

## THE PRELUDE (EXTRACT)

William Wordsworth

It was a summer's night, a close warm night,  
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping mist  
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky,  
Half threatening storm and rain; but on we went  
Unchecked, being full of heart and having faith  
In our tried pilot. Little could we see,  
Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp,  
And, after ordinary travellers' chat  
With our conductor, silently we sunk  
Each into commerce with his private thoughts.  
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself  
Was nothing either seen or heard the while  
Which took me from my musings, save that once  
The shepherd's cur did to his own great joy  
Unearth a hedgehog in the mountain-crag,  
Round which he made a barking turbulent.  
This small adventure—for even such it seemed  
In that wild place and at the dead of night—  
Being over and forgotten, on we wound  
In silence as before. With forehead bent  
Earthward, as if in opposition set  
Against an enemy, I panted up  
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts,  
Thus might we wear perhaps an hour away,  
Ascending at loose distance each from each,  
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band—  
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,  
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;  
Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,  
For instantly a light upon the turf  
Fell like a flash. I looked about, and lo,  
The moon stood naked in the heavens, at height  
Immense above my head, and on the shore  
I found myself of a huge sea of mist,  
Which meek and silent rested at my feet.  
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
All over this still ocean, and beyond,  
Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves  
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed

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To dwindle and give up its majesty,  
Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.  
Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this shew  
In single glory, and we stood, the mist  
Touching our very feet; and from the shore  
At distance not the third part of a mile  
Was a blue chasm; a fracture in the vapour,  
A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which  
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams  
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.  
The universal spectacle throughout  
Was shaped for admiration and delight,  
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach  
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,  
That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged  
The soul, the imagination of the whole.