

## ***II.vii: maybe***

My trail ended at a lovely little pond, secluded by veiling yellow pines and Doug firs, with a little island billowing willows and fringed with cattails, sapphire mountain water its source, an admirable abundance of large bluegill, a few adolescent largemouth bass, and then a Pond Queen that could've pushed 20 inches. I doffed my pack and lounged by the pond, caressed by the early evening sun, light breeze waving the surface a little, entertained by the square dances of the nesting bull bluegills delineating their little love lairs, the hens lazing outside the love lairs, lazily slurping any hapless bug that'd fallen into the water. I stripped and submerged, and, as usual, so refreshing. I stroked to the little island and then back, the bass and bluegill more accepting and inquisitive than scared - a sign, rare in California, that they'd been secluded, too. I crawled out onto a big hoary log and let the sun and light breeze waft the water from my body, a soothing cooling, and my mind wafted, too.

*Gilded sunlight, a breath of breeze, fresh perfume emanating from the oaks and firs and pines surrounding. A placid little pond, frogs frolicking, blackbirds warbling, the water cool, cleansing. And she and I, on a flat, burnished, teal-colored rock, still young, clothed by not much, still swelling with life, energy, resonance, still with so much promise ahead. But the future doesn't matter - only now does, being with her, talking, laughing, drowning in her abyssal ocean eyes, running my hand slowly, smoothly, instinctively up and down her creamy leg, her leg held tight to my side, so sweet and sensual and good.*

*But I wasn't - part of me, mind, heart, soul, was warped and wicked, had been sadistic to animals and people, was haunted by incessant images of knives and guns and blood and guts and vengeance and insane fantasies designed to deny both the waiting world and me, lust so sadly fused with violence and hate.*

*Would you have still sat with me, your thigh tight to my waist, on that smooth rock, the purifying little pond lapping peacefully, eyes twinkling towards me, my hand caressing your smooth leg, if I told you my warped and wicked deeds and thoughts, even though I abhorred 'em, understood 'em, and felt and knew they were wrong? Would you have stayed if I told you that my lust's inevitable rumblings, and thus love's glimmer, mortified me? Would you have stayed if I told you that, consequently, so frequently I feel nothing, I feel as if I'm stone, a headstone, a tombstone, my body a sarcophagus of a dead soul?*

*I can't imagine you would've, which was why I never told you. I'd've understood if you'd left - I was some scary shit. That would've hurt me, but maybe my anguish would have been enough evidence to convince you I still had some life. And then maybe, in that setting, maybe...you would've stayed.*