

Up, Up, and Up

By: Kevin Ren

“Atop the ball of blue and green we call home, an astronomical mountain impales the sky. For decades preceding the birth of civilization, thousands surrounded the lands below it. In the beginning, all were intimidated by this monstrous spawn of nature observable from anywhere and everywhere, an entity rivaling God, or perhaps, is God. Along the passage of time, however, curiosity triumphed, metastasizing from one man to another, one generation to the next.

In a time long, long ago, there was a boy named Elius Kenton, who spent most of every day helping around the family farm, completing the simplest, modest of tasks. He was grateful for the persistence of peace and stability in his life, but often met eye-to-eye with tremendous boredom, often becoming unceasing depression. One day, instead of tending to the dozens of cattle awaiting their morning hay, Elius struck himself with lightning speed, sprinting towards the mountain in dire search of adventure.

In a moment's notice, the boy arrived at the base of 'God', exhausted out of his mind, yet entranced by the view from below. With little remaining energy, but mesmerized like never before, Kenton decided to be the first climber, ever! With that, he commenced the grind. Having complete disregard of time, and perhaps the limitations of his body as well, the boy persisted, allowing absolutely nothing to get in the way of his divine ascension.

Contrary to his mind, Kenton's legs eventually gave out. Instead of taking another step upwards, he pivoted his feet, turning away from the mountain. The view from above was even more overwhelming than from below, it shook Elius back to life. He took a long pause to capture the moment, beaming at the reality of having done the impossible, experiencing something

unprecedented. Satisfied as he can be, Elius hurried home after sunset to begin eternalizing his ultimate tale of bravado.”

Talia Mandal first encountered this story at the age of 12. She quickly became profoundly fascinated by The Boy and The Mountain. Ensuing the events of Elius Kenton, hundreds, thousands, then millions of people have followed in his footsteps. Through the longevity of her youthful years, Ms. Mandal has done the same. Today, she vows to trump everyone.

The 20-year-old steps out from campsite A with great confidence, sunscreen and water strapped around her waist. Her father offers GPS, but she declares no need for navigation. Her destination could not be any more clear, the top of the top.

Talia grapples, then strides, then grapples, then strides, deviating away from the paths designated for tourists and challengers alike. Having spent countless days and nights researching and familiarizing herself with The Mountain, she now tackles it head-on, void of hesitation. With no time to rest, not even to think, Talia drills her feet up, up, and up.

As she finally succumbs to fatigue, she spontaneously halts her restless pursuit, electing to take a one-time break, lounging herself upon a soft pile of grass, surveying the hundreds of climbers below her.

Watch me. I'll prove myself to you all!

The finish line seemed impossibly distant at the beginning of her climb, but perhaps to honor such persevering rigor, it suddenly appears before her eyes. Excited, motivated, and flabbergasted as ever, Talia feels the call of destiny. She gives her body a final push, breathing hard and clenching tight, now just meters away from the very, very top.

There it is! The top! One, more, step!

The clouds dissipate, then Talia suddenly loses grip.

It isn't the top after all. For a moment, she sees a lot more to climb than any man could ever imagine. Talia descends from The Mountain quicker than wind, passing into the next world, but not to be forgotten in this one.