

BOYSENVILLE

BEYOND THE BERRY FARM

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INTRODUCTION

Knott's Berry Farm, America's First Theme Park

It all started in the year 1921.

There once was a farmer named Walter Knott, he had little luck on his small farm as he cared for his crops. One day he came upon a strange vine, left behind by a mysterious creator. Though the vine had begun to wither, upon it grew a purple berry. A berry the world had never seen before. The farmer cared for the vine and after much trial and error the vine began to prosper and more berries began to sprout. Many people flocked from all over to see the new wonderful berries he had found.

The farmer wanted to pay tribute to the man whom originally invented them, but had no idea who exactly put them there. After much research the farmer finally found the name of one man. A man by the name of Rudolf Boysen. He talked with Mr. Boysen one time.

Mr. Boysen told the farmer that he had crossbred the berry from the blackberry, loganberry and raspberry, and that they were truly a wonder of their own.

The farmer wanted to know more, but for some reason Mr. Boysen wanted nothing to do with the berry, saying that he didn't want to be part of that world anymore.

He did, However, allow the farmer to take the berry as his own. So he did, but still the farmer wasn't the type of person to take something for nothing. Instead he paid tribute to Mr. Boysen naming them after him. From that moment on the purple berries were known as Boysenberries.

With these Boysenberries came good fortune. The farmers' prosperity and farm grew, starting from nothing more than a small berry stand alongside the road. Over time his wife began to sell pies made from the berry. Many people flocked and soon enough the farmer's wife decided to serve tea and delicious chicken dinners, the first guests being served on the only dishes they had... their wedding china. Even more people flocked so they created the "Chicken Dinner Restaurant". People would wait in line for a meal by the thousands for many hours.

The farmer felt bad that his customers had to wait for such a long time, so he decided to entertain the guests while they waited. He created many ways to do this, the most elaborate was a replica ghost town of the old west, people loved it. He hired people to play cowboys and Indians. There were wagons and horses, and all the people were now entertained. This went on for a very long time.

Over the years and as more people flocked to Mr. Knott's farm; He added to his land, creating other themed areas and rides for his customers to enjoy. Themed lands like Fiesta village, the boardwalk, and wild water wilderness. Each alongside the Ghost town and each of them with wonderful rides and attractions of their own... And so came the beginning of Americas first theme park, Knott's berry farm.

Many, many years later something strange began to happen... the Boysenberries began to wither away. The farmer assembled a team to find a solution, but all their efforts were in vain and no matter what they tried all the Boysenberries would wither and die. Since then no boysenberry had grown upon that land which was once a farm and now turned theme park...

“Those who were cowards never started, and those who were weak were lost along the way, but the brave find a home in every land.” -Walter Knott.

CHAPTER ONE

Lost and found

My story begins on the same day the Boysenberries began to wither away. I'm not sure how old I was exactly but I'm quite certain I was around the age of five. My story also begins in America's first theme park, "Knott's Berry Farm".

Now that I think back I must have looked so odd. I was a dark little boy dressed in nothing more than sandals, a loin cloth and an odd leather glove on my right hand. These were the oddest of clothes to be worn in the 1990's, I must have looked like I was from a totally different era.

The memory of this day is vague and I don't remember much about it, but what I do know is that I was heartbroken and I didn't know why.

Scared and alone I cried out for someone, anyone at all really. I remember seeing other children with their families having a wonderful time in this theme park, but not me... I didn't even know what a theme park was at the time.

I remember wandering around trying to figure out where I was, this couldn't have been very long but it felt like an eternity to me at the time... Suddenly someone noticed me. A young girl. She found me, pan and broom in hand and knelt down on one knee talking to me at my height.

"It's okay sweetie." She said. "You don't need to cry."

Back then she looked so much older but she couldn't have been more than eighteen or nineteen years old.

"What's your name sweetie?" She asked.

"Miko." I answered

"Michael?" She replied, she pronounced my name wrong, but she was so sweet that I didn't mind, instead I nodded.

"Well my name is Clara." She replied. "It's nice to meet you!"

"It's nice to meet you too." I replied.

Clara asked me what my parents looked like, but I couldn't remember. She asked me if I had brothers or sisters and if I could remember what they were wearing, but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't remember anything, I knew there was something there, but it was like whatever memories I used to have were wiped away or suppressed somehow.

She held my hand as we walked through the theme park looking for my group, her pointing at different families asking if I recognized any of them, but I didn't. Occasionally she would let go of my hand so that she could sweep for a moment, but before I got anxious she'd be holding my hand again. She was extremely kind and tried to cheer me up as much as she could, I guess

she didn't want me to cry anymore so she started to compliment me on what a great costume I was wearing. She said it looked so real.

Eventually Clara led me to lost and found at the entrance of the park, she gave me a hug and a sticker assuring me that soon my family would come to find me there. I watched her through a window as she left, her sweeping and greeting guests along the way until I could no longer see her as she disappeared into the crowded park.

Hours went by at lost and found while I waited. The workers there kept me occupied. They even let me ride a few of the rides, but soon the day had passed, and still no-one had come to find me. It was like I didn't even exist.

Eventually city authorities came and I was taken to an orphanage and became the "states problem", well that's what the people at the orphanage used to say.

I hated it there, it was by far the worst years of my life. The other kids liked to pick on me. They'd steal my things and make fun of me. So I learned to make fun of myself before they got the chance, eventually I learned to be sarcastic enough to fight back, even grew a sense of humor which made them leave me alone most of the time.

I didn't like it there, most of the adults had cold demeanors and most of the other children wanted nothing to do with me.... Except for her.

Her name was Michelle and she was the most beautiful thing I had ever laid eyes on. She was kind to me. She taught me that my life had meaning. That I was a good person, and she believed in me. She would always tell me that someday I'd be something amazing. I don't know my actual age but I believe she was around the same age as I, Thirteen. I fell in love with Michelle Immediately.

Not ever had I met anyone as kind as her. For her I would do anything. I'd even re-live all those lonely years in that orphanage again just to meet her once more.

Once Michelle and I were old enough we left that Orphanage and I married her, vowing to take care of her the rest of our days. I wanted to be as sweet and kind to her as she had been to me, she had saved me and given me a reason to live. I knew that no matter what, I would never let anything happen to her.

Together life became wonderful. Every day was a fresh new adventure and we would do our best to enjoy every part of it....

Yet ...still, in the depths of my mind, I wanted to know what happened that day at "Knott's Berry Farm". Who were my parents? Where were they? Did I even have parents? Or did I just appear out of nowhere? I had to find out, I needed to remember.

My wife and I decided that the best way to remember would be at that theme park. We applied for jobs at Knott's berry farm and were hired that same day!

Michelle got a job in the western museum, and I a job as a ride operator.

I excelled at the job. For some reason me and rides just clicked. I knew how they worked and all their different functions almost immediately. I practically learned every ride there was to know. Almost as if it were meant to be.

Michelle loved working in the Western museum because there were so many pieces of history there. Walter Knott found and preserved each and every one of them, he had created the museum himself. She liked the fact that she would be the one to teach people the stories of each and every western treasure. Truly this was what she always wanted to do. It also reminded her of her favorite moment from when were orphans... At one time the orphanage had funded a field trip to a museum. I remember that day vividly, Michelle loved everything about that day. We

saw animals from around the world and dinosaur bones, ancient relics and other various historical treasures. We listened as one of the workers gave us a tour. I remember Michelle pointing at our tour guide and whispering to me saying.

“That’s what I want to do someday Michael, I want to tell people about the past.”

I knew that someday she would, and as fate would have it, she ended up working in a museum... on a smaller scale of course, but still she was working in a museum in this theme park, and giving tours to any guest that would ask.

Together we both enjoyed our jobs at Knott’s Berry Farm and day after day I tried to remember what happened years ago, back when I was that lost little boy in the park. I like to write so I would keep a note pad and write down anything that felt familiar, but there was n’t much to write about, nothing seemed familiar. Even after a year of trying no memory came to me. It was like I didn’t exist before that day.

I had almost given up until one day I saw the big locomotive resting in its station in ghost town. It was the one ride in the park that I had yet to operate and something inside told me that I needed to operate that too. So I transferred to the railroad, and became a locomotive engineer, operating the train through the theme park. I loved working on the train. I even made a few friends out of my coworkers along the way and every day since I knew something was coming... Something big. A memory maybe. Eventually I fell in love with the job so much that I gave up trying. It would take another ten years before it began to happen. One night I began to dream ...

CHAPTER TWO

Only a Nightmare

“*Where am I?*” I remember thinking as the world slowly began to appear out of the dark. Bashfully and not completely my surroundings began to show. Light fixtures coming into view first. Then lamp posts and walkways. Railing began to swerve around what seemed to be a queue line. It was still very dark but I could hear the sound of a roller coaster moving on its track, the harder I looked the more I could see. There was nobody riding it though, nobody operating it either. It felt eerie being there alone, it was as if everyone had disappeared and the rides were now operating themselves. I began to search for someone.

I felt like I had been wandering around in the dark for ages, as if I had been in this semi dark world my whole existence.

Suddenly a large beam of light flashed up into the sky and I could see the light shine upon a large disk like ride moving up a large pole shaped tower.

“I’m at work!” I shouted out, beginning to recognize myself and my existence. “I’m at Knott’s!” I knew that ride for sure, it was called the Sky Cabin and it was the first ride I had learned to operate in the park. I used to load people in that cabin so they could get a good view of the park from above. You could see the entire city from that high, and on a clear day you could see all the way to the ocean.

I remembered most everything now, thinking it must be really late at night. Plus, there was nobody around, so the park must be closed by now. Then I remembered my wife Michelle.

“*She must be waiting for me so we could drive home together!*” I thought.

I didn’t want her to get worried so I decided to leave.

Suddenly something sprinted past me... a young boy headed towards the sky cabin. The boy stopped just for a moment to look back at me and smile. He was wearing no more than sandals and a loin cloth. He waved his hand and motioned to me to come with him before continuing to run towards the sky cabin.

I ran after the boy trying my best to keep up, eventually he stopped in front of the sky cabins queue line entrance, his head looking up as he watched the sky cabin rotate at the top of its tower.

Once I caught up with him he paid no attention to my arrival, instead he just stood there, starring at the ride.

"Hey buddy." I greeted him, but he didn't reply. He continued to stare, his eyes fixated on the sky cabin as it slowly rotated back down to its loading dock.

"Where are your parents?" I asked.

Still no reply. It was like he couldn't hear me.

"Come on..." I said. "It's time to go home."

"Time to go home?" The boy finally replied. Looking at me with wide eyes.

"Yes" I answered. "Time to go home."

And with that the boy took off heading into the sky cabins queue line and up its spiral stair case, I followed him up the stair case which was a long way up in my dream.

After climbing what seemed to be thousands of spiral stairs I finally arrived at the rides loading dock.

When I got there I couldn't see the boy but I noticed the rides entrance doors were wide open, and the lights were on.

I called out to the boy but he didn't answer back.

...Suddenly a gut feeling.... Something was telling me not to go inside the sky cabins entrance.

Slowly a darkness began to grow inside the cabin. The lights began to flicker and go out. A darkness had overtaken the ride. I knew that whatever was inside this cabin was bad, something evil, something sinister.

Suddenly a voice whispered from the void.

"Come back to me Miko." It said.

I took a step back from the entrance. The voice made me uneasy. I had heard it somewhere before and knew that it was foul.

I called out for the boy once more. I felt bad for him and feared this dark void would get him, but then the darkness shot out of the cabin attaching itself to me, binding me.

It began to drag me into the cabin with it. This thing, whatever it was, was much more powerful than I and I could do nothing to stop it, only squirm and scream as my helpless body was dragged into the darkness.

"*This is it.*" I thought to myself. This was the end of me as I began to fade into the void.

"Come back to me Miko." The voice whispered again as my existence faded away.

"Come back, so that I may consume you..."

After having that dream, or should I say nightmare, I would wake up in a sweat, and the dream would fade away from my memory almost as fast as it came. I would try my best to remember as much as I could, I would even try to write it down in a note pad beside my bed, but little of it would remain with me. All I knew was that it was a dream about the theme park and that it had something to do with my past.

CHAPTER THREE

A day in the life...

I was awake early one morning and if I hurried I could make breakfast before Michelle and I left for work. Quickly but quietly I hopped into the shower. I didn't want to wake her, she needed her rest, she was four months pregnant and she wouldn't be able to go back to sleep if I woke her.

"Hot, hot, hot." I whispered, cringing as I adjusted the water Temperature. I scrubbed, I washed and I rinsed before stumbling out of the shower and blindly snagging a towel.

While brushing my teeth I noticed that Michelle was no longer in bed.

"I must have woken her." I thought.

I decided to continue getting ready putting my work costume on; which consisted of Denim Overalls, a red flannel long sleeved shirt and a train engineers hat. I'd also grab my leather glove that I've had since the day I was found in the park as a boy all those years ago, it would be silly to wear it so I would keep it in my back pocket.

It was a weird glove, it even had a weird symbol on it. The symbol kind of looked like a boomerang. I remember it fitting me all those years ago when I was a child, but for some reason it still fit all these years later. I've always found it extremely odd that it still fit especially because now I'm much bigger... six foot two to be exact. I remember thinking to myself *"Maybe I stretched it out."* But it still looked as it did twenty-four years ago, only larger. I always kept that glove with me, it was the only thing I had left from my past, and I had a deep inner hunch that it would be the key to unlocking memories from all those years ago.

I didn't want to lose that glove and it would probably be more fitting to keep it locked away, but I figured it might help trigger a memory from my past, so I took wherever I went anyway.

It was now the end of September, supposedly a storm today, so I grabbed my jacket out of the closet. It had been awhile since I had worn it. I had gained a few pounds but it still fit nice. Like every other morning I took a step back from the mirror to critique my costume. Decent enough I thought, my dark brown reflection peering back at me. The only thing that bothered me as of late was all the grey hair I was beginning to acquire.

"thirty" I thought to myself. "I'm getting old."

Suddenly a kiss on my cheek. "We're getting old." Michelle Playfully replied.

"Yup." I laughed.

"Don't take too long." Said Michelle. "Breakfast is almost ready."

"That's my wife." I thought.

I wanted to make her breakfast this morning, but no matter what, she would always find a way to be one step ahead of me. Always taking care of me.

Once breakfast was made we sat together. She made me eggs over easy and scrambled for herself, both with bacon and a large glass of orange juice. I drank mine immediately and before long my glass was empty. Michelle offered me another glass. I insisted on getting it myself, but sweetly she grabbed my glass making her way to the fridge. She always wanted to do things herself, quite stubborn at times, but I understood this because I was just as stubborn and then

some, so I would let her try to do most things while she was pregnant at least once and wait until she got frustrated enough to ask me for help, but most of the time she'd try two or three times before sweetly handing over any task.

We talked for a while that morning before she got ready for work. We always did. We enjoyed each other's company and conversations. Soon it was time for us to head to work. We grabbed our things and headed for the door. Before we left she straightened the Engineers hat on my head. She gave me a kiss telling me she loved me, and I her.

We made it to work with time to spare. Through the employee entrance we parted and went to our separate jobs in different parts of the theme park.

I was about to hop aboard the Locomotive when Dave, one of the mechanics, stopped me.

"Here you go Michael." Said Dave putting his hand out. Behold in the center of his palm rested a fresh Boysenberry.

"Where did you get this?" I asked in amazed.

"I found it." He said as he handed it over.

"But where? I thought all the Boysenberry were long gone?"

"They were; I haven't seen one in the twenty years I've been here!"

"Then where did you get it???"

"Come with me." He said as we walked around the side of the locomotive shop.

There in the most hidden of places grew a tiny vine, creeping its way up the outer side of the shop wall. It was in bloom and had a few small berries growing from it.

"These must be the only Boysenberries left in the park." Said Dave. "The rest are long gone... Do you know what happened to all the Boysenberries?"

"I've heard stories." I replied. "But they're all different."

"Well, a long time ago Mr. Knott had whole vines of boysenberries growing all over the park. But one day they all began die. He had a whole team of landscapers try to save them, but no matter what they did, the berries would wither away. For the longest time, no boysenberry has grown on this property... until now."

"Why do you think they've come back?" I asked.

"I don't know." Replied Dave. "But I've heard stories that they are very special. That this entire theme park never would have existed without them in the first place."

"Really?" I replied.

"Yes, and there are other rumors too!"

"What kind of rumors?" I asked now intrigued. I loved hearing about Knott's Berry Farm. Some of the stories go back over ninety years!

"I've heard that these berries are some kind of magic." Dave continued. "A very strange and powerful magic."

"Magic?" I asked.

"Yes, I remember hearing something about them being linked to another world."

"Well that's kind of farfetched." I replied. "Are you sure you're not just remembering the story of Jack and the Bean stalk?"

"I'm sure!" Dave snapped. "I'm just telling you what I've heard."

"...I believe you."

"You do?"

"Yes..." I laughed. "I believe you heard a story and were gullible enough to buy into it."

"Okay, okay. Maybe I am gullible, but can you explain why the boysenberry vine grows

here all these years later after they had completely vanished from the park?”

“No sir, I can’t, maybe it ‘is’ more magical than we two could imagine?”

“Maybe.” Dave agreed. “And maybe this is just the beginning, maybe the boysenberry will make their way to the rest of the park, just like years ago.”

Dave was a little odd, but he was one of the best Mechanics I knew. He had been working at Knott’s Berry Farm for over twenty years! He had even met the creator of Knott’s Berry Farm, Mr. Walter Knott himself!

I tried to hand the berry back to Dave but he wouldn’t take it saying. “I’m more of a strawberry kind of guy... you keep it.”

I didn’t want to be rude so I kept the berry. I figured I’d save it for later. I wrapped it in a handkerchief that was part of my costume and placed it in my pocket.

The day went by like normal. An announcement went off signaling the opening of the park. Thousands of people rushed in headed towards their favorite rides.

Me and my fireman Aaron worked the locomotive around the park, the fireman is the other Engineer who keeps the steam boiler on the locomotive hot, so the locomotive has lots of steam pressure to make it move.

Guests loved riding the train, it was western themed and very scenic. Sometimes the guests were lucky enough to get robbed by train bandits. On rare occasions there was even a shootout in Ghost town as the train would arrive back to the Depot, the bandits always put on a good show as they were confronted by the town Marshal after “robbing” the train.

Many people would come asking questions about the train, how old it was and how fast it could go. Young children would come up to the train dressed like train Engineers, telling us they wanted to drive trains someday too. We would always encourage them, trying to make their day, handing out railroad stickers. The job wasn’t easy but it was well worth it when you were able to make some-one’s day.

Soon enough after many trips around the park, the sun began to set. The day had ended and an announcement signaled the end of another fun filled day.

Aaron and I parked the locomotive shutting it down for the night. We began to check the coaches and as we did Aaron found a child’s doll left behind on one of the seats. He had started earlier than I did today, so I volunteered to take it to lost and found at the entrance of the park.

I had to pass through ghost town, one of the parks oldest themed areas to get there. There were a few different themed areas other than Ghost Town. There was the boardwalk, wild wilderness, Indian Trails, and fiesta village, but Ghost Town one was by far my favorite because it was “The old west.” I loved the various shops along the way, the calico saloon, a leather shop, the blacksmith. It felt very authentic because most of the buildings in the park were in fact real buildings taken from actual ghost towns.

Once I arrived at lost and found there was a little girl waiting with her dad on a bench. Once she saw me she jumped up.

“There it is!” She said grabbing the doll right out of my hands and hugging it as tight as she could.

It kind of reminded me of myself waiting there for my family all those years ago, but what she was waiting for came back to her.

“*Lucky her*” I thought to myself shrugging and putting my hands in my pockets as I headed back through ghost town.

As my hands shuffled around in my pockets I noticed the handkerchief that I had placed in there earlier that morning. I figured the Boysenberry inside must be destroyed by now, but once revealed it was in perfect condition. I decided to eat it there and then. It was delicious, couldn't wait until the vine grew more, Maybe I'd take some for Michelle.

Chapter Four

Whisked away...

I headed back through ghost town, it was getting colder now. In the distance I could see thunder clouds heading towards the park. Flashes of light followed by crackles from afar. I quickened my pace wanting to get my wife and I home before the rain began.

I stopped for a moment, noticing a few rain drops falling from the sky and leaving small water marks on concrete...

...Suddenly something ran past me. As my eyes began to focus on it I noticed it was a young boy. The boy was headed toward the sky cabin in the Boardwalk themed area of the park. He was dressed in some kind of weird tribal gear, loin cloth and sandals. For some reason this felt familiar but I couldn't put two and two together at the time.

I followed the boy up into the sky cabin, but once inside he was no longer there. I have to admit I found this very eerie and thought the boy may have been a ghost!

On account of all the creepiness I decided to head back out of the cabin, but before I could all the lights on board began to flicker. Then the control panel lit up and the doors closed locking me inside. A shrill of terror engulfed me to my core as I began to pry on the doors with my fingers but it was no use. I even pounded on the doors thinking, "*Maybe someone will hear me.*" But no one did.

Rain began to pour outside, the wind picking up now. The ride was on. The fear that festered inside of me finally began to subside and was soon replaced with anger and frustration.

"It's starting to rain!" I shouted at the cabin. "I've got to go home!"

Without warning the Cabin began to move! It slowly began to lift up to the top of the tower, and as it reached the top there was a large blinding flash that I could only assume was lightning hitting the cabin.

The sky cabin had now reached the top of the tower, and since I had operated the ride many times before I assumed that it would be heading back down the tower shortly to finish its ride cycle and let me out, but that didn't happen. Instead the strangest of things happened... the cabin somehow continued to rise further into the air! It had somehow passed the top of the tower! It was flying! Three hundred feet, six hundred feet, one thousand feet!

Soon enough the cabin was well above the thunder clouds and I could see the lightning in the storm now flashing in a dark sea of cloud below as the cabin and I floated high above the unseen earth.

It had been awhile since I had worked this ride, and even back then I had never seen it do anything as strange as this, but I needed to at least try to reverse it somehow. Or at least keep it from rising any further.

In a panic I used the control panel to emergency stop, and amazingly it did! Floating completely still high above the earth in the sky. The ride was simple enough. Maybe if I restarted the ride it would go back to the loading dock. But as soon as I tried the cabin began to free fall

back through the clouds, and I free falling inside of it! For a moment I remember thinking to myself. *"I wish I was anywhere but here!"*

Though I was shaken up. I knew I had to be brave, so I tried with all of my might to make it back to the panel as I jumbled inside the cabin, it rotating in a downward spiral plummeting back towards the earth. Through the windows I could see the earth getting closer... I had to do something fast or this cabin was going to crash land with me in it! I grabbed ahold of the railing pulling myself as close as I could to the control panel and pushed the emergency stop button once more. Once pushed the cabin came to a halt miraculously hovering about ten feet above the ground.

"I must be dead!" I thought trying to understand what had just happened. But then I realized my heart was pounding as much as a humming bird flaps its tiny little wings.

"Surely I'm still alive." I thought as I laid on the sky cabins floor. I started to breathe slowly trying my best to calm all the anxiety. Once I had finally calmed myself enough I began to try and stand. Thankfully, other than a few bumps and bruises, I was still intact. The only harm that had come to me was mostly psychological. I took another look outside the sky cabins windows...It was dark outside now but I could tell I was now above what seemed to be a sandy beach.

I remember thinking how Impossible the situation was as I once again used my fingers to pry at the cabins doors.

"This is not happening... This has to be a dream. There is no way that the sky cabin could go anywhere without being attached to its tower!"

...Yet here the sky cabin was levitating ten feet above the ground of some beach that I couldn't recognize.

My attempts to pry open the sky cabins doors were unsuccessful... until I finally became frustrated enough to shout.

"Open!" I demanded while using my fingers to pry at the doors. Shockingly the doors abruptly opened on their own. My heart sank into my stomach as I took a step back wondering what was going on?

"At least the doors are open again." I thought.

I decided to leave that terrifying ride before it had the idea of taking me back up into the sky once more. It was a pretty good jump from the cabin to the beach below, so I hung from the cabin to lessen the fall. As soon as I landed on the beach the cabin came crashing down slamming in front of me, the sound of it all echoed through my body.

"I'm glad I wasn't inside when that happened." I thought.

The beach was dark, no light anywhere. I remember telling myself that I had to get back home, but something was happening to my mind. I began to find myself wondering where I had to get back to, I couldn't remember. I didn't know where I was or how I got there.

I stared at the sky cabin thinking to myself *"What's that thing?"* and *"How did I get here?"* I had lost all memory of everything, even things that had just happened slowly faded from my mind. But I knew that someone was waiting for me. A woman, that loved me very much. How I was going to get to her I didn't know.

I was utterly lost, but I knew that I had to find a way.

I lay there on that cold beach for the night staring into the ocean, it was vast and I didn't know I had seen an ocean before, so it was like seeing it for the first time all over again. It was beautiful and disturbing at the same time.

“How could it be so big?” I thought to myself.

I stayed there on that beach, waiting, trying to remember, then finally sleeping as the waves crashed in the distance.

I dreamt that night. It was about a Woman. She was beautiful and when I came to her she asked me where I had gone. “I don’t know.” I told her. “I don’t even know who I am.”

“You are Michael.” She replied. “How do you not remember who you are?”

“I can’t I’m sorry.”

The Woman held my face in her hands looking directly into my eyes. “Don’t forget me.” She pleaded. “I’m your wife.”

The boardwalk

The sun had come up as I slept on that beach. Something poked me in my side.

“Don’t poke at him.” Said a young feminine voice. “He’ll wake up.”

“Nope, I think he’s dead.” replied a young masculine voice.

“Really?... because dead things don’t breathe.”

“Well good, he can get off our beach. Wake up you!” He demanded smacking me in the head with a stick.

I turned my body over yelling from all the pain, then grabbed the stick out of his hand and tossed it as far as I could.

As my eyes began to focus, I began to see the two figures, one of which was standing over me, an angry young man dressed in cuffed blue jeans, a white t-shirt, and a leather jacket. He was sporting a pompadour hair style... your typical greaser style hooligan.

The other was much calmer and collected. A young woman. She kept her distance. She wore a white dress with red polka dots. Red lipstick and she had jet black hair pinned up in a red bandana.

“Hey??? Who do you think you are?!” Said the young man. “You can’t just steal someone’s hitting stick!”

“Who do you think YOU are???” I replied. “Hitting people WITH sticks???”

“We are operators, protectors of the Boardwalk.” Replied the young lady. “I am Coast Ryder, and the guy annoying you is Surfside.”

“That’s right!” Surfside added. “This is our beach! Now scram!”

“This is your beach?”

“Yeah, and your trespassing on it!”

“Tress-pass-ing?... What does that mean?” I asked.

“It means you’re not supposed to be here! That bad things will happen to you if you stay here, you may even die... Now leave!”

I didn’t want to argue with this Surfside guy, it seemed he already made up his mind about me and I was much too depressed to fight with him.

“Okay.” I answered. “...I’ll leave.”

I stood up and dusted the sand from my clothes then walked away... But I didn’t know where to go. I was so confused that I accidentally left my hat behind.

The two watched me as I wandered down the beach.

“Hmmm. Thought he’d put up a bigger fight than that?” Said Surfside.

“Why do you have to be so mean Surf?” Asked Coast.

“I’m not mean!” Demanded Surfside. “He’s trespassing on our beach!” We’re supposed to protect the beach and boardwalk from anything and anyone... remember?”

“I know.” Replied Coast. “But he looks harmless. I think he might be lost, maybe we should help him?”

“Things aren’t always what they seem.” Surfside remarked. “He could be very dangerous.”

“I don’t think so.” She declared. “If he was bad, he would have tried something by now, he probably just needed a place to rest.”

“Maybe, but can we take those kind of chances? What if he came out of the water?”

“Look at the way he’s dressed!” She countered as she picked up the Engineer’s hat that I had forgotten. “I don’t think anything in that water dresses like that, and you weren’t very nice to him. what if you were lost and didn’t know where to go? Then at the first sight of people you get smacked in the head with a stick and are told to scam? How would that make you feel?”

“Why?” Surfside frustratingly asked. “Why do you always have to make me feel guilty about every, little, thing I do?”

“Because you are guilty.” Coast answered. “We are Operators, right? We should at least have some decency and show some kind of hospitality. We should see what’s wrong with him.”

“But I don’t wanna!” Surfside Demanded...

Meanwhile I began to take a long look at my surroundings as I stood there on that beach. There was a pier nearby, a boardwalk and some nearby shops but everything looked abandoned.

One thing I saw and found most interesting was a strange green fountain off in the distance. It was oddly placed in the sand. This fountain was very large and had different animal heads made of stone. There were lions heads, fish heads, crabs, and ram’s heads all leading up to a statue of a woman. The woman was dressed in a gown at the top whom held her arm out reaching into the sky, I think she may have been carrying a light of some sort. It also seemed as though she may have been looking at me, but that could’ve just been my imagination.

The fountain was beautiful as it continually gushed a stream of water from the top where the woman stood, the water flowed downward over the different animal statues cascading along the way then finally ending in a large circular pool at the bottom. It was so beautiful that I thought whomever had made it had put much effort into their work. I felt lucky to have seen it, but felt bad that there was nobody else around to enjoy it.

It was just me here, those other two, but they didn’t even want me around, and a large beach. I had no clue where I was, didn’t even know where I came from. I decided to go back to the sky cabin only because it looked somewhat familiar. I knew something had happened with it but I couldn’t remember what.

When I got to the Sky cabin I could hear Surfside and Coast arguing, their voices echoing in the distance. They eventually stopped and found me there.

“Hello.” Greeted Coast, with a smile on her face. She returned my hat back to me.

“Thanks.” I replied.

“We’re sorry for all the confusion earlier, the two of us are actually pretty nice once you get to know us... Isn’t that right Surf?”

For a moment Surfside wouldn’t answer, but then Coast looked at him with the most hazardous of glares.

“Isn’t... THAT RIGHT SURF???” She said again, but this time in a more ferocious of tones.

“Fine!... Yes, we’re so sorry.” Surf finally answered, his voice reluctant and monotone.

I shrugged. I didn’t really care if they were sorry or not.

Coast asked me if I was lost. I told her I didn't know and I couldn't remember anything. "Sure sounds like your lost to me." She replied with a light grin. "Do you know your name?"

I thought very hard for a moment and then it came to me.

"Michael." I told her, I could at least remember that.

"Where did you come from?" Surfside grunted, I could tell he was trying his best to be polite, but his emotions seemed to be running high from our small spat from earlier. "Did you get here in that thing?" Surf asked pointing to the sky cabin.

"I think maybe I did." I replied. "But I can't remember for sure."

"Hmm." Said coast. "I've heard ancient stories of people crossing over to other worlds, and when they do they can't remember a thing. Maybe you're like them?"

"I don't know." I replied. "Maybe."

"Or maybe Surf hit you in the head so hard that you lost all memory of everything?" Declared coast as she scowled at Surfside.

"Oh please." He replied, rolling his eyes. "I barely touched him."

"Well, he can't remember anything!" she snapped back.

"I couldn't remember anything last night either." I added. "I think my memory disappeared last night, all I can remember is remembering and then not remembering."

"That doesn't make any sense!" Surfside Disputed. "How is it possible to remember remembering that you don't remember anything???"

"I know." I whined holding my face between the palms of my hands. "Nothing makes sense anymore!"

"It's so strange." Said Surfside as he pulled Coast aside.

"What?" Coast asked.

"Well, he's defiantly a grown man." Surfside whispered. "At least thirty years old, but it's almost like he's lost all of that, like he's some kind of child... like he's lost the memories that come with being an adult."

"Maybe he has?" Coast added.

"Hmmm..." Surfside Pondered. "This is very strange."

"Yes." Coast replied. "Very strange indeed."

Coast came to me patting me on the back telling me to cheer up, that they'd help me find my memory.

"How can we do that?" I asked.

"Well first things first..." Replied Surfside, finally warming up to me. "You should check your pockets. Maybe there's something that can refresh your memory."

I emptied out my pockets but there was nothing much, a red handkerchief, a strange looking glove and a wallet, which Surfside grabbed right out of my hands.

"Look here, there's a picture of you printed on this weird hard paper... It's in color too! So your name IS Michael.... Guess you're telling the truth. Says here that this is a driver's license! Hmmm... What's a driver's license?"

"I dunno?" I replied.

"Oh well." He shrugged. "Look! There's an address here! Buena park, California."

"Where's that?" I asked.

"I don't know." Surf answered. "I've never heard of it before... Must be a faraway land"

"Our friend the Farmer might be able to help you." Coast added.

“The farmer?” I asked.

“Yes.” Replied Coast. “His name is Mr. Knott. He’s a nice man, his farm is a little far, but he knows a whole lot about everything, and travelers go there all the time.”

“Oh yeah!” Surfside added. “Maybe he knows where this “Buena Park.” Place is?”

“Do you think he can help me find her?” I asked.

“Who?” Coast replied.

“I don’t know, but I know she’s waiting for me, and I need to get to her.”

“Is this her?” Said Surf pulling a picture out of my wallet. It was a picture of a woman. The woman from my dream!

“That’s her!” I replied. “I dreamt of her last night!”

“She’s very pretty.” Said coast. “Look! There’s a ring on your finger, maybe your married to her?”

“I think I am.” I answered. “Do you think the farmer can help me find her?”

“Well, I don’t know about that.” Surfside speculated. “But he might be able to help find someone who can, maybe even get you on the right track to finding your memory again.”

The two decided that they would help me. That they would take me to see the farmer so I could find my way home. The three of us headed up the beach.

Coast decided that we should eat before our journey, Surfside asked me if I had ever fished before.

“I don’t know.” I replied.

“That’s right.” Surfside laughed slapping himself on the forehead. “I forgot you can’t remember anything.... We’ll show you how.”

The three of us sat on the edge of a long pier. Coast let me use her fishing pole instructing me how to use it.

“Okay Michael.” Said Coast in an encouraging manner. “Cast your line out.”

With both hands I swung the pole behind me then let my line fly out into the ocean.

“Now what?” I asked.

“Now we wait.” Replied Coast.

It wasn’t long before I had caught a fish, Coast helped me reel it in. It was rather small. I took it off of its hook and it flopped around on the wooden pier.

“Too small.” Said Surfside. “Throw it back so it can become a big fish someday.”

Gently I picked up the small fish intending to release it back into the ocean, but the slippery thing was so frightened that it wiggled and squirmed out of my fingers. It flopped around on the wooden pier, then back into the water it went.

I didn’t like fishing, I felt bad for the little fish, I think it was scared and alone, I was glad it got to swim free again.

Not long after, Surfside caught a huge fish and killed it immediately.

“Don’t want to let it suffer.” He said. “It’s the law of nature to consume life. But make the kill quick so the life doesn’t suffer.”

The two showed me how to build a bon fire, we cooked the fish over the fire and ate.

“That fountain?” I asked. pointing to the green fountain I had seen earlier.

“What about it?” Surfside replied.

“Is it supposed to be there?” I asked.

“We don’t know.” Coast weighed in. “My Mother once told me that this fountain is one of many, but they are so old, and the others are so far away that nobody knows much about them.

It’s pretty, isn’t it?” She added.

“Yes.” I agreed.

“Well, if you think that’s cool then check this out.” Said Surfside pulling up the sleeve of his jacket and revealing a strange silver band. “Ready Coast?”

“Okay!” She answered.

The two stood up and took a step back from the bonfire.

“Transports!” The two shouted simultaneously. A bright light flashed out from the arm of Surfside’s jacket. Another bright light flashed from another metal band wrapped around Coast’s ankle. Suddenly out of the sand came two large objects. Weird transports you could ride in. One was painted orange, it floated above the ground and had two wings on it, one in the rear and one in the front, the front could move side to side so it’s driver could steer. The other was some sort of land buggy that could seat about four people in it. The land buggy was painted red, oddly enough it had no steering wheel.

“What are these?” I asked.

“Our rides.” Surf smiled. “Mine, the one floating there, is called a Glider, and that one there, well I don’t know, Coast never named it.”

I was amazed at what they had just done. How did those small metal bands bring out these large transports from the ground? It was like magic!

“Well...” Said Surfside. “We should head out while it’s still early, if we want to make it to that farm on time.”

“One of us has to stay behind.” Coast insisted. “Someone has to protect the beach.”

“I’ll do it.” Replied Surfside. “Nothing gets past me.”

“What are you protecting the beach from?” I asked. “There’s nothing here.”

“Your right.” Surfside answered. “There is nothing here, but there used to be. People used to come to this boardwalk from all over enjoying this beach, but now they’re all gone.”

“What happened to them?” I asked.

“Nobody knows. That’s why Coast and I are here. To investigate what happened, to find out what took them and to stop it from happening again.”

“Maybe whatever took them is gone now?” I asked. “It doesn’t seem like there’s anything here.”

“Oh but there is.” Surfside Replied. “Something big, something evil. I used to have more gliders and it took them all.”

“Where is it?” I asked.

“Somewhere deep in the water.”

“What is it?”

“We don’t know...” Surfside whispered. “It has yet to reveal itself.”

“How do you know there’s something there?”

“I can feel it. People like Coast and I can feel where these types of things are... That’s why we are here protecting the beach. I think it knows we’re here too... Once it reveals itself. I’ll be ready for it.” He took off his jacket and showed me more of those weird bracelet like bands on his arm.

“What are those?” I asked.

“Operators bands of course.” He declared. “They can only be used by operators, and only certain operators can use them. This is how we protect the boardwalk.”

“You’re an operator?” I asked.

“I sure am! ...So is Coast.” He added. “But she only just found out she’s an operator, she can use them okay, but I need to teach her much more.”

"I know a lot already." Coast added.

"Am I an operator too?" I asked.

"Do you have any Operators bands?"

"I don't know." I answered.

"Well, check your arms." Surfside insisted as he rolled up my sleeves looking for operator's bands, but my arms were bare. Just brown skinned arms.

"Sorry buddy." Surfside sympathized. "I don't think you are, but that's okay, most people aren't. In fact, operators are very rare."

News from the pony express.

After eating breakfast with the two, Coast and I set out for our journey. Surfside and Coast said their goodbyes giving each other a great big hug. Coast and I hopped aboard her buggy transport and headed away from the beach. The terrain slowly changed as we traveled into what were now grassy plains.

Coast's little buggy moved rather quickly. There wasn't much to see along the way Just long blades of brown grass flowing with the wind. The buggy would speed through them leaving a trail of crooked grass behind. Soon enough we came to a small hill which the buggy scaled effortlessly, beyond the hill were more plains but these were livelier than before. The grass seemed to grow greener the further we traveled here, but as the terrain changed so did the sky. Soon enough dark clouds began to form in the distance. They were extremely far off and lightning would occasionally flash from them followed by long delayed thunder.

"What is that?" I asked. I didn't know I had seen a storm before.

"A storm." Coast replied.

"What's storm?"

"A storm is cold, it's windy, it's rainy, and there's thunder and lightning too!"

"I don't think I like it very much."

"Well, It's necessary" She replied.

"Necessary?"

"Yes, it may seem scary, but it's necessary. Without the rain nothing would grow, and there would be nothing to drink, and if there were nothing to drink everything would die... Don't be afraid of it, it's too far to get us from here anyway."

We were moving further away from the storm, but I kept an eye on it the whole time. The land began to change again, this time there was no grass at all, just dirt. Everything began to feel eerie now. Coast decided to distract me by letting me drive, which she found strange because I was rather good at it.

"Maybe you ARE an operator? She said with a smile.

"Maybe." I laughed. It was fun driving her little buggy, all I had to do was think which way I wanted the buggy to travel and the buggy would do it, that's why there was no need for a steering wheel.

We drove for a while and the sun began to shine down upon the land now. The storm was so far we could barely see it now.

Suddenly we began to see something else... Something off in the distance. I couldn't exactly tell what it was at first, but Coast knew and made me stop the buggy.

“What’s that?” I asked.

Coast was extremely excited and too distracted to reply. Instead she hopped out of the buggy, her polka dot dress catching for a moment almost tripping her.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“It’s time, it’s time!” She replied.

“Time for what???”

“Mail time!” She announced.

“Mail time?”

“Yes!” She cheered, finally giving me an actual answer. “It’s the pony express! It’s one of my favorite things in the whole world!”

“What’s the Pony express?” I asked

“You’ll see soon enough, so stop asking questions and just start living... Get over here!”

I hopped out of the buggy and she made me stand next to her. She held her hand up in the air and made me do the same.

“Ok just stand still!” She advised. “they’ll be here soon!”

Whatever was in the distance was surrounded in a brown cloud of dirt, but soon enough it began to come into view. Two lines of horses ridden directly side by side. Faster and faster they came. The sound of horse hoofs roaring against the dirt, leaving an earthen cloud behind. We could hear the riders shouting at their horses, willing them to go faster.

“Wait, if we stand here, were going to get trampled!” I began to worry.

“It’s going to be okay.” She insisted.

I wanted to believe her... but I couldn’t help it, as soon as the horses came, I dodged them jumping out of the way. I could see Coast only for a moment, first standing there with her hand held high just before disappearing into the stampede of horsemen.

“Coast!” I shouted as I closed my eyes, I didn’t want to see the dreadful horror of what must have just happened.

“*She must be dead!*” I thought to myself, “*mushed!*”

I gathered the courage to open my eyes again, But the air was polluted in dirt and I couldn’t see her.

“Coast?” I called out to her. “Coast? Are you alive?”

The cloud of dirt had finally cleared as the pony express riders charged off into the distance once more. The sound of horse hoofs thundering before fading away.

Finally, I saw Coast, she was just standing there, unscathed. Her hand still held high, but now grasping a letter between her fingers.

“Mail time!” She said once again. “I love it!”

I was relieved and utterly amazed that she was still intact. But mad that she had tormented me like that.

“Why would you do that?” I scolded her. “I thought you were dead!”

“Oh, I’m sorry Michael.” Coast sympathized. “I didn’t mean to scare you; I was just so excited to see the Pony Express... I thought you’d enjoy that too.”

“I did not enjoy that!” I replied shaking my head. “Not one bit at all!”

“Well, maybe this will make you feel better!” she said waving the letter in her hand.

Coast peeled open the letter and began to read.

“It’s a letter from Montezuma!!” She declared.

“Who’s that?” I asked.

“Only one of the best Operators ever!!” She replied.

The letter read...

“-To all of Boysenvale.

People from all places of the known world have gone missing, disappearing, I fear that the dark storm may be linked to this. Take extreme caution while venturing out. I urge you to stay indoors during bad weather. There has been rumor that the grey witch has awoken from her slumber, that she is the one to blame for the storms, I believe these rumors are false. I believe that Nefarious is the one causing the storms. I have found six of the seven seals to contain him, but I am still in search of the final stone, those that happen to stumble across it please notify me as soon as possible. Each and every day Nefarious’ strength grows stronger. The seventh seal must be found before Nefarious wakes. The dark storm brings with it his evil doings. I must find the final seal soon. I ask all of Boysenvale to band together and search for it. If Nefarious awakens, he will be too powerful for Boysenvale to bear. Stay away from the dark storm.

Good luck to you and to those that you love.”

-Montezuma

“Oh my! that’s not good at all!” Said Coast.

“What’s not good?” I asked.

“Nefarious.” She replied. “I’ve only ever heard bad things about him, he was around before my time. We need to avoid that dark storm.”

“That dark storm there?” I asked pointing off in the distance, the storm was now coming our way. “Is that what he’s talking about?”

“Maybe.” Replied Coast. “But we’re not about to find out. We need to get to that farm.”

Coast decided to drive for now, we jumped in her buggy and we were off, she was much faster at driving than I.

Even with the buggy’s speed, we could tell that the storm was catching up to us. Soon we’d be engulfed.

“We need to find shelter quick!” Coast shouted.

“But there’s nothing around!” I insisted. “How far is this farm?”

“Too far to make it!”

The wind was picking up and the sound of thunder was getting closer.

“I’ve got it!” Declared Coast. There’s an old cave somewhere around here, but I think we’ve already passed it!”

I took a look back.

“I see it!” I shouted. There was a small cave but it had been boarded shut labeled with white paint that read. *“Danger! Keep out!”*

Coast immediately turned the buggy around and headed straight for the small cave, which was also directly towards the storm.

“Hold on tight!” She screamed!

We ducked as the buggy crashed through the wooden barrier.

The buggy skid finally coming to a stop. The rain was pouring outside and we could hear the wind rushing in and out of the cave, but in here we were safe... for now.

Inside the cave we tried our best to be as quiet as possible while we waited for the storm to pass. Coast started a fire with dried up wood that was once the barrier that blocked the cave.

“Are you hungry?” She asked.

“Not really.” I replied.

“Me either.” She shrugged.

“How did you know about this cave?”

“Surfside... Years ago when we were just small children my father found him in here.”

“What was he doing in here?” I asked.

“This is where he lived.” She sighed grabbing another small piece of wood to toss on the fire. “He was more animal than boy back then. I remember when my father first brought him home... he tried to bite me!”

Coast began to laugh. “He used to bite my father all the time!”

“Your father?” I asked.

“Yeah, he’s gone now... with the rest of the people from the boardwalk, my Mother too.”

“I’m sorry.” I replied.

“It’s okay.” She smiled. “Look at me complaining... I’m sorry, sometimes I guess I just miss them.”

“You don’t need to be sorry. It’s okay to miss the people you care about, maybe someday they’ll come back?”

“I always hoped that... But then one day, I knew they weren’t coming back.”

“How did you know?” I asked.

“My father was a hard worker.” She replied. “I remember he’d come home at different hours of the night. Everyday I’d wait for him, and just before he would get home... I could feel him. In my gut. I knew he was almost home. Amazingly enough... he’d walk through the door at that same moment. The same with my Mother. That feeling I used to get.... That knowing... It’s gone now.”

Coast’s eyebrows cringed together for a moment like she was trying to stop herself from crying or as if she were in deep thought.

“I didn’t mean to upset you.” I replied.

“It’s okay.” She added. “I’m not upset.”

Coast began to stare outside at the rain for a moment. That same look on her face... I think she was thinking about them.

I decided to let her be for now. Instead I threw more wood on the fire... As I tossed the wood over the fire I noticed something fly by the caves entrance, it was black and darted by extremely fast, but I was able to catch a glimpse of it in the corner of my eye. It felt familiar, it felt foul...

“*Miko.*” A voice. A whisper.

I took a step back clenching what firewood I had in my arms.

“Did you hear that?” I asked.

“The wind?” Coast replied.

“No... a voice... a whisper.”

“No... I don’t hear it.”

Suddenly I had the urge to go outside. These whispers were calling me and I couldn’t control myself anymore. My body wanted to go outside. But I did not. With no action of my own I dropped the firewood and my body took a step towards the caves opening, but Coast grabbed me by my arm.

“Don’t” She warned. “Remember what Montezuma said in the letter.”

“It’s calling me!” I replied. “I don’t want to go, but I can’t stop myself!”

“What do you mean?” She asked.

“...I’m not doing this!” I stuttered, before my body pushed her away! “It’s inside my head!”

“No!” Coast Demanded, then grabbed at me again pulling me back. She used all her strength to throw me to the ground.

My body tried to get away, but she laid her knees into my back and pinned my arms to the ground. “It wants to take you! It wants to make you disappear like the people in the letter!”

“I can’t help it.” I whined.

“Fight it!” She demanded.

“How?” I asked.

My body squirmed trying it’s best to shake free from her grasp, but she wouldn’t let go.

“Your arms.” She began to chant. “They are your arms and yours arms alone. Your legs, they are your legs and your legs alone. Your head, it is your head and your head alone. Now say it with me!”

“What?” I replied.

“SAY IT!!!” She screamed.

“My arms!” I replied. “... They are my arms and my arms alone! My legs... they are my legs and my legs alone! My head, it is my head and my head alone!”

“My body belongs to me!” Coast shouted. “Say it!”

“My body belongs to me!” I repeated.

“My mind belongs to me!”

“My mind belongs to me!”

“This is MY body, and MY mind! They belong to no one but me!”

“This is MY body, and MY mind! They belong to nobody but me!”

I continued to repeat after Coast and miraculously... my body began to calm. It no longer squirmed and kicked, I just laid there now, trying my best to keep myself calm.

“It’s working!” I sighed. “It’s working.”

I laid there continuing to chant the chant in my mind, to think it and believe it.

Soon enough, the storm had passed, and I was in control of my body again.

I don’t know what would have happened to me in that storm. But I believe that Coast may have saved my life....

Now that the storm seemed to be gone, we decided to take a look, Coast was the first outside.

“That’s not possible!” She screamed.

“What???” I shouted.

“It’s gone!” She replied. “The storm is completely gone!”

I emerged from the cave and I too saw that there was nothing but blue skies. It wasn’t even in the distance. It was as if the storm had completely vanished.

“This is very strange.” Coast gasped.

“Very.” I agreed.

“Come on, we’ve still got to get to that farm.”

The two of us hopped inside her buggy and continued on our way. I still kept an eye out for the storm... just in case.

Chapter five

The farm life

We made our way through the plains and found ourselves arriving at the farm faster than we had expected. There were acres and acres of crops. Orange trees, strawberry fields, and many others. Coast decided we should walk from there on so we wouldn't destroy any of the crops that the farmer works so hard on.

"Transport!" Coast shouted and a flash of light came from the metal bracelet on her ankle. The small buggy began to sink into the ground and then disappeared out of sight. We walked the rest of the way. Coast's pace began to grow sluggish.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"Yes." She replied. "Just a little tired, struggling with you took a toll. Plus, operator bands take a lot of energy too."

"Do you want to rest for a moment?" I asked.

"I'm fine." She responded with a smile. "It's not much further."

Soon enough we could see the farmer up ahead strongly fixated on something. He was on his knees in the soil, working on some sort of greenery. There was a nice old golden retriever laying patiently by his side. The two didn't notice as we approached.

Though she was tired, Coast mustered up enough strength to sneak up on the Farmer.

"Hello Mr. Knott!" She blurted.

This startled the farmer unexpectedly and he jolted up from his knees and onto his feet. He looked back at us with a terrified expression on his face that quickly transitioned into a look of relief.

"Oh! hello there Coast!" The farmer shakenly replied. "You startled me there for a moment."

"Sorry." Replied Coast. "I'm just really excited to see you and the farm again."

"Well, the farm and I are excited to see you again too!" He replied.

"What are you up to?" Said Coast as she tried to peek behind Mr. Knott to see what he had been tending to.

"Would you like to see something amazing?" Mr. Knott asked.

"Sure!" She replied and at that the farmer stepped aside revealing a small vine. There were purple berries growing from the vine and he plucked two off and placed one in her hand.

"What's this?" She asked.

"It's a Boysenberry." He replied.

"I thought these were all gone."

"They were, but as luck would have it I found a small vine growing not too far from here, I've even gotten them blooming again."

"That's amazing!" Coast cheered then stuffed the decent sized berry into her mouth and began to chew.

I could tell that Coast saw this Mr. Knott as a father figure even before I had met him. During the storm she seemed so grown up and levelheaded, but here she seemed more relaxed. This farmer was older and I guess this was her only chance to show her real age.

"So what are you doing all the way out here?" Asked Mr. Knott. "And who's your friend?"

“Well...” answered Coast, her tone muffled from the sound of a mouth full of Boysenberry. She didn’t want to be rude so she took a moment to finish the berry before finishing her reply. Suddenly a gulp and she was free to speak again.

“...This is Michael.” She replied. “I’ve brought him all the way here to meet you. We even had to endure a very bad storm along the way.”

“I didn’t even know there was a storm.” He replied.

“Neither did we.” She smiled. “But we’ll talk more about that later.”

Mr. Knott greeted me hello and asked me if I’d like a Boysenberry, I politely declined.

“May I have another for Surfside?” Coast asked and Mr. Knott handed her another berry. She put it away saving it for Surfside.

“Michael and I have come because we are in need of your assistance.” Said coast. “Michael can’t remember much of anything, and he needs to get back home. I think he may be from the other world! That he somehow came here by mistake... Do you think you can help?”

“Well...” Answered Mr. Knott brushing the dirt from his pants then removing his farmers hat and wiping his forehead on his sleeve. “That sure is a lot to take in, and I’m not very familiar with travels to the other world, but nevertheless we’ll see what we can do...Why don’t you two set yourselves up at the house and I’ll be there soon for dinner.”

“Okay!” Replied Coast and we made our way to a farm house just beyond the crops. The old golden retriever following after us panting in the heat of the sun.

“Please let it be chicken, please let it be chicken.” Coast prayed. “Ms. Knott makes the best fried chicken, and the biscuits and gravy...My mouth is watering already!”

When we arrived at Mr. Knott’s farmhouse Coast knocked on a screen door at the entrance. We could hear children laughing and playing inside.

“Those are Mr. and Mrs. Knott’s kids.” Coast informed me. “They’re all really good kids.”

We waited another minute. I don’t think the children heard us the first time. They were all too busy playing. There was a delicious aroma emanating from inside the farmhouse. It smelled like fresh baked bread. Coast knocked once more and we could hear a pot move, the sound coming from another area of the farmhouse and then the sound of a wooden spoon being placed down on a counter. Soon enough we could see a figure approaching the screen door and we were almost greeted by Ms. Knott, but before she could make it to the door her children, three girls and a boy, dropped what they were doing and rushed out beating Mrs. Knott to the screen door.

At the sight of Coast, the girls joyfully screamed pushing the door wide open which swung outward. Coast had to take a step back as to not get knocked over. The girls proceeded to surround Coast, tugging and hugging at her asking her different questions unanimously.

The boy came straight to me; he wasn’t very shy.

“Hey you’re not Surfside!” He moaned disappointedly, but then he saw the glove on my hand and his eyes grew wide because it interested him. He asked me if it was an Operators glove. I told him I didn’t know. He liked the Boomerang shaped emblem on it. He then proceeded to tell me about all the different operators items. That there were certain rare items like gloves and shoes but mostly bands that held powerful abilities that only operators could use.

Eventually the young boy introduced himself.

“I’m Russell.” He said wildly shaking my hand. I let him play with the glove outside where he put it on waving at the sky yelling out “Boomerang!” He even pointed his hand at the dog.

“Boomerang! Go!”

Russel was a nice boy, he had a very vivid imagination.

“Oh well, guess it’s not an Operators item.” He said.

Coast greeted Mrs. Knott and so did I. The girls tugged at Coast leading her and Mrs. Knott inside.

Mrs. Knott saw Russell and I together. "You two come inside soon." She said. "Dinner will be ready shortly."

"Aww Ma!" Shouted Russell.

"You heard me." Replied Mrs. Knott.

"Fine!" He reluctantly answered then tossed me my glove.

"It's no fun in there." Russell informed me. "Nothing but girls inside."

Back inside the house we found Coast. She was brushing one of the girl's hair while she told stories about the beach and her adventures with Surfside. The oldest girl came up to me.

"You're on a quest to find your wife?" She asked.

I replied with a simple nod.

"That's so romantic!" She cheered.

Russell rolled his eyes and took me to the dining table before rushing off and bringing some drawings that he had made.

"These are Operators!" He declared. "The ones I've heard about so far."

Russell had a good hand and his drawings were very detailed.

"You made these?" I asked.

"Sure did." He replied.

"Wow you can really paint a picture." I said sifting through the different drawings. There were all sorts. One of them was a picture of Surfside on his glider, another of Surfside on a pier as a massive hammerhead shark rose out of the ocean. There was another drawing of Coast leaning against her transport buggy... she had some kind of spear in her hands. I could tell that Russell looked up to Surfside and Coast, they were like role models to him.

The last drawing was of a man dressed in a Mariachi outfit.

"That man came here once!" Said Russell. "He's an operator too!"

"You know what." I said handing the drawings back to Russell. "I think you're going to be a great artist someday."

"That's what my father says too." Russell shrugged. "But I don't want to be an artist... I want to be an Operator! I want to go on adventures, and travel the world!"

"Well maybe you can do that too?" I added.

"Not likely." He replied. "Operators aren't made... they're born."

Russell took the drawings and sulked as he left to put them away.

I have to admit I felt somewhat bad for Russell, but soon enough he was back again and talked my ear off about how us men need to stick together, no time for all these girls ruining all things that men do.

Mr. Knott finally entered the farmhouse no more than an hour after we had arrived. The children that flocked around Coast and I now hurriedly flocked around him. There was so much love in that home.

Mrs. Knott was a sweet lady and did all that she could to make us feel welcome. Offering us tea and whatnot.

At dinner Coast was excited because Mrs. Knott was in fact serving the fried Chicken that she had been talking about earlier. Along with it were biscuits, corn, mashed potatoes and gravy.

Now I understood what all the fuss was about. The food was so good! The chicken was juicy and delicious! The corn was the sweetest and the gravy.... oh the gravy, it was so good I ended up smothering my entire meal in it! I remember rubbing my belly afterward wanting more, unfortunately I was already stuffed.

After dinner the children were sent to bed. Me, Coast and Mr. and Mrs. Knott sat in their den talking. Coast handed over the letter she had gotten from the pony express. Mr. Knott read it.

“This is really bad.” Said Mr. Knott. “Is this the storm that you two saw earlier?”

“Maybe.” Coast replied. “We don’t know for sure, but it was making Michael do strange things.”

“Hmmm.” Mr. Knott replied. “Montezuma needs to find that final seal before Nefarious wakes. He even asks for all of Boysenvale to lend a hand in the search. I don’t think he’ll get much help at all.”

“Why is that?” I asked.

“Most people, except on rare occasion, refuse to venture out from their lands. The people from the boardwalk never cross into Calico. People from Calico never cross into the Boardwalk and so on.”

“Why wouldn’t they want to travel?” I asked.

“People fear what they don’t know.” Mr. Knott replied.

“Except for the Pony express!” Coast added. “They travel to all parts of Boysenvale!”

“That’s true.” Replied Mrs. Knott.

“I love the pony express!” Coast added again. “If it wasn’t for them, we’d have no form of communication.”

I asked Mr. and Mrs. Knott all about Montezuma and Nefarious. They told me that Montezuma was the last of the Zumas. That there was only one other...The grey witch Edena, but that she was no longer recognized as a Zuma because of her obsession with dark magic. That she awakens once a year for one-month wreaking havoc on the people of Boysenvale. That she is in love with Nefarious and every year she is determined to awaken him. They also said that Montezuma and other brave Operators of Boysenvale fight her and her minions until she sleeps once again. That years ago Nefarious was sealed away by Montezuma. Nefarious was power hungry and wanted to rule over Boysenvale consuming everyone in it. That he is immortal and cannot be killed. Only locked away in a cold slumber.

Then I asked them how I could get home.

“I don’t think people from the other world have the ability to cross over to our world, I don’t think it’s possible.” Said Mr. Knott. “Only Zumas can cross over. Or so I thought. Maybe A Zuma brought you here?”

“Maybe.” Replied Coast. “Maybe the grey witch has indeed come back? But why would she bring you here?”

“Maybe Montezuma brought you here?” Said Mrs. Knott

“All that we know is that a Zuma can cross over to the other side.” added Mr. Knott. “Your best bet is to find Montezuma. Maybe then he can send you back home.”

“But where is he?” I asked.

“Last we heard he was headed into the forest to see the old Chief.” Replied Mrs. Knott.

“That’s right.” Replied Mr. Knott. “There’s a mysterious lodge hidden in the forest where a tribe lives not too far from here. I can take you as far as the river, and I’ll draw you a map with instructions so you won’t get lost in that forest along the way.”

I agreed and we decided to stay the night and travel the next morning.

That night I dreamt about my wife. She was making dinner as I walked through the front door, she smiled at me then I woke up in the middle of the night feeling relieved, thinking I was home, but then I realized I wasn't and that she was still so far away. After that I couldn't sleep, plus Coast was snoring. But at least I remembered a little bit more about her. In fact, some things were just out of my mental reach, I thought maybe with time I'd be able to remember everything about my wife and home.

Russell, Mr. Knott's son tried to wake me, but I was already awake. "Let's go outside." He whispered. "Bring the glove."

"Why not?" I figured... Couldn't sleep anyway.

It was really early in the morning, the sun hadn't come up yet, but there was some light on the horizon. It was cold outside, cold enough that we could see our breath in the air. I warned Russel if we saw a storm we'd have to go back inside. He agreed to my terms.

"You're from the other world right?" Russell asked.

"Maybe." I replied.

"I've never met anyone from the other world. Maybe that makes you special like Coast and Surfside."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

He insisted that I put the glove on, so I did. He made me hold my hand up high in the air telling me to yell out Boomerang.

"People are sleeping." I told him. "We'll wake them."

"Just do it." He replied.

"Fine." I held out my hand and yelled out "Boomerang!" I could hear my voice slightly echo in the distance.

Russell waited for a moment, he seemed very excited. I waited for someone to wake up, but nothing happened.

"Aww man!" Russell Whined. "I was really hoping that you could operate that glove."

"Sorry." I replied. "Maybe I'm just not that special, and maybe it's just a regular old glove."

"Yeah." He said motioning us to head back inside, but then something happened. Far off in the distance where the light on the horizon was, we could hear it. a *whooshing* sound.

"Do you hear that?" Russell asked.

"Yeah I do, what is that?" I replied, but then I saw it! A huge object flying straight towards us, aiming for us!

"Go inside!" I shouted at Russell and he did rushing his way to the farmhouse. I ran as far from the house as I could, running directly into the strawberry fields. Whatever it was I could hear it catching up to me! following me! Suddenly and forcefully it landed directly in front of me crashing into the ground! The mysterious object made me stop in my tracks, it destroyed a large patch of strawberry. Strawberry plants and soil erupted from the ground in all different directions, some of it grazing me.

Russell came back rushing out of the house. I could hear him yelling really loud, but I couldn't make much sense of what he was saying, I think he was so excited that whatever he was saying wouldn't have made much sense anyway. He stopped abruptly beside me, both of us staring at it. It was, in fact, a large blue boomerang! Had to be at least twenty feet tall!

"You ARE an operator!!!" Russell Shouted. "I knew it!!"

“Quiet, keep it down.” I Replied. The kid was going to wake everyone. “What does that even mean??”

“It means you can use the operator’s items!” He joyously whispered hopping up and down.

“Well what do I do now??”

“I don’t know... grab it I guess.”

Reluctantly I crept up to the massive boomerang intending to touch it, but before I could it immediately shrank in size flying to me, then disappearing into the palm of my glove. We both found it amazing, and I tried my best to hush Russell as we stared at the aftermath.

“Wow! look what it did to the strawberries!” He cheered.

“Shhhh... You’ll wake everyone.” I hushed.

Russell and I both knew that we’d be in big trouble for destroying those strawberry plants. I wanted to tell Mr. Knott what had happened but Russell made me promise not to tell anyone, saying that he would fix it in the morning. The two of us went back to the farmhouse to get some sleep. I couldn’t sleep after that, I bet neither of us could.

In the morning Coast woke up and said she was going back to the beach today. That she was now starting to worry about Surfside. I didn’t mind that she was leaving, she had done what she said she would by taking me to the Knott farm and I thanked her for that.

I missed my wife very much so I knew what it was like to be away from the ones that you love, and I could tell by the way she spoke about Surf that she cared for him deeply.

Ms. Knott packed me and Coast some chicken to go. So that we “wouldn’t starve to death” she said. Mr. Knott gave me a leather backpack saying, you’re going to need this for all that food.

Mrs. Knott handed me a blanket and I stuffed it into the backpack. I liked the backpack, it had writing on it. Just inside the inner lip it said (If lost please return to Knott’s berry farm.)

Mr. Knott and I climbed aboard his wagon which was attached to a large bull.

Coast said her goodbye as she hopped inside her buggy.

“Don’t give up Michael.” Said Coast as she waved goodbye. “I’m sure you’ll find what you’re looking for. But if not, you’ll always have a place with me and Surfside on the boardwalk.”

“Thank you for everything.” I replied.

“No problem!” She smiled.

Coast rode off in her small buggy and the large bull pulled Mr. Knott’s wagon off in another direction, I watched as Coast disappeared in the distance. I was going to miss her and Surfside, they were the first people I had met here in Boysenvale. I could only pray that the next person I would come in contact with would be as welcoming as they were.

Mr. Knott and I traveled across more plains. Soon I could see the forest far off in the distance.

“There it is” Announced Mr. Knott pointing at the forest. “Not long before we get there.”

As Mr. Knott and I made our way towards the forest I knew I felt bad about what had happened the night before with the boomerang and Mr. Knott’s strawberries. So I decided to confess...

“I have to apologize to you Mr. Knott... Last night...”

“Don’t worry about it.” Said Mr. Knott with a smile. “I already know.”

“You do? You know that I...”

“Ruined some of my strawberries?”

“... Yeah.”

“I know. Russell is so loud that I woke up and saw what happened. I do, however, appreciate the fact that you told me, besides it’s not your fault, you didn’t know that was going to happen.”

“I really am sorry. You must have put a lot of work into those.”

“I did, and I’ll do it again.” He said patting me on the back. “I’m a farmer, that’s what I do. Sometimes crops go bad and you have to start all over again, a good farmer never gives up.”

“If it makes you feel any better, Russell said that he’d be fixing them this morning.”

“I can’t wait to see that!” Mr. Knott Laughed. “It’s always fun watching him try to get out of trouble.”

“Please don’t be too hard on him. He didn’t know that was going to happen. I’m more to blame if anything.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t... I just want to see how long it takes him to fess up.”

“Thanks for being so nice about it and thanks for helping me.”

“My pleasure.” He replied.

When we got to the forest the river came into view. It was blocking the way to the forest. Mr. Knott pulled the wagon up to a raft that was resting beside the river.

“Here you go.” Said Mr. Knott. Handing me a small map he had drawn out on a piece of paper. “Don’t lose it, or you’ll get lost in that forest.”

“Thank you.” I replied. folding the map putting it in the front pocket of my overalls.

“There’s something special about you.” Said Mr. Knott. “Something grand. You’re able to operate the blue boomerang. That item is ancient and not many can. I don’t even think Coast or Surfside can operate it. I believe you came here for a reason. That you being here has purpose. I don’t know if you’ll find your way home Michael, but I believe you will find what you’re looking for.”

“Thank you.” I replied and gave him a hug.

“If you get lost I want you to remember my farm okay Michael? Remember my farm and find your way back there.”

“I will.” I replied then hopped aboard the raft finding an oar and cast myself off.

“A word of advice.” Mr. Knott shouted as my raft began floating down the river. “Those who are cowards never start, and those who are weak are lost along the way, but the brave find a home in every land.”

As my raft continued to flow down the river I could see Mr. Knott turn his wagon around and begin to head back home to his farm. Mr. Knott said there was something special about me, but I really didn’t believe that. In fact, I believed that there was something special about him. Everyone I had met in Boysenvale seemed to be more interesting than I. “*Maybe they see something more than I can.*” I thought. “*Maybe I’m as interesting to them as they are to me.*”

“Oh well.” I said continuing on.

A Darkness in the water

As I made my way down the river on that raft I pulled the map out of my pocket for a moment, there was a giant bolder scribbled next to a drawing of a river with words that read *exit here*. I put the map back in my pocket again continuing down the river patently waiting to see the

boulder from which I needed to exit the river. For a moment I could see some species of bird flying out of the forest, a whole flock flying out and headed to the east as if they were being hunted by something. It may have just been my imagination but I got a slight glimpse of something in the forest... Something big, like a bear, but what I saw happened so fast that I couldn't quite believe my eyes. Plus, I didn't get much sleep the night before so I figured my eyes were now playing tricks on me. I rubbed my eyes and shrugged it off as the raft continued down the river.

Suddenly something strange began to happen. I noticed that everything around me began to grow darker, like night had come upon me in almost an instant. I looked up and saw that a thunderstorm had begun to form above the river.

With the storm came wind and lightning. It was extremely eerie and I felt like the storm was watching me. I just hoped it wasn't the storm that me and Coast had seen earlier in the plains, the storm that we had read about in that letter. Yet something inside me told me that it was.

Without warning I could feel myself going again like before! This storm wanted to control me!

"Remember what Coast told you!" I thought, that my body and mind belong to me and no one else.

I repeated those words in my mind... but still It was so strong. Without my approval my body took a step towards the end of the raft.

"No!" I shouted trying to overcome it. "My body belongs to me!"

I shouted at the storm as loud as I could. "You don't control me! I control me!"

The shouting helped and I was able to drop to my knees. I continued to shout as the thunder grew louder, angrier.

With every shout I became more in control, to the point that I no longer needed to shout it. I knew that I was totally in control. The storm began to calm again; it was still there but it was not nearly as chaotic as before. I had won against this dark storm... or so I thought.

Suddenly from the calm of the storm a black raven came flying out from its center. It slowly circled around my raft a few times. I could see it looking directly at me as it circled. It seemed as though this raven was sizing me up. The raven landed on one end of my raft and continued to stare at me for a moment, I looking directly back at it. Finally, it looked away from me and hopped its way to the edge of the raft and began to peer into the water.

The raven stayed there for a while as I stood there watching it not knowing what to do.

"What's it looking at?" I thought to myself. I wanted to know. Needed to know. I put my belongings down and crawled to the edge of the raft. I was now right next to the raven and I too began to peer into the water. There was nothing there. Just my reflection, muddled in the ripples of the water.

But then something changed and I saw it. My reflection didn't quite look like me. It looked darker, more like a shadow. Quickly the raven hopped into the water disappearing then reappearing on the shoulder of my shadow like reflection. White eyes formed on my reflection followed by a carnivorous smile.

The reflections arms shot out of the water grabbing me by my head! In an instant it pulled me into the river. It was strong, overpowering. I tried my best to get away, to get a breath of air, but it wouldn't let me!

This thing, whatever it was had wrapped itself around me pinning my arms to my side! It continued to drag me down towards the bottom of the river. It was trying to drown me! I knew I had to fight back. I squirmed, I kicked, but that didn't work.

Finally, I was able to get an arm loose and tried to pull it off with my hand. Once my boomerang glove touched this darkness, it let out a deathly scream muddled by the water then finally let go. Quickly I swam back to the top of the river and managed to get a breath of air. I found and held onto the side of the raft. The water had become rough! I was now in rapids and I couldn't gather the strength to climb up onto the raft. Instead I tried my best just to hold on. Soon enough I noticed the large boulder from where I was supposed to exit the river. I had already floated far past it on the river and I was continuing to move much further and further away from it.

That raven shot out of the water and back into the center of the storm. The clouds quickly dissipated and the blue sky returned in its place. I felt so weak, like that dark shadow had drained the life out of me. I couldn't help it, my eyes became heavy and everything grew dark as my body slipped back into the water.

Chapter six

Feathers and big feet...

I think I had a nightmare, something about ravens, but couldn't quite remember once I woke up.

Somehow I was in the forest. There was a fire burning close, a line tied between two trees. My overalls were draped over it along with my hat and the rest of my belongings. I was wrapped in the blanket Mrs. Knott had given me. The fire was warm; I was drying off.

"*Someone must have saved me.*" I thought. It felt peaceful there as I got warm by the fire... at least until I noticed it. There was something large sitting close to me on a dead tree trunk. Something big, something hairy. I couldn't quite get a good look at first as I lay there as still as possible, I could hear it grunting as it chewed and ate.

What was it eating? "*Hopefully not me!*" I thought. It was in the shape of a man, "*Maybe a gorilla?*" I honestly had no idea what it was, all I knew is that I didn't want to be its next meal. It seemed pretty focused on whatever it was eating.

"*Maybe it won't notice if I quietly crawled away.*" I thought.

Slowly I crawled out of the blanket but before I could get more than three feet away a strange stubby little bird about the size of a turkey hopped atop a rock and squawked at me warning the large beast. The large beast gently grabbed me by my ankle. It was terrifying, I wanted to scream but I was so scared that my voice locked up and nothing came out. It dragged me back to where I had been laying.

"No go." It said in a raspy deep voice. "You no dry yet. No go time, it rest time now."

The beast was strong. Strong enough to hurt me if it wanted, but apparently it just wanted to help.

"No worry." Said the beast. "I no eat people... everyone think I eat people."

I now took a better look at the large beast. It was shaped like a man but larger. It was extremely hairy with brown fur. Though it was large and somewhat terrifying, its face was somewhat innocent. It had braids and colorful feathers in its hair and wore a loin cloth to cover

its parts. It was eating the chicken that Mrs. Knott had packed for me while the bird watched in hunger.

“No Dodo.” Said the beast to the bird. “You no can have chicken. It made from bird. It no right for bird to eat other bird!”

But the bird still watched the beast wanting food for itself.

“Okay, okay, share.” Said the beast, then tossed a biscuit to the bird. The bird gnawed at it trying and failing to swallow it down in one gulp.

“What are you?” I asked

“I Bigfoot.” He replied. Then pointed to the bird. “That there Dodo, he last Dodo in all Boysenvale.”

The bird stopped gnawing on the biscuit for a moment and squawked at me again.

Apparently greeting me then resuming the obstacle of eating a biscuit.

“Are there more Bigfoots out here?” I asked.

“Bigfoot my name. I Sasquatch. No more sasquatch no more, it sad story I no like talk about.”

“I’m sorry.” I replied.

Bigfoot had a strange way of speaking, it was like this was his second language or he was still trying to learn to talk.

“Who are you?” Bigfoot asked. “And why bad witch man want kill you in water?”

“You saw that?” I asked.

“Yes. Me and Dodo no let you drown.” Bigfoot replied.

“My name is Michael.” I said and shook Bigfoots giant hand.... It was greasy from all the fried chicken. “Thanks’ for saving me.” I added.

“It no problem, you want chicken?” Bigfoot asked.

I told him he could have all the chicken in my bag. He laughed and continued to eat.

We talked while I dressed, my overalls were a little damp but everything else was mostly dry.

“Where you come from?” Bigfoot asked.

“I don’t know.” I replied. “I’m trying to find out.”

“You have home?”

“I think so, but I don’t know where.”

“Oh you must be lost. I lost once as little Sasquatch, but small bears help me find way home.... You know little bears?”

“Little Bears?” I replied. “No I don’t know any little bears.”

“You sure? They wear things like you do. Little bears wear hats and shoes, girl bears wear dresses and other things too. Just like you, but they much smaller than you and they bears.... You sure you no ever see them?”

“Yes, I’m sure.” I replied.

“Yeah, me no see them either.... I think they scared now that I big strong Sasquatch, but I would no hurt them... not ever.”

Bigfoot continued to finish off the chicken from my bag.

“So how come you no remember where you come from?” Bigfoot munched with a mouth full of chicken.

“I don’t know.” I reluctantly replied. “All I know is that I need to find a man named Montezuma. I was told there is a chief here in this forest that can help me find him.”

“Oh you looking for tribe?!”

“Yes!” I replied.

“You know how get there? It no easy to find.”

“I have a map.” I said remembering where I had placed it, then reaching into the front pocket of my overalls, but what I pulled out was no longer a map, it was a paper lump of mush. The river had destroyed it.

“*Well that’s that.*” I thought to myself. plopping down on the tree trunk next to Bigfoot.

“Now how am I going to find the hidden tribe?”

“That no look like map.” Bigfoot laughed.

“It’s destroyed.” I said wadding it into a soggy ball frustratingly chucking it as far as I could. The Dodo chased after it. “I don’t know how to get there without it.”

“Yeah, tribe hard to find.” Said Bigfoot.

“You’ve been there before??” I asked.

“Yes many time.”

“So you know how to get there??”

“No... I no know how get there.”

“Well... that’s just great.” I sighed frustratingly then plopped down on the tree trunk next to him.

Bigfoot stopped eating the chicken. He could tell that I was distressed.

“It ok.” He said patting me on the back with his hairy hands covered in chicken grease.

“You get to tribe; I get you there.”

“But you just said you don’t know where it is.” I replied.

“I no know how get there. But Dodo know how get to tribe.” He said with a smile.

The Mysterious Forest

I packed my bag back up while Bigfoot finished his chicken. Soon he was finished and crept to the river to rinse the chicken grease from his hands.

“Okay!” Declared Bigfoot. “We go now.”

Bigfoot grabbed the Dodo and talked to it for a moment.

“Dodo, you find tribe now.” He said. Then tossed the bird to the ground. Dodo stumbled its way in staggering directions as we followed.

“Trust Dodo. He know the way.” Bigfoot exclaimed.

“Ok.” I replied following the two of them.

Hours went by in that forest, us following Dodo, but then I noticed things started looking familiar. The Dodo would continually eat insects along the way, he would stagger and sometimes the Dodo bird would begin to follow us instead.

“You know...” I said. “If I’m being totally honest. I don’t think this bird knows where we are going. This part of the forest kinda looks like we’ve been here before.”

“All forest look same.” Replied Bigfoot. “That why it mysterious. Trust Dodo, he know how get to Chief.”

“...Okay.” I reluctantly agreed. We continued to follow the Dodo and not too long after, it stopped again to eat more insects. This had been hours now and I was beginning to grow impatient. Eventually the Dodo bird began to nap.

“Dodo think we rest now.” Said Bigfoot lying directly on the bed of the forest.

At this point I was starting to get fed up, but I too was tired and decided to take a rest also.

The three of us napped uncomfortably close, and every time I would skootch away to get some breathing room the two of them would skootch even closer towards me. I decided to give up and ended up staying awake the whole time as the two of them slept. Eventually the Dodo bird woke up and we began to follow it again, but only minutes later the bird began to nap again.

“Dodo no finish resting.” Said Bigfoot beginning to lay down once again.

That was it! I had made it to my frustrated breaking point!

“This bird doesn’t even know where we’re going!” I shouted. “All he wants to do is eat and sleep!”

“Trust Dodo.” Said Bigfoot.

“No! I don’t trust Dodo.” I angrily replied. “Dodo doesn’t know where he’s going. And you don’t know where you’re going.”

“Dodo know where we go.” Bigfoot assured.

“Look, you’re really nice...” I said shaking Bigfoots hand. Bigfoot had a confused look on his large face. “...And I don’t want to make you angry because I’m pretty sure you could rip my head off if you wanted.”

“Yes I very strong.” Bigfoot replied.

“But I think I need to find this place on my own.”

“But you get lost in forest.” He warned.

“We’re already lost, so I think I’ll take my chances.” I said grabbing my things stubbornly heading into the forest alone.

“Ok we meet you at old chief lodge.” Bigfoot shouted as I left.

As I made my way through the forest alone I had an extreme feeling of relief. Yet almost immediately afterward I felt horrible for leaving Bigfoot and Dodo behind, so I decided to go back and apologize, but when I tried to go back I noticed that the forest looked a little different now, and the two of them were nowhere to be found.

“Maybe they’ve already gone on ahead.” I thought.

I still felt bas so I decided if I were to meet them at the Mysterious lodge I could apologize for leaving them behind then, and that it would be better to continue on before it gets dark out.

“Okay...” I thought to myself. *“Can’t let myself get lost.”*

I still had a few biscuits left over in my bag so I began dropping pieces along the way to mark my path in a straight line. Soon enough I noticed that each and every piece of biscuit I had strategically dropped was quickly and effortlessly snagged up by small mice. They were quick little things that began to follow me around waiting for me to drop more. Soon I was out of biscuit and they gave up interest scurrying away back to wherever they had come from. Those little mice had left me stranded without a clue of which direction to go.

Everything looked the same in this forest. After what seemed like a half hour I stumbled upon the camp site by the river where I had met Bigfoot and Dodo.

“Oh no, I’ve back tracked.” I thought to myself. *“Well let’s try again.”*

So I entered the forest again, but only moments later I was back at that camp site. Frustratingly I re-entered the forest again and found myself at the camp site once more. No matter what direction I went it always led me right back to the camp site like a never ending loop. I knew there and then that I had made a huge mistake, I should have stayed with Bigfoot and Dodo.

Somehow the Dodo bird made it into the forest much farther than I could...but how? Finally, I gave up and began to lay on the ground by the camp site regretting my foolish choice to venture into the forest alone.

"What am I going to do?" I thought to myself. All I could think about was my wife. I couldn't remember much about her but I knew her face and her smile. "I'm sorry." I cried out loud. "I don't know how to get back to you."

I lay there thinking for a moment... *"How? How did that clumsy little bird know where to go?"*

Suddenly as I lay there on that cold forest bed something crawled out of the leaves and up my arm. Some weird kind of Potato Beetle. Instantly I remembered that Dodo was eating insects along the way! So I decided that I would search for more insects.

"Hopefully I don't have to eat these!" I thought to myself.

The first thing I found was a bush covered in more Potato beetles. The beetles were crawling off and heading into the rest of the forest. I followed them and not very far from that I found a trail of Ants that headed even further into the forest. I followed the ants far into the forest, the trail seemed to travel for a few miles. The trail ended where there were what looked like Tobacco plants with weird caterpillars feeding on them. I followed those plants as far as they led and from there I found what looked to be Honey bees flying above. I followed them too and eventually I came upon it. The mysterious Lodge hidden in the forest and there in front waiting for me was Bigfoot and Dodo. Dodo hopping up and down, trying to eat honeybees that flew by.

"You take long time; you trust Dodo now?" Bigfoot asked.

I couldn't deny that the Dodo bird knew what it was doing. That if I would have followed it in the first place I would have arrived at the lodge with them and could have avoided wasting so much time in that forest alone in the first place.

"Okay." I replied submitingly. "From now on I'll Trust Dodo."

Bigfoot and Dodo hadn't gone inside the lodge yet. He said that everyone was gone. I asked him what he meant by that. He said that usually the whole tribe was out and about.

There were no doors on the lodge only a colorful painting that covered the entire face of the lodge, it looked like some kind of Native bird.

"Couldn't we just go in?" I asked. But Bigfoot told me that trespassing was forbidden.

We could see smoke coming from the top of the lodge.

"I think we had better go in." I said. "It looks like someone has a fire going, I don't think they'd mind if we watched the fire so the place doesn't burn down."

"Okay." Bigfoot agreed. "But there no door this time. How we get in if there no door?"

"Did you knock?" I asked.

"There no door to knock on." He replied.

I knocked on the face of the lodge anyway. Slowly hidden doors appeared.

"It look dark inside." Bigfoot whined holding Dodo tight.

"It'll be alright." I assured him. "We'll go in together."

Together we stepped through the doorway. Once we entered it took a while before things began to come into view. Finally, our eyes adjusted to the dark and we could see most everything.

From the inside the lodge was extremely large. A wooden tower was at the center of one wall. Different kinds of animal bodies and faces were carved into it. The carvings were stacked on top of each other. The final carving was a giant bird that rested atop the tower. I found it both

wondrous and hair-raising. Wonderful because it was so life like and detailed, and hair-raising because it felt as though the carved faces were watching me.

A fire pit burned in the center of the lodge, Dodo curled up next to it and began to nap.

“Where Chief go?” Bigfoot asked. “He always here.”

“Your guess is as good as mine.” I replied, picking up what looked like a sturdy branch that rested near the fire.

That Chief walk stick!” Bigfoot declared.

I handed the walking stick to him. We decided to search the place and try to find out what happened to everyone.

Dodo continued to make itself comfortable in front of the fire, stretching its stubby little wings and finding a position to sleep.

Suddenly the fire began to grow larger, growing until its flames almost reached the ceiling.

The fire had caused the room to grow brighter. Bigfoot and I noticed the change in lighting and directed our attention towards the fire pit.

“What’s going on with that fire?” I asked.

“I not know.” Replied Bigfoot. “I no see nothing like it.”

Bigfoot saw that Dodo was extremely close to the pit and called out to the bird.

“Dodo, wake up!” Bigfoot shouted, but Dodo payed no heed to his warning, instead it turned over and ruffled it’s feathers while it continued to sleep.

The fire now began to change shape; four fiery legs began to form. From the legs a fiery body came followed by a large fiery head.... the fire had changed its shape into a large grizzly bear! The giant bear stood on its hind legs and roared! It was loud, loud enough to finally wake the Dodo bird.

“Run Dodo!” Bigfoot shouted and Dodo listened. The fire bear jumped out of the pit trying to pounce on Dodo, but missed. The bear began to chase the poor bird as it squawked in terror throughout the lodge.

Bigfoot tried to protect Dodo, attacking the Bear with the walking stick. I grabbed Dodo as the fire bear and Bigfoot continued to fight. Bigfoot smashed the bear in the face with the stick a couple of times, but on the third time the bears large teeth chomped down on the walking stick then ripped it right out of Bigfoots grasp before tossing it across the lodge.

“Hey?” Bigfoot shouted as he ran after the stick. “...Bad bear!”

The fire bear now redirected its attention to Dodo and I blocking us in the corner of the lodge. The only thing I could think of doing was use the boomerang. I held out my gloved hand, Dodo squirmed in my other arm.

“Boomerang!!” I shouted and the Boomerang appeared in my glove! I threw it as hard as I could. Once out of my hand the boomerang grew to the size of the fire bear, slicing through it and destroying its form. The boomerang slammed wedging itself into the wall at the other side of the lodge. What was left of the fire bear dissipated back into the fire pit.

Suddenly... an elderly voice emerged. “Oh it’s just you.” It said. “I’m glad that you are here.”

Out of the shadows appeared an old man, He had long silver hair and a red head band. He was dressed in native attire and covered himself in a warm shawl.

“I am sorry Bigfoot.” Said the old man. “I was only protecting myself.”

“It ok, we no hurt.” Bigfoot replied handing the old man the walking stick. I placed Dodo back on the ground and it crept by the fire to rest once again. I shook my head thinking that bird never learns.

“Who is your friend?” asked the old man.

“This Michael, he lost, need go home. Me and Dodo help find you.”

“Hello Michael.” The man greeted me. “I am the one they call Speaks with stories. I am.. I was the chief of this tribe.”

I smiled and shook (speaks with stories) hand. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“I see you know how to use the boomerang.”

“Well, I guess so. I’m still getting used to it.”

Meanwhile, and to no avail, Bigfoot attempted to pull the now giant sized boomerang out of the wall.

“You made the boomerang grow in size.” Said Speaks with stories. “How did you do that?”

“I don’t know.” I replied. “It just kind of happened.”

Speaks with stories Gave me a kind of examination, touching my arms and face then resting his head against my chest listening to my heartbeat. “You have a good heart, a strong heart.”

I have to admit this was somewhat uncomfortable and awkward, especially when Speaks with stories knocked me on my forehead with his walking stick.

“But you have a hard head!” He scolded.

“Head harder than Bigfoot?” Bigfoot asked overhearing our conversation while still attempting to remove the boomerang from the wall.

“No.” Replied Speaks with stories, then rolling his eyes. “No one’s harder headed than you.”

“Good!” Bigfoot cheered. “Bigfoot have hardest head in whole world!”

The Chief asked me why I had come to him. I told him about my travels so far. And how I needed to get back to my wife.

“So you need to find Montezuma?” Asked Chief Speaks with stories.

“Yes.” I replied. “I’ve been told he can help me find my way home.”

“I see... He was here, but has come and left, headed to Calico in search of the final seal.”

“Where’s Calico?” I asked.

“Very far. On foot it’s a three-day journey from here.” He replied.

“It no use.” Said Bigfoot interrupting our conversation. “Boomerang stuck.”

“Call it.” Said Speaks with stories. “It will only listen to you.”

I held out my hand and willed the boomerang to me. It flew out of the wall shrinking in size and back into my glove.

“Wow you strong!” Laughed Bigfoot.

“How is it I can use the boomerang?” I asked.

“Because you are an operator.” Replied Chief Speaks with stories. “A very strong one at that. Do you have any operator’s bands?”

“No.” I replied. “Mr. Knott’s son told me a little about them, and I’ve seen Some on Surfside and Coast, but I don’t have any of those.”

“I’ve met the farmer.” Replied Speaks with Stories. “he’s a good man, but who’s Surfside and Coast?”

“They too are operators, they found me on the beach and helped me find Mr. Knott.”

“I see.” He replied. “Well, over the years many of these bands have crossed my path.

Montezuma can use them, but apparently so can you.”

Speaks with stories revealed his wrist and on one arm were three metal operator’s bands.

“These bands were meant to protect my tribe, but now they are of no use to me.” He took them off handing them to me. One was silver and had the words (Merry Go Round) stunningly

etched in calligraphy. The other was copper and was also etched with the words (Perilous Plunge). The last was also made of copper. With the word (Riptide) etched into it.

“What do they do?” I asked.

“I don’t know.” Replied Speaks with stories. “I have never seen them work.”

“How do they work?”

“Wear them and speak their words.”

Speaks with stories told me that if I wore them long enough the bands capability would come to me in my mind.

“Why not just try them now? I asked.

“They are much too powerful.” Replied Speaks with stories. “Wait until you are in an open area alone where no-one can get hurt.”

Later that night we four, and that includes Dodo, sat by the fire as the Chief began to tell stories about his people and how they lived. He was able to manipulate the smoke coming from the fire changing it into different shapes, he used this skill to paint a picture of the stories he told. By now Bigfoot was laying on his back getting comfortable. Dodo hopped on top of his belly making itself comfortable too.

“Where is the rest of your tribe?” I asked.

“Trapped.” Speaks with stories replied. “I was hunting when the storm appeared. when I returned they were all gone. The storm had taken them. The storm of the dark one.”

“Who is the dark one?” I asked.

“Bad witch man.” Bigfoot yawned as he passed out by the fire.

“Nefarious?” I asked.

“Yes.” Said the Chief. “Nefarious the dark one.... He has taken my people, but I know they are still alive, not yet consumed by his hunger. The dark one comes with the storm. Have you seen him?”

“On my way here.” I answered. “I saw the storm twice. Once on the way to Mr. Knott’s farm, and the other on the river by here. There was something in the water that tried to take me under. A raven. A dark shadow.”

“Yes, raven is the trickster.” Replied Speaks with stories. “But not all ravens are bad. Only the dark ones’ ravens. He must know that you are powerful. That you can use the Boomerang, and the bands. He will want what you have. He will want to consume you too. It would be good for you to help Montezuma. Help him stop the dark one from awakening.”

“I can’t.” I replied. “I just want to remember everything so that I can go back home. I just want to be with my wife. She must be worried and waiting for me.”

“The dark one loves power.” Said Speaks with stories as he again painted a picture using the smoke from the fire. “If he awakens he will consume all of Boysenvale and everyone in it, but that will not be enough. He thirsts for power, thirsts for life. Even if you do find your wife, if you find your way back home, he will continue on and consume the other worlds and yours along with them.”

The Chief left me there by the fire. I sat there wondering what to do. I didn’t want to be in this place anymore. I wanted to go home and be with her. I didn’t want to worry about it anymore. I fell asleep by that fire.

That night My wife came to me in a dream. She was with me in a large field of boysenberry. She told me not to worry. That she had been dreaming about me too, willing me to remember her and our life together. That she would be okay and praying for my safe return. Far off in the field

a dark storm appeared. Hundreds of ravens swarmed out of the storm piling themselves into a dark shadow in the grass. Out emerged a dark figure. My entire being knew that it was vile.

“Michael.” My wife said holding me close. “You need to stop that thing.”

“I just want to come back to you.” I replied.

“That thing is bad. Don’t let him eat us.”

“I won’t.” I replied. “I won’t let anything bad happen to you... I promise.”

The next morning, I remembered the dream, I remembered how scared my wife was... I knew what I had to do. I packed my things. Speaks with Stories was awake now too. He gave me a small sack of food for my journey. Bigfoot and Dodo were still asleep by the fire.

“Don’t wake them.” I said. “It’ll be too dangerous for them to go.”

“Where are you going?” He asked.

“To find Montezuma and help him stop Nefarious.”

Speaks with stories smiled and gave me a hug. “Good luck to you, young warrior.” He said.

“Bye you guys.” I whispered to Bigfoot and Dodo as they slept. “It was nice meeting you.”

Dodo ruffled its feathers repositioning itself on Bigfoots belly. I think it may have been dreaming.

Speaks with stories led me through the mysterious forest rather quickly. Once out of the forest he pointed me in the right direction. Telling me that after a while I’d come upon train tracks that would lead me straight to Calico and if I could catch the train I’d be there in no time. So now I headed through the dessert on a new journey to find the town of Calico.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Journey to Calico

It was only a few hours after I left that I noticed Bigfoot and Dodo following me. They were hiding behind cactus shrubs and whatnot. I could hear Bigfoot trying to hush the Dodo bird.

“I know you’re out there Bigfoot!” I shouted. “I can see you hiding.”

Bigfoot slowly stood up showing himself Dodo in hands. Dodo was gnawing on Bigfoots thumb.

“Dodo say he no want you get lost again.” Said Bigfoot.

“Is that right?” I asked and he nodded with a smile.

“Besides Dodo Know how get to cowboy town.”

“You mean Calico town?”

“Yes, lots of cowboy there.”

“I was told that people of Boysenvale don’t like venturing too far from their lands?”

“That true.” Bigfoot replied. “But I not people, I Sasquatch, and Dodo always go where I go.”

“This won’t be all fun and games.” I said. “I’m going to find Montezuma to help him stop Nefarious.... are you sure you’re up for this?”

“Yes, yes.” Bigfoot insisted. “We help you stop bad witch man.”

“I can’t promise you won’t get hurt...” I added “One of us might even die.”

"It okay, me and Dodo live in forest alone. It get lonely now and even death better than be alone."

"Well.... okay then." I agreed. "I guess we'll trust Dodo... since he knows the way."

"Yes, yes, Dodo know way, trust Dodo."

As we made our way through the desert I decided to try out the boomerang a little more. I could throw it extremely far, to the point where I could barely see it far off on the horizon. It would zoom back to me and I'd catch it in my glove. I could change its size. I liked using it to cut cactus along the way. I kind of felt bad for chopping down all those cacti though.

"I need to practice!" I said to myself arguably trying to justify my actions.

"It okay." Replied Bigfoot, showing me the bottom of his foot. "I no like cactus, they hurt." His foot was covered in thorns!

"Oh no!" I shouted. "Are you okay?"

"It fine, we Sasquatch have strong feet, I no barely feel it."

I made Bigfoot sit down for a moment while I pulled the cactus thorns from his feet.

"What about Magic bands?" Bigfoot asked.

"What about them?" I replied.

"Why not try too?"

"Well, they could be dangerous." I warned, pulling out the largest cactus thorn from his foot and Bigfoot sighed in relief.

"Maybe you need learn." Bigfoot replied.

"Maybe." I replied. "Next foot."

Bigfoot switched his feet and I began to remove thorns from his other foot.

"Bands hard to use?" He asked.

"Not really." I replied. "When I use the boomerang, I get a little tired afterward."

I finally finished removing all of the cactus thorns from Bigfoots feet. Suddenly a squawk and I saw Dodo lifting its tiny claw for me to remove thorns from it too.

"Oh no..." I said playfully. "Dodo do you have thorns too? Here let me check."

I checked Dodo's foot for thorns but there were none. Dodo just wanted to join in, so I played along.

"Okay next foot." I said, pretending to check his other foot for thorns.

"Okay all better?" I asked.

Dodo squawked happily.

We continued on and after much discussion I finally decided that Bigfoot was right, if I were to help Montezuma I'd need to learn how to use these operator bands. We would need the right spot to perform, Somewhere I could protect Bigfoot and Dodo just in case things were to get out of hand... Eventually we came upon a large boulder, Bigfoot and I agreed that it was a suitable place to try.

We would be extra careful and I would only try one. I looked at the Operators bands on my arms.

"Which of the three should I use?" I asked.

"Merry go round not sound so scary." Bigfoot replied.

"Okay we'll try it." I said climbing to the top of the boulder.

I had Bigfoot and Dodo climb up to the top with me.

“If anything bad happens” I added. “We’ll hide behind this boulder for protection.”

I looked at the band on my arm and yelled out. “Merry go round!”

The metal band flashed a blinding white light. Soon the ground began to shake and rumble. We could feel the vibration through the boulder. Then a large stampede of animals rushed out from the distance towards us! Hordes of Horses and tigers, ostriches and giraffes. There were lions and pigs, along with camels and Zebra. I think I might have even seen a few large rabbits in there also! There were thousands of them. The ground quaked and rumbled all around us as we watched the stampede flow below us parting around the boulder then back together like some kind of animal river. The giant heard headed off into the distance before disappearing completely out of sight. After all the commotion Bigfoot was a little shook up. I could tell the power of this band was a little much for him. It surprised me too. I had no idea how powerful these things really were.

“Where Dodo?!” Bigfoot panicked.

“You’re holding him.” I chuckled reminded him.

We continued on and eventually came upon the train tracks Speaks with stories had told me about. We followed them a ways finding a steam locomotive parked at a water tower in the middle of nowhere. I didn’t know why at the time but this locomotive looked extremely familiar. Like I had seen it somewhere before. It had the number “41” On it. When we got to it I noticed there was a young man maybe fifteen or sixteen sitting by himself resting in the train cab. I decided to say hello.

“Excuse me?” I asked. “Is this train headed to Calico?”

The young man jumped up startled.

“What in tar nation is that?!!” Said the young man pointing at Bigfoot. He quickly hopped atop the coal tender grabbing a shovel in hand prepared to attack.

“Woah! Hold on buddy. That’s just Bigfoot.” I replied hands in the air trying my best to calm the young man. “He might look a little intimidating at first but he’s actually harmless... He’s nice.”

The young man looked us up and down. Bigfoot had Dodo in his arms and was covering the bird to protect it.

“See...” I said to the young man pointing at Bigfoot whom looked terrified. “He’s more afraid of you than you are of him. The young man dropped the shovel climbing back down from the tender then redirected his attention to me. He looked me up and down, showing interest in my attire.

“Are you an Engineer?” He asked.

“I don’t know.... I don’t think so.” I replied. “My names Michael.”

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Said the young man.

“I’ve lost most of my memory.” I replied. “I’m still trying to put my mind back together again.”

“Well, golly!” He yelled. “You sure do dress like one!”

I looked at my attire and his, he was wearing pretty much everything I was. Overalls, leather gloves, a flannel long sleeved shirt and a similar hat.

“My names Jeff.” He said shaking my hand. “How can I help you?”

“We need ride to cowboy town.” Said Bigfoot.

“Oh my goodness!” Jeff astoundingly replied. “It talks too?”

“Yes.” Bigfoot replied. “I talk. So do Dodo.” Bigfoot squeezed on Dodo and it let out a loud squawk. “See.” said bigfoot. “Dodo talk.”

I asked Jeff if he could give us a ride into Calico but he said that he’d need an Engineer to throttle the train. That he was only allowed to watch the fire. Proclaiming that it took two people to move a locomotive. One to give it fuel and water, keeping it hot and the other to make it move. I asked him where the Engineer was, he told me that there was a large storm last night, and the Engineer, his brother, had disappeared after that. Saying they had gotten a letter from the pony express earlier yesterday about the storm. He showed me. It was the same letter from Montezuma that Coast and I had received from the pony express.

“That evil Nefarious must have taken him.” Said Jeff. “If I ever meet him I’m gonna give him my fist!”

“That’s why we’re headed to Calico!” I replied. “I need to find Montezuma and help him stop Nefarious, so we can bring back the people he’s taken.”

“You can bring my brother back???” Jeff shouted.

“That’s what I’ve been told.”

“Then we need to get you to Calico!” He declared. “... But this Locomotive ain’t going anywhere without someone to drive it.”

“...Could you teach me?” I asked.

“I don’t know.” Jeff sighed. “It takes months of training in order for anyone to make this thing move. But I guess we have no choice, we need to at least try.”

Jeff pointed out the train throttle to me and as soon as I touched it I could remember all the names of every part of the locomotive and how to make it work! I touched each part calling out their names one by one.

“I guess you are an Engineer!” Jeff cheered.

“It’s so strange.” I said. “I know how it works. Like I’ve used it before, I think I remember using it!”

“Maybe you Train man in other world?” Bigfoot asked.

“Maybe.” I replied.

Jeff was shocked when he heard that. Asking me lots of questions about the other world. Questions that I couldn’t answer.

“Is this monster from the other world too?” He added.

“I no monster!” Bigfoot snapped.

“Okay, okay.” Replied Jeff. “I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.... I’ve just never seen anything like you before. I’m sorry okay?”

“... Okay.” Bigfoot sighed. “...But I no monster.”

I could tell that Bigfoot had been called that before. He didn’t like being called a monster. But by his looks most people would think that. Bigfoot was far from being a monster he was one of the sweetest people, or should I say creatures that I had ever met. It must be hard to be judged by your looks before someone has even met you.

I found myself operating the Locomotive almost effortlessly. Jeff was very impressed. We’d be headed to calico in no time, but first we had to make a stop along the way.

Train Bandits!

I got that locomotive moving pretty good. Jeff was great at firing the locomotive. We stopped in a small town along the way, coupling the locomotive to a train that passengers had begun to board. We didn't want to stop but we had to take on more water and fuel anyway.

"Train too hot." Bigfoot complained. "Me and Dodo ride in back." The two of them hopped off the locomotive and sat in the first train car instead.

Soon enough the conductor came out of the depot stomping towards us.

"Twelve hours!" He shouted. "How in the world are you twelve hours late??"

Jeff hopped down from the locomotive and took the conductor aside whispering to him as to not discourage the passengers boarding the train. I don't know exactly what was said but the conductor's mood changed almost immediately from angry to sympathetic. Jeff hopped back up on the train.

"What were you two talking about?" I asked.

"About the storm and what happened to my brother, we agreed to keep quiet about it for now, don't want to upset the passengers."

The train continued to board. It was a small town but there were hundreds of people all heading to Calico just like us.

"All aboard!" The conductor bellowed. I gave out two whistles from the locomotive then I grabbed ahold of the throttle, steam sprayed out its cylinders and dark smoke chuffed out of the smoke stack. Slowly the entire train began to move... We were now on our way.

"This calico must be a pretty popular place." I said. "There's a lot of people headed there."

"Sure is." Jeff replied. "There's a lot to do in calico."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Well, anything you could ever need would be in Calico. There's a saloon. A knife shop, a doctor, a dentist, a bank, there's a courthouse, you can even get your dirty laundry done. Oh there's even a theater."

Jeff and his list went on and on.

"So where else does this train go to?" I said trying to change the subject.

"Well, we circle about half way through Boysenvale, through Calico and the outskirts of Calico, but nowhere else."

"Why don't you have a stop at the Boardwalk." I replied. "Or anywhere else?"

"People don't like venturing out." Jeff answered.

"Yeah I've heard that before." I agreed.

"But do you want to know what my dream is?" Jeff asked.

"What?"

"Someday I wish that this railroad could circle around all of Boysenvale. Make trips all over the known world. Take people to and from all over. But I doubt that will happen in my time." He sighed.

"You never know!" I replied. "It could happen."

"Yeah I guess so. I guess I'll just have to wait and see."

Meanwhile, and what I didn't know at the time, things were about to go awry on the rest of the train.

The conductor checked the tickets of the passengers that had boarded the train. He had a hole punch he used to mark their tickets. He walked his way through each rail car leaving a trail of circular hole punches behind.

Soon enough he had made his way through the entire train and everyone riding had been accounted for so he decided to wait in his small room at the front of the train where he could eat his lunch. Once inside he plopped down on a wooden chair, leaned back and opened a sack lunch. Inside he had a sandwich, crackers and an apple waiting for him.

“Hello.” Said Bigfoot startling the conductor, whom hadn’t noticed him sitting in the chair beside. Bigfoot was much too big for the chair and he’d rather stand, but he didn’t want to lean over the whole time on account of his massive size.

The conductor jumped up out of his chair screaming at the top of his lungs. This startled Dodo, and Dodo began to attack the conductor’s legs. Bigfoot grabbed the conductor covering his mouth to hush him. His hand was so large it almost fit around the conductor’s entire head. He scolded Dodo and Dodo stopped attacking the poor conductor.

“You no scream Mr. conductor man.” Said Bigfoot. “You scaring Dodo.”

The conductor finally calmed down and nodded, and Bigfoot slowly let him go.

“Please don’t eat me.” The conductor stuttered.

“I no eat people.” Said Bigfoot. “Why everyone think I eat people?”

“Well... what do you want then?”

“We want ride to cowboy town.” Bigfoot replied. “Train boy Jeff say we can go.”

The conductor finally calmed down enough to sit back down.

“Okay.” He replied. “But you two need to keep out of sight. I don’t want you scaring the other passengers.”

“No, no.” Bigfoot agreed. “We no want scare no one.”

“okay... good!” He replied, then opened up his sack lunch.

Bigfoot and Dodo both noticed the conductor’s lunch. Dodo squawked and Bigfoot’s stomach growled.

“Now what do you want?” Asked the Conductor.

“You like share?” Asked Bigfoot.

“...Fine.” The Conductor replied handing over his lunch.

While this was happening two bandits masked their faces in bandanas had hopped aboard the last car of the train.

“Alright everybody!” Said one of the bandits as he entered the first car. “Hands up! This is a stick up.”

The two held the passengers at gun point. Each had a loot bag and were grabbing anything they could find, watches, rings, jewelry, but most of all they were searching for gold.

The two bandits made their way through to the next rail car and harassed those passengers also. Suddenly one of the little girls they had just robbed began to cry. Astonishing enough the bandits began to feel bad and one searched through his loot bag and pulled out a necklace he had just taken from her. Trying to hand it back to her.

“It’s okay.” Said the bandit. “We aren’t gonna hurt no one unless someone tries to hurt us first... okay?”

The little girl was still terrified and refused to take the necklace, instead she pressed her face into her mother’s dress trying to hide.

“You know... I have a daughter.” Said the Bandit. “...She’s around your age, but she is so skinny and so sickly that I worry she might die, because she hasn’t eaten anything in days. We haven’t had any money... but now that you nice people are giving us your things, I’ll be able to

buy food to feed her and take her to the doctor so she can get medicine, that way she won't be sick no more... We're not bad men, we've just hit a long string of bad luck."

"Come on Billy!" The other bandit mistakenly blurted out.

"Bobby! What did I tell you about saying names?" Billy the bandit replied.

"Oh yeah... Sorry!" Bobby apologized. "But we need to hurry before this train gets to Calico, I'm not dealing with the sheriff today!"

"I'm just going to leave this here for you." Said Billy placing the necklace beside the little girl. Still she buried her face in her mother's dress sitting beside.

As the bandits entered the next car one of their boot spurs caught on one of the seats and the bandit fell to the floor. He accidentally pulled the trigger and a loud blast came from his revolver. The bullet hit a cast iron heater in the corner before ricocheting off then blasting through a window. The bandit leaped back up to his feet before any of the passengers could get the jump on him.

Bigfoot and the conductor heard all the commotion happening. The conductor opened the door slightly to take a peek at the rest of the train.

"Bandits!" He whispered.

"Bandits?" Replied Bigfoot.

"Yes, train robbers." The conductor added. "Try to keep quiet or they'll find us for sure."

Bigfoot took a peek too. He could see and hear the two bandits harassing the poor passengers at gun point. There and then an anger grew inside of Bigfoot.

"They not so big." He growled. "I take care of them."

"Don't be silly, they have guns."

"That okay. I take care of them. They no know what hit them."

The bandits made their way to the front of the coach reaching the conductors small room. They kicked the doors in and waiting for them was Bigfoot. The conductor quickly took the guns out of their hands while the two were petrified at the sight of this creature of extreme stature. Bigfoot slammed the two Bandits together which made a loud crack like sound, as if someone had taken two large pieces of wood and slapped them together. The force of both of their heads colliding knocked the two unconscious.

It took a while before the bandits woke but as soon as they did the conductor gave them a taste of their own medicine holding the two bandits at gun point forcing them to stand up and walk the entire train handing the passengers belongings back from their loot bags.

Couldn't let the two get away, so after all was said and done they tied the two bandits up binding their hands behind their backs and gagging the two with the bandannas they had used as masks.

The passengers were amazed that Bigfoot, this creature, had decided to help them. Surprisingly enough, he was able to befriend a few of the passengers... the children mostly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Calico town

It wasn't long before we reached the town of Calico. I pulled the Train up to a little depot apparently parking the locomotive perfectly, at least that's what Jeff said. As soon as we stopped there was another Engineer waiting to take my place.

Something felt strange for a moment and then I noticed it. A flash of white light and a new operators band had appeared on my arm. It was bronze and had a picture of a locomotive with the number 41 on it.

"Well, now." Said Jeff. "It finally gave up its band."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Operators have come and gone trying and failing to get the band out of this train. You must be very powerful."

"You think so." I asked.

"Sure do...I got something for you." Said Jeff pulling up his sleeve. On his arm was another bronze band. He tossed it to me. "I'm not an Operator." He said. "But my father was...Maybe it will help you against Nefarious. Besides they're both Locomotive bands, they belong together."

I looked at the new band. It had another picture of a locomotive on it with the number 340.

I thanked Jeff for everything. He told me that I could thank him by bringing his brother back and as we said our goodbyes he told me that if I ever needed a job I should think about working for the Calico railroad. "Oh and watch out for that three forty." He added. "She's got a mind of her own."

"What's that mean?" I asked.

"You'll see." He replied. "Just remember to be nice to her."

I found it funny how Jeff referred to the locomotives as "She". He must have really loved them.

Bigfoot and the conductor tossed the bandits off the train, the two made loud thuds once their bodies hit the wooden dock. Bigfoot then grabbed each by their necks lifting them to their feet.

"Come Michael." Said Bigfoot. "We need to take bad men to Sheriff."

"What happened??" I asked. Before Bigfoot could reply Dodo began squawking at me like it was telling me what had just happened.

"Bad men try rob train." Said Bigfoot. "But me and Conductor man stop them."

"...Okay?" I replied.

We began to leave the train depot but before we did a little girl shouted at us telling us to wait. Her mother was trying to stop her holding onto her hand, but she pulled away slipping and escaping her grasp. The little girl ran right up to one of the bandits. He knelt down and she took the gag out of his mouth then wrapped a necklace around his neck.

"For you daughter." She said. "You sell it so she doesn't starve."

"What's your name darling?" The Bandit asked.

"Daisy." The little girl replied.

"My daughter's name is Rose." Said the Bandit. "Rose and I thank you, but from now on I want you to do me a favor... It's something that I tell Rose to do."

"What's that?" Daisy asked.

"Never talk to strangers."

The little girl nodded and rushed back to her mother.

We left the train station and made our way to see the rest of Calico. The town was pretty large. There was a large courthouse just across from the train depot, and a saloon right next to that. Calico town was much different from the Boardwalk. It was like it was somehow stuck in a western era. There were lots of people out now all dressed in western attire. Cowboys and miners on horseback riding up to the saloon and tying their horses before heading in. We could hear a few people cheering inside, some arguing.

One man came out of the saloon feeding his horse then hopping aboard his saddle. He had dark brown skin like me. Long hair that reached to his shoulders and looked maybe a few years older than I, maybe thirty-two or thirty-three. He wore a leather vest and for a moment I could see he had shiny things on his arms until he grabbed a leather jacket from his horse satchel and put it on, maybe he was an Operator too I thought, maybe those shiny things were operators' bands. For a moment the man noticed me... He had a strange look on his face as he stared at me from a distance, like he was trying to figure out where he knew me from. He shook his head, hopped on his horse before riding off.

"I think I know that man." I said.

"What man?" Bigfoot asked.

"The one that just rode off. Didn't you see him?"

"No." Bigfoot replied continuing to struggle with the two bandits.

"Well where's the sheriff?" I asked.

"We get there." Bigfoot replied. "Sheriff on other side of town."

The bandits whined all the way there, trying their best to convince us to let them go. Bribing us even, but Bigfoot wouldn't budge.

The Sheriff of Calico

We headed further into Calico struggling to keep those two bandits detained. Soon enough we could see that there was a commotion up ahead. A band of cowboys came rushing out of a bank shooting their guns in the air moneybags in hand... Suddenly another loud gunshot came from another direction... there stood the Sheriff.

"Alright you three." Said the sheriff. "Put your guns down and hand over the cash."

"Well... well." Said the leader of the bandits, pointing his revolver at the Sheriff. "Looks like you're outnumbered. There's three of us and only one..."

Before the leader could finish his sentence the sheriff fired off three rounds wounding each of them.

Each fell except for the leader, he fired off a few rounds first, hand clenching his gut where the bullet had entered. "Well that's just not fair." He said finally collapsing.

"Never is." Replied the sheriff.

We could hear the sheriff talking to himself saying something about how he might as well just pull up a seat and wait outside the bank from now on.

I guess bank robberies happen all the time in this town.

The Sheriff was an older fellow, grey head of hair, grey handle bar mustache too. He wasn't thin but not fat either, somewhere in between with a small gut. He wore a long trench coat, a leather Dakota style hat along with spurred boots and a sheriff's badge. He holstered his revolver and the towns people began to cheer.

"Wow." A spectator cheered. "You got them good!"

“Yeah I sure did!” The sheriff laughed. His voice was coarse and well weathered, it took charge with every word that came out of his mouth “They’re lucky I didn’t bring my rifle.”

A young deputy and a doctor came out, the doctor brought out a stethoscope and proceeded to check the leader whom he turned over and listened for a heartbeat. The other two cowboy robbers were clearly alive, they were very animated as they squirmed in pain rolling back and forth on the dirt street. The deputy stood over them with a shotgun just in case they reached for their guns.

“He’ll live!” The Doctor announced. “...At least for now.” He cocked his hand back then let it fly slapping the leader across the face as hard as he could. The leader let out a loud moan and began to wake up. The deputy forced the three to stand up.

“Of course they’ll live.” Replied the Sheriff. “My bullets don’t miss their targets.”

“Should I lock em up?” The Deputy asked.

“Yep.” Replied the sheriff. “Make sure they’re all patched up first Tommy.”

“Will do.” Answered Deputy Tommy.

Bigfoot decided to say hello. “We catch bad man too!” Said Bigfoot. “I stop them.”

The Sheriff’s eyes grew wide looking over in our direction with an uncontrollable smile.

“Bigfoot!” Said The Sheriff. “You giant heap of fur! What brings you all the way out here?”

“You two know each other?!” I interrupted.

“Sure do.” Replied the sheriff. “Me and this big guy go way back.”

Bigfoot tossed the two bandits aside and gave the sheriff a big bear hug lifting him up off the ground. The two train bandits hit the ground hard, their hands were still bound so they had no way to ease their fall which looked rather painful. Once the two were on the ground they both looked at each other and began to slowly crawl away, But the Sheriff pulled out his revolver pointing it at them.

“Don’t even try it.” The sheriff said and the bandits stopped in their tracks.

“It good to see you.” Said bigfoot. “You take bad men to jail?”

“Yeah partner.” Replied the sheriff. “I’ll take the bad men to jail.”

I shook the Sheriff’s hand, he had a strong grip.

“Shake like you mean it.” He said as he squeezed my hand even harder. I shook back as hard as I could. “It’s nice to meet you Mr.?”

“Michael.” I replied.

“Okay Mr. Michael you can call me Westwood.”

“You want me to take them too?” Asked Tommy the Deputy unintentionally interrupting our conversation.

“No, no.” Replied Sheriff Westwood. “You got your hands full already.”

“Are you sure?” He replied. “It ain’t no trouble at all.”

“I’m sure, you just watch those three while the Doc patches em up, don’t want anyone getting away again.”

“Okay.” Replied the Deputy and he and the Doc led the Bank robbers off to get patched up before sending them to jail.

Westwood ordered the two train bandits to their feet.

“Why Billy and Bobby Baines!” roared Westwood, recognizing the two.

One of the bandits rolled his eyes.

“What’s a matter Bobby? Didn’t think you’d end up back here?” Westwood scoffed.

“Oh we knew we’d end up back here.” Bobby sassed. “Just hoped it be at your funeral in Boot Hill Cemetery.”

“I was going to bring you daisies” Billy added. “... You like daisies?”

“You know.” Westwood growled. “There’s a high price put out on you two... dead or alive. So maybe I’ll be the one throwing daisies on YOUR graves.”

Billy and Bobby fell silent for a moment.

“Tell me...” Westwood Asked. “How do you two lousy thieves keep getting out of my jail cell?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know.” Replied Bobby. “There ain’t no jail cell that can hold us!”

“I bet I have a rope that will.” Westwood snapped.

Westwood was firm with the two bandits but was rather nice to us as he led us through Calico. As we made our way through town people began to notice Bigfoot more and more. Most of the townspeople hadn’t seen Bigfoot before and were uneasy at the sight of him. Some shocked, others amazed, all would stare. One person shouted out “Monster.”

Bigfoot looked at his arms and legs. He then looked at me with a frown.

“I no monster.” Moaned Bigfoot.

“No you ain’t.” Westwood replied.

I felt bad for Bigfoot. For a moment even I thought he was a monster at first glance when we had first met in the mysterious forest, and I was afraid of him because I didn’t know what he was. Now that I knew him I was ashamed of that.

“You’re not a monster.” I assured Bigfoot patting him on the back. “You’re nice... monsters aren’t nice.”

Westwood would scold those that stared saying things like. “Don’t look at my friend that way.” Or “What’s a matter with you? You never seen a Sasquatch before?” Children were more accepting. A few walked right up to Bigfoot to say hello, others would run up and poke him then run off giggling. They liked to play with Dodo too.

Westwood told us all about Calico as he led us to the jail house.

Inside the jail house he opened up a cell and locked the two bandits away. There were other criminals in there also, mostly cowboys.

“You know we’re going to get out again...” Scoffed Billy Banes. “... We’ve played this game before.”

“I’ve secured this jail cell better than last time.” Westwood replied. “There ain’t no way you two are getting out again, and if by some miracle you do, I’ll have your necks at the end of a rope next time I catch you... Trial excluded.”

Right beside the jail house there was a criminal that seemed kind of nice. He was locked up in his own personal cell away from the others. He asked me how my day was, he talked for a while and I asked him what he was in for, he claimed that he didn’t do anything wrong. Once Westwood heard that he got angry and told me that the man had stolen his horse, and that he wasn’t getting out of there until he fessed up and told him where it was. The man had a sad look on his face. Like he knew what happened to Westwood’s horse, but had too much pride to tell him the truth, instead demanding that he was innocent. I’m almost positive I overheard the man’s name, but I can’t quite remember what it was. Oh well... just some “*Sad eyed Joe.*”

“Well, that’s that.” Declared Westwood. “Let’s get a drink.”

“No can.” Replied Bigfoot.

“We need find Montezuma.” I added. “Do you know where he is?”

“Montezuma?” Westwood Replied. “... Yeah he’s here somewhere in town. I saw him earlier today.”

“Where can we find him?” I asked.

“He’s been looking for that final seal so he can stop Nefarious.” Westwood replied. “Your best bet would be to look somewhere you can get information. That’s where he’d be.”

“Where can we get information?” I asked.

“Wow you sure do ask a lot of questions!” Westwood laughed. “Hey Bigfoot? What’s wrong with your friend?”

“Oh!” Replied Bigfoot. “He lost his mind!”

“Lost his mind?” Westwood laughed. “How did he do that?”

“He no can remember. Not much in his head, we try find Montezuma, maybe he can fix.”

“I didn’t lose my mind!” I rebuked. “I lost my memory, those are two different things!... Now where can we get information???”

“At the saloon of course!” Laughed Westwood patting me on the back. “Looks like we’ll be having that drink after all!”

We headed to the saloon. Along the way we past various shops, a blacksmith was working in one of the shops forging horseshoes out of red hot metal from his furnace. Once finished forming the horseshoes he would then dip them it into a large barrel of water. Steam arose from the barrel once the red hot horseshoe touched the water. The Blacksmith would then remove them from the water and they were no longer red hot, afterwards he would place the horseshoes on a metal anvil closely looking at his work making sure every part of them had been made perfectly.

Close to the Blacksmiths shop was a windmill, spinning slowly in the wind. Underneath it in was something odd. It was some kind of four legged creature resting in the dirt. It had blonde hair on its head and large horns facing outwards towards the front of its face. Its head looked like a large log of firewood, and its body looked like it was made of tree branches. It wasn’t very big, maybe the size of a large dog or small pony. There was a sign next to it that read (*Catawampus, Species Extinct*).

“Was that real?” I asked.

“Sure was.” Replied Westwood. “Catawampus used to roam all over these parts. Playful things. All gone now, Extinct.”

“What happened to them?” I asked.

“The grey witch took em.” Replied Westwood. “Used them for a spell, she comes back every year and lays into us pretty hard, her and her minions.”

We continued our journey to the saloon. Along the way we saw a large crowd begin to form around a small wagon. It had a wooden stage where a man stood speaking, convincing people to come together. The man had a large case with him that was open and resting on a stool beside. He was clean shaven and dressed fancily with a top hat and large coat which he took off and set aside. He also wore black slacks held up by suspenders that covered a white dress shirt. His attire finished off with a black bow tie.

His wagon was a colorful red and had different advertisements on it that looked carefully painted on. It read (Dr. I. Will Skinem. Medicine Show!) It also advertised that there would be “Phantasmagorical Wonders!”

The man was interesting enough so we joined the crowd to watch the show.

“Welcome, Welcome!” He spoke loudly engaging the crowd starting his show.

“My name is Dr. I. Will Skinem! I have come from all parts of the known world to bring to you amazing medicines to ail your poor wounds.”

From his case he brought out a glass bottle, the bottle was rectangular shaped and sealed with a cork at the top.

“Amazing medicines indeed...” He said slowly waving the bottle in the air for all eyes to see.

The crowd talked amongst themselves for a while but began to settle down so Dr. Skinem could continue his speech.

“This here is my most famous, most effective and most pleasurable Miracle Elixir. It’s power comes from a plant that grows in the world of Cedar point... a place that I and I alone have traveled to.” Dr. Skinem claimed. “I’m not saying that my other medicines aren’t as effective, in fact some of them are more effective for certain things... what I’m saying is that out of all of my medicines this one here cures more than one symptom and it’ll also make you live longer.”

He brought out more bottles from his case. I didn’t pay much attention to the rest except for the last bottle that read (Memory Elixir).

Dr. Skinem talked a lot about his travels... places that only he had been, like the world of Cedar point, a place called Kings Dominion, a place called Kings Island and the land of Valley Fair, and so on. Apparently he had traveled to these places somehow and had gotten rare remedies from each one.

“Let me ask.” Said Dr. Skinem. “Raise your hand if you have back pain?”

A few of the people from the crowd were miners and they put up their hands.

“Well, you poor souls.” Said Dr. Skinem. “One swig of my Muscle tonic and you won’t feel a thing, and you’ll get the best sleep you’ve ever had! Come, come.” He asked one of the miners up on stage. “Go ahead.” He insisted. “Take a drink.”

The Miner was hunched over somewhat with all the back pain he had endured from what I can only imagine were hard working days at some mine somewhere. The Miner took a big drink from the Muscle tonic then waited for a moment.

“Nothing’s happening.” Said the miner.

The townspeople began to “boo”, but Dr. Skinem hushed them telling them to give it a moment.

Slowly the miner began to straighten his back standing tall, he had a look of relief on his face. From the look of it, the Muscle Tonic actually worked! The crowd was amazed!

“Well... Tell everyone what you think.” Said Dr. Skinem.

“Works even better than whiskey!” Laughed the miner before passing out and falling backwards off of the tiny stage. Luckily the other miners were there to catch him.

“You see!” Said Dr. Skinem. “He’s all fixed up, and did I not I promise him the best sleep of his life?”

Dr. Skinem continued his medicine show, showing off all of his different tonics and remedies. Amazingly enough each of them worked and everyone he called up was cured in some way.

Dr. Skinem then called for his assistant and out of the wagon stepped a young woman carrying a tray full of different remedies. People began to buy them, especially the muscle tonic, but some of the people from the crowd were still skeptical.

“How do we know you ain’t no fraud?” Shouted a concerned customer that was hesitant to buy. “...And haven’t just payed people to pretend like they’re being cured?”

“Now that is a fair question!” Replied Dr. Skinem. “Which reminds me of my youth...”

Dr. Skinem closed his case and removed it from the stool to which he then sat upon. He cleared his throat before beginning to tell a story.

“When I was a young boy...” Said Dr. Skinem. “...I traveled with a man, my teacher... if you will. The same as my assistant here does here with me today. While working for that man, we traveled the known world selling his medicines, medicines that he promised would work... but none of them actually did. Back then, like you, people would ask if we were frauds and that man would tell them that if the medicine hadn’t worked by the next day they could return it for a full refund... little did they know that we’d slip out in the night before the next morning. In my young heart I felt truly bad, I didn’t want to swindle people, I didn’t want to lie. When I was very young my mother died from consumption, the breathing disease, and I always wished I could have found a way to save her from that horrible fate, but the past is the past and she is gone now.”

Dr. Skinem re-adjusted himself in his seat then continued.

“One day while working as the man’s assistant we came upon a town where one of the women watched our medicine show, like you are today. That poor woman reminded me of my mother because she too had the breathing disease and bought medicine at that show.... medicine to which I knew ...never actually worked. I knew that poor woman would be dead soon and all we did was profit from her sickness. I felt horrible and ashamed... But my teacher did not. In fact, he actually laughed while counting the money we made that day. To that man people were nothing more than a way to make money and I, being young and naive, was too dependent upon him to stand up for myself. One day I’d had enough. The hurt that we were causing people finally got to me, so I ran away and I never looked back.”

Dr. Skinem now stood up from his stool.

“Since then.” He continued. “I have dedicated my life to finding actual remedies and actual cures! I have traveled to all parts of the known... and unknown worlds to find them! I knew as a young boy that what we were selling false hope and fake medicines... Now that I am a man, and an honest one at that, I am in the business of selling true hope and real medicines! After all is said and done there is one thing I did learn from that man from years ago, he had a guarantee, and like him I also have a guarantee... but I won’t slip out in the middle of the night, I won’t sell you false hope ...my guarantee is honest and true...If any of my medicines don’t work after the first sip, then you can turn it back in, money back guaranteed!”

The people liked Dr. Skinem’s speech and not by long he was almost sold out of medicines. I wanted to see if maybe I could get my hands on some of that memory elixir so I too stood in line waiting patiently.... Westwood said he’d buy because I was a friend of Bigfoot, plus even after Dr. Skinem’s story he was still unconvinced and he wanted to see for his own eyes if these weird potions actually worked. Soon enough the crowd had dispersed and all of Dr.

Skinem’s medicines had been sold out.

Dr. Skinem was packing his wagon away for the day when I shyly came up to him.

“Heads up!” He shouted to me then tossed a bottle in my direction. Luckily enough I was able to stumbly catch it. It was the Memory Elixir! It wasn’t full... only a small sip left in the bottle.

“Saw you eying it the whole show.” Laughed Dr. Skinem. “I’m all sold out but at least you can try a swig of it and see for yourself.”

Dr. Skinem took a long look at Bigfoot.

“You know, if you come back tomorrow, I’ll have something that’ll get rid of all that hair.” He said playfully.

"I like hair!" Bigfoot replied totally offended.

"He's just messing with you." Said Westwood.

I asked Dr. Skinem if the memory elixir would actually work?

"Of course it will!" He laughed. "All of my medicines work, guaranteed! Go on, take a sip."

"Sure why not?" I said. Thinking to myself "*What's the worst that could happen?*"

I poured what was left of the bottle into my mouth then swallowed it in one gulp, it had a sour fruity taste to it. Immediately I felt a sharp pain in my head! It hurt massively!

"What wrong with him?" Asked bigfoot.

"I don't know..." Replied Dr. Skinem. "This has never happened before!"

The sharp pain faded away and I stood there relieved for a moment.

"Well what do you remember? Westwood asked. "Anything?"

I tried to think very hard, but no memory came to me.

"It didn't work." I replied.

"That's impossible!" Dr. Skinem shouted. "My medicines always work!"

"He no lose memory like you and I..." Said Bigfoot.

"What do you mean?" Asked Dr. Skinem.

"Supposedly I'm from another world." I added.

"Oh I see!" Replied Dr. Skinem. "You're from the one world I haven't traveled to, you got your mind all jumbled up from that! Unfortunately, I have no remedy for that type of memory loss... well not yet at least, why not give me a few months and I'll see what I can do for you?"

"I think we've seen enough already." Westwood grunted unimpressed.

"Thanks for trying." I said to Dr. Skinem. "But I don't think I have a couple of months to give."

"Well... Good luck to you!" Dr. Skinem shouted as we left. "I'll see what I can do anyway.... Never met a sickness I couldn't cure!"

We had now made it to the saloon... Each of us passed through the wooden swinging double doors. Everyone was loud inside, glasses clinked and music from a piano played. There was the humming sound of many conversations all happening at once... until everyone in the saloon noticed us, immediately everything grew dead silent. Everyone staring at Bigfoot and I... Well, probably just Bigfoot.

"They're with me!" Westwood warned. "Anyone got a problem with that?"

At that the noise level rose back to its loud self.

"I didn't think so." Westwood added. "Let's find ourselves a seat."

Inside the saloon there were lots of different types of people. Some railroad workers. Some farmers. Others were cowboys just heading through town. There were Miners too, some with shovels and pickaxes leaning against their tables. Everyone was relaxing and spending their hard earned cash for the slight taste of comfort.

There were cancan dancers and a pianist playing up on a stage. It was a sight to see. The dancers sang beautifully and the pianist played effortlessly, as if he had been born to play that piano as easy as it was for him to walk.

We pulled up a chair at a table of our own. At the next table over were a few men playing cards. One was cheating, occasionally sneaking a card from his pocket while the others were distracted by the dancers on stage.

"Drinks are on me!" Westwood cheered.

“Good.” I thought to myself, because between me, Bigfoot and the Dodo bird I didn’t think we had any money.

“What’ll it be?” Said our waitress.

“Were looking for Montezuma, have you seen him?” Westwood asked.

“Sorry Westwood.” She answered. “I just started and haven’t seen him yet. But he usually comes in around this time and stays till dusk.”

“Well ok then.” Westwood replied. “Whiskey for me and my new friend Michael.”

“Me want Whiskey too.” Bigfoot Added.

“No, no.” Insisted Westwood. “No whiskey for you, don’t you remember what happened the last time you drank whiskey?”

“What happened the last time you drank whiskey?” I asked.

“I like dance.” Sighed Bigfoot. “But I so big things break when dance.”

“Believe me.” Westwood added. “It ain’t pretty, no whiskey for this one.”

“But I thirsty too!” Bigfoot demanded.

“Okay, okay... Give him a sarsaparilla.” Westwood insisted.

“Sarsaparilla it is.” Replied our waitress.

“You can’t get drunk on sarsaparilla.” Westwood whispered to me.

The three of us drank for a while, I only had two. I didn’t like the taste of whiskey very much. Bigfoot had around twenty sarsaparillas.

“I think these start working now.” Said Bigfoot. “I tipsy now.”

Westwood began to laugh... He knew he wasn’t drunk, but he bought Bigfoot another sarsaparilla just to encourage him anyway.

Over an hour had gone by with me pointing at different strangers as they entered the saloon, I asking Westwood if they were Montezuma. For a moment I even saw too familiar faces walk in the Saloon shoving each other and laughing as they entered. It was the train bandits we had put in jail earlier! Billy and Bobby Baines! At the sight of us the two immediately turned around fleeing right back out the swinging doors.

“Did you just see that?!!” I asked.

“Yeah... I saw.” Westwood answered. “I still need to find out how those two have been escaping every time.... I’ll worry about them the next time they rob a train.... and I know they will, they always do.”

“What if they hurt someone?” I asked.

“They won’t.” He replied. “Never have... They’re thieves not killers.”

We continued to chat and wait for almost another hour. It was now dark outside.

“This is strange.” Said Westwood pulling out his pocket watch. “It shouldn’t be dark out yet.... It’s only three thirty.”

“What do you think is going on?” I asked.

“Don’t know, but that Montezuma had better get here soon.... something doesn’t feel right.”

“Well what does he look like?”

“You can’t miss him, he’s dark skinned just like you. Has long hair like an injun. He’s around thirty years old or so. Wears a brown Leather jacket.”

Immediately I remembered the man that I had seen leaving the saloon earlier that day!

“That’s Montezuma?!!” I asked jumping to my feet. “He rode off earlier!”

A man came up to us, he was covered in dirt. “Did you say Montezuma?” He asked.

“Yes.” I replied. “I need to find him.”

“He’s headed to the calico mines. Some of my miners uncovered what we think might be the seventh seal.”

“Well that’s where we have to go!” I said grabbing my things.

“I know where the mines are.” Westwood replied. “I’m coming with you.. Come on Bigfoot! Let’s go!”

“Okay, okay.” Bigfoot slurred. Stumbling to grab Dodo.

“You’re not drunk!” I scolded.

“I not drunk?” He replied, a confused expression on his large face.

“You can’t get drunk on Sarsaparilla!” Westwood chuckled.

At that Bigfoot was back to normal charging out of the saloon with us. “Why you no tell me?” He whined.

“Because it’s funnier that way!” Westwood laughed.

Once out of the saloon Deputy Tommy bumped into us.

“Something strange is going on around here sheriff!” Tommy said as he stared at the sky. A dark storm had formed around the whole town spinning around like a hurricane. It was silent at first, but then lightning came and furious winds.

“This is definitely not good!” I said remembering my encounters with the dark storm.

“Nefarious, he’s getting stronger!” Shouted Westwood. It was hard to hear him, the wind was loud blowing through the town, destroying windows, ripping through hay stacks. People on the streets began to run into the saloon and any other shop that was open.

Suddenly everything grew dead quiet and the wind stopped. There was no more thunder only lightning and clouds circling above.

“Why did it stop?” Tommy asked.

“I don’t think it has.” I replied.

“Look there!” Westwood shouted pointing up to the sky.

I saw it, we all did. Something dark at the center of the storm. From it came a dark line flying down towards us, towards the town. As the line came closer I saw what it was, a giant flock of ravens.

Westwood brought out his revolvers and began shooting. Tommy had a shotgun with him and began firing into the sky.

“Boomerang!” I shouted and my boomerang appeared in my glove. I threw it as hard as I could. It grew slicing through the swarm, hundreds of ravens falling from the sky, but the swarm was so massive that the boomerang did very little as the flock continued towards the town. I called my boomerang back to me.

As the ravens approached I used the Boomerang as a large shield protecting us as the swarm rushed the town. Hundreds of raven crashed into the boomerang the rest swarming around us. The ravens crashed into shops and poured in through windows. We could hear people screaming as they were engulfed by the swarm. Others on the streets were also engulfed. The swarm would pile over them and moments later the swarm would unpile and the person would be gone as if they had disappeared, absorbed by the ravens. These wretched birds continued their wrath, thousands of them entering the rest of the town and taking people, they even swarmed Dr. Skinem’s wagon. Dr. Skinem tried to protect his assistant huddling over her, but soon enough they too had disappeared.

We tried to save people but the swarm was just too big. Bigfoot pulled off a large wood wheel from a wagon nearby using it to protect him and Dodo. Swinging the wheel back and

forth. Out from the Saloon rushed the piano player trying to free himself from the swarm. He fell to the ground and more ravens poured over him as he cried for help. Deputy Tommy grabbed the piano player's hand trying to help him. Trying to drag him away from the ravens, but soon enough the man's hand had disappeared and Tommy fell landing on his back. He then grabbed his Shotgun and fired off rounds into the swarm that had just taken the poor piano player.

"What is happening???" Tommy shouted. "This is not real!"

Tommy then directed his attention to the Saloon. The cancan dancers inside had begun to scream, muffled by the sound of flapping wings. Tommy rushed to their aid bolting into the saloon shotgun in hand.

"Tommy!" Westwood shouted. "Tommy get back out here!"

We could hear Tommy shouting, then the sound of his shotgun firing off, but then suddenly he and the cancan dancers became quiet and the ravens began pouring back out of the saloon.

"Tommy!" Westwood called out again.

There was no reply from Tommy only the loud sound of hundreds of wings leaving the saloon.

It wasn't long before most everyone was gone. The hordes of raven headed back into the eye of the storm.

The Catawampus

"It's over." Westwood Gaspd. "He took them all."

The storm had now calmed down, but didn't leave, instead it continued to quietly spiral above the town.

"*Miko.*" A whisper.

"Did you hear that?" I asked, everything was very quiet now.

"No." Bigfoot replied. "It quiet now, I no hear nothing."

Suddenly a lone raven flew out from the storm and landed on a rooftop. It stared directly at me. Like it knew me and hated me. My stomach began to sink. I think I had seen that same raven on the river.

"Why it looking at you?" Bigfoot asked.

"I don't think this is over." I replied. I threw my boomerang at it, but I missed.

"Don't worry." Said Westwood. "I'll get it."

Westwood fired off a shot.... And missed.

"I missed?" Said Westwood. "I must be getting rusty."

Westwood fired off another shot and missed again. Westwood began to shout out words I couldn't understand at the time; they may have been obscenities.

The lone raven then flew from the rooftop right over our heads and past us. Westwood continued to fire at it and miss while this happened.

The raven headed to the blacksmith shop. It flew into the furnace and caught itself on fire. The fiery bird then flapped its way to the windmill where the extinct Catawampus was. It landed on the Catawampus' head and disappeared into it. The Catawampus caught fire and began to slowly move!

The catawampus let out a loud "Mooo!" Just like a bull! It even rushed at us like a small bull. It seemed to be headed straight for me! Bigfoot stepped in its path with the wagon wheel

and swung as hard as he could; knocking the Catawampus away, it tumbled disappearing into a large pile of freshly cut fire wood.

“I thought you said those things were extinct??” I asked.

“They are!” Westwood replied. “That wasn’t a Catawampus! That was some kind of sorcery!”

“It extinct now!” Bigfoot declared.

Slowly the pile of firewood began to move. The whole pile ignited in flame. This thing was using the firewood to grow in size, fusing with it and growing even larger! By now it was massive, at least ten feet tall! It roared and headed straight for us!

Westwood fired at the thing blasting holes into it, but his guns did very little.

Bigfoot used the wagon wheel to whack at it which helped somewhat. I threw my boomerang at the beast shattering the catawampus into pieces but the fire at its core drew the pieces back together.

The Catawampus didn’t seem to care when Bigfoot hit it with the wagon wheel or when Westwood fired shots at it... this possessed creature seemed to be fixated on me. It snorted fire and charged at me. Once again I used my Boomerang as a shield.

“Its’ fire!” Shouted Westwood. “We have to put out the fire!”

The Catawampus knocked me down but I quickly stood back on my feet protecting myself with my Boomerang.

“So go get some water!” I shouted back.

This beast was strong. It fought with me like a bull using its horns to knock me back and forth with its enormous strength.

Meanwhile Westwood found a water trough nearby and began tugging at it, dragging it towards the battle.

Bigfoot saw Westwood struggling and rushed to help him, grabbing one end of the water trough, the two both carrying one side each trying their best not to spill. Once they got close enough I continued to distract the Catawampus while Bigfoot used all his might to throw the large trough at the beast. This stopped it only for a moment and the possessed Catawampus backed off of me. Smoke and steam belled out from it but the fire didn’t go out completely.

“More water!” I shouted.

“There is no more!” Westwood replied, then continued to shoot off his revolvers.

The foul thing charged at me once again knocking my body to the dirt then stood on its hind legs before slamming its wooden hooves on top of me. Thankfully I had the boomerang to protect me, but still I was pinned and the beasts massive size was crushing me under my boomerang. Its head leaned over the boomerang and I saw it’s flaming eyes looking directly into mine.... I kind of felt like it recognized me. As if it knew me and hated everything about me.

I was so scared I didn’t know what to do... but then I felt something. Like a jolt of energy flowing and growing through my entire body. This power was massive and I saw that one of the bands on my arm had begun to glow white light. In my mind it’s power came to me and I knew what it could do!

“Hold on to something!” I warned the others.

“Riptide!!” I shouted. My band flashed and a large ocean wave appeared from the east engulfing the entire town. Bigfoot grabbed Dodo climbing to the top of the saloon. Westwood was beginning to get swept away by the current but was able to latch onto one of the shops. For a

moment everyone was submerged in the wave. We all held our breath as this tidal wave flooded through the town.

The wave pummeled the Catawampus putting out its fire. The beast let out a loud Moo like moan before collapsing then dissipating back into firewood.

The wave was now gone and all that was left was a muddy mess. The town was destroyed. All the shop windows were broken and left over water rushed from shop doors and out onto the town streets. Some of the smaller buildings were completely swept from their spots and had crashed into other shops further away in town. Tables and chairs from the saloon now lay toppled over in the mud, along with countless poker cards and money scattered everywhere.

Westwood ran into what was left of the saloon trying to see if he could find Tommy, the place was torn apart. He trudged through the water. The cracking shards of broken bottles could be heard with each step which caused an overwhelming smell of whiskey. Westwood turned to us pleading for us to search, so we did.

We turned the whole place upside down looking for Tommy or anyone that might have been left behind... but there was no one there. All that was left was Tommy's Shotgun. Westwood picked it up holding it tight. As if it were all that was left of Tommy's existence.

"There's got to be at least one person." Westwood cried, then he fled to the rest of the shops calling to see if anyone would answer. We followed and continued to help him search for people. We searched almost every shop in town and everywhere we went there wasn't a soul to be found.

Westwood finally gave up and submitted to the fact that our search was useless. Everyone was gone, they had been taken by the storm... Suddenly that raven flew out from what was left of the Catawampus and headed back into the storm. Westwood was so angry he tried to shoot at the raven before it could make it back into the storm but his guns were wet and useless for the time being. There was the sound of thunder coming from the clouds now. The thunder sounded odd as if it were laughing at us or taunting us. The storm dissipated and sunlight re-illuminated the town.

Westwood fell to his knees. The aftermath wasn't pretty. Everyone was gone and he could do nothing about it.

"I'm sorry." I said to Westwood, trying my best to sympathize with him.

This whole town was Westwood's home. He knew everyone and treated everyone like they were family. He had lost everything. He had lost his home.

I knew what it was like to not have a home. To be away, and worried about the people you love. I thought about my wife constantly, she was always on my mind though I didn't know much about her. Still I wondered if she was okay. If I would ever make it back to her. He must have felt the same way... lost... alone, and worried about his townspeople. We gave him some time to recoup. He knelt there in the mud staring at the town for a very long time talking to himself.

We didn't know what to say to Westwood. It seemed as though he was in shock. There was nothing really to say.

Eventually Bigfoot sat down in the mud next to Westwood trying to comfort him.

"Bigfoot.... I'm the sheriff." Said Westwood. "These people trusted me, I was supposed to protect them." Westwood took off his Sheriff's badge dropping it in the mud. "I don't deserve this badge."

"No say that." Bigfoot replied rubbing Westwood on the back.

"It's true. These people needed me and I let them down. What's a Sheriff without someone to protect?"

"You still Sheriff." Replied Bigfoot.

"Everyone's all gone, I couldn't even save Tommy." Westwood sobbed. "Ain't no use for me anymore."

"No Westwood. No say that."

"... I should have been prepared." Westwood replied. "If only I could have saved just one."

"It not your fault."

"It is... I ain't no good. You two need to go on without me, you're probably better off."

"Come on." I said grabbing Bigfoot by the hand. "He needs to be alone for a while."

We left Westwood there to be alone... Bigfoot didn't want to leave without Westwood. I didn't want to leave him there either, so we waited trying our best to clean up the various shops. If there was a table turned over, we would pick it up and put it back in its place. Bigfoot and I knew our efforts were useless, but still we just wanted to cheer Westwood up in any way possible. I would check up on Westwood from time to time between straightening up the various shops. Westwood hadn't moved from the spot where we had left him. He just sat there in that mud. Eventually I decided that we needed to get a move on if we were going to find Montezuma. Bigfoot reluctantly agreed. Before we left, Bigfoot wanted to say goodbye.

"Westwood..." Said Bigfoot. "...We need sheriff."

Dodo grabbed the badge out of the mud with its beak gently placing it back in Westwood's hands then squawked at him. Westwood knew that we needed him, he was the only one that knew where the calico mines were. He sighed wiping his eyes saying "That salt water stings." He didn't want us to know he was crying but it was clear that he had been. We didn't speak of it though.

"Come on." I said. "We need to find Montezuma, so we can stop Nefarious. Maybe we can bring these people back."

"... You're right." Westwood agreed picking himself up out of the mud. "If we leave now we can get there before nightfall."

CHAPTER NINE

Onward to the Calico mines.

Westwood tried to find some horses for us to ride, but they had all rode off during the storm. We grabbed what little supplies we could and headed on foot to the calico mines.

While on our journey I began to wonder what the rest of my bands could actually do. I had already used Merry go round, and riptide. We were out in the open and we had a lot of time, the mines were far off, we could barely see the mountain in the distance. "*I might as well try the Perilous Plunge.*" I thought to myself. I made sure Bigfoot and Westwood were alert, prepared for anything standing close to me so I could protect them.

"Perilous Plunge!!" I shouted. The band flashed white light... but nothing happened.

"Perilous Plunge!!" I shouted again. And again the band flashed white light and still nothing happened.

"Maybe you no can use?" Said Bigfoot.

“Maybe.” I replied. “Let’s try another.” I saw the two locomotive bands that I had, 41, and 340. “How about one of these?” I asked.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea.” Westwood Replied. “That riptide band was very powerful and I really don’t want to get hit by a train right now.”

I decided to try it anyway.

“Three forty!!!” I shouted. The band flashed white light and train tracks appeared on the ground. A large locomotive with the number 340 appeared from the distance then let out a long whistle stopping and resting in front of us. Everyone was amazed.

“Maybe we can ride it?” I said hopping aboard. “I should be able to drive this thing!”

I grabbed hold of the throttle, but as soon as I did the train fought back throwing me, my body slamming into the tender.

“I no think it like you!” Bigfoot laughed.

“Be nice.” Westwood scolded.

I stood back up brushing myself off.

“Would you like to try???” I scowled.

“No no...” Bigfoot said shaking his head. “...Go on.”

I tried a few more times, but the locomotive was stubborn. The locomotive let out a loud whistle like it was angry with me. Like it was talking to me, maybe even yelling at me. It was like it was alive!

“This is no use.” Westwood insisted. “This thing has a mind of its own! We might as well keep on walking.”

“Wait!” I argued. “That’s just what Jeff the Engineer said about this locomotive! That she’s got a mind of her own.”

“She?” Westwood replied. “...Well, serves you right!”

“What do you mean?”

“You can’t just go grabbing at women all willy nilly! Maybe throwing you into that there tender is her way of slapping you in the face!”

“So what should I do?” I asked.

“Be a gentleman!” He replied. “Look, in all my years I’ve met lots of women and none like to be forced into doing anything they don’t want to do. But what I do know is that most women want to help as long as you ask nicely.”

“Well... you know more about this world than I do.” I admitted. “Let’s try it your way.”

I decided that I’d be as kind as possible to this locomotive, as if it were another person.

“Come on three forty.” I whispered softly to the locomotive. “We need your help.” It sounded silly talking to the locomotive, but it’s all I could think of.

“Please.” I continued. “Please help us get to the calico mines.”

Suddenly the locomotive whistled out two peppy toots, the train tracks magically shifted in direction headed straight for the mines and the locomotive began to move. I didn’t even have to operate it. It throttled itself, fired itself. The locomotive moved fast as it chuffed her way onward, wheels spinning and smoke puffing out her smoke stack. Jeff was right! 340 did have a mind of its own. From then on I referred to the locomotive as “She” ...just as Jeff did.

The locomotive pulled us directly up to the calico mine entrance. We hopped off the locomotive. I thanked 340 for bringing us this far. It let out two happy whistles before chuffing off into the distance and disappearing.

“This is a mine?” I said looking at the large mountain.

“The Calico mines!” Westwood hailed. “And this is just the beginning. The mine reaches deep into the earth... You’ll see soon enough.”

There were vultures perched atop of the mine, they stared at us, waiting. Dodo squawked at them, but they had no real reaction. Instead they just continued to stare. Waiting for us to die perhaps.

“You ready go inside?” Bigfoot asked.

“As ready as we’ll ever be.” Westwood replied. “How about you Michael?”

“I suppose.” I replied staring at the dark entrance of the mine.

“Don’t worry, I’ve been in this here mine a few times before.”

We entered the mine following what seemed to be mine car tracks. They led us deep inside the mine then curved off into different tracks headed into different parts of the mine.

“Which way do we go?” I asked. Some of the tunnels were lined with lanterns, their fire glowing amber, lighting the path.

We decided to stay together following the lit path. As we headed further into the mine we noticed different holes in the rock.

“Those are blasting holes.” Westwood declared.

“Blast holes?” Bigfoot asked.

“Yeah, how do you think they dug this far? Not with just a shovel that’s for sure.”

Dodo looked inside each of the holes along the way, probably searching for insects to eat. He even squeezed his whole head in one of the blast holes and got stuck! Bigfoot had to pull him back out, Dodo shook its head and continued to stick its head in other blast holes.

“That bird never learns.” I said.

As we headed further into the mine the air became humid with massive amounts of steam making it almost impossible to see.

Westwood began to complain about his feet.

“My feet are killing me.” Westwood whined. “We need to take a break soon.”

Westwood mustered up the strength to travel a little further and we finally came to a place where the mine opened up into a large cavern, but there was no time to rest there. There were hot boiling mud pits everywhere and geysers that sprayed out from the rocks creating large showers of water and steam! It was uncomfortably beautiful watching the mud pits boil and gurgle.

“Don’t get too close...” Warned Westwood. “...That steam’ll burn you alive.”

We took extreme caution around these mud pits and geysers as we continued on our way. One geyser shot out extremely close and would have boiled us for sure, but I used my Boomerang to protect us.

After cautiously tip toeing our way around the mud pits and geysers we finally made it out of that cavern unharmed.

Next we headed into another shaft that led deeper into the mine eventually coming to an extremely large opening. It was calm here. The perfect place to stop and rest for a moment.

Westwood kicked off his boots.

“Ah, that’s better.” He sighed in relief.

We all rested for the time being, Westwood and Bigfoot sat together in the dirt and I found a rock to sit on. Dodo hopped in my lap and began to nap... until it heard something. Its neck stretched out and its head cocked sideways listening. We all began to listen too. It was a faint tinging sound. Then came the sound of a hand saw cutting back and forth.

"What is that?" I asked.

"I no know." Bigfoot replied.

"It's probably my feet." Westwood grunted jokingly. "They are in a lot of pain right now."

"Wow, your feet make weird sound." Bigfoot replied taking Westwood's joke literally.

"So do yours!" Go ahead listen." Westwood nudged.

Bigfoot held his large sasquatch foot up to his own ear trying to hear sounds coming from it.

"I no hear nothing!" He said.

Westwood began to laugh.

"Cut it out you two." I said scolding them.. "Where the heck is that sound coming from anyway?"

Bigfoot slowly put his foot back down realizing that Westwood was just toying with him.

"I no believe you anyway." Bigfoot added, picking up one of Westwood's boots playfully tossing it at him.

"Then why was your foot touching your face?" Westwood laughed.

Bigfoot took a moment to think.... then his reply came to him.

"Because I like way my feet smell!" Bigfoot replied. "All Sasquatch have good smell feet! Everyone know that!"

Bigfoot tried to put his foot in Westwood's face.

"Here you smell now!" He added.

"No, stop!" Westwood laughed. "I'll shoot it off!" Then he counterattacked Bigfoot with one of his own feet.

It was good to see Westwood playing with Bigfoot. He had lost so much back in Calico. Back there he was a total mess after what had happened to everyone. I think he was now trying his best not to think about it. Bigfoot was his longtime friend, and the two playing around helped keep his mind off everything, but still we were on a mission to find Montezuma so I stopped the two.

"That's enough out of you two!" I scolded.

The two listened to me and kept their feet to themselves.

"Ooooooo..." Westwood warned. "...Bigfoot you're in trouble."

"I no in trouble! ... You in trouble."

I continued to follow the sounds and saw there was a ledge nearby.

"Hey look!" I declared. "It's coming from over here!"

We crept up to the ledge and peered over... there was a tremendous decent down. We could see extremely far down into the mine. At the bottom there were people working. It was hard to tell exactly what they were doing but we could hear saws and hammers. Ropes were being pulled on, pulleys moving. Shovels loading rock onto mine cars. The sound of hard work being done down there.

"Montezuma must be somewhere down there." Said Westwood. "If we continue on, we should be able to make it to the bottom of the mine."

We continued on through yet another mine shaft and came upon a darker cave. There were no lanterns in here and we all wondered why. We grabbed a lantern off the wall of the closest mine shaft and proceeded onward. Soon enough we noticed why the cave had been unlit. It was full of bats! Thousands of them hanging from the ceiling. Their wings began to move every-time we came close enough with the lantern. We decided to put the lantern out for now so we wouldn't wake them. We traveled blindly through the cave until we came to another lit shaft.

Further into the mine we came upon a beautiful cavern. Inside there were countless stalactites hanging down from the ceiling, they looked like colorful icicle shaped rocks with water slowly dripping from them creating equally beautiful icicle shaped stalagmites raising up from the ground. Westwood said they were created over millions of years, drop by drop. little by little. We could hear each drop of water dripping from the stalactites down to the stalagmites. They were all forming at different sizes so each drip had a different tone echoing through the cavern. It kind of sounded like this cavern was making music ... as if someone were playing a xylophone. This cavern is hard to describe but it was one of the most beautiful things I had ever seen in my life.

From there we continued further into the mine traveling through dimly lit tunnels for quite some time,

Finally, we reached the bottom of the mine where hundreds of men were all at work. Some were digging, some moving rock. There were men drilling blast holes and others preparing dynamite fuses to blast. All were sweating profusely and covered in dirt.

One man had struck gold grasping it in his hand. It was almost bigger than he could carry.

"Gold!" He cheered grasping the golden nugget in hand. "After all of these years I've finally found gold!"

We continued on searching through the workers looking for Montezuma. One finally told us that he had moved further on ahead, deeper into the mine to dig up the seal. The man pointed us in the right direction and we continued on.

CHAPTER TEN

Montezuma

It was in a small cavern where we finally found Montezuma, shovel in hand. He was digging with a miner in a spot where piles of rock and dirt seemed to glow.

"Come on." He said to himself. "I'm running out of time."

"Are you Montezuma?" I asked.

"I'm sorry I don't have much time right now." He replied continuing to dig fixated on the glowing rock and dirt.

"I've heard that you can help me." I replied. "Help me find my way back home."

Montezuma stopped digging and dropped his shovel to his side. The miner took over continuing to dig. Montezuma looked directly at me. It was like he recognized my face from somewhere before. I think I might have slightly recognized him at the time too, but from where I did not know, I knew I had seen him leaving Calico, but even then I thought I had seen him somewhere before. Montezuma looked at the boomerang glove I was wearing.

"...Miko?" he asked.

"I'm sorry?" I replied.

"You don't remember me?"

"I don't think so." I replied, but something in my mind flashed. A younger version of the man, yet still I couldn't quite remember.

"I wouldn't expect you to." He sighed. "You were so young when you left... You shouldn't have come back here."

"I don't even know how I got here." I replied. "I can't remember anything; can you tell me what's happening? Who I am? And why I can't remember anything?"

"Memory wash..." Montezuma replied. "...From the shock of crossing from the other world." "Give it time, you'll remember everything soon enough. You should be able to remember at least one thing from the other world."

"I can't remember much of anything anymore. Only my wife."

"Do you know what she looks like?" He asked.

"I do." I replied pulling out the picture from my wallet.

"She's very pretty." Montezuma said with a smile. "Do you remember her name?"

"No, but I keep having dreams about her. I think she's dreaming about me too."

"She is." Said Montezuma. "Those that are connected can talk to each other in their dreams. You just keep focusing on the thought of her and some of your memory will come back."

Montezuma handed the picture back to me. I placed it in my wallet.

"It's better you don't remember this place." He said. "we can't talk now but I'll explain more later. Right now I need to find the seventh seal to give me more time."

Montezuma picked up his shovel then shook his head brushing off what seemed to be something important to him. Perhaps disregarding or suppressing something. A memory maybe. Instead he and the miner steadily continued to dig.

"We here to help." Bigfoot said grabbing a shovel nearby. Westwood rolled over an oar car and began filling it with rock and dirt too. I also grabbed a shovel and began to dig.

"The seventh seal is here." Said Montezuma "The earth glows where it rests."

Montezuma stopped just for a moment.

"... Here Sheriff." He called out pulling out something from his leather jacket then tossing it to Westwood. It was something that had a dim glow. Five pieces of stone almost connecting in a circle with unreadable writing on it. The center was also empty.

"Over the years I've found six pieces of the seal." Montezuma whispered. "Now the last one is here."

"Is this how you stop Nefarious?" Westwood asked.

"Yes." Montezuma replied. "Once the stone is complete I can re-seal Nefarious as he wakes. But I need to find it before that glow is gone."

"What happen when no more glow?" Bigfoot chimed in.

"Nefarious will wake, and consume everyone he has taken."

Understanding the severity of the situation we all continued to dig. Finally, we saw how a place in the dirt had an even brighter glow.

"The final stone!" Montezuma declared then threw down his shovel and continued to dig with his hands. "She's here too." He whispered carefully brushing the dirt away from the stone and a grey hand appeared, it was clenching onto the final stone.

"Is that who I think it is???" The miner asked. His voice trembling.

"The grey witch Edena." Montezuma whispered.

Hearing that, the miner dropped his shovel and rushed out of the small cavern. Montezuma hushed everyone as he slowly began to pry the stone out of the hand.

“Can’t wake her.” He whispered again. One by one he pried each of her fingers loose from the stone. Soon the seal was out of her hand. Montezuma whispered to us signaling us to leave.

We continued on back headed through the tunnels. Once we were far enough we stopped whispering and began to talk loosely again.

“What was that all about?” I asked.

“The grey witch Edena.” Montezuma replied. “She’s been hiding the seventh seal from me for a very long time. She Wants Nefarious to wake up.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because she is in love with him. She’s always been in love with him.”

Westwood handed the rest of the seal back to Montezuma and Montezuma took the new piece placing it on the outer edge. The stone seals fused together creating a circular plate with one missing space in the center. The glow from the entire plate grew brighter once this seal had been fused with the rest.

“Now that this seal has fused Nefarious will sleep a little longer.” Montezuma declared.

“There are only six seals here.” Said Westwood. “The center is empty...Where is the seventh?”

“It is waiting for me in safe hands.”

“How do you find Nefarious once the stone is complete?” I asked.

“I already know where he is.” Montezuma replied. “It’s a long way, but I need to get to the Jaguar Temple.”

“That very far.” Bigfoot replied. “Past fiesta village, Me and Dodo like fiesta town.”

Once we returned to the bottom of the mine we noticed that there were no longer any men working.

“Where everyone go?” Bigfoot asked.

A small mine train roared along its rails then hit its engine brakes once the driver noticed us. One by one its oar cars bunched together like an accordion. The cars slammed into each other and the train finally came to a halt.

“Didn’t anyone tell you???” The Driver yelled. “The grey witch is here! They’re gonna blast the mine closed! You’ve got to get out of here now... Get in!”

“Thank god.” Said Westwood as he climbed aboard the first car. “My boots are killing me.”

The small train began to move and the rest of us hopped aboard the last mine car. The Driver rushed us through the mines. Along the way were lit fuses burning in different directions. their fiery smoke trails headed to different sticks of dynamite. The first blast blew far behind us and the whole mine shaft began to rumble!

“Come on!” yelled the driver giving the little engine all she had. The mine train was moving pretty fast now, but soon enough there was an upward shaft that slowed us down as we headed closer to the exit of the mine. Again another blast and the wooden beams that held the mine shaft together began to break under the weight of the crumbling mine.

“This doesn’t look good!” shouted Montezuma.

One of the beams finally gave and a giant boulder crushed one of the cars in the center of the train. It uncoupled the mine cars splitting the train into two sections. Most of us were in the last mine car and began to roll backwards into the mine once uncoupled from the rest of the train. We began to pick up ferocious speed.

“How do we stop it?!!” I shouted.

“Can’t!” Bigfoot gasped.

“Then what do we do?!”

“Hold on?!” Montezuma shouted.

More dynamite blasted projecting debris at us as we held on for dear life in these runaway mine cars.

Meanwhile the rest of the mine cars were safe. The little engine slowly pulled the front half of the train out of the mine to a small loading dock.

“Whooley!” Shouted the Mine driver pulling the mine cars to a stop. “Looks like we made it out of there alive... thanks to my “dynamite” driving.” But then he looked back at the rest of the train noticing that half of it was gone and the rest of the group was now missing except for Westwood whom had an upset look on his grey old face.

“Yeah, that’s not good.” Said the mine driver.

“You think?” Westwood barked.

The rest of us continued to roll backwards through the mine at rapid speeds. Bigfoot holding onto Dodo. We were passing through every cavern that we had walked through earlier.

“Look Dodo!” Bigfoot shouted trying to calm the upset bird. His large hand pointed at the stalactites we had seen earlier. “Pretty rock again!”

The oar car sped on making its way into the cavern with all those bats. The bats were already upset from all that blasting, and decided to take their frustration out on us by attacking as we bolted through their cavern. We swatted them away as much as we could but soon enough we were out of there and speeding through the rest of the tunnels. Everything grew steamy and we were now moving through the large cavern where geysers sprayed up out of the mud pots, the cavern was upset and steam was spraying everywhere. Rapidly we passed that cavern and the oar cars quickly sped through more tunnels leading us back to where we originally entered the mine.

We could see the light coming from the end of the tunnel.

“No more track.” I shouted. Everyone held on as tight as they could, but once the cars made it outside, the tracks ended and we were all thrown from the mine cars tumbling in the dirt. There was one last blast and the second entrance of the mine had crumbled also.

It wasn’t long before Westwood rushed to our aid, asking if we were okay. He counted everyone, making sure we were all there. Aside from a few bumps and bruises, everyone was fine. Dodo was a bit shook up though, squawking angrily at everyone trying to find out who was the cause of all its distress. We were all lucky to be alive.

It was getting dark now, so we decided to make camp for the night amongst the miners. Westwood started a fire. The miners were very hospitable, they fed us some soup that they were making in a giant pot, even provided us with blankets so we wouldn’t have to sleep in the dirt.

By the fire Westwood told stories of Calico and different bandits he had arrested over the years and how he once outshot the fastest gun in the west!

Bigfoot also told stories of his and Dodo’s journeys amongst the woods. Bigfoots stories were mostly about food. They were very un-entertaining.

Eventually everyone wanted to hear what Montezuma’s story was, but he wasn’t as open about himself with our group, insisting that his story was mostly sad and he didn’t like talking about his past very much... Instead he began to tell the story of Nefarious.

He said that a long time ago Nefarious wasn’t as bad as he was now. That his people were once friends with the Zuma’s but were fading away from a mysterious disease. That he was

dying and was afraid of death, so he went on a journey to find eternal life. Most of his travels were unproductive, until one day he came upon a Gypsy camp where a woman claimed she knew a spell that would help him live forever, but eternal life came with a price, that if she were to perform the spell it would rid his body of either good or evil, that whichever he had more of would stay with him without the other. Nefarious was fearful of this, he didn't know which he had more of. He knew that there was much good in him, but with all that he had done in his life he also knew that there was a large amount of fear in him and he knew that fear was evil.

Regardless, Nefarious agreed to the terms and payed the Gypsy woman. So the woman performed the spell on him.

Montezuma didn't quite know how the spell was cast on Nefarious, but he said that the woman removed all that was good from him and it became an infant.

Once the spell was cast it was the evil inside that overpowered the good, and the good was cast out of Nefarious becoming a new born and all that was left inside Nefarious was hate and hunger, hunger for life, hunger for power.

At first Nefarious wanted to kill the child, but the old woman told him that hurting the infant would only hurt himself. Nefarious abandoned the infant there.

Ever since that day, Nefarious has grown powerful, consuming everything in his path and taking powerful things. Searching for the operator's bands and sometimes completely consuming them. Montezuma told us that Nefarious would also consume entire areas of Boysenvale. That years later he consumed that entire gypsy camp and that there used to be a Kingdom of the Dinosaurs and he took it. That Nefarious has an uncontrollable hunger for life, to consume it and anyone and everything that has life, and that is why he must be kept sealed away.

After hearing that story I kind of felt bad for Nefarious. From what I heard he didn't mean to become evil. He was just unlucky I thought.

Memories...

Eventually one by one we all fell asleep.

Montezuma woke me up in the middle of the night. He took me away from the camp to talk alone.

"It's time for you to remember." He said. "I've dreamt about you. We are connected."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Nefarious wants the power inside of you, he won't rest until he has it. I sent you away to the other world when you were just a little boy to protect you. Originally Boysenvale was your home. Your real name is Mikosuma, a blood descendent of the Zuma's. I watched over you as your older brother."

This was a lot to take in. I had to sit down.

"I'm sorry." He sympathized. "I didn't want to send you away. Everyday I've prayed for you, hoping you had food in your belly and a place to sleep. I wish I could have been there to watch you grow, to protect you. But Nefarious gave me no choice, he would have killed you if you had stayed. Now you're here years later, too old to be the little brother that I wanted you to be. In my heart I always wanted you to come back, but always hoped that you wouldn't."

Montezuma told me that I could ask him any questions that I wanted to know the answer to.

"Do we have other family." I asked. "Parents?"

"We did." He replied. "But they're gone now."

I knew by the tone of his voice what he really meant. Somehow inside me I knew they had died a long time ago. I didn't want to know how, I stopped him before he could say.

"How come Nefarious didn't kill you?" I asked.

"I'm not really what everyone says I am." Montezuma replied. "The last of the Zuma's."

"What do you mean?"

"You and the Grey Witch Edena are the last of the Zuma's. I was adopted by your family years ago. Your father took me in, so you and I are not really related, not by blood anyway.

"Who is this grey witch?" I asked. "Did I know her?"

"She is your great aunt. You don't know her, but she knows of you."

"She does?"

"She doesn't know you're here though. I had to protect you at all costs even if I had to lie. If she finds out you're here she'll use all of her power to harm you."

"Why?" I asked.

"It's like I said. ...She's in love with Nefarious, and Nefarious wants what you have. She'll do anything for him."

"I see, so I have two people in this world that want me dead, one of which is my aunt, and the other is immortal. I no longer feel very welcome in this world... but then there's you."

I won't blame you if you don't think of me as your brother, maybe it's better that way. That way once we send you back you won't have any more ties to Boysenvale."

"How old were you when you sent me away?"

"twelve."

"You were just a boy... Who took care of you?"

"I've taken care of myself, I haven't had much time to worry about much of anything except for the seven seals. I knew that once I found them all I could re-seal Nefarious."

"How long have you been searching for them?"

"Since the day you left."

"You've been helping me? Keeping me safe all these years?"

"Yes, and now it's time for me to help you once more. Help you remember the other world. You must remember in order to get back home."

Montezuma prepared to tell me about the other world. He told me to keep my mind as clear as I could, and only focus on what he was telling me. I tried my best to have an open mind and calmed my heart.

"I remember dreaming about you Miko." He said. "Small dreams, flashes of you from your world. I've Dreamt about you your whole life, the dreams are real. They will help you remember your past."

Montezuma sat next to me. "Are you ready to remember?" He asked.

"I am." I replied.

"Your head might hurt a little." Montezuma warned me. He then held my face in his hands covering my eyes with his thumbs. He closed his eyes too trying his best to recall dreams that he once had of me.... Montezuma began.

"You were just a little boy, had just left here." He said. "Lost, and alone. You were crying because you didn't know where you were or why you were there."

Something began to trigger in my mind. I could feel it transferring from him to me... I began to remember little bits.

"There was a young girl that found you." He continued. "She was sweet and held your hand. I need you to remember her."

I began to remember that day at Knott's berry farm from when I was a little boy.

"I remember." I said. "She was a Sweeper... Clara, she had a pan and broom. She knelt down trying her best to stop me from crying. She asked me my name, I told her my name was Miko, but she called me Michael, I didn't correct her because she was so nice to me."

"Good." Montezuma replied removing his hands from my face. "You're starting to remember."

My head began to hurt a little but I insisted that Montezuma continue on. So he did once again placing his hands on my face.

"Later there was an orphanage. The other kids would treat you bad there. They were mean and called you names. You didn't like it there. You felt like you were alone do you remember that place?"

"I do" I replied remembering the orphanage. "I hated it there. The other kids would steal my things and hide them from me."

"There was a girl, a girl that was kind."

"Michelle." I replied remembering instantly. "I remember her name! Everyone there was so mean, But not her. She was good to me, sweet to me."

"Can you remember what happened to her?"

"I married her. I promised I would take care of her always."

"Michael." Montezuma said removing his hands so that I could see.... "I want you to know something."

"What?" I asked.

"I want you to know you weren't really alone back then. I was with you in my dreams, watching you, you've never been alone, not ever okay?"

"Okay." I replied with a smile. Montezuma asked if my head was hurting. It did but I wanted to continue further so I made him continue.

"This one will hurt very much." Montezuma warned. "Your wife Michelle...She has something of yours...Something precious, what is it?"

My head began to hurt extremely bad.

"I don't know." I replied. "I can't remember."

"Yes you can!" Montezuma insisted.

"I can't it hurts too much!"

"Think harder! Don't think about the pain, think about the memory! You need to remember this one on your own. I can't tell you what it is... If you do it will unlock all the memories from your world."

I wanted to give up for a moment but Montezuma wouldn't let me. My head hurt so bad that If I hadn't been sitting I would have collapsed, finally it came to me. A memory of Michelle.

I was laying in her lap with my hand pressed against her stomach.

"Do you feel him kicking?" She asked.

I felt it. A tiny foot pressing outward from inside her womb. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever experienced.

"Our baby." I replied. "She's carrying our baby boy... I'm going to be a Dad."

After that I could remember everything! All my memories came pouring back into my mind! I knew that I had gone to work at Knott's berry farm in order to find out what happened that day in the park all those years ago. That I had operated most all the rides at Knott's berry farm. That I had become a locomotive engineer on the ghost town and Calico railroad. Everything was now

clear. I could recall the night I went up in the sky cabin and landed on the beach here in Boysenvale.

“I remember!” I cheered. “I remember everything!”

I had questions to ask. Montezuma tried his best to answer most of them.

“Everything from Knott’s berry farm is somewhat like this world, why is that?” I asked.

“Our worlds are mixed.” Montezuma answered. “This world has an impact on your world, and the things that are done in that place in your world impact this world. They are connected.”

It was almost eerie how much Knott’s berry farm was similar to things in Boysenvale, Like the boomerang. I had operated a ride called boomerang at the park, and Bigfoot too! There was a water ride called Bigfoot rapids at the theme park back home. Even Mr. Knott and his farm were here! The theme park back home was called Knott’s berry farm! Named after its creator Walter Knott! I had even met that man here in Boysenvale! I remember thinking how impossible it was. That maybe I had been dreaming this whole time. I wanted to know what the link between my world and Boysenvale was.

“I don’t understand.” I said. “How is it that our worlds are connected?”

“The boysenberry.” He replied. “They are very powerful.... The berry vine reaches from the other world into this one, connecting the two. That’s why things here and there are somewhat alike.”

Montezuma decided that I needed to get back home immediately. He said that we needed to get back to Mr. Knott’s farm only then could he send me back home. I wanted to go with him and stop Nefarious, but he wouldn’t let me. Saying that if Nefarious got ahold of me all would be lost. I asked him what he meant by that. He said That if I and the grey witch Edena were consumed by Nefarious that he would become all powerful and nothing would be able to stop him. Not even the seven seals.

“Once you leave this place, you need not ever come back....” Said Montezuma. “You don’t have any more ties to Boysenvale anyway.”

“What about you?” I asked.

“I can take care of myself.” Replied Montezuma. “You can forget about me when you get home. I won’t blame you seeing as we’re not bonded by blood.”

“Will you forget me?” I asked.

Montezuma grew silent. I knew he couldn’t. In his eyes I’d always be his little brother.

“No...” I said. “.. I can’t do that. You sent me away to protect me when I was just a boy. You’ve dreamt of me. You’ve spent your whole life searching for these seals to protect everyone from Nefarious, including me. Even now you helped me to remember my world. That, to me sounds like the type of big brother I always wanted. You say that we’re not bonded by blood and I think you’re right... I think we are bonded by something bigger than blood. You said that I was never really alone, that you were watching me in your dreams. I once heard that dreams come from the soul. I think that’s where our bond comes from.”

I gave him a hug saying. “It’s nice to meet you big brother.”

Montezuma smiled simply replying. “It’s nice to meet you too little brother.”

Montezuma warned me not to speak too much of the other world. Saying that people from Boysenvale might not understand and be fearful of it, that he too didn’t understand exactly how things worked. Did Knott’s berry farm exist because of Boysenvale? Or was it the other way around? What would happen to Boysenvale if Something bad happened to Knott’s berry farm?

Was one world real and the other just someone's elaborate imagination? He told me that these questions had haunted him his whole life. I agreed that too much information from my world would only upset the people of Boysenvale... better to not speak too much of the theme park back home.

In the Morning Montezuma told the group that he and I are brothers and that I am actually a Zuma.

"That why you so strong with Boomerang?" Bigfoot asked.

"Yes." Montezuma replied. "He can operate any band. And learn them very quick."

"But Nefarious hates Zumas" Said Westwood.

"I know." Replied Montezuma. "That's why we need to send Michael home now."

There wasn't much time to explain, but Westwood and Bigfoot understood the gist of everything. We left the miners camp in route for Mr. Knott's farm.

Montezuma began to lead us towards the east but I knew that Mr. Knott's place was to the south.

"We're going the wrong way." I insisted. "Mr. Knott's place is to the south."

"It's also to the north, east, and west." Replied Montezuma.

"What's that supposed to mean? I asked.

"No matter where you are, no matter how far you travel, if you want to make it to Mr.

Knott's farm, you will. The Knott family is very welcoming and takes in all travelers from all of Boysenvale."

"That don't make no sense." Westwood sneered. "That some kind of magic or something?"

"Yes." Montezuma answered as we continued on. I wanted to use one of my Locomotive bands to get there but Montezuma insisted we continue on foot and that it wouldn't be long before we got there. He was right. Suddenly orange trees began to appear off in the distance. Strawberry patches too.

I didn't understand it all that well, but it was in fact the farm of Mr. Knott. What I thought was miles and miles away was now right in front of us. Like the farm itself was magic. I had just been there with Coast days earlier. It was as if all my traveling was washed away and I had started all over again!

As we got closer we noticed that something was different. There were ravens feathers amongst the crops. Most of the fruit from the orange trees were missing, the strawberries were mostly gone too. When we got to the Patch of Boysenberry they had also been destroyed. Montezuma searched the vine thoroughly but there wasn't a single berry left.

"This is not good." Said Montezuma. "Now how am I going to send you back?"

"What do you mean?" I replied.

"We need Boysenberry to send you home."

"I ate one of those berries before I was taken up in the sky cabin." I replied. "Is that how I got here?"

"Yes." Montezuma answered. "Without those Boysenberry and that sky cabin you can't go back home. It appears that Nefarious is set on keeping you here."

I looked off in the distance towards the farm. "What about the Knott family? Do you think they're ok?"

We rushed to the Farm house and found that everyone was gone. There was a note left behind resting on the dining room table that read...

“Dear weary travelers, I am sorry we are away today, please make yourself at home and help yourselves to a meal. If you need to find us we are headed to the Boardwalk, I have a bad feeling our friends may need our help.”

The Knott Family

“Surfside and Coast!” I shouted. “They must be in trouble!”

“Well, let’s go help them.” Westwood insisted.

I tried out the 41 operators band and a locomotive appeared but sped by almost hitting us.

“Wrong band.” Montezuma scolded. “That operators band is used to attack.”

“Three forty!” I shouted and my 340 locomotive appeared stopping before us. We hopped aboard and I politely asked it to take us to the boardwalk. Its tracks headed straight toward the boardwalk then let out two peppy toots and we were on our way.

“That’s much better little brother.” Montezuma laughed. “But I had better teach you how to use those bands before you get someone killed.”

The locomotive sped towards the Boardwalk. Along the way we saw Mr. Knott’s wagon, it was tipped over and there were ravens feathers everywhere. There was no sign of the Knott family. It was like they abandoned the wagon.

“He took them.” Said Westwood. “Just like he took everyone in Calico.”

“like tribe in forest!” Bigfoot replied. “.....Bad, bad witch man.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Distress from the boardwalk once more

I still needed to know what happened with Coast and Surfside so we continued on. When we arrived at the Boardwalk the ocean was upset and there were large waves crashing on the beach. There was nothing around just the Sky cabin still resting in the sand.

“That’s how I got here.” I said pointing to the sky cabin.

When we got to the cabin we found Coast inside. She was very distressed and she wouldn’t come out of the cabin, so Westwood and I went inside.

Once inside Coast grabbed me hugging me as tight as she could.

“It took him!” She cried. “Michael... it took him!”

“What happened?” I asked, my hands on her face rubbing away the tears.

Coast calmed herself as much as possible beginning to explain. “After I left you with Mr. Knott I came back here to make sure Surf was okay, I had a horrible feeling that something was wrong. When I got back everything seemed fine and for a few days everything was normal, but then that storm came, like the one you and I saw... it brought ravens with it. They engulfed me and Surf fought them off, but they wouldn’t quit, those birds kept coming. He put me in here and told me he loved me...”

Coast began to sob.

“It’s okay.” I said.

“That’s what he said.” Coast replied. “I love you is what he said. He used his glider to lead the flock back into the storm... and then he was gone.”

“Are you okay?” I asked.

"I am, because of him." Coast replied. "I didn't know he loved me. He never told me that before."

"It's going to be okay."

Coast seemed to be trembling, her hands were clammy and cold.

"Here." Said Westwood throwing me his trench coat. "Try and warm up."

"Thank you... Mr.?"

"Westwood." He replied. "You hold onto that until you feel better."

Coast put on the coat and began to calm down enough to meet the rest of our group outside the cabin.

"I am sorry for your friend." Said Montezuma.

Coast looked over at Montezuma in awe. Apparently she had never met him before.

"Are you who I think you are?" She asked.

"It's nice to meet you." Montezuma replied.

"Michael!" Said Coast. "Remember that letter?"

"Yes." I replied.

"Well, that's the guy that wrote it."

"I know." I laughed.

"I like meet you too!" Bigfoot introduced himself shaking Coasts hand. "Michael talk lots about you and Surfside."

"It's nice to meet you too Mr.?" Replied Coast, her voice trembling, her body semi petrified at the sight of Bigfoot yet trying her best to be as polite and open minded as possible.

"I Bigfoot!" Bigfoot replied letting go of her hand then handing her Dodo. "This Dodo....He last Dodo."

"Oh...Well it's nice to meet both of you..." Replied Coast as Dodo happily squawked in her arms. Coast seemed to calm down a little more once she held Dodo. Dodo had a warmth about it that made her feel less uncomfortable.

"Michael?" Coast asked.

"Yes?" I replied.

"You seem different... like you've grown up."

"What do you mean? I'm still the same age."

"Yes, but you were more childlike when we first met."

"His memory." Montezuma weighed in. "He remembers everything now."

"You do?" She asked.

"Yes." I replied. "Montezuma helped me to regain my memory."

"That's good!... but."

"But what?"

"I kind of liked the way you were, looking at the world through fresh new eyes. I liked all the questions you would ask."

"Well..." I laughed. "That's not over, there's still so much about this world that I still don't know."

"So you ARE from the other world???"

"I'm from here." I replied. "Montezuma is my brother, he sent me away to the other world to protect me years ago. I came back here in the sky cabin by accident."

I could tell Coast was extremely happy to see me. She wouldn't stop with the questions now... It was like she was the child and I the adult. Our roles had been reversed.

We decided to take Coast with us. Surfside had saved her, and it was our job to keep her safe now. We began to leave the boardwalk, but then Coast stopped.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"I can't go with you." She said. "Surf and I were supposed to protect the boardwalk."

"Protect who?" Westwood asked. "There is no one here to protect anymore."

"But what if he comes back?"

"He's not." Montezuma Replied. "Nefarious took him. If you want him back, you need to take him back. Come with us. Help us stop Nefarious."

"If we stop Nefarious we can bring him back?"

"Yes..." Montezuma answered. "...but we have to hurry before Nefarious wakes and begins to consume everyone he's taken."

Coast agreed to go with us. But first she had to grab some of her belongings. She led us to a small 50's style diner. There was a big sign above the diner that read "Coasters Drive-in."

"Is this your place?" I asked.

"It was my Mothers." Coast replied. "Back when people would visit the boardwalk, she would sell burgers and milk shakes. It was a very happening place."

Coast led Montezuma and I behind the kitchen and through a door where there was a small apartment. The place was cute. We entered her room and from her closet she pulled out a wooden box.

"I can barely use these." Said Coast as she opened the wooden box. Inside were three operator's bands, one was larger than the others and there was also a strange pair of boots with metal X symbols engraved on their sides.

"Our operator's bands." Declared Coast. "These are the bands Surfside and I have found over the years... Surf has the rest."

Coast began to put the bands on. She fastened one of the bands just above her ankle. It was inscribed with the word "Vertigo". She put another around her wrist that was inscribed with the word "Corkscrew". The last and largest of the bands she fastened around her neck which read "Supreme scream". She didn't put the Boots on saying that she was unable to use them.

"Michael can use them." Montezuma declared. "He's a Zuma."

"You're a Zuma???" asked Coast with a surprisingly impressed look on her face.

I rolled up my sleeves showing her my operators bands. I even showed her my Boomerang, I made it appear in my glove.

"No Operator has ever been able to use these." Said Coast handing me the boots. "Not even Surfside."

The boots looked a bit small, but they changed size as I put them on. They fit perfectly and were extremely comfortable.

"Well, that's that." Declared Coast. "Let's go get Surfside back."

"You two are still untrained." Montezuma warned. "You two need to learn how to use those bands just in case we need to go up against Nefarious. We don't have much time but I know someone who can teach you a thing or two along the way."

We left her apartment and joined the rest of the group in the diner. Westwood, Bigfoot and Dodo were sitting side by side at the bar giving each other a hard time.

“Westwood.” Said Bigfoot. “You get really old!”

“You smell really old.” Westwood joked leaning over sniffing Bigfoot then swatting the supposed stench away from his face.

“Time to go.” Said Montezuma.

“Where we go now?” Asked Bigfoot.

“Fiesta village.” Replied Montezuma.

“I thought we were going to the Jaguar temple?” Asked Westwood as he stared at my new boots. “Nice boots by the way.”

“Thanks.” I replied.

“We are.” Replied Montezuma. “Fiesta village is along the way, and that’s where we’ll find our final seal.”

I placed my old boots in my backpack then put it on.

“Okay we go now.” Replied Bigfoot grabbing Dodo and placing him in my backpack also. “You take Dodo so he no gets cold.”

“Okay.” I replied seeing as I really had no choice, Bigfoot had already put the Dodo bird inside. It was amazing how lightweight the Dodo was. I almost didn’t feel the weight on my back.

We left that Diner, I called on 340 and we all hopped aboard the locomotive.

“Take us to the Fiesta Village.” I asked and once again the locomotive let out two peppy toots and we were on our way. It was a long way off, even by train. As we traveled on the locomotive, everyone grew tired and most slept atop the water tender in shifts, because there wasn’t enough room. Dodo slept in my backpack.

Montezuma, Westwood and I handed over our jackets so that Coast was able to sleep on something soft.

That night we saw buffalo grazing in the plains. There were thousands of them. Westwood woke Bigfoot and Coast showing them the massive herd that moved out of the way letting the locomotive pass. It was an amazing sight. We could see the cold breath from their nostrils.

“Tribe Chief say Buffalo very wise.” Said Bigfoot. “Buffalo live long time.”

“Yes.” Replied Montezuma. “Chief Speaks with stories is very wise too, the entire tribe is.”

“You think we ever get tribe back?” Bigfoot asked.

“We will try.” Montezuma replied.

We passed the herd of Buffalo and continued on and everyone continued their night watch while the others slept.

Once I had gotten some sleep I told Montezuma that he could rest now, but he wanted to stay awake. He wanted to make sure everyone was protected through the night. I had to convince him to sleep. Saying that if something bad were to happen he’d need his strength. He finally got some rest with the promise that I’d wake him if anything out of the ordinary were to happen.

We traveled all through the night and half of one more day before we saw fiesta village.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Fiesta Village

“There it is!” Shouted Westwood. “Fiesta village.”

“Thank god.” Said Coast. “I am so tired of being cooped up on this train.”

We hopped off the locomotive on the outskirts of the town.

“I hungry.” Said Bigfoot.

A squawk came from my backpack Then Dodo poked its head out. I laughed because I had totally forgotten that Dodo was in there.

“Dodo hungry too.” Said Bigfoot.

“We should get some food once we get into town.” Replied Coast.

As we headed towards the town we could hear festive music playing. Violins, a harp, horns and guitar. Singing too.

“Another festival?” Montezuma supposed. “But that’s why it’s called fiesta village.”

As we entered the town there were hundreds of people dressed up. Men dressed as Mariachi and women in festive dresses. All dancing. The dresses the women wore were very colorful and flashy flowing beautifully as they moved spinning and dancing with the men.

“Let’s dance!” Westwood laughed throwing his hat to the ground then grabbing an unwilling Coast by the hand trying to make her dance too.

“I love this dance!” He added.

The rest of the townspeople threw down their hats and began to dance the hat dance just like Westwood. They were much better at it then he and Coast. Eventually Coast was too embarrassed to continue and escaped to the rest of us.

“Suit yourself.” Said Westwood grabbing the nearest female and dancing with her instead.

Soon enough Westwood grew winded, grabbed his hat and we continued through the crowd following Montezuma as he searched asking people questions.

I was worried the people in fiesta village would be afraid of Bigfoot, but surprisingly enough, people would come up to him and say hello.

“You’ve been here before?” Westwood asked.

“Yes.” Replied Bigfoot. “Me and Chief come here many times. Chief do trade.”

“Thought we were best buds?” Westwood scoffed. “How come you never invited me?”

“You live too far.” Bigfoot replied.

I found it funny how people weren’t afraid of Bigfoot here. The Myth surrounding “Bigfoot” in my world was so much different. A Mythological creature hiding in the woods that could never be found. Yet here in Fiesta village many people knew about Bigfoot and had seen him. They had even grown to love him.

Montezuma decided that it would be faster if we split up and searched for an operator named Diego. He didn’t say much about Diego, just that he would be able to help us. Coast and Bigfoot went with Montezuma while Westwood and I searched together.

During our search Westwood and I we saw a man selling different toys behind a booth. At one point the man stepped behind his small booth which was painted with scenery so that when he brought out two marionette puppets he could tell a story. The man flopped the two string puppets over the booth. The string puppets looked funny and floppy for a moment until the man pulled on their strings bringing the scene to life. Children rushed to the man’s booth to watch. The children had blocked our view.... I was no longer able to see the puppet show.

Suddenly a team of horsemen came rushing into the town headed straight for us. They were all were Mexican, but were dressed more like cowboys. The festive music stopped and the crowd quickly parted giving the riders a pathway.

“Uh oh” Said Westwood. “Someone better run.”

“Who are they.” I asked.

“Well, they ain’t good I’ll tell you that... maybe pistoleros”.

“What’s a pistolero?”

“It means gun fighter.” He replied.

“What do they want?”

“...Depends.”

“On what???” I asked.

“Who they’re after.” He replied.

The pistoleros rode right past us. The leader of their group swinging a rope lasso, he then tossed his lasso into the crowd and pulled out a man whom was trying to hide amongst the people.... It was Bobby Banes! one of the bandits I had met in Calico!

The group dragged Bobby off and Westwood and I rushed after them.

When we caught up to this group they were next to a large dead tree where they were pulling a rope tight around Bobby’s neck... They were going to hang him!

Westwood fired a shot up in the air. The gang of pistoleros turned their attention to us, each pointing a pistol at Westwood.

“That one there is mine!” Shouted Westwood. “Wanted for crimes in Calico! let him loose!”

“And what if I don’t?” Shouted the leader pointing a revolver at me!

“Why are you pointing a gun at me???” I asked. “I have no part of this!”

“Sorry desconocido... He’s got a revolver and you don’t.” Replied the Pistolero.

“Well I’m an operator and I’ll use the power of my bands if I need to!”

“Go ahead!” The Pistolero laughed. “If you think you can use those bands before I can put a bullet between your eyes!

I was a little worried now, I didn’t know if I’d be able to call on any of my bands before the man could shoot.... I was still learning to use them. Still, I looked at my boomerang glove with unsure intentions of using it.

“Usted muy rapido?” The pistolero asked.

“Don’t.” Warned Westwood grabbing my hand stopping me.

The men began to pull on the rope noose around Bobby’s neck. He now stood tip toed trying to keep his feet on the ground and his face began to turn blue.

“What did he say?” I asked.

“He’s taunting you... asking how fast you are.” Said Westwood.

“What do you want from him!???” I shouted.

“A reward.” Replied the Pistolero.

“A reward?” I asked.

The Pistolero pulled out a piece of paper tossing it to Westwood and I... there was a picture of two Bandits. (Billy, and Bobby Banes. Wanted for robbing the stage coach. Dead or alive. \$300 cash reward each.)

“Senor Bobby Banes...” Declared the Pistolero. “...Worth three hundred dollars dead or alive.”

“Tell you what.” Said Westwood. “I’ll pay you for him alive.”

The Pistolero signaled his men with the wave of his hand.

“Uno momento camaradas!” He said commanding them to stop.

His men stopped pulling the rope and Bobby’s feet were once again able to touch the ground. Bobby began to cough and breathe.

“Do you think you have that kind of money?” The leader asked.

"I do." Westwood replied.

"Then what will you pay me for his hermano?" He asked.

"You have Billy Banes also?"

At that the Pistolero signaled his men once again and another one of his comrades brought forth a horse with a large sack hunched over its saddle. From the looks of it there was a body inside.

"Is he alive?" Westwood asked.

"That's a good question." Replied the Pistolero whom then kicked the large sack on one end. The sack slid off of the saddle then slammed in the dirt and began to wheeze. The Pistolero's comrade then brought out a knife cutting the sack open. Inside was Billy Banes trying his best to breathe after the wind had been knocked out of him.

"How much will you pay for Senor Billy Banes?"

"Says here he's also worth three hundred." Westwood replied pointing the wanted poster at the Pistolero. "Six hundred for the both of them."

"You'll pay me a thousand dollars for them alive." Demanded the Pistolero.

"I will not!" Westwood snapped. "This one's half dead already! I'll pay you eight! You won't get that much anywhere else."

"I could kill you Sheriff." The leader shouted. "I could take your money and turn them in. I'd make double the money that way. What would stop me from doing that?"

"Consequences." Westwood sneered.

"Consequences?" Laughed the leader. "What kind of Consequences?"

"Do you know who Montezuma is?" Westwood asked.

The Pistolero's smile slowly began to fade away from his face.

"What about him?" He asked.

"I'm guessing you know how powerful he is?" Westwood inquired.

The Pistolero didn't answer. Instead he just stared at Westwood with a disgusted scowl.

"I'd like to introduce you to Michael." Said Westwood whom pointed to me. "This here's Montezuma's younger brother.... What do you think Montezuma would do to you if you disappointed his little brother?"

"Lies...." Replied the Pistolero. "Everyone knows that Montezuma and the grey witch Edina are the last of the Zumas. He has no brothers... I don't even think you have enough money to pay for one of them. There's no use in dealing with this man. Camaradas... hang him!"

The Pistolero's comrades were about to hang Bobby once again when suddenly a voice from the crowd emerged.

"He'll pay you six!" Said the voice.

We watched as the crowd began to part, soon enough it was revealed that the voice had belonged to Montezuma whom emerged and joined us at our side.

"This is between me and the Sheriff!" Demanded the Leader of the Pistoleros. "I have no business with you Senor Montezuma."

"Then why are you pointing a gun at my brother?" Montezuma replied.

At that the Pistolero lowered his gun and away from me. A feeling of relief finally passed over me.

"Also... Why are you trying to swindle my friend?" Montezuma added patting Westwood on the back.

The leader of the Pistoleros attitude quickly changed. The power struggle was over and landed in Montezuma's favor.

"I am sorry Senor; I did not know you were amigos." Declared the leader. "Sheriff... fair is fair. You can have them for six hundred."

Westwood agreed and pulled out a small sack of coins, he handed a few over and the Pistolero counted it before signaling his men to hand over Billy and Bobby Banes. They took the noose off of Bobby Banes' neck while walking him our way. He was still bound by his hands. The two brothers were once again reunited. They didn't say much, but we could tell they had just avoided a very close call and were extremely relieved.

"Nice doing business with you." Westwood added.

"I wish I could say the same." Replied the Pistolero before he and his men rode off and out of town.

Westwood began to untie Billy and Bobby Banes.

"Okay, you two are free to go." Westwood Declared.

"Why would you do that?" Asked Billy

"Yeah?" Added Bobby "You're just going to let us go? ...not likely."

"You two are wanted in Calico, but Calico is no longer there."

"What do you mean it's not there?" Bobby shrieked.

"Everyone's been taken away by Nefarious." Westwood answered. "A town needs people to exist, and since there is nobody there, your crimes don't exist for the moment."

"Thank you." Billy replied.

"You can thank me by staying out of trouble." Westwood Snapped.

"You're Deputy? Was he taken too?" Asked Billy.

"Yeah, Tommy was taken too." Replied Westwood.

Billy and Bobby Banes looked at each other for a moment. It was strange, they looked sort of sad, as if they felt really bad about that.

"We are sorry for your loss." Replied Bobby.

"Yes, truly sorry." Added Billy.

Their voices sounded so sincere, it was as if they actually cared what had happened to Deputy Tommy. They almost looked like they wanted to cry.

"We're gonna get him back." Westwood added. "We are going on a journey to bring everyone back, and once we do your crimes in Calico will be valid again.... and then I'll have you two hanging from a noose of my own!... Now get out of here before I change my mind!"

Billy and Bobby Banes booked it. They headed into the rest of the crowd and disappeared.

"Why would you just let them go?" I asked.

"You remember my Deputy?"

"I do..." I replied. "...Tommy."

"Those two." Said Westwood. "Those are his brothers."

"They are???" I replied.

"Yeah, and I'm almost positive Tommy's the reason they keep getting out of jail. I don't blame him; I wouldn't want to see my brothers at the end of a rope either. Billy and Bobby never killed nobody. They're just robbers and some of the time they don't even have bullets in their guns."

"You're the sheriff." Montezuma replied. "Why would you let your Deputy get away with that?"

"I like Tommy, he's a good deputy for the most part.... but we all have something that we keep hidden inside. A weakness. His brothers are his, I think he believes the two can change

someday.... but I don't think so, they keep getting into trouble and Poor Tommy is.... or was always covering for them. I hope those two learn their lesson this time."

Westwood told us that if we were ever to get Tommy back we shouldn't tell him that we know he's one of the Banes brothers, that it would only hurt his pride. The three of us agreed not to speak of it again.

We traveled back and caught up with the rest of our group. They too were watching the puppet show alongside a crowd of children, the same show I had been watching earlier.

"Look Montezuma!" Cheered Bigfoot. "That you!"

One of the marionette puppets looked like Montezuma.

"That's enough." Montezuma replied modestly. "No time for games, we need to find Diego."

"Who exactly is this Diego?" I asked.

"An operator like us and the safe keeper of the final stone. He has a very special band, one that's going to help us train you to be a better operator."

We left the puppet show. Bigfoot kept on about how much the string puppet looked like Montezuma.

Montezuma stopped one of the people and politely asked if he knew where the operator by the name of Diego was and if he was in town. The man smiled pointing at a restaurant not too far away. "He's doing a show today in his new restaurant." Said the man before disappearing back into the crowd.

We came to the restaurant. Above the entrance was a large wooden sign that read. (*The house of Diego.*) There was another sign just next to the door that read (*Today's show: The Bear Prince!*) but that sign was different, the wooden words were placed in a peg board so they could be changed at a later time, perhaps to accommodate a different show. One by one we entered the restaurant.

Inside they were preparing for dinner theater. The theater was packed with dinner tables all being waited on by lovely women dressed in festive dresses and hair styles. There was still enough room at one table towards the back. We snagged it before anyone else could. One of the festively dressed waitresses came to take our order in Spanish....Westwood and Montezuma knew how to speak Spanish better than the rest of us so they helped us make our order.

Westwood paid for our meals, Montezuma wanted to pay but Westwood would have no part of that.

We had tacos, fried beans and brown rice. The tacos were very tasty. Bigfoot grabbed pieces of food feeding Dodo.

While dinning everyone talked amongst themselves.

Coast didn't eat much. I asked her why. She just shrugged saying. "I wonder if Surfside is hungry too?"

"We'll get him back." I assured her.

... but I wasn't sure. I had no idea if we could actually get anyone back that had been taken by the dark storm, yet still I tried my best to be positive. I didn't want to upset her any more than she already was.

"Thanks." She replied with a slight smile. I could tell she was just as unsure as I, but she too was trying her best to be as optimistic as possible.

"Your wife?" She asked scooting her chair closer to me. "What is her name?"

"Her name is Michelle."

“What do you remember about her?” She asked.

“Everything.” I replied. “She’s waiting for me in my world.

“Then why are you still here? ...Don’t you miss her?”

“I do, very much. But I can’t go home yet.”

“Why not?”

“I need Boysenberry and all the berries from Mr. Knott’s farm are gone now.”

“I’m sorry.” Coast frowned.

“It’s okay.” I replied. “I’ll find my way to back to her. I know I will.”

“Well, when you do make it back home.” She smiled straightening the Engineers hat on my head. “... You had better clean up before you get there!”

I looked at my clothes. She was right, my overalls were dirty now. I was a mess, hadn’t had a decent wash since I used the Riptide band in calico.

Coast adjusted her dress.

“I must look horrible.” She added. “I don’t want Surf to see me like this. I’m gonna freshen up before we get him back.”

I could tell that Coast really loved Surfside. She probably always had, but I couldn’t tell before, I hadn’t seen them show much affection towards each other on the boardwalk when we had first met.

“When I last saw him he told me he loved me” Said Coast. “I think I always knew he loved me, but neither of us wanted to be the first to admit it. When I see him again I’m going to tell him I love him too.”

“You should.” I replied. “You two look good together.”

“Thank you.” Coast replied. “When you get back home, you should tell your wife that you love her too. Tell her every day.”

“I plan to.” I replied.

“Show start now.” Bigfoot interrupted.

A young man hushed the Dinner tables, He hopped atop a stage. He was wearing a Mariachi outfit but unlike all the others he did not wear his hat. It was like he wanted to be different from the rest of people in town. His hat was unlike all the other hats in town, it had a gold trim. The hat rested on his back held by a string swung around his neck. Behind him there was a red curtain where the show would be taking place.

“That’s him.” Montezuma whispered to me. “That’s Diego.”

We watched as Diego introduced the show. Then opened the curtain. There were many props used to tell the story and a few actors. The story was called “*The Bear Prince.*” It was about a young woman who fell in love with a prince. That an evil witch had put a curse on the prince and that every day he would turn into a bear and at night a prince. The young woman tried to break the curse without permission from the prince, and when she did he began to disappear telling her that the evil witch was taking him to a mysterious castle.

The young woman traveled years looking for the castle trying to find her prince. finally stumbling upon the house of the moon, but the moon did not know where the castle was. From there she traveled to the house of the sun. The sun knew where the castle was but couldn’t take her there fearing he would burn her. Eventually it was the suns friend, the wind, that carried her to the castle where she battled the witch to win back her prince.

It was a very beautiful story fueled by love and redemption, I had never seen a fairy tale like it. They used large props in the show that were crafted beautifully. A large round moon with a

face on it, a sun too, and many many others that helped tell the story so well. I know that as I tell you about this show it seems so vague. It's so hard to explain this show and how good it actually was and how immersed in the story I became. I guess it's just one of those things that you have to see for yourself.

Once the show was over everyone cheered and the actors bowed. The audience began to leave their tables heading outside where the fiesta continued. Soon the dinner theater was empty and all that was left was us.

Diego positioned things on stage really quick then hopped down from the stage to greet us.

"Montezuma!" Diego Cheered. "It's been years. I was worried you had died by now."

"Not yet." Montezuma laughed.

"It's good to see you again."

"And I you."

Montezuma then introduced the rest of us one by one.

"Come, come let's have a drink with our new friends." Diego insisted.

"We don't have very much time." Montezuma Declined.

"You know." Replied Westwood. "I don't think one drink would hurt."

"Yeah." Bigfoot added. "I thirsty too."

"Fine." Said Montezuma, giving in. "Just one drink."

The six of us sat at our table as an actress that was on stage earlier now brought us some drinks. I could tell she was one of the actresses because she still had smudged makeup from the different characters she had played on stage. Coast told her that the show was great as she set our drinks on the table. The actress smiled replying "Gracias."

"So." Diego began. "What brings all of you to fiesta village?"

"You know why we are here." Montezuma replied.

Diego slowly leaned forward towards Montezuma.

"Have you found the rest of the seals?" He asked.

"I have." Montezuma replied

Montezuma revealed the six fused seals with a missing stone in the center. The stones glow was very faint now.

"It is time for the final seal to be combined." Montezuma added.

"The company you keep?" Diego warned. "Do you trust them?"

"I do." Replied Montezuma. "They are only here to help."

At that Diego closed the doors at the main entrance of the dinner theater and locked them so that no one else could enter.

"It's been over ten years since you trusted me with the stone." Said Diego. "The thought of giving it up brings me both relief and fear."

Diego Climbed back up on his stage and from behind the curtain he pulled on a rope. Slowly the large sun prop began to lower down to the center of the stage. He pulled the seventh stone from the eye of the sun then hopped back down the stage handing the stone to Montezuma.

Montezuma placed the stone in the last opening of the plate. The stone fused with the others and now the plate shined bright once again. The seal finally completed.

"This should give us more time." Said Montezuma. "Now we need one more thing from you."

"What's that?" Diego asked.

“We need your Gallery Band.”

“Oh poor Montezuma." Diego remarked sarcastically. “you know I cannot train you anymore, you have learned all that you can.”

“It’s not for me!” Montezuma growled then pointing his thumb at Coast and I. “It’s for these two.”

“You two can operate?” Diego asked.

“A little.” Coast shyly replied.

“And you?” He again asked looking at me with a look of doubt stapled to his face.

“A little.” I replied. With a flash I made my boomerang appear in my glove.

“Amazing.” Diego replied, his doubtful expression now torn away. “You can operate the Boomerang glove! Never met an operator that powerful!”

“He’s a Zuma.” Said Montezuma. “My brother.”

“Another Zuma?!!! You and I have been friends for a very long time Monte. Why did you not tell me you had a hermano?”

“I had to protect him.” Montezuma replied. “From Nefarious and the grey Witch.”

“I see...” Replied Diego. “If the grey Witch were to find out about him that would be very bad.”

“Nefarious might wake soon.” Replied Montezuma. “The seals light grows dim only days after they have been fused, we don’t have much time.”

“Nefarious is becoming too powerful.” I added. “He has taken the whole town of Calico.”

“We have to bring them back.” Westwood added.

“Well why don’t you go straight to him now?” Diego asked.

“He’s become so strong.” Replied Montezuma. “I doubt we have enough time to get to him as it is. We all need to be ready just in case.”

“So you think by teaching these two how to use the operators items it will help you against Nefarious?”

“Yes.” Montezuma replied. “We must seal him away for many years to come, and we don’t have much time to train... will you help us?”

“Of course I will mi amigo. Said Diego. “I will do all that I can, but you know that it takes a long time to become a skilled operator, time that you don’t have.”

“I know, but we at least need to try.”

“Then there is no time to waste.” Declared Diego. “Let’s train now.”

Training

After leaving the “House of Diego” We traveled to the outskirts of town. He claimed that operator’s bands should never be used in populated areas saying that they would destroy everything. I knew what he meant because of what happened in Calico when Bigfoot, Westwood and I battled the Catawampus. I used the Riptide band back in Calico that sent a giant wave almost washing away the entire town. Better to be away from fiesta village as to not harm innocent bystanders.

We arrived in the middle of the dessert. Bigfoot took my backpack pulling out Dodo and sat the bird next to him on what was left of an old tipped over wagon. Westwood sat beside pulling off his boots making himself comfortable.

Diego told us a little about his operator band. That it could do many things, but mostly we would use it for practice. Coast was excited telling me she had trained a little with Surfside before.

“Who wants to go first?” Diego asked.

“I will.” I decided.

Coast knew a little already and I needed as much practice as possible.

“Bring out your weapon.” He said.

So I brought out my boomerang.

“Gallery!” Diego shouted and a band on his arm flashed white light. Out from it came another boomerang almost identical to mine.

“Hey that looks just like mine!” I said.

“My band will replicate any operators item... as long as I am close enough in range.”

His boomerang grew large, almost as big as mine. He threw the large boomerang at me and I frantically used mine to block the attack. Diego’s boomerang returned to him, I stood there amazed.

“Well what are you waiting for?” Diego asked with a smirk.

At that I threw my boomerang back at him and his blocked the attack. We continued to battle. He used his boomerang as a target in the sky while I continued to attack at it with mine. The boomerang came back to him and he charged at me with it. I blocked his attacks and counterattacked. We threw our boomerangs at the same time and they began to battle in the air all by themselves clashing into each other and chasing one another both growing even larger. Eventually Diego’s boomerang crashed tumbling in the dirt defeated. My boomerang came back to me and I caught it.

“Do you want to know why your boomerang won?” Diego asked.

“Why?” I replied.

“It was stronger than mine. Yours’s was the true boomerang, mine was only a reflection of yours.”

I put my boomerang away and Diego’s disappeared also.

“Your turn Senorita.” Said Diego turning to Coast. “Draw your weapon.”

“Right!” Coast accepted. “Corkscrew!” She shouted and a beautifully twisted spear appeared in her hands. “Are you sure your up for this?” She asked

“Please.” Diego Laughed. “You can use every band that you have.”

“Okay.” She laughed. “Supreme SCREAM!” She shouted and a flash of white light came from her neck band. Her scream was loud. I had never heard anything so loud before, my eardrums felt like they were going to burst. I felt bad for Diego because Coast was screaming directly at him but apparently the scream didn’t faze him. His gallery band was protecting him somehow.

The scream was so powerful that it was able to move things. It kicked up clouds of dirt and ripped whole cactus out of the ground from their roots. It pushed Diego back, him sliding through the dirt even though he had planted his feet in the ground trying his best to hold his position. Bigfoot and Westwood were trying their best to cover their ears as they watched from a distance, Dodo ran amuck. Montezuma was smart, he took refuge behind Coast as to not be in the path of her attack. Soon the scream was over.

“Very good Senorita... let’s see what else you have!” He shouted charging at her with a mirror image of her corkscrew spear. The two clashed, him taking initiative dominating while Coast counter attacked. They sparred rapidly both un-intending to do harm to one another.

A crack and slash and Coast had cut Diego's spear in half. She pointed the blade of her long spear directly at his neck.

Westwood clapped as he watched Coast win the duel.

"Boy, we better not mess with her." Westwood Laughed.

"Yes yes..." Bigfoot replied. "...Coast mean."

"Very good Senorita." Diego laughed. "Do you have any other band you need to learn?"

"I have one more." Replied Coast. "But I'd rather not."

"Is it deadly?" He asked.

"No, it's just not very nice to use."

"What do you mean?"

"It's called Vertigo. It makes you dizzy and sick like everything around you is spinning."

"Do you know how to use it well?"

"Very much so." answered coast. "Surfside taught me, he always wanted me to be able to protect myself."

"Good enough for me." Diego replied. "I think you know enough to protect yourself, you may not know it now, but this training session has made you a stronger operator, the more you operate the better you will become."

"I think Michael could use a little more." Said Montezuma. "I will help him."

"Sure thing, amigo." Replied Diego. "No holding back this time."

Coast gave me a hug for good luck then headed to where Bigfoot and Westwood were, she picked up dodo and sat the bird on her lap petting it to keep it calm.

Diego kept his distance shouting out to us from afar.

"Whenever you're ready!" He said.

Montezuma looked at me with a smile.

"Okay Michael." Said Montezuma. "You heard him. No holding back now."

"What should I do first?" I asked.

"The bands will tell you when it's best to use them." Montezuma instructed me. "They'll glow and show you when, but whatever you do... don't let your guard down."

"Okay" I replied. "I'll try my best."

"The revenge within!" Shouted Montezuma and instead of a band flashing white light his whole body did instead. In an instant his whole attire had changed. Golden pieces of Aztec armor covered him. He had a helmet made in the shape of an eagle's head, his face peering out from the eagle's beak. Long colorful feathers flowed out the back of his helmet almost reaching the backside of his legs. The feathers looked like porcupine quills when a porcupine is in a defensive state it's quills flaring out and pointing erect. In his left hand a colorful wooden shield. He looked like an Aztec Warrior.

"What kind of band is that?" I asked.

"It is the band within me." Montezuma replied. "With it comes the skill of the warrior."

I didn't quite understand what he meant. "*Why would a band be inside of him?*" I thought to myself trying to understand.

"I didn't know the band was inside of me." Said Montezuma. "I didn't know I had the skills to operate the bands until I was forced to."

Montezuma turned to me standing cross.

"Jaguar!" He shouted. A flash of white light from one of his wrist bands and a sword appeared in his hand, it had a black Jaguar at the end of its hilt.

“It was in utter despair that I became a great operator.” Montezuma continued. “I only learned when cornered to the point of desperation. So goes the same for you.”

Montezuma began to attack me with his jaguar blade. I blocked the attack with my boomerang.

“There is power inside of you.” Said Montezuma as he swung at me again. I counterattacked, and he blocked. Montezuma was extremely strong because of his band from within. Every time he swung at me it would knock me back, it felt like I was being attacked by a giant hammer rather than his thin jaguar blade.

“This Jaguar band has more than one power, all the bands do!” He shouted. “With it comes the sword, and the summoning of the Jaguar. I have learned to unlock the powers of my bands, and some day so will you, but in order to do that you must be taken to the point of desperation... the brink of death... I have one important question to ask you little brother.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Do you want to live? Or do you want to die today?”

“Live of course.” I replied.

“Then you had better start running.” Montezuma warned.

Montezuma stopped attacking me and suddenly off in the dessert I could see something coming towards us. It was black and moving extremely fast. As it came into view I knew what it was. A black jaguar! Headed straight for me! I began to run but the large predator was quickly catching up with me. “Boomerang!” I shouted throwing it as hard as I could, but the large cat dodged the attack continuing after me. I ran as fast as I could but now I could hear the jaguar on my heels it’s jaws snapping at the chance to get a bite of me! I began to panic, my heart rapidly pounding inside of my chest! This Jaguar was going to get me and I could no longer protect myself.

...then it happened! My boots began to flash bright light and the word “Excell” flashed in my mind.

“EXCELL!!!” I shouted. A burst of energy came out from my Xcellerator boots and I immediately began to outrun the jaguar, I must have been running at seventy to eighty miles per hour!

The feeling of running that fast was both thrilling and terrifying at the same time. I called my boomerang back to me and it came. Suddenly Diego appeared next to me, he too running as fast as I with the mirror image of my Xcellerator boots. We raced alongside each other.

“My turn!” Diego declared and attacked me with a mirror image of my boomerang. Quickly I blocked and counter attacked as we two raced through the dessert.

“Merry go round” Shouted Diego using a mirror image of my band, so I used mine also. Two separate armies of animals charged at each other, one army of animals to the left of me and the other to the right of Diego.

Diego and I rushed through the dessert between the two stampedes as they charged at us from both sides, the path becoming thinner as the animals charged closer. Luckily we were running fast enough to escape just before the animals began to collide and attack each other.

“You’re better than I thought!” Diego laughed. “Let’s see what else you have!”

“Forty-one!” I shouted before he could use a mirror image of that band and a large black locomotive appeared chasing after him, it’s tracks shifting and changing their path to whatever direction Diego ran. I continued on, my Xcellerator boots rushing me ahead, but then I noticed Diego was no longer running as fast as I. The mirror image of his boots had dissipated away because I was too far away from him for his gallery band to work. The Locomotive was

catching up to him! I could see Montezuma running after him to save him, but at the speed the locomotive was traveling he wouldn't have made it in time. He was going to be run over!

Diego tripped falling on the tracks and watched in terror as the ferocious locomotive roared towards him. I had to do something or Diego was going to die! Using the speed from my Xcellerator boots I rushed towards Diego as fast as I could and was able to snag him just before the locomotive got to him. The locomotive rushed off disappearing in the distance. Montezuma caught up to us.

"Diego?" I asked. "Are you okay?"

"You almost killed me!" He frantically replied, but he didn't seem to be angry with me, just shook up a bit.

"We told him not to hold back." Said Montezuma with a slight smile.

"Yeah." Diego sighed. "We did say that."

"I think he knows enough now." Said Montezuma. "He can learn the rest as he goes."

Montezuma's body then flashed white light. His armor flashed away and he was again dressed in his normal attire.

"But I didn't get to use my hat dance yet!" Diego whined.

"Oh well." Replied Montezuma. "Anymore and someone's going to get killed."

"You're probably right, we should head back before el noche comes."

"What's el Noche?" I asked.

"El Noche is the night." Diego Answered. "The darkest things come out in the desert at night... better to be indoors."

The whole group headed back to fiesta village before dusk. We stayed at the house of Diego. Diego moved tables out of the way and provided as many blankets as he could. We all slept huddled together... Mostly because of Bigfoot and Dodo skootching towards everyone.

I could tell that Coast was still a bit shook up by everything that had happened with her and Surf. Her thoughts were keeping her up late tonight but she knew that she needed to pull herself together if she wanted to be of any help to the group.

Dodo woke and came to her. It liked Coast and wanted to play with her. She played back, rubbing its belly and petting it. Coast and I stayed up waiting for the Dodo bird to go to sleep.

Montezuma woke up and sat with us also.

"You two had better get some rest." He said. "We have a long road ahead of us. We'll eat before we leave in the morning."

Coast took the Dodo bird with her and the two of them quickly fell asleep close to Bigfoot. Montezuma stayed with me awhile.

"Miko?" He asked. "Do you mind if I call you Miko instead of Michael?"

"That's okay." I replied. The change of name wasn't much of a difference so I really didn't mind at all.

"That was your real name all those years ago" He said. "You know, when you were little you called me Monte."

"Would you like for me to call you Monte?" I asked.

"You don't have to." Montezuma replied. "Only if you want."

"I will." I laughed. "Monte is a lot easier to say than Montezuma."

Montezuma and I sat watching the rest of our group sleep. Everyone was snoring somewhat. Dodo had a small snore which I found interesting, because I didn't know birds could snore. Westwood's snore kind of grumbled when he slept. Coasts snore wasn't that bad but she

continued to shift in her sleep. Bigfoot wasn't snoring oddly enough, but he talked in his sleep. Couldn't tell much about what he was saying, something about Dodo.

"You had better get some rest too Miko."

"I can't force myself to sleep." I replied. "I'll end up staying up the whole night."

"I'm the same way." He laughed.

Montezuma and I stayed up awhile longer and he showed me his bands. There were only two. One that read Jaguar and another that read Quetzalcoatl.

"What's that band?" I asked. "how do you pronounce it?"

"It's actually pronounced kwet-soul-kwat- ol." Replied Montezuma "Yeah it was hard for me to say at first too."

"Where did you get it?" I asked.

"It was our fathers... It means feathered serpent. I know it's extremely powerful. I saw our father use it only one time... he was an amazing Operator. From what I saw during your training I know someday you'll be just as good."

"Can you use it?" I asked.

"Sort of." He replied. "but I've only used it once and I don't plan on using it ever again."

"Why not?" I asked.

"All of the operator's bands have their limits. Your locomotive bands will do no harm to you, no matter what, you will be protected from their attack. But not Quetzalcoatl. The one time I used it was out in the open. It had nothing to attack.... so it decided to attack me instead. I was only barley able to escape from it. Quetzalcoatl is very unpredictable.... That's why I don't use it."

"I see." I replied. "Did our father have other bands?"

"Many.... That Boomerang glove of yours was our fathers. I gave it to you before you left, it helped you reach the other world. I had never seen the other world and hoped it would help protect you."

"Thank you." I added.

"I'm glad you came back Miko." Said Montezuma. "Even if it's just one last time."

"How come you never came to my world?" I asked.

"I couldn't." He Replied. "Only Zuma's can cross over worlds. I'm only a Zuma because our parents took me in."

"Could I bring you to my world?" I asked.

"Maybe... Father used to tell stories about Zuma's crossing people over, but I don't really know how. He said something about creating a water link between the worlds."

"After we seal Nefarious away will I be able to go home?" I asked.

"Once the Boysenberry grow back." He replied. "Or we find another vine. I thought I destroyed them all years ago, but apparently not, so maybe there are more."

"Why would you destroy them?" I asked.

"So that you would be safe." He replied. "Just in case Nefarious ever tried to go after you the link to your world would be closed."

"Is Nefarious a Zuma?" I asked

"No." Replied Montezuma. "But I'd rather be safe than sorry. Though he's not a Zuma, he is extremely powerful. Powerful enough to maybe find a way to cross over."

"Monte"...I said "If I ever find this water link... I'll cross you over and show you my world.... Would you like that?"

“That would be nice.... Miko.” Monte replied. “I’m getting tired and we both need as much rest as possible.”

I agreed and the two of us tried to get some sleep. It took a while but I eventually fell asleep with the rest of the group and once again I began to dream about my wife Michelle. She was standing alone waiting at the entrance of the sky cabin back in my world. She was staring at the sky cabin. It was stuck in mid cycle at the top of its tower.

“What are you waiting for?” I asked.

“You.” Michelle Replied. “You’ve been gone for such a long time now. I hope you’re okay.”

“I am.” I replied.

“I miss you so much.” She said. Then touched my face with her hands.

“I miss you too.” I replied.

“I don’t think you’re ever coming back.” She said as tears began to rush down her face. “I know you want to come back to me.... but I don’t think you can.”

“Please don’t cry.” I replied. “I will come back, I promise.”

I held her as close as I could, she held her head to my chest saying. “I can hear your heartbeat.”

“... Why don’t you think I’m coming back?” I asked.

“Because of that bad man that plays with ravens.” She replied.

“What about him?” I asked.

“...He’s going to eat you.”

Suddenly I felt something on my feet and creeping up my leg. It was cold but burned. It was dark like tar. It quickly engulfed my body ending with my face.

That was the end of my dream and I woke up in a panic for a moment. It was the middle of the night. Monte was asleep in a chair at a table, he had the final seal in front of him, like he had been watching over it. I could tell that the seals glow was now growing a little dimmer. I grabbed my blanket and covered him with it before going back to sleep.

In the morning I woke a little later than the rest. I had the blanket once again, I think Monte re-covered me with it in the morning. The rest of the group were all getting ready to head on out. Coast had bathed and cleaned up as she said she would. I decided to at least wash up a bit before leaving then met with the rest of the group.

“You slept like a baby.” Westwood chuckled. “All curled up.”

“Yeah.” I replied. “It was cold last night.”

Diego came in through the front entrance. Apparently he had been out shopping this morning.

“Monte.” Diego breathlessly announced. “I found what you asked for.”

Diego had with him an extremely long rope which was wound many times over. He was lugging it over his shoulder and could barely walk with its weight. Bigfoot insisted on helping and took the massive rope from him carrying it effortlessly like a satchel, one end resting between his neck and left shoulder and the other end resting on his right hip.

“Muchas gracias” Said Diego thanking Bigfoot.

Diego insisted on us having breakfast so we ate. Diego packed food for our journey. We each thanked him for his hospitality.

“I really wish you would come with us.” Said Montezuma.

“No, no. Who will put on today’s show?” Replied Diego. “Besides, someone has to protect the village.”

“I’m sorry we have to leave so sudden, if we live and are able to seal Nefarious we will come back to thank you again.”

“When you DO seal nefarious away, which I know you can, then the village and I will hold a festival in your honor.”

“You don’t have to do that.” Replied coast.

“It’s okay, there’s always a fiesta here, it’s not a big deal.” Diego laughed.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Jaguar temple

We made our way out into the desert once again. I used my locomotive band and we all hopped aboard 340. The tracks led us far off, soon enough the locomotive passed through what were hundreds of skeletal remains. Dinosaur bones of all kinds that reached for miles.

“The kingdom of the Dinosaurs.” Montezuma whispered. “Look and see what Nefarious is capable of.”

We could all feel and knew how strong Nefarious actually was. There were so many bones. Nefarious had wiped out their entire existence.

“Keep in mind... this happened many years ago.” Montezuma warned. “Nefarious has become much stronger since then.”

The bones looked awkward. They were all intact. As if all the dinosaurs had all fallen asleep before dying. What was even more disturbing was the fact that there were all kinds, some herbivores and some carnivores like t-rexes and Triceratops laying side by side. From what I could tell there was no sign of struggle. It made me feel as though they had gotten along just for a moment to die together. We found this place quite eerie.

We finally passed this field of countless bones and continued on through more dessert. Further away life came into view, greenery.

A tropical forest ahead. The locomotive stopped at the beginning of the forest. We could see the Jaguar temple from outside of the forest but only the top was showing. There was some kind of fire burning at the top. We would have to travel through the forest to get to the temple.

The five of us and Dodo entered the forest. Montezuma brought out his Jaguar blade and began to hack a path through the vines that grew blocking us at every turn. There were beautiful species of birds, plants and insects everywhere in this forest.

My favorite thing about this tropical forest was the long tailed parrots. We could hear them singing to each other in the trees. Most of the birds and animals would flee before we came close enough for us to see them.

At one time there were small monkeys swinging from the highest of vines in the forest. One of the monkeys swung down landing on Bigfoot. This startled Bigfoot and he began to squirm and shout. The playful monkey then leaped off and back into the trees.

“I no like this forest!” Bigfoot Shouted. “It not like forest back home.”

“Oh you big cry baby!” Westwood laughed, but not long after he too was startled, meeting face to face with a large snake. Westwood stopped in his tracks as he slowly and shakenly

reached for his revolver. The snake darted out springing at him, but suddenly with a crack and slash the snake was be-headed by Coasts corkscrew spear.

“Who baby now?” Bigfoot chuckled.

Coast rubbed Bigfoots back and calmly scolded him saying. “You be nice too.”

We finally reached the Jaguar temple. It was very large and shaped like a pyramid, there was an entrance at the face of the temple and above it were stairs that had begun to crumble over time. The entrance was wide open.

Westwood was about to march right in to the temple when Montezuma stopped him.

“We’re not going inside.” Montezuma said. “We’re going to climb to the top.”

“Why not just go inside?” I asked.

“Because it’s much too dangerous inside.” He replied. “We have a better chance climbing to the top.”

“What inside?” Bigfoot asked.

“Horrors.” Montezuma replied. “I have been in there before, there’s nothing good inside, and there is no way I’m ever going back in there. Besides what we need is at the top of the temple anyway.”

There was an eerie darkness at the temples opening, and something inside me knew it had some kind of dark past, but I didn’t exactly know what. I shook off the eerie feeling and focused on the task at hand.

“What’s at the top?” I asked.

“Forever fire.” Montezuma replied. “A flame that burns for all time. We need to use it to reveal Nefarious’ location.”

“I good climber.” Bigfoot announced. “I go up first?”

“If you wouldn’t mind.” Montezuma replied.

“It no trouble.” Said Bigfoot and he climbed the stone blocks that led up to the top of the temple, carrying the rope wrapped around him. There were some stairs on the temple leading up but most were crumbling and vines made it almost impossible to climb to the top. Some edges of the stones would crack and crumble under Bigfoots weight. He even slipped at one point but held on with one hand dangling for a moment. I held Dodo as we watched Bigfoot slip. The bird squawked up at Bigfoot as if it was telling him to be careful.

“It okay Dodo.” Bigfoot shouted from up high. “I no fall.”

Bigfoot caught his footing and continued to climb once again. Once he reached the top of the temple he tied the rope around a large pillar. He then cast the rest of the line down to us. There was more than enough rope at the bottom. Each of us began climbing up the steep side of the temple using the rope as a guide. Monte went first. Then I put Dodo in my backpack and made my way up.

“Okay, little lady.” Said Westwood handing the rope to Coast. “Your turn.”

“Oh I think not!” Replied Coast.

“Why? What’s wrong?”

“Can’t you see I’m wearing a dress???”

“That’s okay, I won’t look.” Westwood replied.

“I know you won’t... that’s why you’re going first.”

Coast handed the rope back to Westwood and he began his climb to the top. Once coast made it to the top Westwood and I grabbed her pulling her up the remaining few feet.

At the top of the temple burned a fire in a stone pit. There was also a large platform that was meant for something big to go over the fire.

"I'll need everyone's help." Said Montezuma.

He led us over to where a giant bolder was sitting, it was perfectly spherical. Together we rolled the boulder to the pit and with all our might we were able to place it above the fire on its platform. The boulder began to glow hot white...It was large and blinding. Montezuma took out the final seal. Its glow was almost completely gone now.

"Show us the path to Nefarious." He whispered into the fire then touching the seal to the boulder. A flame shot out of the boulder and across the desert in a long straight line to where it hit something hidden, something over a large lake far off in the distance. A glimmer appeared on the object and then suddenly a giant mountain of ice was revealed. It was not as if the mountain was covered in ice, but the entire mountain was made purely of ice. It looked like a giant crystal. The flame burned through the mountain melting a pathway inside. The flame then returned to the stone pit.

"There it is." Said Montezuma. "Just where I left him, on reflection lake. From here on out no more operator's bands."

"What do you mean?" Coast asked. "How are we to protect ourselves?"

"Nefarious can feel their power. We don't want him to know we're coming."

"Nefarious is mountain?" Bigfoot asked.

"No." Montezuma replied. "Nefarious is in the center of the mountain."

"How do you know that?" Westwood added.

"Because he is the source of the ice. His cold heart has created the mountain around him. Ice is always coldest at its center."

"It's not very far off." I added. "We should be able to make it there in no time."

Carefully we climbed back down the temple and made our way back through the tropical forest and back into the desert. We traveled only a few hours before we came upon reflection lake.

"This is where I sealed Nefarious away." Said Montezuma. "You were there that day too Miko."

"I can't remember that far back." I replied. "I'm sorry."

"That's okay, you were so little back then. I don't want to distress you Miko, and I know you would rather not know, but I need you to at least know that Nefarious is wicked beyond anything you have seen in this world."

"Please don't Monte." I said interrupting Montezuma. I knew that whatever he was going to say would be about our family from years ago. I knew there was something in my mind that was trying to reach through and surface, but I didn't want to know. I could feel that it would only make me sad. Just the thought of remembering was making me sad and I wasn't ready to know about that day all those years ago.

"You need to know." Montezuma insisted.

"You're right, but not now." I replied. "We are running out of time. Tell me after we've sealed Nefarious away, if you tell me now I don't think I'll be able to keep my head on straight."

Montezuma reluctantly agreed and we continued on.

"So I guess were going for a dip?" Westwood asked.

"Yes sheriff."

Before going into the lake, Montezuma warned us not to look into the water. He said that if we did we'd see a reflection of ourselves whether it be good or bad. He warned that if we didn't like what we saw we might become so upset that we would drown.

We all entered the water with extreme caution and began to swim to Mount Nefarious. The water was dark and extremely cold...

While trying to keep up with Dodo, Bigfoot accidentally looked into the water. What he saw was an angry beast in place of his reflection.

"Monster!" Bigfoot shouted, beginning to cry. "I no monster."

Westwood swam to bigfoot trying to cover his eyes. "Don't look." He said. "That's not really you."

Bigfoot began to calm down and together we finally reached the icy entrance where the forever fire had melted an opening.

We were now inside the entrance of Mount Nefarious.

"From here on we stick together." Said Montezuma. "I don't know what dangers lie ahead."

Monte asked if we were all ready.

"Yes." Westwood answered. "Let's bring back Tommy and the rest of the people of Calico."

"And tribe from forest too." Replied Bigfoot.

"Let's take back Surfside." Coast added. "And Mr. Knott and his family."

We continued on. Wind passed through the tunnel that the forever fire had created. Yet other than the wind it was eerily quiet inside. The tunnel didn't reach very far before it came to a cavern. The walls were shiny and there was nothing but ice.

Light began to slowly fade from the mountain as we entered its center. Our path came to an end... an Ice wall.

"There's nothing here." Declared Coast. "Where is Nefarious?"

"He's here." Montezuma replied rubbing frost from the center of the ice wall which revealed a man frozen away in the ice. He looked around the same age as Monte or I. But what was most interesting was the fact that though his clothes were different and his hair was much longer, he looked almost identical to Montezuma.

"Monte?" I asked. "Why does he look just like you?"

"I have to tell you something Miko." Montezuma Replied.

At that everyone took a step back from Montezuma. Westwood pulled out his revolvers pointing them directly at him....

"Are you Nefarious?" Westwood Demanded.

"Westwood please calm down." Montezuma pleaded. "I'm not your enemy, I didn't know he was going to look just like me."

But before Montezuma could explain Bigfoot grabbed him pinning him to the ground.

"You bad witch man!" Bigfoot said in an angry grunt then grabbed at his neck.

"Where is Surfside." Coast Demanded. "Give him back!"

Montezuma's face began to turn blue as Bigfoot squished at his throat.

Suddenly I remembered the story Montezuma had told us back at the calico mines. The story of Nefarious.

"Wait!" I shouted. "Let him go."

"But he bad witch man!" Replied Bigfoot.

"No he's not!" I demanded. "Bigfoot let him go!"

Bigfoot whined for a moment but did what I asked. Montezuma gasped for air.

"Put your guns away." I said to Westwood.

"Not on your life." Westwood replied.

I leaned Monte to the side of the ice wall.

"It was you." I said. "Wasn't it? That story you told us that night outside the Calico mines, you're the good. You said all the good was removed from Nefarious and became an infant. You were that baby weren't you? Nefarious had to rid himself of you in order to live forever... Isn't that right?"

Montezuma nodded rubbing his freshly bruised throat.

"I had to get us here." Replied Montezuma. "I need to stop Nefarious at all costs. That's why I didn't tell you before. I haven't told anyone before now, not even Diego whom I have trusted my whole life. If people were to find out that I am Nefarious' other half they would try and seal me away too, but if they were to do that then this world would be consumed by him. Just look at what happened when I told you just now. I'm the only one that can stop him for good."

"Stop him for good?" I asked. "But you said Nefarious could only be sealed away."

"Not everything from that story is true." Said Montezuma. "Nefarious can be killed."

"How?" I asked.

"I didn't want you to be here Miko. I wanted to send you home immediately. I didn't want you to know me or this world, it would have been better that way. That way in your memory I wouldn't matter. That way I could have done this alone."

"What do you mean Monte?" I asked. "What exactly do you want to do alone?"

"I should have done it when I first had the chance, but I was afraid."

"Done what?" I demanded. "Just tell me!"

"... I haven't come here to seal Nefarious away." Montezuma said beginning to cry. "I've come here to kill him and in order to do that I also would have to die. Because we were once one, we must die together as one."

My stomach sank. I understood now.

"No. I can't let you do that." I demanded.

"I have to." He replied. "It's the only way to stop him for good."

"You said yourself that if I use the final seal on Nefarious that He'd be locked away for much longer. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, but if I kill him now the world of Boysenvale will no longer be in danger by him."

"You're a good person." Said Coast. "If we let you die, then we are no better than Nefarious."

"I sorry I try hurt you." Said Bigfoot. "But me and Dodo no want you die."

"I have to." Replied Monte.

"You can't!" I shouted.

The mountain began to shake for a moment... then suddenly the shaking subsided.

"I can't!" I added. "I won't let you die!"

"Westwood?" Montezuma asked. "You know I have to do this. Wouldn't YOU do it too? If you could protect the people of Calico?"

Westwood thought for a moment removing his hat and scratching his head.

"Well, partner," Westwood finally replied. "Killing Nefarious would be the best course of action. But I couldn't live with myself if you were to die too. You deserve to live just as much as the people of Calico." Westwood Put his hat back on. "Nope, can't let you do it. Besides why let you get all the glory? We are in this together, and we've come here to stop Nefarious together."

“What you want to do is a good thing.” I said. “But you have to realize that the people of Boysenvale need you to protect them and not just from Nefarious.” I grabbed Montezuma by the hand and helped him to stand up.

“Monte I’m glad that you are my Brother.” I said. “I’ve only just met you, and I’m not going to lose you now.”

Montezuma sighed reluctantly giving in. He brought out the final seal and handed it to me.

“You need to seal him right when he starts to wake.” Said Montezuma. “All you have to do is touch him with it. The seal will do the rest.”

I took the seal to the ice wall I staring at the frozen figure of Nefarious inside. His eyes were closed.

“Everyone be prepared just in case.” Warned Montezuma. Westwood brought out his revolvers and Bigfoot was ready to pounce. Coast stood there starring at her operator’s bands, ready to use them if needed.

“He’s about to wake.” Said Monte. “I can feel it.”

The glow from the final seal was now gone and the mountain began to shake and melt, some parts crumbling around us. The ice that kept Nefarious was now melting. His chest was about to be revealed. Suddenly I could see Nefarious’ eyes begin to slowly open, they stared directly at me.

“Now!” Shouted Monte. “Use the seal!”

Nefarious chest was revealed! Quickly in hand I thrust the seal at Nefarious’ chest but even quicker Nefarious’ hand busted out of the ice grabbing me by my wrist stopping me. The Ice melted around his face and for the first time in many years... Nefarious spoke.

“Montezuma’s little brother.” He said with a smile. “...Mikozuma. You’ve come back to me.”

At that Nefarious created a burst of energy and I flew back tumbling and sliding on the icy floor. Nefarious now had the final seal which he crushed in his bare hand. The seal broke back into its seven pieces all shattering into different directions.

“Get the seals!” Shouted Westwood and he and coast stumbled to find them all. Dodo hopped out of my backpack that now lay on the ground and rushed at Nefarious squawking, but coast grabbed Dodo before it could get to him.

Bigfoot jumped on Nefarious attacking him and was able to hold him off for a moment, but Nefarious was much too strong, even for Bigfoot! He tossed Bigfoot aside slamming him into an icy wall. Montezuma used his band from within, he flashing white light and his Aztec armor appearing. He brought out his Jaguar blade and rushed at Nefarious, but he too was overcome by the strength of Nefarious. Nefarious grabbed him crippling him to the floor. He then grabbed Montezuma’s chin making him look at me as I lay on the ground.

“You’ve been a very bad boy.” Said Nefarious. “Trying to kill us.... For that I’ll make you watch him die!”

“Michael run!” Montezuma shouted. “You’re the one he wants!”

I didn’t want to leave but I did what Montezuma told me and I ran outside of the Mountain and back into the lake trying my best to swim across.

The Mountain then melted away with everyone in it now swimming in reflection lake and there was now the dark storm from above. Thousands of ravens circling in the center of the storm.

“No look.” Said Bigfoot as he swam for land keeping his eyes closed from reflection lake, Dodo escaped from Coasts grasp and headed swimming after Bigfoot.

Westwood had found four of the seals by now touching them together fusing them into one. Coast had grabbed two before the mountain had melted away. She gave them to Westwood and he fused those together also. There was one left and the two began to search the lake to find it. Trying their best not to look in the water.

As I swam for land Nefarious headed after me walking on the water. I called out for Monte, I could see the others in the water but Monte was nowhere to be found! When I finally made it to land Nefarious had caught up to me standing less than a hundred feet away. He smiled waving his hand motioning me to come to him. Something in my mind was now triggering and it was ever painful. I had seen Nefarious do this before!

“Come Miko.” Said Nefarious. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

Suddenly in my mind a memory came to me. A memory from when I was little boy all those years ago, before I had left Boysenvale...

The lost memories from years ago

I remembered my three siblings for a moment. The oldest was Montezuma. He was a young teenager and was watching the rest of us as we played. My sister couldn’t have been much older than ten years old. She had long black hair that reached far beyond her back almost reaching her ankles, I could remember her name was Aythel. The other was my brother Koma. He was only two years older than I, around the age of seven at the time. He was always carrying me around. My brothers and Sister... My siblings. They were such good children, always looking out for each other making sure none of us got into too much trouble, always watching me. I remember how happy I was.

Then I remembered my mother and father. They were sitting together with us around a fire outside as we all ate soup that our mother had made for dinner in a large pot resting above the fire. My father was telling stories about his adventures, my mother sat next to him as close as she could with me sitting on her lap. The two were very much in love and everything about my family was love.

The memory skipped events and a new memory came.... The worst memory of all, the memory I had suppressed my whole life... the memory of the night that Nefarious came.

“Come Miko.” Said Nefarious. I remember being terrified as I watched him walking toward me. I was crying and scared.

I could see my family. They were laying in grassy fields. Not moving, only the wind swaying the grass back and forth as their lifeless body’s lay still.

Then I saw Montezuma. He was crying as he held our brother Komas body in his arms. My heart ached and I was terrified. Nefarious slowly continued walking toward me. I called out for my brother.

“Monte!” I said.

With tears in his eyes Monte put down Koma’s body and angrily rushed towards Nefarious, but he too was just a boy and Nefarious grabbed him choking him, holding him up in the air by his neck with one hand as Monte tried his best to kick himself free. Nefarious continued to motion me to come to him with his other hand.

“Come Miko.” Nefarious said. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

I remember feeling totally helpless, I wanted to help Monte but I was scared and I didn't know what to do.

Nefarious continued to choke Monte with his hand but then something happened, something had changed. Suddenly Monte flashed white light and for the first time his band within emerged and he was now covered in Aztec armor and used his shield to knock himself free from Nefarious' grasp.

"Run Miko!" Monte Shouted. So I did While Monte continued to keep Nefarious at bay.

That was what came to me in that memory, I know there was more, but that's all my mind would let me remember, and now Nefarious stood in front of me once again all these years later. Motioning me once again.

"Come Miko, I'm not going to hurt you." Said Nefarious.

"... You killed them." I replied. "My Mother, My Father... My brother and sister.... There were just children."

Nefarious just stood there for a moment with a smile then replied in a sarcastically sympathetic tone. "Aww. You remembered."

Everything inside of me wanted to do harm to this man! No, not a man! a monster! All of my bands now glimmered with white light prepared to attack.

"Boomerang!" I shouted throwing my boomerang in massive size.

"Wind seeker!" Nefarious countered and an eight bladed weapon appeared blocking the attack. We continued to battle throwing our weapons.

Meanwhile Westwood and coast continued to search for the final seal in the lake.

Suddenly out of the water came Montezuma gasping for air, the last of the seals in his hand. Westwood gave the stones to Monte and he fused them to make the final seal. They made their way out of reflection lake headed towards Nefarious and I.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Battle Against Nefarious

Bigfoot was the first to make it to the battle, Dodo bird chasing after him. Nefarious saw him coming and his wind seeker blade took over battling me all on its own.

Bigfoot lunged for Nefarious using his body to spear him in the gut, the two tumbled to the ground, but Nefarious landed on top of Bigfoot then bashed him in the face a few times.

Bigfoot swung back knocking Nefarious off of himself. Bigfoot was in pain now and crouched in the fetal position.

Nefarious stood up then raised his hand to the sky. At once the army of ravens in the storm came in a line.

"I like you monster... you are strong." Said Nefarious as the ravens began to swarm over Bigfoots body, covering him completely.

"I no monster!" Bigfoot shouted, trying his best to get away from the ravens, but they were much too strong and he was much too weak. The ravens continued to pile on, until there was nothing but a large mound of dark feathers.

"But you are a monster." Nefarious Replied. "Don't you know what the rest of this world thinks of you?... Let me show you what they really see... what you really are."

"Nefarious!" I shouted continuing to battle the wind seeker blade. "Leave him alone!"

At that an anger grew inside of me and I threw the boomerang so hard that the wind seeker blade and Boomerang began to battle each other all on their own. Clashing together in the dark storm.

"Forty-one!" I shouted and tracks appeared where Nefarious stood. The giant locomotive came immediately smashing into him and continuing off in the distance.

"That must have crushed him." I thought.

Suddenly the locomotive began to slow down and came to a halt. though it had now stopped its wheels were still moving at full speed slipping on the tracks. Without warning the entire locomotive flew off of its tracks flying into the air then landing on its side far off and exploding in the distance. There on the tracks stood Nefarious. Unscathed, unbroken with a piercingly angry look on his face as he glared at me from afar. He began to charge at me!

"Dragons swing!" Nefarious shouted and a large Vikings sword appeared in his hands as he rushed towards me.

"Merry go round!" I shouted, my band flashing white light and an army of animals rushed by me headed for Nefarious.

Nefarious and the animals collided, some of the animals hit him, but he was able to dodge most and used his Viking sword clear himself a path continuing after me. But before he could get to me, Montezuma caught up to the battle.

"Leave him alone!" Montezuma shouted clashing his jaguar blade against Nefarious' Viking sword. Montezuma had the final seal with him, and was trying to use it, but Nefarious knocked it out of his hands and it fell to the ground.

Nefarious smiled once again. "You can't beat me alone."

"He doesn't have to." Said Coast as she arrived at the battle with her corkscrew spear.

Meanwhile Westwood sped to help Bigfoot using Coasts buggy. When he arrived he could see Bigfoot was no longer covered by the horde of ravens, instead he lay face down in the grass, Dodo was already close by and slowly crept up trying to comfort him, but something was wrong. His brown fur had become completely black; it was like he was more of a shadow of his former self. Dodo crept closer but Bigfoot began to growl. Dodo took a step back. In an instant Bigfoot leaped at the poor Dodo bird grabbing it trying to eat it.

"Bigfoot!" Shouted Westwood.

Bigfoot stopped for a moment turning his head to look at Westwood. His face was almost unrecognizable. His once soft eyes now glowing with a tint of sinister red, his mouth panting and drooling. Bigfoot looked back at Dodo in his hands. The bird was terrified trying its best to squirm away from Bigfoots grasp as Bigfoot raised the poor bird to his mouth to take a bite.

"No!" Screamed Westwood and fired off a shot grazing Bigfoot in the wrist. Bigfoot let out a deathly roar dropping the bird. Dodo scampered away as far as it could. ... Bigfoot now turned his attention to Westwood.

“What’s wrong with you?” Asked Westwood but Bigfoot had no reply. Only growled and drooled.

“This is not you! Fight it!” Westwood demanded.

Still Bigfoot had no reply, instead he began to charge at Westwood. Westwood thought for an instant that he should probably put poor Bigfoot down, but he knew this beast wasn’t really him. Only a shadow of his former self. Bigfoot was being used as some kind of puppet, and he couldn’t bear the thought of killing his best friend. It wasn’t his fault he had become this thing.

Westwood wouldn’t put Bigfoot down. Instead he hopped in Coasts buggy ridding away from Bigfoot giving himself more time to think about what to do. Bigfoot chased after Westwood grunting and roaring as he ran on all fours trying to catch up to the buggy.

Montezuma, and Coast continued to battle Nefarious. I had no weapon at the time, my boomerang was still battling Nefarious’ Wind seeker blade.

“*What can I do?*” I thought to myself, but before I could find an answer Nefarious called back his Wind seeker blade to help him battle against Coast and Montezuma using it like a second sword and my Boomerang came back to me.

“Xcell!” I shouted and my Xcellerator boots flashed white light. I rushed at Nefarious at massive speed, my boomerang in hand. I smashed into Nefarious knocking him back, he tumbling in the grass.

Montezuma rushed at Nefarious trying to stab him while he was down, but Nefarious swung back blocking the attack, this forced Montezuma back he tumbling off in the distance. Quickly he hopped back up shaking himself off and rushing back again.

Coast and I now clashed swords with Nefarious.

“What have you done with Surfside?” Coast demanded. “Give him back!”

“You can have him.” Nefarious whispered.

Suddenly out from the center of the storm something began to fall out.

It was Surfside! His body falling lifelessly from the sky and slamming into the ground.

I took over battling Nefarious with my Boomerang.

“Go get him!” I shouted to Coast and she headed to help Surfside. Montezuma rushed back and together the two of us continued to battle Nefarious.

“You two think you can beat me?” Laughed Nefarious. “Let me show you what real power is.”

Suddenly something began to happen, the ground began to quake and out of the ground hundreds of Dinosaur came clawing their way out from the earth. The dinosaur came in hordes and Monte and I tried to fight them off, there were so many of them, they were overpowering us. Montezuma had no choice.... we would have been eaten by the dinosaurs if he hadn’t called upon it.

“Quetzalcoatl!” Monte shouted and out from the sky came a large feathered serpent, larger than any dinosaur, it fought back protecting us from the dinosaurs devouring any that came too close.

Meanwhile Coast rushed to Surfside’s aid, but when she arrived she noticed something was wrong, he wasn’t in pain, ...he just stood there alone. He also looked different. Darker. She called out to him but he had no reply. Like Bigfoot he too had become only a shadow of his former self.

“Get in!” Shouted Westwood pulling up in Coasts buggy. Coast saw Bigfoot headed their way chasing after the buggy. Coast hopped inside the buggy and the two continued to evade Bigfoot.

“Somethings wrong with Surfside.” Cried Coast.

“I know.” Westwood Replied. “Bigfoot too. They ain’t themselves.”

“What do we do?”

“I don’t know.”

The two continued to evade Bigfoot. Suddenly in the sky they could see Surfside riding his glider headed for them. A flash of light came from his direction and then out from the ground a large burst of water followed by a giant hammerhead shark! The shark was large, Larger than any whale, the shark rose into the air then arced before coming back down intending to smash the buggy head first. Westwood maneuvered the buggy just out of its way and the shark hit the earth and with another giant splash disappearing.

“Surfside is using his bands against us!” Said Coast.

“Well that’s just great.” Westwood replied. “How are we supposed to fight that.”

“Maybe I can bring him back. He knows me.”

“Not him!” Shouted Westwood

“What?” Replied Coast

Westwood pointed off in the distance. “That!”

Hordes of Dinosaur were coming their way, all of a sudden another flash of white light from Surfside and a large pool of water surrounded the buggy and all of the Dinosaurs.

“He’s using the whirlpool band!” Shouted coast. “Hold on tight!”

The buggy floated as the water began to swirl viciously. The dinosaurs tried to escape but the whirlpool was just too powerful. The whirlpool began to suck the dinosaurs in drowning them. One of the smaller dinosaurs grabbed onto the side of the buggy, Westwood shot it with his revolver and it fell back into the water. Soon the Whirlpool dissipated, the buggy landing back on the ground and around them now were the bodies of the Dinosaurs that had drowned.

They could see Surfside land his glider and stumble back to the ground, something was wrong with him.

“I think he just helped us.” Said Coast.

“He’s not what you think he is.” Replied Westwood. “He’s lost now.”

“Then I need to bring him back.” Coast countered as she rushed from the buggy heading for Surfside.

Immediately after Westwood could see Bigfoot finally catching up and heading after Coast so he thought maybe he could use the buggy to distract him, it worked and Bigfoot chased after Westwood once more.

Montezuma and I continued to battle Nefarious as the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl continued to protect us from the dinosaurs. Montezuma was very skilled and was able to slice at Nefarious a few times, but every time he did he would also be in pain for a moment because of the connection between the two of them. The wounds, however, would disappear almost as fast as they came and he would continue to battle.

We were both trying so hard to fight Nefarious, but it was more like Nefarious was toying with us, eventually Nefarious became fed up knocking us back. He impaled Monte through his shoulder with the Viking sword while he was down, sticking him to the ground. Monte zuma

screamed in agony trying his best pull the sword out from his shoulder, but the sword had gone all the way through planting itself into the ground.

Montezuma's wound also hurt Nefarious and his own arm became limp.

"Stay!" Nefarious Shouted in agony.

Somehow I managed to fight even harder but though he could only use one arm, Nefarious continued to dominate the battle one handedly. He began to toy with my mind.

"I can send you home Miko." He said as his Wind seeker blade and my boomerang clashed together. "Just let me take the power from inside of you."

"Shut up and fight." I replied.

"You don't need to die; I can take it from you without killing you."

"He's lying." Warned Montezuma as he continued trying his best to pull the Viking sword out from his shoulder. "He'll kill you!"

Montezuma looked to me in agonizing pain. "Don't listen!" He said. "He'll kill everyone."

"You don't belong here!" Said Nefarious as he knocked me back. "Even now your wife is at home waiting for you Miko. You can be with her again, just give me what I want... Or I'll kill you both!"

"Shut up!" I demanded again rushing back to him attacking again and he blocking then counter attacking.

"I can send you home. I can even show you how to live forever."

Montezuma continued to pull at the Viking sword that had pinned him to the ground, suddenly he could see the final stone laying close by. It was just out of his reach; his fingers could barely touch it.

Meanwhile Coast arrived to help Surfside. He was kneeling in the mud holding his head with both hands. It seemed as though he was trying to fight it, fight whatever Nefarious had done to him, resisting Nefarious' control. For a short moment he was able to change back to himself, but he quickly faded away.

"Surf." Said Coast touching him on his shoulder. "It's okay I'm here."

"No, no, no, no." Surfside whimpered. "Please don't."

"Don't what?" Replied Coast. But Surfside wasn't really talking to her, he was battling inside his own mind. Trying to overcome whatever Nefarious had done to him.

"Surf what's wrong?!" Coast shouted demanding an answer, but instead of an answer Surfside's band flashed and his weapon was now drawn, a dangerous blade called the Pacific Scrambler, he had never used it while training with Coast, because he was worried that he would've hurt her if he did. He pounced upon Coast putting the sword to her throat, but stopped himself, battling his own mind. Coast reached up and touched Surfside's face as she laid there helplessly under him.

"I love you." She said. "Before you end me I want you to know that I loved you. I should have told you before, but I was afraid you wouldn't love me back."

Surfside continued to battle with himself trying to stop himself from cutting her, he was able to pull the sword away from her throat, and for one painful moment he was able to show himself and speak.

"Coast." Stuttered Surfside, tears now dripping down his face. "... You ...need to kill me."

Surfside once again turned back to his shadow like self, he was gone now, the darkness he had been battling with in his mind must have won.

Coast drew out her Corkscrew spear knocking him off of herself. Surfside quickly hopped back to his feet rushing back to slice at her.

“Vertigo!” Coast shouted and her band flashed white light. Surfside began to stumble and fell in a dizzy pain vomiting with all the nausea the vertigo band had put upon him. Coast did not want to fight him. She didn’t want to kill the only man she had ever loved!... instead she ran.

As I battled Nefarious he continued to taunt me, trying to get into my head.

“So what will it be?” He asked. “Will you die here today? Or will you give me what I want? Will you let me help you and send you home, back to your wife where you can forget about this cruel place?”

I have to admit that I almost wanted to take his offer. I wanted to go home back to Michelle. But I believed my brother Monte. That Nefarious was a liar, trying to deceive me. Suddenly wise words passed through my mind. The wise words of Mr. Knott the farmer. I didn’t know what they meant before, but now I did.

“You and I.” I replied. “We are not cowards, but a long time ago you were lost along the way, and that makes you weak and afraid. I was once afraid too, but now I am brave, and the brave find a home in every land.... I don’t need your help; your heart is filled with fear...I will find my way home without you.”

My answer did not please Nefarious, he threw his wind seeker blade so hard that it knocked my giant boomerang right out of my hands he then grabbed me by my neck choking me and used his wind seeker blade to fly us into the sky, it rotating just above his hand like a propeller.

“I’ll show you fear!” He shouted as we rose into the storm.

Suddenly My boomerang came back knocking Nefarious’ Wind seeker blade out of his hands. The boomerang and blade continued to attack each other out of our grasps as we plummeted downward toward the ground.

Nefarious held onto me as we free fell through the sky.

“Look at them!” He said.

I could see everything from above now. Monte struggling to remove the Viking sword from his shoulder as the Dinosaurs began to swarm over the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl. Surfside chasing after Coast and Bigfoot Chasing after Westwood.

“How brave are you now?” He asked.

I have to admit, I was afraid for a moment, but not for me and not of death. I was afraid for everyone else. I was afraid of what would happen to Monte if I died. Would my wife Michelle and unborn child be safe? I knew that if I were to lose this fight he would consume everyone and everything in Boysenvale including my new found friends.

“Everything that you love....” Said Nefarious. “I will consume it all... even her.”

I was not going to let that happen! I needed to find a way to beat Nefarious somehow, then I saw it. My Perilous Plunge Band, it was glowing now, not ever since I had gotten it had I been able to use it!

“Perilous plunge!” I shouted, and the band flashed white light and for once I was able to overpower Nefarious in the air, we fell downward faster than the speed of falling I smashing him into the ground which was followed by a giant wave of water that tidal waved outward from around us...

Meanwhile Bigfoot was finally able to catch up to Westwood in the buggy tackling the buggy and making it tumble. Westwood flew from the buggy landing in the mud. He then tried his best to crawl away.

Bigfoot hopped atop the overturned buggy searching for him for a moment then saw Westwood crawling away. He roared charged after Westwood jumping then landing over him. Bigfoot turned Westwood over and was met with a revolver pointed at his chest.

“Bigfoot...?” Said Westwood, tears in his eyes. “What have you become?” and for one moment, like Surfside, Bigfoot was able to show his true self.

“Westwood.” Bigfoot whimpered. “...I monster now...”

“I know big guy... I know.” Westwood cried as he watched Bigfoot slowly become lost again. Westwood cocked his revolver preparing to put Bigfoot out of his misery... he began to pull back on the trigger... and when he did something hit him as his pistol fired... A giant wave of water! The two were washed away.

Meanwhile I had finally overpowered Nefarious, I had slammed him into the ground with my perilous plunge band. The wave that came had washed away all the Dinosaur and Quetzalcoatl with it. It turned the ground to mud freeing Montezuma and he was finally able to pull the Viking sword from his shoulder.

Immediately afterward the wave was gone and all that was left was mud as I lay atop Nefarious, he seeming to be unconscious for the moment.

Then I saw it! The final seal resting not more than five feet away. I ran to grab it and when I did Nefarious awoke tackling me to the ground. I had the seal in my hand but he immobilized my arm by kneeling on it.

Nefarious looked at me for a moment with scowl in his eyes. I could hear Monte shouting as he rushed our way but he was still so far.

“He can’t save you.” Said Nefarious. “He can’t even save himself.”

Nefarious called his Wind seeker blade back from battling my boomerang and it rushed from the sky and into his hands.

“Don’t worry Miko.” He laughed as he held the blade high in the air preparing to kill me with it. “This will only hurt very much.”

Nefarious thrust the blade downward at me but suddenly stopped just before the blade had reached my chest. He was out of breath and looked like he was in pain, he then looked over in the distance. We could see Monte; he was falling to his knees. He had stabbed himself in torso with his own jaguar blade. The blade had gone all the way through, its bloody sharp end exiting out of his back. Monte looked at me and smiled before falling over.

Nefarious was trying his best to breathe. The two were connected so he must have felt what Monte was feeling. Nefarious shook his head trying to forget the pain re-lifting the wind seeker blade in the air but before he could stab me something large knocked Nefarious off of me smashing him into the ground.

It was my boomerang! It had still been battling with Nefarious’ wind seeker blade chasing after it when Nefarious called it back to himself. Quickly I rushed to where Nefarious lay with the final seal in my hand, finally he was weak, yet still he tried to stop me grabbing my wrist.

“Go to sleep!” I shouted and with one last thrust I was able to forcefully touch the seal to his chest. Ice began to slowly form around the seal covering Nefarious chest then reaching to other parts of his body. Nefarious looked at me with disgust in his eyes.... he began to speak.

"It's your morals that will be the end of you Miko." Said Nefarious finally giving up. "Everything dies. Someday the seal will wither away and I will be free again. When that day comes I will consume this world and the other worlds with it... including yours... You should have let Montezuma kill us."

"If that day comes I will stop you." I replied.

"You can't live forever. Someday death will find you, but Monte and I... we can live forever, and he can't stop me alone. You are only postponing the future that I will bring. Someday I will be free again."

"If that day comes." I replied. "Then I will be here to stop you and lock you away, and after I die, my children will lock you away and their children's children... Until the day you no longer remember who you are or why you are here, and when that day comes you will still be locked away..."

"Next time." Replied Nefarious as the ice began to cover his neck crawling up his face. "I'll kill you quick."

The ice covered the rest of his face and body. It began to grow back into the mountain it had been before. The mountain moved back over reflection lake before disappearing once again. All that could be seen was the final seal which burst back into its seven pieces flying off to different parts of the world.

The battle was over, Nefarious would now be sealed away for many years to come. I began to search for the rest of my group.

I found Montezuma laying in the mud in blinding pain. The Jaguar blade pierced completely through him.

"Get it out, get it out." Montezuma Whined. and I grabbed the blades hilt.

"Okay." I said. "On three."

Montezuma nodded and I counted to three before forcefully pulling the blade out from his abdomen. Montezuma sighed in relief and I could see the wound where the sword had entered begin to close and disappear, there were no markings left behind, it was like he hadn't been stabbed at all.

"Finally." Montezuma laughed in relief. "He's gone!"

We looked to the sky, the storm had now gone. The ravens still circled in the sky, but began to turn white. The thousands of white raven began to scatter to different parts of Boysenvale.

"He's giving them back." Montezuma Announced.

"Giving what back?" I asked.

"Everyone." He replied.

The white ravens scattered to every area of Boysenvale where they had once taken people. They swarming in different places then disappearing. In their place appeared the people they had taken.

In Calico all the townspeople were returned along with deputy Tommy and the cancan dancers, even Dr. Skinem and his assistant were returned.

In the Mysterious Forest Chief (Speaks with stories) watched as his entire tribe was returned to him. Happily, he cried as his grandchildren rushed to his side pulling and tugging at him wanting to tell him stories of their own.

Jeff the train Engineer was by himself in the middle of nowhere sitting in his locomotive when his Brother, the Head Engineer was returned to him. He gave his brother a hug.

"What happened?" The Brother asked.

“He did it!” Declared Jeff. “Michael stopped Nefarious!”
“Who’s Michael?” He asked.
“An Operator.” Jeff replied.

Mr. and Mrs. Knott and their children were returned to a field of crops on their farm.
“What happened?” Russell asked his father Mr. Knott.
“They did it.” Replied Mr. Knott. “They defeated Nefarious.”

All had now been returned to Boysenvale... All but three...

Coast was crying searching through the mud for Surfside. Calling out his name. She plopped down in the mud and was about to give up when one of the white ravens landed in the mud and disappeared. Suddenly out from the same spot came Surfside’s hand. Coast rushed to him helping him. She sat him up and out of the mud. He was his normal self again but he was very weak and could barely talk. Coast cried hugging him as hard as she could.

“I think I had a nightmare.” Surfside said before passing out.

Another white raven flew into the mud not far away and out came Bigfoot and right underneath him lay Westwood which he pulled up out of the mud.

“Are you okay?” Westwood coughed rubbing the mud from his eyes.

“Yes, I fine.” Replied Bigfoot. “I had bad dream bout monster.”

“Me too.” Replied Westwood. “But that wasn’t real.. You are real.”

“Of course I real, what wrong with you Westwood? You’re head no work no more? You getting real old.”

Westwood laughed, then stood up patting Bigfoot on the back ...also checking Bigfoot for a bullet wound, there wasn’t one.

“Where Dodo?” Bigfoot asked.

“I don’t know.” Westwood replied as he took a look around. “We had better find him though.”

Monte and I caught up with Coast and Surfside first. Coast shook Surfside just long enough for him to wake for a moment.

“Looks like you’re an operator after all.” Surfside weakly smiled and I gave him a hug before he passed out once again.

“There’s something wrong with him.” Said Coast.

“He’s extremely tired.” Montezuma replied. “He must have been battling Nefarious in the dark storm for days. Don’t let him wake for long he may be deathly tired. Let him rest for now.”

Coast stayed with Surfside. Monte and I headed to find Westwood and Bigfoot, I found my leather backpack along the way. Hiding inside was Dodo, the bird was shivering. I calmed Dodo as best as I could.

When we found Westwood and Bigfoot I told them that I had already found Dodo. I let the bird out of the bag and Bigfoot called to it. But Dodo was scared hiding behind Montezuma.

“Dodo’s a little shook up, let’s give him a little time.” Westwood insisted.

“Why?” Bigfoot asked. “What happen to Dodo?” But then Bigfoot paused for a moment... and he remembered his Nightmare.

“...It no was dream.” Bigfoot frowned. “...I try eat Dodo.”

“It’s not your fault.” Replied Westwood. “That wasn’t really you.”

Dodo peered out from behind Monte and slowly began to creep out. It squawked at Bigfoot then came to him.

“It okay Dodo. I no eat you.” Bigfoot assured.

Bigfoot put his hands on the ground and Dodo climbed into them. Bigfoot gently raised the bird to his chest and hugged it.

I remember always thinking to myself that Dodo never learns, but in this instance I knew that I was happy that it was able to forgive and forget. Without Bigfoot the Dodo bird would have died off long ago.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A VICTORS WELCOME

It was now time to go home. I used my band and we all traveled together upon my 340 locomotive. Bigfoot helped raise Surfside to the top of the locomotives tender where he continued to sleep. Our first stop was in Fiesta village. Where we met with Diego once more. Diego told us that a flock of raven had entered the town and while in mid battle they had turned into white ravens and left. The entire town held a festival in our honor.

We stayed at the house of Diego that night. The next morning, we left Fiesta Village and headed to the town of Calico where we were once again greeted by the towns people whom raised Westwood on their shoulders and into the saloon where the drinks were free. The town was still in shambles but the people were already making quick do with what they had. The people of Calico wanted to officially make Westwood the town mayor, but Westwood politely declined saying that he would always be there for the town as the sheriff of Calico. Westwood wanted to come with us to help me find my way home, but the town was still in pieces, we all decided that he should stay behind to help out.

We all said our goodbyes to him. Bigfoot gave Westwood the biggest bear hug raising him into the air.

“You take care of yourself out their big guy.” Said Westwood.

“You too partner.” Replied Bigfoot with a smile. “Oh and no get so old.”

Westwood laughed replying. “Take a bath... You smell.”

We left Westwood in calico and the rest of us headed back through the desert and into the forest where we were met by Chief Speaks with stories and his tribe. There were hundreds of tribe members and they all welcomed us. We all went into the mysterious lodge and sat around the large fire pit where the chief manipulated the fire and smoke to tell our story of battling Nefarious to the rest of his tribe.

The tribe saw us off with great pride as we left the next morning. I thought we were going to leave Bigfoot there that day.

“Well I guess this is it.” I said.

“I go with you.” Replied Bigfoot. “We still need find you way home.”

I wasn’t one to argue with Bigfoot, he always did what he wanted to do so we all continued on. We were amazed when Coast put on Surfside’s glider band. She used Surfside’s glider to help fly each of us over the river and back into the plains again. Once again we all boarded my

locomotive and headed for Mr. and Mrs. Knott's farm, where we were greeted by Mr. Knott himself.

Mr. Knott's son Russell came straight to me saying that he saw us fighting Nefarious.

"I knew you were an operator!" Russell shouted. He and his sisters were quick to find Bigfoot and Dodo. The four kids took turns as Bigfoot lifted them into the air as high as he could.

Mr. Knott once again invited us into his home where he set up a bed for the sleeping Surfside to rest. We ate chicken once more. It was just as delicious as the first time.

We asked Mr. Knott about the boysenberries and he regretfully told us that there were no more, that they wouldn't be growing again until next season.

There and then I knew that I'd be away from my wife for much longer now. This saddened me extremely and I went out to the porch to sit by myself.

Outside, the Knott family's golden retriever came to me wanting me to pet it so I did. It began to lay at my feet and rest.

Suddenly I could hear the rest of the group shouting from inside, calling me.

"Michael!" Monte called peeking out of the screen door of Mr. Knott's home. "Get in here!"

When I got inside everyone was sitting around the dining table ...staring at Surfside. He was finally awake. He had slept for almost two whole days. He was now sitting at the table with the rest of the group and his hands were held out in the center of the table, inside of his hands lay a lone Boysenberry.

"It was Coast." Claimed Surfside. "She brought it to me when she left you, when she came back to the Boardwalk. I knew how much she liked the first one she ate so I was going to save it for her, but I believe you need this more than we do."

Coast took the Boysenberry from Surfside's palm and placed it in mine.

"Now you can go home Michael." She said.

"So I just eat it Monte?" I asked looking to Montezuma.

"Not just yet." He Replied. "You need to find the original place you entered Boysenvale in order to return."

"The sky cabin." I replied. "I landed on the boardwalk in it the day I came here."

"Then we need to get you back there." Declared Mr. Knott.

"Not until morning." Replied Mrs. Knott as she served tea. "You all need some rest and definitely a good washing."

We each took baths before bed. Bigfoot was so large that he had to use the bathtub more like a sink trying to clean up his best, he left a pool of water around the tub. It was a mess and I mopped it and removed all of the fur left behind before taking a bath of my own. I have to admit it was quite disgusting.

That night I dreamt about my wife Michelle once more. She was waiting for me at the sky cabin's entrance in the theme park. She was staring up at the sky cabin which was stuck at the top of its tower. I felt so bad. She looked so sad and worried.

"I'm coming home." I said to her but there was no reply. She couldn't hear me.

I woke that morning early and found that Monte was sitting outside on the porch by himself. I went to him sitting beside.

"Today's the day." Said Montezuma patting me on the back. "Today you get to go home."

"Yeah." I replied.

"Once you leave... I'll head back out there again."

“Out where?” I asked.

“To find the seven seals.” He replied. “There is no time to waste. It took me many years to find them the first time and I need to get to them before the grey witch Edena does.”

I knew there and then that Montezuma had a burden upon him. That no matter what and as long as he lived he would be cursed to search Boysenvale to keep Nefarious at bay. That for his entire existence he would be burdened to find the seven seals. Montezuma could probably tell how bad I felt about that. I don’t blame him for changing the subject.

“What will you do with yourself once you get home?” He asked.

“It doesn’t matter.” I smiled. “As long as it’s with Michelle I’ll be happy.”

“She sounds like a very good woman.” He replied.

“She is. She’s my whole life.” I replied then thought for a moment... “Maybe I’ll write too.”

“I didn’t know you liked to write.”

“I’m not very good.” I laughed. “I don’t like to read much either but I think I should at least try.”

“What will you write about?” Montezuma asked.

“I think I’ll write about the day I came here in the sky cabin. About how I met Surfside and Coast, the two protectors of the boardwalk. I’ll write about Mr. and Mrs. Knott and their farm.”

“It’s a very nice farm.” Monte Replied. “What else will you write of?”

“I’d like to write about Bigfoot and Dodo, and the Mysterious forest... about the town of Calico and the great sheriff Westwood... and about the house of Diego and the play about the Bear prince.”

“I like that.” Montezuma replied. “Sounds like a good story.”

“...But do you know what I want to write about most?” I asked

“What?”

“You.” I replied

“Me?”

“Yes, My brother Montezuma. The greatest Operator that ever lived. I’ll tell our story about how we and our friends stopped Nefarious together.”

“I’d like that.” He grinned.

“I’m going to miss you big brother.” I said nudging into him.

“And I you little brother...” He replied nudging back.

The rest of the group woke and we headed to the boardwalk that morning. Once we arrived at the sky cabin I said my goodbyes to each of my friends.

Surfside put out his hand to shake mine, but I swatted it away and gave him a hug.

“Take care of Coast.” I whispered to him. “She loves you more than life itself.”

“I will.” Surfside whispered back.

Next I said goodbye to Coast. She was trying her best not to cry.

“Do you think you’ll ever come back?” She asked.

“I don’t know.” I replied giving her a hug. She kissed my cheek. “But if I ever do, I promise to come and visit.”

“You better.” She cried with a teary smile.

Bigfoot was already crying; He didn’t want me to leave. He had been with me the longest on my journey through Boysenvale. We had spent the most time together and I was really going to miss him.

“Dodo no want you go now.” He said pulling the Dodo bird out of my leather backpack. I pet Dodo on the head and said goodbye to it.

“You no coming back no more, are you?” Bigfoot asked.

“I’ll try to come back someday.” I replied. “And when I do, I’ll come visit you and Chief in the forest.”

“Me and Dodo like that.” Bigfoot replied. Then gave me a giant bear hug raising me up in the air. I had seen Bigfoot hug Westwood like that before. It wasn’t as painful as it looked.

Finally, I said goodbye to my brother Montezuma. I gave him one of my bands. The 340 locomotive band.

“I can’t take this.” Said Montezuma.

“Can you use it?” I asked.

“Yes, but it belongs to you.” He replied.

“I know, but you need to find those seals. Boysenvale is a large place and if this band can help you find them faster, then I’d really like for you to have it.”

Monte took the band and put it on. “I’ll hold onto it for you. If you ever come back, It’s yours okay?”

“Okay.” I agreed. “Now give me a great big hug.”

Montezuma gave me a big hug.

“Live.” Montezuma said. “I want you to enjoy your life. Be strong for our father whom no longer has strength. Be kind for our mother whom was very kind... Play for our brother Koma, because he can no longer play. And laugh for our sister Aythel whom can no longer laugh. Live for them Miko... so that they may live through you.”

“I will.” I replied. “With all my heart.”

Monte told me I could eat the boysenberry now so I did and at once the Sky cabin suddenly began to light up and raise off of the ground hovering a foot in the air. It’s doors sliding open waiting for me to step inside.

I stepped through the Sky Cabins doors which closed behind me, and I watched through the windows waving goodbye as my friends waved back. Suddenly as the cabin rose in the sky I could see two riders headed toward the boardwalk. It was Diego and Westwood! I thought maybe they were trying their best to make it to see me before I left. The two looked disappointed that they were unable to be there to see me go, but I knew that they were there and that meant the world to me. I don’t know for sure if they could see me too but I did wave to them.

I watched my friends fade as I rose higher into the sky. Eventually the cabin rose so high that it was above the clouds now.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HOME

“Take me home.” I said to the cabin and it began to descend back down toward the earth. Suddenly I could see Knott’s berry farm once again, the theme park that is, and as I came closer to the sky cabins loading dock a large blinding flash of light appeared and the cabin was now again connected to its tower.

As the cabin came lower to the ground I could see that there were workers from all around the park waiting, watching the sky cabin dock.

Once the cabin came to a stop the doors opened and outside I saw the most beautiful of sights. My wife Michelle. She was waiting for me. She gave me the biggest hug asking me if I was okay.

"I am." I replied hugging her as hard as I could.

"Easy Michael." She warned touching her tummy. "You don't want to hurt the baby."

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"I missed you." Michelle replied. "I'm just glad you're still alive, you must be starving, being stuck up in that sky cabin for almost a week."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"The sky cabin somehow shut down up there and you've been in there for days now, are you sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine." I said with a smile then gently began to hug her once more. Michelle noticed the bands on my arms and my Xcellerator boots and then she knew the truth.

"The dreams." She said. "I had dreams about you Michael; you were in another world."

"I dreamt of you too." I replied.

"Did those things really happen?" She asked.

"They did." I smiled. "If it wasn't for you I might not have come back."

The park medics examined me and were amazed that I was physically fine. I had to lie telling them I always kept lots of food and water in my backpack for lunch and just rationed it while I was "Stuck" in the sky cabin. After that I was free to go home.

Michelle and I began to head out of the park once more, we passed by the various rides along the way. On the boardwalk there were the rides Coast rider and Surfside Gliders. I now had a deeper respect for these rides, because I knew that they were connected with my friends in Boysenvale. We passed by the roller coaster called Boomerang also, I wore my boomerang glove still and the emblem on it glowed for a moment as we passed by that ride. Even more proof that my journey to Boysenvale had actually happened.

While we were leaving we could see some construction happening at the calico mine ride and I had the idea to ask what was going on. There was a sign the worker was fastening to the entrance of the ride. The sign read "*The witches Keep.*"

"Excuse me sir?" I asked. "What are you working on?"

"We're getting ready for Halloween haunt." Said one of the workers. "Haunt is just around the corner."

Michelle and I left the park and made our way into the employee parking lot. When we reached our car we sat inside for a moment. Something inside me had changed. There was no longer any want inside of my heart. The question that I had been asking myself all my life had finally been answered. I now knew who I was and where I had come from. For the first time in my life I felt free. Free from want. Free with my wife Michelle.

"Well, what do you want to do now?" Michelle asked.

I rubbed her belly fixated on our unborn baby then started the car. "Live." I replied. "We are going to live..."

I pulled our car out of the parking lot and we headed home, but I was already home and would always be home as long as I was with her.

THE END

As I look back on my journey, I don't know the moral of my story. Maybe because the moral of my story is yet to be seen, maybe it will be revealed to me at the end of my life. Maybe it takes a lifetime to realize the meaning behind everything. Maybe only someone from an outside perspective can see the moral of my story. What I do know is that my journey to Boysenvale has changed me. I am stronger now, and I appreciate my life much more and relish my relationship with my wife more than ever before.

I want to thank you for reading my story.... I treasure you in my heart and hope that you enjoyed it. You are everything to me, for without you I would have no story to tell.

Farewell.... for now.

-Ghost town rides

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Calico Mine ride | Ghost town and calico railroad |
| Ghost rider | Screaming swing- coasts |
| Silver bullet | Timber mountain log ride |
| Butterfield stagecoach | Haunted Shack |

-Wild Water Wilderness

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Bigfoot Rapids | Pony express |
| Knott's Bear-y Tales | |

-Fiesta Village

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Dragon swing | Hat Dance |
| Jaguar | Merry-Go-Round La revolution |
| Montezuma's Revenge | |
| Wave swinger | Wind seeker |
| Fiesta Wheel | Tijuana Taxi |
| Mexican Whip | Tampico Tumbler |

-Boardwalk

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Boomerang | Coast Rider |
| Pacific Scrambler | Riptide |
| Sky Cabin | Supreme scream |
| Surfside Gliders | Wheeler Dealer Bumper cars |

Corkscrew
Xcellerator
Hammerhead
Wacky Soap Box Racers
Perilous Plunge
Windjammer Surf Racers
Whirlwind
Headache
Vertigo
XK-1

Wipeout
Gasoline Alley
Kingdom of the Dinosaurs
Motorcycle Chase
Propeller Spin
Sky Jump
Greased Lightning
Gran Slammer
Henry's Auto Livery
Whirlpool

Cable Cars
Knott's Lagoon
Loop Trainer Flying Machine
Mott's Miniatures
Walter K. Steamboat

A shriek came from inside that mine. What she had once grasped was now gone... taken from her, stolen from her! The mine rumbled and what was once blasted shut was now forced back open. Steam and oar, dirt and earth, flew into the sky ... Without doubt ...the grey Witch would have her turn.