

Valleys, Mountains, and Plains

By Jacob Patrick

Valleys, Mountains, and Plains, an original piece of prose-styled poetry I created, was inspired by a close friend. Using metaphors and symbolism to tell a story, enables people to connect with the piece in unique ways. Each reader can see their own achievements, goals, and pitfalls in the story. This makes the piece far more moving, and emotionally engaging than if the original story was written only at face value. While the original inspiration was found in a moment of reflection on a friendship in turmoil, readers can walk away with far more profound meanings after reading this piece.

When I showed this piece to one of my English teachers, she said that it was wonderfully put together, and made an incredibly engaging story, with a stunning ability to allow readers to feel as if they are a part of the piece. She recommended submitting it in a poetry reading, a comment which in part lead me to include it in my portfolio.

Walking through how I design a piece like this is rather hard for me. Often times in design I don't consciously design the item at first. Many things simply come to me, often based on my mood, and influenced by what is going on around me. This was one such piece, the first draft was not something I sat down to write, but rather a story I told myself one day while walking. Almost as if I was simply an observer, after I told the story I wrote it down as best I could remember it. After that I more consciously changed small details of a metaphor or changed a symbol like a sun, to that of a moon because I felt it was more fitting to the inspiration. I often get ideas like this; however, *Valleys, Mountains, and Plains* was the first that meant so much to me.

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When you are born in a valley, all you know are the cool, dark shadows where the sun doesn't shine. The cold harsh wind, that comes at night, and the cold mist that rolls like waves around your feet in the morn. You carve your caves into the side of the cliffs, and while dark and damp, they feel like a home. The valley and its many caves shelter you from storms, the cold wind, and keep you safe from the predators that hunt above the valley.

But one clear day, one of the few when you can see the blue sky from your world of darkness, you venture from your valley, and climb the cliffs you've made your home, reaching for the open blue sky, only to find an open rolling plain. A field of golden grass shining under the warm sun, blowing in the soft breeze. Amidst the grass, are sweet smelling flowers and soft juicy fruits. Among those, the predators that hunt and chase you as you run back down into the valley of dark and damp, longing for the safety of the cold stone.

But as you crawl back into your dark, damp, stale cave, you feel empty. You miss the fresh breeze, the warm sun, and the sweet smell of flowers. You pull yourself closer and say you will return tomorrow; and you find rest amidst the darkness that has always kept you safe.

You learn to live on the plain, often spending your days there. The days you couldn't climb out of the valley due to storms you dream of the joy the flowers and sun brought to you. You stay on the plain later and later each night, watching the sunset, moonrise, and the stars take their place in the sky.

And one night while awake under the stars of the plain, you set your eyes on the impossibly tall mountains, opposite the plain; without thinking, you set off running for the mountains, looming and so incredibly far away. You fight your way up the cliffs and slopes. As you look back down over the valley and plain as the midnight moon rises over the peak, you know you must keep climbing, even though you fear the fall, should a single step be taken too swift, or movement made too early.

As you reach the top of the peak, you stand above everything, above the predators of the plain, and the mist of the valley. You stand above the storms that ravage the plain; and you touch the sun that never shines in the valley as it rises next to you. You made the climb to the top of the world, and deep within you know this was what you longed for, all those cold and damp nights in the caves carved out of the valley's stone; and all the nights spent listening in fear for the predators on the valley, only for one more glimpse of the stars above.

As you lay on that peak, above all of your fears and troubles, watching the sunrise on the horizon you know this is what you have always needed, that this was why you are alive, but it seems it all must end. With a gust of wind, and shift of a rock, you tumble and fall down the slopes and cliffs you just worked so hard to summit. You fall back into the valley, its cold mist embracing you, welcoming you back to its world of chilling indifference and darkness. And as you drag your broken body back to a cave, all that comes in your dreams is what it was like to stand among the stars, and you know that you will find no rest among the cold and dark you once found so comforting.