

The Velvet Mountain



Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

The Velvet Mountain

Yavuz DEMİRKİRAN



High above the village stood a mountain like no other. Its slopes were covered in grass so soft it felt like velvet under bare feet. The grass shimmered in shades of pink, gold, and green, changing with the light. People called it the Velvet Mountain, and it was the pride of the whole valley.



Mira, a small girl with warm brown skin and curly black braids, tended her family's sheep on the mountain every day. She wore a faded blue wool dress with patched elbows and a red knitted scarf that flapped in the wind. Her little sheep Pip followed close behind, his bell jingling. She loved the mountain more than anything.



In the mornings, Mira's grandmother, Gran, would climb slowly up the path with her walking stick. Gran remembered when the mountain was even softer and greener. 'The grass holds the soil,' Gran said, her hazel eyes crinkling. 'Without it, the mountain would wash away.' Mira nodded and watched over the flock.



One sunny day, travelers began to arrive. They had heard about the velvet grass and came from far away to see it. A tall man in a green felt hat with a feather led them. His name was Tomas, and he smiled broadly as he showed off the mountain. 'Take a piece home!' he said. 'It's soft as a cloud!'



The visitors pulled up tufts of the colorful grass and stuffed them into their pockets and bags. Mira frowned as she watched. 'Please don't take too much,' she called, but the travelers were busy and didn't listen. Pip bleated nervously and pressed against her leg. The grass looked thinner where they had been.



Day after day, more visitors came. Tomas brought them in groups, and they all wanted souvenirs. They dug up small patches of grass, leaving bare spots behind. Mira noticed that after a heavy rain, little streams of mud ran down the mountain. 'The grass is disappearing,' she whispered to Pip. 'And the mountain is getting hurt.'



Mira hurried to Gran's cottage at the foot of the mountain. She told her about the bare spots and the muddy streams. Gran listened and nodded slowly. 'When I was a girl, the grass was thick and held everything in place,' she said. 'Now, without it, the rain washes the soil away. That is called erosion.' Mira's eyes widened with worry.



The next day, Mira saw a crack in the path where the grass had been pulled away. A small bush had slid down the slope. She knew she had to do something. 'I can't stop the travelers,' she said to Pip, 'but maybe I can help them understand.' Pip's floppy ear perked up, and he baaed as if to say, 'Let's try!'



Mira found Tomas at the base of the mountain, tying his boots. 'Tomas,' she said bravely, 'the mountain is crumbling because we're taking its grass. Can we find a better way?' Tomas looked at the bare patches and scratched his stubbled chin. 'I never thought of that,' he admitted. 'I just wanted to share its beauty.'



Mira had an idea. 'What if we guide the visitors along a special path?' she said. 'They can see the soft grass and take pictures, but not pull it up. We can teach them how the grass protects the mountain.' Tomas nodded. 'That could work,' he said. 'I'll help you.' Together they planned the first guided visit.



Mira and Tomas marked a safe trail with small stones. Gran came to tell stories about the mountain's history. When the next group of visitors arrived, Mira stood tall in her patched dress and red scarf. 'Welcome,' she said. 'Please stay on the path and enjoy the velvet grass with your eyes and feet, but leave it growing.' The visitors listened politely.



Pip helped too. He trotted along the trail, his little bell ringing, and nudged stray sheep back to the flock. The visitors laughed and followed him. They touched the soft grass gently and took pictures instead of pieces. Tomas pointed out how the grass held the soil. 'See how the roots weave together?' he said. 'That keeps the mountain strong.'



Soon, word spread about the guided visits. More travelers came, and they all agreed to protect the grass. Mira trained other shepherds to lead the walks. The bare spots began to heal, and the pink, gold, and green grass grew back thick and soft. The mountain no longer crumbled when it rained.



Gran smiled at Mira with deep laugh lines around her eyes. 'You saved the mountain,' she said. 'Not by fighting, but by teaching.' Mira hugged her grandmother and looked out at the green slopes. Pip jumped happily beside her, his bell jingling. The Velvet Mountain was safe again, and everyone could enjoy its beauty.



Now, visitors come from near and far to walk the gentle trails. They learn to admire the soft grass without taking it. Mira still tends her sheep, and Tomas often returns to help with the tours. The mountain stays green and healthy, a wonder for all to see. And Mira knows that even a small shepherd can make a big difference.



So if you ever visit the Velvet Mountain, remember Mira and Pip. Walk softly, look closely, and leave the grass where it belongs. For the mountain's beauty is a gift that needs our care. And with kindness and courage, we can protect the wonders of nature for everyone, forever.