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A Lost Peace

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As I climbed, I could feel my biceps aching, feel my hands, soaked through with sweat, struggling to keep a grip. I could feel my arms begging — pleading — to let go. But I kept climbing. I kept fighting through the pain until finally, almost miraculously, I reached the top. From 70 feet in the air I could see everything. I could see the many surrounding mountains. I could see the lush treetops that surrounded my perch. Most impressive of all though was the sparkling river that wound through the countryside almost directly below me. It was breathtaking. Truly, breathtaking is an understatement. It was magical. This was the reason that I love to climb.

Looking down across this landscape, all the troubles of the weeks and months prior slipped away into insignificance. All the coworkers that had gotten under my skin, the professors whom I couldn't stand, they all seemed meaningless. No, they *were* meaningless. From up here, nothing else mattered. Nothing but the sky, the earth and the rock beneath my feet.

I must have sat there for at least an hour. As I sat, I didn't think about work or school or the bills that still needed to be paid. I didn't think about studying or test-taking or cleaning my dorm room. I thought about nothing. For the first time in what seemed like forever my mind was completely and utterly void of any kind of thought. It was bliss.

I did finally climb back down, but when I did it was with a different mind than when I'd gone up. I was calmer. I suppose you could say that my mind stayed up on that rock. It wasn't that I was suddenly absent-minded, I just no longer worried about all the things that didn't really matter, the things that stressing about wouldn't solve. And the feeling stayed with me. For a while.

What once seemed menial and pointless, now seemed enjoyable. While making copies or toasting bread I found time to stop and smell the flowers (or the delicious smell of warming bread). Suddenly,

I was using all those momentary breaks in the day to see the brighter side of life. All this kept me sane. Much saner than I could have claimed to be before. I was happy.

However, as the weeks and months passed, this ability to be content with life began to slip away. It started quietly, imperceptibly at first. Instead of relaxing as the light of the photocopier went back and forth I would pace or twiddle my thumbs, slowly losing the calm that had taken over during the climb, slowly regressing to the neurotic mess that I had been before.

Within only a few months, the miraculous transformation of that climb had been completely reversed. Because of the gusto and dedication with which I threw myself back into the daily grind, all of that peace has been lost, ground away by a lifestyle that was hardly worth living. What had I done? All that made me happy these past months had been sacrificed for the sake of maintaining all that made my life so gratingly unbearable.

If I was to live again, truly *live*, I *must* again reach that peak that I climbed so many months prior. In fact, I will do just that.

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