

A LATE TATTER OF EDEN

Will Inman

After sustained hard rains, Burnt Mill Creek swelled over its dark banks, sometimes washed out the bridge along Colonial Drive to Forest Hills Elementary School.

Early on, I observed the difference between nature's rage and natural serenity.

Creekwaters ran serene most seasons. bottomsand shone golden under *Elodea* and *Vallisneria*. Striped *Dace* and fat female *Gambusias* escorted the smaller males, the eldest gone black and white — all swam sheer in open currents. I

never tried wading or swimming during high water, but I waded often or swam naked in a deeper bowl, white sand under flashes of sun through tall cypress green.

Cardinal flowers bloomed creek-edge, hummingbirds sucked the dark reds. My toes went mussels tunneling brief in sand or mud. Brown snails seemed neither deceived nor amused.

Delgado mill-boys, come to bathe, saw me as an alien snob from an enemy class. I was too afraid to view them as potential allies.

Still, I persisted. God spoke in languages of vines scraping high in trees. Zebra swallowtails flew magic down green ways. A slim greensnake mocked Eden.