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Cold Mountain by David M. Valadez

There is a Ch'an (Zen) passage that contains the following line:
"Kung Tzu says: Only in the winter do we come to appreciate the pine trees of Cold Mountain."

To me, this line talks about the capacity to endure. Looking to Nature for Life's lessons, the author takes note of the pine tree's capacity to remain evergreen throughout the seasons - including the harsh winters of Cold Mountain. As budoka we all have our own winters. There is the winter of busy days, the winter of injury, the winter of emotional duress, and the winter of mental and physical fatigue. Like the pine tree that remains steadfast in its purpose throughout the changing seasons, even shaking the snow of winter off its limbs and letting it gather at its roots so it can quench its thirst, we too must stand upon and above our own trials and tribulations - remaining steadfast in our pursuit to embody the virtues of Budo.

We must find the endurance to stand above our own winters so that they too may come to nourish us as well. We must forever burn a forging fire within ourselves - a fire with which we will shape the precious material of Self. We must forever temper this material with the three waters of sweat, tears, and blood. Moreover, we must forever remain unshakable in the knowledge that the mat is Budo's most fertile soil. The pine trees of Cold Mountain show us that to endure is to remain steadfast, and to be steadfast is to remain. We should always take the value of endurance to heart.

The path to Cold Mountain is long, visible only to hindsight, and at times lonely.
But from its heights water tastes fresher, the moon shines brighter, and the eye sees further.

Along the path, should you feel tired, rest under the shady pine trees.

Cling not to your last step.

Worry not about your next step.

Walk

Endure.

