



Wild Plum!

*As I drifted off to nap I heard an old call;
It started with a rhythmic lapping song
As of water upon the shore. I heard
the galooping cupping murmur
of water
cascading and arcing brightly
without breaking the contour of the rocks' worn paths
and I thought I saw
a caddis fly hover
over the pool below*

*and I smiled the cat's smile in his window in the sun
of a fine autumn day all snuggled into a dream of life
timeless as the quietest pools of Wild Plum Creek
as they too drift off, way down to the North Fork,
beneath the distant towering crags of Sierra Buttes.*



*Up above the camps in the morning shadow of the crags
the dusty trail winds and turns, now a boggy mossy faint path
into the heartland of the mountain forest sourcewaters,
the pristine meadows below the feeders,
and narrowed gorges where trapped waters collect
and tumble into stone Jacuzzis
where one can strip,
and sit, or plunge,*

*Oh!
in the coldest cleanest baths in the world,
and drip-dry, clean wet footprints in granite
shivering a trail of droplets toward clean dry clothes,
basking on huge flat sun-warmed boulders
below towering old pines and a giant blue sky!*

*Working back down through the brush and thicket
of a little-known fishing path the deer use all the time
you hear the growing, incessant roar,
the thundering, crashing roar one cannot out-shout:
the boiling, spuming granddaddy pool of them all
where it all plunges twenty feet just like that!
In a maelstrom of chromium bubbles and misty noise
the crashing watery din propels the current ever so swiftly,
down, away, into the deep blue waters of the lower pool,
dive-able, high from this very rock,*

*but the fear says 'no':
not the unmistakable dread fear of certain danger,
but the cautious fascination as of the very young
for things like locomotives, raw power in panting iron,
and thrashing, thudding, thrumming bronze propellers*

*of towering ships, larger than life,
upheaving the very atmosphere or ocean
with evidence of excitement and danger everywhere
just beyond reach
if very careful.*

*Twenty, a hundred yards downstream the slope eases
and the creek spreads and fans into dozens of prime
fishing spots, each one a perfect gem of an evening site
for some past or future foray, and the sun ripples
through the trees' canopy of green and gold above
dancing on clear rocks and bespeckled sand below the water.*

*There is a spot to whoosh-whish-whoosh float cast a dry fly,
perhaps a royal coachman or dusty brown gnat
on guaranteed-invisible tapered line and leader,
snaking down the pool quiet and undisturbingly lethal,
drifting down and behind that rock and into the riffle
where lurks the legendary Sierra Whopper, in truth,
a baby German brown or rainbow,
Too young to grace a campfire skillet. Let him live
to tell the other fishes so only the very skillful can
trick any foolish trout at all.*

*Home is there, that flat sand bed beyond with the tents
and the aroma of breakfast bacon grease poured
on the dying coals of a seven o'clock camp fire
with the face cloths hanging from the tent lines
and tree branches festooned with camp mirrors,
Zip-Locked Charmin rolls and laughter, always laughter
echoing, echoing,
the never-ending murmur of Wild Plum Creek.*

*A single golden fallen leaf drifts past the collective camper feet
cooling in the pool and gets caught, in an eddy behind my rock.
Dancing impatiently back and forth, it cannot break free;
will it drown before it finishes its journey?
A perfectly curled miniature canoe, it bobs and weaves
and little splashlets weight it down so it may here find
its final and meaningless watery resting place;
a little wave propelled by the hand of the thoughtful god
with the ice-cold toes scoots it merrily along its way, and
life just has its own destinations and purposes.*

*When the evening campfire crackles and warms,
Bright flames cast black shadows into images in rising waves
of spires of woodsmoke ascending, dissolving in black canopy above;
What mankind sees in the shadows is the illusion of magic,
smiling faces and looming countenances of evil,
remembering, just in time,
only the memories of illusions are real.*

*I hear laughter, laughter, in the crackling creek
mixed faint with the voices of a thousand fires in so many nights
and if you know the smell of woodsmoke wafting,
blending with the chill delight of night pine air
and if you know how to single out
the sound of that one particular low-slung aspen branch
slap-slapping, dap-dapping, rowing in place,
broadcasting droplets day and night,
as it dips back into the current time after time,
then you know you were never alone,*

nor ever shall be.

*Stepping back, the Sierran observatorium shows Polaris,
Ursa Major and the Big Dipper who always points the way,
And we ohh and ahh at how clear everything is, as if
nature knows any other way, and crackling firebrands
and muted laughter and stories while away the evening fire,
and sleepy children cuddle safely and seemingly forever
in the warm embrace of protective grownup arms,
just as timeless Wild Plum Creek abides anew, each day and year,
in living memories her children are always near,
in cherished dreams, and hopes, and perhaps
in just-so, just-perfect, Sunday afternoon naps.*

© Alex Forbes, La Parola October 1993

Content Copyright 2009 Alex Forbes & by authors as indicated.
"Rocky & Fluffy Computer Co." and "Talking Crow Productions"
are trademarks of Alex Forbes and Summitlake.com.
Comments about this site? Write Summitlake.com
All rights reserved.
edited for Mozilla and Internet Explorer