

This Only Do I Seek

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Inspired by C. S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*

Leah was lost, but did not want to admit it.

Looking back down at the map, she traced her finger from their current position to their destination.

"Have you found it yet?" Tom asked. He adjusted his eyeglasses so he could see the map better.

"I...I think it's this way," Leah decided.

They followed a cobblestone path down an alleyway, turned left and rounded a corner to find a queue of people gathering. People of all ages were there, some young, some old, some in between.

Taking a deep breath, Leah summoned some courage and asked a man, "Sorry, excuse me," she began, "Would you happen to know if this is the line for Bus #1?"

The man tipped his fedora and nodded.

Leah and Tom took their place in line, glancing at each other with relief.

"How do you know what will be there?" Tom said.

She paused, thinking about how she should answer, but then shook her head. She whispered, "I don't."

Tom let out a sigh. "Then why bother going?"

Hesitating, she was not sure how to respond. She had asked that very question to herself, too. The more she thought about it, however, the more she felt there was something stirring in her heart, telling her, whispering to her, *go*.

“But...” she started.

“But what,” he retorted.

“But what if we *do* go?”

Tom was tired and hungry. The sun had not risen yet. “Who gave you this idea, by the way?”

Leah pulled a piece of paper from her pocket. “My father told me,” she explained. “He had written to me and the letter arrived a few days ago.”

Tom’s eyes scanned the page. “Oh, so he had studied abroad here too? Long ago?”

She nodded. “He said he’s been there before, and it changed his life.”

Tom was doubtful, but the bus was already rolling up to the stop, so he went along.

As they stepped onto the bus, they pulled out some coins to pay for a ticket, but the driver smiled and shook his head. “It is free.”

“We don’t have to pay?” Tom asked.

“It is free,” the driver replied.

Leah was amazed, and grateful.

As they sat down in their seats, Tom still could not believe it. “Did your dad say anything about the ticket being free?”

Leah pulled out her letter again. “Oh, yes, he did,” she commented, “but I must have read too fast to have noticed that part.”

She looked up and began to see people of all backgrounds filing into the bus. Young and old, people of all nationalities, people of all personalities.

Some, though, did not enter the bus. They could not believe that the ticket was free.

“There has to be *some* catch,” one woman lamented. She walked away.

When the last individual entered the bus and the doors closed, the driver turned the engine on and began to drive out of the city and into the countryside.

Fields of green were passing by them. They looked out the window, watching hundreds of sheep grazing among the rolling pastures. As the bus stopped at several stations, some people were too tired or too hungry to continue with the journey. They departed the bus.

“Leah, let’s just get off of here,” Tom complained. “I’m tired and hungry.”

“We’re almost there,” she assured her friend. “Should be one or two stops more.”

Leah knew that if they left the bus now, they would go down a different road, a different path. Her father had told her to stay on Bus #1 all the way until the very end.

Leah stood firm. “I’ll be staying on Bus #1.”

Tom realized it would be better to stay with her than to go alone.

It was only one stop later when they finally arrived at their destination.

Some people hesitated to get off the bus, but Leah stood up to disembark. Tom followed after her.

“Go up the Hill,” the bus driver told them, “and you will see.”

“We’ll see what exactly?” Tom asked, but the bus driver gestured for them to keep on going.

The path beneath leads them up a hill, one blushing with emerald grass, dusted with dew that glistens in the yawn of dawn. The smell of morning mist is a welcome companion to the fragrance of the pink orchids blossoming along the trek.

The last of the raindrops dance, as if miniature diamonds sparkle with hints of sapphire. Indigo skies begin to yield to the garnet sun. Echoing gently, the sound of morning crickets present a comforting constant.

As they ascend the Hill, they journey higher and higher into the sylvan wilderness. Leah's heart chuckles as a family of spotted doves flies overhead, cooing together in harmony. Glimmering between large oak leaves, golden rays of light peep forth, tinting their tresses with hazel highlights.

At last, they arrive to the top of the Hill.

Leah stands in awe.

Meanwhile, Tom contemplates whether or not what he was seeing was truly real. "I must be dreaming..."

Leah pretends to pinch him, smiling. "You're not."

She witnesses a landscape she has never seen before, but it seems to embody what she had been looking for all her life. From the top, she is able to see the sun bursting forth, painting the sky with a light she has tasted before. Closing her eyes, she takes it all in.

A few moments later, she opens her eyes, hoping to find her friend in a similar state of awe. But she turns to Tom, who is yawning. He remains unchanged.

They were not alone on the hill. A group of school children on a fieldtrip were there, too. The teachers rushed around, trying to make sure that the children were behaving. They were so

distracted, however, that they were not able to take a moment to stand and witness the rays of gold striking the clouds of gray.

Next, a group of tourists arrived at the top of the Hill. They were all donning oversized cameras and backpacks filled with food and snacks to the brim. In their hands were selfie sticks. They were so engrossed in themselves that they did not even notice the majesty of the world in front of them.

Then there was a group of people talking amongst themselves. Some were complaining how hot it was, while others were complaining it was too cold. They were being blind to what was ahead.

But Leah remained, captivated, fixing her eyes ahead of her. She saw a young girl, perhaps no more than five years old, who was sitting down, with a similar sense of awe in her. Leah joins the little girl and they sit together, side by side, gazing upon its beauty. This only do they seek, and this did they find.

*One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.*

Psalms 27:4