

# The Teterev River — As My Mother Might Have Told It

*Barbara M. White*

The yelping of dogs, the scrape of footsteps,  
the mutter of half-heard kitchen voices.  
Then — “Children, wake up. Get dressed.”

What was wrong? Mumma would not say  
until we were hurrying to the river: “A pogrom  
is coming. *Sha*. Don’t worry. We’ll be safe,

a boat is on the way.” We stood in the dark,  
straining to hear. Dawn broke, and the boat  
reached us. Everyone pressed forward.

Shoulders, hats, scarves. Words skidded  
around me: *how can we?... too many  
of us... never... Gottenu...* I clutched

Rivka’s arm. Tateh’s hand propelled me ahead.  
I held on to his voice, soft, penetrating: “Don’t worry,  
*kinderlach*.” He and Mumma shoved and shoved,

and the four of us slid through opening  
after opening like mice through cracks.  
We stood among the lucky on the rocking

wooden deck. Rivka and I turned.  
Before us: the railing. On the riverbank:  
Mumma and Tateh, smiling and waving.

*In memory of my mother,  
Rae Cooper Mestetsky*



**BARBARA M. WHITE**'s poetry has appeared in *Innisfree Poetry Journal* (an on-line publication) and *Lilith Magazine*. She is a retired copy editor and a former bar and bat mitzvah teacher. A long-time resident of Washington, DC, she is active in *Tifereth Israel Congregation*, the *Zoo Minyan*, and the *Jewish Study Center*.