The River

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Abstract

Water was my first love, the river was my first world...
his hands. She held her breath hard within her chest, and was afraid and lonely. He kissed her again, tenderly, quickly, and the engine intruded. "Whatever happens, honey, don't forget I love you and I'll be back for you someday soon." He ran for the train.

The observation car disappeared around the bend by the water tower. Bill was gone, but she could wait, now. She had something to show that she was loved. For the first time, contentment and security lay behind her tears.

The River
Doris Allen
Winner, Freshman SKETCH Contest

Water was my first love,
the river was my first world.

In the long summers of childhood
I lived by the river,
with all the life of the fields
and the life of the hillsides.
The long-legged heron stood all morning
on the grassy banks,
holding one clawed foot tucked against his blue feathers.
If I rustled the waving marsh grass
he would fly away,
slowly flopping his great wide wings.
December, 1944

I was the child with small brown feet
who waded into the clear, cold, swift running water
and let the clean, red-brown sand
creep up between her toes
and wriggle out like a live thing.
I was the child who lay on the warm flat rocks,
with her head hung over the edge
watching the endless ripple of the water.
The cad-fly crawled across the river bottom
dragging after him his home,
a tiny tube of mosaic sand.
A black salamander, sleek and fat,
wriggled and squirmed when his stone was turned
and disappeared in the bright pebbles.
The river was an endless green vein of life
cutting through the hot dry summers.

In winter my river was black and deep
and each rock in the water
wore a ruff of icy lace
and a cap of snow piled high.
Where branches touched the water
and dragged with the current
rows of ice bells grew from the twigs.
I would snap them off and hold them to the sun—
rows of golden bells, dripping golden water,
fell into the black river.
When the nights were cold, windless, and silent
I would slip down to my black and white moonlit river,
break off pieces of lacy white ice
of intricate design
and fling them at the moon.
For a moment they were burning, silver-white
against the moonlight.
Then they would fall with a sharp tinkle,
shattered like thin glass on the rocks below.

Water was my first love.
The river was my first world.