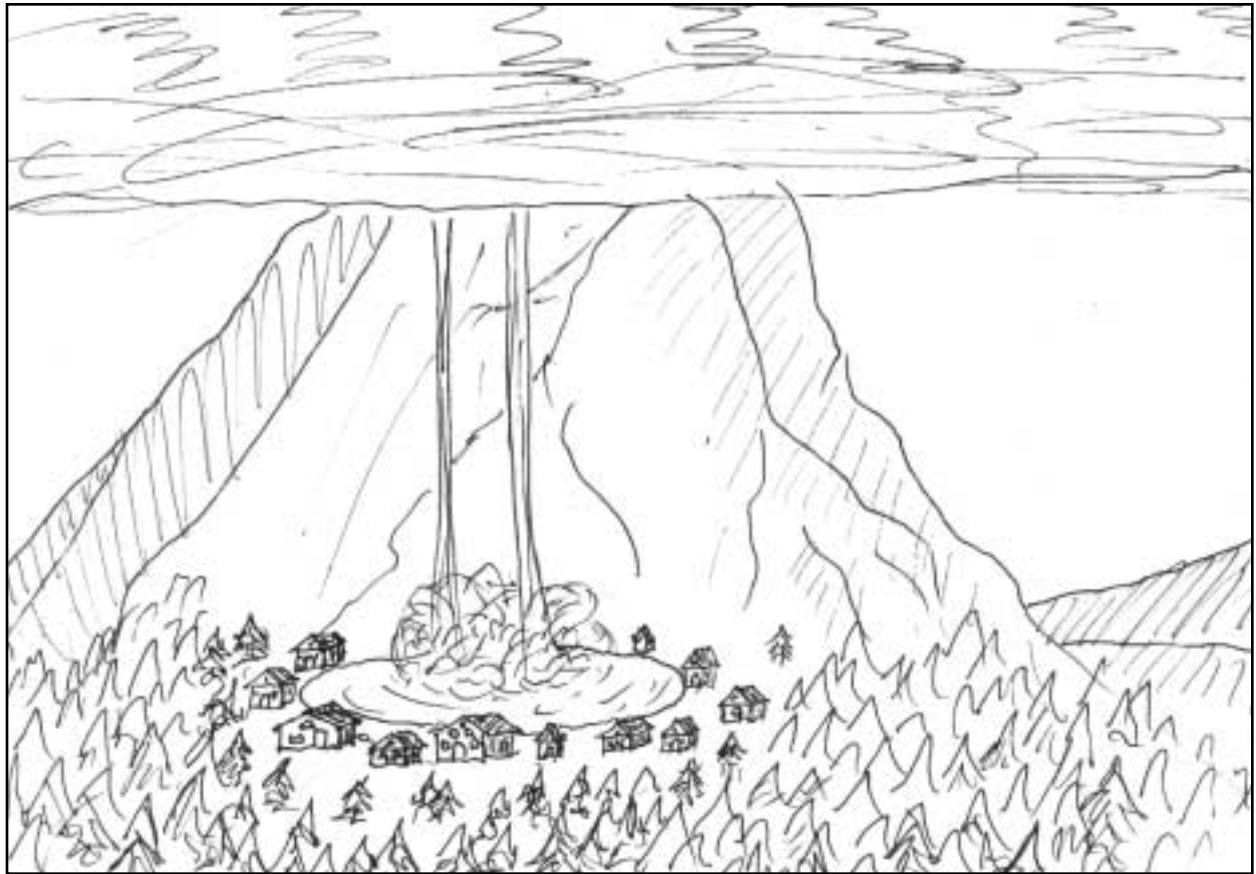


# The Giant Who Cried Waterfalls



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For  
Davida  
Rochman,  
who is good at  
understanding



**T**his story starts most of the way up a tall mountain.

To get there, we have to first take a plane halfway around the world. Then we have to take a long train ride, of about five hours, to the bottom of a large mountain range. That's as far as the train goes, so we have to take a bus from that town to an even smaller town. It's not that far, but the roads are so winding and so thin that we have to stop to wait for cars, carts, other buses, and frequently sheep and goats to go past before we can continue on our way. Finally, we arrive at a smaller town at the *bottom* of the mountain.

Look up the mountain. *Towards* the top, you can see a small village with perhaps fifteen houses and two larger buildings. That's the village we need to get to. You can't see the *very top* of the mountain. It's above the clouds.

Before we travel up, take a good look at the mountain. See how the pine trees get smaller and smaller as they get closer and closer to the village? See how the mountain becomes more rocks than trees as you look past the village? It's almost all boulders and crags as it disappears into the clouds.

See the village? All the houses and the two larger buildings are built in a semi-circle around a small lake. Now, take a good look at that lake. You'd expect a mountain lake to be bright blue like the sky, but it's greyer and milkier than that.

But here's what you really need to see. Look behind the lake. Notice the two thin lines of water running up the mountain and disappearing into the clouds? These are two thin waterfalls, which, of course, travel down from the top of the mountain and into the lake. They're quite beautiful, these two thin waterfalls. They're also magic, or so many people think. That's why so many people go to the lake to cure their aches and pains, among other things. And they pay good money to do this. In fact, many of the people in the village earn their living from the money people pay to bathe in and drink this lake water.

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Are you ready to walk up? It's a long, long walk. But it'll be worth it; you'll see.

~ ~ ~ ~

In the village on the mountainside lives a small girl named Bonnie. She's nine years old, but she's small for her age. She's about the size of a seven year old. That's OK; she doesn't mind being small.

Her family sells bottled water from the village lake, which she and her Dad cart down the mountain every morning. (Yes, all the way down the mountain path!) She has to go down the mountain anyway, since that's where her small school is. Generally, she walks all the way back up by herself.

One day, a beautiful day where you could *almost* see the top of the mountains through the clouds, Bonnie decided she wanted to go all the way to the top of the mountain to see where the waterfalls begin. Of course she was told by her parents, quite plainly, *not* to do this.

"*Never* go to the top of our mountain," her Dad said. And her Mother, always giving the most specific warning possible in an attempt to leave Bonnie no 'wiggle room,' elaborated: "Do *not* try to find out where the waterfalls begin."

But it *was* a beautiful day. School *had* let out early since the teacher had to leave town to go to a wedding. And Bonnie had no homework. So she decided to walk *almost* to the top of the mountain and get *close to but not completely* where the waterfalls begin. She was allowed to walk *around* the mountain and no one was expecting her home for hours and she had done all her chores... but she knew she was disobeying her parents. And she felt bad about it. But she really, *really* wanted to see where the waterfalls begin.

~ ~ ~ ~

Let's follow her up the mountainside.

~ ~ ~ ~

As I mentioned, Bonnie had already passed her village and continued up what seemed to be some sort of path between the waterfalls. Certainly, she was not the first person to do this! The path got smaller and smaller and smaller as the waterfalls got closer and closer and closer until she started to realize it wasn't a path at all. It was simply the space between the waterfalls.

She said to herself, excitedly, "Perhaps it starts as just *one* waterfall!" She was now walking through the clouds. She kept glancing back as she continued upwards and with every step it looked as if her village were fading away.

Before she realized it, she had bumped into a huge, odd shaped rock, almost a small mountain by itself. The rock was as wide as the widest building she had ever seen and as tall as the tallest tower in the town at the bottom of the mountain. The waterfalls ran down the front of this huge rock and try as she might she couldn't help but look up, to the place where the waterfalls began.

Once she realized she was looking up she closed her eyes, so as not to *completely* disobey her Mother. But she couldn't help seeing what she saw. The mountain looked like a huge man, sitting with elbows on his knees, with waterfalls running down from his eyes.

Bonnie turned away and, without looking back, ran down the mountain, through the clouds, and without so much as breaking stride, ran into her house and slammed the front door.

She *wanted* to believe that the top of the mountain had been carved into the shape of a giant. She tried *so hard* to believe this, she had almost actually succeeded. But she *couldn't*. She knew it was a real man, a giant. A giant! Sitting at the top of the mountain. Head in his hands. Crying waterfalls.



The rest of the day and all through the night she could think of only one thing: Why was the giant crying?

The next day, she got ready for school, her mind still on the crying giant, when her Father reminded her to help him put the water bottles into the cart. She had done this every day of her life for as long as she could remember, but now it was different. The bottles didn't contain water anymore; they contained giant tears. Her family didn't make their money selling lake water; they made their money selling giant tears. The money they used to buy food and toys and furniture didn't come from a waterfall running down a mountain into the lake; it came from a very, very sad man. A giant, yes, but also *a man*. His sadness filled their bottles and earned them money.

This made Bonnie so unhappy her bones ached. She strained to keep her own tears inside, lest her father see them and ask her why she was so sad. She finished putting the bottles in the cart, helped her father roll the cart down the mountain and, instead of running off to school, she ran up the mountain to the crying giant.

Bonnie was scared, but she was too sad to let that get in her way. She climbed onto the giant's shoulders. She could feel the giant shaking from his sobs. She yelled (since she figured she needed to be loud to be heard by a giant), **"Why are you so sad Mr. Giant?"**

Nothing happened. The giant cried and the waterfalls poured as if she weren't there. She yelled again, **"Why are you so sad Mr. Giant?!?"**

Still nothing happened. This time, more softly and mostly to herself, she asked, "What could be so terrible that you cry waterfalls?" Bonnie understood crying, but not crying that lasted days, let alone many years.

Suddenly the tears stopped. A giant head looked over at Bonnie. The head was far, far larger than Bonnie's whole body. As big as her whole house. And the voice was so rumbley it sounded more like thunder than words, but it was not loud. As if he had all the time in the world, the giant slowly rolled out, "You could never understand." The giant then placed his head back in his hands. The sobbing, and the waterfalls, continued.

Bonnie did not like being told she couldn't understand, not even by a creature that was so many times her size. She declared, "I may be young and I may be small, but I understand lots." The giant looked her way, but did not take his head from his hands or stop crying. Bonnie added, "I came all the way up here to help you. I am skipping school and will get in big trouble today. Just to help you. The least you can do is tell me why you are so sad!"

The giant said, slowly and rumbley, "I am sad because I am the last of my kind."

"You are the last giant?" Bonnie asked.



“Yes,” said the giant as he put his head in his hands and started crying again.

“What happened to all the rest of you?”

The giant’s head snapped towards her with such anger that Bonnie nearly fell off his shoulder. He yelled, loudly and quickly, **“They all DIED!”**

For a full five minutes the giant glared at Bonnie, freezing her in place. Then he turned away and, once again, started crying. Bonnie took this opportunity to run away. Down the mountain.

~ ~ ~ ~

Let’s hurry down before her and see what’s happening at the lake.

~ ~ ~ ~

There is an old, wise man with a long white beard (of course) who watches the lake to make sure no one is spending too much time bathing in it or dropping garbage in it or, though I hate to say it, peeing in it. He also answers people’s questions about the lake and, in fact, about anything else they might want to know.

This man, whom everyone calls “The Old Man of the Lake” or ‘The Olmal’ for short, noticed that for a few minutes the waterfalls had stopped flowing.

If you’re taking a shower and the water sputters for a second or even stops for a minute, you’d certainly notice. But if it starts up again, then, well, you have better things to worry about and you finish taking your shower. But The Olmal did *not* have better things to worry about. Worrying about the lake was his job. And when the waterfalls stopped, even though they started up again just a few minutes later, he became concerned and he decided he would walk up to the top of the mountain to see if there might be something wrong with the giant.

Oh, yes, The Olmal knew what was at the source of the waterfalls, though he never told anyone. All he would say when people asked where the waterfalls began was this: “Do not go up there or you will break the magic.”

What The Olmal saw when he was walking up the mountain, oh so slowly since he was an old man, was Bonnie running down the mountain towards him.

The Olmal asked sternly, “Where have you been Miss Bonnie?”

Bonnie stopped running and hung her head, but said nothing.

The Olmal asked, “Did you look to see where the waterfalls begin?”

Bonnie nodded her head.

“I will have to tell your parents,” said The Olmal.

“I know,” said Bonnie somewhat ashamed and fearful, but then added, “Do you know who- ... ummm ... *what’s* there?”

The Olmal said nothing, but Bonnie understood that, yes, he *did* know. Bonnie asked another question. “How long has he been up there crying? Since you were a little boy?”

Again, The Olmal said nothing, which Bonnie knew was another ‘yes’.

Bonnie asked her final question, her head now held high and her voice angry, “Did you ever try to make him *stop* crying?”

The Olmal said gently and as if it were a great truth, “His sadness makes many other people very happy.”

“It doesn’t make *me* very happy!” yelled Bonnie. “It makes me very, very sad!” Then she ran back up to the giant.

When she got to the top of the mountain, she declared, “I am going to find you another giant.” Then she ran off, not back to her village, but over to the other mountains.



The giant glanced over to Bonnie, ever so slightly. So slightly, in fact, you might not have noticed, but his tears did slow and the waterfalls, which were never so big to begin with, became just a little bit smaller.

~ ~ ~ ~

Now you have to wait a bit. Because Bonnie's journey took her a few years. Yes, *years*.

~ ~ ~ ~

Bonnie knew that if she returned to the village, she would get into big trouble. She also knew she would be very sad for, perhaps, the rest of her life. "Might as well put *me* at the top of the mountain so I could help the giant make the waterfalls," she said aloud to herself.

So for years and years, she walked the mountaintops looking for the beginnings of other waterfalls hoping to find another giant.

She got hungry some days, but would soon find someone to give her a little food. She got cold some days, but would soon find someone to let her stay in his or her house for a while and get warm. And when she got lonely, all she had to do was think about the giant. The giant who cried from loneliness for so many years that even The Olmal grew old underneath the giant's tears.

And then one day she found a pair of waterfalls running down a mountain that was so tall the clouds covered its top. She followed the waterfalls past a number of small villages, through the clouds, and to a large person-shaped rock at the very top. It was, of course, another giant.

This time, Bonnie was not at all afraid. And she didn't care how many people in the villages below made money from *this* giant's tears. She climbed onto one of her shoulders, (yes, *her* shoulders since this giant was a *female*) and said, quite matter-of-factly, "There is another. *At least* one. Maybe more."

The giant looked over at Bonnie and she was a combination of sad, angry, and just the tiniest bit hopeful. In a rumbling, thunder-like voice, she asked, "Another *giant*?"

"Yes," explained Bonnie. "Also crying waterfalls."

Immediately, the female giant stopped crying. She gently picked Bonnie up and asked, "Will you take me to, to-?"

"-him," finished Bonnie. "Of course. That's why I came."

~ ~ ~ ~



You can imagine what happened next. The giant moved much faster than Bonnie and within just a few weeks joined the other giant at the top of Bonnie's mountain. The first giant was so happy to see another of his kind that he immediately stopped crying. (So much for the waterfalls!)

The two giants thanked Bonnie and told her that they planned to search the globe for more giants. Bonnie was sad to see them leave so quickly, but she understood. Bonnie was good at understanding.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~  
All that's left to tell is what happened when Bonnie, finally, returned to her village.

While she looked very different from when she left, everyone knew it was Bonnie coming down the mountain. (Who else could make the waterfalls stop?)

Many of the villagers were mad at her, but she ignored them. She knew that she had made the giants happy and, though there were only two of them (so far), this happiness was far greater than any amount of villagers' anger.

She walked to her parents' home and found them overjoyed to see her again.

Bonnie said, "I am sorry to have disobeyed you. And I am sorry to have spoiled your business of selling bottled water."

Her father interrupted her. "Don't be sorry," he said. "We did not know about the giant. Once we learned, we stopped selling the water and waited for you to come home."

After they all hugged and cried with happiness, Bonnie noticed that The Olmal was in the room. She looked at him, unsure of what to say, feeling some of the old anger rising in her chest.

But The Olmal raised his hand and spoke, slowly and with shame, "When I was a boy, the same age as you were when you left, I climbed up the mountain to see what caused the waterfalls ... even though I wasn't supposed to. I found the giant and, like you, I asked him why he was so sad. He never answered and I decided that if he could be so rude to me, a small boy who wanted to help him, then he *deserved* to be sad. Every year I thought about the sad giant on the top of the mountain and what I might do to make him stop crying, but then I remembered that he was rude to me when I tried to help him. The years passed, one after the other, faster than you could ever imagine, and soon enough, I began to believe that the sadness of a rude giant on one side of the scale was less of a weight than the happiness of so many good people on the other side. It wasn't until you ran off to look for another giant that I realized I was wrong. All our happiness was *false* happiness, since it was built on the tears of another."

Bonnie's Mother asked The Olmal, "Could you please tell this story to all the other villagers?"

"I already have," said The Olmal. "In time they will understand. In time."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

And, in time, they did. And, in time, all the giants came to Bonnie's mountain. And there were *seventeen* of them! But this was when Bonnie was an old woman and had children *and grandchildren* of her own. And well after the lake had dried up and most of the villagers had moved away.

*So what happened to the giants? Are they still there?* Most of them are, yes.

*Did they all live happily ever after?* Well ... Some did and some didn't. Just like normal people.

But none of them ever became so sad or so lonely again that they sat at the top of a mountain and cried waterfalls.

**The End.**



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