

# First Light-Conclusion

A moment or two passed before he looked up. Back from his musing he smiled showing those teeth again and stated very quietly;

“When I was just about your age”, he began, “my Dad saw me standing and staring and asked me why I always spent so much time just staring at flowers and rocks and picket fences and, well, at just about everything under the sun”.

“I couldn’t give him a good answer, at first.” Adam mused out loud. “In fact, I didn’t really *know* why I stared so much at everything.”

“I just knew that I was mesmerized, not so much by what I was looking at, but by how the shapes seemed to change as I watched and how the light could make something so simple look so complex just by light making shadows.”

He looked at both Elizabeth and her daughter for a moment and said, “Are you sure you want me to go on? ”

Margaret looked at her Mom and Elizabeth at her and then both turned towards Adam and nodded their heads in unison. As they nodded they both smiled and said at the same time, “Please.” And Elizabeth added, “If you don’t mind. I think we would both love to hear the story.”

The photographer stood up and walked to the brow of the hill where he turned and motioned for them to come stand by him. When they came up beside him he pointed at the next hill and then at the pond down below. He mentioned the way the hills sloped into the pond as though making a bowl where water could stay and then looked directly at Margaret. They stood looking at where he had pointed, puzzled, and then he spoke,

“Look very closely at the way the light shines on the trees

and the pond", he said pointing. " Do you see the way it touches each leaf ever so gently and doesn't leave one of them without some portion of light or shadow?" They looked hard at the trees for a moment and then nodded.

Then he added,"Notice how the light changes so quickly that the eye can't follow the shadows and the ripples on the pond. See how the ripples seem to make the light dance? How the leaves change shape with shadow and then light as they move? This is what I saw in everything as a child. The play of light and shadow." "This is why my father wondered at what I was seeing."

Adam looked down at the ground for a moment then looked back at Mom and daughter.

"When I was a boy I was fascinated by the play of light. No matter where I went or what I was doing I always noticed that light made everything change as the minutes sauntered by. I was struck at how different a pebble seemed to grow its shadow as the sun started to go down and the angle of light got shallower and shallower. What was once just a small piece of stone grew in shadow stature just before the sun left it to the dark. Kind of like a reassurance that after night would follow day and the sun would return."

"Of course the light plays with everything there is. It shines and changes minute to minute during the day. If you bend your mind to recognize the changing light there is no reason to ever have a lack of wonder or be bored."

"You asked me what it is to be a photographer." "A photographers life is one of light and shadow" he began, "When you look at the light and shadow and how it moves and changes you see what a photographer sees." "The beauty of the photographers world is that light and shadow are the miracle that is a photograph."

He looked up as a hawk glided overhead and pointed. "See the

shadow under its wings?" "See how bright the sun is and the light all around and yet the bottom of both wings are in shadow but still catch enough light to be seen with color and shades."

"That", he said, "is reflected light." "The light that hits the earth and is reflected back to the sky and, in turn, lights the wings of the hawk from the bottom,"

He paused as they gazed at the hawk while it flew in lazy circles into the distance leaving the bright blue sky empty for a time as it disappeared over the forest canopy. He turned to them both and said, "This is what I do everyday." "Watch for light and watch for shadow".

Margaret looked up at him and blurted, "But, doesn't that get boring?"

Adam, taken a bit by the surprise of her question, smiled down at her and said, "It would if the light was just light and shadow were just shadow all by themselves, he answered, "but light falls on everything. It defines what everything looks like. It gives everything its form and dimension."

He went on, "If not for light and shadow your Mom and you would look just like two paper dolls lying flat on the table. Instead, he stated, looking at both of them, "you have the pretty shape of your faces and stand in the light letting everyone know that you have shape and substance and are real human beings. This is what a photographer sees. The dimensional shape that only light and shadow can show."

"It is what makes the planet and those beings that walk and grow upon it so very beautiful."

"It is the reason that I had you look at the trees and the way the light played on them and then the water so you would see the ripples dance."

"This is what a photographer is; a person who studies light and how to make a photograph that uses the light to make a subject as pretty as he can."

"Just a minute", he said walking back towards the bench and rummaging in his bag underneath. "Stay right there and I will take a photo of you and your Mom so that, when you look at it, you will remember what I just told you and see precisely what I mean."

He took his camera out and posed Margaret and her Mom against the blue sky holding hands. He walked back a number of paces, turned and said "Smile like a pumpkin!"

They both looked at each other and grinned pumpkin grins and heard the brief click of the shutter.

Adam looked up at Elizabeth and said, "Give me your address and I will send this to you when I get it printed."

It was Friday afternoon two weeks later when Margarets father got home from work at his usual time. The photo promised by Adam had gotten there three days earlier. Elizabeth and Margaret had shown the photo to David who was struck at how simple, yet, beautiful a photo it was. He looked at it long and hard and then asked who had taken such a beautiful photo of them. They told him about meeting a man who said he was a photographer and that he had told them all about light and photography. David looked at them and said that you never know who you will meet when going for a walk.

Elizabeth had framed the photo and placed it on their mantle over the fireplace and looked at it every time she walked through the living room. Margaret kept thinking about the conversation with Adam when she looked at the photograph. Elizabeth had taken Margaret up that hill a time or two since but Adam had not been there so they just looked at the scenery and thought about how the light worked and made everything so beautiful. Margaret had been especially moved when she thought

of Adam and was starting to realize that the more she looked at things with a photographers eye the more realized that she had received an unexpected gift from a man who was really all but a stranger to her and her Mom.

The next Sunday David had gotten the paper when it first came to the door and was drinking a cup of coffee while perusing the news. Until a little 2 inch column caught his eye. He called Elizabeth and asked her what that photographers name was again. Adam she said. He looked at her and drew a breath, "Was he an older man?" he asked in a low voice. Elizabeth stiffened and answered, "Yes, not elderly but he was and older gentleman. Why?" She hadn't had to ask, she merely had to look at the expression on David's face. "Says here that a photographer by the name of Adam Scanlon died after a short illness and that he had no next of kin." Tears welled up in Elizabeth's eyes and she started to sob. "That can't be the same man" she murmured. "There is no way that that can possibly be the Adam we met!"

David looked at her and shrugged. At the same moment there came a knock at the door. David, seeing that Elizabeth was in no shape to greet neighbors got up to answer the door. When he got to the door and opened it there was nobody there. Just a box wrapped in brown paper and tied ever so delicately with oiled brown string. It only was addressed to Margaret with no return address on it. David bent over, grasped it by the string and brought it inside and set it on the dining room table. "Package for Margaret", he called to Elizabeth. At that moment Margaret was coming down the stairs in her fuzzy slippers and pink robe rubbing the sleep from her eyes. When she came into the dining room she spied the package and yawned, "Who got a present?"

Not knowing who it was from David and Elizabeth came over to her, thought twice about telling her the sad news, and Elizabeth said, "We don't know but it's addressed to you."

Margaret was as surprised as her folks because it wasn't her birthday and she didn't know who would send her a package. "Can I open it?" she asked. "I'll give you a hand", said her Dad. Opening it was very easy. The knot of the string was expertly and meticulously tied and almost fell open at a mere tug.

Inside was a cardboard box with only a name on it. Printed in black felt tip were the words "For Margaret-Remember the Light."

That was all it said but Margaret almost burst with joy because the only person she had ever spoken to about light was Adam, the old photographer. She pulled on the tape and looked inside. There, wrapped in soft paper were two boxes. She opened the smaller one first; a lens. The second one she already was sure was a camera; it was. Not a cheap little camera. A really heavy good camera. Underneath was a card with a few lines of writing on it. The card said:

***"Margaret, please accept this gift and may it bring light to all you see and do." Adam.***

The letters were neatly and succinctly printed. The handwriting of a perfectionist.

It was the next day when David and Elizabeth told Margaret the sad news. There were tears all around as the import of a chance meeting imprinted itself on all their minds.

The night before she and her Dad had sat down to figure out how the camera worked. As Elizabeth had headed off for bed that night she said that tomorrow morning, the morning of the news, she was going to take her first picture with that camera.

The next morning, when the tears had stopped and the sun cleared the tree outside, a beam of light came through the window and washed over the photo of her and her Mom with a

sweet golden light. Margaret ran and got here new camera and took her first picture with her new camera.

Elizabeth grew up, as little girls do, and went to college and became, what else, a photographer. On a table in her apartment in San Francisco sits a framed photo of a beam of light through a window. Under the photograph is a card which simply says:

***“First Light-Adams Light”.***

(To my daughter, Jennifer and my mother, Margaret Elizabeth Crowe. Love you always.)

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## **First Light-One**

I had a major health problem which nearly killed me in 2013. After coming home I knew that writing was the solution to how shaky I was then. Weak and not able to drive or fend for myself I dove into this story. It has to do with my daughter and how much I love her.

### **First Light**

It was early morning when Elizabeth awoke. Her husband was already up and gone on a flight to Europe for his business. Carefully, she placed both feet on the floor, stretched, got up and pulled aside the bedroom curtains. She wanted the sun to shine today because today was Margarets 12th Birthday.

Her daughter Margaret was a bright little lass with golden tresses and the sunniest personality that could possibly be for any little girl. She was the apple of her mothers and

fathers eye and she easily reciprocated that apple as she dearly loved her Mom and Dad. And why not? Mom and Dad, his name was David, were two peas in a pod. They were always charming to both Margaret and her friends and met each of life's circumstances, be they good or ill, with a positive and common sense attitude. An attitude which had clearly rubbed off on Margaret. She greeted each day with a smile even when feeling less than well. They were a small and loving family of three with a depth of understanding pertaining to the important aspects of life. Each parent handled adversity with aplomb and a steady hand.

This morning there was to be a special birthday breakfast for Margaret due to her Father being away. It had been decided mutually, by Elizabeth and Margaret, to forego the birthday dinner and party with all the friends and, instead, just do breakfast. Besides, breakfast with her Mom and the whole day open for adventure was better than any silly party. For sure it was!

Elizabeth had fixed a breakfast of pancakes with dollops of blackberry jelly and huge pats of butter making a buttery, blackberry mess that was absolutely delectable to Margaret. Elizabeth thought, *Well, once in a blue moon I think it's Ok.*

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## **First Light- two**

Breakfast done, they made ready to go for the long walk of the week. Margaret and her Mom walked every day. They had a routine you see. On school days the walks were short, with rapid steps around the block where they lived. They would chatter about the important items to follow on the day and those things that Moms and daughters talk about within the

confidence of females. Little things like a boy that Elizabeth liked and Mom's thoughts of life, raising a daughter like Margaret and teaching the little girl some of the fun things that she could look forward to as she grew to womanhood. On weekends, Saturday especially, the walks were long and uphill to a bench in the local state park. There was a bench there which overlooked a pond 200 feet below the brow of the hill formed where the bottoms of all the hills sloped gently together. At the bottom they met to form a little bowl of sweet, clear water. From their house on Olive street the walk was almost a mile and a half. The uphill section was reasonably steep and it required a brief rest, and a lot more talk, when they got to the bench to sit, enthralled by the beautiful view they knew they would have. The day was, to put it mildly, the most gorgeous day of the year thus far. The sun's touch was warm but not yet hot. The breeze that blew was gentle, cool and refreshing. As David, Margaret's Father said, it was a 'great day to be a flower'. A truth that was never easier to believe than on a morning such as this.

As they walked they greeted neighbors and folks riding bicycles who passed with a special wave to Grandma Dolores who was, by nature, the neighborhood Grandma. Dolores was the chicken soup and fresh biscuits Mom that everyone loved. Loved for her demeanor, grace and rock-hard common sense. If anyone deserved a special wave it was Dolores.

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## **First Light-Three**



Immediately after Dolores' house was the start of the uphill portion of the walk. It was dirt road, firetrail actually, mixed with small stones with a nice border of wild yellow-green grass and poppies of purple and orange. At the top of the steep climb the trail meandered on, curving through the oaks and bays of the old woods that harbored both rascal squirrels and screeching crows accented by the flash of deep-blue of raucous scrub jays. But before anyone got to the winding trail through the woods at the top some smart man or woman had decided the trail needed a bench for folks to sit on after the climb for rest and, perhaps, a little "mind-wandering" while sitting, basking in the sun-dappled shade. Especially while looking at the beautiful view of rolling oak filled woods down to a 6 acre pond of blue.

When Margaret and Elizabeth came over the brow of the hill they could see that there was a man already sitting on the bench. He was what one might call a "tweener"; not yet elderly but getting there. He looked up at them and smiled with a friendly wave and moved to one end of the bench so that they could sit. This they did and, as they sat, they saw that the man had a kind of rucksack sitting at the other end of the bench. Attached to the rucksack was a photographic tripod so they guessed he might be a photographer. And that he was.

As they sat there Margaret screwed up the courage to ask the man his name and what the bag was for. He answered, "Well, let's see, first, my name is Adam, yep, and I am a photographer and in that bag are the tools of my trade."

"Oh, and a bottle of the best water on earth; the water from the well at my home."

Margaret and Elizabeth smiled at Adam and Margaret asked him,

“What is like being a photographer?”

“I mean”, she stammered “What makes you a photographer; your camera?”

After a long pause the old man looked down the oak clad hills toward the pond and took in a deep and considered breath. “That”, he said looking up from the pond toward the sky, “is one tough question.”

He looked down at Margarets upturned face and then over to Elizabeth and said with a smile, “How much time do you have for me to *try* to answer that?”

Elizabeth smiled and Margaret had that puzzled look with wrinkled nose that little girls sometimes get when they are about to delve into deep deliberations concerning life; as they understand it.

“I don’t know, exactly” said Margaret. “How long would it take?”

She turned and looked questioningly at her Mom and Elizabeth quietly looked at Adam, nodding her head and said in a quiet voice, “I think we can make some time. After all, we are just on a walk together and this sounds like something we would both love to hear”. She looked up and gave Adam a knowing look. He smiled expansively showing that wise smile and whispered to Margaret, “It’s been a long time since anyone asked me so intelligent a question”. “Where should I begin?”

He seemed to be asking the question of himself even though looking at Margaret and Elizabeth. His mind started back to some salient time when he actually realized that he would be a photographer.

Now, when a person of Adams age starts looking back it is much like a librarian putting books back on shelves where they belong that readers had left lying on the desks and tables of

an old library. Books full of knowledge needed sorting exactly right so that each book the librarian has to replace on the shelves is placed in a orderly and exact manner. Much like a minds "Dewey Decimal system". Each memory alphabetized and numbered with dates ascending or descending depending on which one went where and which category it needed to reside in.