

DAYTIME/NIGHTTIME

The climb entered its final leg. With the sun setting darkness came down like a fog over them. A winter chill moved with the breeze. Every so often a gust would howl . Only a few tough pines stood sentries near the lofty ridge they would go over. Aaron started to feel very tired and looked forward to the rest on the other side. Stars could faintly be seen. A mist was being drawn somehow upwards into the endlessness above them. An awesome spectacle to any and everyone was unfolding.

The friend took Aaron by the arm and helped him up the last little bit. Part of the time he felt lifted along as if his feet were off the ground. The surrounding coldness and a trace of snow and ice made Aaron want to hurry though they were already going swiftly.

Finally they stood at the top of the ridge. The peak seemed very close with its white cap. On one side of the ridge was the darkness of night shrouding the valley way below. His eyes quickly retraced their path, or tried to. It was like passing from season to ~~season~~ ^{seasons}. The other horizon the sun still hovered, barely glowing above the earth edge. It was exhilarating. One moment nighttime. The next the trailings of daytime. It was amazing! Aaron felt a thought spring into his mind. A refreshing, uplifting one.

Excitedly he said to his friend, " All things are either in the light of day or in the darkness of night. There really is no in between. A faint light seems to linger; but, it's only the sun's waves trailing behind!" This caused a smile to break on the face of his friend.

When Aaron looked at him he saw something he'd never notice before. Maybe it was just the different light or maybe the contrasts. Whatever the cause, Aaron was startled by the intense piercing look he saw. Those eyes seemed to be sweeping the horizons. It was almost eerie. Yet it was strangely comforting and reassuring, like a great knowing or a deep seeing. Aaron really didn't understand nor did he want to ask his friend.

They set out again. One more he felt as though they sailed along

over the rocks until the footing became easier. Going down the slope was much faster than going up. By the final whisper of light they had traveled a good distance. Aaron could now barely make out the snow line back near the peak. The pines grew thicker. More and more shrubs were dotted here and there. Eventually they came upon an open spot nestled in a nice way near a large rock.

Aaron wrapped himself in the blanket and stared up at the stars brilliantly spread out like a tent above them. The Milky Way was dazzling. He could hardly believe his eyes. At times the sky looked more like a giant white sheet than individual dots. "How many!" he thought out loud in fascination.

"As many as there are drops in the ocean," his guide said. "Or grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. Or seeds that fall to the ground. Or the good thoughts that pour through the minds of all men, women and children throughout the earth. Or creatures that move on the land, in the air or under the water. Or discoveries that are waiting like buried treasures for people to find. An endless number, Aaron."

Nighttime was a different world. Completely so. For animals. For plants. For humans. For the wind. For all currents and motions. Everything was different at night. Darkness and light are definitely not the same.

The moon had risen earlier full and strikingly bright as well. As a small sun or rather a big mirror. Nevertheless it patrolled the sky, doing its job of watching and being watched. Mainly being watched. Like the sun, the moon and the stars ruled the heavens. Or seemed to. Aaron wondered where they came from. Who put them there or if they just happened some how. Other than all the visible and invisible, known and unknown ways they affected the earth and all on it, the water and all in it, something struck Aaron as being very important: "they were simply there!"

They weren't secret or hidden. They weren't a mystery or an imagination. They weren't a fantasy made by man. They weren't guessed about. They weren't pretended about or lied about or made up about. They weren't disguised or shrouded or veiled. Like princely rulers, they were there.

Like sentries. Like faithful soldiers. Rulers shining for us to see. And once we really see them, their absolute presence gives us assurance and constant reassurance. As signs and symbols of something hopefully greater.

While tucking Aaron in for the night's sleep, his friend touched Aaron's thoughts lightly by saying simply, "Yes, they're meant to be there- to be real and to tell us something about the greatness behind them. Just as the moon reflects the sun's presence and greatness at night." Sleep settled deeply upon a tired, happy boy.

The next morning came quickly. The sun's brilliance caused Aaron to leap from the ground, refreshed and ready to move on. He felt a great excitement come over him that made him feel like running and jumping. It was like a strong wind blowing within that made his heart laugh. His friend wasn't to be seen, though Aaron hardly noticed, busy with jumping and rolling around. About then the soothing voice called him over for some breakfast. The friendly voice Aaron now knew so well. Aaron gladly ate another of the mystery meals that somehow appeared without questioning the source. They were always filling and tasty. He was thankful and ate with a glad heart.

"Today, Aaron," he said, "we will start the final part of our journey!"

"You mean to where the sun actually rises," exclaimed Aaron excitedly. Now he knew why he felt so great this morning! "Okay. I'm ready. Let's go!"

"Wait now. Finish your food. It will be a very long part of our journey. But I know a way that will make it go more swiftly," he added.

Aaron stood up and gazed towards the horizon. The sun was moving above the mountains and valleys. For sure there were many mountains ahead, a very long distance. He thought to himself that even though they had gone so very far in these last days, the sun seemed as far away as ever or even farther. Suddenly Aaron felt his earlier happiness begin to drain out of him. It looked hopeless and impossible!

About then a strong hand squeezed his shoulder and his friend said, "Don't worry about the distance. Remember I told you that a know about a swifter way."

Aaron bowed his head sheepishly and then raised it slowly. He thought

about the journey thus far. All the fun and excitement. The treasures discovered. The land of beautiful sounds. The delicious food always set before him. "Yes, I remember!"

So they went off down another mountainside. At times some climbing was required. And some agile leaping. But generally the path went smoothly. Here and there along the way were sights and sounds that sparked Aaron's imagination and gave him a gasp of excitement. Many things as well were now becoming more familiar giving him a sense of confidence and a feeling of being more a part of the surroundings rather than a stranger or a spectator.

The day was flying by fast. The sun was already half-way across the sky. A lot of ground had been covered but it was a small dent compared to what stretched far ahead. Aaron had to stop several times and remind himself of his friend's words. And they traveled on and on.

The sun began to heat the air making it grow hotter and hotter. Thoughts of a swim in a nice pool of water danced or splashed in Aaron's head. He was thirsty and started to feel hungry as well. But his friend said nothing but only kept up the steady pace that was getting harder and harder for Aaron to stay with. Twice Aaron asked if they could stop to rest, but the guide friend said nothing but kept on moving ahead. Finally the third time he said okay. By now Aaron's tongue and mouth were completely dry making it hard to swallow. When he moved his tongue around it felt like it was rubbing on sandpaper-almost.

His friend wandered off for a few minutes leaving Aaron sprawled in some shade by a scrub brush. When he came back he encouraged Aaron by telling him they would make it soon. Aaron got up slowly wondering what soon really meant. Only a little further. Only a little further. He didn't understand how it could be true. There was so far yet to travel! Yet he tried not to think those thoughts.