

Wanderlust by Laine Johnson Awarded 3rd Place

Photo: Both Sides Now

Wanderlust they call it. The irresistible impulse to travel, to join nature, to get out in the world. Why stay in one place when you have the opportunity to broaden your mind and widen your horizons? I have that desire to know where all the roads go in life, and what is really out there just beyond my reach. Think about it, travel makes one simple and modest because we see what a tiny place we occupy in the world. When I was just a young girl, my mom shared with me this quote, "The traveler sees what he sees. The tourist sees what he has come to see." Ever since, I wanted to be the traveller, I wanted each destination to be pages in my endless book of "Wanderlust and Wonder." There is much more to an adventure than sights to be seen; it is about the rebirth of the human heart in its habitat, and the idea of letting everything go while travelling to the place where you can truly live.

Dawn. The beginning of twilight just before sunrise. The time when dew drops dance on the tips of the unkempt grass, waving in the soft breeze. The time when the world is still, yet it is the very life of life. The time of day that is most alive, when the sun peeks over sleeping babies. I like to think of dawn as a bliss of growth and the splendor of beauty, for yesterday is but a dream, and today is another opportunity to uncover secrets of the unknown. I walk along the trail, a backpack upon my back and a water bottle in hand. I take each adventure as a time to never look back on the bad, to free the mind with each footstep towards my destination. In the distance I can distinguish the outline of three dark mountain tips, each with a dusting of white powder. The breath of the mountain hovers close to the cold sky, like the fog gliding off my lips on a cold winter day. The glorious sun highlights a quarter of the mountain peak casting a shadow across the others. The sun appears as if it is expecting me, waiting to spread its warmth on all creation. We wave goodbye to night together and greet the new day.

I settle on the mountain's foot, ready to capture the moment with something more than just my eyes. Gingerly taking my camera from my backpack, I aim it Skyward. The tip of the mountain lightly touches God's fingers. It is as if God is singing "Joy to the World." The mountain is a tower, but it seems so delicate, very fragile compared to the great rolling skies of creation. The dreamers, the wanderers, the vagabonds are the ones that teach us to see the world through beautiful eyes. Right then, the wind whispers through my shirt and gives me yet another realization of why I chose the journey. It is only God, this mountain and myself present to look upon the world. I am a solitary wanderer, but I have the opportunity to take it all in. This mountain and my God never distract me from my path towards unforgettable bliss. Human beings are not shackled by the chains of life. No obligations. Remember that feeling, when the sight of the mountain was first captured. I know each trip I take. I will never forget my experiences. My emotions are so built up, I never fail to remember.

After noticing my camera battery running down, the mountains tell me it's time to leave. The sun is calling for a hush, and God sees me getting tired. All three wanted me to stay, but we all had our business to attend to, and daylight was burning out. Everything must come to an end, and this day was just another that I would keep locked away. The feeling in my heart, the memories in my mind, and the embodiment of my soul. We part ways in a pace that is slow. I hike upon the dry dirt, a faint cloud of dust behind me, flowing towards the fading mountains and the setting sun.

Wanderlust, they call it. A hobby, a drug, an irresistible longing to experience what's out there, and to see, know, hear, touch, and taste the world around you.