

Green Fire

I remember

Those long summer days when I would dip my feet in shining
pools of emerald

When the wind would untangle the snarls in my hair

Cool my agitation

And bring me tidings of companionship on its misty,
outstretched arms.

I would cock my head and listen to the unearthly wails it would
bring me

On unfurling waves

Crashing into my eardrums

And filling me with the lonely desire to be with its owner.

Perhaps that's why a howl is deceptively forlorn:

The listener knows that the call of a pack

Is full of more love than they could ever achieve

And it makes them jealous.

I remember

When the shots began to echo through the hills.

I remember standing in front of my mother

As my world was spinning

And asking her

What was happening to it?

Her black eyes darkened

Her face closed

She stared into the fireplace
And sucked in a deep breath.
She muttered something that sounded like
“You wouldn’t understand.”
“You’re only a child.”

I remember
Walking down a trail
Chilled to the bone
My backpack filled with a bottle of water, binoculars,
And a very battered copy of my favorite book
The Sand County Almanac.

As time passed on I lost my way
And found myself near a small lake.
A doe was chest high in the water.
As she turned
And shook out her bottlebrush tail
I realized my mistake.
The wolf fluffed out her chest,
And pricked her ears
In all of her canine ecstasy.
Six wolf pups tumbled behind her legs
Their little pink mouths gaped
And squeaking, they began to play.
They knew that their games
Would determine their survival.

A shot rang out.
It reminded me of thunder

And wet spray smacked into my face.
The blurry form of a pup limped behind a crevice.
The whines of its five comrades
That beckoned it to safety
Seemed to come from nowhere.

I knelt beside the mother's crumpled form.
My hand buried itself in coarse hair
Sticky with water.
The intervals between the rises and falls of the chest
Told me everything that I needed to know.
Her broken body gave no justice to her former pride.
Her head raised slightly
And my blue eyes met green.

There I saw
The shining pools of my childhood.
The emerald liquid swirled into strange images,
Hieroglyphs that I could never decipher.
They contracted and formed flames.
The fire sputtered, its wisps turning into nothing.
And the green was no longer vibrant.
It was opaque.

I remember seeing the mountains become marred with deer
tracks.
I remember watching the vegetation
Become scarcer
And bones begin to take their place.
The new graveyard is filled with tombstones.

They say
Prey to the tragedy of the commons.
Rest in peace.
I remember a time when tertiary predators were to be feared.
Now they are only game.
Varmints.
I remember when I used to fear them... her... too.
Now there is only one thing that haunts me.
The fingers of a stranger
Snuffed out a candle.
It's dormant for them.
They could never comprehend
They could never really
Truly
Know the consequences
Of their actions.
They are blind
And I pity them.
But for me,
I will always know
That the green fire will never
Ever
Die.