

Benjamin stood next to her, clinging to her one knee for dear life. The wind whipped at his trousers, nearly pulling his little legs out from under him. He looked up at her with a mixture of terror and exhilaration, wanting to climb up into her arms. She paid no attention, staring out the boxcar's open door, intent on the dark landscape, blurry and featureless, rushing there, somewhere out beyond the night veil that shrouded their view out.

Giant steel wheels below his feet squealed shrilly, its high pitched sound piercing, making him wince from the stabbing pain to his ear drums. The floor below him jerked and shifted, twisting a degree, then sharper, followed by the odd roll in his stomach. His sense of speed reduced, the colossal snaking man-made contrivance of steel and wood upon which they rode rounded a bend in the tracks. The thunderous rattle and clatter of aging metal mechanisms calmed suddenly, the winds force through the open door waning, as if taking a deep breath, readying for another exhale.

Her grip on his shirt collar grew suddenly tighter, choking him, he felt her leg tense, muscles flexing, ready to spring. She sensed the right moment.

"Jump! Jump now!" she screamed. She pulled him with her into the darkness.

Benjamin sometimes woke up with a start in the middle of the night, sweating; the images of their desperate flight from the city and that awful tumble from the steam locomotive train the most likely cause. He didn't remember much before that event; she never spoke about it to him and he didn't ask. Still the questions haunted his dreams; *why did they have to leave, who was his father, did he leave and where was he now—was he dead?*

They arrived penniless and homeless, no belongings except what she carried in her small tattered canvas bag, hoping to make a new start away from the misfortunes of her former existence. In any other place they might have met with even greater calamity. Here they found helping hands, the inhabitants accustomed to hardship and suffering, only a few generations previous having survived persecution and discrimination; they themselves finding refuge here in the high country.

The landscape of their new home, high steep mountains formed a millennia ago, was so new and foreign to their eyes. The vision of it, in little Benjamin's mind, appeared as if soft leather had been pushed up against a stiff flat duck canvas water bag, the leather bunching and forming wrinkles. The more correct geological explanation, posited that the natural surfaces had succumbed to constant, interminable erosion that exposed the rough and jagged granite rock beneath. The resulting natural formations, regardless of origin theories, became the foundation for their little enclave tucked in amongst the towering pine and spruce trees, clinging and taking root in the thin layer of earth left behind.

Even with the help and support of the tiny little community, they struggled, mightily. The fear was constant within them both; how would they make it here? But with nowhere else to go, they stuck with it, making it through the first few days, then weeks which turned into months, and now years. No small feat, they did survive, they were not broken after all.
