

A River So Long

by Vallie Lynn Watson

Veronica met Van on a Friday evening in New Orleans, in a double-bedded Marriott room, thirty-two floors above the winds of the Mississippi. He went to sleep around three. Naked, she rolled the desk chair up to the window, sat and pulled the drapes around her, a full wall of cape.

From the other side of the river, a steamboat pushed across, landed on the near side. After a few minutes it took off again, went under the bridge a few hundred yards downstream and stopped again on the same side. She thought she was still watching but soon realized it was back at point A, on the other side. It made the triangular trip again and again, then the sun started to come up.

At 5:12, the river turned silver, as if it were frozen. She traced the river's curves on the window with her finger, wishing it were her. The river narrowed out of view.

The sun stung her eyes, so she came out from behind the curtains, dressed, and went to the lobby for coffee. When she came back up she asked him to leave, even though they'd planned for two nights. She watched him dress.

After he left she took off her clothes again and sat at the window all day, until the sun started to go down. Then she stood and pushed her forehead, her breasts, her belly against the cold window. The boat on the other side of the river started toward her.

