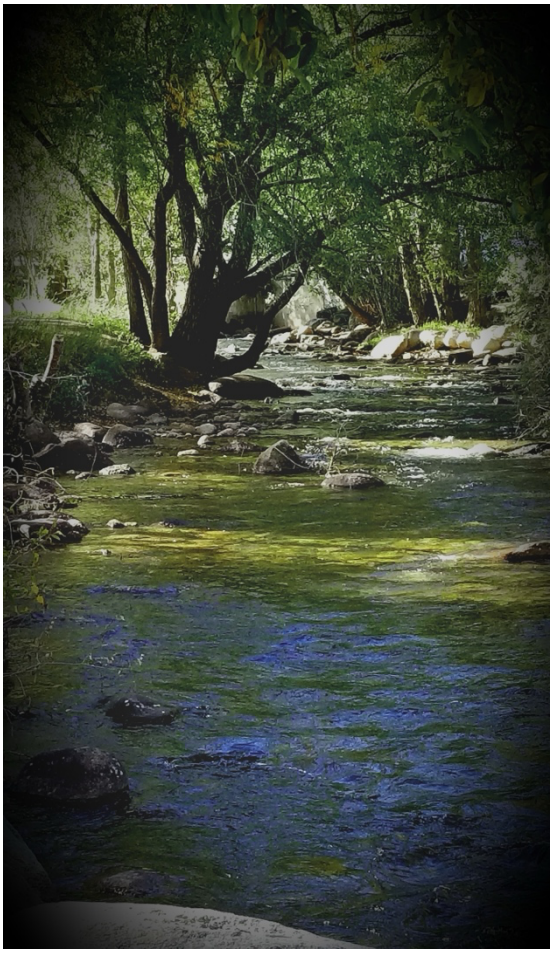
underCURRENT *(a Summer Series)*

Isaiah 43:2 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.' (NIV)



I stare in horror and helplessness at the television, the raw footage so graphic I almost feel as if I am being swept beneath the current. My hand rushes to my nose and i simultaneously hold my breath. A shiver uproots my spine as I grasp for the ledge of the coffee table, something to hang on to as I imagine the floodwaters ripping me from the only foundation I have ever known. An echo of a child crying for his mommy triggers tears, and just then, I gasp, as the ground gives way and an entire village is plummeted into darkness, the earth rising up to eat the homes and the people on the screen as their screams are frozen in time.

More than 700 people are believed dead, and the death toll continues to climb as countless more are missing. The torrential rains have created extreme flooding once again this season, and because of a poor infrastructure in villages in western Nigeria, they haven't had an opportunity to rebuild, or for a shift in the upheaval to those who survived previous years' catastrophic storms. Their culture is riddled with poverty. For most Nigerians, repair to their homes and livelihoods remains elusive and oxymoronic. The rainy season lasts for 6 months every year and it seems they face exceedingly aggressive and torrential flooding year over year. For many, most everything they own has been swept away. It is a blessing and a curse to even survive sometimes. About the time they begin to right themselves to some semblance of living, another catastrophic storm pummels their lives.

What kind of world do we live in? I asked myself that today? Often, I am impacted by the gross abnormalities in life. Step outside of the mainstream, walk out of the sports stadium where athletes are paid millions of dollars to entertain us, and you will find a dozen people, dirty and unkempt and without hope, hungry for a handout. We shout and scream, chant a star's name after spending what we can't afford to watch boys become men, but we are chastised for raising our hands to the God of the Universe when we sing praises to His name.

While spending a few days on vacation, I find myself gulping back a gasp. I realize the opulence I walk through daily, undoubtedly a wealthy person in this world comparatively speaking. Again, I find myself exasperated, chewing on a mixed-up laugh that erupts into more of a sob. I think of the fun my husband and I have had floating for hours around a lazy river, playing in a peaceful pool, while halfway across the world, thousands are being tossed beneath turbulent waters and taken hostage in unkempt waves.

As I rise from the current in this playful pool, I realize how desperate it can be to swim upstream, to move with purpose against a current. What gratitude overflows from my eyes as His Word buoys something deep inside. The passage above reads like this in the Message, "Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You are mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end— Because I am God, your personal God, The Holy of Israel, your Savior. I paid a huge price for you: all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in! That's how much you mean to me! That's how much I love you! I'd sell off the whole world to get you back, trade the creation just for you." Isaiah 43:2-4 MSG