

This Mysterious River



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I ~ E L D lx in the palm of a calloused hand, and my fingers,
edged with ragging nails, trembled so the pearl quivered with
light; and then and there any plans my mother had for making
me into a concert violinist drained like rain off a hill to become
one with my mysterious river.

Since that day I have always been planning to go back to

see if the big, black clams still cluster where Wisconsin's Rock River sweeps the clay bottoms at the sharp bends, hoping to find one with a pearl luminous as the moon and worth maybe a thousand dollars.

But I never get there, and I do not even know if pollutants have killed off the clams and my dream is, after all, just that --a dream.

Once it wasn't. As a sunburnt crisp of a boy I opened and examined tons of clams to obtain a wine glass full of precious seedling

pearls with which I was loath to part. There was no fascination comparable to spreading them on a card table, watching the light, like tunes of a song, play a hundred, a thousand variations on the same theme.

My precious pearls! What horizons they lighted! And then to lose them--all of them--down the huge, circular hot air register of my grandmother's furnace.

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目录:

[This Mysterious River 下载链接1](#)

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[This Mysterious River 下载链接1](#)

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