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The Creek

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The Creek *by Laurel Lamperd*

There was a creek across the road
where we lived.

After the first rains
it emerged from the high country
rushing through the bush
to vanish into flat land
which became a swamp in winter.

In summer
a chorus of frogs filled the air.
Our parents cursed the mosquitoes
lit insect coils
and slept under nets.

We children
made boats from the flat leaves
of the eucalypt.
The little bits of flotsam
racing each other
until caught in a protruding root
the water had eroded.
The sand drifts covered them
next summer.

Once in those days
when I played by the creek
too far away for anyone to hear my cries.
a man came out of the bush.
He paused a moment
to watch my boating tricks.
Don't fall in, kid, he said
and whistled to his dog
who dug for rabbits nearby.

Today the creek is a storm drain
fenced in from the housing estate
encircled by a high fence.
At night
a guard patrols the boundary
against intruders.