

## Mountain View

A short story by Alexis Krouk

The view was all too familiar: mountains stretched for miles, deep green and covered in dense forest against a backdrop of clear blue sky. I observed this through the window of the moving car, wondering how many times I had seen those mountains against that sky. I wondered if I had ever really stopped to appreciate how beautiful they were before.

“Dad. Hey dad, you alright?”

I turned to my daughter, who was driving with her fingers gripped tightly on the wheel. Her eyes were a glaring blue, with the exact same light in them as they always had, right from her first moments on Earth.

“I’m fine, dear. You worry too much.”

“I know, dad. I was just wondering, that’s all.”

Silence filled the car again and left me to all the things I had been ignoring for years. Regret builds up until it’s as big as the mountains we drove past that day. I wished I had noticed how beautiful everything was before, and I wished I had slowed down a second to really take in what I had. Little things slip through the cracks and get lost, like the exhilaration I felt proposing to my wife some 50 years ago, or that feeling of fear as my daughter left for school for the first time and the utter joy of seeing her smile as she ran back to the car to tell me all about it. Those feelings get lost, and it only takes a brief moment to get them all back: an epiphany that’s like a slap in the face.

“Look, I, uh, I wanted to tell you something” my daughter said, her eyes glued to the road.

“Sure thing. What is it?”

“I wanted to make sure you’re really okay with moving in with James and me. I know how persistent I was when, you know, after you got sick, but I want to know you’re really okay with it. Afterall, you’re moving away from the place you’ve lived your whole 70 years of life.”

She had a tendency to ramble. I remember the excuses she had for staying out past her curfew could span an hour. I let out a chuckle, even though I tried to hide it.

“Was that funny?”

“No, no. I want to move in with you. It’s been years since your mom passed, and I’ve just been alone. You’re all I have, and I haven’t seen you nearly enough.”

“Thanks, dad” She choked out, a tear slowly running down her cheek that then hung from her chin.

We talked the whole way through the rest of the trip about childhood stories, her husband, dreams, hopes, fears. A car ride can’t make up for lost time, but at least it can get in a few good moments before they run out. I watched as the view grew more and more unfamiliar. The mountains faded from view, and another view emerged: a new place I can call home.