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THE TRIALS OF AEOLUS

I recall an astonishing moment just three days after my house was constructed. It was early morning and no one else had yet arisen. I was baking bread and I went outside to collect eggs for us to eat. Our valley appeared very different that day. It was not so much a valley as an enormous stone bowl. The rock was quite reddish and it glimmered. It looked as if God had reached down and polished it. The crust at the top edge, jagged and black (or perhaps blue), was the only indication of the vastness beyond. I remembered my journey traversing it three weeks earlier. I looked at the red slopes that cascaded toward a deep, wide pond at the base of the bowl. An ephemeral violet mist, accepting the vital light of the morning sun, rested on the water.

All at once there was no distance between heaven and me. I wanted to throw my body into the singular vastness before me. My body stiffened and shook, my passion became stifled. I realized that I could not fly, but then there was no need to take possession of the unlimited space. It did not try to escape from me. Infinite space surrounded the whole of me, as surely as it surrounded the trees. The space was all around me, and all inside of me. I felt the beautiful; I cried.

We always eat our evening meal at dusk or later. The precious twilight celebrates and calms. It is a time for family to come together, a time to exchange thoughts between young and old. At other times we eat by the light of candles. There is a great fascination for fire in all of us. It is an element of purest contemplation; every flame so archetypal, part of one same spirit. How vulgar it is for those in the other world to reserve candlelight dinners; for the important to situate themselves in contrived splendour.

Upon eating we go to the lake's edge and gather about a fire, telling stories, dreaming, dancing to rhythms echoing through the bowl. There are glowing embers around the circle of the lake. Small worlds. This night was a night for singing. A single family begins to sing. A song about the night, a song about sadness and beauty, a song about life and death. Sometimes one voice is all that is heard. A single voice, an aeolian harp, stirring the quiet night. Rising up, filling the bowl. Then, in unison, all join in. Melodies, counter-melodies, reflections. Pure harmony.

The children often ask about the world we left behind. After dinner one night they asked if we would ever return. I told them the story of the salmon. How they leave their birthplace and then struggle back there to die. I told them that the salmon's birthplace is probably more enchanting than ours. Perhaps one day my children will have to see the outside world. Perhaps one day it will be suitable for life.