

## *VI: for abbey*

Man, have we fucking debased Wild. Man, once a son of Nature, a node in a vast web comprised of myriad colors and shapes, an integral part of the whole, through his evolving mind power, now - now he dominates Nature, subdues Her, and, in the process, dissolves his hunter past, now exists merely as a ghost, a domesticated cog in this technocracy's automaton gearing. The organic landscape, once a harmonious rolling and shifting and curving of hills and floodplains and rivers and secret coves in forest cleavages, now - now it's been shaved and cut and straightened into a simple fucking math lover's ideal, simplified world, a world of concrete, asphalt, monotonous tract houses, right-angled streets, canals masquerading as rivers, the staid strip malls that homogenize experience, a perverse interring of the very land that gave rise to human life. And the actors actualizing evolution's story on the landscape, the plants and animals, they now, too, they've been straightened and tamed and dulled and squashed to where they're the commodities the technocracy's gears process for domesticated consumption. Salmon are planted in the sea like crops, monoculture draped with pesticides decorates the produce tables at bland corporate supermarkets, and dumbfounded, glassy-eyed cows gaze idiotically across overgrazed fields where mighty elk stags once roamed.

And yet, somehow, despite the obtuse goal of modern man to transform life into metal concrete consumerist products, a vestige, a memory, of Wild - it remains, even in the suffocating atmosphere of the typical American city. Grand old sagacious valley oaks still proffer acorns amid the clatter of smart-phone-drugged pawns stomping maladroitly on city sidewalks. Leveed channels, banks stripped of erosion-controlling trees and shrubs, water sterile from dams, in some areas, still, they snake sinuously and, when Nature rears Her wrath and throws down floods, the channels resurrect, at least ephemerally, their tempestuous past, cutting new paths for the raging roily water, throwing rocks into new formations, digging deep holes in river bends while raising the ancestral point bar. In the suppressed waters of city park ponds, non-native bass and sunfish and carp, they persevere on their own, following the sun and the moon and the leaves, despite man's continual smothering of pond life with poisons. And occasionally, within these phantoms of a former, more intimate life, roam complete humans, those versed in modern life's attributes - cars, schooling, home replete with electricity and plumbing, electronic media - but awake to the complementary atavism that, with the finer aspects of civilization, and stealing Abbey's words, completes humanity.

On a still, gilded day in early autumn, in what was once the braided channel of Putah Creek but is now the Arboretum Waterway, a civilized man with only a lone rod, bare feet, one hook, and some old corn, with guile and grace, caught a koi, a mighty koi, a koi that persevered for years and likely longer than any of the copious, more drably colored carp that also inhabit the Arboretum Waterway, a mighty fish that survived despite her snowy, day-glow orange advertisements to predators, a mighty fish that still expressed a Wild heritage. It was completion.