

The girl and the river

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The girl lived on the banks of a mighty river with her parents. They were river people. They ate fish from the river and grew vegetables, fruits and nuts in the muddy earth next to the river. The girl loved her life  
One day the girl's parents went out on their boat to catch some dinner. The girl stayed behind to do her chores in the vegetable garden. When she finished her chores, she climbed up her favorite tree and sat down on her favorite branch, which stretched out over the water. There she sat watching the river roll by while she waited



After two hours had passed, she saw her parent's boat coming up from the horizon. She watched as they got closer and closer and bigger and bigger. When they got close enough to see her, she stood up on the branch and waved her arms. They waved back and held up a big catfish.



All of a sudden the river became angry. The water around her parents boat began to bubble up and thrash. So much water was splashing that she couldn't see her parents. When the river calmed down, her parents were gone... boat and all.

The girl didn't know what to do. She sat on her favorite branch and cried for many days and nights. When she cried out all the tears she had, she began to think. It was just a matter of time before serious people wearing serious suits would come and take her to live in a sad place. The girl didn't want to leave the river.



The girl couldn't believe it. How could the river she loved so much do this to her. She was so mad she cursed and proclaimed her hate for the river. This made the river angry with her. Then the sky grew dark and a single bolt of lightening came down and struck the girl's favorite tree.

As she sat there on the ground surrounded by the broken pieces of tree, she got an idea. She would build a raft from the wood from her favorite tree and live on the river so she could be close to her parents forever.



She built a raft and pushed it out onto the water. But, the river was still angry with the girl for the things she had said. So the river swelled then spit the girl back onto land.

The girl knew she had to build more than a simple raft to protect herself from the river. She built walls up the side of her raft to make a boat. She built a wooden shield and a picked up a big stick that she could use to defend herself with. If the River wanted a fight, the river would get a fight.



Once the boat was finished, she had to find a way into the river without getting spit back out. She searched the banks for a way in. She found a tree with a branch hanging over the river. She climbed the tree, slowly walked along the branch as far as she could, got into her boat with her shield and stick and dropped into the water. The water immediately started to thrash; trying to spit her out, but she was too far from the river's edge.



The water became calm. Everything fell silent. The girl thought she won. The silence was broken by the frogs, which let out a terrifying cry. The girl felt a force pulling her boat down. The girl took a deep breath right before she went under. She was pulled all the way down to the muddy floor. But the wood was too buoyant so the girl and her boat bounced back to the surface.



The river then called upon the water moccasins to poison the girl. One Hundred water moccasins surrounded her boat and tried to find their way into her boat. They slithered up the sides of her boat but every time they got close, the girl whacked them with her staff and the snakes fell back into the water. Eventually the snakes gave up



Next the river asked all the fish to tip the boat over so the girl would fall out. Catfish, bass, carp and gar all worked together smashing into the boat to try and tip it over. But, every time her boat rocked to one side the girl held on until it straightened out again. Eventually the fish got tired and had to quit.



The girl was not finished protecting herself from the wrath of the river. This time the river sent in the most powerful birds it has. Hawks and eagles circled the girl's boat and took turns swooping down with their mighty talons. But, every time they did, she lifted her shield and the bird crashed into it. Eventually, the birds got tired and used the last of their strength to fly back to their nests.



The river was getting frustrated. So this time it sent out it's fiercest killer: the alligator. Giant alligators came up and started chomping at her boat. But, every time a gator chomped, the wood released giant splinters into their mouth. Eventually, they all swam back to their swamps crying in pain.

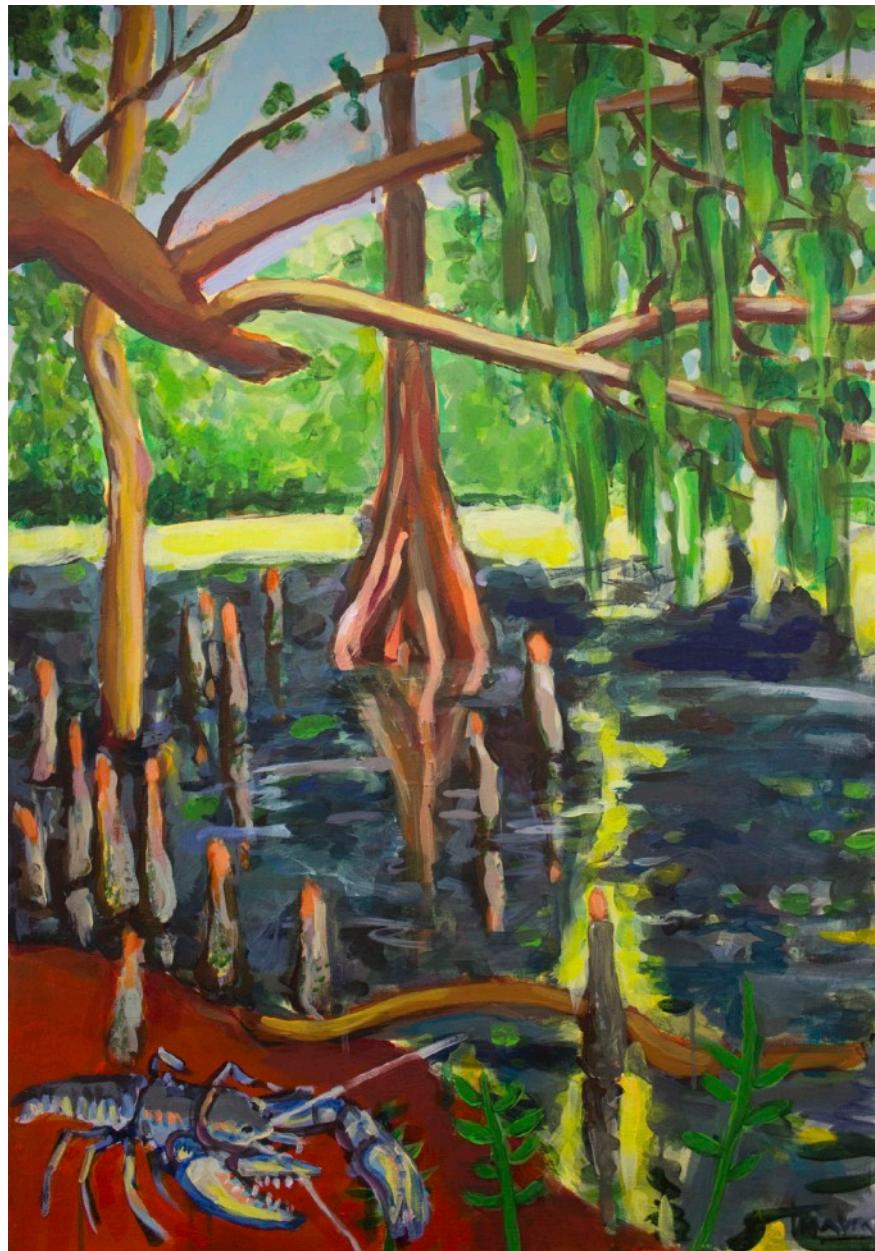


The river had had enough. This time it unleashed all of its power against the girl. The water thrashed, the snakes slithered up the sides of the boat, the fish bumped and smashed against the boat, the birds swooped at the girl and the gators chomped.

The girl fought as hard as she could. She held onto the boat so she would not be thrown from it. She shielded herself from the attacking birds. She swatted at the slithering snakes. The girl was growing weary. The chomping gators started to break through her boat. The moccasins started slithering in. The fish bumped her boat closer to the banks. The water swirled around her then threw her boat into the air sending her crashing onto land.



The girl stood up, surrounded by the hundreds of pieces of her shattered boat, and stepped into the shallow waters of the shore of the river. The water moccasins swam around her feet. The alligators waited poised to attack. The Hawks and eagles circled over her head. All the river creatures waited for the river's command to devour the girl.



The girl threw her shield and staff to the ground. A crawfish crawled out of it's mud hole and up onto her shoulder. The sky began to cry. The river's command to devour the girl never came so when the girl started walking deeper into the river, the animals let her. She walked until she was at the bottom of the river.



The frogs knew the girl did not know how to breath underwater so they jumped in after her. The frogs swam up to the girl, who was now at the bottom of the river, and showed her how to take in oxygen from the water through her skin.



Once the girl learned how to breathe underwater, the fish swam up to her. They showed the girl how to swim so she could get around in the river as easily as she could on land.



After the fish, the water moccasins came to the girl to teach her how to use venom to protect herself from danger. Then the alligators showed the girl how to hunt so she would never be hungry.



The birds promised the girl to keep a watch  
on the river. The Diurnal birds would watch  
by day, nocturnal by night.



The girl continues to live in the river. She serves the river and the river serves her.



This is the way it will be.