

# The Very, Very, Very Long HiKe

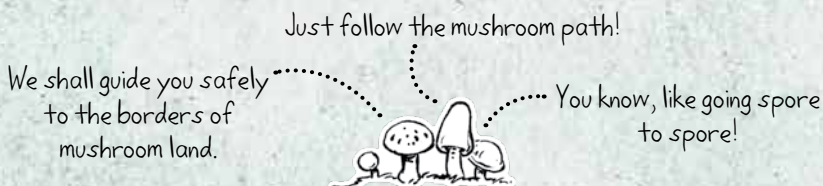


**E**DUN DID NOT want to go on a hike.

She especially did not want to go on a long hike in the mountains that led to a tiny cabin with no electricity and no running water. On the hike, Edun would have to carry her clothes and toothbrush in her backpack, and only one book. She wanted to stay inside instead and dream up an exciting adventure story while wrapped in a warm quilt.

“Ready?” Mama Sara asked cheerfully after breakfast. Edun looked out the window and only saw rain, lots of it.

“We should go another day,” Edun suggested. “Maybe a hundred years from now.” She worried she would get tired on the hike. She worried about getting bored at the dark cabin.



by Debbie Urbanski  
Art by Dave Szalay

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Mama Sara said it was time to stop worrying and get into the car.

Edun's brother, Will, was waiting in the garage with Mama Jade, their other mother, who wore binoculars around her neck. She was quizzing Will using her favorite field guide.

"Is that . . . a white spruce?" asked Will.

"Excellent!" said Mama Jade, beaming.

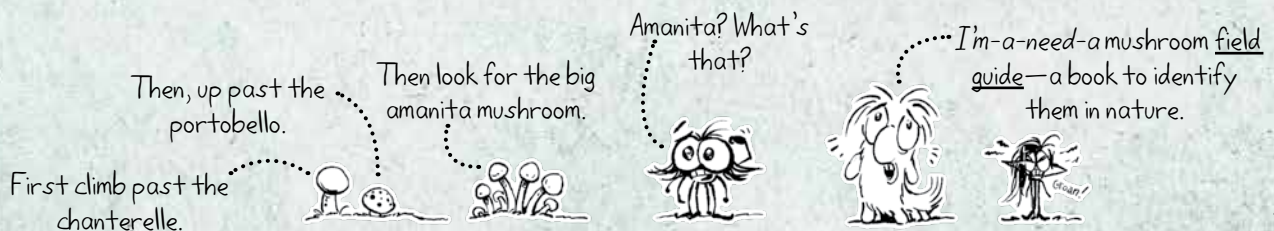
Will was four years older than Edun and had climbed many more

mountains. He'd started hiking when he was two and loved it.

Because it was raining, Edun had to wear her rain pants, her rain hat, her rain jacket, and her waterproof boots. Her jacket had a weird mesh on the inside. She didn't like how it felt against her skin.

They parked at a dripping wet trailhead.

"We'll be there by afternoon!" Mama Sara promised. The afternoon sounded far away.





Mama Jade identified a bird perched on a nearby branch—"Fox sparrow!"—then she and Will zoomed down the trail and were soon out of sight.

Edun huddled under a pine tree. "You can't force me to walk," Edun said.

"You're right," said her mom. Mama Sara stood under the tree, too, and they watched the rain together. "But what if your brother and Mama Jade need us?"

"They won't need me," Edun said.

"I think they might," said Mama Sara. "You need all sorts of people in the mountains."

In case her mom was right, Edun reluctantly agreed to start hiking.

The cold raindrops fell heavy on Edun's hat and rolled onto her neck. They passed a waterfall no bigger than Edun's hand.

"A waterfall for gnomes," Mama Sara imagined.



Hooray! We're out of the woods!



Thank you, mushrooms.  
You saved us!



It was no truffle at all.





“A pixie waterfall!” Edun said.

There was always something to look for in the wet green woods: animal tracks, wildflowers, little creeks, moose droppings. They climbed past the tree line, above where a regular forest could grow. They hiked past scratchy bushes, gray rocks, and dwarf trees. Edun loomed above those miniature trees.

“Look, Mom, I’m a giant,” she laughed.

Mama Sara took out her waterproof map. Already they had walked

two miles. Was Edun better at hiking than she thought?

Next was the day’s big climb to the very top of a mountain.

Will and Mama Jade were waiting for them beside a field of boulders. Mama Jade put her finger to her lips then pointed to some nearby rocks, where a mother bird led four of the cutest baby birds on a slow walk. The birds were practically invisible and the same brown color as the ground.

I thought we’d never see the end of that deep, dark forest!



My dear, that fear loomed—appeared suddenly very large—over me, as well.



We only need to climb that mountain now.



“Ptarmigans!” Mama Jade whispered. “You only see them here in the alpine.”

The trail switched steeply back and forth, winding between large rocks. Halfway through the climb, the rain stopped. Edun unzipped her jacket and put her rain hat in her bag. The mountains, creeping out from behind the clouds, were decorated with white lines of snow.

“I’m tired,” Will said.

“Me, too,” Mama Jade said.

“Me, three!” Mama Sara chimed in. Uh-oh, Edun thought.

Then she remembered the beginning of the hike. Those first miles went by so quickly when she was looking for special things in the woods! This gave her an idea.

She grabbed Will’s tired hand and Mama Jade’s tired arm and marched up the trail with her family. “I spy with my little eye something blue,” she began.

“The sky,” guessed Will.

“Your jacket,” guessed Mama Sara.

Here in the refreshing air of the alpine—this area with mountains—I feel like a little bee boy again.



They played I Spy. They played I Spy again. They kept playing until somehow, just as Edun had hoped, they stood together on the mountain’s

Once we get to the peak, we should see the meadow!





couldn't see any buildings or roads, no matter what direction she looked. All she saw were faraway meadows and lakes, and many more mountains. She felt like she stood in a whole new world, a world made of mountain peaks and stone. Her family took a break and huddled beside a pile of rocks—a cairn, Mama Jade called it.

"It helps mark the trail so we don't get lost," Mama Jade said. Will added a smooth rock to the pile, while Edun added a small flat one.

They hiked down from the mountain together. At a large waterfall, Mama Jade pumped fresh water through a filter into Edun's water bottle.

"Is this a goblin waterfall?" Mama Sara imagined.

"A dragon waterfall!" Edun said.

"Actually, this water came from glaciers," Mama Jade pointed out. Edun had never drunk a glacier before. It tasted clear and good.

Twenty minutes later, they saw the cabin. Everyone cheered. The cabin was small but cozy, and Will gave Edun first pick of the bunks.

summit. It was windy and cold and it felt suddenly like winter.

"Wow," said Edun, digging in her backpack for her hat and gloves. She







That night, everybody stayed up late to see the stars. Edun barely recognized the night sky. There were so many stars up there, stars upon stars.

"I need to take a picture of them so I remember," said Edun.

Mama Jade explained they didn't have the right type of camera. Edun tried anyway. In her photo, the sky looked like one dark blur. This made Edun start worrying again.

"What if I forget how this looks?" Edun asked.

"I don't think you will," said Mama Sara.

Edun closed her eyes to be sure. She saw that every star in that wild sky was right there suspended in her mind.

"Edun," Mama Sara whispered, "now are you glad you came?"

Edun nodded, smiled, and opened her eyes. 🌟

Carry me down to the valley, my trusty mites. I shall return in triumph.

Mira! Look! That banner is suspended—hung over—Ophelia's yard!

The mushrooms must have contacted Miro through the interwebs!

Whazzit say?

C'mon gang! Let's get down there!