

Playing in the River
by Krista Fink

The water is cold and refreshing,
Goose bumps pop up on my bare arms,
Shivers that at once show my excitement,
Yet foreshadow my fear.

It is hard to stand up in the river,
The rocks slippery and sharp,
I never know which ones will make a strong foothold,
And which ones will leave me
Sprawled on my behind,
Checking my body for scratches, bruises, even breaks.

But the same river which caused my fall
Quickly soothes with its water as it gently moves over my body,
Caressing my skin, exciting me once again,
Luring me to trust it,
Tugging me downstream where there are promises of
Deeper waters, beautiful scenery, and
Adventures abounding.

I submit.
I cannot deny the call of the river.

My mother calls from the bank,
Beckoning me home,
Warning me of the dangers of deep waters
And angrily proclaiming that I should obey,
Only serving to make me firm in my submission
To the water.

What does she know?
Standing on that bank all her life,
Never even daring to dip a toe in the current,
Afraid of the excitement, the emotion it reveals,
Preferring instead the safety of the wading pool,
Where
 Nothing
 Ever
 Happens.

I, however, crave adventure.
I feel pride in my courage as
The water begins to deepen,
Allowing for a leisurely, beautiful ride.
I notice shortly, though, that the pace begins to quicken,
And I realize that this is due to shallow waters
As the rocks rudely scrape my behind.

Before I can get my bearings to stand,
The current rakes me swiftly over jagged stones,
Cutting my elbow.
I am tossed around so that my knee is gashed.
As I writhe in pain my head strikes a large rock
And I think I black out a moment.

When I awake,
The river has deepened again.
The water is once more soothing.
I am glad the rough part is out of the way
And I can enjoy the rest of the ride.

The river seems to sense my pain
And tries to lift my mood with
Bright wildflowers and sunshine,
Reviving once again my optimism
And hunger for adventure.

It senses also when my pain has subsided,
Taking it as a cue that I am ready for more.
The pace again picks up,
The now familiar jagged edges
Work their ominous magic,
Creating a palette of colors on my skin.

Soon, I realize that there is no single rough part,
This is simply the pattern of the river.
I sadly wonder if perhaps my mother was right.
I lose hope that the creek will provide the adventure I seek,
Without the pain I wish to avoid.

Just as I decide that I must somehow find a way out
Of these treacherous waters,
It hears my soul,
Detects my escape,
And rushes in a way I cannot overcome.

The roar in my ears is deafening.
The current races at a neck-breaking pace.
I cannot get my bearings.
I don't know which way is up.
I am beaten from all directions
And don't know which way to go.

And suddenly,
Just when I thought I could take no more,
It throws me over the edge of a
Brilliant, cascading waterfall.

Screaming,
Grasping at the air,
Hoping for a handhold,
Finding none,
Landing with a great splash that
Quiets my cries,
Dulls my pain,
Relieves my fears.

I am no longer aware of the pain from the beatings
For I realize I am drowning,
In a beautiful pool
Under the all-powerful waterfall.

Relief washes over me.

Finding Peace

I look back on the life I once lived
From a more peaceful place.

No longer do I have to fear the tyranny
Of an outraged man,
For I discovered a way to remove
Not only my mind,
But also my body.

One must find a way to create
Peace and relief in a real word
Rather than in the fantasies of waterfalls.