

magic without a wand

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A

Tom LaPorte Project

Chapter 1

“What are you doing?!”

“Playing my video game,” Eddie said to his mom.

“Get up!” she demanded. “Get out of the house.”

“Huh?” Eddie replied curiously. *Was his mom really kicking him out of the house?* He thought back as fast as he could. He hadn’t done anything wrong or gotten into trouble, at least not that he remembered.

“Come on, son,” his mother said. “It’s the third day of summer. You need to get out and enjoy this beautiful day instead of being cooped up in this stuffy room.”

“But I want to play my video game,” he protested.

“Son, we have farm animals, a stream and acres of woods with all sorts of interesting living things. Not everyone has so much right in their own backyards. Go out and enjoy nature.”

“Mom, there’s nothing to do outside.”

“That’s exactly why I insist,” she said as she unplugged Eddie’s game. She picked up his joy stick and game station and started walking out of the room.

“What am I supposed to do for fun?”

“You’re a smart boy. Go outside and explore,” she said. “Use your imagination.”

“Can I at least watch television?”

“No, you need to play outside.”

“But you watch television.”

“I think you know I only watch one show a day,” Eddie’s mother said. “I enjoy seeing people get help.”

“You just like that TV Doctor because he’s from Texas like you.”

“When can I come back inside?” Eddie asked.

“After you have some adventure to tell me about,” she said with a smile. “Take the cell phone. You may use it to take pictures, but no gaming and only make a call in an emergency. Is that clear?”

“Yes ma’am,” Eddie groaned.

Chapter 2

Eddie begrudgingly shuffled down to the stream. He didn’t feel like fishing or swimming so he skipped rocks across the smooth flowing water. One good toss led to five skips. He looked along the edge of the water for flat stones. He hoped to find one that would skip even more times.

“Whoa!” Eddie said, stepping back from a giant footprint in the mud. The boy couldn’t tell if it belonged to a man or an animal. He did know it was enormous, the

biggest he had ever seen. Oddly, there was only one monstrous footprint. Eddie bent down and placed his hand in the humongous impression. It was several inches deep in the mud and much larger than his small hand.

He sat down next to the track and began to wonder what on Earth could have made such a thing. Darkness pushed out the sun. Eddie didn't come home in time for dinner. His mom called his cell phone, but he didn't answer. An hour later his father called the police to report their son missing. Eddie's mother worried herself sick.

"It's my fault. It's all my fault," Eddie's mother cried. "My sweet baby boy just wanted to play video games and I wouldn't let him. He would still be here now. He'd be safe, but no, I made him go out into the woods. What was I thinking? My baby's gone and goodness knows what beast has taken him."

Chapter 3

"Imagination? Yes. Nice? I think not," a booming voice filled the woods and frightened Eddie, drawing him out of his daydream.

"What in the world?" Eddie yelped.

"It is I, the beast of your imagination."

"What are you, Big Foot?"

"If you must, I guess it's okay for you to call me that," the massive creature said.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Over time people have called me by lots of names. For example, I have been referred to as Big Foot, which I must say is not terribly original. I prefer the likes of Sasquatch, El Chupacabra and Yeti."

"Yeti is a cool name," Eddie said.

"Yes, I like it, too."

"My name is Eddie and you can call me Eddie."

"Yes, I know."

"You know my name?" an astonished Eddie asked.

"Sure, and I just happen to be able to talk and speak English, too."

"How is this possible?"

"You made it so," the hairy giant said. "I'm a part of your imagination."

"If I am imagining you, then what did you mean when you said I am not nice?" Eddie asked.

"You were imagining using me to scare your mother," Yeti said, wagging his finger. "That's not nice, not at all. What's worse is you used me in your scare tactic. I seem to only come to mind when people are unnerved or frightened. I hate that."

"What's there to hate? You're world famous," Eddie said. "I think it would be cool to be legendary."

"Do you really think it would be all that exciting to only be thought of as an oversized ape-like creature believed to terrorize people and animals in remote forests?" Yeti said. "I'm not even a name; I'm an idea, a concept of horror. I'd much prefer to be a fairy tale, but even then most people judge a book by its cover, or in my case by what I am on the outside, rather than who I am inside."

"I guess that wouldn't be so cool after all. I shouldn't have used my imagination like that, but my mom made me quit playing my video game."

“Sure she did,” Yeti said. “She’s a smart woman. Take a look at yourself. Her brilliant plan is working right this very minute. You are using your imagination, but I must say I don’t think this is the best you can do. I mean, I appreciate that you thought of me, but Big Foot? Come on, surely you can do better.”

“What would you have me conjuring up in my mind, visions of unicorns and intergalactic travel?”

“Your mental image of me came from your surroundings. You saw an oversized footprint and it sparked a picture in your mind. You started out doing well, but then you turned mean by imagining scaring your mom. Look around, let your mind marvel at the possibilities and don’t limit yourself.”

“I’m not sure what you mean,” Eddie said.

“It’s simple. You saw an unusual track in the mud and you let your imagination roam and wander,” Yeti said enthusiastically. “Do that again. That’s the very process by which stories come to life. The kind of enduring stories shared by families, stories that transmit cultural traditions, stories that educate and entertain, stories that are funny and frightening. Most of the tales about me fit all of the above and have created Big Foot, El Chupacabra and Yeti icons on all the continents. Do you see how incredible the imagination can be?”

“I guess so. Maybe I can make up a story about you that’s not so mean.”

“You’ve already done that. To be correct, you are doing that right now,” the big footed being said. “I think it’s time for me to be going.”

“Hey, wait. I have a camera on my cell phone. Can I take your picture before you leave?”

“For whatever reason, humans have this need for some larger-than-life creature. Given that, I think its best that people continue to invoke their own mental images of me. Don’t you agree?”

“I guess so,” Eddie said dejectedly.

“Look, what’s that?” Yeti asked, pointing to something glimmering on the bank of the stream.

Eddie hurried over to a shiny object glistening in the sun.

“It sort of looks like a shell. What do you think it is?”

When no answer followed, Eddie turned around to find that Yeti was gone.

Chapter 4

Eddie smiled and said good bye to Yeti, though he had already mysteriously disappeared. The boy turned back to the edge of the stream, knelt down and inspected the shell more closely. He noticed it began to glow through the sand. Eddie didn’t show any fear as he cautiously gathered bits of the fractured shell. Its illumination grew brighter as he carefully wiped away the thickly caked mud and began piecing it together like a puzzle. As he joined the final section it fell from his hands. The shell shone brightly and moved back and forth as it began to take form. Astonishingly, it morphed arms, legs and a face. Dazed, Eddie watched the fantastic transformation take place before his eyes.

“Thank you,” it said.

“Who are you, Humpty Dumpty?” Eddie asked in a state of shock.

“Indeed I am.”

“I’m Eddie.”

“I know,” the newly reconstructed shell said.

“You can speak?”

“And in English no less, thanks to you. You have a vivid imagination, I must say.” As he spoke, the jolly rounded object with spindly arms and legs smoothed his hands over his newly reformed shell over and over again. “I must say chap, this is a sight better than being scattered about in bits and pieces.”

“I’m glad I could be of help, at least I think so. I thought you were an egg and that you couldn’t be put back together again,” an uneasy Eddie said.

“Ah yes, you’re referring to the pat answer to the riddle. There’s much more to my story. When I fell from the wall I was broken for sure, but more than that I lost something inside,” Humpty Dumpty said. “Even though you have repaired my outer shell, I can never be whole again.”

“But if you are not an egg, what are you?” Eddie asked straightforwardly.

“Since you must know, my name, Humpty Dumpty was once used as slang for a clumsy person. The riddle concept suggests that a clumsy person falling off a wall would not be irreparably damaged, whereas an egg would be. A terrible misconception I must say. Nonetheless, the rhyme is no longer posed as a riddle, since so many inside-the-box thinkers assume the answer which is now so well known.”

“Okay, no matter what kind of shell you are, what did you lose after the fall?”

“Therein lies my problem young man. I don’t rightly know. Can you help me?”

“No, I can’t say as I can.”

“How awful.”

“Hang on a minute. I have an idea. Dr. Carnegie is a scientist I’ve seen on television. He has a show on the Discovery Channel and he works at the museum in town. I’ll take you to him. He’ll know what to do.”

“I’ve been to doctors many times,” Humpty Dumpty said. “They were the best in the king’s service and you know how that worked out for me.”

“That was then. Nowadays there are tons of people who can help repair your inner being. There’s even this other guy on television that can do it in an hour,” Eddie explained.

“What is television?”

Chapter 5

Eddie happily took Humpty Dumpty to the museum. They experienced several shocking glances as they journeyed, but not much else in the way of trouble. That surprised Eddie as he escorted a walking and talking shell inside the museum. Once they entered the reception desk two staff members hurried Eddie and Humpty Dumpty to Dr. Carnegie’s office.

Dr. Carnegie, the museum curator, refused to shake hands with Eddie and Humpty Dumpty.

“Don’t be offended,” Dr. Carnegie said. “It’s a silly sanitation issue I have.”

“That’s okay. Can you help my friend? He was broken. I managed to put him back together again, but he lost something. Inside he’s empty,” Eddie detailed.

“What a find, a truly magnificent find,” the curator said, as he surveyed the shell. “We must begin study of this fine specimen immediately.”

“Does that mean you can you help replace what he’s missing inside?” Eddie asked.

“Heavens no. We mustn’t do that. Absolutely not. We have to protect the integrity of this rare and wondrous find. I’ll find a secure place to keep this fine specimen under lock, key and constant observation until the world’s scientific community can come and join me in the dissection of this marvelous find. I’ll get the forms for you to sign,” Dr. Carnegie said.

“Papers?” Eddie repeated quizzically.

“A mere formality, of course. In short the forms will release the shell to museum custody and give you all due credit for this magnanimous find.”

“Dissection? That doesn’t sound good,” Humpty Dumpty whispered to Eddie as Dr. Carnegie washed his hands and left the room.

“It is bad,” Eddie said. “You don’t want to know how bad. We’d better get out of here.”

“But I thought he could help.”

“It’s not the kind of help you need and you certainly don’t want what he has to offer.”

“Let’s give him a chance,” Humpty Dumpty said. “I’ve been broken for hundreds of years.”

“Dissection means he is going to cut you open and study you, inside and out.”

“Which way is the door?”

Humpty Dumpty and Eddie sped out of the museum.

“Hey, come back! You can’t just keep that rare shell. We don’t know if it’s safe. It might be a biohazard,” Dr. Carnegie shouted. “Did you use hand sanitizer after touching it?”

“Come on,” Eddie said and grabbed Humpty Dumpty. “We’ll have a better chance of getting away if we go into the woods.”

Chapter 6

“Okay, that was a bad choice,” Eddie admitted. “I think there’s a better doctor for your situation. Remember that other guy I mentioned who can fix people in less than an hour? He’s the one. Best of all, he’s from Texas, like my mom. She watches him on television.”

“Not this television thing again,” Humpty Dumpty said, disbelieving.

“Trust me. This guy can help, but we’re going to need money to get to Texas.”

“At your service,” a man wearing buckskin and green tights said, as he patted a money pouch that clinked with change.

“Where did you come from?” Eddie asked.

“From your imagination, of course.”

“Who might you be?” asked Humpty Dumpty.

“My guess is he’s Robin Hood, the Prince of Thieves,” replied Eddie.

“Now why did you have to go and say that last part?”

“Sorry. I didn’t know it was a sore spot.”

“Well it is. It’s the very bane of my existence,” Robin Hood declared.

“Do you not have a band of merry men?” Humpty Dumpty asked. “Where are they at present?”

“I struck out on my own in an effort to clear our good reputation. It was me who led us to an unflattering moniker of thieves, so it shall be me who makes it right,” said Robin Hood.

“Most people think you took from the rich to help the poor,” Eddie said. “That’s not so bad.”

“It’s my understanding that a diabolical prince stripped you of your nobility when you spoke out against his evil ordinances,” said Humpty Dumpty.

“Certainly no nobleman am I and I am no son of a nobleman. I came to this world from hardy stock the same as many generations of yeomen before me. I was appalled at first hearing I had been painted as a fallen noble who lashed out at the wealthy in a violent act of retribution.”

“I read in an old library book that you were the enemy of the Nottingham Sheriff because he seriously abused his position, misappropriating land, levying excessive taxation, and persecuting poor people,” said Eddie.

“That rings more like the truth. I was just a young fellow who saw the abuse of power and acted impulsively. I am not, nor have I ever been, a cruel crusader. Yet I have grown famous, or infamous rather, for robbing the rich. People seem to forget that I fought to provide for the poor and rebelled against injustice and tyranny.”

“I’m beginning to see your concern,” Humpty Dumpty said. “Even in my confined context I recognize your name as shorthand for ‘fugitive’ or ‘outlaw.’”

“It is sort of a funny play on words, Robin Hood. It has the verb rob--to steal--and the descriptor hood—like hoodlums--used to describe bad boys.”

“I trust you mean funny, odd, and not funny, ha ha. For too many years than I can chronicle, the name Robin Hood was used as that of a criminal. Even here and now in your time my name is used to describe sedition and treachery.”

“Clearing your good name, my good sir, you certainly have set a major task for yourself,” Humpty Dumpty said. “You’ll have to find a way to go back in time to change your long-standing muddled reputation.”

“If that’s what I must do, then so I shall.”

“I think it would be a tad bit easier to share your side of the story with the world. You should let people know how you feel about being called a thief,” Eddie said.

“That sounds perfect. Every time someone else bothers to write or tell my story I look like a vigilante, a thief among thieves or a barbarian who steals and has drunken parties in the woods with my friends. How do you suggest I inform people of my side, the truth, for once and for all?” Robin Hood asked.

“You tell the truth on national television and if the people don’t understand your point of view, maybe at least you can be at peace with yourself for having done all you could do.”

“I am willing to try anything for the sake of truth in literacy and the good name of my merry men, but I can’t say I have any idea what you are talking about. What is television?”

Chapter 7

“I’ve got an idea,” Eddie said after walking several miles. “I bet if we find the local democrats they can help us get a ride to Texas.”

“Who are the democrats?” Robin Hood asked.

“Democrats are one of the political parties in this country. Many of them share the same philosophy as you,” Eddie said, waving a hand toward Robin Hood. “Generally speaking, democrats like the idea of taking wealth and spreading it around.”

“These democrats of yours sound like perfect allies. How do we find them?”

“That’s the easy part. All we have to do is look for the red, white and blue donkey.”

“I’m not sure I want to know what that means.”

“Good, because I can’t explain.”

Sure enough, along the main street of town Eddie spotted a store front office in an old style strip plaza sporting a tricolored donkey in the window. He and his pals entered a small front room that reeked of coffee. Beyond a wooden reception desk, metal folding chairs, white boards, pennants, and American flags filled the space along with countless campaign stickers and buttons affixed to the walls and ceiling tiles. Eddie introduced himself and his companions and then apprised the Democratic Party leader of their situation.

“So as you can plainly see, we really need to get to Texas. Can you help us?”

However, the party leader hadn’t heard a word beyond Robin Hood.

“The actual Robin Hood! What a boon. You mustn’t change. No, you should never change. Ignore this silly boy. He’s just a kid, what does he know? Our party needs you now more than ever. Giants like Microsoft, Wal-Mart and Coca-Cola are hoarding much of the world’s wealth. You are perfectly positioned to help us bring them down and redistribute their prosperity across the country and beyond.”

“I appreciate your confidence, indeed I do,” said Robin Hood. “However, my sole purpose is to restore the sullied reputation of my merry men and that of my own.”

“Perish the thought. Rubbish I say. I need to call the national democratic committee chairman. We must get you to Washington, DC. I can just see it. Overnight you’ll become the poster boy for our efforts to establish equality.”

“Is Washington, DC, near this place called Texas?”

“No, it’s in the opposite direction,” Eddie clarified.

“Gentlemen, I love your idea,” Robin Hood said. “Maybe some other time I can be of assistance to you and your organization, but now I must clear my name, thus I’m not the one to lead your campaign. I’m through stealing, forever.”

Ignoring Robin Hood, the democratic politicians exited the room to call the national party leadership.

“I get it that stealing is out. How do you feel about running?” Eddie asked.

The three disappeared into the woods.

Chapter 8

Wandering aimlessly through the forest, the three travelers happened upon an old mining rail bucket car.

“If we can get this old rail bucket up on the tracks we could ride it all the way to Texas,” Eddie said. “I learned in school these tracks follow the Chisholm Trail from Kansas to Texas.”

“This iron canister is far too heavy for us. I can’t risk cracking my shell,” Humpty Dumpty said. “If this monstrosity fell over on me then I’d be done for sure and no doctor of any kind could ever help me.”

“We need a lever or something since we don’t have pure brute force.”

“Perhaps I can be of assistance.”

“Whoa!” Robin Hood uttered, out of surprise and shock at the sight of a bulky man towering high above their heads as when he appeared out of thin air.

“There you stand a walking and talking shell with a guy in green tights. I’d think you two would be more understanding of a man’s looks.”

“My goodness, who might you be?” Humpty Dumpty asked in a shaky voice.

“I’ll go out on a limb here. You must be Frankenstein,” Eddie said.

“I am in fact, the grand creation of the good Dr. Victor Frankenstein, but we do not share a name.”

“How on Earth did you get here?” Eddie asked.

“I’m part of your imagination of course, and you do seem to have a good one.”

“Since you did manage to pop in for the occasion, we’d love your help,” Humpty Dumpty said while pointing to the derailed metal container.

Showing no signs of distress, the gigantic man easily lifted the hefty bucket car and gently placed its grooved wheels on the train tracks.

“There you are,” the monstrous man said.

“Thank you,” Robin Hood said. “By the way, you never did tell us your name?”

“I have no idea what I am to be called. I have been wandering to and fro low these many years in search of someone who knows.”

“I have always thought your name was simply Frankenstein,” Humpty Dumpty said.

“Most people share your assumption simply because the title of the novel bares that name. It is of course the name of the scientist who learned how to bring life to flesh and created me in the likeness and image of man out of body parts stolen from graves.”

“Your life story is an interesting cross section between the human quest for life and a grim tale.”

“Indeed, I’d venture to say that most people in the world know of you one way or another,” Humpty Dumpty agreed. “Your story has had an influence across literature and popular culture and spawned a complete genre of stories and films.”

“Yes and that genre is horror. Truthfully, I don’t care that I’m basically a zombie and that people think of me as such, all I want is to know my name.”

“Did Dr. Frankenstein never tell you the name he had in mind?” Humpty Dumpty asked.

“Dr. Frankenstein never named me. He was ashamed because I am so hideous. Victor intended for me to be a perfect specimen of humanity, but when I actually came to

life the good doctor grew disgusted. He had used corpses as material for my creation resulting in my yellow watery eyes, translucent skin and flat top head. Upon my initial unveiling Victor found me revolting and ran away in sheer terror at first sight.

“After such a disturbing welcome to the world I long for a sense of belonging. So during my first night of life I went to my creator’s bedside with an outstretched arm like a babe longing for its father. He fled again, whereupon out of shame I disappeared.”

“I have to say, chap, for a walking quilt of the living dead who had no formal schooling you certainly speak quite eloquently,” Robin Hood said.

“I learned language from peasants. By the time I met the family I had grown smarter and did not allow them to see me. We spoke through a hole in a wall. When I told them I didn’t have a name they begged that we meet face to face. I foolishly acquiesced and of course both children and parents panicked. What’s worse is that out of fear and misunderstanding the townspeople blamed the deaths of animals and people on me based solely on my grotesque appearance.”

“Wow, take it easy on yourself. Look at me, I’m a shell and I don’t even know of what. I lost that which was inside me.”

“Yes, mate, you don’t look as bad as you suggest. I feel your pain. The same way people take you for a monster, they think of me as a thief, which I am not. I hope you hear me saying you are amongst friends.”

“They’re right. We’re not afraid of the way you look,” Eddie said. “Hey, I have an idea? Why don’t you come with us? We’re going to see a really smart doctor. He’ll probably know your name or how to find out what it is.”

“Is he as smart as the good Dr. Frankenstein?” the creature asked.

“I can’t say for sure, but he does have his own television show,” Eddie said. “It will be cramped, but we can make room for you. It’s the least we can do, without you we would be walking to Texas.”

“Okay I’ll join you, but I have one question. What is television?”

Chapter 9

Speeding along the winding and harrowing track Humpty Dumpty, Robin Hood, the Frankenstein Monster and Eddie emerged near the big city of Dallas, Texas. Using a hand lever brake the Frankenstein Monster slowed the rail car as they saw an artist community just outside the city.

“We can take a break here. We’ll pick up some snacks and then push on to the city. These guys surely won’t flip out because of the way we look. More than likely they’ll welcome us.” Eddie looked at his companions, and added, “Yeah, they’ll groove on us.”

“Am I the only one who doesn’t want to get grooved?” Humpty Dumpty asked. “I’ve already been threatened with dissection.”

“It’s not that kind of groove,” Eddie said with a chuckle. He jumped out of the cramp rail car and led his band of unlikely travelers as they marched up to a flock of artists enjoying a picnic.

“Is that an egg salad sandwich?” Humpty Dumpty asked.

“No worries, dude. I’m a vegan.”

“Okay....” Humpty Dumpty said unsurely. “Does that mean you don’t mind sharing a bite or two?”

“Come on over. We have plenty,” a heavily tattooed artist said. “The big guy there looks like he hasn’t eaten in days, or he ate something bad, very bad. He looks green, for real.”

No one required any further urging. Eddie and company plopped down on the plush grass and partook of the scrumptious fare. Each found something to his liking among the goodies of vegetable sandwiches, brie, crusty bread, grapes, zucchini crisps, mangos, almonds, rice cakes and figs.

“What’s the deal here? Is this a big art festival or something?” Eddie asked.

“No, man. It’s a co-op. We live and work here making our wares. One night a week we have an open market. Scads of people come out and buy some of our stuff. We make most of our living expenses from guilt sales.”

“What’s a guilt sale?” Eddie inquired.

“People come out here to gawk at us like a modern day freak show. Once they get here and talk to a few folks they usually end up feeling bad, so they buy some little trinket to make themselves feel better. That’s how we pay the bills. Selling big pieces is just gravy.”

“I shall never learn the language of this place,” said Humpty Dumpty.

“You have many tribal markings, what do they mean?” Robin Hood asked the artist.

“It’s skin art, man. It’s like I use ink as a way to express my inner being on the outside. I like to think I’m a walking mural. Do you have any tattoos?”

“What are tattoos?” Humpty Dumpty asked.

“Dude, you aren’t from around here are you? Tats are ink. Like this,” the artist said, as he rolled up his sleeve, revealing a portrait of a five headed serpent.

“That ‘ink’ of yours is most interesting,” Humpty Dumpty said.

“How serendipitous we met you. I need to do that very thing,” Robin Hood said. “I need to tell everyone I encounter how I feel inside.”

“It works, dude. I’m for real, you gotta get some tats,” the artist said.

“I’d be happy simply to have something I could feel inside,” Humpty Dumpty remarked.

“Rather than go to the television doctor,” Frankenstein’s Creation said. “Maybe we should all get...how do you say? Inked?”

“We can hook you up, big man. But first, you gotta tell me where you got your neck pierced. I’ve never seen anything like that. You’re a real trend setter. I’m saying the neck posts are awesome.”

“Maybe we can all come back for tattoos and guilt sales later. For now, we better get going,” Eddie said. “Thanks for the food.”

“What’s the rush, little dude? Why don’t you guys hang around for a market night? Do you guys have any skills?”

“I make a mean quiche,” said Humpty Dumpty.

“I’m not one to boast, but I am quite a marksman with a bow and arrow,” Robin Hood replied.

“I can solve jigsaw puzzles in record time,” The Frankenstein monster proudly stated.

“You cats are really out there. I meant do can you make anything worth selling.”

“Really, I think it’s best that we get back on the road,” Eddie said.

“Where are you going?” the artist asked.

“We’re going to Dallas to see the TV doctor. Do you know the way from here?”

“Cool your jets there little man. No need to rush. You see Doctor P is big time now. He packed up and went west to the big city and bright lights of Los Angeles.”

“This keeps getting better and better,” Eddie sighed. “Now, we really need to get going.”

“Seriously, there’s no rush. Why don’t you guys settle in and wait here. We can’t just let you go, even though you have no marketable skills. You have to stay for at least one open market night just to be seen. The lot of you will become legend. Talk of you, especially the big guy, will boost Lookie Lou traffic for years to come,” the inked artist said. “The kid can go on; he’s no use to us.”

“If Eddie goes, we all go,” Robin Hood said. “He says we need to see the TV Doctor. So that’s how it will be for one and what it is for one it shall be for all.”

“What makes you think Mr. Big Head will even see you?”

“As you can clearly see we have lots of issues,” Eddie said. “I’m sure we’ll get on the show. We just have to get there.”

“That’s the fact. I’d say you guys have issues. I mean check out the big guy. Dude, you are like freakin’ Frankenstein.”

“You had to go and call me that. And I liked it here,” the disgruntled Creature said.

“Chill Frankie baby. I loved your movie, but I have to say the sequel is my favorite.”

“We better be going especially since we have to get all the way to California,” Eddie said nervously.

“Larry, I think Flo made some organic mace when she had that candle groupie stalking her. Run and get it!” the tattooed artist ordered one of the others in the co-op. “We can use it on the big guy. I think we can take the egg and the power puff in the green tights.”

Once again the gang made a run for the woods.

“What’s a sequel?”

Chapter 10

“What do we do now?”

“If we can find our way to the I-10 it goes all the way to Los Angeles. I learned that in my US geography class,” Eddie said. “Once we are on the highway, we can follow the yellow striped road all the way to California.”

“Pray tell, what is an I-10?”

On the edge of the woods, while searching for an entrance to the Interstate striped with yellow paint the group encountered a relic hunter.

“You are a magnificent find,” he marveled while walking in circles and inspecting Humpty Dumpty. “You are undoubtedly priceless. You’ll be the pearl of my collection. No offense.”

“None taken,” Humpty Dumpty said.

“Excuse me, but can you help us find the Interstate that leads to the TV Doctor?” Humpty Dumpty asked.

“Surely you jest. You can’t go on that show. The whole world would see you. Those sniveling scientists and academic types would fall over their antiseptic selves to study you and put you on exhibit in museums all around the globe.”

“You sure have that right,” Eddie agreed.

“Heavens yes,” Humpty Dumpty agreed. “We encountered this very nervous museum curator who wanted to do that and to dissect me.”

“How did you manage to escape?” asked the hunter.

“We ran into the woods,” explained Eddie.

“I’ll have none of that. You are to be my prize possession and mine alone.”

“My goodness can’t we catch a break,” Humpty Dumpty said.

“I can handle this,” Frankenstein’s Creation offered.

“Don’t bother. Running seems to work fine,” Eddie said.

Like so many times before, the clan turned and made an escape in the woods.

Using a two-way radio the relic hunter requested back up. “You won’t believe the precious collectibles I have in my sights. They’re running. I need help.” He added, “They have a monster of a man with them. We’re going need the steel net for him.”

“Run faster,” Humpty Dumpty shouted.

Chapter 11

Plumb tired out from running, the guys took a breather and slowly walked as the forest gave way to miles of concrete and asphalt. Strip malls seemed to stretch beyond the horizon. Hoping for a Good Samaritan to offer directions, the guys entered a shopping center parking lot.

Among the cell phone retailers, nail shops and video rental stores the strip plaza contained one small storefront decorated with elephants of all shapes and sizes. The windows were draped with red, white and blue bunting. Eddie coaxed his pals to follow him inside with the hopes of getting some aid. The room was filled with men and women sipping coffee. As per usual, Eddie took the lead. He addressed a bespectacled woman dressed in an immaculate Armani suit.

“Excuse me, might we trouble you for some water and a quick glance at a map?”

“Sure. We have lots of maps. What directions do you need?”

“We are looking for the I-10. Can you help us?” Eddie asked the woman who had fixated on Robin Hood.

Without giving a thought to Eddie’s question the lady asked, “Who are you supposed to be, a modern day Robin Hood?”

“No, ma’am. I am in fact the one and only Robin Hood.”

“Oh my goodness gracious! This can’t be. We’ve got to get you out of this country. Yes, you must go now. We can’t give the democrats a sympathetic face recognized world wide to become their champion.”

“Indeed, you are correct. Those nice democratic chaps were so kind and generous,” Robin Hood said. “I think I shall return to help them once we have our meeting with the TV Doctor who can help repair my severely damaged reputation.”

“No, that will never do,” the imposing woman said. “I can’t believe the opposition already has this intel. How did we miss something as big as the genuine Robin Hood? We have a system in place for this very thing.”

“No worries lassie, once I clear my good name with the help of the TV Doctor I will be available to help you too, in any way possible.”

Coffee sloshed everywhere as the commanding woman barked out orders, “Alert the phone tree. We are on code orange!”

“You’ll have to pardon me, I have some local language impairments. Does ‘code orange’ mean you are going to give us some water and help us get to California?” Humpty Dumpty asked.

“Surely you jest. No, we will not help you. Your Sherwood Forest friend must go, and I mean out of this country. The further the better,” she said as her face tightened into a grimace.

“I do not understand your concern. I mean you no harm. My friends and I are trying to find a doctor of the television. What problem do you have with that?”

“Our problem is with you and everything you stand for in this society. We don’t believe in entitlements and glorifying poverty. Our ideals are along the lines of when you fall on hard times, we believe people should buckle down and pull up their boot straps. We think of it as rugged individualism. It builds character. It’s the American way.”

She faced Robin Hood and said, “We’ll get an escort to take you back to merry old England, or better yet, to Iceland. How would you like that? You can take your Halloween friends, too. You just have to go.”

Troubled glances shot back and forth. Caught between confusion and despair, the assemblage opted to hurry out of the political headquarters and run to the woods.

“What’s Halloween?”

Chapter 12

Barely breathing, the guys stopped to catch their breath in a clearing with several rock outcroppings.

“Eddie, we know you have tried earnestly to help us, but we have been sequestered for most of our lives. This has grown ridiculous,” Frankenstein’s Creature said.

“I’ll give you that. But we’ve made it California. Let’s finish this.”

“This place doesn’t look like the land of make believe,” Humpty Dumpty announced.

“The beauty of California comes in its variety,” a voice came from the mouth of a cave. “It has snow-capped mountains, sandy beaches, barren deserts, bountiful farmland, big cities and lots of pretty people.”

When he finished speaking several other hippies came ambling out of the cave. These outdoor types had hair that had been styled for hours to look disheveled. Save none, each person wore expensive clothing and carried top notch elite gear from fine

outfitter stores found in boutique malls and sandals that cost more than some used cars. The weekend spelunkers feigned brawny appeal.

“You look like an interesting brood,” one of the crunchy granola types remarked.

“True enough. We’re on our way to Los Angeles. Can you point us in that direction?” Eddie asked.

“Why would anyone want to go the Mecca of traffic and pollution?” asked the Hippie.

“We’re going to see the TV Doctor,” Eddie said.

“Why do such a thing? Don’t worry about the outside world. It’s much better here with us. We’re open minded people who believe in free will. I think you might enjoy our way of life.”

“You are so kind and generous, but we aren’t exactly looking for a new place to live,” Eddie said.

“We weren’t looking for this either. It just happened. Fate and destiny brought us here and we stayed. I beg you to give some consideration to our invitation. Come be one in nature with us. We commune with all living things, seeing them as sacred and holy. Accept our offer and you’ll be free to live life as it was intended.”

“I love living outdoors in Loxley, Sherwood and Nottinghamshire--all the great forests,” said Robin Hood.

“That’s the spirit,” the Hippie cheered.

“I’ve spent my whole life hiding and staying inside and out of sight of others. I’d love to come back and enjoy nature with you as soon as I figure out my name,” Frankenstein said.

“What’s in a name?” asked the Hippie. “Names are the cornerstone of the trappings of society, the great oppressor.”

“Say what?” Eddie blurted.

“We all had names and changed them at our own free will when we decided to follow in the footsteps of the Native Americans and began living with the land, not on the land. No other living thing worries about such insignificant things like a name, so why should you?”

“It is a matter of great importance to me,” Frankenstein’s Creature said.

“If you must have a name, we can call you Big Guy Without A Name,” one of the female hippies suggested.

“How about simply Big Guy?” Humpty Dumpty suggested.

“How about we keep going?” Eddie suggested.

“You can’t leave. You must not make any impact on the land. If you head in a different direction than that from which you came, you might bend a leaf, scare an owl or that non-native shell may have some sort of a negative environmental impact. You have to acclimate first before you even think of leaving this area. We can teach you to live on the land and leave no trace. We must insist.”

“What happened to the ‘free will’ talk?” Robin Hood queried. Then Humpty Dumpty asked, “And what does ‘negative environmental impact’ mean?”

“It’s the same everywhere. These guys remind me of those brooding artists who ‘insisted’ we stay with them,” said the Frankenstein Creation.

“I must agree, chap, those so-called open minded artists were not terribly tolerant,” Robin Hood said.

“You’ve got that right. Those people use non-organic paints and their kilns pollute the air and water,” the Hippie railed. “Not to mention they are nothing but a bunch of money grubbers with their art fairs, festivals and open market nights. That’s how it is in the outside world, thus I implore you to stay with us.”

Not a word was uttered. All that could be heard was the stamp of feet as the crew began to run out of the clearing and into the woods, once again.

Chapter 13

Following the I-10 the fellows traveled all night and day. When they couldn’t take it anymore Eddie and company stopped in a roadside diner. Weary from their constant travel the four companions dragged inside hoping for water, a restroom break and directions.

A noisy cow bell tied to the glass door jangled as they entered the greasy spoon, and much to their dismay as it brought unwanted eyes in their direction. Instantly the lot of them were recognized, except for Eddie, of course.

“Unbelievable! It’s you,” an elderly woman proclaimed. “It’s really you.”

Their bedraggled bodies weren’t ready to run, again. Still, they turned toward the door in a flurry.

“We loved you guys as kids,” a blue haired lady called out. “We have shared your stories with our children and grandchildren.”

Door partially open and the brass bell clattering, Eddie and his band of literary characters came to a halt.

“Can I have your autograph?”

Good fortune had finally shined on the weary travelers.

“Sit down and have a bite to eat,” a man from the group of senior citizens said. “I’m speaking for all of us when I say we’d be honored to have you join us.”

“What a delightful invitation,” said Robin Hood. “We gladly accept.”

Excited conversation set the restaurant abuzz.

“I wish kids these days read classics like those written about you.”

“Whatever are you doing out here?”

“We’re on our way to Los Angeles to see the TV Doctor,” the Frankenstein Creation said. “Our friend Eddie says the syndicated therapist can help us.”

“You guys are immortal,” the elderly woman said. “Pray tell, what help can you possibly need?”

“As you know, I was broken and I lost something inside. I want to be whole again,” explained Humpty Dumpty.

“I have lived far too long known only as the prince of thieves,” Robin Hood noted.

“For me,” said Frankenstein’s finest design. “I seek to know my name.”

“I thought your name was Adam.”

“I referred to myself as that, but Dr. Frankenstein never called me by name.”

“And you think the TV Doctor can help?”

“He helped all those overweight people. He’s got skills.”

“My yes, I saw that one. Do you remember the time he....”

While eating, the twelve elderly diners reminisced about previous TV Doctor episodes and Eddie and the guys recounted their journey from the Kansas stream all the way to California. Nearly an hour later Eddie said, "So after all we have been through, meeting up with you nice folks has been great. We're deeply grateful for your hospitality."

"Here's a thought that may be of interest to you. We live in an active seniors resort in Arizona. We rented a shuttle van and are off on a sightseeing tour to Los Angeles. I believe it ends near the studio where the TV Doctor tapes his show. What do you say? Come go with us."

"You've already been so gracious. You paid for our meal and you didn't even chase us off into the woods. I don't see how we can ask for more."

"You didn't ask. We offered because of all you have done for us," the older man said. "The least we can do is provide you with a ride."

"How have we helped you?" Robin Hood asked.

"Don't be silly. You gave us hours of great reading and stimulated our imaginations."

"Yours is the best invitation we've encountered," The Frankenstein Creature said. "Thank you. We accept."

"What's an autograph?"

Chapter 14

Zippering along in the shuttle van proved much faster and far more pleasant than running through the woods. Even better than being faster the comfy and cozy seats made for a much more comfortable trip than being accosted by bugs, stuck by briars and coerced by various strange people. Humpty Dumpty, Robin Hood, the Frankenstein Monster and Eddie relaxed and enjoyed the ride. In a flash they arrived in Los Angeles.

Eddie and the literary icons agreed to tag along with their retired friends on a sightseeing bus to get to Studio 8. Once everyone found a place to sit on the tour bus and strapped on their seatbelts a crackling voice blared through mounted speakers.

"Good afternoon. My name is Ronald and I'd like to welcome you to the City of Angels. I'll be your driver and guide for the next sixty minutes. As you may know, in Los Angeles we will only be driving a few blocks in that amount of time due to daily gridlock traffic." His words drew a hardy chuckle from most of the seniors.

Other tourists on the sightseeing bus gave an occasional glance or two, but no lingering looks. In Los Angeles everybody stood out. Eddie and his new found friends were no exception.

In the excruciatingly slow moving traffic Ronald, the tour guide, made mention of restaurants and hot spots that celebrities and big wigs frequented. He also pointed out houses belonging to the rich and famous.

"Madonna's villa is the next stop," Ronald said.

"The Holy Mother!" Humpty Dumpty, Robin Hood and the Frankenstein Monster all said at once.

"What a sacrilege," said Robin Hood.

“No. No, it’s not the Blessed One among women, but a multimedia star,” an older lady explained.

“A heavenly body?” the Frankenstein Creature wondered out loud.

“She works out,” a cheerful old man said. “But no, she’s not that kind of star. She’s a celebrity.”

“Dare I repeat? I’ll never get a handle on the language of this place,” said Humpty Dumpty.

After seeing a few homes the size of some European countries the bus driving guide said, “We’ll be stopping the bus here for a short walk on Hollywood Boulevard, and from there we will visit the studio where the Apollo 13 landing was filmed.”

Ambling along the crowded street the tour group huddled closely so as to hear Ronald’s tidbits of information and local trivia. Highlights of the walking portion of the tour included the engraved stars of Steven Spielberg, Mary Shelly, Kevin Bacon, Piers Plowman, Oprah Winfrey, Lewis Carroll and Sean Connery on the walk of fame.

Bewildered by the stars and names etched in the sidewalk along side handprints Robin Hood asked, “Who on Earth are these people?”

“Have these people been buried underneath the stars?” asked the Frankenstein Monster,

“No, they are all famous entertainers,” a woman from the bus explained. “Their names were placed in stars as a symbol of their contribution to the world of entertainment.”

“Why have I never heard of any of them?”

“Me either?”

“Unbelievable, you should recognize at least three of them,” Ronald said incredulously.

Eddie had been studying the street map. He looked up with a Cheshire grin and said, “We can keep walking from here. The TV Doctor’s studio is two and a half blocks south on N. Gower Street.”

“Good luck. We’ll TEVO the show.”

“Thanks for everything,” Eddie said, and the groups departed.

“What is TEVO?”

Chapter 15

Eddie and his new friends plodded along until they were stopped at the gate to the television studio by a very young and ruddy faced guard.

“We are here to see the TV Doctor,” Eddie informed the youthful guard.

“Tickets please,” the youngster in uniform said mechanically.

“We don’t have tickets. We’re here to be guests on the show.”

“Sure you are, fella, you and half a million other people.”

“Look at us,” Eddie implored.

Tugging at his cap the laconic guardsman took a closer look and digested the sight before him. “Okay. It’s Studio Eight. The third building stage left.”

A flurry of cell phone calls led to a face to face meeting with the TV Doctor’s show producers, a flock of well heeled recent college graduates. The TV Doctor himself

was not available at present. His happy shiny producers appeared to be accustomed to that and stealthily handled their business. They contacted his handlers, who contacted his agent, who contacted the TV Doctor and arranged a video conference. Their computer generated conversation lasted all of two minutes or so, but it was long enough to put wheels in motion and in high gear at that.

At the behest of the TV Doctor, and at the expense of his sponsors, the peppy young producers arranged for Eddie and the group to stay in a local four-star hotel where they lived a life of luxury for two days. No amenity was overlooked. Their fabulous temporary lodging had indoor and outdoor swimming pools, an atrium dotted with movie stars and the best piano player imaginable. Both evenings Eddie and crew enjoyed scrumptious gourmet room service. It felt like the full on royal treatment.

During their short stay the vivacious producers conducted interviews, filled in cue cards and had each member of the gang complete a video diary. At the order of the TV Doctor his clerical staff worked around the clock to verify the identity of Humpty Dumpty, Robin Hood and the Frankenstein Monster. A battalion sized array of administrators, the likes that would make the U.S. Army envious, cleared the TV Doctor's calendar and prepared for his live primetime super show.

Chapter 16

Red lights placed in all corners of the stage flashed and roaring applause followed. Audience members leapt to their feet as music blared and doors at the rear of the stage parted. A robust partially bald man and his striking wife came parading out, smiling and waving like the king and queen of the world.

"Thank you. Thank you," the TV Doctor said heartily. "I want to thank the good folks at ABC for working their magic on the schedule so quickly to get us in this coveted prime time slot. Thanks to our corporate sponsor, NEXTEL, this broadcast comes to you with limited commercial breaks. Finally, I want to thank my wife for giving up her spa appointment to be here with us."

Red lights illuminated and the audience broke in to applause. The TV Doctor's wife stood and gave a quick curtain call.

"This evening we have four special guests and I can assure you this show will be like none other. When my producers brought this story to me I knew immediately that it had to be shared on a grand scale. That's why we preempted Must See TV for this special live edition of my show.

"Some of my guests are going to be familiar to most of you. Please know we have exercised every possible resource and have confirmed their authenticity. We only have sixty minutes, but trust me I'll be writing a book on this one and I'll certainly have several follow up shows to boost ratings during fall and spring sweeps weeks.

"With no further *adieu*, let me introduce my first guest. This ingenious young man found the three super stars we'll meet in a moment and brought them to our show on a harrowing trek from Kansas, through my adopted home state of Texas, all the way to this stage. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome, Eddie."

The red lights blinked "applause" and the studio audience dutifully did as directed.

Eddie casually came out, shook hands with the TV Doctor and took a seat on a high back bar stool. His feet flitted back and forth without touching the ground.

“Welcome to the show,” said the TV Doctor.

“I’m glad to be here. I hope you can help my friends,” Eddie said encouragingly.

“You can be sure we’ll do all that is humanly possible to address their needs,” he said.

“Thanks. My mom always watches your show. I knew you’d be able to help,” said Eddie.

“I appreciate your confidence. Since you’re familiar with the show then you know that in an hour I make magic without a wand. What do you say I get to work with your friends?”

Eddie nodded and the crowd applauded. The TV Doctor smiled and spun in his chair to face a different camera angle.

“After much deliberation I’ve decided the best plan is to bring out our guests all at once and then I’ll address their issues individually. Please join me in a broadcast premiere of Humpty Dumpty.”

Applause blared as Humpty Dumpty waddled out. He had to be helped into the towering chair. Once seated, he smiled expansively.

Next the TV Doctor announced, “For the first time on television the one and only, Robin Hood.”

Applause howled and the chipper Englishman tipped his felt green hat before taking a seat.

“Finally, never before seen in front of a live audience, I give you Doctor Victor Frankenstein’s Monster.”

Apprehensively the audience offered a mixture of applause and disbelief as the eight foot tall creature lumbered into the viewing area. Once seated, his massive frame hung over the lofty chair, but the sturdy piece of product placement furniture didn’t give under his weight.

“Welcome one and all. My plan of action is to hear your concerns in the order I introduced you. First of all, I’d like each of you to tell us in your own terms why it is you are here today.”

“I guess that makes me first. I’m Humpty Dumpty and I am ever so happy to be here. I have been through a lot and many people of regal status have attempted to help me, to no avail.”

“What is it you need?”

“As I am certain you know, I had a great fall,” Humpty Dumpty said.

“Afterwards I have never managed to be the same. Something is missing.”

“Your shell seems to be fully intact,” the TV Doctor pointed out.

“Indeed it is. Years ago the king’s men and recently Eddie were good enough to reassemble me. That’s just it. Outwardly, I am whole, but I’m far from healed. Something I cannot identify has been put asunder inside of me.”

After a quick glance at his \$25,000 watch the TV Doctor stated, “Time’s a ticking. Here are the facts. You’re not an egg, so you didn’t lose yolk or anything else after the fall. Your name, Humpty Dumpty, implies a clumsy person. That’s factual in your case. You fall. You have accidents. You get hurt. It happens and will happen

again. That's who you are. But here's the important part, you get up again. Don't give up that persevering spirit and most of all, be careful."

"Everybody knows I am a wee bit wobbly on my feet. That's not my problem. I want to know why I feel so incomplete."

"You have to be comfortable in your own skin, err... or shell as it were."

"Ah hmm. Pardon me, the whole time I have been here the language of this time and place has baffled me. Can you give me the diagnosis in the King's English?"

"I have no idea what was inside of you in the beginning," the TV Doctor explained. "Only your creator knows that. Here's what I do know; your rhyme or riddle whichever the case may be and the very sight of your iconic form has brought pure joy to an untold number around the world. You may feel empty, but you have filled others with happiness. Take that to heart and it should make your cup run over."

Applause sprang vigorously from the audience, perplexity governed Humpty Dumpty and self satisfaction filled the TV Doctor.

"While you ruminate on what I have said, let's keep moving," he said and turned to face Robin Hood. "How can I help you?"

"I am Robin Hood and I'm here today hopefully to end my long quest to expunge my record and clear my good name and that of the merry men who so bravely aided me in the battle against inequality."

"Why do you worry so? It is not what people say about you, but rather what you do that defines who you are. Robin Hood, your story varies according to time and place. Some authors want to explain away why you do what you do. You are not a noble born son of a nobleman who fell from grace. No, you are just an honest man who understands that life is hard. You try to help. Your motives are pure; however, your methods...well a rose is a rose. The good news is you are the one person most people are willing to forgive for being a thief."

"I do worry about such things. They are my albatross. Can you imagine every time you hear your name it's in solely negative terms?" asked Robin Hood.

"Obviously you have never watched Frank TV or Saturday Night Live. I'm mocked weekly by them and others. I feel your pain, except it's really not so hurtful. The way I see it, it's free advertising."

"I am not sure I follow you," Robin Hood said.

"Put it this way, you have correctly identified a problem of sorts. Your name, Robin Hood, in and of itself gets used as a contextual construct to indicate thieves, fugitives and outlaws. Since the early 1200s your name has been used as an archetypal criminal in literature, legend and even Parliament."

"So you are saying this moniker of mine exists, regardless of where I came from, the man I grew to be or my personage of the future?"

"That pretty much sums it up. Your historicity remains a question of great debate. However you came to be, you have remained a prominent part of the collective consciousness. People want you. They need you because you are a hero, a real hero, not just a subculture poster boy for the haves verse the have nots. Tear all that away and Robin of Yorkshire, you embody the very ideal of selfless concern for others; you are a friend among friends. You motivate people to do what is right in the face of overwhelming odds."

“I’m feeling a little out of sorts. As I listened to you talking, I realized I’m not at all clear on what you have said.”

“In short I said: You are not a zero; you are a hero.”

Applause sprang robustly from the audience, bewilderment confounded Robin Hood and self approval consumed the TV Doctor.

“While you cogitate on my comments, I must keep moving,” the TV Doctor said and turned to face the Frankenstein Monster. “How can I help you?”

“I would be happy to introduce myself. However, therein lies my problem. I have no name.” The Frankenstein Monster paused and then continued in song:

Eiffel has its Tower
I could order flowers
Buy tickets for a plane

My signature I’d be writing
On e-mail I’d be typing
But first I need a name

I don’t care about last or middle
I must solve this riddle
So as to ease my pain

I’d freely give an autograph
I’d follow nearly any path
But first I need a name

“Interesting that you chose to use a lighthearted, self-deprecating song as an anxiety reducer, especially since you, my friend, are the easiest to help today.” The televised psychologist and spun in his elevated seat to make a camera angle change.

“I’m sure many viewers at home are confused by your issue of not knowing your name. Allow me to clarify. Your creator bore the name Frankenstein and that has been incorrectly superimposed on to you. Of course it’s an easy mistake as you are, in essence, the son of Dr. Victor Frankenstein.”

“True.”

“However, we know little about him beyond your story. Here is what we can deduce. The original title for your tale was intended to be *The Modern Prometheus*.

“Taking a name from Greek mythology seemed apropos, as Prometheus arguably created the human race, but most all historians agree he is rightly credited with giving humans the great and powerful gift of fire. Of course we all know fire has a negative side. Overall, fire empowers others. That’s what your story of life does for us.”

“How does that help me to learn my name?”

“It doesn’t. I digress.”

“Eddie says you are as intelligent as Dr. Frankenstein and that you will know about my name.”

“This young man is correct,” the TV Doctor said, casting a smile toward Eddie. “I do know a little about your name. The surname Frankenstein has become disassociated

with Victor and solely related to you. Unfortunately, it has come to mean zombie, the walking dead, demon, fiend, devil, and most notably, monster. In pop culture you are revived year after year at Halloween, if not on other occasions. In the simplest terms, that's not you."

"I know that. Tell me something new, namely my name."

"Deucalion, that's your name. As stated, we have no records from Mrs. Shelley about Dr. Frankenstein, but we do know that your story was fashioned based on the life and acts of Prometheus. Furthermore, we know his son's name was Deucalion. *Ergo*, one can derive that you are to be named for him."

"Deucalion?" the creature repeated.

"Yes. Like you, Deucalion was a mixture of human and the supernatural. He survived the threat of extinction and chaos during a world wide deluge. Deucalion and his wife went on to restore order from the watery chaos and repopulate the human race following the flood. Among children attributed to him is the infamous Pandora, yet another agent of life who tangled with turmoil and eventually preserved hope."

"Deucalion? What an interesting name. I'm sorry, after you said my name I didn't really hear what followed."

"To surmise, you are not a despicable perversion of humanity; you are a marvel of life itself."

Applause rang out enthusiastically from the audience, bafflement overwhelmed Deucalion and complete contentment engulfed the TV Doctor.

"While you ponder over my comments, I must take our only sixty-second commercial break. When we return, I'll check back in with each of our guests and give a few final thoughts," the TV Doctor said, as the scene transitioned into a NEXTEL advertisement and the audience gave a thunderous round of applause.

Chapter 17

"Welcome back. We have heard from each of our distinguished guests and I have provided them with much needed direction," The TV Doctor said, as he stood and addressed his guests.

"The goal of today's session was to have you have to feel comfortable mentally and emotionally with who you are. I don't mind saying that is not easy work. If we all did it naturally you wouldn't be here and I wouldn't be wildly rich. We all have it hard enough to deal with our self-perception and the perception other people have of us. Most people have a relatively small sphere of influence. However, you three have the distinct and unique problem of being timeless and world famous. Paupers to princes have heard of you. In a sense with each generation you become renewed and everlasting."

Cameras panned across the faces of each of the guests as they listened attentively.

"Across the globe people relate to your brokenness, your ideals and your victory of life itself," the TV Doctor said to Humpty Dumpty, Robin Hood and Deucalion respectively. "That's not to mention the inner beauty found in each of you." He paused and rubbed his thick mustache.

"Come to think of it, combined you carry many of the same enduring traits of Jesus."

Collectively the audience gasped, nearly drawing all of the oxygen from the television studio without a producer driven cue.

The TV Doctor spun on the heels of his fashionable loafers to face those in attendance. "Please hear what I'm saying. It's certainly not my objective to be sarcastic, irreverent or controversial. I'm making a comparison of attributes that are compelling and undeniable. Many people argue Jesus is the world's greatest advocate for the poor like Robin Hood. His brokenness on the cross and in death carries a story much like your own, Humpty Dumpty. Both the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus marks a celebration of life as is the case with you," he said to the Deucalion.

An air of uncertainty reigned. The TV Doctor forged on with his agenda.

"You have all had time to think about my advice. Now, I'd like your feedback on how you will act and view yourself after this experience."

"I feel the same as I did before," Humpty Dumpty admitted. "I obtained more out of the trip from Kansas with Eddie and the rest of these fellows than with you, mister smooth talking polished baldy boy."

"I agree," Deucalion and Robin Hood said in turn.

"No need for insults. We all know that's just the shock of self-realization talking."

"I don't even know what that means!"

"There is only so much magic I can work in a single session. We must arrange for individual follow up shows with each of you. Until then, I say to you one and all: Be who you are. Go forth with vigor. Do what you do."

"Is that it?" Humpty Dumpty asked.

"Yes. Be yourselves. Be free."

Applause.

Chapter 18

"And you son, why are you here?"

"I just brought my friends to see you. I feel like they still have questions. I just know you can give them closure in the remaining time instead of worrying with me."

"My dear boy, I have already worked a miracle within the last 55 minutes," the TV Doctor said after a glance at his luxurious watch. "I have time for you."

"I'm fine, really."

"Go ahead, Eddie," Humpty Dumpty urged. "I think he has done all he can for us."

"Okay, well, there is this one thing. My mom took my video game and I don't think I'll get to play it all summer long."

"Enough skirting the issue, one of the reasons I demanded to be an executive producer of this special show is you, young man. I understand you are from Kansas."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell us how you arrived here," the TV Doctor demanded more than asked.

"Mostly we walked. We did ride in an old rail car and many times we found ourselves running through the woods. Once we got to California we caught a ride on an active seniors' tour bus along the I-10."

“I have to say that is quite a tale. Tell me this, do your parents have any idea where you are?”

“No, sir I can’t say as they do. Like I said, my mom made me go outside. So I went down to the stream. That’s where I found a broken shell. When I put it together...well, then Humpty Dumpty came to life.”

“He just came to life right in front of your eyes?” The TV Doctor asked incredulously.

“Yes, sir. That’s how it happened,” Eddie said. “I didn’t know what to do so I took him to the museum curator.”

“You went there instead of informing your parents?” the TV Doctor asked.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then we ran away so they wouldn’t dissect Humpty Dumpty. Once we escaped I told him you could help with his problem and we met Robin Hood in the forest.”

“Is that all?”

“No. There’s more. Lots more.”

Eddie recapped the highlights, including encounters with Democrats, Frankenstein’s Monster, the co-op artists, the relic hunter, Republicans, the hippie hikers, the Arizona seniors, and ended with their meeting with the TV Doctor’s producers.

“This story keeps getting more and more fantastic.”

“You’re telling me!”

“I think you have a severe problem, son. We are going to contact your parents. I want to place you in the TV Doctor House immediately. We’ll be able to monitor you twenty-four hours a day via web cameras. You are clearly delusional and you need professional help. Have you ever taken drugs?”

“Are you serious? Look at them. It’s Humpty Dumpty, Robin Hood and the Frankenstein...I mean Deucalion. They are all real and they are all here,” Eddie bellowed.

“Settle down, son. We’re here for you. I have a whole team of moderately trained and highly paid professionals who are going to help you get off those drugs.”

Offended at the TV Doctor’s comments, Eddie jumped to his feet. Before he uttered a word a cell phone began ringing and shattered the pregnant pause.

“How embarrassing,” someone whispered from the audience.

All eyes rested on a red faced Eddie as he fished his mother’s mobile phone from his pocket. He started to silence it.

“It’s much too late now. You have already interrupted our show. Go ahead, answer it,” the TV Doctor instructed.

Eddie glanced at the caller ID. Hesitantly he engaged the phone and answered, “Hello.”

“Eddie, where are you? You’re late for dinner and we are worried.”

“I’m on the Dr. P...,” his words wouldn’t come. Eddie shook his head and looked around. “I’m by the stream. I found this really cool shell..., or a piece of glass that kind of looks like a shell. I’ve had an extraordinary afternoon. It’s great down here by the stream. I think we should build a dock.”

“We have the whole summer for that,” his mother said. “Come on home for now before your food gets cold.”

“Yes ma’am,” Eddie paused. “Hey mom.”

“Yes, son.”

“Thanks for kicking me out of the house. You were right; using my imagination is much more fun than that boring old video game. Wow, I have a story to tell you. This has been a changing day in my life.”