

The Amazon Flooded Forest

Aboard the Zodiac “Charles Darwin”,
powered by a 50hp Yamaha,
we explore the backwater igapó.
Black water mirrors
a Maxwell Parrish landscape
of golden light
on clean-limbed, giant fig trees,
forming baroque avenues
through the flooded forest.

Two scarlet macaws,
red tails streaming,
join a celebration
of short-tailed parrots
foraging through a
domelike fig tree.

Gliding beneath
trailing aerial roots
we see,
rising from dark waters,
stilt roots and limbs
merging overhead to form
gothic arches and buttresses,
flooded halls decorated with
feather-like ferns,
sword-leaved aroids,
scarlet-spiked bromeliads,
all guarded by ant garrisons.

A broad-leaved *Clusia*
anchored in an arboreal
termite town,
quests for light.
Long-billed woodcreepers call
in descending flute notes
beyond the parrot cacophony.

Swept back in sunlight
we note
white-throated toucans,
inspect seductive pink petals
of *Clitoria*,
blue-violet *Vitex*,
red-violet *Dalbergia*.
In deep shadow
flaming passion flowers glow.
Gustavia flowers,
pink-fringed white petals
with golden stamen-filled centers,
fragrant as Magnolia
await the bats and moths
of midnight.

In nutrient-poor blackwater
carnivorous bladderwort mats
trap tiny aquatic animals
and digest them.

A flight of chestnut-fronted macaws
pass overhead
in the gathering sunset
as we retreat towards
the M.S. “Explorer”
our time machine and travel center.

In silent procession
Ticuna Indians pass
in the shadows,
their fragile dugouts
bearing them home.

