

REFLECTIONS ON THE WATER

Introduction

The last year has been as no other we have had before as our very way of life has drastically shifted.

We have all faced challenges, whether great or small, internal or external, and even as a community and alone.

The wheel has continued to turn and changes will continue to flow towards us, but before continuing down our various paths, it is worth us taking a time to reflect on what has gone before.

As change has surged to meet us and time has flowed past us, it seems appropriate for us to do this with the ever-running element of water, constant in that it is always changing.

So let us sit together and watch the reflections dancing on the water.

Flowing Spring River

Last spring, our lives matched the ever-rushing river hidden deep in the forest glade. Water running as clear as our perceptions of how our lives would be, constantly rushing down as we dealt with our busy list of places to be, people to meet, and lives to lead. Everything was part of a well-trodden landscape where we knew what to expect and when, with plans established and worn into our lives over time with their repeated occurrences.

As the river flowed, we would all gather to nourish ourselves, to embrace as community members and share space with one another, growing together from the sharing of refreshing ideas and skills. Together we would follow the river for a while, easily embracing the roles we had when united.

We would stop to dip our feet into the cool water, make time to enjoy one another as well as relax and recharge, our community as nourishing to our souls as the fresh water is enriching.

Yet while enjoying the current, we did not notice the dirt kicked up further ahead, how the waters suddenly got muddier and less clear to navigate. Nor did we see the shift turn coming in the river we were going to encounter.

Still Summer Lake

As the summer grew and the sun properly began to shine upon us, we suddenly stumbled out of our forest glade to find ourselves at the start of a still lake. Where seconds ago we had been dancing closely, holding hands, passionately discussing, or even kissing with others, we suddenly found that everyone had disappeared as we cleared the tree line.

After looking behind to check that we could not go back, we accepted our solitary place by the gentle waters. Experiencing our new loneliness, sitting by waters that gently lapped at the lakeside but never more animated than that, we grew contemplative.

We stared deep into the depths, sometimes of the centre of the lake and other times of ourselves, and we remembered those that were no longer around us. We yearned to find them again, but also knew that to leave the lakeside was to risk not finding our way back, or potentially putting those that needed us to wait here in danger.

While we found new ways to play and became content that this would change at some point as all things do, there was also a breeze that appeared from across the waters at times.

Then, we sighted something. Was it someone, far across down that lake?

We weren't sure, but we heard the noises and a feeling grew that now was the time to move, after what felt like months trapped, alone at the lake. So we left our solitary place by the summer lake in search again for our friends and family.

Along the Autumn Rapids

Our journey took us against a crisp autumn breeze, and on that was carried the crashing of waves amongst the voices of others. As we crested the horizon and saw where we had arrived, water crashing onward through the landscape of rapids, and alongside were the people we had missed from before, also looking upon the new landscape we found ourselves in.

Emotions slammed through us like a tidal wave, both at the sudden longing we felt at seeing old familiar faces and at the shock of our new landscape. In our hearts, we had thought to find our loved ones by the joyous river from before. Now our hearts were dashed like the foam upon the rocks and our tears mingled into the earth as they fell as we struggled to adjust to this new setting.

Where once we had acted carefree by the water, easily dancing with one another, now our steps were focused, our minds ever alert of how we would keep distance between each other to ensure neither slipped into the rushing water beside us. There was a chill wind that accompanied our steps, which although at times refreshing from the heat of the pressured sun and our ever racing thoughts, it sometimes felt like a splash of our lonely times at the lake.

Our feet were still finding themselves, but we were determined to carry on down the path on the belief of escaping the solitary summer lake and finding our way back to that easy flowing river and the calm forest glade we called our community.

Bitter Winter Sea

Yet that cool breeze grew stronger, into a fierce wind the further down we went. When we finally reached the end of the rapids and followed another turn together, we soon realised that instead of taking us back to our gentle stream, we had stumbled to the shoreline, once again our partner disappearing upon our arrival of this new place.

Where once we followed a stream, we now gazed into the cold, deep ocean before us.

That bitter wind was now a fist of ice. Although the constant motion of the turbulent waves kept the ocean constantly in motion, the pools of water along the shore had frozen. Our hard work to get safely back to our usual interactions had not worked out, and we now found ourselves alone again in a much colder position. This time under the assault of the elements, we froze too.

The water around us was cold and it was deep, and at times when we dared we stared deep into it, trying to foresee what would come next but also seeing parts of ourselves dancing deep in that water. Not all of it was pleasant, but we saw that as we weathered this storm, we would recover and find ways to take the strength that was necessary to go on.

We fought back against the cold burning our hearts and found ways to light fires with the wood around us, determined to keep the community spirit within us burning no matter how lightly, connected to missing friends through remembered warmth.

Refreshing Spring Showers

Finally, once that endless winter storm passed, we decided to head along the shoreline and back through the forests, this time forging new paths to get us back to where we had once gathered.

No longer could we afford to fall into our old pattern of thinking, it was time that new ideas were tested and a new way of thinking would lead us to a more prosperous place to rest and find our community once again.

We stumbled through these woods, past trees and spaces new to our eyes, when we heard the rumble of the clouds above and felt the refreshing rains of spring pass over us.

Our clothes became soaked, and again were we reminded of the sweet waters we used to play within and knew that once again we would find a place where these waters collected.

~ ~ ~

As the light continues to get brighter, and the days continue to become warmer, let us once again slowly wander through the forest woods in search of that babbling brook. Underneath the sounds of the flowing water, I am sure I can hear the voices of long-missed community friends. I am sure it won't be long before we can embrace again, and fully appreciate how much that means after the journey that we have been through.