A Day of Change

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WOODLAND MEMORIES

A DAY OF CHANGE

With every step I took, the mica dust on my boots shined with the sun’s passing moments. I looked up at the sharp blue sky against the mountain ridge and breathed deeply the crisp coolness of thin air. So many feelings were flowing through me as the excitement ran into my bones; every sensation I was taking in intensified my livened awareness. I had experienced so many days like this one before, but today seemed different.

With each step I took, a place of flowing white water, tall pines, and rugged rocks rang out its anticipation. My slow steps began to increase their speed, my muscles tightened with each movement, and the walk turned into a run as mountain faces fleeted by my eyes while the roar of the water grew louder and louder. Eyes rested upon a vision I had conjured up during the day, but now the vision was my reality.

As I looked around at the familiarity of the surroundings, feelings of complete happiness shot through me. This place was my own escape, but, somehow, today I did not feel all alone. It was as if someone were there with me. I looked out over the roaring rapids as they rang out their feeling of travel and question. The breeze floated gently through the sublime pines, singing out a tranquil sound. In the river lay a huge boulder that fought against the pounding strength of the heavy water throwing whitened, tormented currents into the air. Going nearer to the molded throne of rock, I felt as if the power of the river was pulling me into

GLORIA KOSZEGI
its clutches until I came to rest above it, becoming one with stone.

Sitting still, I looked up the stream and saw a blurred figure. Knowing now I was not alone in this place, I still felt the security it offered. But somehow the shadowed vision made my mind drift.

Closing my eyes, I began to meditate on the sounds around me— the birds, the animals, and the breeze were all interlocking into one peaceful thought. Then the thought drifted away to places in my past and home. A feeling of loneliness and distance drifted over me, a feeling filled with memories of childhood happiness.

It was with my family that I first came to this place, sublime and tranquil, in the mountains. It was here I spent many days with my father, wading the cold, clear streams, leaving it all behind in just the thoughts of casting a fly. As my thoughts floated away, I raised my eyes and saw a fly fisherman, wading cautiously into the stream, his eyes fixed upon the current’s movements through the sun’s reflected glare. It was as if my father became reality.

I sat very quietly and watched closely. Just then a trout raised below a rock near the man. He slowly, quietly drew the line into several, small loops around his fingers, bringing the dry fly in to meet his pole. Raising the tip of the pole, his arm moved skillfully, setting the fly soaring through the air in graceful back-and-forth movements to dry the feathers. His line retreated far enough to set the fly above the mark of the fish’s raise. The white and brown fly bobbed with the river’s movements past the mark and to the man, floating gently downstream.

The determined arm picked up the fly to repeat the process. I could see a slight swirl begin to form around the floating fuss. The excitement began to rush through me as I looked on with anticipation. A splash flew out of the mark; zipping of line penetrated the air. Muscles tightened in the man’s back and arms, while fingers moved with speed and accuracy to bring the weighted-down line through the bent pole. From the man’s movements, I could tell he was a very skilled fisherman and that this was not a regular fish but one of those you always hope for. After minutes of battle between the man and fish, an end came when the man surrounded the weary, rainbow colored, scaled frame with the netted hoop.

I jumped up with a scream of excitement.

“Wow, that was beautiful.”

A bit surprised, the man turned to me, smiling and displaying his catch.

“The’s a beauty, isn’t she?”

I climbed off the rock and went over to him I couldn’t get over how much you remind me of my fishing when I was smaller.”

“I’ve been coming to this place for many years to fish back into the water, letting him free. ‘Girl again, someday.’

Looking at me, he said, “You look very familiar to me. I told him I worked at the resort down the road.”

“You know, you remind me of my daughter many times. It was about this time last year when I spent many beautiful, good times together on this river.”

His eyes looked a bit sad to me as if his daughter was far away.

“Where is your daughter now,” I asked.

He paused for a moment and then told me about a mile up the pass.

Feeling very helpless, all I could say was, “I’m so sorry.” My tears in his eyes, I watched him slowly walk towards the road.

I sat down on the bank and stared open-mouthed at the man, feeling inside for the man, there was still something he was feeling inside for the man, there was still something if the pines and the wind were speaking out with words I realized how much death is a part of life and reaching out, something inseparable. But it seems something to mourn over, but to live on into. I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew I knew...
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I turned to me, smiling and displaying his catch.

“She’s a beauty, isn’t she?”

I climbed off the rock and went over to the man. “I’ve been watching you.
I can’t get over how much you remind me of my father. We used to come here
fishing when I was smaller.”

“I’ve been coming to this place for many years now,” he said, while placing
the fish back into the water, letting him free. “Perhaps I’ll be able to catch this
girl again, someday.”

Looking at me, he said, “You look very familiar.”

I told him I worked at the resort down the road.

“You know, you remind me of my daughter. She used to come here with
me many times. It was about this time last year that she was here last. We spent
many beautiful, good times together on this river.”

His eyes looked a bit sad to me as if his thoughts were millions of miles
away.

“Where is your daughter now,” I asked.

He paused for a moment and then told me she was killed in a car accident
about a mile up the pass.

Feeling very helpless, all I could say was that I was very sorry. The man
next to me became very still for a moment then began to collect his gear. With
 tears in his eyes, I watched him slowly walk up the path that lead upstream
towards the road.

I sat down on the bank and stared openly across the river. With all that I
was feeling inside for the man, there was still so much life around me. It was as
if the pines and the wind were speaking out wisdom to me. It was at that moment
I realized how much death is a part of life and how one is just next to the other,
reaching out, something inseparable. But it seemed that it was not the harsh, cruel
thing to mourn over, but to live on into. I knew that I would the rest of my life
come close to it but never be able to understand it.

CINDY HALDEMAN