

### **III: disparity**

I drove to Rollins Reservoir yesterday afternoon, zooming east on crinkled concrete, under a bed of nimbostratus clouds, ostensibly to close out my lentic glory career for at least one pattern: summer redear, summer brown bullies, summer crappie. Ostensibly. The major purpose, function of jumping in the fucking tree-resin-glazed Honda, of rigging the rods, of donning the pack, was merely to see if I could get the fuck out of this sarcophagus home and live a little bit. I mean, fuck, I'm in pain no matter what I do, so I might as well have a better vista than the dead fucking sere yard outside my window, no?

Rollins, like Sugar Pine and Scotts Flat reservoirs, has always electrified me. It was the first reservoir nestled in a mixed-coniferous forest that I visited after moving to Davis, so it's the vanguard in my memory bank of northern California mountain waters. Too, of course, has been the nostalgia - its surrounding botany and climate have mirrored the Arrowhead of my youth. That botany, oh man, it's also been a draw, so lush and diverse - black oaks and white alders and Doug firs and ponder pines and manzanita and big-leaf maples - so full of life, effervescent, that energy's translated to me, it's seeped into my skin, my bones, my blood, it's fucking aroused life within me. The cute little community of Chicago Park has likewise appealed to me, having that inchoate sense of being the right type of human social settlement that conforms to rather than dominates the landscape. And, without question, the fishes - autumn, winter, spring, all the cooler seasons have offered me fat spotted bass and robust redear and perfect, perfect, perfect wintertime holdover 'bows, and that, remarkably given the accessibility of the reservoir, in a contemplative quiet.

I'd never been to Rollins during summer.

And so rolling along that dreary fucking pavement of I-80, enveloped by endless people in endless vehicles likely going endlessly aimless into the recesses of life, I pined for a fat redear or brown bully while Godflesh strafed through my speakers the soundtrack of my soul. It seemed right - the dour overcast; the pounding, brooding, painful music; the weakness and hurt and fragmentation and hopelessness and clutter of my mind. A synergy was there, a resonance, and it may well have been the best, most sensible fucking thing I'd done that week.

The reservoir, which had been a tranquil bed of sweetness and solemnity every other time I'd visited, was packed like a fucking feedlot with people. Kids, moms, dads, fat fucks, meatheads with retarded tattoos and dumb-big trucks and undoubtedly heinous credit scores, they were all there, all shattering any sense of solitude for which I was searching, and on a *Thursday*. The nightmare image of the human barrage destined to descend on the reservoir on the weekend sent shudders through my misanthropic body.

But I had fucking work to do, so I hoisted the pack on my back, tenderly retrieved the rods from the car, and maneuvered through the thronging mob infesting the lake's east side to the vacant west side, where there were less of *them* and, I'd hoped, more fish.

And so as the inevitable night slowly oppressed the sun into oblivion, I sent the slip-float-rigged worm into cove water, where infinity baby redear sunfish and bluegills pecked my bait - I couldn't coax a decent fish out of the pile of 'em. As the blackness of a new-moon night settled on the reservoir, I switched out the drift rig for a set-rig, for a bigger worm on bigger line with a bigger hook, hoping that would be enough to entice a foot-long brown bullhead into chewin' my bait and thus ending up in my hand for a photo shoot. It didn't happen, even after two hours of effective fishing in what historically was the correct habitat (soft bottom, cove corner, flat bottom not too deep, short carpet of submerged veg). With no action on the rods, I just fucking

sat there. I sat and tried to think productive thoughts, tried to get somewhere, but I didn't, I couldn't. Had a hard time not letting my head sink down onto my knees, was an effort keeping my eyes open, what with the weight of self-frustration stomping on me like big fuckin' concrete boots. And the fucking mini-porcupine knifing my gut frequently reminded me that something was not well, regardless if in my head or body.

The only worthwhile impression the bullhead sit gave me was this: the east side of the reservoir was covered with people, laughing, burping, families and lovers and friends and enemies, in tents, chuggin' brews around booming campfires, lanterns glowing; and on the west side of the reservoir, shrouded in darkness, no illumination or sound or warmth or any fucking sign of humanity, was one...

Me.

It seemed such a fitting metaphor for my relationship to society.

I left around 11 PM, my mind tracing fucking imaginary roads to oblivion, senseless fantasies designed to prohibit me from contemplating my painful, tenuous position in this world. I let it, and it was only interrupted once when the low-pressure sky erupted in lightning fire while Godflesh's "Dead Head" blasted through the stereo's speakers, and I wanted to fucking raze the goddamn world to the ground, I wanted to carpet-bomb it with fucking nuclear warheads, I wanted to fry it to obsidian nothingness with merciless litanies of incendiary bombs, I wanted it dead, dead, dead.

And that, frighteningly and sadly, was the only real fucking thing I felt.