."



**THE END**

## Discussion Starters

- Have you ever been to Lake Michigan? If so, what part(s)?
  - What do you remember about it?
  - Have you ever taken a boat cruise on a very large lake such as one of the Great Lakes or even the open sea? If so, what was it like?
  - In addition to Lake Michigan, there are four other Great Lakes. Can you name them? (Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and Lake Superior)
  - Were you surprised when Todd told Jean he had purchased the cabin cruiser?
  - Do you like the name *Second Chance* for the boat Todd bought?
  - If you had a boat, what names would you consider for it?
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