

1995

Brave River

Nikole Hobbs
Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hobbs, Nikole (1995) "Brave River," *Exile*: Vol. 42 : No. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol42/iss2/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Brave River

A singular rock face glances upward,
rising alone from red earth.
The sun warms its stone folds
in early morning.
Scarlet wind blows in the eyes
of the blanketed brave.
The dust swirls about him
shards of sand, lifted in the air,
bite his lips, pressed together,
forming a silent question.
The canyon ends in a dead riverbed,
200 feet below him
desert dry and cracked.
The only moisture the blood of the thick song
that soaks through the lungs of the brave,
and into the ghost river he remembers.

Pure and solemn, his song sung as finely
As the woven thread about his shoulders,
the patterns of both coloring his life
and the death he mourns.
He remembers the cool water,
sweat and dust washed away by current.
His brothers and he dove deep
Breath tight, they broke the surface,
chasing some shiny metal
his father threw to them.
A game, as the warm water pulled
against their naked bodies
reaching for the gold.
He remembers his father,
his broad mouth full of teeth,
laughing a great belly laugh at the boys.

Wind whirls, and fire clay
cakes his smooth cheek,
clings to the horsetail
that whips about his head,
like a frenzied dancer,
bleeding with every move.
His eyes are set far back years ago.
They are of horses,
round, large, soft and understanding,
Yet full of flame
like the tongue of the Wasichu,
The white man
Who wrote words like a bushfire,
promising to save their river,
Only to destroy it
when the wind changed direction.

The Brave relaxes his knees,
bends near the edge of the rock
to feel the hot earth in his hands.
Holds the dirt,
tracing circles with it
through the lines in his palm,
and then shakes it to the ground.
His fingers deep now, full of his pocket,
Searching for cigarette paper.
The tobacco catches in the wind,
Then strong and bitter-sweet on his lips.
He breathes deep the life of the canyon,
Sucking hard on the fire poison that numbs
and blackens and destroys,
hoping to stop the drowning and choking
in the dusty riverbed below.

Nikole Hobbs '99