



# THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

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Year 2015

Article 13

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4-13-2015

## The Fall

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Class of 2017

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Nigg, Valerie C. (2015) "The Fall," *The Mercury*: Year 2015, Article 13.

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# The Fall

**Keywords**

creative writing, non-fiction

**Author Bio**

Valerie Nigg is a sophomore psychology major at Gettysburg College. In addition to writing, she enjoys reading, theatre, singing, and puppetry. Valerie would like to thank her loving friends, family, and boyfriend for helping her get to where she is today.

# The Fall

Valerie Nigg

I feel myself slip and the world stops. Brief moments are ingrained in my memory: the look of terror on my best friend's face, the gut-wrenching feeling of falling, the smell of pine from the trees above, the sting of the freezing water that I am now waist-deep in. I cling to the rock, its edges somehow both slippery and ragged. It rips open my hands but I don't notice the pain, using all of my energy to fight against the current that tries to sweep me away.

I've never been a strong person.

I go under and the deafening thunder of the waterfall is replaced by silence. For a moment I feel at peace, allowing myself to give in to the water's embrace. When I resurface, the roar seems louder than before and fear consumes me, causing an adrenaline surge as I get closer and closer to the edge. At the last second, I am whipped around, the plummet to my death postponed. I have been caught in some kind of whirlpool.

I bob in and out, around and around, disoriented and choking on water. Each time I approach the drop I think that I will go over, but each time I'm whipped around just before I reach the edge. It's torture: the suspense of my inevitable death, the dizziness, the water that slowly fills my lungs. I am denied the blessing of falling over the edge and being knocked unconscious by the rocks below. Instead I will be completely aware as I drown.

They say that your life flashes before your eyes when you are in a life-threatening situation, but that's not true. Instead you think of all you were unable to accomplish. I think of the soul mate I never met, the children I never had, the diploma I never received.

A splash and I realize that Victoria has fallen in. She slipped while trying to save my life, as I did while trying to save Tim, who fell in first. No. She can't die too. I am more afraid for her life than I am for mine and my tears mix with the water of the swirling vortex I'm caught in.

I scream, "I love you Victoria!" a final goodbye to my closest friend.

Instincts take over and I lose all humanity, consumed by the animalistic need to survive. I claw at the rocks, breaking my nails as the current pushes me past. I push my friends under in an attempt to propel myself to land. I hardly know what I am doing, don't register that I could be killing the ones I love. My brain has accepted the fact that I am going to

die, but my body doesn't stop fighting.

Suddenly, a freak current or perhaps the Hand of God pushes me out of the whirlpool and towards shore. Barely aware of what has happened, I instinctively start swimming and am surprised to find that I can now fight the current. I guide my friends to safety and collapse on the ground, assuming the fetal position.

I am not dead.

My friends are safe.

The nightmare is over.

I am granted another chance at life.