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Ms. Alexandra Machinist  
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Dear Ms. Machinist,

Please find attached a synopsis and the first chapter of my Young Adult fantasy novel, *The Bookster's Apprentice* (72,000 words) which I wish to submit for your consideration.

*The Bookster's Apprentice* is the story of Erileine, a bookish girl who lives on a mountain that has flown back and forth on the same route for centuries. One day, without warning, it changes direction, throwing her life and the lives of those around her into confusion. When it reaches its new destination, she finds herself helping her teacher, the world's most famous magician, and a sullen young thief defend her home against invaders whose plans could change the whole world.

The target audience for this book is readers aged 10-14 who have enjoyed *Mortal Engines*, *Children of Blood and Bone*, and *Cinder*. With magic, swordplay, heartbreak, some talkative birds, and a strong female protagonist, it earned four stars from my daughter (age 11), who turned out to be a tougher critic than I expected.

I have previously published two children's books—*Sensible Adventures*, with Annick Press, and *Bottle of Light*, with Scholastic—and several science fiction and fantasy short stories for adults. I have also written or edited several non-fiction books and over a hundred book reviews, scholarly articles, and popular science pieces for *The Independent*, *New Scientist*, and the like.

Many thanks for considering my work for publication. If you would like a full copy of the manuscript, please let me know—I would be very happy to send it to you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg V. Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, stylized 'G' and 'W'.

Greg Wilson

## *The Bookster's Apprentice: Synopsis*

The story opens with Erileine fleeing from the town bully, Fraederiq. For centuries, the flying mountain has shuttled back and forth between the northern and southern ends of Cherne. A sudden change of course a few moments ago gave Erileine a chance to escape from Fraederiq, and now he is chasing her. She tries to take a shortcut down the side of the mountain to her grandfather's; Fraederiq follows her, but falls to his death when the mountain shakes again.

The story then doubles back to fill in what happened earlier that day. A trader named Vaszlav showed up in town with a new apprentice named Jaromir. Both are Hett, a group of people who lived on the mountain before Erileine's ancestors seized it six hundred years previously. The Hett have been wanderers ever since, and are intermittently tolerated and persecuted wherever they go. When the younger Hett, Jaromir, isn't properly deferential to Fraederiq, the boy tries to blackmail him. Erileine tells the town's bosun, who intervenes and sends the Hett on their way. Fraederiq then ambushes Erileine as she is on her way to a lesson; his attack is interrupted by the mountain's sudden change of course, leading to the chase and his fall.

Back in the present, Erileine makes her way to her grandfather's. Together they climb back up to Starboard Town and tell people about Fraederiq's fall. Erileine is ashamed and guilty: why didn't she reach out and grab him? Why didn't she *do* something? As the bosun organizes a search party that he knows will be fruitless, Erileine goes for her lesson with her teacher Razi, an itinerant scholar who is cataloging the books in the town library, and who gives her what comfort he can. She returns home for dinner; when she goes back to the library to take some food to Razi, she interrupts him talking to a lit candle in an otherwise-empty room. He claims that he was meditating, but she is troubled.

The next day, a Gifted parrot (able to talk) brings news from the mountain's capital, Forecastle. Nobody knows why the mountain has changed course or where it is going. A group of townspeople decide to walk to Forecastle to buy supplies. Along the way, we hear how Erileine's grandfather Vurt first came to the mountain to kill a monster that was hiding in an old tunnel, and learn more about how the Hett are mistreated.

The travelers arrive in Forecastle. Shortly afterward, a scrawny young boy tries to steal the bosun's wallet. Erileine and Razi help catch him and take him to the town hall. Once there, Razi and Erileine visit the captain and his adviser Klaues, a Hett who has tried to assimilate. They discover that a magician named Thomas has arrived by flying boat, and Erileine learns that he and Razi have been at odds in the past. She also learns that Razi works for Lady Kembe, the most powerful magician in the world, and that he came to the mountain because her dreams were warning her that something was going to happen.

That night, Erileine wakes to the sound of a riot. The townspeople are throwing rocks at Klaues' house. When several of them take hold of the Hett and start to beat him, Razi uses magic to save him.

The next day, Erileine joins Razi and Thomas in a flying inspection of the mountain. They see

men dressed like Hett working on the side of the mountain to clear brush from the mouth of one of the old tunnels. When they report back to the captain, he sends Razi and Thomas flying ahead to scout a town that the mountain seems to be headed for. They are ambushed, and Razi is shot with a crossbow.

They take Razi to the town hall, where the captain's wife uses magic and some good old-fashioned stitching to sew up his wound. As she does so, we learn that whenever someone does magic, they must bargain away something for the power: a tooth, their ability to see red, or the chance of ever hearing a song they want to dance to. Erileine leaves Razi to rest and goes back to the inn where they are staying, only to find that someone has left a book for her. She figures out that it must have been the thief they caught the day before, but doesn't know why he would do that.

The innkeeper wakes Erileine in the night. The mountain is landing. She rushes back to the town hall, where clerks and militiamen are tripping over each other in confusion. Razi is awake but weak. He sends Erileine to find out what is going on. Just as she reaches the captain, the mountain touches down next to a tall stone tower that Erileine realizes was built to give invaders access to the old tunnels that run through it.

She reports back to Razi. He asks her to help him work a spell to report to Lady Kembe. That done, they return to the infirmary to sleep. As they are leaving the next morning, the invaders attack. The market is set ablaze, and as Razi and Erileine flee, they are caught in a fight between the invaders and the ill-prepared militia. Razi's wound re-opens, and Erileine has to work the spell to talk to Lady Kembe on her own in order to save him. The effort exhausts her, and she passes out.

When she wakes up, the young thief is there. She learns that his name is Piaerre, and that he and the bookster clearly know each other well—the bookster helped capture him to give him some practice escaping from jails. They sneak out of Forecastle and head home on foot, avoiding the invaders' patrols. Along the way, they encounter the trader Vaslav, who reveals that the invaders are Hett zealots intent on retaking the mountain after six hundred years.

They reach home. The invaders arrive in strength the next morning, and the town surrenders without a fight. Their commander is Jaromir, the Hett who briefly worked for Vaslav; Erileine recognizes another Hett as well and realizes that they have been preparing their invasion for years. Jaromir sends Razi to the capital under guard and puts Erileine and the others to work.

Thomas shows up in disguise as they are weeding and doing chores. Moments later, the mountain takes off again. The magician uses the things Razi left behind to contact Lady Kembe, who tells him that the Hett are taking a magical stone to the peak of the mountain that night to complete some great spell. Thomas offers to fly a group of townspeople to the peak to try and stop it from happening. They are attacked as they leave, and only a handful make it to his flying boat. Halfway there they see Razi fleeing from his captors. He jumps into the boat, but Thomas is forced to work a spell to save them all whose price leaves him a broken man.

Erileine, Razi, and the others make their way through the old tunnels to the peak. For the first time, Erileine works a spell of her own to help her father, and wonders what she is becoming. They reach the peak just in time to ambush the Hett who are bringing the magic stone. Erileine briefly manages to take hold of it, but its power is too much for her. The Hett recover it and complete their spell, resurrecting one of the ancient Pilots who once ruled the world. The Pilot orders Razi thrown off the mountain and then returns Erileine and the remaining townspeople to their home. A few moments later, the mountain begins to tip over.