

The Paycheck from God

By T.A. Barron

To live in the Rocky Mountains is truly a gift—what my father used to call “the paycheck from God.”

That gift comes in many forms. The freedom to dream some dreams as wide as the blue sky above our heads. The opportunity to live a healthier lifestyle, to stretch our bodies as well as our minds and spirits. The chance to be close to the land, where we can come to know glowing vistas, snowy peaks, meadows full of wildflowers, marvelous creatures, and even—up in the high country—crystalline pure air.

But there is one form of this gift that I appreciate above all the rest. Especially when I hear the sounds of engines roaring and grinding and battering, this gift becomes most precious. For it is the best possible antidote to the noise of modern life, the surest way to calm the nerves as well as the soul. In the paycheck from God, it is the ultimate dividend.

Silence.

To sit on a mountain ridge in the wilderness, drinking in the silence, is to become part of the ancient stone, the wild water, the endless sky. To listen to silence—truly listen—is not to hear nothing. Rather, it is to hear something very subtle and truly precious: distant echoes, both outside and inside ourselves. Echoes of who we really are, where we really live, and what we really value.

Sometimes, at such moments, I feel immersed in the great miracle of all that surrounds me. A miracle which is much, much larger than me both in size and longevity—but of which I am also a part. That miracle both dwarfs me and enlarges me. At the same time, it continues to inspire ... for its essence is life, and its engine is silent.