



# River Swimming

You would go for the whole day, pack a picnic lunch and a Sunday collection of things. Your mum always remembered the stuff you would forget: sunblock, hat, a blanket for later, toilet paper (just in case). You took care of the essentials: togs, towel, boogie board, the last of the chocolate you got for Christmas that you'd been hiding from your sisters. Too cold too fast too blue; the adults sat

beside the river on the bank, drinking tea from flasks and commenting on the weather. Make-believe was everywhere they couldn't see: the current was a lane pool to race each other, flapping furiously towards nowhere; the silver slivers of trout were the taniwha's minions, emerging from the shadows to make sure you didn't go too far upstream; underwater, you were a mermaid, hair fur-soft your skin aglitter and sun-through-water blue.

Watercress came home with you in a plastic bag and Mum would dish up some for dinner, little tastes of river-fresh that wouldn't live another day. Dad would say you were eating rabbit food, and you'd wonder what he meant – you'd never seen a rabbit in the river before. After dinner you'd find your uneaten chocolate underneath the damp towel in your bag. It had melted and set again in the shape of a rabbit. Or a taniwha.

*Lynley Edmeades*

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by Lynley Edmeades

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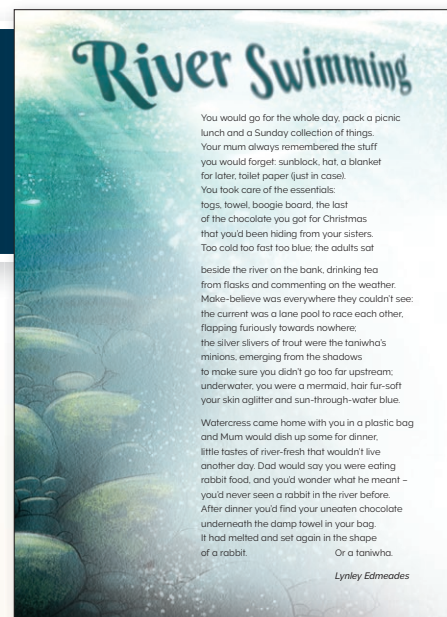
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