

I conquered my fear of heights when I was in middle school, but every now and then it comes back, catching me off guard and reminding me what irrational terror feels like. This is me on top of Wakely Mountain, after hiking for three hours and climbing what is supposed to be the tallest fire tower in the Adirondacks. I suffered a panic attack on the stairs and only made it to the top by singing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” over and over again, distracting myself from the chilly, whistling oblivion all around me. At the time I was sick with fear, but in retrospect, it’s good to know I’m still capable of wild irrationality. It’s also good to know that, when my sense of judgment fails me, there’s another impulse that kicks in, singing me through the paralysis and the possibility of an outcome far worse than the panic itself: to have come this far and end up with nothing, not even a lousy picture, to show for it.

—*Matthew Ducker*



Photo: Marisa Domenech