

The Argument the River Keeps Having

The river does not look dramatic when you first see it. From the bridge, it appears narrow and unbothered, sliding past its banks with the confidence of something that has done this exact thing for a very long time. People lean on the railing, glance down for a few seconds, then move on. The river allows that. It does not insist on attention. It keeps going either way.

Up close, the surface tells a different story. Water folds over itself in small, restless motions. Light breaks and reforms with every shift, never settling into one shape. Near the edge, debris gathers and drifts apart again, leaves bumping gently against one another before separating. The current pulls steadily, not fast enough to alarm, but strong enough to make its intention clear. This is not water at rest. It is water deciding something over and over.

The bank changes depending on where you stand. On one side, the ground slopes gradually, stones worn smooth and half-buried. On the other, the drop is sharp, the soil packed tight, roots exposed where erosion has already won a few rounds. Grass grows unevenly, thick in places, sparse in others. The river does not distribute evenly. It presses harder where it can.

Sound carries low and constant. The water does not crash or roar. It speaks in layers. A steady rush underneath. A softer ripple near the edge. An occasional knock when something solid interrupts the flow. Standing there long enough, the noise begins to feel patterned, almost deliberate. Not soothing, exactly. Persistent. The kind of sound that fills space without asking permission.

People interact with the river cautiously. A man casts a line, adjusts his stance, waits. A child tosses a rock and watches the splash disappear instantly, as if it never happened. Joggers slow near the water, then pick up speed again once they pass. Everyone treats the river as something to approach, acknowledge, and leave intact. No one tries to stop it. No one could.

Further downstream, the river widens. The pace shifts. What felt insistent earlier now feels heavy, deliberate. The water carries more, holds more, drags its history along without apology. Branches catch briefly on the bank, then tear free. Foam gathers in shallow pockets, white against darker water, then thins out and vanishes. The river does not keep souvenirs.

Time behaves differently here. Minutes stretch without changing much. The same stretch of water never looks quite the same twice, yet nothing truly new appears. The river repeats itself with variation. That repetition feels intentional, as if it is working through an argument it has not finished making.

Weather alters the tone, not the purpose. After rain, the water darkens and thickens, pushing harder against the edges. The sound deepens. The current picks up debris with less hesitation. During dry weeks, the river lowers itself, revealing stones and sandbars that were hidden before. It looks calmer then, but the movement never stops. Even reduced, it insists on direction.

Standing there, it becomes difficult to think in straight lines. The river resists conclusions. It undercuts certainty by existing in motion. You can trace where it has been by the marks on the bank, but predicting exactly where it will press next feels pointless. It reacts to the ground it meets, reshaping both itself and what holds it.

Eventually, attention drifts. Muscles stiffen. Thoughts wander. The river continues uninterrupted. It does not mark time the way people do. There is no beginning visible from here and no clear end. Only continuation. Only adjustment.

When you leave, the river does not register the absence. It keeps its pace. It keeps testing its boundaries. It keeps wearing down what resists and flowing around what does not. The argument carries on without witnesses, unresolved and ongoing, written not in words but in pressure, movement, and the refusal to stand still.