

Walking to Independence

"It's not as steep as I feared," Hattie said, her voice ringing with an exhausted enthusiasm.

"I'm glad you think so," Oswald panted.

"Just got to keep going, that's all. That's the trick."

"Yes," was all that Oswald was able to say, his calves burning as he negotiated another step.

"Thanks for doing this, Oswald. Having someone to talk to helps me more than I can say."

"Don't...mention...it..." Oswald replied, struggling onwards.

"Almost there," Hattie said.

"Yes," Oswald said, as the viewing platform came into view above him.

"Done it!" Hattie cried, the delight in her voice shining as surely as the sun in the cloudless sky above them.

"Done it," Oswald echoed, finally stepping onto the viewing platform. Lifting the binoculars to his face, he gazed across at the tiny figure on top of the mountain opposite, as she shook her walking stick in triumph.

"I did it!" she cried.

"Yes. You did it. Well done."

"I showed those doctors, didn't I?!"

"You certainly did, Hattie. You certainly did."

"It's so peaceful up here. The view. The wind against my face. It's...incredible."

"Enjoy it."

"I'm going to stay here a while. Meet you back at the pub?"

"Yes, meet you back at the pub."

"Bet I beat you there!"

"Yes," Oswald smiled, turning off his phone. "Yes, you probably will."