

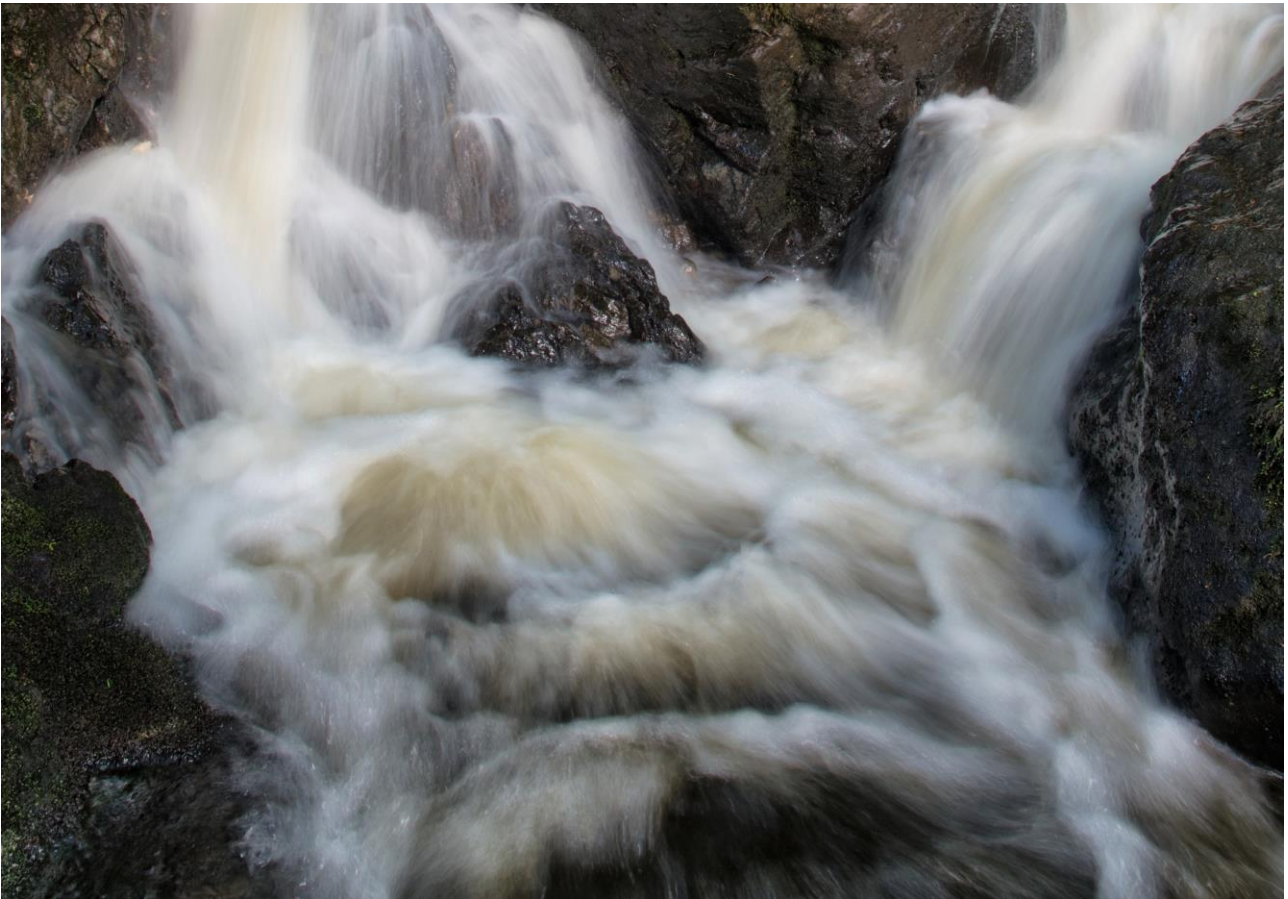
A Watery War

An ever pressing tide pushes relentlessly against wavering legs. The force is constant, a flowing wall of water, sucking at slipping feet, threatening to topple the quivering figure. Uncertainty grows as limbs bend under the irrepressible force. The water rushes faster, legs cannot resist; the figure is thrown in to the maelstrom.



Time stops as the body hurtles down the fall, senses heightened by surging adrenaline. A kaleidoscope of images flashes by, staccato frames of frothing foam in a confused upside down world. There is no sense of place, time or orientation. A sort of black hole replaces reality, where there is nothing beyond the roaring waters that envelop all in a shroud of spray. There is no real fear in falling, just a dull awareness of a blur of black and white and tossing waters. Crashing, gasping, reeling, grated, buffeted and pummelled; the body is flung down the rapids. A vain hope that the body might be discarded on the flanking rocks is soon extinguished, as the malicious waters screw it down in the plunge pool beneath. Opposite forces fight a battle for the body. The spiralling waters suck, suck strong, suck very strong, but the body thrashes with an inborn will to survive. The waters defy the body's attempt to escape their grip. The body resists the screwing of the waters as it lunges in its desperate struggle to elude a watery grave. A hand grasps a smooth black rock, gaining a temporary respite from the spiteful waters. Yet the rock is too smooth, too holdless to effect an escape, and with sapping strength, the body reluctantly submits itself once more to the power of the waters. Coughing, coking, suffocating, DROWNING, the body refuses to yield to the easy comfort of the waters beneath. Love of life and fear of death drive the body upward, kicking, flailing and straining for existence.

Out of the white hell, a rock appears. An arm reaches out, muscles tensed, straining for survival, as legs kick furiously to break the waters chains. A gloved hand slaps on to the submerged rock, but the waters pull relentlessly, reluctant to let their victim escape. Another hand slaps beside the first, legs kick with renewed vigour and a head emerges from the ferment. A hand grasps a small hold and then another. Soon the body is upstanding. Yet all is not won; deep water swirls around and a band of steep rock looms above, water cascading down the slimy black crag. The body lunges awkwardly at the rock, a bedraggled and battered replica of its former self. Actions are conducted in slow motion, and each movement is painstakingly tested, such is the acute awareness of the dangers of tumbling in to the pool once more. With limbs numbed by the cold, yet feeling eerily warm, the body slumps on to the crest, half alive, half dead; a choking, inanimate object, devoid of feelings, driven by instinct.



A jump to safety and the body becomes flesh anew: a thinking, animate being of feelings, thoughts and life. Pain dulled by danger sears through the knee, a voice choked with water speaks once more, the chill of the forgotten gale replaces the illusory warmth, thoughts of all that is held dear banish the fear of death so closely encountered. The waters flow on.

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