

There is no end where there is no beginning

The towering mountain rises high above a patch of ground, which is itself carried on a plate deep within the earth. Slowly, slowly the plate drifts on the molten rock of the earth's core and the mountain rides its shoulder, like a flea rides on the back of a dog.

High up near the mountain's peak, an icy cold blizzard rages. Snow falls throughout the brief daylight hours, through the twilight and on into full darkness. The night grows colder, way way too cold to snow, the snow already fallen freezes and turns to ice. The ice shivers under a thick blanket of cloud for many days, but at last a day of strong sunlight arrives, dispersing the cloud cover and the mountain stands out in dazzling splendour. The very topmost layer of ice melts briefly, but freezes again as soon as the sun dips below the horizon. This cycle repeats all through the long harsh winter, and the repeated freeze-thaw-freeze cycle fractures off and steals grains, pebbles and larger chunks of rock from the mountain's face. One particular ice-stolen chunk is whirled by avalanche down the steep side of the mountain.

Eventually the sun returns for longer and longer periods, and finally comes to stand over the mountain for the long summer days. The melting layers of ice and snow race down through the debris of the repeated avalanches, carrying our chunk along with many other pieces torn from the mountain, down into the river which flows through valley below. Summer storms break off more pieces of surface rock for the rain runoff to carry down to join with their older brethren as they meander with the river for many miles to a shallow lake out on the plains. Here our chunk rests idle, as it sinks below the ever increasing depth of mountain fragments journeying down to be piled above it. Is this restful idleness the end for our chunk?

Through countless millenia, the combined weight of the layers of the rocks of ages compacts the disparate grains, pebbles, chunks and boulders into new rock, perhaps into sandstone, mudstone or as in the case of our chunk, cementing them into conglomerate. Through countless more millenia, the ever-increasing weight of the new deposits above slowly increases the pressure and temperature causing the rocks to melt and flow, and the layer containing our chunk elongates and folds into a new shape as it sinks deeper. Surely this is the end?

The purposeless movement of the underlying plate drifts our re-formed chunk over an incredibly hot spot in the molten core below, rapidly increasing temperature and pressure even more and causing a violent eruption. Our chunk is thrown out into the air, coming to rest high up on the side of the volcano. It is buried beneath further lava flows which gradually cool as the plate moves on, bringing a new section over the hot spot. The volcano cools and stands as monument to the earth itself, riding the plate which wanders further on along its aimless path.

Through many succeeding years, rain, snow, ice and sun continue to bring change to the mountain, reducing its height, changing the expressions on its face, chipping away at, and stealing its substance. Finally our chunk is once again exposed to the cold light of day, completing the old cycle and beginning a new one, world without end.