



Perspective

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By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

where I was ensconced ^{alone} in my little cabin,

Last night the wind blew through ^{the} these North Carolina mountains and the trees bent in awesome majesty before it. Tree tops swirling in the darkness, leaves blowing, scattering before the wind like whipped school children before the headmaster, dead branches breaking and tumbling to the earth — it was a wonderful sight.

I stood at the edge of the pasture, in the shadow of a towering white pine dark against the sky. The wind played across the tops of the rich green hay, causing it to bend and straighten, bend and straighten in fluid patterns. During the intermittent flashes of lightning I could see the yellow and white daisies and the fragile Queen Anne's lace which are sprinkled throughout the hay, nodding and bobbing in syncopated time with the flow of the music of the wind. The two ponies, sensing the excitement of the clashing of the elements, were standing on the hilltop, heads erect, manes blowing in the wind.

I leaned against the rough bark of a tough old red oak and listened to the thunder rumble through the mountains. There was no rain, only brilliant streaks of lightning followed by the roar of thunder as it rumbled and rolled up one valley and down another. Unlike thunder in the flatlands where there is nothing to provide an echo, thunder in the mountains has character. It rolls on and on like an old carriage down a gravel road, up one valley and down another, sometimes seeming to grow in intensity as the mountains pick it up and hurl it back until it finally fades away in the distance.

Oddly, the dark forest around me was filled with the flickering lights of thousands of fireflies. Perhaps under the protection of the trees they were immune from the

howling wind. I could see them across the pasture, also, in a small wooded area where there is a stand of towering poplars and hardwoods. The woods, dark and deep, were alive with the tiny flashing lights. It was a magnificent sight, the wind blowing the tall hay, the trees bending and swaying, the lightning behind the mountains and the woods alive with glittering lights. No theatre marquee or Broadway lights could compare with the beauty of this panorama.

I came inside the cabin and lit the kerosene lamp. The harsh glare of electric lights would have utterly destroyed the mood of the moment. The reflections of the lamp danced across the walls and ceiling, keeping time with the howling wind outside the window. I lay for a long time on top of the covers, listening, watching. In the sounds of nature there is manna for the soul, refreshing for the troubled spirit. A long time later I rose on one elbow and blew out the lamp. My prayer had come through listening, not speaking. Soon I was asleep.

This morning the yard shows evidence of last night's windstorm. Branches and leaves are everywhere. But the birds are high in the trees, singing, and a saucy blue jay is perched on a branch outside the window, daring me to come outside.

Few people have a place like this where they can go and feel themselves close to the earth. We've become accustomed to asphalt and concrete, exhaust fumes and street lights, the roar of motors and false entertainment of electronic devices. This kind of place would drive most urbanites to madness. But that's because we do not know how to listen — and look. No matter where we are, if we stop and observe, we'll see the face of God in His creation.