Hudson River Interlude

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A sudden breeze raced up the hill through the chestnut and scrub pine, ruffled Sara Lynn's braids, and left a spicy fragrance in the air. Behind *Anthony's Nose* the sky flared pink and subsided into nothingness again.

"The old boys are getting ready to bowl," Eric remarked. Sara Lynn said quickly:

"Perhaps we should go in."

"Why? We just came."

"We'll be drenched."

"Not for a while yet," Eric said. "Look, there's the moon!"

A wispy bubble floated up through the black-haired clouds. A mist of light filtered across the river and edged the sails of a boat moving in the shadow of the hill. Sara Lynn turned her head away from the wind. It was sweeping up the hill now, clean and cool and smelling of rain. It billowed her cape and brushed her arms. She shivered a little, but not from the cold.

"What's the trouble?" asked Eric.

"Nothing."

A flash of light blazed behind the opposite hill. She saw Eric's face, lean and slightly amused.

"If you're going to laugh at me, I'm going in," she said.

"I'm not laughing," he protested, "but I would like to know what you're afraid of." Sara Lynn rubbed her fingers over the fold of her cape.

"It's the river," she said. "I never come here at night. My worst dreams are about the river at night." She moved closer to the trees.
"You are laughing at me," she said. He put his arm around her and dug his fingers into the thick folds of her cape.

"What kind of dreams?"

"It's always the same one. I dream I am standing in the middle of the river, right there where it is widest. The water's all around me, and the trees are dark and heavy, but it isn't the water that frightens me. It's the wildness and the feeling that I am all alone in the whole world."

"Most people have pet nightmares," said Eric. "Jupiter! Did you see that?"

"I heard it splash," said Sara Lynn; "was it a sturgeon?"

"I think so. Watch there in that streak of light under Anthony's Nose. There!"

A white body leaped from the river, curved in a silver arc, and nosed back into the river, sending a spray into the eerie light.

"I wish the moon would stay out," said Sara Lynn. But the erratic bubble had sunk into the clouds, and now the lightning plunged in a quick fork behind the hill. Thunder boomed from hill to hill, leaving a trail of mumbling behind it. A wide curve of river blazed and faded into the sky.

"I like it," Eric said. "It has power . . . and flexibility and mystery."

"You're a curious person," said Sara Lynn.

"Mmmm."

The rain broke then. It pelted down in long sheets, sweeping above the river. Sara Lynn buried her face in Eric's sleeve. He tightened his arm around her, turning his back to the river. She smelled tobacco and pine and wet wool, and the feel of the wool was rough on her cheeks. Lightning slashed a wedge above Anthony's Nose, and the thunder roared above the scream of the wind.

Sara Lynn pulled the hood over her head, but the rain pelted down the front of her cape. She could feel the dampness on her shoulders and through her shoes.

And suddenly she began to laugh. Eric half lifted her from the ground and began racing toward the house.

"Tabby will shoot me," he shouted into her ear.

"I won't let her," Sara whispered, but the wind drowned her voice in its screaming, and she said it again, knowing he couldn't hear her.