The River

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Ho Ho Ho, Christmas is over. She was standing by the river looking at the stepping stones and remembering each one. The first, a cool, dark rock, was always a test of fate as a small child. She wished her legs were longer, feet were bigger so that in one giant leap she could make it over the last fish-belly stone and safe on shore."

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Ho Ho Ho, Christmas is over. She was standing by the river looking at the stepping stones and remembering each one. The first, a cool, dark rock, was always a test of fate as a small child. She wished her legs were longer, feet were bigger so that in one giant leap she could make it over the last fish-belly stone and safe on shore.

Today she has leapt three decades and in the river a collection of cattail summers and firewood winters spin furiously in each eddy. She dives in, succumbs to the powers of memory. The water rhythmically stabs her flesh, quickens her heart, and allows her to float freely through the confines of time. The numbness passes over her, the dark, cold sky crashes down upon her, and it is July. Dragonflies tease lilies and on shore Joseph scurries after one amphibious creature or another—he in overalls, she in pigtails.

His small feet skim the top of each stone and in one blink he is safe upon the far side. “C’mon Mel, it’s easy,” his tone is careless and confident as his blue eyes sparkle and reflect the majestic shimmering light in the waters. She studies the rock formation then Joseph, his grin wiser than his four years.

“Trust me,” he beams beneath his white mop—top shag, “just close your eyes and jump.” Oh how she envied his aloof demeanor. Sure, he was already on the other side, miles away, decades apart.

She closes her eyes and leaps, plummeting into the moving water. From beneath the surface she watches Joseph collapse into giggles, tears freely flowing over his sunburnt cheeks, giving birth to the river.

She emerges fixated on the stepping stones, still remembering each one.

“Someday, Joseph,” she whispers, “I’ll catch up with
you on the far shore.” A hint of his fearless blue dances in her eyes as one icy tear slides past her grin and falls deep into the giggling waters of the river.

--Erin Hopkins

--Carolyn DeRight