Service With a Smile

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Mountains Beyond Mountains, Pulitzer-winner Tracy Kidder's biography of Paul Farmer, doesn't merely educate—it motivates. Ditching fortune as an infectious disease doc for an austere life serving poor HIVers and other less fortunates, Farmer bridges the epidemiological divide between teaching at Harvard and doctoring in Haiti. He mixes Marxist liberation theology, medical anthropology and clinical expertise in his crusade for the redistribution of wealth and health care as Kidder trails along. "The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that's wrong in the world," Kidder summarizes during their seven-hour hike to treat only two families.

Tracing the modern Robin Hood's heroism, Kidder reveals the possibilities at the intersection of public health and personal responsibility. He tries to balance his adoration by slamming Farmer's righteousness—but can muster only half a page. *Mountains* is a must for first-worlders contemplating service—and an inspiring climb regardless.

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