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Mountain and Faith

by

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I'd like to tell you a story.

He always stood tall. He was the largest and fiercest of mountains, inescapable in his fury, but also in his love. For his pull was equal in both directions. Everyone was drawn to him. When the sun reflected on his snow-capped slopes he sparkled like a diamond. People clambered from all around to marvel at him, to stand in his shadow, to climb upon his slopes. And there wasn't a thing he couldn't do except for one-- He couldn't move.

He wasn't always the tallest mountain, even if he *stood* tall. He started off small. A child. In the rain and thunder and lightning, he would stand with his arms raised in the air, and he would laugh and laugh, and Faith would say to him with a smile, "You *could* move,"

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but his laughter would disappear, and he would become sad. "Impossible! Faith, you know I can't move, why would you hurt me by suggesting such a thing?"

He would look at Faith and wonder, what was she thinking to say that? She knew how sensitive he was about moving, how anxious it made him, and besides, he didn't like to talk about it. No one else came up to him suggesting that he move from one place to another. His roots were deep in the Earth. How could she expect such a thing! He turned from her, angry, "Go away, Faith. It isn't very nice to say something like that. I don't want to talk to you right now." And Faith shrank ever so slightly as she turned, leaving Mountain behind. And he stood just a little taller.

Mountain's childhood was full of perils. He was shy and didn't often like to let people know who he truly was. Despite his shyness, he would appear confident and charismatic. But people were cruel, crueler than Faith appeared to him sometimes. They would dig into him, and climb his peak. They didn't always know how they hurt him. They would call him names and abuse him. But because he was closed, he would not share his feelings, so no one knew they were hurting him, no one knew the pain they were causing.

But he was firm, he was fixed, he was alive. He was stubborn. He was full of laughter and joy. He was full of rage and fire. He was full of knowledge and freedom. He was full of fear and anxiety. But he was also full of loneliness and weeping. He didn't like to show his fear. He didn't like to show his tears. In his fear, he would lash out and hurt others. In his loneliness, he would cast

people out. He would hate and he would curse, and although people admired him, they also feared him.

But not Faith. Faith never hurt him like that, and she did not run away from him in fear. She whispered to him kindly as she gently walked among his hills. She pondered his life with him. She listened in wonder to the ages of storms and with laughter to the joy that Mountain told her.

She tried her best not to make him angry because in anger he would drive her away. In anger, he would shut her out and treat her like the others. In anger, he would find his pain and in anger, he would look at Faith and see everyone else that hurt him. Despite his anger, Mountain and Faith became friends. They loved each other deeply and they shared something that Mountain had shared with no one else. In Faith, *Mountain began to trust.*

Faith would scamper among Mountain's crevices, and he would search for her. They shared joys and sorrows with each other. They laughed together, and for the first time, Mountain wept before another. She wept with him in the rare moments when he could share with her his pain; when his hurt was overwhelming and he could give words to those feelings. He allowed himself to be vulnerable, to share his pain and his hurt with Faith, to let her in. And Faith listened, she was silent and said nothing as Mountain shared his soul with her. And Mountain said to her, "Why do you not ask what you usually do of me?"

"Today is not a day for questions, Mountain. Today is a day for weeping." And so, Faith wept with

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Mountain, and their friendship deepened. Their loved hardened. And Mountain thought there was little that could happen that could separate them from each other now.

Mountain grew taller. As he grew, Faith continued to visit him. She said less and less to him and listened more and more. She no longer asked Mountain the question. Occasionally Mountain would ask her why, and she would look at him mournfully, then turn away.

“I do not seek your anger, Mountain.”

And in those times, Faith would shrink ever so slightly as she turned, leaving Mountain behind, and Mountain would stand a little taller.

After one such time, Faith drifted away with the wind, and as she drifted down Mountain, a storm raged toward him from his back as he watched her go. He stood in the snow, his feet frozen, his arms raised, weeping. He screamed into the blizzard, “Do your worst!” And the blizzard raged around him as he wept frozen tears. Eventually, his eyes were so thick with them he couldn’t open them anymore.

So, he was startled when he heard a soft whisper in his deepest places as Faith said to him, “You could move if you’d like. You could rest from this storm for a moment.” And he forced his frozen eyes open just to look away from her cruelly. Hatefully. Scornfully. He screamed at her, saying, “You don’t even know me anymore! You were my friend, once! I used to love you! I trusted you! But now, how could you even suggest such a thing! You hate me to say a thing like that!” And

Faith shrank as she walked away, leaving Mountain behind. And he stood a little taller.

He wished he hadn't screamed, with his scorn drifting on the wind and full of weeping.

Mountain grew. He stood taller than any mountain. He grew wiser, or so he thought. Faith came, again and again, she looked at him. Her gaze, questioning, inquiring. "Ahhh," he would say, "I know what you are going to say. But why would I move? I am comfortable here! I have everything I need! Besides, people adore me! They look at my beauty and climb to my peak! They adore my every crevice! Why should I even contemplate your speech? Away from me! Away with your foul words, your cruel ways!"

Faith turned, her eyes sad, weeping for what Mountain was becoming. His fear closing him from what he once was and what he once loved. She shrank a little more as she walked away, and Mountain stood a little taller, a little prouder.

She was becoming small, he was becoming large. She was becoming insignificant, barely visible, and he was a behemoth, a world of a thing--a sight for the whole Earth to look at and marvel at his majesty.

Mountain no longer feared the people who jeered at him. Their curses were no longer painful. He had formed a thick skin, a facade he presented to others. They approached him and he smiled and glistened, he flexed and roared, and they praised him for his beauty and his luster. They wondered at his wit and his mastery, they marveled at his height and his firmness. He was fixed, immovable. Nothing could shake him,

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and no matter what anyone said of him his confidence never seemed to waver.

Yet he was so utterly alone. Surrounded by people and so inexorably alone.

People were solid and loud and wanted attention. Throngs of people stood on mountainside, watching him and wondering whether they could or should climb him. He was much greater now than he had been in the past, and he was a thing to be feared as well as marveled. So many marveled, but few climbed.

No one noticed Faith as she glided through them, because no one could see her. They were solid, whole, complete, but light passed through her. Her clothes no longer caught in the breeze. Her feet could feel no cold, her breath left no cloud in the cold air.

People Everywhere. She was alone. He was alone. He was becoming taller, but they were both becoming empty.

She had only one thing left, one daring chance of hope and one desperate plea, that perhaps Mountain would remember.

Faith stepped from the crowd and placed her foot onto Mountain. One foot pressed lightly in front of the other. Each step made her smaller, each step made her less of a thing, less likely that Mountain would ever hear her, even recognize her voice, but she had to try.

Through the canyons. Through the shelves and crags and gorges and crevasses. Through the ledges and to the place where she and Mountain knew so deeply, where his heart lay hidden. Where her only chance at a softly spoken word could have any weight or meaning. Faith

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brought forth all her courage and she looked at him. She spoke quietly, the smallest whisper, the quietest possible thing, barely a whisper, barely a voice, for she was hardly a thing anymore, hardly a wisp of existence herself.

“move.”

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And mountain roared, and leaped, and cried out in joy and sorrow. He couldn't imagine why he had held himself for so long against Faith, for she had always only wanted what was best and brightest in the world! So, mountain shook the people from his back, those who had cursed and broken him.

He flung the lies that he had believed that had made him tall, and Faith grew a little brighter.

He cried out in pain remembering the hurt he had caused her, casting her out when all she had wanted was to help him, and Faith became more solid.

And Mountain pulled up his roots, and leaped from his place, and sat into another, and marveled at Faith's call, and the power of her words to do an impossible thing.

And Faith rested in Mountain's heart, marveling at his strength and courage to overcome the impossible, to embrace his pain and fear and bring it with him into the unknown.

Mountain and Faith smiled at each other deeply. Lovingly. As one.

“...For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20b New Revised Standard Version)