

Oregonauthor.com

Jon Remmerde

707 words

Published in *The Christian Science Monitor*

## Rising with the Rising Moon

Winter days are short 45 degrees north of the equator, in the Blue Mountains of Northeastern Oregon. Dark came long before we were ready to go to bed, and we started our days before the sun came up.

One winter evening, snow fell onto our house, onto the meadow around us, onto the forests and ridges of the Blue Mountains. In the soft yellow light from kerosene lamps, Laura read to Amanda and Juniper, and I wrote at my desk.

Laura went to bed, and Juniper and Amanda and I finished chapter five of *The Wind in the Willows*, our fifth time through. We voted three to zero to go right into chapter six. We had a lovely time in that book about small animals living lives of adventure, and we sat quietly after we finished chapter six.

I said, "It's time for all small animals to be in bed," and Juniper and Amanda squirmed out from either side of me in our old, green, comfortable rocking chair and padded off to bed. I followed them into their room, made sure they had enough blankets, and hugged them goodnight.

I sat at my desk in the back room, and wrote a few more lines. Then I blew out the lamps and watched through our large south windows as our snowstorm with its dark clouds drifted out of Whitney Valley east, across mountain ridges. Stars and the full moon shone brightly and reflected from clean, white snow. With the blanket of clouds gone, the valley got colder fast. Sparse moisture in the air froze to thin crystals and drifted slowly toward the ground. Across the river and across the meadow, by Aspen Spring, coyotes sang to the night.

As enchanted with the beautiful night as I was, I needed to sleep. I checked my daughters' blankets, fed the stoves wood, and climbed into bed and slept.

I woke when Laura got up. I heard Juniper and Amanda laughing and talking happily in moonlight shining in the windows. They

worked on their weekly newspaper for the “Toytown” they had built and peopled with small plastic figures and stuffed toys. I dressed and walked into the kitchen where Laura touched a match to newspaper under kindling in the cook stove. She said, “The moonlight is so bright, we don’t need to light lamps. I guess I stayed up too late. I still feel tired.”

The moon had not moved much since I went to bed. I asked, “What time is it?”

Laura reached into the shadowed cupboard and brought our clock out into moonlight. She laughed. “It’s two o’clock. Nobody gets up at two o’clock in the morning. I only got up because you two were up, out here playing. Why did you get up?”

“It’s time to get up.”

“We’re not sleepy anymore.”

“We don’t need lamps. There’s plenty of light.”

“Did you hear the coyotes singing? I think they’re talking about the moonlight.”

“And how cold it is.”

“It’s morning.”

“It is morning, but just barely.” Laura turned to me. “You get them back to bed and close this stove up. I got up because they were up, and I thought it was morning. I’m going back to bed,” and she went.

I closed the stove. Amanda and Juniper continued their adventure in moonlight. I put on my coat, hat, and gloves and walked out and looked at the thermometer hanging on the front porch. The thermometer only went to 40 below zero, and all the red huddled coldly in the bulb at the bottom. I looked at golden moonlight on deep, clean snow and at the bright moon high above us.

From the timber across the river, I heard “Hoo. Hoo hoo. Hoo hoo hoo” from a great horned owl, then a sudden, sharp explosion that comes when the sap in a tree expands as it freezes solid and bursts the tree. Then silence. I went back in and stood near the living room heater.

Sounds of two small girls playing together faltered and began to sound like tired children playing in the middle of the night. I

shepherded them to bed and climbed into my bed. A morning of sunlight on new snow moved rapidly toward us, and I needed to sleep a while before a bright, new day of adventure woke me.