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Stones in a Stream

It is hard to remain still at a river's edge. The river reminds us that change is the heartbeat of time and nature.

Except for stones in a stream.

Given enough time, even hulking granite might become the sand on my boot's sole. But this rock deposited by glaciers? As far as humans are concerned, it is solid, steady. Water works its magic across years to smooth it, but decade by decade the stone sits still.

Such a stone, lodged in a stream, breaks any scene, makes drifting water dramatic, takes a steady motion and splits it, divides it, roughs it up. Ripples and ripples become waves and rapids.

The remarkable thing is the water is the same; there isn't any more. The decline is the same; it isn't any steeper. The force is the same, but the stone changes everything.

Everything attends to that stone. Everything adjusts to it.

The stream pounds away without effect. The watercourse turns back on itself, pushes away hoping to return to its pathway, its comfort zone, as soon as possible.

Streamside, I stare and ponder and listen, pulled, siren-like, toward its draw. How many moments, how many hours have I stared at such stones, mesmerized by the churning they cause, sucked in and almost drowning in the drama, damp by the closeness, soaked into stunned silence.

The stones of my memory, and in my life, cannot be avoided any more than rain can avoid rivers. They take up space. They force action. No, they demand reaction. They do not interact, they impose. They do not relate, they occupy. If they breathed, I'd have no oxygen left.

It is just the way of stones. There in the sun. In the rain. In temperateness. Nothing perturbs them. Fish swim by. Logs bounce off, sometimes after hanging on for days, or a season. But in the long run, the stone in the stream can't be bothered.

Others may call it igneous, but I know how to spell indifference.

I admire its steadiness, its self-assuredness, its need only to be itself.

I disdain its selfishness, its self-centeredness, its insistence on only its own needs.

And I wonder, to whom am I the stone?