

## The River

by Kirsty Ferguson

The sky is above me, swollen, grey and unforgiving. Cold rain splashes my face and carves a river down my face. I am crying, hot tears mixed with cold rain. My cardigan is torn and hangs from one arm. My left foot is asleep and I wonder how it can sleep with all this going on. I blink through the water at the boy's face. He is screaming at me, his spit landing on my already wet face. I know he is yelling at me, but I can't seem to hear anything except a roaring sound in my ears. I'm nowhere near the train tracks though. I can feel the sharp pebbles under my back. My jeans lay on the ground, all scrunched up and getting wet. As I lay there, I wonder when he will be finished; I should have been home ages ago. I try to speak, to ask him to stop, but my words come out all weird. Like I am trying to speak with a mouthful of rocks. I explore my mouth with my tongue and find that my teeth are ragged, and I can taste blood. It must have been from where he hit me. I tried to hit back but he is much bigger than me.

The storm is getting worse. I can see the sky getting darker and the little river beside me seems to be growing bigger. Now I remember, I went for a walk to the river. I had my poetry book with me and I wanted to write about the river and the fish. I wonder where my book went. I feel a heavy weight lift from my body and I turned my head to look at the boy. He is staring at me, he has snot running from his nose and he wipes it on his sleeve. He seems upset and I wonder why he is upset, I'm the one who is hurt. He picks up my jeans and my book and throws them in the river. Why did you do that, I try to yell. My teeth cut my tongue and I taste blood again. He walks back to me and grabs my arm. He starts to drag me toward the river. No! I'll drown! I feel each rock as my body is dragged over them. My cardigan catches on a rock and the wool snags and begins to unravel.

The boy is grunting from dragging me so far. I can feel the slimy mud sucking at my stomach. It's cold and I gasp from the shock. Freezing brown water fills my mouth and I cough and try to spit it out. My head keeps going underwater and I begin to thrash as panic sets in. He's taking me further out into the water and I can't feel the bottom anymore. He turns to look at me and he mouths the word sorry. I feel his hands in my hair grabbing fistfuls as he pushes my head underwater. The roaring in my ears grows louder like a swarm of angry bees as I feebly try to lift my head so I can breathe.

I open my eyes underwater. The brown, swirling current is slowly turning dark, like

someone is turning down the lights. I feel the boys hands let go of my hair, but it doesn't matter anymore. I no longer need to breathe. As I am swept away in the fading light, I see a fish pass in front of my eyes.

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