

## A Hidden Place

David Blumenfeld

Deep in the marsh, hidden far behind Natalie's little cabin, lies a secret spot of a fisherman's most extravagant dreams. If you are among the few who know the way, a quarter-mile trudge ankle-deep in briny stench and slimy black Pleistocene marsh mud will take you to it, fully disguised by tall green Georgia cord grass, *Spartina alterniflora*, for which our cabin, Villa Spartina, was named. A savvy fisherman can hack the dense green blockade with a sharp machete or, under favorable circumstances, push it aside to reveal a grey/black bank where the stream bends, widens, and grows deeper at its tawny center. But take care: the wet mud is soft. No fisherman wants to sink deep and risk losing a boot or slip down the bank's slick side and return home a muddy mess. At 5 PM, two hours before low tide, the fishing spot is ten yards across, forty long, and the sun's red-orange beams make slowly flowing Brockington Creek seem aflame. A leathery gator slithers silently, barely a splash, into the shadowy shallows, a Great Blue Heron, dinosaur of the sky, squawks its grating *Skeow, Skeow, Skeow*, while overhead, flocks of shore birds: Ruddy Turnstones, feathers flecked randomly in brown, white, and black; Red Sanderlings; Willets; Oyster Catchers; Osprey; and nervous Plovers head home to much larger Christmas Creek. A squadron of heavy-beaked-Pelicans, as graceful in the air as they are awkward on land, glides westward in V-formation. A bald eagle makes one last dive, artfully plucking a plump trout for his chicks' dinner, munching on its head for himself after gliding to his nest in the tallest loblolly pine near the creek's sandy edge. Fisherman *superieur*, he's clenched a trophy I would have liked for myself.

But he's left plenty of other prizes for me: fat spotted Redfish; thin flat Flounder, their pure white side hugging the creek's dark bottom, their mottled brown side up, hiding them perfectly from passing prey, two alert eyes atop, ready to snatch unwary victims into their voracious, spiked mouths; heavily molared Sheepshead (three rows of Fiddler-crab-crunchers above, two rows below); meaty Black Drum; hoards of sleek, sparkling Rainbow or Sea Trout, outrageously delicious when gutted, scaled and broiled in butter or pan-fried within two hours of the catch. Just cast your bait into the stream a foot or two from the soft bank — a wildly wriggling white Georgia shrimp drives the fish crazy with lusty hunger — or toss it into the deep eddy where the murky water flows fastest toward the sea. A half dozen lunkers will attack like sharks, and you'll soon be ready for a large family feast. Just be sure to watch your bucket or a masked thief, bold little raccoon, will whisk off with the choicest of your catch. For hours, you've been the only human in the marsh for miles. Now it's your time to head home feeling fervently, as we do in those incredible moments when life is at its peak:

*This must never end.*

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**David Blumenfeld** is a former philosophy professor who resumed writing stories and poems after a break of more than 40 years. Since 2022, he has been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize. One of his pieces published in *Sport Literate* received a "notable essay" mention in *The Best American Essays 2023*, another poem was featured in *The Best American Haiku 2023*, and 10 of his works were finalists or received other high praise in literary magazines. Learn more at [Davidcblumenfeld.com](http://Davidcblumenfeld.com).