

# Buried Treasure in Nepal

Story by Melaina Faranda  
Illustrations by Paulina Dybala



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## Chapter 1

# Departure

Seth glanced up from flicking through the channels on the inbuilt screen in the headrest in front of him.

Rosie continued to tug at his arm. "Seth, all the buildings look like toy blocks!" she exclaimed, lifting the pirate eyepatch of her toy monkey, Bunky, so that he could see better, too.

Seth spoke in a monotone. "It's because we're so high up." He returned to the screen and ignored his little sister.



“Seth, do you think you could try a little harder?” Mum asked. “It’s her first time on a plane. And *our* first time being overseas together.”

Seth shrugged, to remind her he was an unwilling participant. It was a matter of principle to him that Mum didn’t think he was in any way okay about going away and being forced to drop the epic plans he’d made to go mountain biking with his friends over the holidays.

He reached again for the phone in his pocket and patted it with relief. Mum had felt guilty enough to let him bring it. While they were in Nepal visiting where Dad worked as a chief engineer on a hydroelectric power plant, the phone would be Seth’s lifeline to his friends.

Seth was used to Dad working overseas. Whenever he came back, Dad would be grinning as he hefted suitcases stuffed with gifts out of the taxi. “Treasure for my greatest treasures,” Dad would say. And for a little while after Dad got back, Seth would feel complete – him, Mum, Dad and Rosie all together again.

For the first days after Dad’s return, the tight lines etched between Mum’s eyebrows softened. Instead of Mum’s usual pasta, there’d be laughter and new flavours in the kitchen as Dad showed Mum

the new dishes he'd learnt how to cook while he was away. Mum would let Seth and Rosie stay up later, and she didn't mind as much if Seth forgot to empty the dishwasher.



Because there was always a bunch of saved-up stuff that needed fixing, Seth didn't feel he could take up any of Dad's time at home. Dad had got Seth into mountain biking before he'd started to work overseas, and Seth wished they could go and ride the bike trails together. He wanted Dad to be there for the competitions, especially when Seth won. But whenever he came home, Dad was always too busy.

Every time Dad flew out again, despite there being trails of new toys strewn by Rosie around every room, the house felt emptier. It was back to pasta most nights, and Mum trying to juggle her work



with driving Rosie to swimming lessons and Seth to the mountain bike trails.

So, a few weeks after Dad had flown back to Nepal last time, Seth had been surprised to see Mum smiling, as, barely glancing at the mess of Rosie's spilled breakfast cereal and milk, she made an announcement.

"Kids, I've got wonderful news – we're going to have a holiday with Dad, in Nepal!"

Seth shook his head. "No way. I'm not going." He already had plans for the school holidays. He wanted to enter the mountain biking championships and win another trophy. He couldn't care less about seeing some hydroelectric plant in Nepal.

At school, however, Ms Quinn had been way too excited about Seth's family adventure. "What an amazing opportunity. You're very lucky, Seth. I think this calls for a whole-class activity – we're all going to do a research project on Nepal!"

Thanks to his classmates, Seth now knew that Nepal was a tiny country squashed between the giants of India and China.

Seth discovered that Nepal was famous for having eight of the ten tallest mountains on Earth, including Mt Everest. Because it was landlocked, and the mountains were so high, it was hard for

Nepal to trade – there were no ships, few trains and hardly any decent roads, and it was one of the world's poorest countries.

Nepal was a very religious country, with a capital city called Kathmandu. Rhododendron flowers and cows were the national symbols. There were also tigers, snow leopards, elephants, rhinoceroses, yaks, monkeys and red pandas living in the wild.

Despite all that, Seth still didn't want to go to Nepal. He begged to be able to stay at his friend Abdo's place, but Mum ignored his pleading. Seth followed up with a no-talking tactic that was met with a seeming complete lack of awareness on Mum's part. Upping his protest to an eruption of rage, Seth slammed his bedroom door, only to have his favourite trophy fall off the shelf and snap in half.

Rosie didn't exactly help the cause. At dinner, between forking fried rice from her plate, she kept up a never-ending stream of chatter. "Are there pirates in Nepal?"

"No," Seth said flatly. "There's no sea for ships to sail on. It's a landlocked country."

Rosie seemed unfazed. "But they might still have buried treasure?"

"I doubt it."

"Can Bunky have his own seat on the plane?"