

Wet socks

Bend in the river

Iridescent

Wet Socks and Minnows

Cathan hardly felt it as the river-water sloshed around his feet. In the previous days, his steps had been deliberate and solid, but now he stumbled like a drunkard leaving a bar. He hardly registered the passing of time, or the singing of the birds instead focusing on putting one foot in front of the other.

When he first came to the water's edge he'd been with his sister Keala, but it had a long while since he lost her, and Cathan could no longer see the path they had traveled before. When she was there the world was iridescent and shining. The trees on the riverbank were full with the sounds of life, and images seemed to shimmer on the water's surface like a faraway dream. Yet once they reached the bend in the river she had disappeared and taken the colors with her. Cathan lost the trail and was left with only the river to guide him.

He had originally tried to backtrack, follow the trail he knew had once existed, but he found only uneven ground and circular pathways. The river seemed to be the only clear signal, and upstream he traveled. At first, Cathan tried just following the edge, but even that path became a complicated trick of flowers filled with thorns. Each new cut called forth crimson blood that was brighter than the flowers, and at last, he gave in to the rush of the river.

He grumbled of wet socks but refused to remove them. He cursed out at frigid waters but hid from the sun. He swatted at the minnows swarming around him but continued to walk through the school of them. He begged the gods to save him, or at very least bring Keala back to him, to no result. Yet eventually Cathan grew tired of the anger. He stopped pitying his sodden shoes, he let the sun bite at his skin, and when the world went dark he sobbed to the minnows.

When the night grew cold he looked to the sky and cried out again. "If the river has claimed her, let it claim me too."

If the gods were looking down on him, it was in that moment they took pity. His sobs quieted as he surrendered to the river's current, and accepted it as a new home. The minnows returned to his side and guided him to the shoreline.

When Cathan woke there was a new trail just to his right. With great effort, he rose to his feet. For a moment the world's colors brightened. He could've sworn he heard Keala giggling. He turned to the river and to no one in particular he grinned. "Thank you."

As the sun rose he began down the path, his footsteps once again deliberate and solid. He began to walk and didn't stop until the fierce rush of the river faded into an old song.