

Add the following to page linked to Cosmic Swan Novella:

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OPENING:

Mark is alone in his bed. All is quiet in his ranch-style Palo Alto home, but he can't sleep. He feels strong, vigorous, healthy, like a powerful genie corked up in a bottle. A demon throws monstrous geological puzzles at him. As senior member of the U.S. Geological Survey staff, his job is to make sense of the turbulence rocking the Himalayas. No plate tectonics or clashing of continents could explain the focused and growing magnitude of destruction. The data doesn't fit. He loves being a geologist and looks the part. He proudly wears his dark brown hair long, and keeps his graying beard trimmed. He enjoys working in the rocks, the dirt, and hills of California. He likes to be in the open with the Sun and wind on his face, and is happy to spend days following a fault line along the coastal range, but now he is spending too much time with a computer in his cavernous office. He works out at the local gym, but he wants his copper tan back. His well-developed arms and legs long to stretch out in a climb up a tall mountain.

Just past midnight he finally falls into a deep sleep. The storm of earthquakes in south Asia follow him into a dream. He stumbles for hours through a hot jungle. He slashes thick, dense vines. The earth pounds, growls, nearly knocks him down. He struggles through the tangled growth into a clearing, where giant elephants are furiously dancing in a circle. Wait a minute. His grandchildren, Rhys, Trys, and Izabel are surrounded by the angry elephants. Fearing that the elephants will trample them, he fights frantically to protect them, but the elephants dance more and more wildly until he can't stand. The precious children cry out in terror.

He wakes with a start to find that the thundering elephant dance and cries of his grandchildren continue. His mind churns. Is he having a stroke? In a flash he is fully awake and understands that a strong earthquake is shaking the house. "Earthquake! Earthquake!" he shouts. "Everybody out of the house!" With bare feet he leaps out of bed and rushes through the shaking hall to his grandchildren's room. The two-year-old Rhys is screaming through tears, holding on to the rail of his crib like a sailor in a stormy sea. The earthquake has walked the crib into the center of the bedroom. Trys, his six-year old brother, is standing next to the crib, holding on to the rail and yelling "Earthquake, Rhysy, earthquake." Trys looks cold. He is wearing only his white jockey shorts. The bathroom light goes out.

The shaking house is totally black. Mark scoops up a struggling child under each arm and rushes into the hall toward the front door. The boys cry "Mommy, Daddy, Mommy, Daddy!" He runs into his daughter-in-law Mary as she bursts out of the bedroom door holding

baby Izabel over her left shoulder. She yells, “My babies,” and like a professional football player takes the hand off of Rhys from Mark. Mark sets Trys down to run out the front door with his mother and turns back toward his son Tim’s bedroom to see what is happening there. The earthquake punches the whole house hard, knocking Mark to the floor and shattering the window above the front door. Glass comes raining, cutting into his palms as he tries to stand.

BATTLE TO SAVE THE HATCHING COSMIC SWAN

Below, the soldiers start up the mountain, firing rifles at them, encouraged by their captain. Bullets zing by. The defenders spread out along the edge of the glacier.

“We cannot hold them, Mark. We have no guns, just old-fashioned swords, clubs, rocks and ice.”

“I have a plan,” Mark shouts. “Men. Hold this board at the edge of the ice.”

Mark hammers furiously with his rock hammer to break the ice dam holding back the glacial lake, while Druythob and pilgrims hold the long board in front of the key ice block.

Kusoom points and shouts down to Mark from the wing above.

“Mark! The soldiers are coming up the glacier. Run before it is too late.”

Mark shouts back. “No. We will stop them.”

“Mark!”

Mark shouts across the lip of the glacier to Druythob and the defenders

“Druythob, everyone, push now. Push hard!”

Finally, they push the board away from a slab of ice to open the ice dam. Tons of ice and rock flood down on Chinese troops, flushing them down the valley. Cheers are shouted from the people on the Cosmic Swan, but a couple of soldiers and their captain escape the flood.

Druythob elates, “We did it. Look at them run. Whew, I’m freezing.” A moment later, “Look out, Mr. Mark. Some soldiers are still crawling up the broken ice.”

The captain lifts his rifle and shoots at Mark. The bullet shatters ice nearby. Mark and the defenders hide behind a block of ice. Mark takes a quick look.

“Push that big ice block!”

Together they push the large block of ice down the hill. It starts a small avalanche, but the soldiers keep climbing.

Holding his rock hammer at ready, Mark shouts, “Ready your swords, men.”

Druythob shouts, “They climb up the wide crack below. Look, there they are.”

Two soldiers push into the opening of the fallen glacier dam.

Mark shouts, “They are inside the wide crack – they can’t see us.

They're up to the dam. Jump on them! The soldiers are surprised and cut down by the swords, except for the captain. He blocks Mark's rock hammer with his rifle and knocks him to the ground. Mark rolls, but the captain fires. Mark takes a bullet in his side.

"Shit, that hurts."

Standing over Mark, the captain taunts, "You American dog! You cannot protect the monster any longer!"

He points his rifle at Mark's head.

Mark shouts. "Drupthob. Where are you?"

Drupthob is standing on an outcrop above. "Here!"

The captain looks up. Drupthob points his rusty sword at the captain and jumps. He falls on the captain, stabbing his shoulder, but the rifle fires, hitting Drupthob in the chest. Drupthob falls. Raising his rock hammer Mark knocks the gun away, and slams the captain on the side of his head, knocking him out cold.

Mark slowly stands, clutching his bleeding side

FLIGHT TO HIMALAYAS

"Call me Jagdish. Flight is good. This old turboprop is in the best condition. I work on it myself."

"That's good to know, Jagdish. Please call me Mark, but excuse me, who is flying the plane?"

Jagdish smiles confidently, "Auto-pilot flies plane."

"Can the autopilot see these jagged mountains?"

"Oh, yes, the pilot replies, "autopilot has look-down radar."

"OK. I guess you've done this before. From your well-worn jacket I guess you were in the Indian Air Force."

"Yes sir. I left in 1964. Do you remember when the Chinese invaded India in 1962?"

"I don't remember that."

"We trained in Migs. I was ready. I wanted to fight the Chinese, but we were told to stand down."

"Why?"

"Government said no. We ran like frightened goats. I was angry."

"I would be too."

"I will go to America someday. I admire Arnold Schwarzenegger. He is a fighter. He is such a cool tough guy. Maybe I could get into the movies in Hollywood. May I visit you there when you finish your secret mission?"

"Sure. That would be ..."

An alarm sounds from front of plane.

"Well, Mark. The autopilot needs my help. Nice talking with you."

The pilot returns to the cockpit. A few moments later, Mark hears some excited exchange over the radio. He unbuckles and runs forward to stand behind the pilot. He sees two Chinese Mig interceptor jets rise

up below the plane.

“Holy crap. What’s happening? What are those Chinese fighter planes doing there?”

“They tell us we are invading Chinese airspace. They told us to return to Indian airspace or they will shoot us down.”

“Have we crossed the border yet?”

“About ten minutes ago.”

“What! Are they going to shoot us down?”

“No sir!”

“I don’t think we are faster than those jets ...”

“This souped up turbo is faster and more maneuverable than those old antique Migs. I made some modifications to the engine myself. Their speed is maxed out now.” Hah. See the Mig pilot on the right side. He is a little upset. His hand signals are not in the international signals book. How crude.”

The plane accelerates away from the migs.

“But, but, why not just turn back?”

“I do not think so. The Indian Science Institute told me about your secret mission. I know it is important. Please return to your seat and buckle up. The air might become turbulent.”

“Jesus.”

OLD STUDEBAKER TAKES MARK TO MT. KAILAS

Blackness creeps down from the mountains. The cold is beginning to alarm him. Shivering, he starts rummaging through a box to find his camping tent. A sound. He looks up the road to see a strange vehicle growling in a low gear toward him. After some time he sees an old beat-up six-wheel Studebaker military truck. It stops next to him.

The driver wears olive drab and a rag turban. He is tall with a long grey beard down to his chest. He studies Mark carefully, then smiles and asks, “Are you Mr. Joff?”

“Yes. I am. I’m very happy to see you. I am freezing my buns off.”

“Buns, sir?” After a short pause he says “I am putting your back pack behind the seat. My name is Rakash.”

“Thanks. Nice to meet you. Will you help me load the boxes into the back of your truck?”

“Yes - Yes, I will help you put them in the lorry.”

“Lorry? Oh, yes. OK. I keep forgetting.”

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After the boxes are loaded, Mark climbs into the passenger seat.

The lorry chugs into the dark.

“Thanks. Are you driving to Mt. Kailas?”

“I take you to holy valley at foot of mountain.”

“How can you see? The dark is impenetrable. Are you going to turn on your lights?”

“No lights, broke. I see good. Know way to valley.

KUSOOM FLIES BACK TO COSMIC SWAN

Kusoom changes to her black space suit and goes to Mark. “Good bye, Mark. I am terribly sorry to leave you. I wish we could take the time to see more of the Earth.”

“I am very sad,” he says. “Come back as soon as it is safe.”

“I will. I will miss you.”

Mark reaches out and pulls her into his arms for a hug. She pushes back for a moment, but then relents, pulling him to her and says “Good-bye.” Both faces are wet with tears. He follows her around the corner of the barn, where Mikla is waiting. “Oh, Kusoom. I have a little going away present for you.” He gives her a little silver box. She pulls the chain out of the box and looks closely at the multifaceted green stone, turning it around to catch the light. “The emerald! I love it. I will not forget you Mark. Will you put it on?” Mark carefully takes the thin gold chain and connects the ends behind her neck. “Beautiful.” She tucks the stone down her neck in front and closes the top of her black space suit.

Mark, Caroline, and Jack watch as she climbs aboard, and, with a great rush of wind, Mikla lifts her up into the dark.