

THE PRIMARY HEROES

by
Mark Jenks

(This book is dedicated to my Primary Class of 2011, who are the inspiration and Heroes of this work: Anna Hancock, Avonlea Durtschi, Azael Riday, Ben Husted, Caleb Jenkins, Martin Van Horn, Michael Jameson, Scott Romney, Diego and Lorenzo Mancera and fellow teacher Jordan Smith.)

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Prologue

*For behold, there re many worlds that have passed away...
And there are many that now stand... for they are mine, and I know them.
Moses 1:35*

Captain Lightning soared over the cheering crowds, waving at the thousands of adoring fans that had gathered to honor the greatest hero of the planet Urth. His golden costume and crimson cape with the famous symbol of the crossed lightning bolts on his chest was well known to all of the peoples of Urth, and he was proud to be the defender of such a great world.

Sure there had been villains that he had had to battle: it seemed that for every super-hero, there were a dozen super villains, but that was was to be expected, I guess. On Urth one person in a million developed super powers, so it's not surprising that some of them are not nice people. Everyone is used to having supers around, so they knew that they had to take the bad with the good.

This Hero's Day promised to be the most joyous of all recorded Hero's Days because Captain Lightning had again saved the Urth from destruction, but this time the nightmare that had hung over their heads for centuries had been turned, they hoped, away for all time.

For almost 300 years, the astronomers of Urth had watched a rouge planet coming from outside of the solar system that was on a collision course with their home. They thought that they knew the day of their world's ending; the day when the rogue planet would smash the Urth into tiny pieces, but the day before yesterday Captain Lightning flew into space and pushed the feared world so far away that it would never return to menace them. They were sure that as long as they had their great hero, they would never have anything to fear. But what would they do without him?

Suddenly, in view of the adoring crowds, a hole opened in the sky in front of Captain Lightning. He was swallowed up and vanished from sight. The hole closed and silence fell over the stunned world as they realized that something had taken their beloved hero away from them... perhaps for all time.

Chapter 1

The Party

There were giants in the Earth in those days...
Genesis 6:4

All of the students in Brothers Smith and Jenks' class had taken up the challenge that they had been given and memorized their Articles of Faith. They had been promised a pizza party if they all succeeded and they all had done so; therefore on this chilly Saturday, they were gathered for a little food and fun.

Azael and Scott were drawing pictures, Ben and Martin were playing video games while the rest of the kids ate their pizza and talked with their teachers. The teachers told the class how impressed that they were with how they had all completed their task and were asking them what kind of a challenge they would want to try next. Everyone was having a great time.

In addition to the pizza, each student brought some of their favorite foods to share: Avonlea and Martin brought different kinds of noodle dishes while Anna's French fries went well with Azael's hot dogs and corn dogs. Scott brought an all American mac and cheese while Ben and Caleb brought bigger dishes of Chinese foods and pork chops. Taken together, they thought that it was perhaps the greatest feast suited to a Primary class' tastes that had ever been assembled. Even the weather had co-operated to make it a perfect day.

Even though it was a bright sunny day, everything suddenly got much much brighter and a personage that they had seen before, that they had forgotten, suddenly stood before them again. Two years earlier, an angel appeared to the class and sent them into the past to save the first Christmas. They had succeeded and been returned to the present, and had their memories of the adventure had been temporarily blocked from their minds. Suddenly, that veil of forgetfulness was removed and they recalled their great accomplishment of two years previously, and amazingly, even Michael (who was not in the class at that time) knew what they had done.

Once again, their teachers stood frozen in time, while the angel spoke to the class members only. "It is pleasing to see you all again my modern Warriors of Helaman. Once again your world is threatened and it falls to you to come to its rescue. The giants of old are breaking the barriers between the worlds and attempting to return to your Earth. They have destroyed their own world, and now want to destroy yours."

"Giants? Really?", said Scott.

"How are we supposed to stop giants?", asked Avonlea.

"The angel smiled, and said, "I will send you a helper; but he too will need your help. It will be up to you to discover what it is that he needs and to see that he will get it, but remember always that it is your job to save your world, not his job."

"Then what good is he to us?", said Azael, "Why should we spend time helping him when we should be saving the world?"

"When the giants break the barriers between the worlds; all of the adults on Earth will be frozen in time. That is why it must be you children who save the Earth, but you will need the experience and guidance of an adult if you are to defeat your opponents. The man who will come is not from your world, so he will not be frozen in time."

"So he's kind of like our Yoda..." said Caleb.

"He will give you the wisdom and knowledge that you will need to defeat the giants, but only

after you help him learn the lessons that he must learn first: so... yes, he is your Yoda, but you are also his Yodas.”, said the smiling angel.

“Are we up to this task?”, asked Martin.

The angel smiled wider, leaned over and said, “Let me tell you a secret that should be obvious, but most people seem to miss. There is great power in faith, and you have always heard how we should have faith in God; and to defeat the giants you will need great faith. But have you ever wondered who God has faith in?” Looking around the kids had blank looks on their faces. “Let me tell you. God has faith in you. In all of mankind. If he did not he wouldn't have made an Earth for you; and if God has faith in you, how could you not have enough faith in yourselves to succeed. That's how I know that you can defeat your enemy. God has faith in you and if you have faith in him too, you will be able to do whatever you need to do.”

Instantly the angel vanished and the world around them began to move again, and the party continued.

The festivities were coming to an end, and all of the kids parents had returned to pick them up. Suddenly the clear sky was shattered by an impossible display of lightning. A whirlpool appeared in the clear blue and a dark storm ripped the heavens open high above. Amid the lightning which they could all see: class, teachers and parents alike: the form of an unconscious man dressed in gold, crimson and black rags was being thrown about in the stormy eddy. With a flash of lightning, the helpless body was thrown out of the sky and crashed to the ground, landing at their feet. Captain Lightning had come to Earth.

Chapter 2

The Super Hero

Everybody stood around the crater and looked at the still form of the still smoking man laying in its center. The burnt and torn costume might have been impressive at one time, but for now it served only to show the ordeal that this man who fell from the sky had endured. His blond hair was singed and smoking, and his powerful muscles were bruised and battered.

The Bishop stepped forward and felt the man's pulse. He indicated that he was indeed alive. He shook him to try to wake him. The man groaned but wouldn't wake up. It was obvious that the man had arrived in a miraculous fashion, but no one knew what to do with him.

One of the fathers suggested that they should call the police, but Anna tugged on the Bishop's sleeve and whispered something in his ear. Then each of the children stepped up and also spoke quietly to their Ward's leader; after which he announced that the man had a special purpose.

The Spirit told the Bishop to listen to the children, who had told him that an angel had told them that they were supposed to help this man: so they waited.

After another half hour had passed the man began to awake. Shaking his head, he looked around himself, and for the first time in his life, he felt the aches and pains that are felt by any normal person: it was strange for him, for Captain Lightning had always been impervious to harm. He had always been the most powerful man on his world: but here on this world he found that he was just another human being.

Standing up shakily he said, "Hello citizens. It is I your greatest hero... Captain Lightning." the children standing around him looked at him blankly. 'Is it possible that they don't know who I am?' he thought.

All of the kids were staring at the odd man for the longest time until suddenly, Martin noticed that all of the parents had frozen in place and stood unmoving. "The giants have broken through..." he whispered. At that the rest of the class looked around and realized that their challenge had begun. They had hoped that there would be more time to prepare, but they had to start now... but where?

"What are we supposed to do?" asked Ben.

"The angel told us that this guy could help us," said Azael. "Let's ask him. Hey you! We've gotta save the Earth, and you're supposed to help us."

The Captain really noticed the children for the first time. "Ho children, you need me to save you you say? Speak and I shall vanquish your foes."

"No thank you sir. It is our job to save the Earth, not yours, but we could sure use your advice." said Avonlea.

"If the Urth is in danger, it is always my job to save it. Just tell me young friend who menaces this world."

"Giants have broken through the barriers between worlds and are now entering our world." said Anna, "they must be stopped."

"Very good. I'll take care of it.", and with that Captain Lightning saluted the class took three steps and tried to take flight... unfortunately, he found that he could no longer fly and he fell flat on his face and sprained his leg as a result. Then he did something very unheroic. He began to cry.

Everyone was stunned. Finally Azael said, "You're kidding, right? You're supposed to be a

super hero, and you're crying?"

Captain Lightning wiped his nose on his sleeve and said, "I'm sorry... I've never felt pain before when I was Captain Lightning. Let me pull myself together and see if any of my powers are still working."

He tried to break a rock... unsuccessfully, and he played with several of the gadgets that he had attached to his utility belt. Finally he said, "All of my powers are gone, and only a few of my widgets still work. This one, ", holding up something that looked like a small mirror, "lets me see far away. With it I can see where the giants are attempting to break into your world."

Holding up another mechanism, which looked like a small silver ball, he said, "this one can send you there."

"Then let's get going," Caleb said.

"No," said the not so super hero, "You will need to gain experience and maybe weapons that you will need to fight the giants first. Each of the giants is trying to enter your world by a different path. They are attempting to enter this world by going through other worlds: I will send each of you into the world that you are most compatible, along with a communications coin."

"I will also give each of you one of the widgets from my utility belt: hopefully they will be enough to defeat your giant and send it home. When you have defeated them, simply hold the coin in your hand and concentrate; that will bring you back here where we can plan our final assault against the one who has already entered your world through mine. I have programmed each of your coins, so each of you take one and let's get started."

Chapter 3

Anna in the Boxcar

The world swam around Anna and she found herself in the woods. Hearing children playing over the hill, she moved in that direction. As she crested the mound, she saw a large house with an old style railroad boxcar in the back yard. It seemed to be set up as some sort of clubhouse and several children were playing outside of the boxcar.

Realizing that if she were going to have to confront a giant, (something that she really had no wish to have to do) she knew that she would have to find the giant first, and to do that she would need some help. Something about the children in the yard seemed familiar to her and something inside of her said that she could trust these people.

Cresting the hill she saw a girl about her own age, dressed in a purple outfit brushing a playful dog. Working her way towards the girl Anna began to doubt herself and started to turn away, but just as she did the girl looked up with a smile and said “Hi there. My name is Violet, what's yours?”

Turning back to the girl she said quietly, “Anna.”

“Nice to meet you Anna. This is our Airedale Terrier. His name is Watch.” With that said, Watch bounced over to Anna, sniffed her and licked her face. “Hey look Anna, he likes you.”

The other kids noticed the exchange and came over to see what was going on. The tallest boy said, “I'm Henry.”

The oldest girl said, “I'm Jesssie.” and the last boy said, “I'm Benny. Got any cookies in your backpack there?”

Smiling Anna said, “No, sorry.” Then it hit her why this all seemed so familiar. “Your last name wouldn't be Alden would it?”

“Yeah, how'd you know?” said Benny.

“Oh I read something about you once.”

“Really,” said Henry, “I didn't know that we were that famous. You look a little confused, is there anything that we can do to help you?”

Hesitating, Anna knew that she had to talk to this older guy, but she really felt more comfortable with Violet. “I'm looking for a giant.” she said quietly.

“Let's go into the boxcar... that's our clubhouse and talk about it. There was a time when we had to live in it, but that was a long time ago.”

Anna had of course read about this clubhouse and these Boxcar Children, but she never imagined that she would ever get the chance to actually see it, much less be a part of it. When they had all settled in she recited to the famous detective children everything that had happened at the Primary Pizza party. After taking time so that Benny could check about what kinds of pizza there was they continued until the whole tale had been told. Anna was surprised that they took it as truth without any doubts.

Finally Henry said, “OK, let's figure this out. There is a giant that is using our world as a hallway to get back into yours, and you have been sent to try to stop the giant. How are you supposed to do that?”

Anna held out something that looked like a large steel marble, although it was light as a feather. “I'm supposed to throw this at it,” she said.

“So we just have to help you find it”, said Jessie. “Let's figure it out.”

“First off, you were sent here,” said Jessie, “So it probably is nearby.”

“A giant entering our world should be noticed,” Violet said, “But there has been nothing about it

on the news.”

“So it's smart enough to stay away from people”, said Benny.

“Right,” said the older boy, “so how do we find it?”

“Maybe he hides from people, but doesn't bother hiding from animals,” said Violet, scratching the well groomed head of the dog Watch, “Maybe Watch can find him.”

“Let Watch smell your marble Anna, maybe he can get a scent from it.”

With one whiff, the dog took off barking, and they all followed after it. Watch ran over the hill and down into the woods where the children had originally found the boxcar. Anna tripped on a tree root and skinned her knee but was picked up by Henry and they all continued forward.

The chill fall air made her wish that she had brought a warmer jacket with her but she knew that she had a job to do. She wondered what she was supposed to do against a giant and she felt a moment of fear, but she realized that she wasn't alone. She had God who had faith in her and she had true friends at her side to strengthen and support her

Finally Watch came to the entrance of a cave and stood outside of it barking wildly.

“This must be it,” Henry said, “come out giant! Come out and talk to us!”

Slowly a giant baby faced child crawled out of the cave. It looked like a three year old, but stood eight feet tall. Sucking it's thumb it looked down at the barking child and began to cry.

Feeling sorry for the little giant Anna said, “Don't be scared, Watch is a friendly dog... just a little noisy sometimes.”

Wiping his sniffling nose with his enormous blanket, the giant said, “I wanna go home...”

“Them why are you here?” said Benny.

“The king made me come here. I wanted to stay home, but he made us go.”

“Where is this king?” asked Anna.

“He went ahead. He's a bad man. He made us go 'cause he knew we'd be happy at home if he were gone. He don't like us to be happy.”

“What's your name little one?” asked Jessie, using her best mothering voice.

“My names Bertie.”

“Would you like to go home Bertie?”

Suddenly looking joyful, he said, “Yes please, nice lady.”

“Anna,” said Jessie, “Throw your marble to Bertie please.”

As soon as she did, Anna saw the happy giant baby sparkle and fade away on his way back home.”

After a brief luchen celebration, Henry suggested that it was time for Anna to return to her own world, and after a hug from each of her new and dear friends, Anna pulled out her coin and returned home.

Chapter 4

Caleb Enters Hogwarts

Caleb came to rest on a rocky hillside looking up at an enormous castle. Battering the walls of the castle stood a thirty foot tall giant. Flying around his head were dozens of children and several adults flying on broomsticks. Each had a magic wand and were zapping the giant with various colored bolts of energy. Although the energies seemed to sting the giant, he seemed relatively unscathed. It was incredibly fast and one by one he would swat the children out of the sky.

He didn't know how it could be true, but he knew somehow that this was Hogwarts: the school for wizards and witches. This was Harry Potter's home, and it was under attack, and somehow it was up to Caleb to defeat this giant when all of these wizards and witches seemed to be failing.

He was deep in thought when he was therefore shocked to see a felled student falling toward him, out of control. Caleb tried to catch him but he wasn't fast enough. Fortunately the young wizard hit a cushioning patch of bushes and survived, although he looked to be in bad shape.

Caleb knew that the wizard needed medical help and that he wasn't likely to be found way out here at the edge of the woods. He remembered hearing that you shouldn't try lifting an injured person so he took off his jacket and rolled the unconscious child onto the jacket and dragged him toward the castle.

Bolts of energy bounced off the giant and almost hit Caleb and his patient several times but they were lucky in that regard, although it was a long way to drag someone to the castle, and without his coat Caleb was getting colder and colder. Tripping he scraped his hands, picked himself up and continued forward. By the time they reached the road leading to the great gates of the huge building hypothermia had set in and Caleb collapsed with his burden in the middle of the roadway.

He awoke in a hospital bed feeling much better. There were candles floating in the air nearby and owls flying in and out of the window. He could still hear the shouting and the giant outside battering on the castle walls, but for now he knew that he was safe.

A young girl looked up and seeing Caleb looking about shouted, "Madam Pomfrey, he's awake."

A matronly lady approached him and waved several weird objects over him and said, "He'll be fine Maggie." and turning to Caleb she continued, "Now how is it that a non-magical boy has found his way to Hogwarts, and how is it that you know anything of us?"

Caleb just looked at her and shrugged his shoulders.

He was feeling much better; the chills had left him and he could feel the weariness quickly leaving him. Whatever Madam Pomfrey did to him, it seemed to be working. The fact that there even was a Madam Pomfrey was something that he found a little disturbing: as far as he knew, she was a fictional character. Still, the entire situation was rather unusual.

The giant's pounding on the walls continued, and soon the boy in the next bed, who wasn't much older than he was, leaned over and said, "I want to thank you for bringing me back to the school. They tell me that you probably saved my life. My name is Ron... Ron Weasley."

Shocked by the name, and seeing that he didn't exactly look like the Ron from the movies, Caleb said, "Caleb. My name's Caleb."

"Well thanks for having my back Caleb. Usually my buddy Harry would be doing that, but he's in that bed over there," Ron pointed to a boy sleeping three beds over. "I'm told that as soon as he wakes up the three of us are supposed to report to the headmaster."

"That would be... Dumbledore?"

"Yeah. That's him. Kinda scary guy when you first meet him, but he's actually really cool."

"I've heard of him," Caleb said, "what year are you here?"

"Harry and I are second years, how about you?"

"I'm not a student here." Caleb said.

"I thought not. You sound like an American."

"Yeah... from Wisconsin."

"Well I'm sure that the schools are great there too." said Ron.

"Yeah. Different though."

An hour and a half later, after Harry had woke up, the three boys were escorted down to the headmaster's office. Caleb was surprised that Harry looked just like he did on the covers of his books, rather than like the actor who played him in the movies. The real Harry was a lot skinnier and his glasses were a lot bigger.

Dumbledore though was even more imposing than he was in the movies, with a deeper and more tender voice.

"Welcome children," the headmaster said, "I can't say that it's much of a surprise to see you here again Mister Potter... Mister Weasley: but you young fellow," turning his piercing gaze upon Caleb, "are unknown to me: and I had thought that I knew every student at Hogwarts."

Struggling to not trip over his words, Caleb tried to answer calmly, "I'm not a student here sir. I'm here to stop the giant."

"Indeed." said Dumbledore, "I sense that maybe you do have the power to defeat the creature. We, I am afraid have failed in our efforts to do so. Maybe you will have better luck. He seems to be a different sort of giant than any that we have previously dealt with. What can you tell us about him?"

"Well sir, it has come from another world and is trying to break into my world by going through yours. I've been given a device," he held out a silver ball that looked a little like a golden snitch, "that will send him back to his world. All I have to do is get it close enough to hit him with it."

"Ah. Well that explains why our magics have been ineffective against it and why it was able to simply walk through the magical protections that have been placed around the school. The magics don't even recognize that the creature even exists. It's lucky then that the walls of Hogwarts are very well designed and sturdy. Do you have anything else to tell us?"

Looking around, Caleb said, "Maybe, but I should probably tell it to you alone."

"Perhaps that is wise. Mister Weasley, Mister Potter please wait for us upstairs. We should be along soon."

After Harry and Ron had left the room, Dumbledore said, "Well young Caleb what is it that bothers you?"

"Sir. In my world, you are all characters and a series of books. I've read the books and I know how all your stories end. I can tell you what you need to know about the future, if you want. I can tell you how to defeat... You Know Who."

Holding up his hand to stop Caleb from continuing, Dumbledore said, "I appreciate what it is that you are trying to do, and you have no idea how tempting your offer is: but if you were to tell me anything more, there is a good chance that that would change the future, and that change might not be as good an ending as the one that is meant to happen. It's enough to hear that there will be a day when our enemy is defeated. I don't need to know the details." Then he smiled like a little kid and said, "Besides, where would be the fun in there being no surprises? Now let's get you to the giant and help you defeat your enemy."

Soon Caleb found himself on the battlements of Hogarts near the roof. Dumbledore stood to his right and Harry stood to his left.

“This must be done right young Caleb,” said the headmaster, “I sense a great destiny in you so you must prove yourself to be a man of honor. Offer the giant a chance to depart of his own free will and accord. Forcing him to his home against his will would be painful to him.”

Caleb stepped forward and Harry used his wand to make a bright flash in front of them. The giant looked at them and Caleb said to the giant, “Please mister giant. Give up your plan to attack my world. Please stop attacking these people and return to your home.”

The giant roared with laughter, “You must be joking tiny person. My people once ruled your world. The Zuzzuzim held your people as slaves, and we will again. I am Hendron, lieutenant of the giant king, and I will eat your bones for breakfast. As soon as I break down these walls, I will reach the portal to your world. Then we will defeat you puny humans and make slaves of you again.”

“So you will not leave peacefully?”

The giant's laughter became even louder.

“If there is a portal in Hogwarts,” said Dumbledore, that explains how some people from your world can know of ours. I'm sorry young Caleb, but you must take the risk and try to cast this beast back into the depths that he came from. Mister Potter, are you ready?”

“Yes sir,” said Harry. Then turning to Caleb he said, “I'm a pretty good flier, so if you climb on my broom, I'll try to get you close enough to use your device.”

Caleb climbed on the back of the broom. His stomach was tied in knots. Flying might be fun, but it wasn't something that he was trained for. He was more used to falling.

With Caleb holding him tightly, Harry launched himself from the roof and into the air. Caleb looked down and felt a moment of sickness before concentrating on the task at hand. They sped up and circled the giant at a giant's arm length away, looking for an opening.

The giant, Hendron, was surprisingly fast. Whenever the boys tried to approach him from the back, it would spin and prevent them from closing the distance. Flying upward they tried to dive bomb the giant but failed at that also.

The boys sparred with the giant for about a half hour with no success. Unfortunately Hendron got in one lucky swipe with his massive hand and knocked the boys out of the sky. They crashed into the brush to the north of the school fortunate that they weren't instantly killed.

Looking around himself, Caleb saw that Harry was unconscious, and thought to himself, 'What if my coming here changes this world? If Harry dies now, there will be no one to save this world, or my world.'

Using the last of his strength, he stood up and ran towards the giant who laughed and insulted him. Then he picked up Caleb he held him up to his leering face.

“Ho ho ho,” said the giant, “you have spirit. You'll make a tasty snack.”

Raising his hand to put Caleb into his mouth the Primary student hurled the silver snitch looking device into the open mouth of the beast; who suddenly shimmered screamed and vanished from sight.

Sure that he was now falling to his death, Caleb was saved by the wand of Hermione Granger.

With Hogwarts saved, Dumbledore said that it would be dangerous to have Caleb stay in their world any longer than necessary: he might let something slip that could cause problems in the future. He gave Caleb an envelope, telling him not to open it until he had returned home.

Harry, Ron and Hermione said their good byes and Caleb used the coin in his pocket to say farewell to Hogwarts School forever.

Chapter 5

Azael at the Gateway to Foo

Azael had landed inconveniently in front of the giant called Grax. Grax was not the brightest of the adult giants, but he was definitely the scariest. Most of the giants had blunt rounded teeth, which were generally used for grinding up their victims; but Grax had sharpened his teeth, so that they looked a lot like a shark's teeth. It was a strange fashion statement, but it seemed to go with the hideous tattoos and scarecrow-like clothes that he wore.

As soon as Azael saw the twenty-five foot giant, he was smart enough to hide in the bushes so that he wasn't seen. He hoped that the giant would get close enough so that he could throw the return device at the giant before he even knew that Azael was there. It was a good plan too: unfortunately he had no way of knowing that the giant also had great ears.

As soon as he tried to get close enough to hurl his device, the giant heard the bushes rustle and he tried to crush Azael with his club. Azael would then find another place of concealment and the whole thing would start over. After six or seven tries, even Grax came to realize that he should not let the small human hit him with whatever it was that he was trying to throw at Grax.

This went on for hours and Azael kept backing farther and farther away, and he decided to try a different tactic. He waited for the giant to lay down in a valley, out of sight for a nap, and then he went ahead to try to look for help.

The ground under his feet became rocky and covered with a black soot. Angry weeds scratched his ankles and caused him no end of annoyance. Ahead of him was a mobile home park and the small community which was directly in the path of the oncoming giant. The sign in front of it said, "Rolling Green Deluxe Mobile Home Park." Something about that seemed familiar to Azael.

Picking the first home in the path of the giant he walked up boldly and pounded on the door. An eleven year old boy sat up on a bed that was kept on the screened in porch. "Can I help you?", the boy said.

"I need to talk to your mom or dad," Azael yelled.

"I live with my aunt and her husband. Believe me no matter what it is, it wouldn't be a good idea to bother them." There was something familiar about the boy.

'Wait a minute,' thought Azael, 'he has a streak of white in his hair.' "I'm Azael," he said 'What's your name?'"

"My name's Leven," said the boy.

'No way!' thought Azael. 'But he's too young. I can't let the giant get him before any of his adventures even begin.'

Suddenly a small furry smiling face looked over Leven's shoulder holding a finger to his lips as if to shush Azael. Shaking his head to make sure that he wasn't imagining things he said, "Do you want to come out and do something?"

"I'm not allowed to play," said Leven, "and I'm not allowed to have friends." he continued with a longing sadness showing in his expression. "I suppose that you better go."

Slowly Azael turned to walk away as Leven closed the door behind him. He felt a small body resting invisibly on his shoulder and a small voice whispering in his ear. "You know something, don't you?"

Azael nodded.

"Is Leven in danger?", the voice asked.

Again Azael nodded.

"Let's sit under the big tree and you can tell me about it.", said the voice.

Azael smiled a sly grin and said, "OK Clover; do you think that Geth will mind."

It worked, The voice now sounded worried and said, "How do you know those names? I don't sense any danger coming from you."

"I'm no danger to any of you, but I know of a great and unexpected danger that will soon be upon us."

"Tell me about it."

After Azael had brought Clover up to date, and in the process Geth too, (Oh yeah. Did I forget to mention that Geth was the tree. Yep, a tree, but no tree like you've ever seen before.), they set up a plan for dealing with the giant, without Leven seeing them doing it. (It was important that Leven not yet find out that there was more to the world than just that which is seen and heard.

Clover made sure that nothing would happen to Leven. (After all Leven was his burn, his assignment.) He made him fall deeply asleep, while Azael set off to taunt the giant, and to try not to get killed in the process. Sneaking up on the sleeping Grax, he tried to get close enough to throw his little silver ball at him, but Grax heard him and woke up and started chasing him.

After a short chase the giant began to lose interest, Azael knew that he had to keep the giant moving forward while Leven slept soundly. Jumping up and down, he said, "Hey you! What kind of a giant are you that can't catch a single boy? Are all giants as boring as you?"

Grax roared and resumed the chase. Whenever he got too close to Azael, Clover would appear sitting on Grax's nose and distract him. The small furry catlike Clover used all of his sycophant-kind tricks. He would appear and disappear at will and make faces from close range. The giant would try to swat him, but somehow he always failed.

Azael again tried to dart in and throw his device, but Grax was always faster.

Between Clover and Azael they slowly maneuvered the behemoth directly toward the house with the snoozing Leven. The blackened ground seemed to be bothering the barefoot giant as he slowly but surely plodded forward.

Finally just short of the Leven's mobile home, Azael and Clover turned to look at the titan before Clover hurried off to watch over Leven. Grax was overjoyed; now, without the bothersome furry creature he would be able to smash his tormentor. With glee he raised his club over his head so that he could smash the puny gnat, but suddenly something wrapped itself around his wrist and held him with a grip like iron.

Turning his head to look at the new annoyance he saw that the tree named Geth had coiled its vinelike branches around his arm and club. The massive tree, like an angry octopus slithered wooden tentacles around more and more of the giant's body, and soon the giant was wrapped up like a wooden mummy. Clover had thought that Azael was going to hide in the majestic fantrum tree, but from reading the books Azael knew who the tree really was, and he suspected that something like this might happen.

Roaring in anger and frustration, the immobilized brute bellowed his rage to the heavens. On the screened in porch, Leven heard the noise and almost awoke.

Running quickly back, Clover looked up at Azael, and said, "Its time my friend. Some day Leven will be called upon to save the world, but today it is your turn. Do what you have to do."

Finally able to approach the giant without getting killed, Azael ran up to the brute, made a face at it and threw his silver sphere. When it made contact with his massive and ugly nose, Grax screamed in anger one more time before he disappeared with a sparkle.

Clover handed Azael a seed and told that it was time for him to return home and save his world too. Fingering the transport coin, he too sparkled and vanished from the world that would someday be a gateway to the land of Foo.

Chapter 6

Ben Battles Bilbo Baggins

Bilbo Baggins was a halfling of the land of the Shire, which was the home to many of the Hobbits of Middle Earth. It was a tranquil life in that part of the world, and still a long way from that time when it would become involved in the great conflicts that nearly consumed the entire world. This is not to say that the Shire did not occasionally find itself in the middle of unwanted excitements, for this is the story of one such time of excitement. It is the story of the day that young Bilbo Baggins was confronted by a giant named Ben.

Bilbo was just a young Hobbit who had been sent out to pick radishes by his mother. Like any human youngster he would have rather been called on to something more interesting than pulling up turnips; but he was a Hobbit, and Hobbitses were supposed to value tranquility over adventure. Bilbo was not your average Hobbit. Outwardly he was as tranquil a Hobbit the best of them, but buried deep inside of him was a side that craved excitement and adventure.

Therefore on the day that the giant named Ben dropped out of the sky amid a sparkling whirlwind, only young Bilbo went out to see what it was. What he found was a young giant who stood twice as tall as the Hobbit child. Bilbo had never seen a Hobbit so large before so he knew that it must be a giant child that now stood in front of him.

Ben left the party in a whirlwind and flew the the sky in a state of wonder. Briefly he thought that, being in a whirlwind, he might find himself in the land of OZ but he quickly dismissed that silly thought, 'OZ isn't a real place,' he thought, 'If I survive this I'll be at some place real.' When he landed he found himself in a farmers field: well cultivated, with strange looking houses with thatched roofs.

'Maybe I'm in Ireland', he thought to himself. Pulling up a turnip, he examined it and decided that there was nothing strange about a turnip. "Guess it's not OZ," he said out loud.

"Of course it's not an oz... it's a turnip!" said a voice in front of him. Looking down he saw a very short child looking up at him with his hands on his hips and the biggest bare feet that he had ever seen. "Whoa... it's a midget," said Ben.

"I'm no midget!", said the short person. "I'm a Hobbit and this is my family's garden! What are you doing pulling up our turnips?"

The startled Ben dropped the vegetable and said, "Oh... I'm sorry. I'm Ben."

"And I am Bilbo Baggins, and I'll thank you to leave our garden."

"OK. I'll be happy to leave your garden. I'm looking for a giant: have you seen any pass this way?"

"If you lost your parents you'll have to go somewhere else to find them. Now, I'll thank you to leave." And he walked over and kicked him in the ankle.

"Hey!", said Ben, "You didn't have to do that."

But Bilbo had learned that you had to show people that you were the boss, so he kicked him again.

Ben got angry and tried to kick him back, but Bilbo was expecting it and nimbly jumped out of the way. Running around behind his larger opponent he climbed up the loose folds of his jacket and hit Ben over the head with a large turnip.

Getting angry for the unprovoked attack, Ben brushed Bilbo off his back and tried again to kick

unsuccessfully. After a couple of more failed kicks, he threw out his arms and landed squarely on top of the nimble Hobbit. Grabbing Bilbo's foot he lifted him into the air to slam the halfling into the ground; but a shower of sparks hit him directly in the face.

“ENOUGH!”, a loud deep voice commanded. Looking up and dropping the Hobbit, Ben saw a tall man with a long gray beard, dressed in, what had to be gray wizard's clothing. He was holding up a shepherd's staff that crackled with multi-colored lightning.

“Gandalf!” said Bilbo.

Gandalf glared at the two of them. He looked at Bilbo and sighed. “Bilbo,” he said, “you have too important a future to chance getting killed in some stupid childhood brawl.

Then he turned his gaze on Ben as if he he could see right through him. Finally he said slowly, “Do you mind telling me what a human child is doing in the land of the Shire? And not just any human I see, you are not of this world are you.”

Before Ben could answer, Bilbo said, “he's not a human Gandalf, he's a giant.”

“He is a human,” Gandalf said quietly, “but not an ordinary one.”

It really didn't matter what Gandalf said, for in the following years every time that Bilbo told the story Ben was a giant. Not only that, he got bigger and scarier with every retelling.

Ben told the old man the entire story of the events that led up to his coming there and the wizard promised to help the primary student in his quest while Bilbo ran to his mom and told her that he would be spending the day with their good friend Gandalf the Gray.

The giant Krossix was found in one of the fields outside of the town tearing up Old Mister Bagshot's garden. To Ben the giant was eighteen feet tall, but to Bilbo, his size couldn't be measured for its greatness.

The three adventurers slowly approached the feasting giant; the boys hid behind the imposing wizard, who stood before the hungry Krossix and boldly said, “Ho giant; what is your purpose here?”

Krossix looked up and ignored the three intruders of his meal of turnips.

Again Gandalf commanded, “Answer me invader, why have you come to the Shire?”

The giant took no notice of the interruption, and simply pulled up another turnip, and smiled with a mouth full of food.

Frowning Gandalf looked down at the boys and said, “I guess that we'll have to do things the hard way.” Holding his staff high emerald lightning crackled around the shepherd's crook and lanced toward the giant. The powerful energies and its accompanied thunderclap collided with Krossix, and ran of him like the rain of a spring shower.

Gandalf hurled spell after spell at him with no better results than the first. Scratching his head, he said, “I don't think that there's anything that I can do. Krossix is not of this world, and nothing of this world can affect him, although obviously he can affect us... well our gardens at least.”

Bilbo jumped out from behind the wizard and; picking up a stick said, “then I'll use force to make it go home.”

Gandalf put his arm in front of Bilbo and turned to Ben. “This is your quest young Ben,” said Gandalf, “go to the giant and try to talk it into leaving of its own freewill.

Timidly walking forward Ben complied.

Krossix, was one of the dumber giants, but he knew his mission. Somewhere on this world was a portal to the world that had long ago spawned the giants, before the ancient prophets of old had banished the Zuzzuzim from the Earth. He was to find that portal and go to the Earth.

With a quiver in his voice Ben said to the giant, “Hey giant. Why don't you just return to your home and forget about going to the Earth?”

With a mouth full of turnip, Krossix said, “I can't... I got a mission to perform. If I don't the king will be mad at me, and believe me, you don't want the king to be mad at you.”

“Then why are you still here?”

“I'm not sure where the portal is. Besides, this is a nice place and the king isn't here.”

“No he's on the Earth.”

“That's right.”

If he's on the Earth, doesn't that mean that he's no longer on your world?”

Krossix stopped eating for a minute and said, “I suppose that that's true.”

“Then why don't you just go home? If he comes back, then you can always come back here, now that you know about it.”

Scrunching his face up in thought the giant said, “You're right. Besides, I miss my family: but I don't know how to get back home.”

Pulling the silver ball out of his pocket Ben said, “This will take you home,” and holding it out to the giant he continued, “You can have it if you want.”

Krossix reached out and took the device from Ben's hand and said, “Thanks.” With which he disappeared in a cloud of sparkles.

Kneeling down in front of Ben Gandolf said, “Don't you think that it's time for you to return to your own family now my friend?”

Smiling, Ben nodded and used his coin to return home.

The story has been told at the bedtimes of many small Hobbits, for many hundreds of years in the land of theShire; of the friendly giant named Ben who was shown the importance of families by the noble Bilbo Baggins and with that knowledge the friendly giant Ben and the Noble Bilbo were able to drive away the destructive monster named Krossix, before he caused a famine which would have spelled the destruction of all civilized Hobbitkind.

Chapter 7

Avonlea and the Wimpy Kid

Greg and Rowley were very excited. Summer had arrived and next year they would finally find themselves in their first year of Junior High School. It even sounded better than Elementary School. Junior High School was almost like High School and how adult was that. It was going to be great and they really planned to make it big there.

The first night of vacation Rowley had a sleepover at Greg's house where they stayed up late playing the video Game *Twisted Wizard*. It was their favorite game... at least until the new *Twisted Wizard II* comes out. Greg's mom made pizza and cookies. The boys played late into the night talking about how big they were going to be next year and finally fell asleep.

Avonlea arrived on their world early the next morning. Her quest for the giant that was sent to the boys version of Earth had barely begun. The giant was kind of a slob and she was able to follow the trail of breadcrumbs that she left behind her. The lady giant had brought a large bag full of sandwiches and snacks leaving behind her a messy trail of crumbs.

It was a trail that led her to the park where she met Greg Heffley and Rowley Jefferson, of whom she asked if they had seen anything strange in the area.

They said that they hadn't and introduced themselves. Avonlea was a little surprised when she recognized their names and realized that she knew who they were; but by now she had seen some strange things and was beginning to be able to take these things in stride.

"I'm following a really large woman," she said. "She's not very neat and keeps leaving behind a trail of leftovers wherever she goes. She," she pointed at a half eaten peanut butter and jelly sandwich. "makes a mess wherever she has been."

"OK," said Greg, "we'll help you look for her. I don't think we've met before. Are you new here?"

"I guess so," she said.

"Where'd you go before?," asked Rowley.

"Uh, I'm from Wisconsin... Madison."

Beaming a bright smile Rowley said, "That's the capitol isn't it."

"Yeah."

"I'm so looking forward to the next year," interrupted Greg, "I've got big plans and we're gonna be the most popular kids in our new school."

Avonlea just smiled, knowing, after reading *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, that things won't work out quite the way that he is expecting things to go: but instead she just said, "That's nice."

Greg told her about how the Middle School has a much nicer yearbook than in their old school, and that they were going to be in everything. Once in a while Rowley tried to say something, but it always seemed that Greg wound up running the conversation.

Rowley seemed a real and genuine person: the kind that is so honest, most people just automatically trust and enjoy being around them. Greg was OK too, but he had more growing up to do. Either way they were both a lot of fun to hang out with.

The three friends followed their trail of endless food scraps out of the park and down the bicycle path that led to the Middle School. On the way they ran into some older kids that Greg said that they had to take the time to get to know. "You never know when knowing the right people might get you ahead." He said.

“Ahead of what?” Asked Rowley.

They walked up to kids that must have been High School kids sitting at a picnic table. They really didn't look too much like the kind of people that Avonlea wanted anything to do with. One of them had a cigarette in his mouth and their language seemed kind of rough. Little did any of them know that some of these tough guys would wind up causing trouble for Greg and Rowley throughout the coming year.

“If we can make friends with these guys we'll have it made,” Greg said.

Rowley and Avonlea were pretty sure that he was wrong about that, but they weren't going argue with him in front of these bigger kids.

Old Cigarette Mouth blew smoke at them and said, “what to you children want?”

Greg obviously didn't like the way he said...*children*... like they were babies. Even so he stood as tall as he could and said, “We're tracking a messy lady. Have you seen anyone like that?”

Blowing smoke, the thug said, “Why? What's she done to you?”

Greg obviously didn't know where to go from there, “Uh... she's littering.”

“Is that so?” said the hood as he flipped his cigarette into the dry grass. “Good for her,” he said laughing as the teens walked away shaking their heads.

The three kids watched them go, until Rowley said, “Do you guys smell smoke?”

Looking around he saw that the lit cigarette had set the brush on fire and the flames were growing fast. They didn't have any water to try to put it out so they ran. Greg said that there was a Fire station just a block over and that they should go there: besides, he thought that it would be great to be able to hang out with fire fighters.

Rowley tripped over a tree root and skinned his elbow, but other than that, they got to Fire Station No. 3 in record time.

CMT Fred was washing the Fire Rescue Ambulance at the time that they ran into the building. “Hey kids, slow down there. Why are you in such a hurry?” He said.

There's a huge fire,” Greg said, “Over by the Park.

Glancing over toward the park, CMT Fred saw the small wisp of smoke that his practiced eye knew to be the smoke from a small brush fire that had already burned itself out. With a grin he said, “A huge fire, you say? Well we'll have to get right on that.” Typing something into a computer he said, “There; now that blaze will be taken care of in no time. I sure want to thank you kids for saving the city from an out of control firestorm.”

Then noticing Rowley's skinned elbow he said, “Let me bandage your injury my friend: I am a CMT after all.” Somehow it seemed that when Greg would lead Rowley into an adventure, it always wound up that Rowley was the one that got hurt.

With his new bandage in place, Greg told Avonlea that he should get his injured friend home safely, so the two boys left Avonlea to face the giant alone.

She found the Lady Giant Larabelle on the Middle School Playground eating a sandwich. The giant was muttering to herself about how she hated it when her mom put the stinky giant cheddar cheese slices on here sandwich, and she pulled it out and flung the smelly cheese across the playground where it landed and stayed for many months.

Watching the scene, Avonlea realized that this giant was just a kid, probably no older than she was herself. Suddenly confronting this giant didn't seem to be as bad a job as she thought it might be, because she knew, that under everything else, a kid is still a kid, and she knew how to talk to another kid.

Sitting down next to the twelve foot giant on a swing she looked up and said, “Hi there.”

“Hi.” said the giant.

“I'm Avonlea, what's your name?”

“Larabelle.”

“That's a pretty name. You look unhappy, is there something wrong?”

“My mom sent me off this morning, but I don't know where she she is.”

Nodding Avonlea said, “Scary. I know how it is, I'm a long ways from my Mom and Dad and I'm not sure when I'll get to see them again.

Larabelle started sniffing.

“Hey, cheer up,” the smaller girl said. “I may not know how I'm going to get home, but I know how to get you home.”

Smiling an uncertain smile, Larabelle said, “Really?”

“Absolutely.” she pulled the silver ball from her pocket and said, “Just hold this tightly and it will take you home.”

The giant girl grabbed her in a hug that nearly hurt Avonlea's back and said simply, “Thank you...thank you... thank you...” After which Larabelle took the little ball and with a smile disappeared in a rainbow of sparks.

Grabbing her coin, immediately Avonlea also left the world of the Wimpy Kid in a shower of colorful sparks.

Chapter 8

The Two Invasions

It was bad enough that I had to be involved in stopping an invasion of the Earth, but now I found myself in the middle of an alien invasion of an Earth in a parallel universe. An invasion of giants, that I hoped to nip in the bud, seemed bad enough, but this world's invasion by the Yeerks I knew would continue for years.

I appeared on a plane of ice, and found five people in their early teens sitting around a campfire planning an attack on their enemy. I arrived in a whirlwind of colored lights, and the one I later found was called Jake jumped up and grabbed me as soon as I had stabilized.

Assuming me to be one of the enemy, he demanded, "Who are you?"

I said, "My name is Scott, and whoever you are, I'm not your enemy."

The girl named Rachel grabbed my shirt and said, "Then what are you doing here?" There was something that made me feel uneasy about her. She seemed more dangerous than the others for some reason.

At that point I really didn't know where I was, so when I said, "I'm here to stop an invasion," I was surprised when they said that they already knew about an invasion, and that if I was an enemy of the Yeerks, then I was a friend of theirs.

When I heard the name Yeerks, I knew right away where I was. These were the kids that could morph into animals. These were the Animorphs. "I'm not here about the Yeerks. I'm here to stop an invasion of giants." Sitting down around the campfire I filled them in on the situation and they surprisingly enough took it quite well.

Jake said, "Well I guess that we got another task to straighten out before we get on with our war. Tell me Scott; how many of the giants can we be expecting?"

"Well," I said, "only one. Each giant is trying to slip quietly into my world through a nearby dimension, so there should only be one who will come through yours."

"Piece of cake," said Tobias, "my drunk uncle should be able to take one giant, so we should have an easy time of it. Once we've located it it should be a simple matter of devising a workable plan."

"Ax, (talking about their alien friend) told me, never to underestimate an enemy," said Marco.

"It shouldn't be too far away," I said.

"Trust me Scott: it'll be a piece of cake." Promised Tobias.

The giant, who was named Cygnarra was found two miles away at the Air Force base. We could hear gunfire and headed that direction. He seemed to be trying to get to a massive bunker, but the Army's ground troops had, so far, been able to keep him away.

I looked at the forty foot tall giant, then at Tobias. "Piece of cake, huh?"

Tobias looked at him with a lopsided grin and said, "Devil's Food cake?"

Shaking his head Jake said, "Either way, let's find a way to take care of him. Scott: why were you sent to fight this giant? Are you really strong, or can shoot lightning or something? What have you got that we can use?"

Reaching in his pocket, Scott pulled out a small silver ball and said sheepishly, "I have this."

Everyone went silent. Finally Marco said, "You're kidding, right?"

"Hold on," said Rachel, "maybe it's a bomb or something."

"Well, it's not really a bomb," said Scott, "but if I can get the giant to touch it, it will send him

back to his world and seal the portal between their world and this one. Each giant is supposed to use a portal that they know about into a different universe and then find a portal from that universe into my universe. If they can do that they can open up a highway for their armies to invade my world.”

“”Why don't they just invade the worlds that are between their world and yours?” said Tobias.

“Well, at one time they used to live on our world with us, but they kept causing trouble.” Said Scott, “The prophets back in those days cast them off of the Earth and sealed the portals between the two worlds. The giants want our world because they consider it their home, even though there hasn't been a giant who wasn't born on that other world for many thousands of years. They don't care about your world except that they might be able to use it as way to get to mine.”

As they talked, a falcon circled the Cygnarra's head and after a while flew a roundabout path to the youth and landed. Then the beautiful bird transformed into the girl Cassie. “We've got a bigger problem than we thought.” she said. “The giant has a Yeerk in it's ear. If the Yeerk can find the portal and use it for themselves, they could have an army of mind controlled giants. We have to stop this thing.”

“Scott: are all of the giants as big as this one?” asked the inquisitive Tobias.

“As I understand it, the giants that have been sent on these missions are the runts of the giants. The leaders of the giants didn't want to send what they considered valuable soldiers into unexplored worlds so they sent the ones that they considered expendable. They sent the losers.”

“Oh great,” moaned Marco.

“I guess that we better deal with this one then,” said Jake, “so that we never have to even see the bad ones. We already stopped at the zoo, and touched the animals whose powers we want, so we might as well get to it.”

Jake slowly morphed into a rhino and Marco into an elephant. The two of them quickly attacked the legs of Cygnarra the giant, who screamed with rage and pain as his ankles were pierced by the rhino's horn and the elephant's tusks. The beasts tried futilely to tip the giant over but he was simply too big.

Cassie had resumed her falcon form and swiftly flew into his eyes in an attempt at blinding the massive giant, who tried uselessly to swat her away. Tobias tried a more stealthy approach and approached the giant as a bee. She hoped to be able to sting the Yeerk, who was in the giant's ear, and distract it enough that she could resume her own form and yank out the Yeerk. Once they freed the giant's mind, maybe he would be easier to deal with.

Scott and Rachel stood on the nearby hill watching the action. Finally he turned to her and said, “What power do you have? What can you turn into?”

Looking at the lad she said, “I can become a snake... the deadliest and most poisonous snake in existence.” Nodding towards the others she said coldly, “If they can't stop the giant, I will.”

“Wait a minute,” said Scott, “the giant's being mind controlled. Maybe he's really innocent and doesn't deserve to die.”

“Too bad for him I guess.”

The battle wasn't going well: one by one the morphed children were defeated and knocked unconscious. First Cassie was knocked out of the sky followed quickly by Tobias, and eventually Jake and Marco were battered senseless.

Rachel said, “I figured it would come down to this.” And she began her transformation into the poisonous snake.

Scott shouted at her to stop so that they could find another way to fight the giant; but seeing that she was determined to kill the giant, he bolted forward running straight at Cygnarra. The giant barely noticed him and decided to swat him like a bug. As the huge hand came down on Scott he hurled the silver ball, which impacted with the large hand and the giant instantly vanished in a rainbow of light before it could complete the swing and squash the boy.

Rachel resumed her human form and said, “Well that was a dumb thing to do.”

“Maybe so, but it worked didn't it?” Grinned Scott as he too faded from sight.

Chapter 9

The Fallen Hero

Captain Lightning reclined back on the lawn chair to contemplate his situation. As the children set off on their missions, one by one, he found that his legs were getting tired, just standing there watching them depart. He had never been tired before... he didn't like it.

He had always been the guy that could do pretty much anything and everyone looked up to him, but these kids acted like they had never heard of him. Hard as it was to believe, it might have been true, but they didn't have to be so obvious about it. He was used to being the center of attention. Even when the bad guys would attack him it was because they hated him, even though they had to respect him: but not in this universe.

So he sat in the lawn chair and sulked. Still the kids were pretty brave going off to fight giants without any special powers. 'How could they do it,' he thought to himself.

From behind him a voice said, "They have faith, so if it's the Lord's will, they can do anything."

Turning around quickly he looked up at the personage standing behind him. The man blazed brightly like the sun, (although it didn't hurt his eyes) so he assumed that the man wasn't human. "what are you?" he asked.

"I'm an angel." the man said.

"An angel? Like in the Bible?"

"Exactly like in the Bible."

"I never really paid a lot of attention to religion. When you can move planets it makes it a little hard to believe in an almighty being." Said Captain Lightning. "Why are you here?"

"You are a man that has done a lot of good in your world, but power has a way of corrupting someone if they don't have faith to teach them how to control what that power does to their soul. I'm here to help you find your way. God has faith in you, and He figures that it's time that you learn about humility and faith."

Rolling his eyes and waiting for a lecture, Captain Lightning was surprised as the angel disappeared and was replaced by the young girl called Anna. "You survived?", he said to her.

"Yes sir," she said, "with a little help from my friends." She went on to tell him about the help that she had received from her new friends among the Boxcar Children. She told him of the giant child and how it had been forced into it's mission and only wanted to go home: and she told him how sorry she felt for the poor thing."

"You pitied it?" Said a surprised Captain. "I would just have beaten it up and sent it on it's way. After all it was a threat to your world."

"And that is why Anna is a greater hero than you are Captain." said the voice of the smiling angel, who was again standing beside him. "Compassion should always be a primary motivation for all of our actions. God didn't say to beat up your enemies, He said to love your enemies."

Turning to Anna, the angel said, "You have done well sister, I have one more mission for you before it is time to reunite your class." Whispering instructions to her that the fallen hero couldn't hear without his super hearing, Anna smiled and she and the angel faded from view, leaving Captain Lightning alone again."

After awhile Caleb reappeared, looking invigorated. "That was so great," he said.

"I take it that you were successful in your mission?" Captain Lightning asked.

"Oh yeah. I got to go to Hogwarts and meet wizards and witches. I got to ride on a broomstick

and fight a giant. We beat him.” Caleb went on to tell the fallen hero the entire story of his adventure.

“So the translocator sphere that I gave you worked?”

“It did,” said Caleb, “once we were able to get close enough to be able to throw it. I even had the chance to try to warn their world's greater wizard of a danger that will kill him some day in the future. It's funny though; he didn't want me to tell him.”

“Well that sounds kind of dumb,” said the Captain, “I find that it's always a good idea to survive so that I can fight another day.”

“Even if your survival would mean the deaths of those you love?” Said the suddenly reappeared angel. “Dumbledore knew his limitations, and he knew that sometimes sacrifices have to be made for the greater good. If Jesus Christ wouldn't have died, man would never have received the gift of redemption. If Joseph Smith had lived, the Saints would not have had Brigham Young to lead them west, and he was the man who was foreordained to do that.” Turning to Caleb he said, “Can you guess why Dumbledore had to die young hero?”

“I guess that if he still lived, Harry Potter never would have been ready to defeat Voldemort.”

“Exactly, and a true hero knows when it's time to stand aside and let the new generation have its day.” Smiled the angel. “Now come with me and I will fill you in on the next part of your quest.”

Next Azael returned with his gift of a seed of a fantrom tree, which he quickly went to the nearest hill and planted. Looking at the strange looking seed being planted the Captain followed Azael up the hill. After the seed had been planted, he said, “What's that all about?”

“I'm not supposed to tell you,” said Azael.

“Why not?”

The boy just shrugged his shoulders.

Thinking to trick him into telling him, the fallen hero said, “What happened to you when you went to the other dimension? Did the giant get sent home?”

“Yeah, he did. He wasn't very bright: just strong and ugly..” Then he proceeded to tell the tale of the world that housed to gateway to Foo, and the people that he met there. He told him how he and Clover led the giant to become entangled in the tree that was Geth, even though Clover never really caught on that there was anything special about the tree. He guessed that Clover never really picked up that trees on Earth aren't animate like the ones in Foo are.

“Why was this Clover so worried about not waking this Levin person?”

“Because he was dreaming, and dreams are important.”

That statement mystified Captain Lightning, and something in the back of his mind said that this statement was very important. He had always understood that he had a duty to help those less fortunate than himself, and he tried to live his life by that principle; but he had never suspected that there might be something more than duty.

Again the angel appeared, “Captain,” he said, “doing the right thing because you are expected to is a wonderful thing; but you will find that it will be much more satisfying, and productive, to do the right thing because you have gained a testimony of it and really want to do the right rather than just doing it because it is expected of you. A great hero longs for righteousness and loves the people that he serves.

Next Avonlea brought him the story of the wimpy kid with the big ego, that often hurt the people around him as he tried to prove that he was a big man.

The Captain said, “Were you able to defeat your enemy?”

“It was a funny thing,” said Avonlea. “Larabelle wasn't my enemy. By the time she left she was a friend.” She then proceeded to tell the story of the lost Giant child and how she found her way home.

“You didn't have to fight her? Well that seems like a waste of time.”

At that Avonlea got angry, “That's awfully mean of you to say that. Larabelle was a scared

child, and she needed my friendship, not a punch in the face.”

“Yes, but wasn't she a threat to your world?”

“I supposed that she was, but that doesn't mean that I should become uncaring: then I would have been the monster.”

“Avonlea has proven the greatest type of hero:”, said the smiling angel, “the one who turns a potential enemy into a friend. Some day Larabelle will grow up and become a great leader in her own world, because today she learned the lesson of love and forgiveness from Avonlea. Some day she will tell this story to her people and will convince her people to lay aside their long time hatred of mankind. It is a greater victory than simply defeating a foe.”

Captain Lightning sat for a long time thinking. Slowly he said, “I begin to see that there might be a reason that I am here after all. I begin to sense that perhaps I can be a better servant to my people than I have already been.”

The angel smiled, tapped his nose and vanished with Avonlea to prepare her for the next stage of her adventure.

Scott came next. He told the captain of the world of the Animorphs and how the Yeerks were about to turn the giant's invasion into one of their own. If they would have succeeded not only would that other world be lost, but so would Scott's Earth and the home of the giants.

Scott was disturbed that Rachael was willing to kill the giant without mercy.

“What of it?” The Captain said, “She would have been justified in killing her enemy in those circumstances.”

“Yet she didn't have to,” said the newly appeared angel. “Because of Scott's courage and willing act of self sacrifice, the giant was freed of the Yeerks influence and the giants were warned to stay away from that world. What were you thinking about Scott when you jumped in front of that possible killing blow?”

“I was thinking that I had to save Rachael from doing something that she would live to regret.”

“So you were thinking that it may be more important to save someone than to defeat your enemy, isn't that right?” Said the smiling angel.

“Obviously. It's always more important to save someone than to win a battle.”

Turning to the fallen hero, the angel said, “That is the difference between a hero and a soldier, my friend.”

Chapter 10

Rock, Scissors or Paper

Mike felt dizzy and put his head down. When he looked up again, he was in a schoolyard watching what looked to be a middle school softball game. He didn't recognize any of the kids or even the school so he began to get a little panicky. That was until he looked at a sign that told the name of the school, "McQuarrie Middle School." Suddenly he became very sure about who these kids might be.

He saw a big kid at bat who nailed it and got a home run. 'I'll bet that that's Tater Tot.' thought Mike. After another batter an odd looking kid in a dirty tee shirt almost struck out, but was hit by a bad pitch, and he was told to take a base. He had a big smile and started running, looking like he had really accomplished something... until he tripped and fell face first into the dirt. 'That must be Dwight.' He thought.

Dwight Tharp was a strange kind of hero. He had invented Oragimi Yoda: kinda of a supernatural guru, who was made out of paper. People couldn't really hear him, but he sure gave good advice anyway. There always seemed to be a debate over whether or not Origami Yoda was real or not. It seemed that no matter which side you took you felt it passionately.

The game continued for another 20 minutes and Mike found himself torn: he knew that he had a mission to complete, but he really wanted to meet these kids. Finally he decided that maybe he could do both: after all these guys had baseball bats, and if he had to fight a giant, maybe baseball bats wouldn't be a bad weapon to use; so he waited for the game to end and then he approached the kids.

"Hi guys, my name is Mike and I enjoyed your game." He said.

One by one the kids introduced themselves and Mike found that generally they were just normal guys, although he had imagined most of them to look differently than they did. They all talked about the highs and the lows of the game and eventually Tater Tot asked him, "Well Mike, are you any good at baseball?"

"OK I guess," said Mike, "although I've come more to ask some advice than to play games." Turning to Dwight he continued, "I understand that you have a friend who is great with advice."

"I used to," said Dwight, "but he was... all burned up... and won't talk with us any more."

Frowning Mike said, "That's not good, I really need some good advice."

Tommy Lomax then stepped into the discussion, "Well maybe between us all we can be of some help. What's your problem?"

Not being sure of how much he should tell them, Mike finally decided to just blurt out the whole thing and see what happened. Not too surprisingly some of them walked away shaking their heads (led he noticed by Harvey Cunningham) and Mike could hear things being said like "nut case" and "crazy in the head", but some of them stayed. He found that since he really didn't know the people who had walked away, he really didn't care what they thought of him... but he was doubly grateful for those who stayed.

"So you have to stop... a giant?,, from invading a parallel world." asked Tommy, "The giant is trying to reach some portal and your world has sent... a kid to save it? I think we've got it."

Turning to Dwight, Kellen Campbell said, "What would... you know who, suggest?"

"But he's not here," said Dwight.

"From what I gather, no one knows him better than you Dwight, so why don't you tell us what you think that he might have said. Besides, I happen to know that he'll be back, so give it a go will

you?”

“Well, once he said that *the biggest of threats can often be handled in the smallest of ways*. Do you think that that might be helpful?”

“Maybe. If so it will probably make sense only at the right time.”

“I think that you're right,” said Kellen.

So the kids set off to find and vanquish a giant.

It wasn't much of a giant that they found, only seven feet tall and not very bright, but he had quite a temper. He had soda bottles hanging from holes in his ears and wore a necklace of old dried bubble gum wads that were so old they were as hard as rocks. It was a weird fashion statement and one that showed that this particular giant had no taste at all.

He was gleefully digging through the trashcans at a nearby apartment complex and mumbling an out of key song to himself. As giants go he probably was the runt of the litter, but even if he would have just been a human, no group of kids is likely to be able to beat a seven foot tall man.

Since he was not a thirty foot giant the kids were divided about the situation. Some of them (not surprisingly the same ones who doubted the existence of Origami Yoda) didn't believe that he was a giant and wanted nothing to do with attacking what seemed to be a powerful homeless guy that might not be entirely sane. Others, (the same ones who believed in the wisdom of Origami Yoda) saw the size of the giant as a great asset and were assured that he could be vanquished.

Tommy Lomax shouted at the giant to get his attention, “Hey you... giant! Turn and face us. Why have you come to this world?”

Turning slowly, the giant looked numbly at the children and said, “Huh?”

Mike then said, “It's time for you to return to your own world.”

“Dunno how.” The giant said, “Gotta find port-al. Tha's wha I was told. I kin feel it here sum where.” With that he turned back to digging through the trash and ignored the kids.

“Stop it!” Mike shouted, but the giant just waved his arm at him and continued his digging. Harvey and his friends shook their heads and turned to walk away.

“OK. We gave him a chance,” said Kellen, “It's our turn to be heroes: let's get him!”, and raising his baseball bat he started to charge.” Several others quickly followed, although none of them really had it in them to actually hit somebody with a bat, so they just swung them near the giant and tried to act tough. He ignored them.

Finally Tater Tot said, “If I'm going to swing this bat, it's going to hit whatever it is I swing at,” so he stepped up to the giant and took aim at the giant's stomach and took a swing. It was a perfect blow, and everyone expected the huge guy to fold, but the giant totally ignored it.

Tater Tot took more swings at increasingly more injurious spots on the giant but none of them bothered the oddly dressed creature. It was really too bad that the kids never realized that giants (even a small one) are a lot tougher than a human being. Soon all of the kids joined in, whacking the giant with their bats, and none of them seemed to do any good.

Finally they all stood back and talked about how to proceed. One kid said that hey should call 911, but no one thought that anyone would believe them. Another suggested getting the tractor from their farm and running it over, while yet another suggested getting a hunting rifle. It was doubtful if any of them would really do any of those things, but they all got carried away in the discussion.

Standing aside and taking a few minutes to think about it, Mike reflected on all that had happened to him since he had come to this world, and suddenly he knew the answer. Reaching into his pocket he pulled out the silver ball that the guy who called himself Captain Lightning had given him and looked it over. Breathing on it to fog it up, Mike polished it on his sleeve and stepped up to the giant.

“Hey, you!” He said. “Look what I found. Do you want it for your necklace?”

Turning around the giant with the poor dress sense smiled broadly when he saw the shiny ball

and reached out and grabbed it. As soon as he did, he vanished in a flash of sparkling lights.

Stunned the other kids were silent while Mike chuckled to himself, knowing that he had just saved this world and maybe his own as well.

“What happened to the giant?” Asked Tommy.

“I just remembered the advice of Origami Yoda, where he said '*the biggest of threats can often be handled in the smallest of ways*'. I realized that a big man can usually be brought low by small things and the giant obviously liked jewelry, even the odd jewelry that he wore: so I offered to give him some. Once he took it the sphere sent him home. We were advised to use small things to defeat a big threat and we just looked for bigger and more powerful things to fight with, when we were supposed to use small things. Once I realized that, the answer was obvious.”

While he was talking, Mike could feel himself slipping away from this world and realized that he was being returned home, so he said, “I have to be going home now guys, but it's been a lot of fun.” With that he too vanished as the giant had leaving an amazed group of kids and one in particular.

Dwight Tharp remembered what Mike said. He said that Origami Yoda will be back. Dwight had been going through the summer kind of depressed at the thought that Origami Yoda was gone for good, but now he began to have hope that maybe some day he would be able to remake him. It was something to think about.

Chapter 11

Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks

Martin had been wandering through the woods for a while before he stumbled across Billy Coleman the Fourth, who was in the woods hunting for raccoons with his two dogs. The two immediately struck up a friendship. Martin had recognized the similarity between the new boy's name and that of the main character in one of his favorite books; although that Billy Coleman lived a very long time ago, this one had a similar outlook on life.

He had told Billy that he was hunting a giant and was amazed that Billy took it in stride, and never questioned Martin's sanity. He just made a few suggestions about how they might get started, and off the two boys went.

Unfortunately Martin really didn't have too much to go on: they hadn't even found a trail to follow yet, but he knew that it was important. If they had had a piece of the giant's clothing they could let the dogs smell them and the hounds would be leading them to their quarry in no time, but they did not, so the dogs led them after raccoons and squirrels instead of monsters.

Don't dismiss an angry raccoon though, because they can be fairly large, mighty bright and awfully mean when they're mad. One of the hounds led them right to a deep ravine with steep sides. Vines dangled down the steep walls of the pit and right into a mama coon with three babies who got mighty mad.

The boys almost walked unknowingly into the small animals. They were chatting while they talked and weren't really paying attention to where they were going. (Something that you should never be doing when you are hunting.) Suddenly a large raccoon was barring the path of their exit and hissing at them. Its fur was raised menacingly on its back and baring its teeth. Backing up slowly they found themselves backed into a closed canyon.

"What do we do now?", asked Martin.

"I guess we climb", said Billy. They tried scrambling up the walls but kept sliding back and wound up closer to the angry animal with every attempt at climbing. On top of that they were nearly buried in a shower of rocks and gravel with every attempt.

Billy whistled two longs whistles and two short ones and the dogs came running. At first I thought that they were going to attack the baby raccoons, but they just ran around in circles barking until the mama coon slowly maneuvered her brood back down the small canyon.

Billy and I looked at each other. We were both shaking, for as much as we were loathe to admit it, the incident had scared us both.

Laughing with a nervous laugh Billy said, "I guess that we're not the fearless hunters that we might like to think ourselves to be, huh?"

Martin just shook his head quickly and thought to himself, 'If we get scared by a raccoon, how will we find the courage to confront a giant?'

Finally Billy said, "I might not be a great hunter, but my great grandpa is visiting us right now, and he's a great hunter. I'll bet he could give us some good advice"

Martin could tell by the tone of his voice that Billy's great grandfather was a hero of his so he decided to see what the old guy had to say, so he said, "Good idea."

As it turned out, William Coleman the first really did give Martin just the advice that he needed to hear. He was surprised when the old man started telling a long story that Martin knew well. He told the story of himself as a boy and his love of hunting and a love of his two best hunting dogs. Martin

had read the story before in his world. It was told as a narrative to someone, but he never suspected that the old man was telling the story to him personally. It was a humbling experience: and it was a lot longer story when spoken than when read.

Grandpa Coleman didn't finish the story until early the next morning. At the end of it Martin was in awe of the hunting skills of the old guy. "Sir," he said, "if you had to give the one best bit of advice about hunting, what would it be?"

"That's easy young man: I'll tell you what my grandfather once told me, and it is what made all of the difference for me. This is good advice for life in general, but also important for hunting, He told me that we should do all that we can do and turn the rest over to God. It's as simple as that. If you care enough to do all that you can do as a simple human being, God will give you more than human help, if it is His will."

The old man's words hit Martin dead center and he felt the power of the Holy Ghost telling him that this is what he needed to know to accomplish his mission.

With a renewed purpose, he set off on his hunt again. Billy Colman's mother made him lay down and go to sleep, so Martin set off alone, but not by himself, for he now knew that God would be at his side. He said a short, heartfelt prayer, and left the Coleman home.

He hadn't gone far when he heard a voice behind him, "Wait up young fella." Said William Coleman the first. "I started to go to sleep, but got an overpowering feeling that if I went with you, it would be the greatest hunt of my life."

Turning around, Martin saw the old man hurrying up the path after him. He somehow seemed to have more strength and energy than he had had the night before. He had on an old baseball cap and an old army coat. With him he brought Billy's dogs and a shotgun.

Catching up to Martin, he said, "Now the Spirit said I was to help you in your hunt; so why don't you tell me what we're hunting."

Martin told him the entire story, leaving out no details. "That's the oddest story I've ever heard," said the old man, "but it shouldn't be too hard to find a giant."

Feeling a little frustrated, Martin said, "I don't even know where to begin. I have no idea where to start looking."

Pushing back his cap, the old man said, "What is the most important rule for hunting, young fella?"

Then it hit Martin and he spoke in a whisper, "Ask God..."

"Well why don't we just do that then?"

During a brief prayer, Martin heard a quiet whisper that shook him to his core, that told him where to go. "We have to go to your old home Mr. Colman."

Smiling, Billy Colman the First, said, "That's what I heard too. Why don't we get going."

After a fifty minute hike, which surprisingly enough, the old man handled just fine: they crested a hill and looked down into the most beautiful valley that Martin had ever seen. It was like a sea of red ferns, with a center between two graves of the brightest red. According to old legends, Red Ferns will grow between the graves of two who have the profoundest of love for each other. (In this case it was Mister Coleman's hunting dogs) It was strange to see a field of red rather than a field of green, but Martin knew what those red ferns signified.

"This was a place of great love," whispered the old man, "it was my home and a place of love." Looking down into the valley, they could see an ugly twenty foot giant digging in the middle of the field. "It is wrong to have a creature like that spoiling such a place."

Martin nodded his agreement and said, "why don't we do something about it!"

Martin and William circled around the giant coming up behind it, while it continued its digging.

When they got within twenty feet of it the old man stood up and shouted, "You! Giant! This is my home and you are not welcome here!"

The beast looked at him, grunted and ignored him and went back to his digging.

William whistled and the dogs came at the giant from two sides and then attacked, but with a swipe of its meaty arm he swung and knocked the hounds far away, with yelps of pain. Fortunately, these dogs were raised right and they didn't give up and attacked again and again. Finally, William signaled them to stop; seeing that they couldn't hurt the giant but that he could hurt them: and he would not have these dogs wounded unnecessarily.

Shouting again, the old man said, "I have a gun and I'll use it if I have to."

The giant grunted and threw a large rock at the old guy, who took aim and shot the giant in the leg. Unfortunately the giant had very tough skin and the buckshot just bounced harmlessly off.

The old man turned to Martin and said, "I don't know what else to do young fella..."

With that Martin fell to his knees and begged help of the Almighty. Immediately, a bolt of lightning struck the beast and he fell stunned to the ground. Seeing this Martin ran forward and hurled the silver sphere which sent the giant to his home world and sealed the rift between worlds.

After a few minutes the old man said, "That was quite a hunt. It's nice to have a chance to have one more great hunt while I am still on the earth."

Taking Martin over to two small graves that held the reddest of ferns between them and he said, "Well young man, do you know what these are?"

Martin nodded.

"I'm glad. Just so you know, when my time comes, I've made arrangements to be buried right here."

Smiling at the old gentleman Martin said, "I think that 's a great idea sir." And with a rainbow sparkle Martin returned to his home world and faded away from the place where the red ferns grew.

Chapter 12

The Lioness of Nephi

The Smiling Angel told Anna to take the path that led through an overgrown hedge. She pushed through the hedge and found a rocky seashore on the other side, with the smell of the ocean and a salt tang in the air. Looking back over her shoulder the hedge had disappeared and behind her was a cave mouth that led into the rocks.

On the edge of the shore she saw the skeleton of a large wooden ship, which was in the middle stages of construction. Several men were working on its superstructure, with several carrying a large beam while others had some sort of pulley mechanism hoisting up another beam.

Nearby she could see several large tents with women cooking over open fires. The women seemed to be laughing and have a good time in each others company as they watched the children playing some sort of game with a ball that seemed to be made out of a bundle of rags.

She watched the children for a while as she tried to figure out the rules of the game, forgetting all about the ship's construction until she heard shouting coming from the boat. Turning that way, it looked as if two of the men were about to get into a fight. She was supposed to talk to these people, so she decided that maybe the women, who seemed much friendlier, would be better for her to approach.

Thinking back she remembered how all of the members of her class returned to the place from which they had been dispatched on their missions. One by one they each told the others of their adventures and of the various lessons that each of them had learned. The angel told them that they should particularly remember what William Colman had told Martin. "Remember," he said, "Do all that you can do, then turn the rest over to God."

They had all successfully closed off all of the portals between the giant's world and ours, except for the one that was already opened through Captain Lightning's world, by the giant's king. It was the passage of the giant king that unwittingly brought the Captain to our world, where he has no super powers.

Long ago, although it was never so recorded in the scriptures, the angel told them that the prophets of the distant past sealed the portal that led directly from our world to the giants world when they were cast out from our world. The angel said that the class members would therefore each be sent on quests into the past to acquire the tools necessary to send the evil king home and seal, both the portals from their world to Captain Lightning's and from his world to the giant's world. They would each meet people who would help them to obtain objects that would help them in their present quest.

He then spoke to each child privately and sent them on their way. Looking down on the people on the shore below her, Anna couldn't help wondering if those people were the people that she was supposed to meet.

When Anna walked into the camp, she was first noticed by the children playing. Most of them were younger than she was but a couple were about her age. One of them, named Dinah approached her. She was a little shorter than Anna, with long curly hair tied back and braided, and she wore the kind of cloths that she had seen desert people wear on the news, but with much brighter colors.

"Greetings stranger," the new girl said to Anna. "My name is Dinah, welcome to the camp of the Lehites." (It was a group that Anna didn't think that she had ever heard of before.) "You are not alone here in this wilderness are you stranger?" Anna was surprised, that even though the girl was speaking a language that she had never heard before, somehow she was able to understand it.

“My name is Anna and I am alone,” she said. “I have been sent to seek out a great man to help me in saving my people and I have come a very long way. Is there a great man of God near here?”

Dinah smiled and said, “The greatest man that I know of is my grandfather; would you like to talk to him? Maybe he'll know who it is that you are looking for.”

“Yes please.” Anna said with a smile.

Dinah led her to the largest and most colorful of the tents, motioning for her to wait outside while she asked her grandfather for permission to bring a stranger into his tent. After a few minutes, Dinah opened the flap of the tent and waved for Anna to come in.

The inside of the tent smelled of incense and bread baking and at the far end of the tent, sitting on a cushioned bench at a table sat an older man with a long beard, which was longer than the beards of Brother Smith or Brother Jenks and much whiter. He wore colorful robes and a scarf tied over his hair. He had a kindly smile and spoke with a deep voice in the strange tongue that she could somehow understand.

“Welcome child,” he said, “My granddaughter has told me that you are seeking help. My name is Lehi,” That was a name that Anna knew well, and she now knew where and when she was. “If there is any way that I and my people can help you, we will. Now tell me: what is it that you are looking for?”

Stuttering quietly Anna said, “Sir I know who you are. You are a prophet. I have traveled a great ways to find you, because the giants have returned and are threatening my home and family. Long ago the prophets got rid of the giants from our world, and an angel has sent me here to get the help of a prophet so that they can be thrown out of our world again.”

Looking solemn, Lehi said, “the Spirit tells me that you speak the truth young Anna, but I am also told that I am not the prophet that you are in need of. You must go to the boat and look for my son...”

“Nephi?”

“Yes, my son Nephi. He is the prophet that has been ordained to aid you. I am getting old, and he has that which you will need when the time comes to banish your foes. You have brought me great joy in giving me the opportunity to still speak to God as a prophet again. Lately I have been so busy with the problems around the camp that I have been distracted from my duties as a prophet. Thank you giving me a reason to call upon God once again in a matter of such importance. Now it is time for you to hurry to the beach. Nephi is at a time of crisis for him and you are needed to save him. Now go with my appreciation my young sister.”

Anna and Dinah rushed down to the beach and found a man,(who Dinah said was Nephi) arguing strongly with two other men. It was getting so heated, one of the men had pulled a knife and looked like he was going to stab Nephi.

Running between them Anna said in an uncharacteristic and forceful manner “Sir, I must speak with you immediately!”

The men were shocked by the unexpected situation and each stepped back. The man with the knife shook his head, put away the knife and walked away, followed by one of the other men. Nephi had a look of rage on his face aimed at the departing men that scared Anna a little. Still she knew from the scriptures that he was a good man and that she could trust him.

Finally he looked down at her, put away his anger and said, “And who have we got here Dinah: a small lioness in disguise?”

Anna smiled and said, “No sir, not at all. I can hardly believe that I did that.”

“I can sense the Spirit of God in you: the Spirit has made you strong. Now what can I do for you young lioness?”

Anna immediately told him everything that had happened to her: about the primary party, the

super hero and particularly the return of the giants: and she told him what Lehi had told her.

After a few moments, Nephi said, "I recently met a friend of yours who has explained your predicament and after much prayer on the matter, the Spirit has told me what you need in your struggle." Bending down, he took a necklace off from around his neck and put it over Anna's head. "This," he said, "was made from a string of my favorite bow that was recently broken, and hanging from it is a shell from this beach with my name carved into it along with the likeness of a lioness. I was going to give it to Dinah here but the Spirit says that it belongs to you."

"Thank you sir." She said.

"You are very welcome. I have been instructed that when this ship that we are building has served its purpose to us, I am to set it adrift in the sea. When the Spirit moves you to do so, hold onto your necklace tightly and say '*Come to the Lioness of Nephi*,' and the ship will come to you: for from this day forward you Anna are the Lioness of Nephi."

"One more thing child: you shall always have my thanks. If you had not arrived when you did, I might have gotten into a fight with my brother and one of us would have died. The Spirit has told me that we both will have important descendants, so you have saved us from disaster, because you had the courage to follow the Spirit. Always remember to seek the Spirit to give you strength when you are in need and the Father will always stand behind you.

"When you next see my Trailblazer, tell him that it is the time for him to use his gifts. You now have what you need my Lioness, so return to your people and be as brave as you have been today."

Chapter 13

Caleb in Jericho

Caleb followed Anna into the hedge, but came out in a very different location. He found himself on the wall of a fortress that he first thought might have been a section of Hogwarts, but looking around he could see that it was a much rougher and considerably larger construction than the school for witches and wizards.

Looking down from the wall, he, along with a mob of curious city dwellers in linen robes, saw a large army surrounding the fortified city. The army just seemed to have encircled the city and was marching around it. Watching the strange antics of the attackers he marveled at their actions. Without warning, the army stopped marching, turned toward the city and stood in place stomping their feet. Trumpeters raised horns and blew them all at once. It was a long and loud wailing sound that made the walls below him rumble and shake. Then the army turned and resumed their marching.

Caleb's blood ran cold, as he realized where he was. He had to get out of the city before the wall fell down; because if he was still in what he now realized must be the city of Jericho, he would surely perish when the walls were brought down. He had to get out of the city.

He pushed his way through the crowds of sightseers and started running. Some of the people noticed the modern clothes that he wore which certainly must have seemed out of place in these circumstances and tried halfheartedly to stop him. After all, Caleb was obviously not from Jericho, so they thought that he might be a spy. If they would have thought that there was any chance that the armies of Israel had the least likelihood of getting into the city, they probably would have tried harder to capture him: as it was he got away into the lower city and made his way to the gate.

Hiding himself behind a wagonload of straw he waited silently for the gates to open, but they seemed to be locked securely. Unexpectedly a hand grabbed him from behind and spun him around.

An old man in desert garb stared intently at him and said, "I don't know why, but the Spirit constrains me to take you with us, so come along boy. What is your name?"

"Caleb."

"Really?" said the man, "That too is my name. Now I know that we must take you with us. We are spies for the Nation of Israel, and we have found help so that we may escape the city: so you will come with us, or you will die in the fall of this place." Handing him a robe, the old man said, "Here put this on. Those clothes that you are now wearing will give us away for sure otherwise."

When night came they escaped the city walls, and he saw other spies passing them heading into the city to replace them. The darkness of the evening concealed their actions and the apathy of the city dwellers made it easy to be ignored. Moving stealthy among a ridgeline of brush, Caleb soon found himself standing outside the tent of the commander of the Army of God.

Old Caleb said, "Wait here," and went into the tent. After several minutes, he returned and told Young Caleb to come into the tent. Inside the tent, he saw several men standing around a large table with parchments and maps. Everyone gave deference to an older man who was obviously the commander. Although older, the man had a powerful presence and appearance. With a close cut gray beard and bronze armor and a pointed metal helmet.

The commander looked up and said, "Come here boy; I won't hurt you."

"I know you won't sir," said Caleb.

"And how can you know such a thing my friend?" He said.

“I have been sent here by an angel sir, and the Gift of the Holy Ghost has told me that you are to be trusted. No only that, I'm pretty sure that you are the famous Joshua.”

“Famous am I? Not infamous?”

“Not where I come from sir. There you are known to be a great prophet and a great warrior. I didn't know that it was you that I was supposed to seek out when I left on my mission, but it can't be a coincidence that I found you here anyway.”

With that he proceeded to tell the prophet of everything that had happened to him up to that point. He told him of the giants return and the need to stop them. Joshua listened intently before making a reply.

“Long ago”, Joshua said, “the prophets defeated the giants and drove them from the world and very few are left. Every prophet has been taught the secret of defeating the giants, and has a sacred trust to pass that secret down to all newer prophets, until the day comes when the last of the giants is banished for good.”

“Sir,” said Young Caleb, “in my time all of the giants were banished long ago. I come from the distant future and they have returned. The secret of how to banish them has long since been lost and we need to recover it. Can you help me.”

Joshua put his hand to his chin and went deep into thought. Finally he said, “I can only reveal this secret to a prophet, and you are not a prophet. I cannot violate my oath in this matter, therefore I will write the secret down on a parchment in the ancient language of Adam and Eve. Take it with you, and show it to someone in authority when you return to your home. If it is God's will that you learn the secret, someone will be sent to translate the parchment for you.”

“Beyond this I will give you my staff. It will be a weapon that you will be able to use against your foe. I have pressing business here and this is my place, so I entrust it to you. Use it wisely, my friend and brother.”

Caleb took the staff and held it in his hands. It was an older piece of wood and worn smooth through decades of use. It was relatively light and easy for him to handle. “What does it do sir,” he asked, “How will it be helpful against a giant.”

Smiling broadly, Joshua said, “Just listen to the Spirit. The Spirit will tell you what you must do. Now I cannot give such a prize to just anyone, so by the authority given me as supreme commander of the host of Israel, I now make you an officer in the Army of Israel and bestow upon you the rank of Captain of Tens. Now go young Captain of Israel and always remember that there is great nobility and honor in defending the weak and protecting those in need of protection and in comforting those in need of comfort.”

“Be like your namesake here,” he pointed towards Old Caleb, “when everybody in Israel doubted the power of God, only my old friend Caleb held true and trusted in the power of God. As a result, only he and I, of all of the people who left the captivity of Egypt, were allowed to enter the promised land. If you can show even a small portion of the faith of Caleb, I have no doubt that you will be able to vanquish your foes and send the giants of your era out of your world.”

With that a whirlwind arose and Caleb's vision was obscured with dust. When his eyes cleared, he was again standing in front of the hedge in his own time.

Chapter 14

The Last Giant

Azael closely followed Caleb through the hedge and on passing through, he found himself in a crowd of smelly people who obviously hadn't bathed for a while. They seemed to be watching some sort of ancient sporting event. A tall guy stood in the middle of two lines of people shouting about how great he was and challenging one of the groups of people to send someone out to fight with him. He thought that maybe it was professional wrestling.

When no one came out to fight him, the big guy in armor said some rude things about the other people. The crowd that Azael was in the middle of, the smelly guys: they all joined in and made fun of the cowards in the other group too. Finally they all decided to break for lunch and walked away, leaving Azael alone.

He stood there for a while until he heard a voice from behind him saying, "It's a sad state of affairs Azael, but believe me it will get better."

Turning around, Azael saw a man dressed in a really scraggily robe and said, "How do you know my name? Who are you?"

The man chuckled and said, "My name is Samuel, and I am a prophet. Do you know who that big guy was who was shouting all of those rude things?"

"Not really..."

"His name is Goliath, and he is the last of the giants..."

"Oh! I know who Goliath is, and I know what is going to happen to him."

"That is good. It should save some time. There is a boy who must fight the giant..."

"David." Azael said.

"Yes David. You are well informed. Either way, David must fight the giant, but he is out in the fields tending his sheep. He doesn't know what is happening here, and he is too dedicated to abandon his sheep to come find out. I need you to go to him and find some way to get him to come to this place. If he doesn't, the whole course of God's plan for the nation will be derailed."

"If he doesn't, he'll never become King and Jesus might not ever be born." said Azael.

Samuel, looking astounded said, "I see that you know even more than I do. That is why it must be you who goes to David. Only you really understand what is at stake. As a boy yourself, only you can think enough like David to be able to get him to leave his sheep and come here."

"Here is my dog Bo. He will lead you to David."

The dog led Azael into a hilly area where he saw a boy playing some sort of stringed instrument and singing a song. He was surrounded by a group of grazing sheep who seemed to trust him completely.

Azael climbed up the rocky hill and called out to David who noticed him for the first time. "Come on up friend," David said. Looking at Azael's clothes he looked deep in thought, "What is this strange material that you are wearing? It's not wool or cotton and certainly not furs."

Azael just shrugged his shoulders and said, "I dunno; my Mom gave it to me for my birthday. I came up here to find out what you're doing up here. Don't you know what's going on down in the valley? It's where all of the excitement is, not up here."

Azael spent the next forty minutes joking around with, and building a friendship with young David. It became obvious to him that there was no way that David was going to leave his sheep to go and see an exciting battle. His brothers had done that and there was no one else to watch the sheep and he was too dedicated to not do his duty.

Finally Azael decided that he would have to try to trick David into going to the battle. “you know,” he said, “your father told me that he needed you to take some supplies to your brothers. He said that they were running out.”

“That might be true,” said David, “But unless he sends a keeper to watch over my flocks while I am away from them, I cannot leave my sheep.”

Thinking quickly, Azael said as convincingly as he could, “I am the keeper that your father sent. Why else do you think I am here?”

“I don't know... How do I know that you aren't just trying to get my sheep away from me?”

Looking around for an answer to that question he saw it. “David, do you see that dog. His name is Bo and he is the dog of the prophet Samuel. If Samuel trusts me with his dog, surely you know that you can trust me with your sheep.”

David thought for a moment then said, “I can't argue with that. I will run this errand and return as quickly as I can. Please watch my flock carefully,” Pointing to one particular lamb, he said, “that spotted sheep likes to get into trouble, so watch out for her.”

With that David introduced Azael to his sheep, gave Bo a few whispered instructions and headed down into the valley.

Azael found watching sheep to become very boring after the first twenty minutes or so, and he started to doze off. He was awakened by someone shaking his shoulder gently and calling his name. Opening his eyes he saw Samuel standing there with another young man.

“This is Keb,” he said, “it is important that you come with me so Keb here will watch the sheep until David returns.” Starting down the hill he continued, “David will soon be battling the giant and you must see the confrontation. Something will happen there that will be necessary for you at a crucial point in your future battle with your own giant.”

Samuel and Azael stood next to King Saul as the battle began. Azael knew the story from reading the scriptures and hearing of the account throughout his life, but watching it actually happening before him was much more exciting than any video game that he had ever experienced: right up until he saw all of the blood as Goliath fell dead on his face. The blood wasn't very cool at all.

He heard the crowds shouting for David and he saw the jealous look in the king's eye that he knew would bring future problems. After it was all over, Samuel dug out a scroll that was in Goliath's bag and handed it to Azael.

“This is a copy of the Book of the Giants.” he told Azael, “There is much useful information written within this book that will help you in your struggle. Remember, not all information is meant for all people, and the things contained in this scroll could be very dangerous in the wrong hands. For a time you were a keeper of sheep, you are now a Keeper of Sacred knowledge; and only you will be able to read and understand these records. Guard well your trust my Keeper and when the time comes to bring forth the hidden knowledge herein contained and defeat your enemies.”

“Now go say good-bye and congratulate your friend David on his victory, but keep close your knowledge of David's future. He will find all of that in his appointed time. Then make your farewells and it will be time for me to send you home.”

Chapter 15

Michael At Sea

Michael walked through the hedge and found himself exiting through a wooded hatchway on the upper floor of an enormous wooden ship. Looking over the edge he could view sea water in every direction with no end in sight. Running quickly from rail to rail he scanned the horizon all about him, but there was no hint of land anywhere.

For a while he suspected that he had wound up on an old style pirate ship, but when he looked up he couldn't see any masts, sails or Jolly Roger flags. The ship rocked gently on the waves and the sky was the clearest of blues, with only a few storm clouds on the horizon.

There were no other people anywhere in sight, but he sure could smell something that smelled like an old barn somewhere nearby. Following his nose he returned to the wooden hatch and opened it again. The smell was horrible, but he started his climb down the stairs into the dark interior of the massive wooden vessel.

The ship was lighted by a series of mirrors, which reflected sunlight into the depths of the hallways. In the eerily illuminated boat, everything seemed very still and quiet. Following the smell downward he came to a deck with a great many cage doors. Looking into the first cage he saw two lions in a very deep state of sleep.

He tried to get their attention but no matter what he did he couldn't wake them: which probably was for the good anyway. It's rarely a happy lion that is rudely awakened from a deep sleep.

The next cage had two sheep, and the next had two giraffes. All of the animals were in the same deep state of hibernation which the the lions were in and Michael was unable to wake them. Cage after cage was filled with sleeping beasts and Mike was feeling like he was in some end of the world movie. He might have thought that he was sleeping and dreaming if not for the terrible smell of the animal dung that had obviously been laying on the deck for a very long time.

Going down another floor he found more of the same and even more on the deck below that. Eventually he decided to check the deck at the very top of the ship, which was above the first deck that he had entered on. On that floor he found rooms with hibernating people. Checking to see that they were really alive, he saw that they were breathing very slowly and very shallowly.

Picking one of the men at random he tried shaking him awake. When that didn't work he threw a cup of water in the man's face with the same results. Finally he re-aimed one of the mirrors so that a ray of sunlight shone brightly in the guy's eyes, and his eyes slowly opened up. The man took a deep breath and sat up.

Looking around him, and feeling the ship moving beneath him the man said, "I'm up early..." Then spying Michael he said, "Who are you? You weren't on the ark when we set sail."

'Ark,' Mike thought, 'so that's where I am.' "Are you Noah?" He said.

Looking puzzled the man replied, "No, that would be my father; my name is Shem. And you...?"

"Oh yeah, my name is Michael, and I've come from the future. Can I talk to your father?"

"Maybe; but first I want to hear your story."

The primary student told him the entire story up till that point and asked for his help.

"I perceive that you have been telling me the truth my friend; but I know nothing about dealing with giants. My father though is over six hundred years old and he may know more of the matter. Come let us wake him and find out."

Noah looked like a thin Santa Claus without the red suit. He had the beard and the deep booming voice, but most obvious was his loud Ho, Ho, Ho. Fortunately for Michael, he remembered much about how to deal with giants.

He told Michael that God had in ages past created many large animals to fight the giants, but that there was no purpose for such animals in the coming world after the flood: nevertheless, Noah had been commanded to bring several of them along on the ark and they slept peacefully on a special deck, away from all of the other animals. He said that he never understood why he was supposed to load these animals, especially since many of them were dangerous animals; but now he understood.

Noah asked him about the future and was pleased to hear that mankind survives into a very distant time. He was shocked to hear that some day man would be able to fly and even some day travel to the moon.

Mike watched as the old man sent off several birds in search of land and he smiled knowing how that plan would work out for the good.

Eventually, Noah took down a silver whistle hanging from a thin leather strap and placed it about Michael's neck. "This my son, is a Mariner's Pipe. When you return to your own time you will know what to do with it, and I name you the Warrior Mariner. After I complete my mission and unload all of the animals that I am supposed to unload, I will set the ark adrift. It will find it's way through time and space and come to the owner of the Mariner's Pipe. There the ark, and its contents will be invaluable in your struggle against the giants."

Mike thanked the old man and after a short tour of the ark, (After all, Noah was very proud of the ship that he had built and he had very few chances to show it off.) the boy walked through the wooden hatch and soon found his way back home.

Chapter 16

Martin in the Wilderness

Martin pushed his way through the hedge and came out... on the other side of a hedge. He was sure that he would have wound up in some place adventurous, but as far as he could tell, he hadn't moved a bit; and he couldn't help feeling a little disappointed. Looking around though, he realized that all of the homes in the housing development seemed to have vanished, and he was alone in a highly wooded area.

For a minute he thought that maybe he had returned to the place of the red ferns. He knew that he had no weapons, and he also knew that there was a possibility that there might be dangerous animals in the area, so he crouched down and moved as stealthily as he could among the bushes and brambles.

He found some footprints of what looked like slippers and decided to follow them. The bugs were biting him on every exposed part of his body and he was having a miserable time of it. He mumbled that things couldn't get any worse: and then they did.

He heard a low growling behind him.

Turning slowly, there was a wolf or some other kind of large dog-like animal baring its fangs at him; the hair on its back standing up told him that it was not happy with him.

Either that or it said that Martin was about to become its lunch.

He stood up and took off running and the animal bolted after him and Martin knew that he couldn't keep ahead of it..

Martin knew that he didn't have long to live.

Suddenly the dog yelped and fell over with an arrow sticking out of its neck. A hidden voice said, "you should be careful where you travel without something to defend yourself boy."

"Thanks for saving me," shouted Martin. "Where are you?"

Stepping out of the bushes a tall young man came into view. He was wearing desert clothing with a long robe and hood. "My name is Nephi. I was hunting and saw your predicament and I knew that I had to step in and help you. You are unknown to me boy; what are you doing out in this wild place? Is your family nearby?"

"No sir," Martin said. "I was sent to find a man of God who would help me defeat a giant."

Nephi was about to make a joke of what the boy said, but was constrained by the Spirit who told him that he spoke the truth and that Nephi should help him. "Tell me of this giant situation boy."

Martin launched into a retelling of all of the adventures that he and his classmates had so far endured and he told him of his mission.

Nephi listened intently and nodded. Some day he would use this knowledge to help Martin's classmate Anna, but that will happen in the future.

Just then two big bruisers stumbled out of the bushes into the clearing... they appeared to be drunk.

Staggering towards Nephi, the one that was starting to go bald said, "Ho lil' brother, wha' di ya find there?"

"Looks ta be a rich little guy judging by the fancy lookin' clothes he got on." Slurred the other one. "How 'bout it kid; ya got any gold?"

Martin backed up and Nephi stepped between the bullies and the boy. Laman, leave the lad alone."

Laman laughed. "Who's gonna stop us if I don't? You gonna fight us lil' brother?"

"If I have to. I'd rather not, but I won't let you hurt an innocent."

“Who said annathin about hurtin' anyone? I jus' wanna rough him up a little and maybe make a lil' gold too.”

“I'll say it again: leave him be!”

Lemuel pushed his way forward and Nephi swung his bow, hitting his brother in the head. The steel bow and string twanged as it hit the drunk man. Seeing his favorite brother being knocked down, Laman pulled his knife, roared and attacked hi little brother.

Nephi sidestepped him and swung his bow yet again. After several more passes like that Nephi brought the bow down on Laman's back, and the bow snapped in two.

The three brothers stared at the bow in silence.

“Oh Man,” said a suddenly very sober Lemuel, “Nephi we can't tell father what happened. Promise us that you'll tell him that you broke the bow accidentally while hunting.”

“Please brother,” sobbed Laman.

“And why should I do that?” Said Nephi.

The brothers continued to beg Nephi. Finally Laman said, “Father has a weak heart. Don't put any stress on it, please.”

That gave Nephi pause. They were right. Knowing the truth about his older sons' actions would cause pain for Lehi. Finally Nephi agreed to tell his father that the bow was broken while hunting, even though he knew that his brothers would give him grief for doing so later on; when evrything had blown over.

Thinking that they had pulled a fast one on their brother, Laman and Lemuel walked off snickering to themselves. Martin watched them slither off, knowing that they would cause even more trouble for Nephi in the future: still, he knew it wasn't his job to change the past, it was his job to save the future, so he kept his mouth shut.

Nephi shook his head and said, “Now why don't we figure out how I can help you with your giant problem.”

Struck with a moment of inspiration Nephi reached into his bag and pulled out a golden metallic ball with pointing needles inside of the hollow ball. The exterior of the ball was decorated with the finest of carvings and inscriptions.

Martin could read none of them.

“Do you know what this is?” Asked Nephi.

“Is that the liahona?” Whispered Martin in an awed voice.

“You really are well informed my friend. I had two items that might have been useful to you: the bow, and the liahona, and now that the bow is broken I must entrust the direction finder to you. Do you know how to use it?”

Martin nodded and said quietly, “I think so.”

Even so Nephi gave him a quick set of instructions and said, “My people still need this device, but when that time is past, I'll see that it is delivered to you. With this you will be able to blaze a true trail throughout the wilderness. With this you will be able to find whatever it is that your are in need of finding.

From now on, I will call you Trailblazer, to signify that you have been trusted with this responsibility. Now you must return to your own time my friend. I am counting on you to prepare a safe future for the descendants and my families descendants.

Chapter 17

Benjamin and the Tower

Ben's trip through the hedge brought him into a land with many ancient peoples who, on the face of things, appeared to be very devout people, but through the Gift of the Holy Ghost Ben felt ill at ease with these strangers. He came upon a small group of them walking down a well worn and dusty road. They were talking about offering their prayers to God, so they appeared to be spiritual, but he could feel within himself that it wasn't so.

Even so, on the off chance that they might be going to see a prophet or some other man of God he followed them, because he wasn't sure how else he should find one in this strange land. He heard them talking about the chief judge in the nearby land of Zarahemla and heard the name of Alma, so he had some idea where he was and suspected that the man that he was supposed to meet was indeed Alma: whether it was Alma the older or the younger he didn't know, but either one, he was sure, could help him.

He was so deep in thought over the subject that he almost ran into the people he was following when they came to a stop. They were laughing and joking about a great many things (some of which no follower of Christ should joke about) and they got into a long line of people that stretched around the corner: where he could hear people shouting, one by one, in a loud voice.

Not having a desire to waste time standing in a line, Ben walked around the line and turned the corner to get a better view of what everyone was so worked up about. He came upon a puzzling sight.

The line led up to a very tall stone tower, which was standing out of a large building with a stone wall about it. At the base of the tower were two men in long robes taking money from each person in the line. Once they had paid the men; the people from the line were able to climb the tower, and when they reached the top, they would recite the same prayer that the people just before them had said. It seemed like madness to Benjamin.

He listened to the people in line talking about how great the view was on the tower. It sounded like some kind of silly tourist attraction to him, having little connection with worshiping God: still something about it seemed familiar, so he continued watching until it came to him.

This was the Rameumptom. Now he knew that he had to talk to Alma.

He walked quickly over to the place where the people were exiting the structure and waited until he heard one of them mention the name of Alma: then he asked them where Alma could be found. He was told that if he continued down the road he would come to the city of Zarahemla, and that he would find Alma there.

Ben was worried that it would take too long to go all of the way to Zarahemla, but he couldn't help but be a little excited about the prospect of actually seeing the great city for himself. Unfortunately for him, (But fortunately for the rest of the world) he met Alma and Amulek on the road

It had been a long and boring walk up until that point, and he was under a continuously high level of stress, since he had no way of knowing what kind of people that he would meet on the road. Finally he saw two men walking toward him dressed in casual Nephite traveling clothes (although he had no way of knowing that). They were telling each other jokes and seemed to be having a pretty good time. They looked like they might be pretty tough people to have on your bad side, but somehow Ben felt safe in their presence.

"Excuse me sirs," he said, "but can you tell me if this is the way to Zarahemla?"

The younger of the two men looked up and said, "This is indeed the road to Zarahemla; but why is a young man like you traveling so far by yourself. This isn't always a safe road."

"I have been give a mission to find Alma the prophet and I am told that he is in Zarahemla."

The older man said, "Oh, I can assure you that the man you speak of is not in Zarahemla."

Ben's heart sank, but then the younger man said, "Who gave you this message to seek out that man?"

"I am from a long ways away sir, and I have been given this task by an angel of God. I have to find Alma the prophet Can you tell me where I might find him?"

The older man, Amulek by name, laughed loud and hearty and said pointing at the other man, "Why right here boy. This man here is the man that you seek, if it is the younger Alma that you seek."

Ben realized that he could feel the Spirit telling him that the man was indeed Alma. (That was probably why he felt so safe in their presence.)

With that Alma said, "I can tell that you are telling me the truth, so why don't we all sit down and you can tell us your story. They all sat on a circle of rocks in which Amulek built a fire. Alma picked up a stick and pulled out his knife and whittled while Ben told his story. He told him of the giants and the parallel worlds and of the Smiling Angel and of Captain Lightning. He held nothing back from the man of God.

When he was finished Alma said, "That is the strangest story that I've ever heard... but I also know that it is true. Now what is it that you want from me? Why did you have to travel so far to find me? Have you no prophets in your own time?"

"We do sir," he said, "but they are not warrior prophets like you are. They have their own tasks to perform, but fighting giants isn't among their jobs. Besides, giants have almost been forgotten in our day and time, and the methods of fighting them have been forgotten."

"As they have been here," said Amulek. "I know of no giants in our time."

"Wait. Let's not be too hasty," said Alma. Pulling out his pack he dug through his things and pulled out a set of brass plates. "These plates are very old. They were obtained by our father Nephi from the evil Laban under a great cost to himself. They are most known for holding the genealogy of our people, but there is also many other things written on them that were never to be told to others. As keeper of the plates, I have read these closed sections and there is information on how to deal with giants."

He placed the plates back in his pack and held up the thing that he had been carving. "This," he said, "is a special whistle that I have carved for this occasion. It is now yours," He placed the whistle on a string and hung it over Ben's neck. "When you first come under attack, in your distant future; blow the whistle. The Brass Plates will come to you. In that far day, you will then become the last Keeper of the Brass Plates. Use them wisely my brother."

"Thank you sir," whispered Ben.

"Now: I sense that there is something else that disturbs you. Why don't we see if there isn't some other thing that we can do for you while you are here."

With that Ben, proceeded to tell them of the Rameumptom and the strange actions of the odd worshipers at that place.

"That is odd behavior," said Alma, "While don't we go see this strange sight. Maybe we can help them to find their way back to Christ. Maybe even such a thing that was made for such a bad purpose may be used for good."

Chapter 18

Courage and Beauty

After a short trip through the hedge, Scott found himself on a bustling street with buildings made out of whitewashed mud bricks and straw roofs. Open sewers ran down the sides of the streets creating quite a stench.

It was a hot dry day with the burning sun high overhead, but he could hear the sound of a running river not too far away. He seemed to be in some kind of a market place with people talking quietly and shouting loudly all around him.

Suddenly the crowd parted as close to a dozen men, who had the look of soldiers on them (He probably thought that because they were all dressed similarly in leather armor and carrying swords and knives) pushed their way through the crowd looking each person closely in the face, as if they were looking for something.

Finally they stopped in front of Scott, grabbed his shirt and one of them said gruffly, "You are dressed in a strange manner boy. Are you a Hebrew?"

Stammering with the pressure of the situation Scott replied, "No sir... I'm a Mormon."

"Mormon?" He said, "I don't know where this Mormon place is, but it doesn't really matter, as long as you're not a Hebrew."

A second one of the men then said, "You know Bashaan, I've never seen a Hebrew dressed like this kid."

"I suppose so," said Bashaan, "go your own way kid; and if you see any Hebrews, you'd be wise to keep your distance from them." With that he pushed Scott to the ground, turned and continued his search.

Scott couldn't help wondering what kind of a place he had found himself in, where ruffians could wander the streets bothering innocent people. 'Things like that could never happen back home' he thought.

When the men had passed out of sight a dark haired boy, about his own age, but shorter, walked up behind him and tugged on his sleeve. Scott was so wired he almost jumped out of his own skin,, and turning he said, "What... what is it?"

The boy smiled and said, "My name is Eli, I think maybe you should come with me. You look like you have a lot of questions and I will try to give you the answers... but not here; out in the open."

Scott followed the boy through the market place. It was obvious that Eli knew his way around the market. He probably had played there all of hi life as he was growing up. Finally he stopped at a house with a wooden door on which he knocked once, twice and three times.

Silently a young girl's face looked around the edge of the door to see who it was before opening it to let them in.

Eli's family was sitting around a table, and his mother was baking something on an open fire oven. His father looked Scott over deeply and said, "You must be the one." He then waved to his wife who brought over something warm to eat and a cup of some liquid.

The food was kind of strange to Scott. It smelled like fresh baked bread, but was flat and harder than any other bread that he had ever eaten before, though not as hard as a cracker. He took a small taste of it and found it to be quite tasty.

Then he sniffed the cup and asked, "What is this?"

Eli's father said, "It is wine to wash down your bread."

Scott quickly pushed the cup away and said, "No thank you. I cannot drink that."

"Why not?", asked Eli's mother. "Is there something wrong with it?"

"I don't know if there is anything wrong with it, but I have covenanted with God to never drink alcohol."

Nodding approvingly, the father said, "Ah. Like a Nazarite holy man. Eli has said that you were something called a Mormon: that must be something like a Nazarite. He heard you say that you were not a Hebrew; but tell me boy, what God do you worship? Do you worship the God of Israel?"

"I do." said Scott. "I worship the same God that was worshiped by Moses, and Abraham and David, but I come from a land far away."

"Then boy you are in great danger. Haman, the king's advisor, seeks to kill all of the people who worship the one true God, and even though you are not Hebrew, he may seek you out too."

Thinking quickly, Scott tried to remember where he had heard the name Haman before. The Man continued speaking, "Tonight is a special night. Our queen is going to risk her life to implore the king to protect us. All of our people will fast and pray this night for the safety of our queen and for the deliverance of God's people. There is great power in united prayer and fasting, so after tonight's dinner, all of our people will begin our fast."

'Esther!', Scott thought, 'Their queen is Esther!' Speaking up he said, "Sir, may I join you in your fast?"

"We would be honored my friend."

As each hour of the fast continued, Scott could feel the Holy Spirit more and more. He felt a closeness with these people, little knowing that Eli was a very distant ancestor of his. They sang hymns together, and although Scott didn't know the strange tunes, he recognized the spirit behind them and found them very uplifting.

Late into the night, he fell into a deep sleep and dreamed a dream; in which the Smiling Angel came to him and said, "What have you learned from your journey Scott?"

"I have learned that when things are most dark, you should join with others and implore the Goodness of God."

"Very good. And do you remember how this situation ends?"

"I do. Queen Esther risks her life and wins safety for her people and their enemies are killed."

"Do you need to stay here to see their enemies be hanged?"

"I would rather not."

"Then remember the lessons that you have learned here, for you are now a special witness of the courage of Esther and the beauty of united prayer and I name you Persian Sojourner. Now: your sojourn in the ancient land of Persia is over and it is time for you to return home."

Chapter 19

Madison to Be

Avonlea's trip through the hedge was different than the others; because she exited the exact same hedge that she had entered, except that everything around the hedge had changed. Everything was more rugged and wild. She was still on the Isthmus of Madison, right where the park was where they were holding their activity; and the lakes were still there unchanged: but all of the buildings were gone and only forests and swamps could be seen.

Turning around she could see that Captain Lightning was gone, but a Native American sat in his place on a log. A pang of fear hit her and she almost bolted and ran, until she felt an overwhelming peace fall over her accompanied by the warmth of the Spirit.

Looking closer at the man she could see a slight glowing surrounding the man. "Are you an angel?" She asked the man.

He chuckled with a warm smile and said, "No... are you?"

"Well, no. I'm not."

"And neither am I. I am just a man who has been sent to give you some insights. Do you recognize this place?"

"It looks like Madison..."

"Absolutely right. This is Madison; but it's the Madison of eighteen hundred years before you were born. It is the Madison from the only time that all of the lands, including this one were righteously following the teachings of Jesus. Do you know the Jesus of whom I speak?"

"I do. I am a member of His Church."

"That's good, and it brings me great joy to know that His church will survive. I was fortunate enough to meet and know Him, and it is my task, along with two of my brothers, to remain on the Earth until His return, so that His will may be done. And today it was His will that I meet with you."

Avonlea was overwhelmed to meet a man who actually knew Jesus and she had many questions to ask him, but before she could ask, the man said:

"Our time together is short, so let's get right down to business. What help is it that you need from me?"

"The giants have returned to threaten our world and we need to know how to defeat them, and send them back to their world."

The man frowned and said, "That's a problem that I never considered. I guess that it's an opportunity for me to grow. Let me give you some advice from the Savior's teachings. Have you read any of the scriptures?"

With a smile and a happy heart, Avonlea was able to say, "Yes sir, I have."

"That is good. Did you read about when the multitude came to hear Him speak, but didn't bring any food, He had compassion on them. What did He do?"

"He collected the few fish and bits of bread and put them in a basket, and from the basket, He was able to feed the thousands of people."

"Very good; and what can we learn from this that might apply to your problem?"

"That with God's help we'll have everything that we need?"

"Yes that's a part of it. Another part of it is that we should be moved by love and compassion more than anything else. Don't hate your enemy, pray for them as you pray for yourself. Now tell me: what is your favorite scripture?"

“Well, that was one of them, and another that comes to mind is the Parable of the ten women and their oil lamps.”

“You have good taste little sister. That Parable applies well to your problem, It tells us of the return of the Savior but more generally that we must be prepared when we are warned of any coming situation.”

“You were warned about the giants and now you have warned me. Although I now know little about giants right now, in the next eighteen hundred years my brothers and I will become experts because you have given us due and timely warning. When the time comes little sister, you will call us and we will come and fight the giants by your side.”

“How shall I call you?”

“I will teach you one of our hymns. When the time comes, you must pray to God for help, (Because no one should ever begin any great or important undertaking without first invoking the blessings of God) then sing the hymn. That hymn will not have been sung for many hundreds of years, and me and my brothers will hear it and come running.”

He motioned for Avonlea to sit and he began to teach the most moving of the Hymns sung and loved by the ancient Nephites.

Chapter 20

The Coming Storm

One by one the classmates returned to the present to report. They all sat in a circle while the Smiling Angel (Who Anna now was certain looked strangely familiar) brought them refreshments from the cooler that was still there from their primary party.

They each told of their stories of their trips into the parallel worlds and their trips into the past. Captain Lightning listened quietly as the Smiling Angel asked each of them what lessons they had learned that would be helpful in their upcoming struggle.

Anna said that she learned that they would have to trust God and to trust each other.

Avonlea learned that not all of the giants wanted to be our enemies and that we must fight them out of love and not hate.

Azael pointed out that they could be distracted and be felled by one attack while they are expecting something totally different.

Ben found that size doesn't always matter, and that there is always someone bigger.

Caleb said that they have freewill and we should remind them of that and remember that sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice ourselves to save others. (Captain Lightning heard that and hung his head low because he feared this, and he feared that he had unconsciously opened the portal between his world and ours: the portal that the Giant King found, which started the invasion.)

Martin recited the lesson taught him by Grandpa Colman in that other world: "*we should do all that we can do and turn the rest over to God.*" he said.

Mike told them the advice of Origami Yoda: "*the biggest of threats can often be handled in the smallest of ways.*"

Scott said that you should never fight in anger or hatred and never forget the power of prayer.

The smiling Angel smiled even broader, (If that were possible) and said, "It sounds that you all have gathered a lot of wisdom. Now let's plan our strategy."

"Um, sir?" said Martin humbly.

"Yes Trailblazer?"

"How can we plan our battle when we don't really know where the Giant King is?"

"Oh didn't I tell you? Finding him is your job Martin."

"How... how can I do that?"

The angel reached into his robes and pulled out the Liahona and handed it to Martin. "this I believe now belongs to you."

All of the kids stared incredulously at the golden ball that they had heard about their entire lives. They all started asking questions all at once and the angel held up his hand to silence them.

"Now kids, why don't we take this time to see what gifts you have all been given."

Ben blew his whistle and the Smiling Angel took out the Brass Plates and handed them to him. Caleb and Azael pulled out their sacred documents, and as Azael handed the Book of Giants scroll to the angel he told them that only a prophet could read it and Caleb agreed.

The angel smiled and said, "I was a prophet once... long ago. Don't worry. I'll be able to read it."

Then with a look of recognition Anna said, "You're Lehi, aren't you. When I met you you were really old, but now you look young."

"I am Lehi. Very good Lioness of Nephi. Now let's look at the rest of your gifts and plan our strategy."

The scrolls were opened and the secrets of defeating the giants were revealed. The angel Lehi told them each what their gifts were capable of and how they would be able to use them. Then they laid out their plans.

When it was all over, captain Lightning finally spoke up. "Isn't there anything that I can do? The courage and faith of these children have shamed me and I must do something to redeem myself."

Turning to the Captain Lehi said, "You are finally ready. You needed to learn humility and then regain your courage. This will be your part."

"When these heroes drive the giants from this world the giants will have to retreat through your world, and it will be your job to return to your home where your powers will return and force them back through the portal from your world to theirs. Then you must seal both portals. Then your penance will be completed."

"Can I enlist the help of the other heroes of my world to push the giants back?"

"No. They must never know that there are other worlds. I will send you two heroes from this world to join you. On entering your world, they will gain the same powers as you and the three of you should be sufficient for your needs."

With that they finished their plans and the real work began.

Chapter 21

Rolling Thunder

The hour had come and all was in readiness. The children were joined in prayer by Captain Lightning and two other children that none of the class had met before, stood by the Captain, but they were assured by the Angel Lehi that they belonged with the class.

After seeking divine guidance, the needles in the Liahona began to work, and Martin was able to lead the class for the next two hours until they crested a hill and looked down into a valley that bordered a lake that was much larger than any of the Madison lakes. Lehi told them that they had crossed through space, as they had earlier crossed through time, and that they had now arrived on the shores of Lake Superior.

At the edge of the lake there was a hole torn in the very fabric of the air and hundreds of giants had crossed into our world through that hole. They were forming up into military companies at the lake's edge and congratulating themselves on conquering the Earth.

That might have been a little premature.

Lehi ordered Captain Lightning and the two strangers to sneak up behind the portal and find a way to pass through it without getting caught. He then told Avonlea that it was time to sing her lost hymn.

With a clear voice she began the hauntingly beautiful hymn of the lost peoples of God from so very long ago. Scott joined in with a hymn from the Persian captivity that blended well with the Nephite hymn. Soon Ben pulled out the whistle given him from Alma the Younger and joined in the tune. To them Mike added his Mariner's pipe and the tune became a symphony.

When Anna joined in with the complementing song of *Come to the Lioness of Nephi*, it became a complex harmony of unchildlike melodies and overtones that sent joy and inspiration to the heart.

Caleb spun the staff of Jushua with a loud howling note reminiscent of the horns at Jericho and at that instant several things happened. Three Nephi strangers (who seemed to come from nowhere), along with Lehi, joined the chorus and two large wooden ships sailed into the harbor and landed on the beach near them.

Lehi and the Nephites charged the giants and placed a ring of fire around them preventing them from escaping the beach. The behemoths backs were to the lake and the fire was before them.

From the mighty Ark of Noah, many of the sleeping creatures at the bottom of the Ark finally awoke. These were animals that no longer had a place in this world, but were saved for this very battle. These beasts were used, in the days before Noah, to drive the giants from the Earth: and they would do so again. Each one wore a specially designed saddle as they did in the ancient days; and they had been trained to know how to follow the commands of a rider on its back.

These Primary Heroes then mounted each of the living weapons, as they were moved upon by the Spirit, and prepared for the war against the giants according to the plans laid out in the ancient scroll, parchment and plates that they had collected.

Captain Lightning used the distraction to slip through the portal and reenter his own world, taking Lorenzo and Diego with him. On exiting the portal they all gained the powers of Captain Lightning and took to the skies. Diego was overjoyed by the feelings that flying brought to him, while Lorenzo found that he could easily throw a school bus for a great distance.

The Captain taught them the use of their powers while they waited for the giants to be driven back into that world. The raw energies coursing through their bodies felt amazing and they were ready.

While the heavenly messengers kept the giants contained the creatures from the Ark walked solemnly to the children and each one knelt before their rider to give them easy access to climb into their saddle.

The winged unicorns, Fairwing and Bravemane knelt in front of Avonlea and Anna. Their coats appeared to be a glistening spun silver while their horns and hooves of the highest of polished gold: with a mane of flowing bronze.

Anna rode Fairwing and Avonlea rode Bravemane as they leaped into the sky: their wings majestically carrying them directly toward the giants. It was their job to offer the giants redemption; for they knew that not all of the giants were evil. Many of them had joined the army because they were deceived or because they were scared of the Giant King, who was most fearsome to behold. They had met nice and harmless giants in their travels, so they knew that some were innocent.

Swooping down upon the giants the girls opened their mouths and spoke with the sound of thunder and proclaimed louder than was possible for either of them:

“My friends, we offer you freedom.” Said Avonlea.

“Not freedom stolen by enslaving others, but the freedom offered by God.” Added Anna.

“If you have not the heart to harm others follow us to waiting freedom.” And Avonlea pointed toward the second ship that, until now, everyone had ignored.

“This ship,” proclaimed Anna, “Brought a people from a life of future captivity to a land of promise, and it can do the same for you.”

“Flee this life of fear and warfare.” said Avonlea, “If you desire a life of only peace and gentleness, come to this ship of promise and you will sail to your own promised land.”

At that, about two thirds of the giants broke from their military formations and ran to the ship: many of them weeping with joy while some of them looked back at their king in fear of retribution. When the last of the refugees boarded the ship that once belonged to Nephi, the wall of fire that had fenced in the giants on the beach, fell also between the army and the boat. The refugees had found protection.

The one third of the hosts of the giants that remained on the beach were the worst and they snarled and vowed vengeance on the children that were standing between them and conquest.

Chapter 22

Lightning Strikes

The giants bolted with clubs raised snarling and charged the children yet on the shore; but the young heroes were ready.

Each of the Primary's Heroes were on their mounts and ready to meet the charge. On the left waited Azael sitting atop the tyrannosaurus rex named Slashtooth. (Although Azael insisted on calling him Rex.) Ben rode the pterodactyl named Razorwing while Caleb commanded the mastodon called Thunderfoot.

On the right waited Martin on the triceratops named Blazinghorn, Mike on the Stegosaurus called Spiketail and finally Scott; who rode the Saber-Toothed Tiger named Lightningcat. Each was ready for the hoard of charging giants and each knew what they had to do.

Scott bolted forward on Lightningcat weaving stealthily through the mass of giants looking for the Giant King; while Ben and Razorwing took to the skies in an effort to find the location to the portal. The other boys and their beasts charged directly into the invading army.

Caleb ordered Thunderfoot to push back as many as he could and batter others with his enormous tusks. Thunderfoot took it upon himself to use his trunk to throw a few of the smaller foes aside.

An orange-haired giant with a mohawk sneaked up behind Martin and Blazinghorn with a club, as they tripped up a particularly clumsy oaf. Mohawk pulled back his club to hit Martin in the back of the head as if he were hitting a baseball. Azael, seeing this, urged Slashtooth forward where the swift T-Rex grabbed the club in its powerful jaws and yanked it away from the startled giant.

Spinning around, Mohawk raised his fists as if to hit Azael, only to have his huge feet knocked out from under him by the spiked tail of Mike's stegosaurus Spiketail; and once on the ground, Caleb and Martin had their beasts quickly push the fallen giant to the beach.

Soaring overhead Ben surveyed the scene of battle and quickly discovered the fiery hole hanging in the air. Noticing that his companions had felled Mohawk, he soared downward and directed Mike and Caleb to force the enemy through the portal.

Caleb nodded and spurred his beast forward. Mohawk vanished through the gateway and didn't return.

The tactic seemed to work, so one by one they repeated their performance (at least with the dumber ones) and one by one the beach was slowly being cleared of giants.

Unfortunately, on Captain Lightning's world each giant that left our world reappeared there. Diego saw Mohawk first and flew in for the attack. The giant barely had time to rise to his feet when he was beset by a small human flying at him faster than the eye could follow. Diego flew around Mohawk faster and faster until he reached speeds that created a cyclone around the giant, raising him up into the air. He then directed the tornado to throw the giant into the second portal, which led back to the giant's world: the same portal which Captain Lightning's sensors had previously found for them.

Another giant came through and Lorenzo flew in at supersonic speeds and quickly knocked him unconscious. Then he picked him up and threw him through the other portal. Captain Lightning shouted words of encouragement to the boys that he liked to call his Lightning Lieutenants while he

handled a third giant.

Looking over the scene, Lorenzo saw a giant sneaking up behind his brother (giants seem to like to sneak up on people, which is funny because they are too big to really be able to be unnoticed.) and Lorenzo never liked someone who would hit someone from behind, so he shook his head and clapped his hands together. Suddenly a bolt of lightning burst forth from his hands and stunned the behemoth senseless.

Diego grinned at his brother and said, "You know, I think I like this world."

Scott had found the Giant King and he and Lightningcat raced around the giant to confuse and trip him up. The king tried several times to swat them but the saber-tooth and his rider were just too agile. Scott then ordered Lightningcat to return to the others so that they could report the King's location.

Along the way, a swift smaller giant leaped at them in hopes of catching them by surprise. Lightningcat swiftly spun in the air slashing the giant with its terrible claws. The giant grabbed its bleeding hands and fell backwards. The fur on lightningcat's back bristled and a low growl rumbled from his throat.

The giant backed up and stumbled through the portal.

The Giant King tried to rally his troops, but the unicorns and their riders swooped down and kicked him with their hooves. Falling over they then threatened him with their blazingly bright horns of gold. They tried to get him to back towards the portal, but seeing this the King moved instead in another direction.

One by one the giants had been forced through the portal until only the King remained. Seeing this Caleb hailed Martin, Mike and Azael and called for them to mount a joint charge on the King. Thunderhoof, Blazing Horn, Spiketail and Azael's "Rex", roared down the hillside and ran directly into the King; who was forced off of his feet. The mighty beasts lowered their heads and pushed the Giant King through the waiting portal; and the Earth was once again and forever freed of it's invading army of giants.

In the world of Captain Lightning, the three heroes fought giant after giant, tossing them one by one through the portal into their own world. When the Giant King too passed out of that world, the Angel Lehi appeared.

"Now my friends and brothers," said the angel, "you must seal the portal, and that will require a great sacrifice. You three must stand together in front of the portal and surrender all of your powers forever on one great burst of energy. That will seal the portal forever, and with the portals through the other worlds now safely closed, the evil giants will never be able to threaten any other world again."

Turning to Captain Lightning he continued softly, "This my friend will be a greater sacrifice for you, since you have had your powers all of your life, and you will have to learn to live as a normal human. Is this a sacrifice that you are willing to make?"

Smiling sadly, the Captain said, "I am. In that other world I watched those Primary Children, none of whom had any powers, defeat giants and save their world and others. They have taught me that even without any super powers I can continue to be a hero, with the help of God."

Nodding the angel said, "Then it is time."

With that Diego, Lorenzo and Captain Lightning stood before the swirling portal and released their powers in a blinding flash, and with their sacrifice many worlds were saved as the portal closed for all time.

Chapter 23

The Calm After the Storm

The Primary Heroes sat on the top of the hill and watched as the two children that they didn't know walked slowly through the portal that led to Captain Lightning's world. One of them turned around and tossed a silver ball into the last of the portals, only to see it close up like the ones in the other world's had.

“Martin looked up at the Smiling Angel, who was known in life as Lehi and asked, “Who are those kids there? And why are they here sir?”

The angel smiled down at him and said, “They are people who don't yet know it, but they will be joining your class by the end of the year. They are future classmates of yours.”

“I learned in my trip to Hogwarts,” said Caleb. “that sometimes it's better not to know what the future brings. Is that why we weren't introduced to them.”

“Exactly,” said the angel, “and it is also the same reason that a veil of forgetfulness will be placed on all of you so that you will not remember these adventures until a future date when your memories will be restored.”

“Like our trip into the past two years ago.” Said Ben.

“Like that, yes. But first you have achieved a great victory, so it is time for a celebration, that you will also remember at a future date.”

Speaking up, Avonlea said, “Sir, Captain Lightning didn't return with them. Is he all right? Has anything happened to him?”

“Something has indeed happened to him. He has suffered the loss of his powers, but he has gained something much greater. He has gained a testimony of Jesus Christ; and he has learned the lessons of humility, compassion and integrity. He has always been a hero to the people of that world, but now he will be a great hero and a great leader: and the people of that world have long floundered looking for the truth and leadership that they will now find in an old hero.”

Looking out into the harbor, they could see the two gigantic wooden ships setting sail, and Anna pointed towards the vessels and asked, “What will happen to them?”

“Don't worry about them sister. The righteous giants, will sail to a new home where they can build a society without the evil leaders that they have long been forced to endure. In time, I suspect, they may form a civilization to equal the City of Enoch for righteousness, and they have you to thank for that opportunity.”

Looking toward the Ark of Noah, Michael asked the Smiling Angel, “And our animal friends on the Ark?”

“They will follow the righteous giants and defend them as they build their new world. If they are ever needed on this world again, they will come to you heroes whenever you call upon them. And trust me, you all will be called upon in the future to fight a battle greater and even more important than any battle that has yet been fought. Today you fought for the survival of mankind: in that day you will be called upon to save the souls of men.”

“Did you say that there was a party?” asked Azael.

The angel smiled and said, “Indeed I did my friend; indeed I did.”