

Wild is the creek

It feeds my body with its sweet mulberries in early summer. June mulberries and June junebugs fill the hollows below the roots, the gaps between the rocks down by the shore. Purple washed from my palms by the water, dirt cleaned from my nails by the minnows.

Wild is the creek and the creatures around it

The nesting red hawks perching in the tallest tree. The barred owl singing its questions as it glides silently over the grass. Coyotes run, pause, stare at me, eyes the same hazel as my own, primate and canine sharing a fear that comes to fruition in the few feet between the two of us. The judgemental stare of the turtles. Brown bats dive and twist and play above the field, silhouettes against the setting sun. A mature raccoon by the water's edge, patiently teaching its juvenile to fish, eyes glinting in the lights from the bridge.

Wild is the creek and the water that flows through it

The rain comes from the sky and fills its banks to overflow, roaring and plowing down the weeds far above. When it spills from its bindings to soak the earth, the water ensures that it will not be forgotten. It leaves crawfish in meadows, debris halfway up the trunks of the trees. The plants refuse to be uprooted, so they resign themselves to drowning, Midwestern whirlpool seaweed.

Wild is the creek and its potential for greatness

It slithers through the ground, carving away at the rock just as a river would, a constant reminder of what it could become. Life brimming to overflowing, generations of existence below my feet, melted into the mud. It hums with being, with a peaceful existence in which it can simply *be*, in which it doesn't need to puff its chest and raise its hackles to be left alone, in which it doesn't need to be intimidating to keep some sense of autonomy. If left unchecked, it will spread, through the baseball diamond and the plastic slides and the neighborhoods, taking over the landscape and turning it into a post-apocalyptic suburban forest. It leaves this threat in the open, accepting the odd looks it may receive, the open judgment in the form of littered soda cans and blatant ignorance.

Wild is the creek and its dewy spring mornings

A half hour before eight, when the sun has clawed its way out of the night and is taking a moment to breathe in a pause halfway over the horizon and the frost has begun to melt, when each blade of grass is straining under the weight of the water, when the light filters through the droplets in rainbows and prisms, when the vapor emanating off of the trunks of the trees is visible from the shade. The world revels in the brief minutes of the morning in which both the crickets and the birds chirp, where night and day, dawn and dusk, sun and moon can sing in harmony and paint the air with vibrant streaks of sound.

Wild is the creek and its neverending resilience

It is filled with litter, with oil, with withering disease. Rocks are dumped on its banks and it endures the pollution of the roaring and groaning of vehicles, the stupidity of children as they trash the water, as its meager watershed is burnt and chopped and paved and plasticized. Yet the water still flows, the air still blows, the trees still grow. The only white flag it will wave are its clouds.

Wild is the creek and its incredible reach

It travels where it wishes, always moving in the same direction, continuing on until it reaches the Mississippi, where it abandons its individuality in favor of becoming part of the

moving mass, part of the journey to the ocean, part of something bigger than itself, and once it reaches the salt of the Gulf it separates even further from the water that was previously its own and the once-strange waters of the other creeks and streams that band together to make the river, that it had come to know quite well, and it continues on into the ocean. It doesn't know where it may go next. It could freeze and become part of a glacier, it could evaporate and join the droplets that make up the monsoons, it could fall to the bottom of the Mariana Trench and feel warmth from the jets for the first time in its existence. A bunch of protons and neutrons and electrons tossed together in a salad of matter that has the power to create life and destroy it.

This is the creek that remains wild despite the human nature to tame.

Cats and dogs, corn and beans, earth and sky. We take great things and try to make them greater. We mold and mutilate them, our hands with our opposable thumbs, the only thing to set us apart from the mass of animals struggling to survive. We expand where we should not, exist where we should not. But the water of the creek cannot be tamed.

Wild is the creek as it always has been and always will be