

## SPRINGTIME

It was early spring. The man, aging in years but young in heart, strolled through the awakening clover in the field. Ahead he saw the stream, swollen with the melted snow of winter. He came down to its bank and he stood there, remembering a time long ago when those rushing waters had borne him, torn and bleeding, through the rapids--and his heart was heavy within him.

But, as the sun emerged from the billowy clouds and he felt the warm touch of its rays flooding him, he began to realize that the stream had been a victim too. It, too, had been caught within its entrapping banks, unable to escape the rocks that left it, like him, wounded and bitter. Nor did the stream escape the final plunge of the waterfall and the spraying whirlpool beneath until it evaporated like mist into the heavens to look down upon him here below with regret.

Then a great understanding came to him. He forgave the stream its cruelty and unkind behavior. ~~For~~ He saw that it had wanted to find a new path through some little side valley, only to slip back into the channel where it was once again thrown against the jagged rocks and rent asunder by the boulders in its path. And, with forgiveness, the bitterness left him and he was able to find peace.

Later, another time, he wandered out in his new-found freedom. Once again he came upon a different stream, and this time he could look upon it with a lighter heart. Like a boy, he shed

his shoes and dipped his toes into the water and felt the gentle waters ripple over his feet. His hands caressed the warm waters dancing beneath them. He picked up a floating twig and leaf, glistening wet with the sunlit fluid, and laid them on the rock beside him, marvelling at God's delicate creation and wondering wherefrom they had broken loose to travel down the stream to him.

The stream softly murmured, "Now you are free--free to be young again. To feel my gentle friendliness, to listen to my music and dance to my song. Free to hear my splish and splash as the life that is within me breaks the surface and returns to my flowing depths."

The man felt young again. He was the master of himself and his fears. In his strength, he knew he could channel this stream into safe ways where it could bathe his aching body in its quiet pools, soothe his worries with its steady flow and fill his heart with its loving presence. And he rose and stood by the stream. For it was springtime.