

## Hiking In The Grand Canyon

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*Jodi Johnson*

At Santa Maria springs  
we take off our shoes,  
dangle feet in the water.  
Their whiteness shocks—  
salt-pale below brown ankles—  
the white of our age:  
concrete, sunlight-on-glass,  
impeccable museum walls.  
But here I wear color again:  
trail dust on bare legs,  
shoulders sun-reddened,  
I see how muted shades of rock climb  
perfectly, from the river's black line  
to the white sky-rim.

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I stand naked among rocks,  
the river rising, white-maned.  
Only a pale slice of sky—  
the river owns all blue:  
cornflower, december ice, glass-eye  
on bald-faced colt.

The water is cold  
I wash off eleven miles  
of Hermit Trail. I think that if I wanted  
I could wash clean through,

Run clear as the river.  
It takes knees hips  
ribs shoulders—my hair  
floats, a yellow fan, thickens,  
sinks. Only my face  
sunlifted, survives. The river claims  
blue of eyes.

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The clear notes of coyotes  
rise like moons.  
We lie in the river-sand  
and catch stars.  
All day I watched night  
growing on canyon walls,  
spreading blue roots.  
It covers me now as it always has.  
In the dark, I forget  
where my skin ends,  
I feel a thousand others around me  
rustling like grass.

A star falls and goes out.  
Perhaps some night another will watch  
our own earth,  
shot from its orbit,  
wearing hair of flames.

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In the sharp light of dawn  
we lie in sleep-worn hollows,  
each separate as stones.

The stillness makes everything new—  
leaves wave gold of first leaves;  
the sky is a curve of eggshell.  
In this light even my skin is transparent,  
thin as a baby's.

I wake from ribs of earth  
afraid to shatter the morning  
with rising, each movement making rings  
in tender air.

\* \* \*

When we begin the climb home,  
our bones feel immeasurably old.  
We have been walking the floors of oceans,  
sleeping with fossils.

Halfway up the canyon wall, I pause,  
watching a red-shouldered hawk  
circle below. The sheer cliff  
tempts me to try my own wings.  
I know now why once  
we wore feathers,  
danced to the sun;  
why young girls smiled as priests  
lifted their red hearts.