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opening extract from

# The Lord of the Mountain

written by

## James Lovegrove

published by

**Barrington Stoke Ltd.**

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The 5 Lords of Pain

# Book 1
# The Lord of the Mountain

James Lovegrove

Barrington Stoke

Teen

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# Glossary of Foreign Words

To Alex Levy

# Chapter 1

## Dragon

Dragon glared down at Tom. His eyes were orange-brown with flecks of gold in them. They were sparkling like flames.

“No! No! No!” he snapped. “This will not do! This will not do at all!”

Tom lay on his back on the hardwood floor, stunned. His head throbbed. His right arm throbbed too. He had no feeling at all from the elbow to the hand. That part of the arm was numb. He could not move his fingers. He could not pick up the *bo* staff which lay just inches away.

The two blows had come out of nowhere. *Thwack, thwack!* Tom hadn’t even seen Dragon move. Dragon’s *bo* had been a blur in the air,

and suddenly Tom’s arm was useless. Another blur, and suddenly his head was ringing like a gong and he was flat out on the floor.

Tom felt woozy, sick with the pain. Bubbles of light rippled and popped in his vision.

“You were not paying attention,” Dragon scolded. “You did not even begin to defend yourself. You were moving so slowly, I could have hit you another three or four times. Be thankful I didn’t.”

Normally Dragon spoke English with a slight foreign accent. When he was angry – and it didn’t take much to make Dragon angry – his accent got thicker. Then he sounded like someone talking underwater, and Tom had to struggle to make out anything he said.

You couldn’t tell which country Dragon came from by his accent. Nor could you tell by Dragon’s looks. Dragon was a small, thin man

with pale brown skin. His hair was long and grey, apart from on the very top of his head, which was bald. His face wasn't especially Asian, but neither was it western.

Tom didn't even know Dragon's real name. He was just Dragon, a martial arts master, and for seven years he had been teaching Tom how to become a fighter and a killer.

"I don't ask for much when I'm training you," Dragon went on. "Only that you concentrate the whole time. You listen to everything I tell you. You learn. That is all."

Tom could have laughed. No, Dragon didn't ask for much. Just total obedience from Tom. For two hours a day. Every day. Every single day of the year. Even Tom's birthday. Even Christmas.

“But do you learn?” Dragon asked. He answered his own question. “It seems you do not. You know I am about to attack and yet you stand there like you’re asleep. You react as quickly as a slug stuck in glue. And shall I tell you why?”

Tom didn’t say, “Yes, please do.” There was no need. Dragon was going to tell him anyway. A lecture was coming. One that Tom had heard many times before.

“Because you are lazy. Typical lazy modern kid. Too much television. Too much video gaming. Too much junk food. It makes you stupid. It makes you dull. It slows you down. Here.” Dragon tapped his own chest. “In your body. And it slows you down here as well.” He tapped his bald brown skull. “In your mind. And this is just not good enough. Not for you, Tom Yamada. Not for somebody with *your* destiny.”

Tom’s arm had begun to tingle, not in a pleasant way. It felt as though as an ice slushie was being piped into his veins. The nerves which Dragon had numbed with his *bo* were waking up again, and they weren’t happy. At the same time, the ache in Tom’s head was fading, a little. He no longer thought he was going to throw up, at least.

“Fifteen years from now, you will be called on to face the toughest trial any man has ever faced,” Dragon said. “The Contest. Fifteen years may seem like a long way off. It may seem like a date in the farthest future. But trust me, the time will go like this.” He clicked his fingers. “And when the fateful day arrives, you must be ready. Or else . . . all is lost.”

Dragon let those last three words echo round the room. *All is lost*. Tom had heard them many times before. He knew what lay in store

for him fifteen years from now, when he turned 30. He knew what the stakes were. But still those three words had the power to send a chill through him.

If he failed, if he lost the Contest, it would be the end of the world. Half the human race would be killed. The other half would become the slaves of unspeakable monsters. Cities would be destroyed. Mountains would crumble. Skies would turn red. Seas would boil. A new Dark Age would begin.

No pressure, then.

“So you see why I must be hard on you, Tom.” Dragon was talking a bit more softly now. It was easier to understand what he was saying. “It is for your own good, and everybody else’s. Only you can fight the Five Lords of Pain, and only you can beat them. It is what you were born to do. It is the task you inherited from your father, as he inherited it from your

grandfather, and your grandfather inherited it from *his* father, and so on back through the ages. It is the duty that has fallen on every first-born Yamada son there has ever been. It is the destiny you cannot escape and the burden you cannot throw off."

Tom finally found his voice. "Yeah, yeah," he said. "I know. Once in every generation, a Yamada takes on the Five Lords of Pain in a series of duels. It's been that way since before history began. But you know what, Dragon?"

Dragon narrowed his gold-flecked eyes. "What?"

"We've always won."

Tom snatched up his *bo* and sprang at Dragon. He aimed a strike at Dragon's head. Quick as a blink, Dragon raised his own staff and blocked

the attack.  There was a loud *clack* of bamboo on bamboo.

Dragon grinned.  His teeth were sharp, almost pointed.

“Now that’s more like it,” he said.