

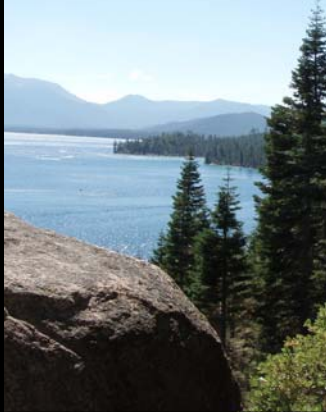


Talking to Flowers in Tahoe (August 2007)

After reading through my files and reconnecting with the wild blood that flows in me, I fly off to Nevada to roam a bit around Lake Tahoe. My sister and I stay in a small cabin that a stranger recommended, surrounded by wild gardens of flowers, all leaning onto one another, into one another, competing with their brightness for the light. I wake up early in the morning and go for a walk down to the river and back around the gardens. A silence hangs in the air and that full contentedness that comes with being fully in the place where one is at the moment.

I wander slowly and then hear a voice speaking in a calm tone. She looks at me, giggles, “Oh, you must have heard me talking to the flowers.” What a perfect opening line. She stands holding a thin green hose that runs a flow of water over the flower beds. Her long hair is pulled into two braids that reveal the crinkled skin that comes with living at high altitudes under the sun for too many years. The wizened look of her skin gives her a wildness that I’m drawn to in strangers.

We spend that early morning together, slowly moving around the flowerbeds. She tells me about how three large boulders saved her home and all her belongings in the big Tahoe fire, yet how that fire also freed her from her belongings. Her house was in a nearby neighborhood that had not been evacuated with the fires, and although everyone had the awareness of potential danger, there was a stronger sense of “that can’t happen to me.” But the fire changed direction at the last moment and they were given under 10 minutes to clear out what was dearest to them. She describes running into her home, smelling the fire all around her, almost feeling its heat, and as her eyes wandered around all that she had held as her own just days ago, it was already not her own. She took her camping gear and some photo albums and walked out on her past.



When she looked back, the fire was already in her neighbor's homes. Yet her home survived. Although all her belongings survived, she spoke of how she had already parted with the items, how she found herself giving away items without reason, she simply had already said good-bye.



My sister joins me and we head into the small dining room to eat our gourmet breakfast, the last one for weeks. We share bits of our lives, as this is our first morning together in months. She tells me of working into the early morning as an investment banker. "One night, I couldn't deal anymore so I stripped off my shirt and sat topless working for hours." I gaze in admiration, at the bravery. I giggle at the image of my topless sister working on a million dollar deal. She tells me of drunken nights at bars. I try to explain my restlessness. "I love you," she tells me. Only a week has passed but Poland already feels like another life, my memory dims quickly; the sad secrets and leaning graves are quickly replaced with the air rushing over my head as I drive quickly on mountain roads towards the desert of Black Rock City.

