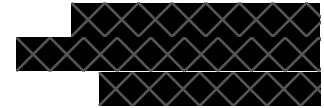


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Cold Water for Little Trout

*Cold water, little trout
Come to the surface
and breathe—
Take in the air
It's humid enough you might mistake it
for home
Ahhhh.... but it does not run near so deeeeep
It's the cold water
you like to immerse yourself within
So wise, little trout
So wise—*

I grew up in the wooded suburbs of northern Delaware. The woods ran with little creeks full of salamanders and water-spiders, little pools and big, beautiful rocks; all the things which fueled my burgeoning imagination. As I grew older, the woods became smaller, partly from encroachment by developers, but also because I grew tall enough to see all the boundaries, both physical and legal, of the woods which had once seemed so endless. While I was still in the womb of this childhood innocence, I had a rock that was all my own. I now know that it sat in my neighbors backyard—I could be seen on that rock from my mother's kitchen window. At the time, though, I believed I was lost in the middle of a great hidden space that was all my own and this rock was placed there just for me. I called it *Thinking Rock*. I whiled away many hours in my most *Rodin-esc* posture, consulting with the skunk-cabbage, conferring with the leaves...

There is a little water hole that I have discovered for myself along the blue ridge parkway. I won't disclose the exact location of it—I need to have my secret places, and you need to find your own. And, while that sounds like one of those greedy locals-only statements so common to towns drowned in tourism, in this case, its honest; I implore you, go forth, and find your spot that's full of magic just for you.

I will share this much of my secret with you: Along the Blue Ridge parkway about forty minutes west of Asheville is a hidden trail that starts at mile marker 415, just before the very popular Graveyard Fields trailhead. This little trail wanders back about a mile into the woods until it runs across a portion of cool creek known as Skinny Dip falls. Its a perfect trail for young people with dogs and kids. The best part is that the creek and its falls are not one big Niagra, but are a long series of little swimming holes and big sunny rocks—a perfect place for seeking out a spot that's all your own.

The rich forests of Western North Carolina are a wonderland to me; Oh, the endless labyrinth of trails through trees! Oh, how large the rocks! Oh, how deep the creeks—with their water so cool and deep! Oh, how small I am, lost in the great wilderness that I had once only pretended little Delaware to be; It's as though I've walked straight through my wardrobe and into the abandon of my unabashed child-like imagination. When I feel the muse pulling at my earlobe, or my inner Peter-Pan begging me to free his shadow for a frolic, I drive out to Skinny Dip and hike down to my magic spot.

The water in my little pool is cold, the kind of cold that steals my breath and lights my skin on fire. Its deep, too, enough to swallow me whole. That's where I was when I saw the trout. She was six inches long and wore a beautiful sequined leotard that shimmered slightly in the sun. Bold little fish, she seemed un-phased at my presence. I sat quietly along the edge of the pool and watched her rise to the surface and suck at the air before dashing back down into the deep for a turn, then rising once again. I enjoyed it when she rose to blow kisses at the world above, but it always felt so right to me when she returned to her rich, cold water.

Later that night I wrote the poem of the little trout. I wondered for a while what it was in that experience that had spoken to me so clearly. Often my own poetry is an enigma even to me at first, like a lucid dream; a mystery from the cool, subterranean river of my subconscious rising to the surface to speak. The mystery of the trout came back to me again and again over the course of the last year. I kept seeing that little fish, and kept feeling so good about her swimming in that cool, deep pool. I wondered about her secret life in the water. How different it was from mine; the air is my home and the water belongs to her. The strangeness and shock of the creek is as foreign to me as the touch of air must be to her.

The lesson of the trout eventually came to me as I struggled through my own journey this past year. Oh, little trout, how enamored you are with the air, and it can at first seem like its not that different, but, oh, little trout, you know! You know that you were made for the cold water, not the warm summer air—and wise little trout, you immerse yourself in what you were made for. You, my sequined messenger are a reminder to me not to be lured out into environments that I will never survive in, but that I am right to dwell deeply in those places for which I was designed. For me that's acting and writing, playing and singing—a deep, cool pool of art.

I have tried my whole life to thrive in the world that others told me was abundant and right. And while they meant no harm, they were not cool brook trout; They could not understand my need for the deep. They were children of the earth and air, who found joy and sustenance in sunning themselves on rocks—I have no shame anymore in recognizing that I am unable to thrive there. Wise little trout that I am, now, I immerse myself in that which is true to me. I may tease and flirt at the wild air from time to time. But, always return back to the depths of my special magic place. A place just for me.

Richard L. Bergh is a writer, actor, and musician currently living in Weaverville, North Carolina. He graduated from Wilmington University and currently works and trains at the NYS3 Meisner Acting Conservatory in Woodfin. He performs under the names R. Lyon Bergh and TwoSocks, and can be reached at RichardLBergh@gmail.com or on instagram as [@twosockswrites](https://www.instagram.com/twosockswrites).