

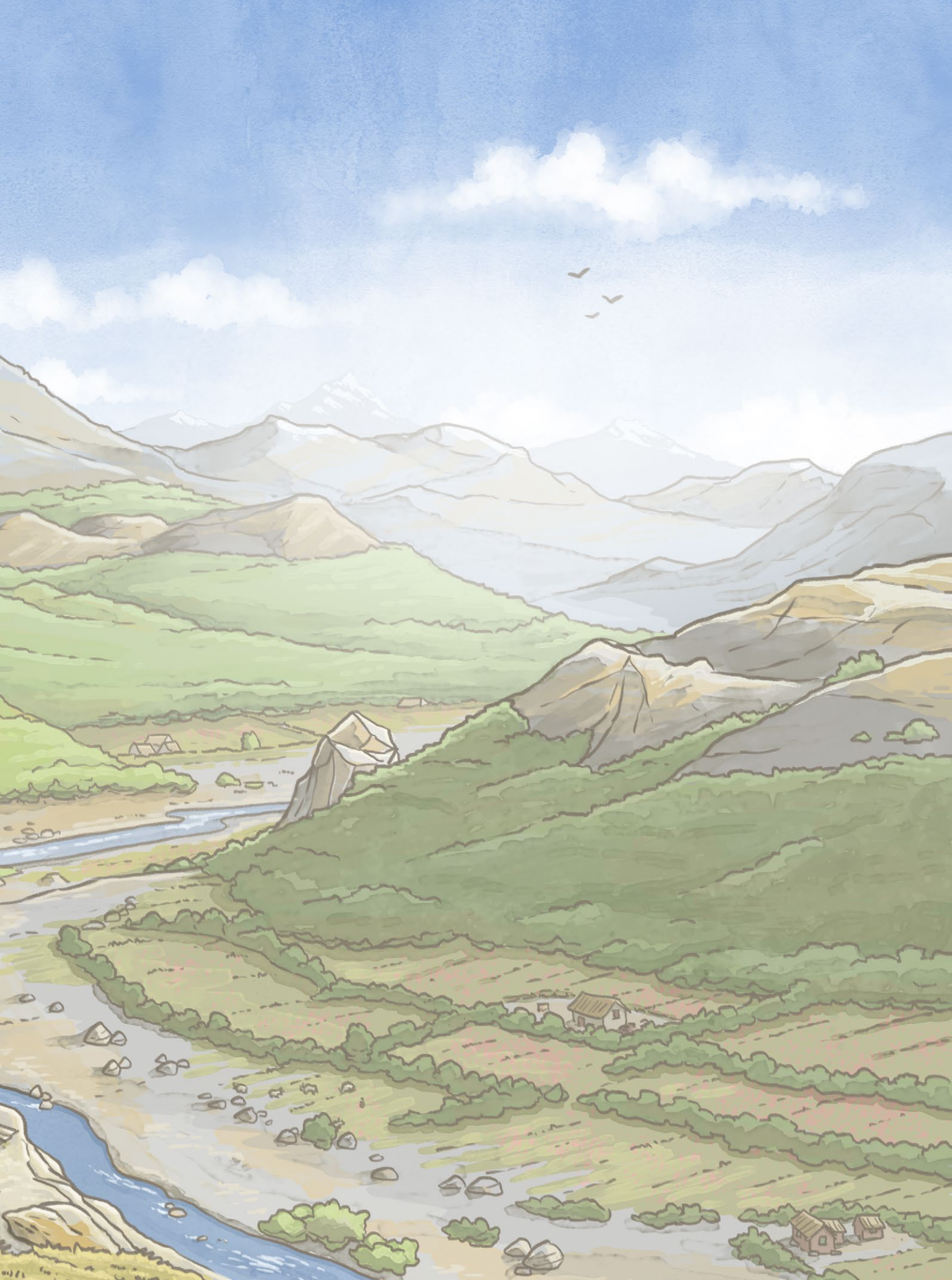
A TWINKL ORIGINAL

# The Man Who Bought a

# MOUNTAIN







First published 2020 by Twinkl Ltd.  
197 Ecclesall Road, Sheffield S11 8HW

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# The Man Who Bought a Mountain



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# One

“Everyone: stick together, look out for each other and stay on the trail, please. The path is really rocky and steep. It’s mostly uphill from here – but I suppose you’d all guessed that! As the elders say, the longest journey begins with a single step.”

Yash finished his speech and smiled at the weather-beaten faces looking back at him. He had spoken loudly and clearly to the group of nine men and women, most of whom shuffled from foot to foot, adjusting huge rucksacks as they listened.

“Jeez! How old is this kid, eleven?” muttered one man towards the back.

“Actually, I’m twelve.” Yash gritted his teeth.

*Twelve years living at the base of this mountain, he thought to himself, compared with the twelve hours since you got off the plane.*

A wise voice then echoed in his head.

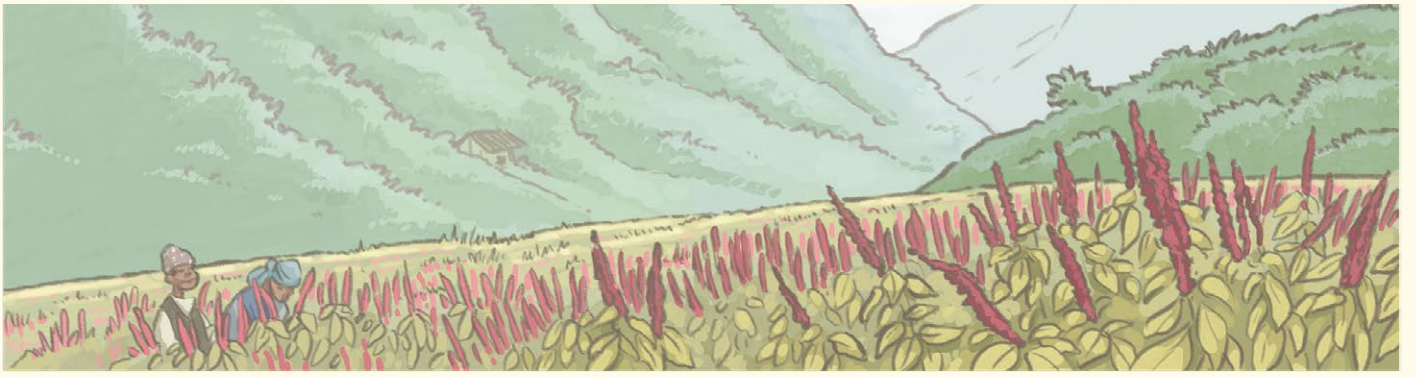
*Always be welcoming to friends but be even more welcoming to visitors.*

He forced another smile and then fastened his rarely brushed brown hair into a messy knot with a plain elasticated band which he took from his wrist. “Right, follow me. It’s a few hours to the base camp. The Jagurdwa mountain is home to thousands of different species of animals and plants...”

Yash began his ritual of information and storytelling as he led the trek. He weaved his familiar route through the fields of amaranth crops, up a steep slope and past the Spring of Hope, where clear, cool ground water pooled gently before tumbling down the mountain rocks.

The area around the Spring of Hope always reminded him how much new life came from even the tiniest nooks and crannies on the vast





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Jagurdwa mountain. Cracks and crevices along the side of the steep path were home to beetles and spiders and, behind the waterfall, a damp, shallow cave served as a perfect hiding place for other small creatures who preferred the darkness. The river that cascaded from here with its streams and pools provided homes for fish and other creatures, and food for people.

Some visitors squealed or jumped in fright at the sight of the many animal species living on the mountain slopes, but Yash loved to see them and took pleasure in trying to identify one set of distinguishing features from another. He knew that some animals lived only in this mountain region and nowhere else.

The group wound their way along the rocky track which led to the path of yaks. Yash's scratched and faded boots glided deftly over each section of the rough ground. With his right hand, he gripped a finely crafted stick made by his grandfather. The tip of it reached shoulder height and he planted it into the ground with every alternate footstep. Yash knew this – and every – path up the mountain like the back of his hand, and he adored every inch of the familiar landscape.

Behind him trudged the group, each kitted out with walking boots and hats and weighed down with their heavy bags. Sometimes, the groups were chatty and asked lots of questions; sometimes, they marched silently as though they had been sent as a punishment. Thankfully, this lot seemed like a fairly interesting bunch.

Several hours and two short stops later, he had delivered most of his repertoire.

“Some people believe that the mountains were created by the gods. They point to the skies, see?” Yash extended an arm up towards the nearby peaks that were visible around them as they climbed. “Lots of our people believe that they are sacred and a way for us to get closer to the gods.”

With that, he showed a final flourish of energy, dashing to greet his uncle, Ranj, as they arrived at their destination. At eye level, the sight

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was little more than a colourful array of dome-shaped tents pitched on some flat, rocky ground. It looked like alien pods had landed on a moonscape. Above was the most breathtaking view – the one which always drew gasps from the visitors when they first rounded the corner approaching base camp. All around, jagged mountain peaks pointed skyward, stretching their cold fingers towards the clouds. Straight ahead, the highest tip of the Jagurdwa rose above them all.

“They’re all yours,” Yash said to his uncle.

“A good group?” he asked, out of earshot.

“Pretty good, Uncle,” Yash replied. “Not too fit – but we’ve seen worse!”

They shared a laugh between them before the first of the group caught up and was slowly followed by the rest, who were sweating and breathing heavily.

“Here we are,” Yash announced. “Your base camp for the evening. My uncle, Ranj, will lead you on the next part of your trek up the Jagurdwa first thing in the morning. Have a safe trip! I’ll see you again in a couple of days.”

With that, Yash began to wander back down the beaten track towards the village. On the way, he detoured, as he often did, to visit the wise sage who lived in a remote spot on the mountainside. He had lived in the small wooden hut for as long as Yash could remember (and, he supposed, much longer than that).

Everyone knew the sage. Children were taught about his sayings; adults sought his advice for help on anything important. When the drought had withered all the villagers’ crops, the sage had been there; when the river had burst its banks and destroyed many homes, the sage had been there. Each time the village needed guidance, to the sage was where the elders turned. Yash wondered if there was anything that the sage didn’t know. He knew and kept even more of the mountain’s secrets than Yash did, and his words always brought inspiration.

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Yash found Guru Oluko sitting silently in his rickety home, well hidden from the tourist trekking route. His wrinkly eyes were closed.

Yash studied him silently for a moment. A few wisps of grey hair on his mostly smooth, bald head fluttered slightly in the breeze that billowed through the tiny cabin. Yash had no idea how old the sage was, and had never been brave enough to ask him.

“Hello, Yashaswin.” The voice startled Yash.

“Hey, G. How did you know it was me?”

“No one else tiptoes in at this time. And no one else calls me ‘G’.”

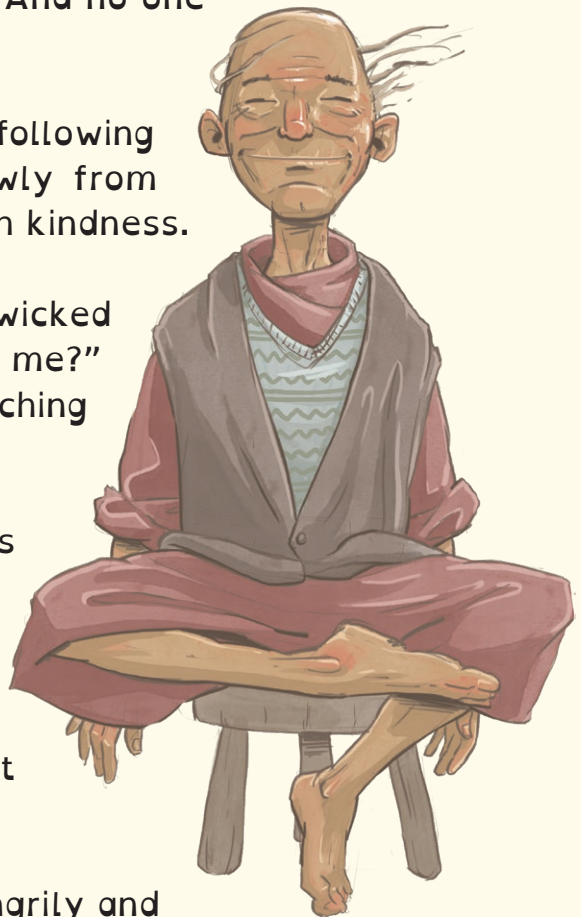
The sage opened one eye at a time, following this with a smile which spread slowly from cheek to cheek. His face glowed with kindness.

Then, suddenly, his smile became a wicked grin. “Now, what have you brought me?” he asked, scouring Yash with searching eyes.

Yash sighed and turned out his pockets. “Not much,” he admitted. “A couple of boiled sweets and something called ‘mint cake’.” He pulled out a handful of sweet treats, donated to him by the past week’s tourists.

Unblinking, the sage reached out hungrily and took the meagre offerings. Turning each sweet over in his hands, he investigated them all with the innocent bliss of a child inspecting his marble collection.

As Guru Oluko began to unwrap a mint humbug, Yash cleared his throat.



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“So, what’s new, G?”

As usual, there wasn’t anything new but Yash was sure that there would still be a story to hear. He helped himself to a steaming mug of tea as a few lively flames licked at the bottom of a well-worn saucepan, precariously balanced over the fire near the entrance to the hut.

The sound of the trickling stream nearby reminded Yash that almost everything the sage had, including this tea, came from the mountain. It was no wonder, thought Yash, that he was so fascinated by the sugary delicacies brought up the mountain by travellers; his was an uncomplicated lifestyle that many in the huge cities dreamed of, away from the noise and confusion of modern life. He tucked his legs underneath himself on a rough blanket as he sipped the warm drink. The wise sage spoke softly, sucking all the while on his boiled sweet, and they talked for a time.

“Can you remember how old the mountain is?” Guru Oluko asked.

“Millions of years. You’ve told me that before, you know.”

“It is true, Yashaswin. Millions of years of history lie beneath your feet.”

“But how did the mountain get here, G? Does anyone really know that?”

“It is a good question to ask, Yashaswin. Ask a man of science and he will tell you about the plates in the Earth’s crust colliding fiercely together, causing the land to buckle and rise...”

Yash complemented the sage’s description by motioning with his outstretched hands, bringing his fingertips together and then pushing them upwards, adding sound effects for good measure. “Boosh!”

“...but ask a man of spirituality and he’ll tell you of the gods fashioning a higher sacred place for the ancient people to become closer to their creators – a pathway to the heavens.”

“So, which one is true?”

“Many people believe different things, Yashaswin... but some things are certain. The mountain has both beauty and power. It is greater and older than us all, and it has an aura of majesty. It will take from you but it will also give great rewards. Do not concern yourself with moving mountains, for the mountains will move you.”

Silently, Yash thought for a moment on the sage’s words.

*Do not concern yourself with moving mountains, for the mountains will move you.*

It didn’t seem to make any sense and Yash gazed out across the drifting cloud shapes as his mind wandered, distracted by the views. In the distance, snowy peaks were attempting to edge higher than each other into the sky. The overlapping mountain sides sloped away and, even further below, the tops of the great trees looked tiny.

“Oh no, look how low the sun is!” he blurted, jumping to his feet. “I have to go, otherwise I’ll have a miserable herd of chauries wondering where their evening feed is.”

Smiling, Guru Oluko reached out one bony hand, as he always did. He deposited a small parcel, wrapped in leaves and tied with string, into Yash’s palm. “Take this to our friend on your way home, if you would, Yashaswin.”

Yash waved as he skipped away along the rocky path.

# TWO

There were no more scheduled groups for the following few days, which was rare for the Jagurdwa during the summer trekking season. Usually, people would arrive from cities and countries all over the world, wanting to explore somewhere new. Mostly, they would say how surprised they were at the calm and peaceful surroundings and compare them with all their cars and buildings and crowds of people.

Yash was always kept busy between treks, tending the crops, looking after the cattle and helping out his mother in many other ways. Yash's mother was a tremendous cook and he took every opportunity to assist her while she mixed up steaming pots of lentil soup and juicy, meat-filled dumplings. His favourite chore was making cheese from yak's milk, as he often came away with a small chunk of the smoky, nutty cheese to suck on during his hours labouring in the fields.

While he worked, he often pondered over the strange phrase that the sage had left him with during his last visit.

*Do not concern yourself with moving mountains, for the mountains will move you.*

Days later, Yash was no closer to understanding the sage's meaning.

The villagers were spread across miles of Jagurdwa mountain foothills and the lower slopes, connected by long, dusty paths and uneven roads. Passing one expanse of farmland and fields led to another small collection of homes, then wide open spaces linking to the next gathering. Even spread so far apart, most of the villagers knew each other by name. It was a community like one enormous family. Jagurdwa mountain farmers could trade crops with each other and everyone made their living, in one way or another, from the mountain; they felt its presence looking over them as it towered up into the sky.

Spread around over many hectares, each part of the villagers' farmland seemed to have different conditions and therefore suited

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to a different purpose. Land in the foothills was usually hotter and drier. Higher up, there was more rainfall and moisture. A patchwork of habitats boasted a variety of plants and animals in different locations. Higher still was the treeline where it became colder and nothing more would grow.

On a particularly blustery day, Yash was feeding his family's cattle. The grazing land, which stretched up a gentle incline from Yash's home, lay in the shadow of the bamboo forest. The trails of the forest had a mysterious, magical feeling and were shrouded by a canopy of green. At the edge, the path opened out and led to the wide open pasture spaces where their home nestled among surrounding peaks and slopes.

"Ah, there you are, Yash," called a voice across the dry land of the field. "We have a late booking for a group arriving this afternoon."

Yash stood up from the water trough and looked at Bhubakta, one of the village elders, who had brought the announcement.

*Always show respect for your elders, Yashaswin.*

"This afternoon?" he replied, as calmly as he could. "Will there be enough time to reach the camp before dusk?"

"You'll get them there, I'm sure," smiled Bhubakta. "They are important men and women. Show them your kindness."

Yash dusted off his dirty hands on the sides of his shirt and sighed. In less than ten minutes, he had topped up the water and food and was striding off to the meeting point where most of the trekking groups were dropped off. Dancing over rocks of every size, Yash skirted across the bamboo bridge and joined the mountain path as it zigzagged its way to his destination.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen!" he announced breathlessly, with a beaming smile. Right on time, too.



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The seven-strong group consisted of four men and three women, all with shiny sunglasses and almost-as-shiny boots. All were busily strapping on matching packs, which all looked brand new. Every man and woman was wearing a thin, black earpiece in one ear which, Yash thought, made them look a little like robots. One or two carried small devices with large screens and were tapping away furiously upon them.

The battered local mountain truck which had transported them sped noisily away, belching smoke into the distance.

“Welcome to the Jagurdwa Mountain! I hope that you’ve had a good trip so far. There’s some important information to tell you before we start our trek.”

There was a bellow. “Excuse me, young man! Where’s our actual guide?”

The gravelly voice grated on Yash’s last nerve as he resisted the instinct to roll his eyes. “Well, sir, I’ll be guiding you to the base camp. I’ve guided many groups before. I know this area really well.”

“D’you hear that, fellas?” the man laughed, his pink cheeks jiggling up and down. “This little boy is taking us up that huge mountain!”

Like infant chimps gathered around a troop leader, the men and women all joined in with the laughter. The pink-faced man took off his hat and pushed some straggling, greasy hairs away from his forehead. He took out a slim, silver mobile phone and shaded his eyes to peer into the screen.

“Well, I won’t be taking you all the way up the mountain,” Yash corrected him. “As I said, I’ll lead you to the base camp, where you’ll spend tonight. My uncle, Ranj, will prepare you for the next part of your trek. We must get moving, though. It gets dark pretty quickly.”

Grumbling murmurs were exchanged between a couple of members of the group. Unhurriedly, they began to move off behind Yash in the direction of the amaranth fields. They had trudged little more than a

few hundred metres before the same man spoke up again.

“Is this the quickest route?” his voice boomed.

“Yes, sir.”

Around the narrow winding path and up the steep slope, they approached the Spring of Hope. Yash loved the view from here, even though they still had a long way to go. The air tasted cleaner and you could sense the clouds beginning to shroud the mountainside. Smaller peaks in the mountain range were poking through the mist. It was such a delight to look down on tall trees from above. His eyes followed the edge of the forest to where it met the fields and farmland. A few tiny wooden buildings on the edge of the village were dotted around like toy houses. He paused for a moment and breathed deeply, before his peaceful moment was cut short by a loud voice.

“...and I don't care what the mayor's man says! Offer him three million and no more.”

Yash wheeled around, confused. The pink-faced man was dawdling behind the rest of the group, conversing loudly into his mobile phone. The group of men and women reached the small outcrop on which Yash stood, and paused to admire the view. Many of them removed their earpieces to listen to the running water which burbled near their feet. Yash smiled briefly at the looks on their faces.

“...if he doesn't like it, tell him I'll put that money into running against him in the next election. See how he likes that! Hah!” The large man stabbed at the screen with his thumb and pushed himself up the last few feet towards the group. Rather than take in the view, he fixed his gaze on Yash. “Boy, is there not another truck or something to drive us to this base camp?”

Yash paused and cast his eyes along the narrow, rocky path – it was barely wide enough to fit a wheelbarrow, let alone a truck.

“No, sir. You can't get there by road.”

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The mountain goats always frequented the next section. As steadily as the trees seemed to grow sideways from the rocky edge, the goats clung to the stones like they had magnetic feet. A wall of rock on the left-hand side of the path contrasted with a sheer unprotected drop on the right. The sound of rushing water signalled that they were almost at the waterfall ahead.

Some of the group sped up, keen to see more wonders of the mountain. Many of the earpieces, portable screens and blinking gadgets had been stowed away, now. Yash marvelled, as usual, at the power that the mountain had to amaze people and take them out of their small worlds for a short while.



“...I’m not interested in *how* you do it, just make it happen! I don’t want to hear the word ‘can’t’, do you understand me?”

The loud voice ripped through the natural sounds of the mountainside once more, and Yash glanced back to see the large man’s mobile phone clamped to the side of his face yet again. He was struggling to keep up with the group and maintain his conversation, especially in places where the walkers needed to use both hands to navigate parts of the path.

A rickety wooden bridge came into view, which crossed the rushing waters below. It was only wide enough to move in single file while holding the worn, rope handrail on each side. Yash stood aside politely to let the group go first, ready to bring up the rear, and the first walkers stepped forwards tentatively. When most of the group had crossed, he stepped onto the planks himself.

“Oh, this is ridiculous!” came a shout from behind him.

Yash recognised the voice. He spun round to address the man, who stood at the edge of the path and whose wide face and bulbous nose had both now turned from pink to more of a beetroot red.

“Hold,” the man barked at the person on the other end of the phone. He stuffed his mobile phone into his pocket and stepped onto the bridge unsteadily.

Yash sighed. “It’s not ridiculous, sir. It’s a mountain. It’s steep. It’s narrow.”

“It’s a joke! You expect us to clamber over this wretched thing like cattle? Disgraceful!”

Watching the rest of the group climbing off the bridge ahead of them, Yash seethed, “You don’t climb the Jagurdwa mountain because it is easy, *sir*, you climb it because it is *hard*. If you can’t manage this part, how d’you think you’re going to reach the summit section?”



Someone gasped. The rest of the group stood and stared, silently. The large man, joining Yash in the centre of the swaying bridge, lifted his shoulders so that his chest puffed out like a bullfrog's. He breathed in deeply through his nose and then took a single menacing stride towards Yash.

"Now listen here, young man. Don't you know who I am?" His voice was a dangerous rumble.

Inside, Yash felt a quiver of fear but he wouldn't let it show. Looking up into the man's eyes, he stood his ground. "No, I don't know you who you are, actually. I just know that you're holding up the whole group by complaining."

The man scrunched up his face and held Yash's gaze, unblinking. The bridge creaked and water continued to charge past underneath their feet.

"I'll have you know," he began, his huge face wobbling with suppressed fury, "that my name is Theodore J. Goldlaw." He stuck out his chin with pride at the sound of his own name. "I am one of the richest men you're ever likely to meet, lad. *No one* speaks to me like that."

*People may not arrive with kind thoughts, Yashaswin, but consider it your mission to make sure that they depart with them.*

Yash inhaled through his nose and counted slowly as he breathed out. As he reached five, he opened his mouth to speak, deliberately softening his tone.

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean to sound rude. Where I come from, we are taught to respect the mountain. It gives us food and shelter and it is home to thousands of living species. It affects our whole climate and, in turn, what we can grow on the land. It is really special to our people."

His knuckles white on the rope handrail and blotches of red spreading to his ears and neck, Theodore J. Goldlaw looked disapprovingly

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at Yash for a moment. Perhaps he was deciding how to react, or perhaps he was just taking a couple more rasping breaths before attempting to continue.

“Well... apology accepted. We’ve all come a long way, so let’s give this one more try, shall we?”

The pair walked in silence to the end of the bridge. On solid ground, the man marched past Yash and pulled out his mobile phone once more, mopping his brow with a handkerchief. The smell of his sweat lingered behind slightly longer than the rest of him. Off they traipsed, following the path towards base camp.

\*

“What – an – *idiot!*” Yash announced as he flung himself onto the layers of blankets draped on the corner chair.

He had deposited most of Mr Goldlaw’s group at the base camp but, due to the late arrival, had been forced to stay with Uncle Ranj for the night before returning home the following morning.

“Yash! Please say nothing at all, unless you have something nice to say,” his mother scolded.

“You know what he did? That ‘Goldlaw’ guy?” Yash continued. “*First*, he complained about absolutely everything. *Then*, he turned around before he even got to base camp because there was no signal for his mobile phone. He made the truck come back and pick him up from the meeting point! And – you won’t believe it – *and*, he said that he’s here because he wants to buy the mountain so he can make it more ‘tourist-friendly’! Can you believe it? *Buy the mountain!*”

“Yash...” began his father, who was reading in a chair by the fire.

“Who does he think he is? He thinks he can come here and *buy* the mountain? All the land around here has been owned by our ancestors for generations. He doesn’t understand the beauty or the power of

our land or how important or sacred it is. How *dare* he?"

"Well, he is a very rich man..." his father said softly.

"Rich? Who cares if he's rich? He's rubbish at trekking and he's lazy –"

"Yash!" His mother's mouth pursed.

"– and it doesn't matter if you're rich or not. You can't just buy a mountain if it's not for sale."

"As I was saying," continued his father, "money can make a difference. It's well known that many of the villagers have been struggling. Maybe it would be for the best if Mr Goldaw paid the locals for their land. The Council of Elders would have to consider things very carefully."

Yash stared at his father for an age. When he managed to speak, his voice was a hoarse whisper. "You can't be serious? What about the farm? The mountain is our life. It can't be sold!"



# Three

When the Council of Elders called an urgent meeting the following week, Yash paid little attention as he was far too busy with the goats, which wandered over his grandfather's land near a little stream, and the chauries on his mother's land. Of the two herds, he preferred the goats. Chauries and yaks were a bit moody sometimes, probably because of all that boring, dry land they grazed on lower down, where the slope became a little flatter. At least the yaks had their long fur to make them look friendlier. The chauries were all stretched skin on lumpy-looking bone, droopy mouths and heavy eyelids.

When the villagers talked of being present for a second meeting not long afterwards, however, Yash grew more suspicious. As he crept to the ramshackle village meeting hall and heard the shouts from the small crowd that spilled out of the doors, his mouth dropped open.

"You can't sell the land! It's *our* mountain. It's sacred. Our ancestors have lived here and farmed on this land for generations!" he yelled over the top of the raucous noise.

"Yash, what are you doing here?" asked his uncle Ranj, shocked.

"That man's an idiot! You mustn't allow it to be sold. He will ruin it, whatever he does. The farmland is all around the slopes and foothills and the mountainside. We could lose it all."

"Yash," interrupted his uncle. "The elders have met. They have consulted the sage. Mr Goldlaw is offering a lot of money to buy the land which we all own. No one wants this, but it's too much money to be able to refuse. Maybe Mr Goldlaw's plans will attract more tourists and we can focus on leading treks rather than farming. It could be good for us all."

Yash stamped his foot. Why wouldn't anyone listen to him? There was something not right about that man and he hated the thought of him owning the land on which all of the community lived. What was he up to?

Yash pushed his way into the building, under the arms and between the knees of the crowd. At the front of the room, the meeting was becoming rowdy. There were moans and grunts from many people who disagreed with the elders' vote. Yash spotted his mother and father stood close to the elders' table. His mother shot him a trademark glare as he emerged at the front of the crowd. Bhubakta, who sat at the table with other members of the council, held out a hand as if welcoming a good friend.

"Mr Goldlaw, please join us."

Until this point, Yash had not spotted the sweaty, beetroot-faced man lurking at the side of the room. Theodore Goldlaw sidled over to the table.

"With some understandable regret, a narrow majority decision has been arrived upon," Bhubakta said to him solemnly. "The Council of Elders has agreed that your offer will be accepted. We hope that it will be a profitable and constructive relationship for everyone..."

Grinning, Mr Goldlaw held out a large hand. His cufflinks glinted briefly as he extended his arm towards Bhubakta.

"...however, there is one condition."

Goldlaw hesitated. Bhubakta continued, "We are all guided eternally by the wise sage who lives on the mountainside. He wishes to meet with you before the deal is concluded. Other than that, we have an agreement."

Bhubakta stood up and held out his hand to meet Goldlaw's. The portly man paused briefly, then grinned even more broadly. He gripped Bhubakta's hand and shook it with obvious force. Without letting go, he turned towards the disgruntled crowd as a piece of paper was passed along the table and signed in turn by each of the elders.

"This is a great decision for your community and a sign of progress in our modern world. Thank you all for your patience,"



Goldlaw announced.

The paper was passed finally to him and he took his own gold pen from his inside pocket and leant on the table to sign with a flourish. Immediately, he turned back to the crowd to finish his speech.

“Now that the deal is agreed and the land is mine, I am delighted to announce that I intend to move the Jagurdwa mountain from its current position to a new, more accessible, tourist location.”

Gasps rose from the crowd. People turned to look at one another in confusion.

“Unfortunately,” Goldlaw continued, “this will cause some inevitable disruption and those of you living on the slopes of the mountain or the foothills will need to relocate.” A cruel grin spread across his plump face.

No one in the crowd seemed to know what to say for a moment. A few people laughed, uncertain if what they were hearing was serious.

“Move the mountain? You can’t be serious! You can’t *move* a mountain!” shouted Yash.

Bhubakta held up a hand. “Yash, please. Mr Goldlaw, there must be some misunderstanding. Could you explain what you mean?”

“Just that!” Goldlaw declared, as though he were suggesting nothing more unusual than pouring a cup of tea. “I shall bring all the modern technology that the city has to offer, and the mountain will be moved to its new home.”

“Relocate?” came a shout from a farmer who lived near Yash’s family. “You mean, you expect us to *move*? We can’t just move! We’ve nowhere to go!”

“We won’t need to go anywhere, because you *can’t move a mountain!*” said Yash, almost laughing at the ridiculous nature of the situation in

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which he found himself. Several villagers nodded and some raised their voices to agree with him, but Goldlaw puffed out his chest as Yash had seen him do before.

“I assure you, *young man*, that I can and I will. You will all need to be prepared to make way for my machines and, yes, those of you who live on the higher slopes will be required to move.”

As realisation dawned on the villagers, fury and frustration grew. Most found Goldlaw’s suggestion laughable, but all were concerned about the destruction that he would bring to their beloved mountain in his attempts to lift it off the ground.

“See? I told you not to sell it to him!” Yash fumed, casting his eyes around at the stunned crowd.

He pushed his way out of the tiny building, head bowed, and sat down on a rock. Plucking at the long dry strands of grass growing loosely around its edge, he swallowed a lump which was forming in his throat. How could this be happening?

\*

It was only a few days later that great hordes of heavy construction equipment gradually began to arrive on the outskirts of the bamboo forest, where the flat valley ground began its long slope upwards. Mechanical monsters rumbled in, assembling like an automated army. It was the kind of equipment never before seen at the Jagurdwa: enormous excavators, winches with reinforced steel cables and huge hydraulic cranes with extending boom sections. Truck after truck rolled into the region – none of which looked remotely large enough to climb the Jagurdwa, let alone lift it.

Rumours about Goldlaw’s plans spread like wildfire.

“They’re going to try digging out the base of the mountain.”

“They’re blowing up bits of the mountain to loosen it.”

Just as quickly, worries and fears grew over the damage that would be caused.

“How are the diggers going to get through the forest? Will they cut down the trees?”

“What if the blast scares away the animals?”

“What if it blocks up the river with debris?”

Most villagers had refused to move off the mountain, none believing that Goldlaw would succeed in uprooting it from the earth. Uncle Ranj, however, was concerned. “If he’s going to ruin the landscape with his awful trucks and dynamite,” he said one morning, “who’s going to want to climb the mountain, then? I’ll have no business, especially with Goldlaw taking a percentage of my profits. It’s his land, after all.”

Yash stomped around in a bad mood.

“This plan is crazy! We can’t let it happen. This is our mountain – our home,” he pleaded with anyone who would listen. “Bhubakta, what about everything you taught us? The spirit of the mountain? The connection to the gods? The life-giving land?”

Bhubakta looked forlornly back at Yash.

“The spirit of the mountain will always be strong. There is nothing we can do – the deal was signed.”

Yash did not understand Bhubakta. He definitely didn’t understand Theodore J. Goldlaw when he arrived to join the growing team of workers and vehicles. He wore a navy blue suit with a long, grey coat buttoned over the top. His wide boots were the only attire remotely suited to the environment – those, and the plastic white hard hat on his head. His bright blue tie was pinned to his white shirt with a sparkling silver clip. Yash couldn’t recall ever seeing anyone in person wearing a tie before.

## The Man Who Bought a Mountain

A large space had already been flattened at the mouth of the bamboo forest where Goldlaw's men now stood, some hanging out of the cabs of their enormous vehicles. A small crowd of villagers had gathered. Murmurs were passed around and anxious looks exchanged. Yash was among them, fuming more with every new machine's arrival.

"Let's get this show on the road," Goldlaw declared, ignoring the crowd. The other men and women who had been with him in the trekking group filed along behind him, clinging to their screens and muttering into their earpieces. Yash couldn't help noticing that they looked a little nervous. Furtive glances were thrown between them every few seconds, and the group weren't the only ones acting strangely. Some of the men who were climbing into vehicles seemed to be smirking slightly, and Yash even caught two of them rolling their eyes in Goldlaw's direction.

That was when it hit Yash. None of Goldlaw's men and women actually *believed* that they could succeed in lifting the Jagurdwa – how could they? Each one was humouring their foolish employer, who thought himself more powerful than the ancient earth.

Engines echoed like thunder as, one by one, they were started up. The hulking vehicles looked so out of place in the scene overlooked by proud trees and with the crop fields stretching in front of them. The chauri herd two fields over stared at the noisy machinery invading their peace, looking more sullen than ever.

A worker in a fluorescent yellow waistcoat stepped forwards. "Which way for the first crane, boss?"

"Take it towards the northern face," shouted Goldlaw.

"We can't get the trucks up through that forest, boss."

"Don't worry," Goldlaw replied, "the bulldozers will make a path. We need the explosives team in first to loosen the rocks and then the cranes can move in."

## EXTREME EARTH COLLECTION

The worker who had approached Goldlaw frowned, perplexed. "Right, boss. Of course. It's just that... we don't think that it's going to be possible to..."

Goldlaw bristled. "I'm not paying you to *think*, I am paying you to *do*. I don't care how you do it, just make it happen." His face was wobbling dangerously, and the worker blanched under his glare before lowering his head and hurrying away.

"Ready the bulldozers!" shouted Goldlaw.

A huge, hulking machine began to move. Yash's eyes filled with tears.

*Doing what is right is never easy, Yashaswin, but it is within your power.*

Suddenly, Yash thought of the sage. He hadn't met with Goldlaw yet. There was no way that the sage would allow this. Yash's last hope was with Guru Oluko.

"NO!" he screamed, running in front of one of the vehicles as it growled its way across the flat area of land towards the edge of the sloping kaguno crop fields.





# Four

He stood like an insect in front of a lawnmower.

“Get him out of the way,” Goldlaw demanded. His team of men and women in suits began to pick their way towards Yash. Some of the villagers became more animated, shouting their support for Yash. Amid shouts and waves and billowing smoke, the enormous wheels of the truck continued to roll towards him. Yash dug his feet into the dirt and clenched his jaw.

“What on earth do you think you are doing, Yash?” called his mother as the engine revved menacingly.

Yash didn’t flinch. He continued to stare at the truck’s driver.

His mother forced her way through the gathering crowd. The enormous vehicle continued to crawl towards them: Yash, planted in place, and his mother, tugging desperately at his arm. Any second now, they would collide.

Yash pointed at Goldlaw. “He hasn’t met the sage! You said that he had to meet the sage before everything was agreed!” he shouted.

The entire village seemed to hold its breath. After a few seconds, the rumble of the surrounding machines dropped and the great bulldozer squealed to a halt.

Every pair of eyes was fixed upon Goldlaw.

Goldlaw frowned and pursed his lips as he looked at Yash. He surveyed the scene with his arms crossed and his legs wide apart, peering out from under his hard hat.

Bhubakta approached him calmly and a moment of conversation followed. The pack of tech-wielding cronies had stopped in their tracks and turned to stare, waiting for instructions.

## The Man Who Bought a Mountain

After several more minutes of discussion, Bhubakta marched from Goldlaw over to Yash. He cleared his throat. "You are required to lead Mr Goldlaw up the mountain to meet the sage."

Yash couldn't believe what he was hearing. "No way. I'm not walking with him again." He scowled and turned away, crossing his arms.

"It is your duty, Yash," the village elder replied. "You are correct – the visit is required. Mr Goldlaw has been reminded that he must meet with the sage before the deal is completed, and he has requested someone who can direct him to Guru Oluko quickly."

Yash poked the toe of one worn boot into the ground, chewing over the thought.

"I have assured him that you are the fastest and most experienced guide that he could wish for," Bhubakta continued.

Yash looked back over his shoulder, kicking at the stony ground, and caught Goldlaw's gaze. Every part of his big, red face looked just as annoyed as Yash felt.

"Fine." He exhaled loudly and tramped across to where Goldlaw was standing.

"We meet again, boy."

"Not through my choice," Yash mumbled.

"Nor mine. Let's get this over with so that my men can get their work started."

Before they could leave, a flustered-looking woman carrying a portable computer tottered over to Goldlaw and spluttered, "Sir, our first detonation is planned for 2 p.m. Shall I cancel the order as a precaution?"

Goldlaw scoffed. "Absolutely not. This won't take long. Continue as planned."

## EXTREME EARTH COLLECTION

From there, they marched, separated by several paces and a gulf of frustrated silence. Yash trudged up the winding path through the bamboo forest. Goldlaw huffed and puffed behind, past the mountain goats and along even more narrow ridges than the tourist trail had to offer.

Eventually, Yash could stand the silence no more. “Why are you so determined to ruin our lives as well as our mountain?”

Goldlaw harrumphed but did not reply. They approached a small stream with a makeshift bridge, in the form of two thick planks, laid over it. “You’ll probably fail, anyway,” Yash added as he stepped forwards onto it.

“I don’t fail at anything,” came the provoked response.

“You failed at trekking up this mountain, the last time you were here!”

Goldlaw paused. Yash didn’t know whether to expect a verbal barrage in retaliation or more of his silence. Instead, the reply was measured.

“Listen, son. I’m a businessman. This mountain provides a business opportunity. Clearly, other people get some kind of pleasure from climbing this thing. But out here, it’s so hard for most people to reach. If we move it to somewhere just outside the city, we can attract thousands – millions – more tourists. We can charge admission for people to climb. It just needs to be in a more convenient place.”

Yash stopped in the middle of the stream and laughed. “Convenient? You have no idea why people climb this mountain, and that’s your problem! Does your city have a view like this one?” He threw out his arms to gesture at the peaks and valleys in the distance, followed by the stream under his feet, the hanging foliage and the goats on the slopes below. “Could all these animals and plants live there? Would the streams flow?”

“The world is covered with trees and streams. In the city, we can build a ski resort and hotels. We’ll make our town the one to see!”

## The Man Who Bought a Mountain

“But this is where we *live*,” Yash pleaded. “Our farmland stretches up the mountainside; our animals are perfectly adapted to live all around it; whichever direction you go from here, you’ll find people from my community living and working – my uncles and aunts, my cousins... There are crops that are in just the right place for them to grow – the climate and soil would be different anywhere else. This mountain brings us food and brings us money from tourists; it brings us... together.”

“All good business decisions require a sacrifice.”

“And what are *you* sacrificing?!” Yash cried. “You can’t move a mountain anyway, you must be stupid – all you’re going to do is destroy our homes and land – and there’s no way that the sage will agree to the deal.”

“Actually, for this job, we have the biggest, most advanced engineering ever produced, young man. Here, we will do what no one else has ever attempted. We will move this mountain. As for your wise old sage, leave him to me. Just take me there, as you were told.”

“Ugh!” Yash turned his back and stamped across the bridge, making it wobble. Goldlaw waited until Yash had reached the other side, then followed cautiously. For the rest of the journey, not one more word was spoken.

\*

As always, Yash found the sage outside his home, looking out across the valley. Yash marched round the final bend of the steep, twisted path to his door and wheeled round to watch Goldlaw staggering up the last slope. Finally, Goldlaw heaved himself onto the rocky outcrop and paused, bent double, to draw a few deep, shuddering breaths. When he eventually regained his composure, he forced himself upright...

...and his jaw dropped.

In the far distance, snow-capped summits glistened in the sunlight. Birds swooped effortlessly through the cool, clean air. The sky had





a different blue here; you could see – almost touch – the texture of the clouds, like you were actually with them, not beneath them. Huge forests lay far below, divided by great rivers, expansive lakes and miles of lush, green hills. All sound had fallen away below them; the mountain towered over the land and Goldlaw suddenly looked very small, perched upon it.

Yash turned to the sage. “Hey, G. I’ve brought –”

The sage raised one thin hand. “Thank you, Yashaswin.” He spoke in a soothing tone. “Your efforts are appreciated, as always. Welcome, Mr Goldlaw.”

Goldlaw blinked, and turned away from the view. His eyes seemed overly bright and his face paler.

Yash stared. “Welcome? But, he –”

“Please take a seat, Mr Goldlaw. Yashaswin, would you excuse us for a few moments?”

Yash crossed his arms but said nothing. After a moment, he turned and trudged a little further along the path, up past the house and away from the two men.

Then, he waited.

He kicked around in the stones for a while.

He used a stick to drag lines and patterns in the dusty soil.

The two men had been talking for what felt like an age, but Yash could hear nothing. He looked back down the path but could see nothing, either.

Stepping lightly, he crept a little closer. From above the corrugated roof of the sage’s dwelling, he could make out the sound of their muffled conversation inside. On his knees, he edged closer still, holding a tree



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stump to keep his balance.

Goldlaw's voice was getting louder. "Let's stop beating around the bush. You're trying to call my bluff, aren't you, old man? You think that we can't move this mountain."

Yash grinned and waited for the sage to tell him that, of course, the mountain couldn't be moved. There's no way that G would agree to this.

"With respect, you are wrong, Mr Goldlaw..."

*Ha! Here we go,* Yash thought.

"...I believe that it would be perfectly possible to move this mountain to a new location."

"What? No! What are you saying, G?" Yash's eyes widened as he broke cover. Stumbling, he clambered back down from his listening place. "You can't let him, you *can't!*"

Theodore Goldlaw leaned back in a wooden chair, hands clasped behind his head and stubby legs stretched out in front of him. A satisfied grin spread over his face and he crossed his feet at the ankles.

"Maybe you are a 'wise' guy, after all, old man."

The sage held up a pale hand to them both.

"Please, Yashaswin. Mr Goldlaw, if you'll kindly let me finish."

All three of them looked at each other for a moment before the sage spoke again. His voice was as composed as ever.

"The mountain can indeed be moved if you have enough patience."

"That's alright, old man, we've got excavators and cranes..."

## EXTREME EARTH COLLECTION

“Your tools will not do the job adequately, Mr Goldlaw. You must move the mountain one pebble at a time. You must break down the mountain into small pieces, transport the materials and rebuild the structure elsewhere.”

Guffawing, Goldlaw spluttered, “You’ve got to be kidding! One pebble at a time would take way too long. We don’t have time for that!”

“It is the only way, Mr Goldlaw. The mountain is too great for your machines to lift.”

“Now, see here, old man.” Goldlaw’s smile had faded. “You are looking at the man who stopped the rain in New Kathpur, the man who stemmed the flow of the Narapti river and calmed the wind in Bodhar Bay! I am the man who is going to conquer this mountain. My engineers have drawn up the plans. A series of small explosions will create the necessary cracks, then we can move in with the big beasts. My machines will do the job.”

The sage shook his head. “Beware the power of the mountain. Do not climb it so that the world can see you, but so that you can see the world.”

Goldlaw stared momentarily, then laughed so hard that he nearly fell backwards from his chair. “You’re as nuts as I thought you would be, old man. Living up here, talking about ‘the power of the mountain’? Ha! You can keep your ‘one pebble at a time’ nonsense.”

Goldlaw heaved his large frame out of his chair and edged around the sage to the door of the little house.

“But you can’t!” Yash blurted out. “You needed the sage to agree. He hasn’t agreed.”

He looked back, impatient. “Sorry, lad. I only came up here to *meet* the sage. That’s what the agreement stated. So, now I’ve *met* him, our work shall begin.” Shielding his eyes from the bright sunlight,

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Goldlaw stepped out of the hut.

“A pleasure to meet you, Mr Goldlaw,” the sage called after him.

As Yash stared, his eyes prickling, at the man who had been his last hope, Guru Oluko smiled and stretched out his arm towards him as he always did. Clutched delicately in his thin hand was the usual parcel of leaves and string. Yash reached out to take it automatically but, this time, the sage grasped his hand with surprising vigour. His wrinkled fingers curled around Yash’s wrist as he whispered, “*For the mountains will move you.*”

# Five

The return trip from the sage's dwelling looked set to be even worse than the journey up. Yash felt like running ahead and leaving Goldlaw behind, hoping that he'd get lost or fall or just turn so red that he popped. The only thing that stopped him was the feeling that all his energy had been sucked away. He just wanted to get home to his parents.

On his way back down the rugged path, Yash thought about all the treks that he had made up the Jagurdwa mountain. He marvelled, perhaps for the last time, at layer upon layer of jagged rock; here and there, streaks of colour leaked across its surface, compressed like dough under a rolling pin. Yash took in all the colours and shades of the layers, bearing all that history. When he didn't point out one overhanging ledge, Goldlaw walked straight into it.

Rubbing his head at the point of impact, he grunted, "Who put that there? I don't remember it being that low before."

"I think you'll find that it's been there for millions of years," Yash replied wearily.

Goldlaw wheeled round to face him. His expression, in which confidence was usually set like concrete, was one of surprise. He rested a hand on the dusty surface. "Surely not."

Yash shook his head a little at Goldlaw's ignorance, given that he was now the owner of the land. "Just look at the layers – the different colours and rock types. The layers on top have built on those underneath, and that takes a long time."

Yash ran a long finger along a thread of siltstone at eye level, and Goldlaw's gaze followed it. For the briefest moment, Yash thought that he could sense a shift in the way in which the man looked at what was all around him.

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Just as quickly, the spell was broken. “Come on,” Goldlaw grunted. “We’ve been held up long enough.”

They walked on, returning to silence. Below, the peaceful beauty of the mid-hills gave way to the lower regions: the rushing streams which provided a home for unusual fish and water for other animals; the bamboo forest with its sheltered canopy, which hosted rare varieties of plants; the fields of crops which brought the whole community food, money and life.

When Yash reached the familiar makeshift bridge, he took a left turn off the well-trodden path, into a wooded patch of scrubland in the other direction.

Goldlaw stopped and frowned at him as he stepped lithely away. “Wait. Why aren’t we taking this route back?” He pointed at the planks that made up the path across the stream.

Yash scowled. “We are. I just have to do something first.”

“I don’t have time for detours – I’ve a detonation planned!”

Breathing deeply, Yash counted to five in his head. “You don’t have to come with me. If you think that you can get yourself back through the bamboo forest without following the wrong path, off you go. It’s *your mountain.*”

Yash continued to tramp away through the undergrowth, not caring whether or not Goldlaw followed him. As far as he knew, no one but himself and the sage had ever walked this way on the mountain and, until now, they had worked hard to keep it that way. Now, though, Yash’s rage was causing him to throw caution to the wind; Goldlaw owned all of this, after all, so it was only a matter of time before their secret was either discovered or destroyed.

Away from the path, the pair weaved between thickly growing birch trees. Moving neither up nor down but across the mountainside, Yash navigated the sloped ground as easily as a duck would navigate water; Goldlaw stepped uncertainly over mossy tree roots and stumbled over limestone steps.

After a few minutes, the slope of the mountain face began to level out and the trees thinned. They emerged onto a small outcrop, halfway up an enormous crease in the mountainside where the Jagurdwa folded back on itself. It was perfectly sheltered from the wind and other elements, and overlooked the farmland and river below. There was a long, sheer drop on one side, and up ahead was a dead end.

“What on earth are we doing here?” grumbled Goldlaw. He glanced at his watch. “You had better get me down this mountain in time.”

Yash ignored him. Instead, he crouched so low that he was almost kneeling on the dusty ground, pulling from his pocket the tightly wrapped bundle that the sage had given to him. With his other hand stretched out in front of him, he began to make a soft clicking noise with his tongue.

Goldlaw stared at him, utterly perplexed. “What in the name of –”

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Yash shot him a furious warning look and Goldlaw was silenced. Yash clicked a few more times and then gave a long, low whistle.

For a few moments, nothing happened. Then, as Goldlaw watched in amazement, a small creature appeared from a shadowy fissure in the rock face up ahead.

It was about the size of a large rabbit, and obviously very young. Grey, speckled fur grew soft and downy all over the creature, from its pointed, wet nose to its short, stubby tail. Thin, bandy legs tucked themselves timidly under its body and enormous ears stood to attention. Two huge, glistening eyes stared around as the tiny fawn picked its way slowly towards Yash.

Crossing his legs slowly, Yash seated himself on the ground and unwrapped the sage's parcel. Goldlaw peered over Yash's shoulder from his great height.



From inside the small package, Yash pulled a handful of lush, green leaves and yet another, even smaller, parcel. Quietly, he held out the bundle of leaves and the little fawn stepped instantly towards it. It sniffed Yash's hand momentarily before folding its legs under itself and settling down beside him, blinking up at Goldlaw as it chewed.

Goldlaw stared, transfixed, at the tiny creature. His mouth hung open slightly as he stood on what felt like the edge of the world, gazing down at the scene unfolding in front of him. After a few minutes, he swallowed, blinking, then cleared his throat quietly. "What –"

Before he could ask, the soft clicking sound broke through the quiet once more. Cradling the remaining leafy parcel in his free hand, Yash continued to make soft noises with his mouth, and they waited. Goldlaw stared at the gap in the rocky wall expectantly until, eventually, they saw movement.

An adult deer, perhaps half a metre in height, with huge ears, small tusks on its snout and thick, brown hair all over its body, moved into the light. Large, dark eyes gazed dolefully towards them and its ears twitched this way and that as Yash continued to click. It was remarkably thin; the shape of its features was clearly visible under the skin and its limbs trembled slightly. It limped towards Yash awkwardly, keeping one hooved foot raised off the ground as it came. As it neared the group, the deep wound that it carried on one leg became visible.

"What is it?" Goldlaw asked, his voice a soft rumble.

Yash waited until the adult deer had settled itself beside its fawn before he responded. "It's a musk deer," he explained gently, keeping his voice low so as not to startle the animals. "The fawn is probably about six weeks old." With his free hand, Yash opened the small package onto his lap, revealing a thick, brown paste.

"And that?"

"Lotion," Yash replied, "made with neem roots." He was struggling



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to hold the clump of long leaves in one hand and the paste in the other. "Here, hold this." He held out the leaves to Goldlaw, who hesitated before stepping forwards, his large boots crunching on the rocky ground.

Goldlaw crouched beside Yash, his smart suit now noticeably dusty. Looking disconcerted and utterly out of place, he took the foliage and held it out for both creatures to graze on. "What's wrong with it?" he asked, looking at the injured mother.

Yash dipped two fingers into the paste and, very gently, applied it to the wound on the adult's leg. His kind hands worked expertly and the deer hardly moved, such was the carefully built trust between them.

Yash sighed. "Musk deer are poached for their scent. The males have a gland in their abdomen that creates a perfume and hunters kill them for it. You can tell that this one's female," he said, gesturing at the deer's muzzle, "because the tusks are only small." He wiped his hand on a tuft of grass and folded up the wrappings from the lotion. "This one was hit by accident. She's no use to hunters but she can't take care of her young while she's hurt."

"I've never heard of them," Goldlaw said bluntly.

"They're very rare," Yash continued. "They're almost completely nocturnal, usually. They stay as far from humans as they can" – he shot Goldlaw a disgusted glance – "but the more we take, the less choice they have."

There was a few minutes' pause, punctuated by the sound of Goldlaw's heavy breathing. When Yash turned to look at him, he saw what looked like a furious battle taking place behind the man's eyes. Sensing an opportunity, he continued. "They live on the mountain because humans don't build their homes and cities up here. The mountain gives them water to drink, shelter from the wind and rain, and food to eat. Even the tree root in this medicine was grown on the mountain."

Goldlaw gazed down at the fawn's beautiful head as it chewed calmly through the pile of leaves, and then at the mother, whose flank Yash was stroking gently. "Will it survive?" he asked gruffly.

Yash gritted his teeth. "Perhaps. If she isn't *disturbed*," he replied shortly.

Before Goldlaw could retort, a distant sound from far below them disturbed the quiet. A muffled rumbling, like thunder, seemed to roll towards them through the mountain and was followed by the rustling of hundreds of wings as flocks of birds fled the local woodland, soaring upwards.

The deer panicked. The fawn scrambled upwards and cowered behind its mother, who kicked out in an attempt to stand before Yash reacted and held her still.

Goldlaw's eyes widened and he looked down at his watch. "My detonation!" he cried, jumping to his feet.

"Idiot!" Yash hissed, but Goldlaw wasn't listening. He was stabbing the screen of his mobile phone with his large fingers but, when he raised it to his ear, nothing happened.

"No signal, Mr Goldlaw?" asked Yash, bitterly.

Goldlaw scowled and thrust the phone back into his pocket. "We have to leave," he said sharply, and turned to walk back towards the mountain path.

He had taken only a few steps towards the treeline when he stopped.

A new sound had broken the silence. A faint pitter-patter became gradually audible, and a small cloud of dust and dirt rained down the steep slope beside them, landing very close to Goldlaw's feet. He and Yash looked up towards the mountain's summit...

...and horror froze them both to the spot.



## EXTREME EARTH COLLECTION

Rocks the size of small cars were rolling down the bumpy hillside in all directions. They picked up speed and bounced higher with every strike of the ground, thudding and smashing into trees and bringing earth and rocks of all sizes pouring down after them.

Shaking himself out of his momentary stupor, Yash jumped to his feet and scooped up the fawn. Shoving it into Goldlaw's arms, he yelled, "Take this!" Goldlaw was backing away from the edge of the platform, flattening himself against the wall created by the fold in the side of the Jagurdwa, and held the terrified animal tight to his chest.

The injured musk deer was on her feet. Yash grasped her around the middle and staggered towards Goldlaw, seconds before the first enormous boulder, almost the size of the sage's house, ploughed through the ground above them and slammed into the spot where the deer had lain. Unhindered, the rock rolled over the edge of the outcrop and continued to gouge a path down the mountainside.

Yash only had a moment to wonder if the rock would land near the village before a wave of debris cascaded over them. He and Goldlaw cowered like mice as dirt, stones and tree trunks alike tumbled down, bouncing over the ledge above their heads and crashing to the ground at their feet. They clamped their eyes and mouths shut against a barrage of dust and shards of stone.

Sound ripped through the air as more and more enormous stones came barrelling down the side of the Jagurdwa. They were heading down towards the valley, each one becoming a marauding monster of rocks, trees, soil, mud, dust and anything else that could be swallowed up in its path. The noise increased; clouds of dust billowed into the air above the moving mass. Below them, Yash could hear trees in their path being knocked over like skittles. Fear coursed through him like ice; a single hit from one boulder would be enough to crush them all. There was nothing to do but hold on tight and wait.

Gradually, the ground beneath their feet stopped shaking, and the thudding and rumbling from further down the mountain became more distant. When the sound of the rockfall had died away enough to hear

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Goldlaw's coughing and spluttering by his side, Yash dared to open his eyes and squint around through the dust.

The small, rocky platform in front of them had all but been destroyed. Piles of ground-up rock, splintered wood and soil had landed inches away from the group and were still pouring like sand over the edge, which had cracked under the impact at some point in the last few minutes and had fallen away, leaving a sheer drop mere yards from their feet. Yash glanced over the brink of the ledge, and what he saw made his blood run cold.

The area below was devastated.

The slope of the Jagurdwa had been deformed. At least ten different paths had been scored down the side of the mountain's face, cutting through forest, stream and farmland like a hot knife through butter. In all directions, remnants of trees and hillside were still falling down into the valley, picking up more debris all the time. The question was, how much of Yash's village had been lucky enough to escape?

Just as hot, panicked tears began to well in the corner of Yash's eyes, a soft, wispy voice floated through the collecting dust towards him.

"Come along, Yashaswin."

# Six

Ten minutes later, Yash sprinted down the mountain path towards the village, having left the fawn and its mother with the sage, whose ramshackle home had, fortunately, been higher up the mountain than the rockfall and had therefore remained untouched. Goldlaw huffed and panted along behind him, but Yash couldn't bring himself to speak to him.

He raced down the final slope and ran headlong into his father, who was making his way at great speed up the track. When he saw Yash, he stopped, his face a picture of pure relief, and embraced him.

"You had us so worried," he breathed.

"Is everyone OK?" Yash demanded.

Yash's father led them down into the village, where most villagers had fled into the nearest buildings for safety, followed by the yellow waistcoat army. While many buildings further along the mountain had fallen prey to the rockfall and following landslide, some within running distance had provided refuge.

They walked past fields through which debris had been scattered and where small outbuildings had been destroyed. A boulder as big as an armchair had smashed into the side of one of Goldlaw's trucks, and the driver was now being attended to by the local medic, along with Bhubakta.

Worse was to follow. A blanket of rock and mud had reigned down over much of the village. A large crane from Goldlaw's fleet had been toppled and the long boom arm had landed, like a felled tree, onto one of the farmers' houses; many shaken locals were trying to recover what they could. Children were crying and land owners were staring, their hands on their heads, at the devastation. In some places, it was impossible to see what damage had been caused further down the valley, as choking clouds of dust



filled the air in the distance.

As more people emerged and gathered in the centre of the village, so did a fresh silence. One by one, the men in yellow waistcoats reappeared from where they had scattered. Villagers who had reached nearby surviving buildings peered out, knowing that these homes were the lucky ones.

Yash found his mother and Uncle Ranj tending to the injuries of a family whose roof had fallen in. Once he had convinced his mother that he was unharmed, he allowed himself to sit down and take a few deep, shuddering breaths. Then, he spotted Goldlaw standing in front of the village meeting hall, looking uneasy.

“This is all your fault,” Yash seethed.

Everyone turned to look at him.

“Yash, this is not the time for blame,” said Bhubakta, softly.

“Well, it’s true!” He shot daggers at Goldlaw. “We could have all been killed.”

No one spoke.

“The boy is right,” came Goldlaw’s rasping voice.

This was not the reaction that Yash had been expecting. He stared at Goldlaw, rage giving way to surprise.

“I thought that we were going to be buried under piles of rock, and it would have been my fault,” Goldlaw continued, his voice shaking. “I... I may have underestimated the force of this mountain.”

Yash had not witnessed this side of Theodore J. Goldlaw before. His face had changed. The normally beetroot cheeks were now ashen; his eyes were usually bright and beaming with plans but now, they were weighed upon heavily by his furrowed brow. His whole body hung limply.



## The Man Who Bought a Mountain

He looked every bit like a man who had just been scared for his life.

“I should have realised sooner,” he whispered, before rounding on some members of his team. “Why did nobody tell me?”

When it became clear that Goldlaw expected a response, one of the workers edged forwards nervously. “You told us that we weren’t paid to think, sir.”

Goldlaw blinked, stunned. No one spoke for a moment.

“We need to check that everyone is OK,” said Bhubakta, finally. Yash and his father moved to join him and other villagers gathered around, side by side.

“Let me help,” said Goldlaw.

“Help?” Yash responded curtly, raising his eyebrows. “Huh. That’s the first time you’ve used that word.”

Goldlaw looked around, addressing everyone. His eyes met those of the desperate villagers, then the trembling faces of his own workers. “I see what I’ve done. You were all right about the beauty and the importance of this mountain where it is, and now, it has given me a reminder of its true power. A mountain can’t be moved with force. It was wrong of me to try to move it at all...”

Goldlaw screwed up his face and the muscles in his jaw shifted uncomfortably, as though he was trying to force his lips to form words that they had never said before.

“...I’m sorry,” he finished.

Yash blinked and then stared.

“What if it’s too late?”

“I will make it right. Whatever the damage, we’ll recover it. I will help

to rebuild it.” He looked around the crowd and then directly at Yash again. “We’ll do it – one pebble at a time.”

*One pebble at a time.*

The sage’s voice echoed through Yash’s head.

“Apology accepted, then,” he said, looking to his father and Bhubakta, who nodded back in agreement. “Bhubakta is right – let’s go and see if anyone needs help.”

\*

Many weeks passed and, high up the mountain, outside his home, the sage opened his eyes and uncrossed his legs. He looked out across the valley which had seen so much change over the last few months.

He had been there when Theodore J. Goldlaw had offered the funds to help the farmers to replant their crops. He had been there when Goldlaw’s workers had helped to shift the debris from the river. He had seen the villagers come together to rebuild their homes. Now, he sensed that a new peace had descended upon the mountain.

“Do not concern yourself with moving mountains,” he said aloud, only to the clouds, “for the mountains will move you.”

**THE END**



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### The Geography of a Mountain

Using the word bank, can you label the mountain (see below)?

Challenge: Write a definition of each word and add it to the word bank.

|          |         |      |
|----------|---------|------|
| base     | plateau | peak |
| mountain | ridge   | side |
| mountain | ridge   | side |
| mountain | ridge   | side |

### Mountains Vocabulary Matching Game

Match the word to the definition by writing the correct word in the box.

|                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| the highest point of a mountain | the highest part of a mountain |
| the lowest part of a mountain   | the lowest part of a mountain  |
| a flat-topped mountain          | a flat-topped mountain         |
| a steep slope of a mountain     | a steep slope of a mountain    |
| a high mountain                 | a high mountain                |
| a mountain range                | a mountain range               |

### The Man Who Bought a Mountain

The Extreme Earth Collection  
Guided Reading Questions

Chapter Four

### The Man Who Bought a Mountain

Adult Guidance

Chapter Summary

Guided Reading Questions

### The Man Who Bought a Mountain

Word and Definitions

|          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>A</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>F</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>H</b> |
| <b>I</b> | <b>J</b> | <b>K</b> | <b>L</b> | <b>M</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>O</b> | <b>P</b> |
| <b>Q</b> | <b>R</b> | <b>S</b> | <b>T</b> | <b>U</b> | <b>V</b> | <b>W</b> | <b>X</b> |
| <b>Y</b> | <b>Z</b> |          |          |          |          |          |          |

### The Man Who Bought a Mountain

Questions

Answers

|            |           |           |
|------------|-----------|-----------|
| decline    | igneous   | tree line |
| descend    | incline   | trek      |
| expedition | landscape | valley    |
| face       | landslide | volcano   |

### The Man Who Moved a Mountain

Questions

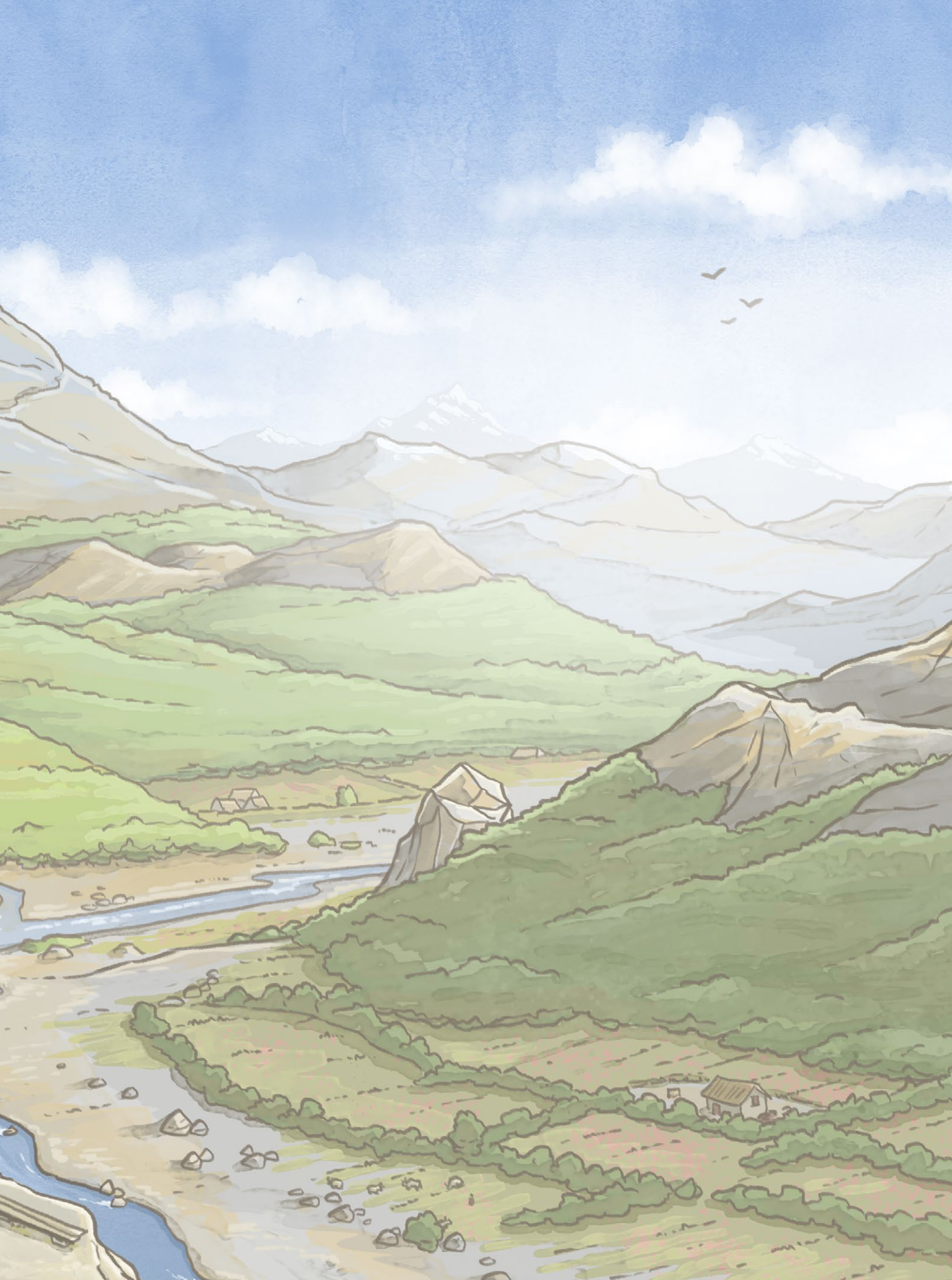
Answers

|                    |                      |                     |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Kilimanjaro</b> | <b>Mount Everest</b> | <b>Mount Fuji</b>   |
| <b>K2</b>          | <b>Denali</b>        | <b>Mount Elbrus</b> |

### Life on the Mountain

Questions

Answers





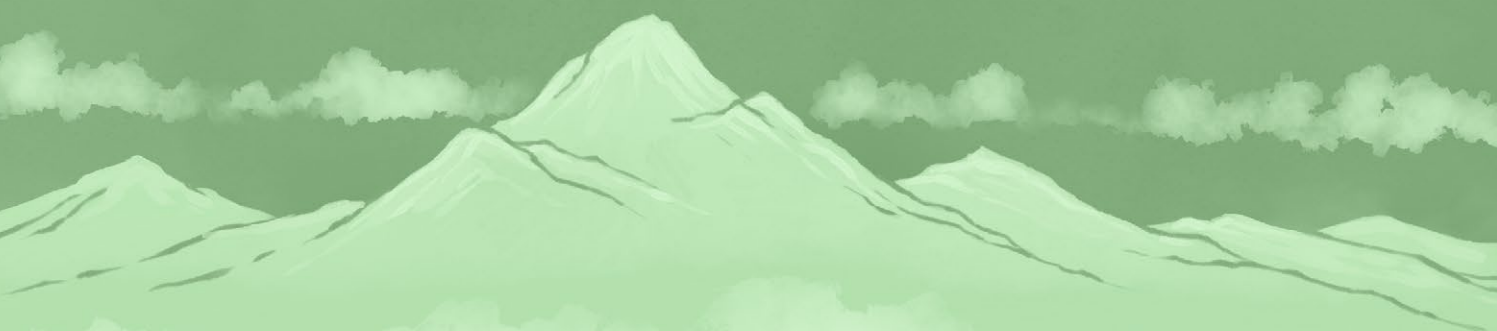
**“Beware the power of the mountain. Do not climb it so that the world can see you, but so that you can see the world.”**

The Jagurdwa mountain is home to so much life: birds, fish, deer, wonderful plants and insects, and Yash, a boy whose love for his mountain and his community is unconditional.

One day, however, something arrives which turns his whole world upside down. Now, Yash must fight for his home, his job, the land that he knows so well and the safety of those he loves.

The future of the Jagurdwa hangs in the balance – can Yash save his home in time? Is it really possible to move a mountain?

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