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Topic: How Courage Looks as I Age or Home

## Home Is Where The Hurt Is

“Home is the starting place of love, hope and dreams.” “There is nothing more important than a good, safe, secure home.”

Sunrise in the Sangre de Christo Mountains comes with a streak of deep red across the peaks, moving from left to right. I look out the window and think that it surely resembles the blood of Christ, blessing me with a glorious morning. The bedroom windows in my home in Westcliffe, Colorado, have no blinds or curtains; giving me an unobstructed view of the blazing spectacle. Our house is on a 50 acre plot, with no close neighbors and no need for artificial privacy. It is open range out here, and our neighbors' white-faced cattle enjoy our front yard, while a herd of buffalo, looking solemn and prehistoric, graze out back. Certified a dark sky city, Westcliffe's night sky is as breathtaking as the morning. Each day we hike up trails that rise thousands of rocky feet to a series of lakes carved out by ancient glaciers. This is my mountain home, and is as peaceful and safe as any that I have known.

Westcliffe is a weekend home and retreat. On a Monday morning I am back at the Boulder County Justice Center and staring at several emergency messages about a temporary custody hearing set for that afternoon. Five boys and two girls have been removed from their home that weekend. It is alleged that the boys have molested their sisters, and there is physical evidence available. I have known this family for years and, unfortunately, am not surprised. No one is going home soon. As I stand in the hall and wait for the hearing to begin, one of the caseworkers takes me aside. “It broke my heart,” she says, “that when I arrived at the home Catherine, the older girl, raised her hand and said, “I’ll try out for foster care.” There were no tears as she held my hand and left the house.

A safe and secure home is a rather nebulous concept for children in the foster care system. Bobby, at 9 months of age, has a shunt in his head after being slammed against the side of a sink by a father who was irritated by his crying. Sammy, age 3 years, gets in my car when I visit him and insists on coming home with me. It is flattering but does not bode well for further attachment. His foster mother said he keeps a list of all of the people that have left him in his short life. Tiffany's father keeps a bottle of beer in the cupholder of her stroller as he wheels her down the Boulder mall.

I see them all as I look at the Sangre de Cristo sunrise; all of the beautiful children in desperate need of a good, safe and secure home. T.S. Eliot says that "home is where one starts from." We all long for home, a safe place where we can be ourselves and not be questioned. A place where we can have a second chance. Many of us, the lucky ones, assume that we will have such a place. I hope with all my heart that these children, that all our children, can some day find their safe home as well.