

Walking on Water

by Terry DeHart

After his chemotherapy failed, he went water skiing. He longed for the tense thrill of walking on water. Holding and pulling and balancing, and then rising from the chop as the boat revved faster and the foam slapped against his legs. Flesh and bone at high velocity. It deserved a place on his “to do” list because of its link to summers past. And he didn't think about anything else when he skied because if he did, he'd soon find himself skipping across the water like a rock thrown by a strong arm.

His wife drove the boat while he pulled against the speed. He cut outside the wake and accelerated and cut back and the rope went slack and then snapped tight again, so he could catch some air. He did it again and again, up and down the riverfront until his head throbbed and his legs were spent.

He released the rope and skidded along on his own, slowing and sinking into the late summer water. He kicked to shore and he could barely stand. The sun flared in each bead of water on his body. His wife beached the boat and ran to him. She took his arm and he felt as if he'd managed to grow very old, but he knew that wouldn't happen.

His wife handed him a cold beer, and her brave smile and bikini riches made him want to stay in that place, maybe invite her back into the underbrush to make love. She read his mind. She winked and he loved her for it. But he didn't want to create another memory to haunt her, so he didn't hide the extent of his exhaustion.

He rested while she packed their cooler and tossed their red-white-and-blue towels into the boat. He shoved off, and it was all he could do to climb back aboard. His wife fired the big Evinrude and she drove flat-out. Their hair snapped against their skulls as they smiled into the gale of their own making. They burned up natural resources at a fantastic rate and they pretended to celebrate their freedom to do so, but it was such a waste, they knew.

Such a stupid goddamned thing.

