



Name _____ Hour _____ Date _____

Excerpt from Three Cups of Tea: Young Reader's Edition

Chapter 3

I'm Going to Build You a School

(1) Someone tucked a heavy quilt over Greg. For the first time in months, he slept indoors. When he woke, he was alone, and blue sky showed through the square hole in the ceiling. Haji Ali's wife, Sakina, brought him lassi, a drink made with yogurt; a flat bread called chapatti; and tea with lots of sugar. Greg wolfed everything down, and Sakina, laughing, brought him more. Greg didn't know at the time how little sugar the Balti had and how precious they considered it. If he had, he would have said no to the second cup of sweet tea.

(2) Sakina left Greg alone, and he looked around the room. Everything from the blackened pots and pans to the oil lanterns looked plain and well used. But not the quilt Greg had slept under. It was made of maroon silk and decorated with tiny mirrors. All the other blankets in the room were thin, worn wool, patched with scraps. Greg realized that his hosts had covered him up with the most valuable thing they owned.

(3) Greg spent the day in Korphe. Late that afternoon, he heard voices calling. He and most of the rest of the village walked to a cliff that overlooked the Braldu River. There he saw

someone crossing the river—but not on a bridge. A wooden box hung from a steel cable that had been strung above the water. A person could sit in the box and pull him- or herself along the cable. Crossing the river this way saved the half day of travel needed to walk to the nearest bridge. But it didn't look terribly safe—and a fall would mean certain death.

(4) When the person was halfway across, Greg recognized him—it was Mouzafer, sitting on top of Greg's pack. Once Mouzafer reached the other side, he again slapped Greg on the back, looked him up and down, and shouted, "Allah Akbhar!"

(5) After a meal of roasted chicken at Haji Ali's house, Mouzafer and Greg left Korphe. They met up with Scott Darsney, and the two climbers made the long journey by jeep down to the city of Skardu. But Greg felt something tugging him back to Korphe and returned as soon as he could arrange for a ride. He stayed in Haji Ali's house and rested, recovering his strength. Now that he was out of danger, Greg realized just how weakened he had become. He would walk around the village for a few hours each day, with children holding his hands, and then return to Haji Ali's to sleep or simply lie down, staring at the sky.

(6) As Greg slowly got better, he learned more and more about how people lived in this part of Pakistan, called Baltistan. The village of Korphe was perched on a rocky mountain slope, and the people there worked amazingly hard to grow the food they ate—apricots, barley, potatoes—and to take care of the animals they raised. Greg found out that the nearest doctor lived a week's walk away, and that many of the people in Korphe had diseases that would be easily cured in the United States. Most of the children did not get quite enough to eat and suffered from malnutrition. One out of three children died before the age of one.

(7) Greg knew he owed the people of Korphe more than he could repay. But he was determined to try. He began giving away the things he had brought with him. Small, useful items like Nalgene water bottles or flashlights were precious to the Balti. He gave Sakina, Haji Ali's wife, his camping stove. He handed Twaha, the chief's son, his fleece jacket, even though it was several sizes too big. To Haji Ali he gave the parka that had kept him warm on K2.

(8) But it turned out that the best thing he had to offer the people of Korphe was his knowledge. In the United States, Greg worked as an emergency room nurse, and he had a medical kit with him. He began to go from house to house, doing what he could to cure injuries and illnesses with simple tools—antibiotic ointment to keep wounds from getting infected, painkillers to ease suffering. People in and around Korphe began to call him "Dr. Greg," no matter how many times he explained that he was really a nurse.

(9) Greg wanted to do more. While he was spending time with the children of Korphe, he felt like his little sister, Christa, was there, too. "Everything about their life was a struggle," Greg says. "They reminded me of the way Christa . . . had a way of just persevering, no matter what life threw at her." Maybe, he thought, he could get some textbooks or supplies for Korphe's school. He asked Haji Ali if he could see where the children of Korphe went to learn. Haji Ali seemed reluctant, but finally agreed to take Greg there the next morning.

(10) After breakfast, Haji Ali led Greg up a steep path to an open piece of land. Seventy-eight boys and four girls were kneeling on the frosty ground to study. Haji Ali explained that Korphe had no school building. A teacher cost one dollar a day, which was more than the village could afford to pay. They shared a teacher with a nearby village, and he came to Korphe three

days a week. The rest of the time the students were left alone to practice the lessons he had left behind.

(11) *Greg* watched and listened as the children sang Pakistan's national anthem to start their school day. He saw *Twaha's* seven-year-old daughter, *Jahan*, standing tall and straight beneath her headscarf as she sang. When the song ended, they sat down in the dirt and began writing out their multiplication tables. A few, like *Jahan*, had slates on which they wrote with sticks dipped in mud. The rest scratched in the dirt with sticks. "Can you imagine a fourth-grade class in America, alone, without a teacher, sitting there quietly and working on their lessons?" *Greg* asked later. "I felt like my heart was being torn out. . . . I knew I had to do something."

(12) But what could he do? He had barely enough money left to travel by jeep and bus to Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, where he would catch an airplane to fly home. Still, there had to be something.

(13) Standing next to *Haji Ai*, looking at the mountains that he'd come halfway around the world to climb, *Greg* suddenly felt that reaching the summit of *K2* to place a necklace there wasn't really important. He could do something much better than that to honor his sister, *Christa*. He put his hands on *Haji Ali's* shoulders. "I will build a school," he said. "I promise."

