Waiting For Winter

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I miss it. I miss friends. I miss laughing. I miss the adrenaline rush. I miss the nervous feeling. I miss community. I miss hiking. I miss building. I miss floating. I even miss the pain.

So many memories come to mind when I think about it. I remember how it wasn’t a part of my life; it was my life. It was everything I did. When my friends and I weren’t actually doing it, we were talking about it, we were watching it on TV, we were dreaming about it, we were anticipating it. We hated summer but without the summer we would have taken it for granted. We persevered through summer and somehow made it through fall. Then it happened: the first snow.

The first snow. It covered everything and made everything beautiful. Somehow it soothed us and tormented us at the same time. The first snow told us that it was so close, but it wasn’t there yet. The first snow was to us what the first drink is to an alcoholic. We were no longer ourselves, we were obsessed. We watched the news more than our parents, just to see the weather report. Our longing grew as the snow accumulated. With each new snowfall we slept less and daydreamed more. Our grades declined; our nights were spent watching the videos and reading the magazines. We hurried home after school to pull out old rails and benches. This curbed our hunger for a little while but the satisfaction was only temporary, our appetites were insatiable. We kept waiting in agony. It seemed the day would never come until suddenly it was there in front of us, like a home-cooked meal set in front of a starving teenager.

We hardly slept the night before. We stayed up late getting everything ready. We packed the new gear that we had bought three months earlier, and set it by the door. We woke up early in the morning from dreams of gliding, floating, and weaving. We skipped school.

Wide smiles accompanied excited eyes as we began our ascent up the windy road. Our blood was already pumping, our adrenaline already rushing. We blasted our music and laughed about old times.

Then we were there. We turned right, through the large entrance, smiling mockingly at the open gates that had been closed all summer, holding us back. We unloaded and hurried up the stairs to the lodge. Our boots were on in a matter of minutes and then we were outside again. The chilly air bit at our noses while big fluffy snowflakes danced around us. We buried our faces in our soft coats and strapped our front foot in. A few minutes of waiting in line, then we were on the lift. When we got to the top, we drifted off the chair and looked at the sight that surrounded us. Through the heavy snow we could see our playground. Trees, moguls, chutes and Cat trails called to us, begging us to come and play. We strapped our back foot in and took our first bite.

We cut through the untouched powder and shot off of small ledges. We weaved through the trees as snow flew in our faces, its freezing sting the most comforting sensation we had experienced in months. We were not rusty; it felt like just yesterday we were there, on the very same run. It was as if there had been no time between then and the closing day of the previous season. Our aching legs were the only reminder of summer.

Still, we were not satisfied; the meal was good but we were not yet full. We were still waiting for dessert, and just like all teenagers, we had saved a lot of room for dessert. But we had to wait. There was not enough snow yet but soon we would be indulging in the most delicious morsels of all.

The day finally came when a buffet of tabletops, rails, and quarter pipes greeted our anxious eyes. There was finally enough snow to build the snowboard park. The morning sun glistened off the shiny rails and cascaded over the mountainous tabletops. Aaaah, the tabletops, this was my delicacy of choice. The others could have all the rails they wanted, but leave me the tabletops. The large jumps looked more like mountains than anything else. The steep run in shot up the jump and ended with an abrupt lip, then there was the flat middle space, followed by the gentle landing. From the side the jump looked similar to a table, which is where it got its name.
As I raced towards the gigantic hill in front of me I said a little prayer, just like I always did. It was my ritual; it calmed me down. I was nervous, as I should have been, but more than that, I was excited. How would it end? Would I land the trick? Would it look good or would it be sloppy? Would I crash? Would I hurt myself? I could hear the snow crunching under my board and feel the air rushing by my face. I started the ascent and the next thing I knew I was airborne, flying, no floating, through the air. I may have only been there for a few seconds but it seemed like an eternity. I grabbed “indie” (grabbed the middle of the board with my back hand) as I spun a 540 (one and a half rotations), soaring over the flat tabletop. I “stomped” my landing as I finished my last rotation and rode away smoothly. There is no way to describe that feeling. One cannot explain the sensation to someone who has never experienced it because there is nothing like it in all the world. All I can say is that I love dessert.

Those days are now gone and I miss them. I live in Portland, with Mount Hood only an hour away and Bachelor within a three-hour drive, but they are only teasing me. I look at them like a homeless child looks at a chocolate cake behind the bakery shop window. School, work, and a lack of money have pulled me away from the life I love so much. They have reduced me to a starving college student who dreams of the days when he used to be well fed.