

A Man Gets Off Work Early

By Thomas Lux

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A Man Gets Off Work Early
and decides to snorkel in a cool mountain lake.
Not as much to see
as in the ocean, but it's a tranquil (no sharks) floating
face down into that other world.
The pines serrated shadows reach
across the waters,
and just now, just below him, to his left,
a pickerel, long and sharp and...whuppa whuppa whuppa, loud,
louder, behind him, above him, the water, louder.
whuppa whuppa whuppa...Two weeks later,
twenty miles away, he's found,
a cinder, his wetsuit
melted on him, in a crablike position
on the still warm ash
of the forest floor
through which fire tore unchecked,
despite the chemicals,
the men with axes and shovels,
despite the huge scoops of lake water
dropped on it
from his friend the sky,
on whom he turned his back.