

“THE MOUNTAINS ARE NOT FAIR OR UNFAIR. THEY ARE JUST DANGEROUS.”

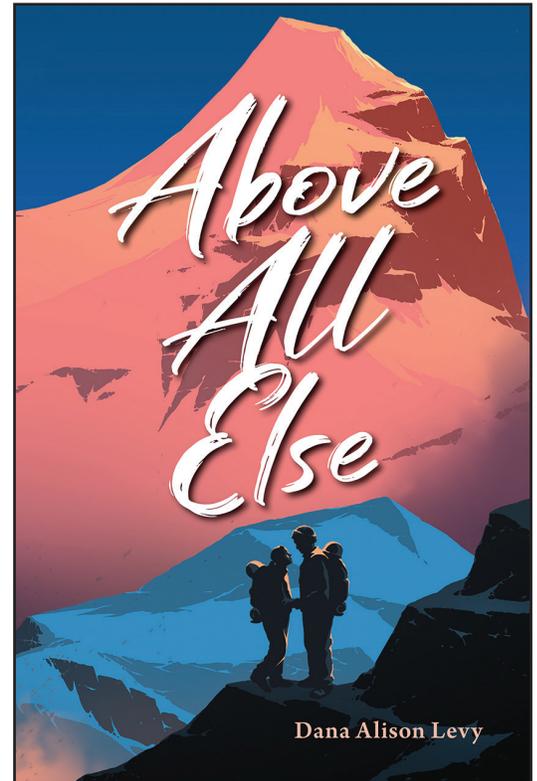
—Reinhold Messner, first to solo ascend Mount Everest

About the Book

Teen mountaineering prodigies Rose Keller and Tate Russo have been training their whole lives. They're finally ready for the ultimate climb: Everest. But between Rose's ailing mother, Tate's demanding father, and their simmering will-they-won't-they romance, neither teen's head is fully in the game.

Every climber on this expedition has something to prove. Exhaustion and oxygen deprivation steadily chip away at their ability to make good decisions; the higher they climb, the more their plans unravel and the more isolated each one becomes.

Rose and Tate will have to dig deep within themselves to determine what—or who—they value above all else.



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About the Author



Dana Alison Levy has written several lauded middle grade novels, including *The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher* and *It Wasn't Me*. *Above All Else* is her YA debut. She lives in Massachusetts with her family.

- Read the epigraph aloud. What tone does this set for the rest of the book?
- Why did the author choose to open this book in epistolary form, with a letter from the main characters' expedition company? What events, themes, and challenges are foreshadowed in this letter?
- Each chapter begins with a header denoting elevation. Do you know your current elevation? Have you ever been so far above sea level that you could observe effects on yourself or your environment? What are some common impacts of elevation on human, plant, and animal life?
- Discuss Rose's and Tate's differing perspectives on their life at school. Do you think one presents a more accurate picture than the other, or are they about even?
- What do you think of Jordan's parenting? Why does Jordan push Tate so hard? Do you think there's any way Tate could live up to his father's expectations?
- Rose and Tate begin climbing at a young age, first in a climbing gym, then in the wilderness. What effects does this have on them, physically and as people? What relationship dynamic does this set up with their parents, who are also their coaches and climbing partners? Is it ethical to train children in extreme sports?
- What are Rose and Tate's first impressions of Nepal? Do you think those perceptions are colored by jet lag, fatigue, pre-climbing nerves, etc.?
- Discuss Rose and Yoon Su's conversation at the temple in chapter 5. How do you see their reflections on gender, race, and mountain climbing play out later in the book?
- What do you think of Rose's attitude towards her mother's health in the first half of the book?
- How does Tate feel about his therapist and the coping strategies he learns in therapy? Do you think Tate's character realistically depicts life with ADHD?
- What do we learn about the climbers from their reactions to the news that the Icefall Doctors have been caught in an avalanche? Do you think they should have called off the ascent?
- What are some literary or even poetic techniques the author uses to portray the events at the beginning of chapter 8?
- Discuss the impact of Tate's fall on Mt. Rainier. How does it affect Tate? Rose? Their parents?
- What do you think of Tate's meeting with Lama Geshe?
- Reminders of mortality abound during the approach to Mt. Everest. Why do you think this is? What do you know about Nepali and Tibetan Buddhist versus mainstream American conceptions of death and the afterlife?
- Rose and Tate's argument at the end of chapter 23 marks a turning point in their relationship. Do you agree with one of them over the other? What do you think of the author's decision to narrate this scene from Tate's point of view?
- Rose and Tate reflect throughout this book on the Sherpas and on their own role in promoting and enabling a life-threatening work environment. In light of their thoughts and conversations, do you think it is ethical to climb Mt. Everest?