

The Valley



The trio moved steadily through the forest, the canopy above filtering the sunlight into a soft green glow. They had been walking in relative silence for a while when Zia suddenly stopped and pointed ahead.

“Hey, look at that!”

Lyra and Orin followed her gaze. In the distance, a strikingly

triangular mountain rose against the horizon, its peak sharp and almost unnaturally symmetrical.

"It's perfect," Lyra declared, tilting her head as if a different angle might reveal even more of its beauty. "Can we go and see it? A little detour wouldn't hurt, would it?"

Always one for adventure, Zia's eyes lit up instantly. Orin, on the other hand, remained silent, clearly not one for unplanned sightseeing.

Gliding above them, Gryphon let out a dramatic sigh as he landed on a low branch. "A detour? To see a pointy rock?"

"It's a mountain," Zia corrected, squinting at the distant peak.

"Are you *sure* you want to go that way?" Gryphon asked, his tone heavy with scepticism. "It's the bottom of a valley, and let's just say it's not... the driest option."

"Oh, come on," Zia said, already stepping forward. "It's just a valley. How bad can it be?"

Gryphon sighed, fluffing his feathers with exaggerated exasperation. "All right, fine. If you insist. But when this ends in soggy boots and regret, don't say I didn't warn you."

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The group wove through the valley floor with ease, their steps light as they veered towards the mountain in the distance. It was an odd place, different from what they had seen before. Their surroundings seemed to give way to something resembling a jungle rather than a forest.

Zia nodded towards the treetops, where a vibrant toucan perched, its massive beak gleaming like a shard of sunset. Ahead, a sloth hung lazily from a branch, watching them through half-lidded eyes.

As they pressed on, the air grew damp, and the landscape shifted yet again. The ground beneath their feet became softer, wetter, and the wildlife around them seemed more suited to a bog than anything else.

Lyra spotted a large, warty toad hopping through the damp undergrowth. “Hey, Orin, look at that—” she began, but as she turned to him, she froze... then did a double take. “Orin, are you... shrinking?” Her brow furrowed as she studied him more closely.

“Speak for yourself,” Orin retorted. “You’re shrinking.”

“No, I’m not,” Lyra said, looking down at herself, then at Zia. “Wait—are you *sinking*?”

Zia paused, glancing at the others before reluctantly admitting, “I think I might be.”

They stopped and looked at Zia, only her head visible above the ground.

“Oh, no,” Lyra said, blinking. “You *are* sinking!”

“So am I!” Orin added in a high-pitched astonishment, his usual composure cracking.

“Actually, me too,” Lyra finally admitted, glancing down to see she was now waist-high in the bog beneath her.

“I’m not,” Gryphon said smugly, landing on a sturdy branch above them. He stretched his wings, surveying the scene with evident satisfaction. “Lovely and dry up here. And I must say, now that we’re closer, your mountain is rather splendid.”

Neck-deep in mud, Zia glared up at him. “I’m glad you like it.”

Panic began to creep in as, with every struggle, their movements only dragged them deeper into the bog.

“I think we’re stuck!” Orin shouted.

“Very observant, Orin. Now, what do we do about it?” Zia

snapped.

Lyra was now chest-deep, Orin nearly up to his shoulders, and Zia had been reduced to communicating with her eyebrows.

“Stop moving!” Orin barked. “You’re making it worse!”

“What do we do?” Lyra yelled, her voice rising even more.

Try as he might, Orin could no longer stay composed. “I don’t know,” he said, his voice tense, “but I think we’re about to lose Zia.”

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“Well, this is a fine mess,” said an unfamiliar voice.

It was calm, steady, and came from above—but it wasn’t Gryphon. The trio craned their necks to see a figure perched casually on a thick tree branch.

The stranger wore a patchwork coat with frayed edges, a belt lined with neatly coiled ropes, and a satchel brimming with tools and gadgets. An easy confidence radiated from her, her expression amused yet unreadable.

“Who are you?” Orin called up.

The stranger raised an eyebrow. “Tether,” she said simply. “And it looks like you could use a lifeline—quite literally.”

“Yes, please!” Orin exclaimed.

Tether smirked, already pulling a length of rope from her satchel. She moved with effortless precision, securing it to a sturdy tree.

“All right,” she said, crouching on the branch like a poised acrobat. “Here’s the deal: grab the rope, keep your weight low, and let me do the rest. Got it?”

The trio nodded frantically.

“You’d better get Zia first,” Lyra said, nodding towards her.

“She’s the eyebrows over there.”

Zia raised them in confirmation.

“I’m not sure she can actually grab anything at this point, though,” Lyra continued.

Zia raised her eyebrows once more, now adept at eyebrow-based communication.

“All right,” Tether chuckled, already on the move, leaping gracefully between branches. “Not to worry. You’re up first, then,” she said, lowering herself deftly and digging into the mud to loop the rope beneath Zia’s arms. “Hold on tight—and don’t wiggle too much.”

Tether braced herself against the tree and pulled with all her might. The thick rope in her hands was taut, straining under the force of her effort. It was back-breaking work, but through a combination of skill, technique, and sheer determination, Tether managed it—Zia emerged from the bog, sputtering but unharmed, collapsing onto solid ground with a relieved groan.

“I’m free!” she gasped, wiping mud from her face. “I did not appreciate that.”

Lyra was next, following instructions carefully as she was hauled free. Orin came last, his usual calm entirely replaced with sheer relief as he touched stable ground.

After a job well done, Tether dusted off her hands with a satisfied look and looped the rope back into a neat coil.

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The trio lay in a muddy heap on the ground, utterly spent. Zia, still catching her breath, eyed Tether with a mix of curiosity and exhaustion. “So... what’s your deal, then?” she asked.

Tether shrugged. “Just passing through. The forest has a way

of tangling things up—I like to untangle.”

“You’re very good at it,” Gryphon remarked. “A true professional, obviously.”

Tether waved off the compliment with a playful wink.

Lyra paused for thought, considering the Gryphon’s words. “How can we ever repay you?”

As she spoke, Lyra’s eyes caught something hanging from Tether’s necklace—a hexagonal tile engraved with a perfect circle. She recognised it instantly. It was another Workstone.

She glanced at Gryphon, who was already nodding in quiet confirmation. “Orin, give me the Workstone,” she continued.

Without hesitation, Orin reached into his pocket and handed it over.

Lyra held out the Workstone towards Tether, who, without hesitation, unfastened her necklace and extended hers in return. As the two stones met, a faint glow pulsed between them, energy shifting seamlessly from Lyra’s to Tether’s.

Tether gave a satisfied nod. “That’s more than enough. Thank you.”

With nothing more to say, Tether gave a lazy salute before turning towards the trees. The trio watched as she vanished into the forest, her satchel swaying gently with each step. Most striking of all, she was impeccably clean and completely dry.

The trio, meanwhile, stood in stark contrast—muddy, dishevelled, and barely recognisable under thick layers of mud. Unsure of what else to say or do, they turned to Gryphon. He was perched with his front paws over his muzzle, visibly straining to hold something in. Try as he might, he could restrain himself for only so long before bursting.

“I told you so!” he cackled, wings flaring dramatically.

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As they pressed on, the terrain began to shift once again. The swampy ground gradually gave way to rocky outcrops, and soon, a shimmering glacier lake appeared in the distance. The water was mesmerisingly still, reflecting the surrounding mountains like a perfect mirror.

“Finally! Clean water!” Zia cried, sprinting towards the lake.

“Zia, wait!” Gryphon called, but it was too late. Orin and Lyra had already bolted after her, and all three leapt in with a resounding splash.

“Argh, it’s *freezing*!” Zia shrieked, flailing in the icy water.

“Glacier lake,” Gryphon said matter-of-factly, ruffling his feathers. “Clue’s in the name.”

The trio scrambled out as fast as they had jumped in, shivering violently as they huddled together, drenched but certainly awake.

“Well,” Lyra managed through chattering teeth, “a-at least we’re c-clean now.”

“W-wet, but c-clean,” Zia agreed, hugging herself for warmth.

“T-t-totally worth it,” Orin added, attempting a smile through his shivers.

They found large, soft leaves nearby to dry off as best they could, draping their damp clothes over sun-warmed rocks. As they sat in the golden sunlight, they admired the towering triangular mountain, its reflection glistening faintly on the lake’s rippled surface.

Gryphon, perched on a boulder, stretched his wings. “As lovely as the view is, we should get moving.”

But Lyra wasn’t listening.

Gryphon's voice faded into the background as another echoed in her mind—Mr Mole's parting words: *The answer is in the stillness.*

She stared at the lake, watching as the last ripples from their splash faded. The surface eventually settled into perfect stillness, and the mountain's reflection sharpened into clarity.

"Wait," she said suddenly, sitting upright.

"What is it?" Orin asked.

Lyra didn't answer immediately. She rose to her feet, moving towards the water's edge, her gaze locked onto the lake. On its surface, the mountain's triangular form was mirrored, creating a flawless reflection. The symmetry, the balance—it was exactly what she needed next. Without hesitation, she pulled out her sketchbook.

"What do you see?" Zia asked, standing beside her.

"A diamond," she whispered.

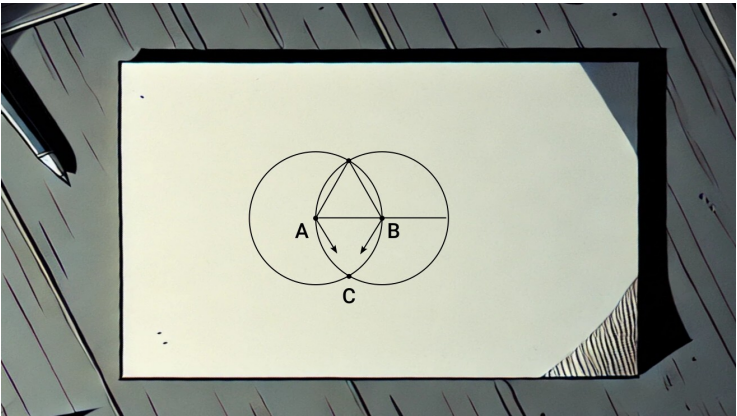
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Task

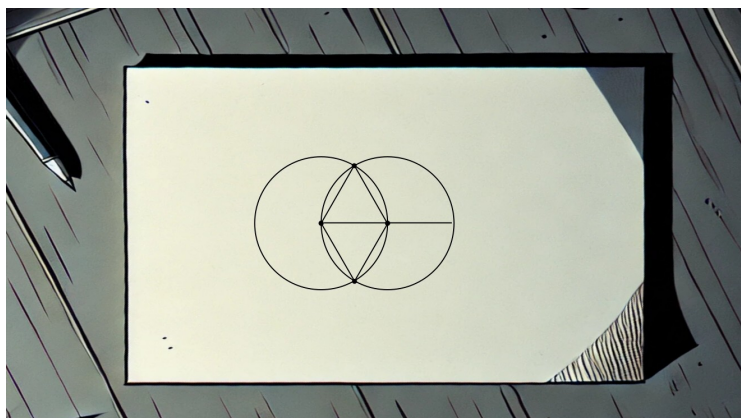
Now it's your turn to create a perfect reflection. To complete the diamond, you just need to draw another triangle. This one is upside down. Can you help Lyra complete her design by adding another triangle to the *vesica piscis*? Where does it go, and what parts do you need to use?

SOLUTION

1. **Locate points:** Identify **Point A** and **Point B** (where the horizontal line intersects the circles) and **Point C** (where the two circles intersect, this time at the bottom).
2. **Connect points:** Using a ruler, draw a straight line connecting **Point A** to **Point C**.
3. **Complete the triangle:** Repeat the process to connect **Point B** to **Point C**.



When you've finished, you should have a second triangle and a diamond within the *vesica piscis*.



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Lyra sat back, inspecting her work. “There,” she announced, her voice laced with both relief and satisfaction. The lines met seamlessly, the two triangles merging to form a perfect diamond nestled within the *vesica piscis*.

As she finished, a faint sparkle rippled across the lake’s surface, as if the Great Spirit itself were silently affirming her work.