

Naga the Mountain Goat



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A very, very long time ago there lived a mountain goat, and she lived like most mountain goats, high up on the alpine meadows where she felt safe and found those small green plants she loved to eat. She absolutely loved climbing to the tops of the mountains. Every mountain surrounding their meadows she had to climb to the very top, some mountains multiple times to the summit. She would get to the top and look around and sing 'Mother Earth, this is such a beautiful place and from up here I can see how wonderful you really are! Thank you!'

There came a time when she was still very young, she had climbed every single mountain seen from home, and she started wandering farther from home to find a new mountain to climb. Her grandmother warned her to be careful climbing the mountains and traveling further distances – always remember your way home, she said. Yet every time, her grandmother would tell her to sing loudly and in her best voice. If she did, she would please Mother Earth.

One day while out looking for a new mountain to climb, a tall mountain she had not seen before appeared out of the clouds. This mountain stood taller than those around it in every direction. It was the tallest mountain she could see, and she'd never climbed any part of it. She just *had* to climb it!

Walking for what seemed like hours, she finally made it to the base of the mountain. She climbed up a short distance and realized that side of the mountain was solid rock – no footholds, no cracks, just smooth rock – and difficult to climb. She kept at it for several hours but hadn't made much progress.

She started to get frustrated and sad because she had never failed to climb up a mountain to sing praises to Mother Earth.

While she rested to catch her breath and fight back the tears before taking off again, she saw it. Just above her was a cave entrance. Could this cave lead up the mountain?

She made her way to the cave entrance and carefully went inside; there was no other animal smell in the cave as the entrance was too difficult for anything but birds. As she went further into the cave, the darkness enveloped her and she could not see anything – not even her own feet. She kept walking deeper in the cave though deeper into the mountain.

Then, the cave started gradually sloping downwards. Turning around was not even a thought that entered her mind; she had to keep walking to get to the top. Somehow, she knew that this cave was her path to the mountain's top. She just *knew* this was the path. She kept walking slowly down the cave floor which surprisingly was smooth and easy to walk on. Lucky for the goat, because she still couldn't see anything!

After what seemed like hours, she hit what felt like the bottom. The path stopped going down and started to curl upwards as she needed much more energy to walk. More hours passed, or so she thought, and she was starting to get very tired. Darkness was her only companion, so it was easy to curl up into a ball and fall asleep. She woke up without knowing just how long she slept because everything was just as dark as when she fell asleep.

Walking up the cave towards the top was her best path forward and she climbed on. After some time, she noticed that the steepness of the cave kept increasing. It was harder and harder for her to make progress, and she got tired quickly. She hadn't had food or water since she left home and by now, she had no idea how long that was. Everything stayed dark.

She took another rest and fell asleep again.

When she woke, darkness remained just as black and empty as before, and absolutely no sounds – absolute silence. There was only one thing she could do ... keep walking up the cave hoping it would take her to the top. She kept going but getting more tired with every step and very thirsty. Big tears were forming in corners of her eyes as she was starting to get afraid of not reaching the top. Not once did she worry about herself or how to get out of the cave, only that she wouldn't make it to the top to sing to Mother Earth.

As tears streamed down her face, she tried to lick them for their water. Her sadness increased but she never thought about stopping. She just kept on going up in the dark and silent cave. Eventually, the cave got narrower and she had to squeeze through small openings to continue.

With her strength almost gone she rested on last time and fell asleep.

When she woke up this time, she thought there was a small dim light above her, but she couldn't tell for sure – and she didn't trust her exhausted mind to not trick her. She went up more and then some more ... the light got brighter and brighter ... and with one more squeeze through a small opening, she was standing atop the mountain at night looking at a sky filled with stars.

She waited until the sunrise and began her song. She was so tired but sang as loud as she could and for as long as she could praising Mother Earth. When she finished, she started looking around her and realized how high she was! There were clouds beneath her and mother earth below as far as she could see. ... But, she couldn't go down the side of the smooth rock mountain. Could she go back down through the cave?

What was she going to do? Going back down the cave would take her days, and she'd either die of thirst or hunger along the way. She was tired, so very tired. She sat down and started humming her song to Mother Earth quietly to herself to keep from being afraid.

A Spirit-wind from the East was out in the world that day. As the Spirit-wind passed through the mountains, it heard a small voice singing a beautiful song praising Mother Earth. At first, the Spirit-wind thought it another smaller wind making noises in the rocks and it just 'seemed' like a song. Small creature voices don't belong at mountain tops this high.

The Spirit-wind went to the mountain and found the little mountain goat singing quietly in an exhausted voice. It wasn't a wind – just a tiny mountain goat.

The mountain goat feared the Spirit-wind at first, but it calmed her by asking, "Little one, I heard your beautiful song and at first thought it another wind this high on the mountain. When I saw a goat and not a wind, I just had to talk with you. Why are you here atop this very tall mountain where goats do not belong?"

She was still afraid, but explained, "I always climb mountains so I can sing to praise Mother Earth. This mountain was so tall that I thought Mother Earth would be pleased."

The Spirit-wind thinking ahead, "You were not afraid on the way up through the cave, or not being able get back down?" The little goat just replied, "I never thought about it; I just wanted to sing my song for Mother Earth from the tallest mountain around."

Still pondering the situation, Spirit-wind remarked, "you know I cannot help you back down the mountain, and I don't think you can get down on your own. You traveled for almost four days to get to the top."

The goat was surprised at the four days. She didn't cry, she didn't moan ... she just looked at the Spirit-wind and asked, "did Mother earth like my song?" If the Spirit-wind had eyes like a goat, they would have been filled with tears. It gently soothed the goat with a gentle breeze and said to her, "Oh, my dear precious little goat, Mother earth was so happy with your song, she asked me to help you."

The Spirit-wind quivered with an idea and the goat heard a small chuckle in the wind. The Spirit-wind asked the goat, "would you let me help you? But, before you answer yes, know

that you will NOT be a goat any longer. You will be able to praise Mother Earth from the highest spot above her.”

She thought about this for a long time. Not being a goat? Not going back down the mountain, what would I do, what would I be she thought to herself. Those thoughts bothered the goat deeply as she loved her goat family and the meadows, but she’d still be able to sing her song to Mother Earth ... and now, from the highest place possible.

She decided that most important was for her to keep singing. She agreed with the Spirit-wind that she’d accept the help.

The Spirit-wind circled around the goat’s head gently and said, “Your name is Naga! Naga the Mountain Goat who sings praises to Mother Earth. All the spirit-winds will come together to blow you to the very top of the earth’s sky that holds still while the earth turns so you can sing her praises from the highest point above Mother Earth. You, Naga, will become an unmoving star above Mother Earth. Other singers will find their way home because you will shine brightly and sing loudly to Mother Earth from the highest point in the north sky. You will be the North Star and the story of Naga the Mountain Goat will never be forgotten.”

Naga knew she was home.