

The Mountain's Secret

Margaret Dale

I love the fresh smell of the Colorado Mountains. It makes me feel a sense of adventure. I swung my leg over my mountain bike, and took off down the trail leading from the house. Birds chirped, rivers flowed, trees stood, and the breeze ruffled my long wavy dark hair. I love autumn days like this. My name is Mimi. Mimi Haverbrooke.

I stood up off my bike seat and pedaled up the tiny hill on the trail. I had no idea where I was going to turn around. But that didn't matter just yet. Rays of dusty sunlight filled the gaps between the trees, and dappled the leaf strewn ground. I live on Vermilion Peak, in southern Colorado. In my opinion, it's the most beautiful mountain you can get.

My backpack swung as the constant movement I pursued hastened. A little chipmunk darted across the trail. It startled me and I fought against gravity to keep my balance. I peeped a light scream as I fell on to the forest floor. I picked myself up, brushed off my T-shirt and leggings, and went to pick up my bike.

When I was all ready to go again, I found that there was a slight problem. I couldn't see the trail. I was lost. Completely lost. Just as I started to panic, I remembered the worst thing I could do in a situation like this was panic.

"You can't think if you're freaked out." My dad told me once. So, I took a deep breath and considered my options. A light wind caused a black wave of hair to swing in front of my eyes, blocking my vision. Deeply annoyed, I swept it out of my face. I could wander up to the top of the mountain, where the path

is always clear, or, I could wander down the mountain, and find my way back to the house. I decided to climb to the top of the mountain, going near the road in the autumn season and on a beautiful day like this, could be dangerous.

“Well, I guess I’ll have to call back home, to say I’ve lost the trail, and to give me some time to climb the mountain, and then ride back home.” I called to the empty forest around me. Being lost had taken its toll on me. I was afraid. I called to my Southern Ute ancestors to help me. I know, people who died can’t come alive again, but I was hoping that at least their spirits would help me. My mom told me she was sure I would be okay, and if I needed help to call, and she would find me. I wouldn’t need help. My ancestors, and hers too, had navigated this peak for generations. I could too.

I trudged onward, hoping this day wouldn’t end in disaster. After at least an hour, I came upon a circle, or rather oval, of indigenous trees. Not a rare sight I know, but I had a strange feeling that these trees, had a secret hiding in the middle of the oval they created. A tiny bird hopped nearby.

“Weird, how you get these feelings, and you pretty much always end up right, huh.” I told the bird. Not that it understood me. Cautiously, I stepped between an opening created by two tall lilac bushes, that resulted in an arch over the makeshift door. Inside the trees was a pool, large enough for me to swim in. The water’s color, was a bright tropical turquoise. The color you only see in Central America, like Costa Rica.

I felt compelled by curiosity to jump into the pool, even though I would be soaked and freezing afterward. But, this came to an interesting thought too. I somehow knew, I wouldn’t get wet when I dove in. Not knowing what I was doing, I strapped my bike helmet to my handlebars tightly, walked

forward to the shore of the still pool, and dropped into the water, bike and all. There was no bottom for my feet to touch. I felt no sand brush the soles of my shoes as I dove in. There was no water.

When I woke up, I found a girl about my age, giving me sips of water. She was my great-great-great oh, you get the point, grandmother, when she was my age. An early generation of Southern Ute. A wet cloth bound with healing herbs had been tied around my forehead. I made to get up, but she motioned me to lay down a little longer for the herbs, and water mixture to work.

Through a type of sign language she told me they had carried me miles, back to my home. She also told me, I had been bruised, cut, and injured when they found me. Finally, she told me I could get up and go home now. But, when I got up, nothing I had taken with me on my ride was there. Shaking it from my mind I looked around. The whole tribe was here. My ancient grandmother, informed them I was well and ready to go home. Home to the future.

Slowly, almost gliding, they started to walk away. As they walked, they faded as well, leaving me to see the past no more once they were gone. I waved to my ancestors. My family. They waved back. After minutes, they finally disappeared.

I was back in the future. In front of my house. My bike and backpack were at my side. I opened the door to the house and stepped inside. I had visited the Pool of Time. I had visited my ancestors, and learned my true meaning. To keep the Southern Ute living. And my ancient grandmother's lively, adventurous, and kind spirit alive.