D.I.Y. Thoreau

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The term *self-published* is sure to evoke visions of would-be Edna St. Vincent Millays and fringe messiahs. But this month, through the online self-publishing house, Xlibris (www.Xlibris.com), there's a prize in the popcorn: **Paul Reed's *The Redwood Diary***. From the pine-scented seclusion of a cabin outside San Francisco, Reed -- a longtime AIDS survivor -- records the minute changes in the weather, the Russian River and the wildflowers around him. The **influence of Thoreau's classic *Walden*** is clear, but here the woods are also a backdrop for battle -- it's 1995, friends are dying, and Reed himself, beset with nightsweats and fevers, depression and anxiety, is waging a daily war with AIDS. Quiet and confessional, *Diary* reads more like an epic pen-pal letter or a care package for posterity than your run-of-the-mill literary journal.

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