Lucie Anderson

Creative Writing Nonfiction

Daryl Farmer

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New Sight

All week my sister Patsy and I dreamed of our trip to Pasagshak. Camping was the purest form of imagination to us: a time where we could dream uninterrupted by our daily lives and Kodiak was the perfect place for it. We called this favorite spot Surf Beach for the number of people who geared up in their wetsuits to ride waves in the Alaskan ocean. In those days, there was nothing better than running wild across the beach sand and climbing up the seaside cliffs. What world could we create with so much space to allow our imaginations run free?

My sister and I made sure to collect our things into a neat pile- backpacks, sleeping bags, and gameboys while our parents pitched the tent and set up camp. While our parents were preoccupied we took off to explore and find all the secret spots, mapping out our kingdom. To the east was the mighty gravel mountain and the deep streams carved into the beach, leaving behind sand islands to hop across. To the west was the beach cliff with bat caves where the buffalo would roam. To the north was the mighty ocean and southward was Patsy and I’s classic spot: the gentle stream. Here, we were rangers tracking down our captured companions or animals lounging by a pool of water. In the sunshine, it was nice and warm compared to the harsh Alaskan ocean, so we quickly began splashing around in our private watering hole, our parents paying little attention.

I, of course, was perfectly content making mud pies of my own accord, but Patsy was already ready to move on the exploring the sand dunes. I told her I would stay behind and not to go too far so our parents could see her. She nodded in agreement and took off up the hill and disappeared from view. I quickly realized making mud pies wasn’t fun alone, so I crawled up the sandbank on the other side of the stream and pretended I was a gymnast on the balance beam. Even in my imagination, I wasn’t a very good gymnast. Before I knew it, I was falling fast down the side of the sandhill.

The ends of my hair washed in the current as the sand rolled down over my face like a mighty wave. My feet were buried under the immense pressure of the sandy bank above my head which my sister and I had been playing on so naively before. I took a deep breath but wasted it immediately to cough out the sand pelting the back of my throat. In an instant, the light was blotted out and I could still feel the sand amassing on top of me. The sand covering my legs seemed too heavy to move from my struggling. Though I was disoriented, I believed they were bent down into the sand dune, making the weight of the sand on top of them even greater. I replayed my backwards tumble from the top of the sand bank- head falling down into the arms of the creek below, back hitting the wet sand at the bottom as breath was knocked from my lungs. No hand reached down to save me.

Somehow, I reminded myself not to panic, overriding my instinct to focus solely on my burning lungs. Struggling against the packed sand was not going to work, so I slowly pulled my knees toward my chest with all my might, feeling the daylight and ocean breeze break onto them. Once there I moved my hips back and forth, dragging my lower body upwards out of the sand until I could pull my arms out. With a final heave, I pulled myself out with my arms, coughing and spluttering. I laid on my side, body still upside down on the bank, exhausted. The ends of my hair were still being washed back and forth gently by the stream. If there were a time to have magic healing powers from water, that is when I wished to have them. Instead, I focused on breathing and the slight tugging of my hair in the cool water. After I had regained the use of my tired muscles, I stood carefully, wading across the stream. In my head, I was a great warrior returning from a difficult battle. My armor was blood drenched, my clothes soaked in sweat. Every bone in me ached and my stomach rumbled. Walking across the stream took all my effort, unlike earlier when Patsy and I had ran back and forth through it without batting an eye. I didn’t want to be the princess in our game anymore. My battle-weary hands were no longer fit for the dainty work of a royal. At the other end of the stream, I had to rest before climbing up the short embankment to walk to our campsite. My parents looked alarmed when I first came into view with my tear-stained cheeks, and dirt caked visage. I hugged my mom first, unable to explain what happened through my blubbering. She sat me by the campfire and wiped off my face and hands while my dad made me a cup of hot cocoa. Patsy came back and didn’t notice a thing, as usual. My mom filled her in which made me cry again.

That night, Patsy and I sat in the tent playing our gameboys, saying nothing of what happened earlier. The rest of the trip, I wouldn’t go near our stream. I didn’t want to be a ranger anymore. Instead, we climbed up Mount Gravel and watched the birds fly by, sliding down the other side and then climbing back up again. Each time I reached the top and paused, I wondered why nobody came to save me. Patsy had disobeyed and gone out of my parent’s sight. I was right across from Mom and Dad and they never noticed a thing. That was the first time I had to save myself. The seagulls circled, carefree above their ocean home. The waves crashing on the beach echoed in my ears. I could see everything from the top from the buffalo herd grazing in the distance to the indent on the embankment where I had fallen down. There was something comforting in the fact that the ocean waves couldn’t reach it and wash it away. It would take the wind a lot longer to smooth over my struggle. Somehow, that made me feel like I had won something. I slid down Mount Gravel and walked toward the looming waves. As they curled around my feet, I slowly sank into the sand below, feeling dizzy as the waves tried to pull me in. But I wouldn’t let them. I knew how to dig myself out.