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of the light on top of the mountain

If I were to raise my hand
Unblemished and untorn
And look up
To see that mountain that I am to climb
Would I realize
Just how far I have to go?

The mountain
It's rugged and ruined
With cracks in the character
And destruction in its demeanor
There is beauty in the edges
Trees with bark of rust and roses
And willows in the whispered breeze.
Soft slicing rolling rivers
Framed by fields of wildflowers
And the sky is clearer than the ring of a bell.

I hold up my tiny hands
Smooth and silky
To the light at the top of the mountain.
It's a bright thing
A brilliant thing
And so so far away.

I climb
Raking my palms through the tired trail
Scraping my knees on the wretched ragged rocks
I climb
And climb
And climb
The light shines more than the morning sun
It's blazing
It's beaming
And it almost seems to burn, sometimes.

I climb
Pushing my toes through thorny tangles

Smearing my arms with sweat and soil
I climb
And climb
And climb
It never seems to stop.

So I stop.

There is a willow tree by the trail
Its branches are arching
The leaves sway with the heather in the hills
The grass is wet by the morning dewdrops
And I sit
A cool seat of shade for the tired traveler.

And as I sit
I wonder
To the top of the mountain
Lustrous and luminous
Lined with toil and troubles
Will I ever reach it?

I turn my head down
To the trail I have traveled
It's a long thing, I realize
Twisting and turning and tumultuous all the same
Something in me thinks
"I've gone far, haven't I?"

The beginning of the trail
It seems so far away
It's a faint dot in the distance
A spot of something among the wild and ravaged
I don't think I would have noticed
Had I not stopped to look back.

I raise a thumb
To the small speck that I started at
All the way down
At the mouth of the mountain.
The way I have walked
My ancestors weathered before me
It's time-worn weary by the footsteps of a thousand
The trail is clear and concise.

I hold up my hands
Crushed and calloused
And I wonder
Of the light at the top of the mountain
Do I need to reach it
To see how far I have come?
Do I need to reach it
To have etched an echo
On the mountain's might?

And I realize
I don't need to reach the light
To understand how far I've gone.
I don't need to look from on high
To know that my footsteps
Have planted an imprint
For all the other little girls to come.

I don't need to reach for the future
That radiant, blinding thing
I am the future
In every step I've taken
Up this treacherous
Terrible
Beautiful
Bold mountain.