

# Everyday Marvels

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Duality is a theme that is found in all aspects of life. Coins have two sides. Computers communicate through ones and zeroes. Sometimes when you read between the lines a little bit, you can find duality in places you never would have thought to look. Even my experiences in life can be split into two distinct categories. Everything I see on a day-to-day basis is a technological marvel. But on the other side of the coin, in my spare time I enjoy going out into nature to get away from all the steel and concrete. Experiencing two different sides of life has left me with a healthy respect for both worlds.

Working as a mechanic on Staten Island, I've come in contact with some amazing pieces of technology. Everything I touch is some sort of lightweight metal alloy, or a high impact plastic. I've worked on everything from a flawless Mercedes from the 1940s, to a 2019 Tesla Model S, to a rusty 2002 Toyota Camry that was so filthy I almost refused to get into it. When I come home from work, my sister complains that I smell like metal and burnt rubber. For the last six months I've had to walk through a minimum of two construction sites on my way to work. The amount of seemingly impossible tasks I see my coworkers accomplish with ease using a specialty tool, or a certain computer program, is astounding. I knew a man who was so talented that he was able to chop cars in half and reattach them without any heavy machinery. I've been the "new guy" at my shop since I started there, even though I've been there longer than some of my coworkers. It's mostly because of my age, since I don't have the same amount of experience as other people. Luckily, I learn quickly, and they usually only have to explain things to me once. I know how to cut through steel and I know exactly how hard you have to hit aluminum for it to crack. My hands are scarred from my mistakes, but I'm more focused on my accomplishments.

There's more to life than technology and large cities. I've also hiked six hours up a mountain just so I could catch a glimpse of what life would look like without a strip mall, parking lot, or apartment building in sight. The mountain was named the Giant of the Valley, but most people just called it Giant Mountain. Its name definitely did it justice. It stood tall above the other peaks in the area. From the top, the giant basins below that catch the mountain's runoff rainwater looked like puddles. You could see the shade from the clouds as they passed over the rest of the Adirondack mountains in the distance. Giant was so tall that, as I pushed myself to the top, I began to notice patches of trees where there was a noticeable gap in the thorough woods. When I started to look closer, I noticed that the trees had burst and been debarked as they fell because they had been struck by lightning. This became too common to be ignored as I approached the summit. I had never climbed a mountain that high before. My longest hike before the Giant was only about 45 minutes.

This past summer, I went on three hikes with my brothers, each one with some particular goal, or challenge for us. But even with challenges, the time we spend on our hikes doesn't feel like a competition. It isn't us versus the mountain. I enjoy exploring these places and seeing how different life could have been for us if it wasn't for plastic and steel alloys.

When I made it to the top of the world, without an elevator, that's when I noticed the real split in my worldview, and my experience in life. After experiencing one of the busiest and largest cities in the world, and experiencing nature in a rough and definitive way, I've grown to admire both. With a healthy admiration for two halves of the same world, I feel as though the world is a fuller place, and I could never pick a side.