

and the day after they'd finished there was a huge earthquake. They fled.'

'That doesn't prove anything,' I say. 'There are often earthquakes in mountains.'

'Legend has it the dad from the family that moved here afterwards followed the lights and fell off the cliff.'

'The green lights?' I ask. 'You've seen them?'

'Everyone's seen them,' replies Praveen. 'And last year, several people got attacked by a bear and then the next people to visit were hit by falling rocks.'

We walk in silence for a minute.

'Who's Durga?' I ask.

'Mother of the universe,' replies Praveen.

I pull my shawl closer around me and look around us, 'Do you believe in it?' I ask.

He nods.

'Has anything ever happened to you?' I ask.

'No,' he replies, shaking his head.

'Do you think I'll be okay?' I ask.

'I think you're safe as long as you treat the mountain with respect. I don't think Durga's angry. She's just like a mother protecting her child.'

'Ruby!' I hear Dad shouting my name as the hotel comes into sight. 'Ruby!'

'Dad?' I shout, quickening my pace. 'I'm here.'

He turns, sprints towards me and hugs me tight. 'Where have you been? I was so worried.' Grandma's behind him.

'I just went for a walk. Exploring.'

'You can't do that here. There are leopards and bears.'

'There were venomous snakes and spiders in Australia,' I reply.

'You can't go off by yourself, all right?'

'It's okay, Dad, I promise – I was with Praveen. I was going to ask if I could go to his house now . . .'

'Ruby,' he snaps. 'I've got enough to worry about right now with Mr Bhat on my back about getting the hotel up and running, okay?'

Praveen catches up to us.

'Hi,' he says, smiling. 'Is it okay if Ruby comes to my house? I said I'd show her the baby goats.'

There's a pause and then Dad nods, calmer now. 'You can go for an hour. I'll be there to collect you.'

I nod.

As I go to grab two big torches to take with me, I have an idea. 'Want to meet Joey before we go?' I ask Praveen.

He tilts his head to the side. 'Joey?'

'The kangaroo,' I say.

He grins. 'Definitely.'

Inside, we step over paint pots and brushes,