

Chapter 1

Meet the Carrot-Tops

A long, long time ago, in the year 1850, there was a man by the name of Sam Carrot-Top. He was a well educated man, slender in build and always wore a dusty old cap that covered his orange hair and broken glasses. He was an honest and wealthy man, but you would never guess that he and his family were well off; he never showed his wealth or bragged about it. He used his money to help the poor and needy.

His wife, Jane, was oh so beautiful, with lush red hair, a petite figure, and smooth, creamy pale skin. She loved all the children in the neighborhood, always fixing a broken heart or a scraped knee. She was the perfect housewife, the kind any man could want.

They lived in a small town in Georgia called Valdosta. Sam and Jane were the talk of the town; they grew the largest vegetables and fruits the eyes have ever seen. Their watermelons were the size of houses and carrots as long as 20 feet!

All the neighbors began to whisper, and became jealous of the success of the Carrot-Tops; farmers came from near and far to see the great Carrot-Top plantation. Because of

the popularity of their fruits and vegetables, they became a household name. Merchants came from all over the world to buy their fruits and vegetables.

Some of the other farmers became extremely jealous of the success of the Carrot-Tops. They tried to sabotage their land, either by overflowing it with garbage or water, but it never worked. The fruits and vegetables kept on growing and growing. Some were so tall that their leaves touched the clouds. Nevertheless, Sam and Jane ignored their rivals and continued to be good neighbors.

Their pride and joy was their son and only child, Peter Carrot-Top, a 10-year-old boy who was as skinny as a Beanpole with bright orange hair and deep freckles on his face. He wore the same old clothing over and over again, brown khaki pants and a rainbow-colored shirt with two different colored shirt sleeves.

Peter was teased by all the kids. Not only was his hair funny, but his name, Peter Carrot-Top, was as well. The kids teased him all day. Every day it was the same thing, kids singing, "Peter Carrot-Top, Peter Carrot-Top," in an annoying and devilish tone.

Peter was sick of it. Unfortunately, every time he got upset, his head would swell up like a big orange balloon and his orange hair would gently stand up at attention.

This made the kids laugh even harder.

Peter was all alone in the world; he didn't understand or fit in. There was nothing the principal or the teachers could do. He was just a special boy. His mother and father were hurt the most; Peter got the orange hair from his father, and the freckles from his mother.

His parents went to the school regularly to seek help for him. Just a poor farmer, Peter's father did not know what to do. He would pace the school hall as he talked to the Dean of the school asking for help for his son, but Mr. Snicker, the Dean, just walked around with his fat gut stuck out, and only made the Carrot-Tops feel worse by telling them their child needed to be placed in a special school.

Peter's father slammed down his hat in frustration as the Dean sat back in his leather chair, and smoked his cigar with a smirk on his face.

Mr. Snicker shouted at Peter's father, "Boy, calm down before I have you thrown out on your ears!"

Peter's father grabbed up his hat; took his wife by the hand and stormed into Peter's English class. "Peter, get your things. We're taking you out of this school!"

By the look on his father's face, Peter knew that his dad was very upset. All Peter's mother could do was cry and

sob as they walked out the doors. The kids began to laugh, and once again, Peter felt distant and alone.

Peter and his family jumped into their wagon, and off they went. He could see the concentration on his father's face, and the sadness in his mother's eyes. Peter began to tell his parents how very sorry he was, but a gentle touch on the hands from his mother let him know it was all right. Peter lay back in the seat of the wagon and didn't say another word.

Suddenly the wagon began to lift until it started to fly. Peter jumped out of his seat and gazed in awe; he was speechless. He looked down and saw that they were above the world.

He could see the cows and trees, and he even spotted his house. Peter was tickled to death; he began to laugh hysterically until his parents started laughing with him.

Peter said, "Father, what is going on?"

Peter's dad didn't say anything, then his mother jumped in and told Peter that they were from a different kind of generation.

"What kind is that?" Peter asked, dumbfounded.

Then a stronger, sterner voice jumped in; it was Peter's father. He went on to tell Peter the story of the Carrot-Tops.

Peter listened intently, and hung onto his father's every word. Peter's eyes began to move back and forth as every word spilled from his father's lips. He waited patiently to hear the story of the Carrot-Tops.

Peter's father went on to tell him that they are not alive, at least not on earth, and that they were from a world the living call "Death".

Peter stuttered and said, "Do you mean we're dead?"

"Yes, we're dead," Peter's father replied. He went on to tell Peter that they had been dead for years. He said they didn't belong to this world. He told Peter the world they belonged to was called Baja, a place of mysticism and power, a place so beautiful, and yet so evil.

"Wellllll, why aren't we there?" Peter asked his father, but his father could not do or say anything. He just hung his head down low and began to wipe the tears from his eyes.

Suddenly Peter's father parked the wagon on a hilltop way above the trees, where no one could see them; then he began to tell Peter why they were here on Earth.

"Well, son, many years ago I was one of the chosen ones to protect Baja and make sure that the city was preserved for all our generation, but I failed at my job."

Peter's father told him of how he was in charge of

leading an army of men to get the eighth key. This key opens the door to the eighth elder of the world. The elders were in hibernation. When they awoke, they protected not only Baja, but also Earth.

He told Peter that he failed when he lost the key. Because he lost the key, the eighth elder was never awakened. The other seven went back into hibernation because they can only function with each other; all eight have to be awake at the same time.

"Well, why did you lose the key?" Peter asked.

His father told him that the key was so powerful there was a rule to never touch it with your bare hands. He did anyway, and the key gave him so much power that he could not handle it. His hands began to burn and his skin began to rot and fall to the floor.

When he woke up, the key was gone and Baja was at risk. The remaining elders were very angry, and before they fell back into hibernation, they exiled Peter's father and mother from Baja. Peter's mother jumped in and began to tell Peter that she loved his dad so much that she was willing to take banishment with him, and one day their names would be cleared.

She also let Peter know that his father was being very modest and taking the entire blame. She said what really

happened was that Peter's dad, Sam, was forced to touch the key by his brother, Marcus. Instead of Sam turning his brother in to the elders, he took the blame for something that was not his fault alone.

Jane told her son that Sam's brother was evil and mean; but Sam didn't like to admit the fact that his brother set him up. Suddenly the wagon was quiet. No one made a sound.

Peter's dad began to look back at Peter in shame, but Peter jumped up and gave him a big hug.

Sam was relieved. In a trembling voice, he looked into Peter's eyes and asked, "So you aren't ashamed of us?"

"No!" Peter replied.

Peter then asked his father about the wagon flying.

"Oooohh! Yes, son, I will tell you about the flying wagon."

They all began to laugh. Sam told Peter that in Baja everyone has some special ability, from making objects fly to growing large fruits, vegetables and plants.

Peter suddenly looked at his mother and figured out that she was the one growing all the fruits and vegetables on their plantation.

She smiled with her cherry lips and said, "I was gifted with the green thumb."

Peter laughed and told his parents he was finally free. His parents looked bewildered and asked him what he meant. He told them that he knew now why he was different from the other children at school. Peter also told his parents he had something to show them.

"Up here?" Jane asked.

"Yes, come out of the wagon," Peter replied.

Peter's mom and dad looked at each other in amazement and shock as they jumped out of the wagon. Peter held his hand to the ground and began to shake. Suddenly a big hole appeared in the ground. The hole was so big that it swallowed up the trees. Peter looked at his parents with pride. They looked back at him in amazement.

"Why didn't you tell us, Peter?" his parents asked.

"Well, I did not want you to be ashamed of me. The kids at school were already calling me 'weird' and 'strange'. I didn't want to disappoint you."

"Never," said his father.

Jane asked Peter how long had he been keeping this secret from them, and Peter told them, for many years. He did it only because he was afraid of his own powers. That was a great power for a little boy to handle. Peter's parents knew that there must be something extra special about their son.

Their brains began to think of what all of this could mean; the wheels in their heads were turning so fast you could see smoke coming out of their ears. But nevertheless, Peter was happy that his conscious was clear, his face began to get some color and his eyes began to twinkle.

The family decided it was time to go home, and as soon as the rooster crowed in the morning, it would be time to see the Oracle. Off the hilltop they went, swaying through trees and mountains. Everyone had had a rough day, but now it seemed to be a day of joy and happiness.

Peter hung his head out of the wagon and began to feel the breeze on his face.

"Be careful," said Peter's mother.

"I will," he replied.

All that afternoon, they went flying over rivers, lakes and streams. They even passed a drunk sleeping under a tree. The man jumped up and began to scream, "The sky is falling!" He ran through the village telling the people, but no one believed him since he was the town drunk.

Peter and his family continued to ride the high hills and mountains until it got dark so they could return home without being seen. He was so excited that he had finally figured out why he was so different than the other children.

As for his parents, they were relieved that they were

not hated by their son, but they were also worried about his tremendous gift. It was a gift that no child should have, but they did not ruin the moment by being sad. They remained happy and upbeat all the way home.

As nightfall grew, Peter and his parents arrived home. Nothing was the same anymore; their house began to look old and rotten. They could see the tiniest imperfections, and they knew in their hearts that it was time to leave.

Peter was so excited he could not sleep, but his parents forced him into bed with the hopes of seeing a land the living only dreamed about. Peter asked question after question as he drifted off to sleep. His parents only smiled as they rubbed his orange hair and tucked him tightly into bed.

But as midnight approached, his parents found themselves pacing the floor. They discussed how long they had been away from Baja and how they would be accepted after 10 years. It was very stressful for them; their faces became blank and sad. Finally, they went to bed anticipating a meeting with the Oracle, the only one who could get them back into Baja.

Chapter 2

Meeting the Oracle

As the rooster sounded his alarm, Peter was the first one up and making breakfast for the entire family. He was so excited to meet with the Oracle, but his parents weren't. They never let Peter see the fear on their faces, and went about their morning as usual.

Sam was out in the plantation talking to the workers, letting them know that they might be gone for a long time. He told them he would sign his will over to one of his trusted workers and his family. He and the worker he picked began to debate back and forth about taking over his land. The worker told him that he was a poor Negro, and no colored man had ever owned anything this successful without being hung. Still, Sam insisted.

He gave his worker, Mr. Jones, a bag of magical seeds and told him to spread them along the property line and he would be protected. Sam let Mr. Jones know that he chose him because he was one of the workers who was always truthful, fair and honest with everyone. Though Mr. Jones was afraid, he took the bag of seeds and hid them in his pocket.

Sam patted Mr. Jones on the shoulder and let him know that everything would be all right, and that he would be watching. As Sam finished his business affairs, he went into the house where his wife and Peter were waiting on him to eat breakfast.

No one said a word. Reality was finally setting in on what they were about to do. Everyone took deep breaths and began to eat very slowly. Finally, Peter started a conversation and asked his parents what to say to the Oracle.

Sam replied, "Don't say anything until you're asked."

As breakfast finished, Sam began moving things around the house telepathically. Socks were flying through the air, and even Jane's underwear got caught on the lamp shade! She was so embarrassed; she jumped up and snatched them off the shade with a smirky grin at her husband.

Once Sam got everything packed, they walked around the house touching and feeling everything they would miss, but Peter didn't. He was so excited that he could hardly wait to leave. He began to pull his parents by the hand urging them to leave, but they were filled with so much emotion, they had to take a seat.

As they were saying their goodbyes, Peter was already in the wagon ready to go. After a long time of waiting, he

yelled from the wagon, "Come on!"

Then the door slowly opened and his parents walked out. Peter could tell Jane had been crying. Her eyes were puffy and swollen; her nose was red and her face was disheveled.

They jumped into the wagon and said goodbye to their workers. Sam pulled Mr. Jones aside and told him to never let anyone know that he had gone, and if anyone asked, to tell them that he had some business in Paris he was taking care of. Mr. Jones nodded, and they were on their way.

They made sure not to look back at the home and friends they were leaving behind to go to an uncertain place where they might no longer be welcome. The carriage ride was long and hot. Everyone was sweating.

"Are we there yet?" Peter asked.

"Soon, son," his father replied.

As the Carrot-Tops left their plantation, they were hailed and greeted by all the people of the town. Sam was sad to leave his home, but what he was doing was for his family, not for himself. Suddenly the carriage turned off a dark road.

It was so pitch black Peter became afraid and yelled out for his father, "Father!"

"It's okay," Sam replied, letting his son know that he

was right there with him.

Then there was light again, a big burst of brightness. It was so bright they could hardly keep their eyes open. Then it went dim, and Sam told Peter and Jane to get out of the wagon, and to follow him closely, out of the bright light.

There was a beautiful forest like nothing Peter had ever seen before -- the plants were moving and talking. Peter was startled for a minute but then regained his composure.

"Good day!" yelled the plants.

Peter stopped to inquire about the plants, but his mother pulled his hands away telling Peter that they had important work to do. Even the animals in the forest were glad to see visitors.

Then a rabbit the size of a wagon came up to Sam and shouted, "Well, well, well! The traitor is back!" with a smirk on his face.

"You're gonna get it now!" a squirrel replied.

Sam did not let it bother him. He kept walking to his destination, but Peter was amazed at the beauty and wonder of the forest.

"Pay them no mind, Peter. They all were once our friends," Jane said, but Peter was not listening. He was

too in tune with the singing waterfall.

He watched as the waterfall turned into different shapes, from a woman, to a dog, to a big roaring lion. This was all exciting to him.

"Where are we?" Peter asked his father.

"This is the portal to Baja" Sam replied.

"We're moving on," said Jane.

Peter replied, "I am so excited to see home, somewhere that I fit in."

As they walked the long forest pathway, there was a cottage made of golden bricks and rubies, and birds flapped their wings vigorously when they saw Peter and his family coming. The tension in Sam's eyes showed fear as he came to the gate of the cottage. He hesitated to knock.

His hands began to sweat and shake out of control, so Peter walked in front of him and knocked on the door. Suddenly, the door opened, but there was no one to greet them! They walked in quietly and stood in the middle of the hallway.

"Oracle, it is I, Sam. I have brought my son to you with a gift so powerful; it must be a sign from the elders."

Suddenly a burst of fire came from the chimney, and swirled across the room knocking down Peter and his father.

"Why have you come back? You have brought nothing but shame

on our kind."

As Sam began to answer, a woman appeared in the form of a snake with eight arms. Her fingers were covered with gold and diamond rings that glistened in the light. She had a crown on her head that was 9 feet tall, and in that crown were souls crying to be free. They were in a wax-like bubble.

The crown was made of gold and silver with hieroglyphic writings on the top and sides. The oracle was a 12-foot snake, dressed in the finest of linens. Her upper body was human, and the lower body a snake with a huge tail and a long rattler. Her fingernails were long and made of ivory like an elephant's tusk, but the most irritating thing was that she made this hissing noise that pierced their eardrums.

But, oh, what a beautiful creature! Her skin was like white flour. Her lips were like rose petals, and she had the most adorable face they had ever seen.

Sam quickly bowed down to the Oracle, asking her to hear him out. Jane did not bow down. She refused; telling the Oracle that she knew Sam was set up and did nothing to stop it, and now wanted to treat them like peasants.

The Oracle quickly threw a small fireball at Jane. She quickly ducked her head and the fireball missed her face by

an inch! Peter quickly defended his mother and created a massive hole in the center of the house where the Oracle was standing.

Suddenly the Oracle fell down the hole, letting out a hideous scream as she fell.

"Peter, what have you done? That was the Oracle!" said Peter's father.

"Served her right!" shouted Jane.

Suddenly a hand came out of the darkness and the Oracle crawled back to the top of the hole.

"What a powerful boy! I must speak with him," said the Oracle.

"No! Only if you get us back into Baja," Jane replied.

The Oracle hesitated and said, "Very well, but you are on your own once in Baja. You and your husband are hated by many. They blame both of you for the fall and destruction of Baja."

Then the Oracle went to Peter and told him to rise up and say nothing. Suddenly he levitated off the ground and floated toward the Oracle. As she placed Peter in her oversized hands, she closed her eyes and saw into the future. In her vision, Peter had a crown on his head. His father and mother were old and gray, but they also had crowns on their heads. The Oracle saw a great battle were

Peter defeated the evils that plagued Baja.

Suddenly, she opened her eyes and told the Carrot-Tops that they must head straight to Baja right away.

"What is it?" Sam asked.

The Oracle told Sam that his child, Peter, was the savior of Baja. Sam and Jane were in disbelief and began to laugh and cry with joy.

"Our son has saved us!" They cried, and threw Peter in the air and twirled him around in circles.

"Go now," said the Oracle. "I will make a way for you to travel. Tell no one of this secret or his life will be in danger." The Oracle repeated it to Sam and Jane over and over, until they got it in their heads. "Trust no one until they have earned your trust!" shouted the Oracle and off they went.

As they were leaving, the Oracle pointed the Carrot-Tops toward the kitchen, where hot food was waiting for them to carry on their long journey. The Oracle let them know that they must walk on foot and only use the resources of the forest. "Hurry along, Baja awaits you," the Oracle replied over and over again until her voice slowly disappeared.

Peter was very excited to go on an adventure. His feet began to swing back and forth, and his eyes lit up with

excitement. Peter asked his father why was he so special.

Sam explained that after the eighth key was lost and the elders could no longer stay awake, no child born would be blessed with a gift, and in Baja everyone had gifts. After the evil curse, no child born in Baja was blessed with a gift or talent, and therefore Baja was at the mercy of the evil dwellers.

"But then you came along, Peter." Sam looked loving in his son's eyes, "and all our fears and defeat seem to have dissolved away."

Sam went on to say that years had passed without a child developing powers in Baja, and therefore there was no one to fight the evil spirits that came upon the land. He explained that Baja needed a new generation of fighters.

"So, yes, son; you are special," Peter's father said, as the Carrot-Tops walked through the forest.

It was a magnificent experience. The birds began to fly overhead with their 10-foot wingspans and they sang, "The prince is coming, the prince is coming."

Peter was in awe of the birds' beauty. Their wings were so long that he could see no end. Their tails curled up like the locks in a Southern belle's hair. Their feathers were like a rainbow, every section of the birds were a different color. They flew in lines of five, giving

shade to the Carrot-Tops.

On the ground, the flowers protruded out of the Earth at least 20 feet tall. They dropped down big petals covering the Carrot-Tops. Peter and his family just laughed and indulged in all the attention. Sam looked at his wife and told her how good it felt to be adored again, and how great it felt to be going back home.

The flowers danced in a synchronized routine. One by one they waltzed and turned. Their petals were so huge, they looked like ballroom gowns. The flowers were so tall that from way, way up above, they looked like humans dancing.

"What a wonderful sight to see!" Jane said.

The forest animals now were so much more welcoming of the Carrot-Tops than the first encounter, and they took great care of the Carrot-Tops. Suddenly a turtle came by and asked the Carrot-Tops if they wanted a ride. Peter jumped up and said yes, and they climbed in.

The turtle shell was so big it was the size of a wagon. The inside had carved-out windows; the seats were made of the finest gold threads, and the floor was padded with the softest cushions. It was like heaven. On the wall of the shell was a picture of a young prince with bright orange hair. Peter and his parents stared at it.

Rabbits came offering the family honey tea and crumpets. Oh! The rabbits were so excited that they could barely keep still to take the Carrot-Tops' orders! Each one kept asking, "Could this really be the boy king?"

They zipped back and forth, running with the highest speed, bringing the family everything that they could possibly cook. First were the tea and crumpets, then sweet honey rolls. Next came roasted pig. Then they brought pork chops, steak, shrimp, fish and so forth until Sam told them lovingly to stop.

The poor rabbits were so out of breath that they collapsed on the floor. The Carrot-Tops laughed hysterically, until milk came out of their noses. Then the rabbits joined in on the fun.

"Oh, yes! This is our royal family," one rabbit said to another.

Peter looked out of the window and saw little elves waving and getting their first sneak peek at the boy prince.

"I see the word has spread," Jane said to Sam.

"Yes, indeed, my dear. The word has spread," Sam said.

One of the elves came to the window and took out a mirror device that glistened in the sun and captured a picture of the family, and then he ran off. The device mystified Peter. The handle was made of pure gold. It lit

up with secret codes and had writing Peter had never seen before.

Peter could see himself in the image, but it was of something or someone he did not know. The image showed a young boy with a crown on his head, clothed in the finest attire. Then it was gone.

"Oh, don't worry, Peter. You will get to see them again," his mother said.

Peter was so mystified by the elves that he kept looking for them out of the window, but they were gone. Sam told his son that the forest of Baja was so mystical there wasn't enough time in death to discover it all.

"Why are we dead?" Peter asked his parents.

His parents said that everyone dies, and moves on to other worlds, according to their deeds on Earth. They said no one knows how many levels there are to death, but to be on a good aura, you must do good things before you move on. Sam went on to tell Peter that sometimes worlds collide causing a clash of auras; sometimes it's good and sometimes it's bad.

"Is that what happened to you, Father?"

"Yes," replied Sam, "I got caught up in the power of self and all the finer things that came with it. Because of this, I was sent back to the living, never to see Baja

again."

Sam began to get teary-eyed, and Jane held his hand tightly and rubbed his shoulders, letting him know it was okay and they were on their way back home.

"Whatever you do, Peter, be a good person," said his mother.

"I will," Peter replied.

Suddenly the turtle made an announcement that he would be stopping for a rest, and Peter and his family could have a stretch. When the ride came to a complete stop, Peter jumped off, and his parents quickly followed.

There was a river made of dark chocolate next to them. Peter began to drink and drink until he saw a tree that produced strawberry cupcakes. He ran and plucked a few off, until the tree began to talk and it startled Peter.

"Welllllllll hello," said the tree in a deep voice.

Peter was too afraid to talk. He clutched his cupcakes and crawled back.

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the tree.

"Who are you?" Peter asked.

The tree told Peter he was just a tree, and it was his pleasure to serve him. Suddenly the branches on the tree turned into a face, one that was happy and jolly.

"I am so happy to be the first to serve the prince,"

the tree said in his husky voice.

Peter was amazed of all the wonders of the land great and small, from the tiny ants that lined the dirt path wearing their golden shoes on each leg, to the gigantic pelicans in the sky that flew people from destination to destination. It was such a wonderful sight to see a land of milk and honey that dripped from the leaves of the trees. Peter started to appreciate the world he was in. He really felt like he belonged, there were no regrets in him going there.

"Mother, Father! Come quick!" he called out.

His parents came running. Peter showed them the talking tree and the ants with golden shoes.

They cracked wide grins. "Yes, son, we know all about them. They are your family. Baja is your family," they both said together.

The tree just let out a big laugh, "Ha! Ha! Ha! Welcome to Baja, my Prince!"

Suddenly a horn sounded and the turtle let the Carrot-Tops know that he was almost ready to get back on the road again. Peter and his parents watched as the turtle got his shell washed by two octopuses, and then polished and shined by a herd of small spider monkeys.

"Oh, that feels good!" laughed the turtle, as the

monkeys polished under his belly.

Rats and rabbits brought fresh food. One by one, the animals catered to the Carrot-Tops. Clean clothing and sheets for the long trip were hauled back and forth. There were five old lady rabbits taking the measurements of Peter and his family. They measured the Carrot-Tops from head to toe, back and forth. They went on, not saying a word; they were busy in their duties.

Chapter 3

The Journey to Baja

Sam was so reluctant to accept his new clothing; he had become very familiar with his overalls and old cap. Jane just laughed.

"Oh, honey, you are so set in your ways!" Jane stated.

Peter was glad to have new clothing, even new clothing made by a handful of rabbits.

As the turtle was on his last step of grooming, Peter watched as grasshoppers brushed and cleaned the turtle's teeth. Soapy bubbles were splashing everywhere. Oh what fun it was for Peter! A place where he finally belonged; and a place he could really call home. The look of joy on his mother's face meant so much to Peter.

Then a loud horn blew. It was time to load up and leave. Back onboard, the Carrot-Tops were offered a fresh hot bath. Jane fixed Peter's bath first. As she made it of warm milk and bubbles, the bubbles began to sing to him as they floated in the air.

Jane watched as her son had the time of his life playing with the bubbles. Peter had so much fun that he didn't want to get out of the tub. After a long time of

trying to get him out, Jane took her bath, and then Sam followed shortly after. After the family was all tidied up, they were laced in the finest garments of gold silk and Egyptian fabrics.

"Supper is ready," one of the mice called out to the family.

But where could supper be? The inside of the turtle did not seem big enough for rooms and dining. But on the contrary, with the press of some golden symbols, the turtle turned into a mystical palace. The family was instructed to walk down a bright, colorful hallway, where the paintings on the walls began to talk and say "Hi" to them as they passed by. As Peter looked around in amazement, he laughed as two pictures of old ladies gossiped about the new arrivals; they pointed and stared.

As they came into the main dining area, a loud voice sounded from the line of servants. "I am Victor Caercio. I will be your main servant." But Victor was nothing more than a bossy cat who thought he was the best chef in Baja. With his Italian accent, he proceeded to tell the Carrot-Tops they were dining on the finest of everything.

Jane laughed and told Victor, "This is too fancy."

"Nonsense, my queen," said Victor. "You will get the best of the best."

Jane smiled and let Victor do his job. With the snap of his paws, he ordered the servants around. But, oh, what a sight to see! They were twirling like a well-organized team, one got the forks and spoons, another tied the napkins, and another poured their drinks. What more could a family want than to be pampered like kings and queens?

The night's meal was a rack of lamb roasted on red scalloped potatoes, milk from the finest cow, and warm dinner rolls with mouthwatering honey butter. As the Carrot-Tops ate, a big screen suddenly appeared on the wall. It took up the entire dinning area wall space.

"What is that, Father?" Peter asked inquisitively.

"Oh, they are the scenes of Baja," Sam answered.

The entire family watched the screen as images of Baja were shown. There were temples of the elders covered in gold and silver with code writing going up and down the sides. The temples were so tall that they touched the heavenly sky. Then there were flying pelicans that took citizens about their daily work and play.

Peter was especially amazed when he saw a pelican taking kids to school. The pelican was built like a large vessel that held about 2,000 citizens. It was a gorgeous bird with a tail long like a whip. A long strand of hair protruded from the bird's head with colors of the rainbow,

and like all creation in Baja, it had symbols of code going around its legs.

The huge bird had golden straps that ran across its nose, and some type of tag that hung from its tail. The kids on the pelican seemed to be having fun. Peter began to daydream of the way he would have fun once he get there, but no one was happier than Sam.

His orange hair began to stick up as if he had seen a ghost. He walked in front of the screen and began to slowly touch the images with his fingers. He stepped back in time to when he was a boy and had his first school ride. Then Sam broke down in tears.

Jane and Peter ran to his side telling him that it was okay, and they were home now. Victor the cat ordered the wait staff of mice to bring a chair. Quickly, they ran and picked Sam up off the floor. He had fallen to his knees as he reminisced about all the things he had lost. He clenched his fists, and vowed to regain all of his losses and the respect of the citizens of Baja. The wait staff of mice and other animals slowly began to clap, one by one, until the clapping could be heard loudly.

"My Lord, this is what we have been waiting for, for you to come back and save us," proclaim Victor.

The Carrot-Tops regained their composure, and began to

eat their dinner again, but their eyes were fixed on the magical screen. Peter continually watched the screen as the food missed his mouth. The scenes he watched were of the land and the people of Baja. How friendly and happy they were. He watched as the kids slid down a long dinosaur's tail and had lots of fun. The land of Baja was clearly a fairy tale -- trees talked and walked, and children had rocks for pets and took them for walks.

"I want a pet rock, Mother!" Peter shouted with excitement.

"I will think about it," said Jane with a smile on her face.

Baja was so unforgettable -- waterfalls that changed colors, rivers and streams made out of milk and chocolate, rabbits and animals that walked, talked and lived like people. It was the one and only place Peter wanted to be.

"How much longer before we reach Baja?" Peter asked.

Jane replied, "One more day, son, and we're home."

Sam told Peter that Baja was a big place that was constantly growing, and the more it grew, the longer it took to reach home. He turned to Jane and noticed she was very sad. He asked what was wrong, and she said she hadn't seen her parents in years. She wondered what they would think, and if they would accept her and her family.

Sam comforted Jane and said, "We will deal with one thing at a time. Everything will be all right."

As dinner was over, Victor the cat called to the wait staff to bring forth Miguel. He was introduced as the architect of Baja. With the stroke of his paintbrush and pencil, he could make anything come to life. The Carrot-Tops began to clap for Miguel. Gracefully, he accepted and began to draw on the walls. He drew a small tiny dragon with big black eyes. He graced the dragon with blue and white skin, and his long tail had white fluffy fur at the end. His ears pointed up to the ceiling. Peter was so excited to see the magic of the pencil. When Miguel was finishing drawing the dragon, it came to life and jumped into Peter's hands.

Oh, how excited Peter was! "Can I keep it, Mother?" he asked.

"Yes, you can. But remember, it is your responsibility to take care of it," Jane replied.

Peter couldn't thank Miguel enough. Miguel was so pleased and happy to serve the boy prince.

"I shall name it Dingo," said Peter, and Dingo ran into Peter's hand. Before long, they were on the floor playing. Dingo licked Peter with his purple and polka-dot tongue and began to wag his thick dragon tail. It was like

Christmas morning to Peter.

Then Miguel came and sat by Jane with his pencil and paper. He drew a large bouquet of singing flowers, and when the last petal was drawn, the flowers came to life. The bouquet popped off the artist's canvas and into Jane's hands.

"What lovely flowers!" she said.

The minute Jane touched the flowers, they began to grow. That was Jane's gift -- a green thumb for all things in the garden. After the flowers grew to about four feet, they began to sing the sweetest melody and put Jane to sleep. She was at peace in a deep dream world.

Miguel then moved on to Sam. Sam said he didn't want anything, but Miguel knew when not to listen. Suddenly, Miguel began to draw, and it seemed to take forever. When he was finally done, he motioned Sam to come over and see his new gift.

As Sam came closer, he began to sigh. A beautiful piano caught his eye. The piano was made out of tortoise shell with hieroglyphic symbols on it. It also had jade and gold, and there was no other piano like it in the entire realm. Sam was excited and began to play. The keys were cut ivory and the legs looked like lion's claws. Sam played the sweetest melody as everyone gathered around. Jane woke up

to the beautiful melody, and walked over to her husband as he played his heart out.

"You never sounded better," Jane replied.

All the passengers of the ride listened intently as Sam played for hours. His music was so hypnotizing, and the sounds rolled off the keys like sap from a tree. When Sam was done, the entire room began to clap. Even the turtle that was transporting the family was impressed.

But, when Sam turned around, Miguel was gone. He didn't have a chance to thank him. Victor the cat told Sam Miguel's job was done and when his work was finished, he liked to move on.

Now it was time for bed, and Victor showed Sam and his family back to their rooms. These were rooms Miguel had made for them before he left. First stop was Peter's room. The room was huge with big oval mirrors that covered the walls.

Peter ran and looked into one of the mirrors. He could see different images. Some were scary, like a figure on a dark hill. Peter tried to make out the face of the figure, but a hat was hiding it. Peter watched in amazement as the image in the mirror came closer. Sam ran over to the mirror and threw a piece of cloth over it.

Sam told Peter, "Don't ever stare into the mirror for

long or it will capture your soul. You will become a ghost, like what the living on Earth call a 'dead soul'."

Sam warned Peter that some mirrors were dangerous to look in, and if he got caught staring too long, he would truly be dead. Sam then ordered Victor to remove the mirror and cover the rest of them. Victor had the servants remodel the room in a flash. The only thing Peter could see was the view outside as the turtle ride took them to their destination.

Peter's room had toys everywhere, from stuffed animals to robots, but what he liked most was that he had his friend Dingo with him. The room was painted in sugar paint in all different designs and colors. The walls were sweet to eat, or at least Dingo thought so, and he began chewing on the edges of the wall.

"Time for bed," Peter's parents said.

He jumped into bed with Dingo. The bed was huge -- it almost swallowed them up. The sheets were soft, and the pillows were huge, including some that were body length. After his night prayers, Peter was fast asleep in no time. He'd had a long day.

Now it was time for Sam and Jane to go to bed. Like Peter's room, theirs was huge, but it had no mirrors. It was made up for royalty. It took 100 little mice to pull

the covers back and fluff their pillows. They put glasses of warm milk by the Carrot-Tops' bedside and left, one by one. The mice had looks of joy and determination in serving their king and queen well.

On the side of Sam's bed lay a golden chest filled with gold coins and precious gems. The glitter of the diamonds from the light caught his eye. He went toward the box and opened it. He ignored all the diamonds and gold and reached for a book that lay in the bottom of the chest.

As he grabbed hold of it, it opened, and there on the pages lay three passports to Baja, his, Jane's, and Peter's. Sam was amazed to see the details in the passports; everything was perfect, from their orange hair to their clothing. It was as if someone or something was expecting them in Baja.

The news had spread of their return, so Sam didn't want to let his guard down. In the back of his mind, he feared that someone would try to hurt Peter or worse, kidnap him. After all, there had not been a miracle child in 10 years, and only a handful of gifted children made it without being cursed for life.

As Sam began to think about the image his son had seen in the mirror, he became very scared. Sam was not taking any chances. He immediately called for Victor the cat by

shaking the bell that was left on the side of their bed. When Victor arrived in his nightgown and long stocking cap hold a floating light, Sam asked him to have guards posted at Peter's door.

"Very well," Victor said. He then brought Sam a deck of royal cards. On them were different types of warriors. "Choose one, two or three," Victor said to Sam, and so he did. Sam walked with Victor to the hall so that Jane would not wake up and become worried.

In the hallway, Sam shuffled the cards, and as he shuffled in a fast motion, he could see the movements of the warriors. There was a knight that was armored from head to toe; he held a long silver sword. Then there was a barbarian who was not only big in size but very powerful. The last choice was a wizard dressed all in black that disappeared and then reappeared on the card.

These were the three Sam chose to protect his son. One by one, Sam said a spell, "Amenta, Labasa, Carmy," and the individual warriors popped out of the cards. Sam needed not say anything, they already knew their job. The three warriors stood by Peter's bedroom door at attention. They didn't move or blink, as they were steadfast in their protection of the boy prince.

"You've still got it!" declared Victor.

Sam just let out a big laugh and told Victor good night. As Victor went away, Sam glanced over his shoulder to see if the warriors were still at attention at Peter's door, and they were. They didn't move an inch or blink. There was no way anyone could get in that room.

Sam went to bed and had many nightmares. It was like whatever he dreamed came true. Sam dreamed of being kicked out of Baja for good and being turned down by the elders. Then his dreams switched and he saw himself and his family being hanged to death and then burned.

He awoke in a panic and ran to Peter's room. Everything was still safe; the warriors were still standing guard. Sam took a deep breath and began to relax, as he walked back to the room. He sat on the side of the bed, nervous about arriving in Baja the next day.

"What will people say? How will they treat us?" Sam talked out loud to himself.

All the commotion woke Jane up, and now both of them were up and worrying.

Then a loud voice echoed from the walls of the turtle. "I believe in you, Sam," the voice said.

Sam jumped up from the side of the bed. "Who are you?" he asked.

"It is I, the turtle; are you enjoying your ride?"

Sam was a little startled, but went on to answer the turtle anyway. Sam explained that he was very afraid of returning to Baja and that he and his family were at risk of disappointing the elders. The turtle comforted Sam and Jane telling them not to worry, and that everything would be okay.

"Besides," he told them, "I will always be on your side."

Sam and Jane went over and kissed the turtle walls as if they were kissing him. Then the two of them went off to sleep. There were no more nightmares, and everyone was fast asleep.

A giant alarm clock went off, waking up everyone on the ride. The clock was so huge, the bang made the entire ride shake back and forth. It had a big giant face and the hands were made of diamonds. "Wake up, wake up!" the clock shouted.

The servants jumped up, rushing to get breakfast ready for their royal family. Jane and Sam jumped out of bed to see what was going on. As Jane ran out of the room, and into Peter's room, she was startled by the three watchers. She ran back screaming through the hallway, and Sam came

out to meet her.

"It's okay, honey," Sam said to Jane. "They are just here to protect Peter."

Jane's heart was beating so fast that she could not say or do anything but nod her head. The three protectors bowed down to Jane to show honor and respect. Sam explained to Jane why he requested protection for Peter. Immediately, Jane became worried. Sam assured her that everything was going to be all right; even though he didn't believe it himself.

Chapter 4

Return to Baja

Jane ran into the room where Peter was still fast asleep through all the noise, and lying beside him was Dingo. Jane smiled and gently touched her son's face. She placed a kiss on his cheek, and then Peter opened his pretty big blue eyes.

"What's wrong, Mother?" Peter asked.

"Oh, nothing," Jane replied. "It's just time to get up and start our day."

Peter jumped up with excitement. He told his mother he couldn't wait to see Baja, and all his family. Jane had a little bit of worry on her face, but she did not let Peter see it.

He ran into the bathroom where he began to brush his teeth. Then in came two mice with fresh towels and new clothing for him. They never said a word, just went about their duties.

As Peter was getting ready, Jane met back up with Sam. She began to talk to him about how happy their son was and that they needed to do anything and everything to clear their names. Sam agreed, and off they went to get ready for

the next day.

Even though fresh new clothing was on their beds, the family liked their old-style ones and kept their original clothes. Needless to say, this pissed the servants off. They ran and told Victor that the Carrot-Tops would not wear their royal garments.

In came Victor, "Master Sam, you must dress like the royal family."

Sam said, "Victor, my family doesn't need fancy clothing to be royal."

"Very well," said Victor as he cracked a snobbish grin.

One of the mice started crying; tears were flowing everywhere.

"What's wrong?" Jane asked.

The mouse shied away and continued crying. Jane went over and patted its little head.

The mouse crawled up in Jane's hand and asked, "Why don't you like my tailored garments? I worked a long time to make them fit right."

Jane wiped the mouse's tears and reassured him that it was not his sewing, but that they liked a simple style of clothing. The mouse calmed down as Jane gave him a big kiss. As the mouse blushed, he slid right out of Jane's hand.

"I have to watch out for such a handsome fella like you. You might take my wife," Sam said playfully to the mouse.

Everyone began laughing.

Jane called to Peter, and told him it was time to eat. He and Dingo burst into the room, but the three watchers caught his attention. "Wow!" he said as he looked at his protectors.

He admired the wizard's hat and how the secret codes on the hat glowed from bright to dim. Then he saw the knight, covered in all silver armor from head to toe. The same secret codes were visible all over his armor. Last, Peter loved the barbarian and how big he was. The golden leather belt that went around his waist also had codes that glittered and glowed. He had golden coins melted into his skin from head to toe. Peter had never seen coins like them in his life.

He went over to the barbarian's foot and rubbed one of the coins. Peter could feel a shockwave run up his hands as he touched the coins. It was so powerful; it made his orange hair stand up.

After a few moments of amazement, Peter went to breakfast mumbling to his parent about the three protectors. He could barely keep the food in his mouth.

"I thought you would like them," Sam said to Peter.

The Carrot-Tops continued eating their breakfast, but Peter was in such a rush to see Baja; he ate very fast.

"Slow down," Jane said to Peter, but Peter was so filled with excitement that he could hardly contain his emotions.

As the ride stopped, Peter jumped up and headed to the window with his face plastered to the glass. He sat there and watched as people got on and off the ride. "Father, Mother, come see!" he shouted.

As Jane and Sam came to the window, they saw so many different people getting off and on the ride. They were wondering where all the people came from. The ride was not big enough to handle that many people, but in Baja, the impossible was possible.

"Quickly," Victor the cat motioned to the Carrot-Tops. As the Carrot-Top family came toward him, he let them know that this was their stop and they must pack up quickly, so that they would not miss their flight.

"So quickly?" Sam asked.

Victor just nodded and gave Sam their passports and luggage.

Dingo came running into Peter's arms as he almost got

left behind. He gave Peter a big fat lick on the cheek. Peter laughed as Dingo continually licked him all over his face. Victor then threw Sam the deck of cards with the three watchers to protect Peter. He told Sam never to lose the box of cards because it could be a matter of life or death.

"Wait right here, and the flight will pick you up," Victor said to the Carrot-Tops.

Nervousness spread on the faces of the family. They waited on the platform patiently and waved good-bye to Victor and the rest of the crew. They watched until the turtle train was out of sight. It seemed to just disappear like the wind.

As the turtle ride disappeared into the hills, a big black shadow came over the platform where the Carrot-Top family was standing. Everyone looked up. This creature had a massive wingspan and had to weigh a ton.

"Look out!" someone said, as the creature came in for a landing.

Peter and his family were so in awe of the creature that they did not hear the warning alarm. A gentleman came to their rescue, and pushed the family out of the way.

"Oh! Thank you so much," Sam said.

The man just smiled and walked away. Sam turned to

another couple on the platform to ask them if this was the right stop. The couple nodded their heads and said, "Yes, my lord."

"Oh stop, just call us the Carrot-Tops," Sam said, but the people just bowed their heads in honor as the Carrot-Tops passed by.

The massive creature was a bird of some sort with a long purple beak and gold and white features. It also displayed the codes and symbols of Baja. They glittered in the sunlight.

The Carrot-Tops were so amazed that they could not move. They became motionless with a surprised look on their faces. Peter began walking up to the creature's side and then up to his face. The creature's eyes met Peter's eyes. "What a magnificent creature!" Peter mumbled to himself.

"Well, hi there," the creature said.

Peter was speechless. He ran his fingers on the side of the creature's belly.

"Oh, that tickles!" it said.

Peter continued to rub and rub its belly; he was so amazed to see something that size up close and personal.

Jane and Sam ran over, telling Peter to leave the creature alone. The creature sat down with his legs under its stomach. It carried a large cargo area on its back, it

looked like a floating city. There were buildings that looked like castles; the walls were made of pure ivory, inlaid with gold. There were long, pointed golden cones that were towers where people stayed for long rides. The sand outside the tower was pure black.

People inside watched as the sand revealed what it was hiding -- huge, massive devil ray fish that jumped in and out of the sand performing tricks for the guests. Then there were 20-foot earthworms that were blue and red in color that jumped out of the sand and did cannonballs and twirled into the air.

Peter heard the people clapping and saw how much fun they were having. He couldn't wait to see the inside. People began to get off the ride; they had suitcases and other knick-knacks. Some people were going off to work, and it was like a coach stop. The Carrot-Tops just watched the hustle and bustle of the people of Baja.

Almost everyone that went by bowed to the Carrot-Tops, tilting their hats and extending their respect. The Carrot-Tops weren't sure what to make of it, but they began to accept their fate and played along with the citizens of Baja. People were carrying all sorts of gifts and food; Sam stopped a couple and asked what was going on.

One couple replied, "It is you, my Lord. Now we can

celebrate Royal Day."

"Royal Day?" Sam replied.

Yes, it was Royal Day. It had been 10 years of not celebrating any holidays because of the curse Sam left on Baja. No holidays were allowed because one of the elders could not be awakened, but now, since the word had traveled that a gifted child was born of Sam and Jane, the curse would be broken.

When Sam heard this, more pressure mounted, and he wasn't sure Peter was the one. A look of fear darkened Sam's face. In his heart, he wanted Peter to be the one, the one who could make his family name right again. Sam knew that if he failed this time, he would never be allowed back in Baja. As Sam headed toward his family, standing on the platform, a loud horn blew.

"All aboard, all aboard," a ticket taker yelled.

Sam, Jane, and Peter headed toward the line, and they were greeted by four elf-like servants.

"This way, my Lord," all the elves said at the same time.

The elves pointed the Carrot-Top family into a private entrance of the bird coach.

Sam looked back as he heard the crowd whispering, "That's the king and his family. They have beaten the

curse."

As the Carrot-Tops entered the main entrance into the hub of the bird, they could hear the creature's beating heart. Every time the heart beat, there would be a wave of flute music.

As the family continued to walk through the massive meeting area, there were many guests from around Baja and from different worlds. They noticed there was quite a difference between the rich and the poor. All the rich folks had their servants with them, and all the businessmen and woman were huddled together talking business, all dressed up in business attire.

"We're out of our league," Jane said to Sam.

This meeting hall was huge and overwhelming for the Carrot-Tops. There were ballrooms with chandeliers as big as mountains and many, many fireplaces. Everyone stared at the Carrot-Tops.

One snobbish lady asked her companion, "How could they be royal when they are dressed in rags?"

As the lady stuck her nose in the air at the Carrot-Top family; nevertheless, the family minded their own business and kept moving. Then they passed another meeting place where everything was underwater; Peter and his family stopped to watch as mermaids danced and had fun. To Peter,

that was fantastic. He had never seen a mermaid. One of the mermaids saw Peter watching and came up to the glass that separates them, and blew him a kiss. Yes, indeed, Peter was very embarrassed and began to blush. His parents just laughed at their son's shyness.

As they kept walking down the long golden corridor, there were many rooms. Some of the room doors were open. One room was a saloon where bar fights were going on. Quickly Sam and Jane covered their son's eyes to such violence, and one of the elves called for security on his secret watch communicator.

Another door held a big playland for the kids. Peter begged his parent to go in. They were reluctant, but they let him have a little fun for a while. Sam and Jane watched as their son ran toward the playground leaving them behind. The playground was huge, with a large sandbox. In it was a large worm; it had to be about 20 feet long, and had seats on its back for the children to sit in as they rode up and down through the air.

Everyone could hear the children's laughter. Peter immediately left his pet and parents behind and ran into the line for a ride with the sand worm. He could hardly wait! Once in front of the line, the trainer buckled Peter and the rest of the kids safely in their seats. Up and down

the worm went, splashing sand all over the place.

"Wheeeeeeeee!" shouted the children.

Peter was having the time of his life; waving his hands in the air as his proud parents looked on. After the fun ride, Peter socialized with the rest of the children. There he meet a young kid name Zack Bean; he was very slender and had long, golden blond hair that touched his shoulders, and big blue hypnotizing eyes. Zack was a very well-rounded child. He was very outgoing and easily made friends, and he was always the center of attention.

He also met Nicholas Webster, a very heavy, overweight child, who was a joy to be around. Nicholas had short black hair and wore glasses that were held together with a piece of tape. He wore big, baggy oversized clothing that was always tripping him or causing him to fall down. No matter what time of day or night it was, Nicholas was always eating a banana.

Next was Clara, tall and skinny, with fire-engine red hair that she kept in two ponytails. She wore dusty old overalls and miss-matched shoes. Clara was the type of girl that bullied boys around -- she was not to be messed with. Then there was Robert Clark, a Beanpole of a child who was very, very skinny indeed. He was so skinny that he could hide behind a pole. Robert was an unusual child for being

only 10 years old; he was 7 feet tall with slick, greasy black hair. He wore ripped jeans and shirts and carried 10 watches on both wrists. Robert was more strange than unusual.

Last, but not least, there was Benjamin Franklin. He had a gene disorder that caused fur to grow all over his body. He was an average-size child with a great appetite for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches -- that's all he ever wanted. As he was covered in fur, no one knew what he really looked like. He had straight white fur from head to toe. No matter what he put on, the fur poked out. It didn't matter whether it was clothing or a hat; the fur stuck out and was a pain to work with.

Now Peter had a whole new set of friends to play with. Back in the land of the living, he had had a hard time making friends. But here in Baja, it was much easier for him. Peter's parents were so proud to see their son finally make friends and being a normal kid.

Suddenly, the horn blew very loudly, and down came a big floating pirate ship out of the sky. The kids began to scream with excitement.

"It's Captain Johnny!" one of the kids shouted.

Peter was a little awestruck once again for he had never seen anything like this before in his life. The

pirate ship was huge. It flashed through the sky like a bird moving vigorously back and forth. This was a big brown ship of some sort with crewmen onboard waving their swords at the kids. Peter went over to Robert and asked him about the ship. Robert told him that this was the best ride in Baja, and that Captain Johnny rides were the best.

Peter's parents ran over, fearing the worst. He ran to meet them, and told them that this was a kids' ride and there was nothing to be worried about. As his parents were leaving, Dingo, Peter's pet, jumped on his shoulder wanting to go with him.

"All right, boy, you can go with me," Peter said to Dingo as he rubbed his head.

The children watched as the pirate ship came down. This was a huge vessel, made of deep maple red wood. The ship had to be at least 100 feet long. There were missiles and cannons onboard that shot out fireworks. Its long white sails fluttered in the winds. The ship came hovering down.

The children began to scream, "Captain! Captain! Captain!" as they chanted for his quick arrival.

As the ship landed, a well-built man came forward in his captain's outfit. He had a patch over one eye, and he wore a red bandanna with the outline of a skull and crossbones. His goatee came down to his stomach, and his

long white hair was braided into one long braid with beads and sea shells throughout it.

As the children chanted his name, Captain Johnny came forward raised his hands to the sky, and did backflips over and over. The kids loved him.

"All aboard, all aboard," Captain Johnny said.

The kids climbed up into the vessel. Peter had a nervous look on his face. He grabbed ahold of Dingo, and off the ship flew, back and forth, swinging higher and higher. Then the ship spun around and around in circles with the speed of light. The children screamed with excitement. This was one of the best times they had ever had, but poor little Dingo clutched onto Peter's shirt. His paw-like hands began to tremble.

"It's okay, boy," Peter said like a proud papa protecting his young.

The kids rode the pirate ship for well over 20 minutes, then they were invited to start the fireworks. What a blast Peter was having! But it was time to go. Peter said good-bye to all the new friends he had made, and was on his way again with the magical flying bird.

The elves came back and greeted the Carrot-Tops, and they showed the family to their room. It was a huge place with high ceilings and Victorian decor. Dingo was glad to

be on solid ground, and he jumped out of Peter's hand and onto the floor, rolling and chasing his tail. The Carrot-Tops were told that they would be arriving in Baja any minute, and that they needed to spruce up a bit. They complied and changed into clothing made for royalty.

Peter wore a silk lace suit that was all white, and on his head was a crown. His clothing had the same mystical symbols as everything else in Baja. His parents were also dressed in all white with crowns that graced their heads. They looked like a true royal family.

Then in came a servant snapping pictures and taking them away quickly. The family began to get nervous, not knowing what they were up against. Then a loud sounding alarm began to blow. Peter ran to the window and saw a beautiful sight. It was the land of Baja, very colorful and unique. Trees were 100 feet tall or taller, and there were beanstalks that giants were sliding down. As Peter looked over to the right, he could see a group of colorful birds flying back and forth with welcome signs in their beaks.

The sun was shining brightly, and there were chariots flying through the sky carrying kings, queens, and descendants of royalty. Peter called over his parents, and they rushed to the window. They had not seen Baja in so long. Jane began to cry. Baja was a beautiful mystical land

where the impossible co-existed with the possible.

"What's wrong, Mother?" Peter asked as he saw Jane crying.

She explained to him that she was the one that grew all of those flowers and trees, and that her magical gifts were the reason plants flourished. Peter told his mother that he was so proud of her.

Down below, Sam could also see the empires that he helped build. Because of Sam's magical ability to move objects of any size, he was sought after to build a massive empire for the elders. The family embraced each other as the door opened and a servant walked in and stated that they were in Baja, and their royal presence was needed.

Peter was excited and was the first Carrot-Top to the door. As the servant opened it, they were greeted by armed guards. They were dressed in all black with their faces covered. The same mystical symbols glittered on their clothing. They each carried a secret weapon. One had a silver sword that could stretch 10 feet long. The next had a ball that created explosions, and the last one had a golden bow and arrow. Peter stared the three guards up and down, trying to see if they would look at him, but they never did. They were focused and never talked or made a move unless the Carrot-Tops did so first.

Off they went; they were led by two elves through a big double door. They were so huge that the Carrot-Tops had to look all the way up to see the door handles. The door was solid gold with different secret codes scattered all over it. The door had two big lion heads that looked like they were moving.

The family kept moving and looking over their shoulders. As they came closer to the door, it began to open. A beaming bright light came through the crack of the opening, blinding the family. They quickly put their hands over their faces and proceeded through the door.

At first the family could only see the bright beam of white light, and then it subsided. They were now in an arena filled with millions of people from all over the world. It was so beautiful, with large marble pillars throughout the arena. The pillars were covered with beautiful mystical drawings, and there were large statues of kings and queens and many famous rulers.

There were also thousands of army men made out of carved marble stone that circled around the entire arena. The top of the arena had a dome that had Christian paintings on it, including the birth of Jesus, the baptism and many more.

"That must have taken years to paint," Peter said to

his father.

People began to clap for the family as they arrived in the arena; it was a royal celebration. There was entertainment such as juggling and magic tricks. People were holding up signs and banners that welcomed the royal family's return. The Carrot-Tops were modest and quickly tried to settle the crowd down, but it did not work. There had not been a magical child born in 10 years. As Peter looked over his shoulder to the right, there were tables upon tables of gifts and presents, all wrapped in pretty paper and big bows.

After a few minutes of being surprised, the Carrot-Tops were escorted to their seats. They were made of gold and had the finest feather pillows for cushions. Then a man appeared out of nowhere on the large stage. He introduced himself as Mr. Patric Stewart. He was very well groomed, and his suit had the look and work of a professional tailor. Mr. Stewart had no hair on his head; he was completely bald. He was a man for getting down to business.

He cleared his throat and gave a welcome speech to introduce the Carrot-Tops. "In ten years there has never been a child born with gifts outside of Baja, and our world depends on the resources of the gifted ones."

The speech was long and touching. Patric told the

crowd that the Carrot-Tops would be staying in Baja and to treat them as their own family. For the most part, many of the millions of visitors were satisfied, but there were a few that whispered about the authenticity of the family returning to Baja.

Mr. Stewart shared that the family had gone through their share of betrayals and that in time, everything would be returned to right. The crowd clapped and cheered, balloons began to fly into the air. It was a big day in Baja, very festive and joyous. After the speech, he came over and greeted the Carrot-Tops. Sam and Jane knew him very well; he was the one that kicked them out of Baja many years ago. Mr. Stewart was very humble in his apology, but he was still skeptical about Peter's powers. This was something he had only heard about and not seen for himself.

He walked over to Peter and requested to see his powers. Sam was upset about the request, but Mr. Stewart reminded the Carrot-Tops that if they wanted to make it in Baja, they would have to prove that Peter was a gifted child. Very reluctantly Sam gave in, but he was still very disappointed by Mr. Stewart's request.

"It's okay, Father. I'll do it," Peter proclaimed.

Mr. Stewart got the crowd's attention to watch a miracle in action. The air was thick, and in that big

arena, you could hear a pin drop. Suddenly Peter held his hand to the ground. The dust began to fly and the earth began to shake. The crowd was frightened to see the power of a little boy in action.

Peter's orange hair began to flap in the wind, vigorously swaying back and forth. Suddenly huge chunks of rock and earth began to fly up and into the air. With lightning speed, a whirlwind erupted. As the dust finally settled, there was a gigantic hole the same size as the arena. When the crowd looked down, there was nothing but pure darkness.

Peter, his family and Mr. Stewart were standing on a little chunk of rock; there was nothing else left. Mr. Stewart looked down into the hole and saw nothing. It was like this hole was a never ending abyss. Then, suddenly, he leapt off the side of the rock and into the hole.

The crowds screamed at the top of their lungs, and then went silent. Sam and Jane feared the worst -- that Mr. Stewart was gone for good. But then, he suddenly appeared, brushing the dirt from his shoulders. He raised his hands to the crowd, letting them know that he was okay. Mr. Stewart leaned over and told the Carrot-Tops that they had one special child.

Sam smiled, but deep down he knew there was more to

Mr. Stewart's comments than he let on. After all, this was the man that kicked them out of Baja. The crowd was roaring and cheering for Peter, and they kept calling his name.

A big, wide grin graced Peter's face. He was a happy boy because he was in a land that appreciated him for who he was. Sam and Jane rushed over to hug him. After the show, there were parades and all-night festivities. Sam asked Mr. Stewart when they would be in Baja, the main island.

Mr. Stewart asked, "Why are you so in a rush, my boy? Enjoy life, because from here on out, you will be proving yourself to the entire world."

After that, Mr. Stewart walked away, never looking back at the Carrot-Tops. Sam was puzzled by his comments, but went along with the fun.

Peter was so happy when he and his parents got to tour the entire bird ship. He saw the captain's deck, and met some very important people of Baja, including wizards, priests and royalty. It was overwhelming for Peter, but he handled it like anything else -- he got nervous and his head swelled like a pumpkin. When this happened, he rushed out of the room. Jane ran behind her son to comfort him, and let him know that everything would be okay, while Sam stayed behind to cover for Peter and Jane.

For such a long time, Sam had felt neglected by the people of Baja. Now he felt like royalty -- a feeling that only was ten years in the making. Sam noticed that the people were more interested in his son than him. After Peter left the room, the royal members of society did not want to talk to Sam. They began to shun him over and over again. One royal member confided to Sam that his son was the only reason he was invited back to Baja.

Sam was feeling unwanted and that Peter was the only reason they were there. He burst through the crowd, pushing and shoving with anger. He began to yell for his wife like a crazy man.

"Jane, Jane, let's go!" Sam shouted.

She came running, with Peter at her side. Sam explained to her that they were only there because of Peter, and that they might be hanged when they arrived in Baja. Jane tried to calm him down, but it did no good; Sam was ready to leave, and leave now.

He ordered the captain to turn around, but he explained to Sam that they were riding on a magical rainbow and couldn't turn back because the rainbows were erased by sweeping angels. The captain told Sam that, after the elders had been in slumber, the world of Baja was under attack and easily penetrated, so they had to come up with a

way to disguise the route to the main inlands of Baja.

Deep down in Sam's heart, he wanted to go back home, but on the other hand, he wanted to stay and confront his fears. Sam flopped down onto a chair with his eyes covered by his hands, "What, have I done to deserve this?" Sam shouted.

Jane ran over to Sam and gave him a big hug, putting her fingers on his lips, motioning for him not to speak. Peter ran over and gave them both a big hug. The family stayed hugging for a while, and then they got up refreshed. A loud horn blew, signaling that the ship had arrived on the main land of Baja.

The crowd of people could be heard un-boarding the ship. Peter and his family were guided by the elves to retrieve their belongings. He saw the friends he'd made getting off and waved to them.

"See you soon," said Peter as his new friends waved back.

The elves reminded the Carrot-Tops to have their passports ready. As the family gathered up their few belongings, they headed to the door. People were pointing and whispering that they were the royal family, and some wanted autographs and pictures. The family felt a little strange doing this, but they did it to please the people of

Baja. All the young kids wanted Peter's autograph. His father told him not to let the fame go to his head, and to know who his true friends were. As the passengers lined up, a voice came over the air telling them to pull out all passports and get ready to be scanned.

The Carrot-Tops held up their passports and a beam of white light scanned their entire bodies. No one coming into Baja would be left un-scanned, no matter who they were or their rank. Dingo was also scanned, poor little animal. He was so afraid of the scans, but Peter kept talking to him, letting his little friend know that it would be all right.

During the phase of the white light, the scanner could tell everything about a person, from their age to their health, even the length of their hair. Everything went well going through the scanner for the Carrot-Top family.

Finally, they were home! Tears began to well up in Sam's eyes. Peter watched as his parent's facial expressions showed so much pain. He could not do anything for them, but feel their pain. One more step and the Carrot-Tops were on land. Peter looked back to wave to the captain on the bridge and the people leaving. He looked around as he saw family after family hugging and kissing each other.

Baja was a beautiful place with countless waterfalls,

and large animals co-existed with humans and other species. There were large beanstalks that giants slid down. Children raced their seahorses in the rivers and twenty rainbows in the sky gave off a multicolored glow. The trees walked, and sang and talked to the citizens of Baja. There were birds as big as houses filling the entire sky. There were huge statues throughout the land, some reached the clouds. Every statue in Baja had a meaning, whether it was of a mighty warrior or to educate the people.

Baja had its fair share of icons. There were golden gates, bridges, and rivers that ran through the town bringing fresh fish and food to the people. Most of the streets were made of mud bricks. Shops were everywhere. There was every store a child could imagine -- toy stores, train stores, games store -- you name it, Baja had it. There were millions of residents that called Baja home, walking about the streets going about their daily lives.

Peter couldn't wait to get into the swing of things. He wanted to start enjoying his new home. "Where is our family?" he asked his parents.

Both Sam and Jane looked around, hoping someone would come forward and claim them, but no one did. They hailed a cab, and just as it was coming, an older gentleman shouted "Sam, Sam, my son!"

Sam and Jane quickly turned around. They looked puzzled. They could not recall the face for the life of them.

"Yes?" Sam asked.

The man explained that he was Sam's father.

"Father!" said Sam, as he ran up to the man stroking his long beard and pale skin.

"What happened to you, Sam?" asked his father, David. "Your mother and I were also banned from Baja. We had to work in the hot underground tunnels as our punishment for having a failure as a son."

David explained that they had been kicked out of Baja after Sam had. David let Sam know that his mother was barely holding on, and today was the first time they had seen daylight. Sam became very angry, and he blamed himself. He told his father he would straighten everything out.

Peter began to pull on his father's coat tail. "What about me?"

"Oh! Father, I would like to introduce you to your grandson, Peter," Sam replied.

"You are the one that wizards and witches are talking about," said David.

"Witches?" Peter mumbled.

David told his grandson not to be afraid of evil, but by the look in Peter's eyes, he was still afraid. Then Jane came forward and stretched out her hands for a hug.

"Oh! Jane, my beautiful daughter-in-law," cried David as they hugged.

Peter noticed that a strange man was watching them from across the street, but when he turned around to tell his father, the man was gone, vanished into thin air. Peter's eyes began to bulge out and he looked vigorously from side to side. But the man was nowhere to be found, so he never told his parents anything else about what he had seen.

David quickly looked around and told his son that he would take him home.

"Home?" Sam replied.

"Yes, home," said his father.

David explained to Sam and his family that their house was never destroyed; the house was put onto the house farm.

"House farm?" asked Peter.

"Yes, a house farm," said Grandpa David.

Jane and Sam explained to Peter that when any citizen was facing punishment of any sort, all their belongings, including their house, were stored on the house farm. Then, when that individual was set free, he or she went to the

farm and requested their belongings.

"Let's go," said Peter.

Grandpa David just laughed and was happy to have his family back. As they were leaving, a group of royal soldiers came and stopped the family. There were five soldiers in all, dressed in all white uniforms and top hats. They explained to the Carrot-Tops that because they were important citizens of Baja, they would be escorted everywhere. One of the soldiers pointed to their beautiful transportation. It was all white, and had wings like a bird and eight wheel tiers. Brown leather covered the seats inside.

The transportation was new and shiny. Peter was about to run over to see it until his mother pulled him back.

"No! We do not need your charity. We will make it on our own," said Jane.

Then the Carrot-Tops walked away, leaving the soldier's puzzled.

"That fixed them!" said Grandpa David, and the family went off to find their home.

Chapter 5

Going Home

Peter watched out of the wagon window. As they rode down so many roads, people were waving and saying, "Welcome back." Some even stopped the wagon to get a glimpse at the boy wonder.

"You're a very special young man," said Grandpa David.

Peter just smiled with a large grin on his face.

Baja was so beautiful with golden rain and purple and yellow clouds. The bears that roamed the hillsides were as big as houses, but they were very gentle creatures. There were even trees that grew popcorn! Peter and his family stopped as they saw a tree getting ready to start popping.

"Oh boy!" said Peter.

The family just laughed, running to the tree like kids in a candy store. Jane kept her mouth open to catch the popcorn while Grandpa David and Peter made snow angels in the popcorn. Sam sat back and watched his family have the time of their lives. After eating until their hearts were content, the family sat by the tree and caught up on old times. Sam was very reluctant to ask his father about his brother Marcus. Marcus was a bad seed. From the time he was

born, he was very mischievous and rude, always blaming everything on Sam. Besides, Marcus was the one who turned his own brother in to the royal authorities for losing the eighth key, even though he'd had a hand in it.

David shied away from the question of where Marcus was. Finally he said, "Your brother has gone to the other side. He sold the family out and went to work for the seven wizards." Tears started to form in David's eyes as he thought about his child fighting on the side of evil.

Sam was in shock. He began to pace back and forth, asking his father, "Why?" over and over again.

David went on to tell his son that Marcus was so drawn in by the key and the power that it held that he was willing to risk his life for it. So, he found someone that would let him divide and conquer -- the seven wizards. They were a small group of men, women, and children that had powerful magic spells, and so far, no one could stop or undo them. This group could flow in and out of Baja without notice. Since the elders were in hibernation, the citizens of Baja were no match for those evil forces.

David went on to tell Sam that Marcus was also kicked out of the boundaries of Baja, but not Baja completely, like Sam and his family were. Because Marcus turned Sam in, the elders showed him leniency and made him live on the

outside of Baja.

Sam was very hurt and didn't want that road for his brother, but Marcus chose power instead of family. Now Sam felt like it was his duty to stop his brother, because whatever he was planning would soon come into effect.

Sam and his father continued watching Jane and Peter have fun in the popcorn field, and then they were ready to leave. Peter and Dingo had one last run around the field and one last taste of mouth-watering popcorn. Back in the buggy the family went. Peter stared out the window waiting to reach the house farm. Jane and Sam looked anxious.

"A few more feet and we're there," shouted Grandpa David.

Suddenly the buggy pulled up to a metallic gate made entirely of gold. They rode up to a guard shack and signed in to see their home again. The guard bowed to them and told them he was glad to see them back. As the gate opened, they saw an amazing sight, house upon house, there were even houses stacked on each other all the way up to the sky.

"Which one is ours?" shouted Peter.

"I don't know," Jane replied.

The family marched on and went up to the help desk. The lady looked the family over and over, out of the corner of her eyes. She was very snooty and rude to the Carrot-

Tops.

"Well, where is your passport? I must verify you are who you say you are," said the lady.

The family showed their passports with plenty of objections from Grandpa David. "They don't have to show anything," he said with an angry voice.

But the lady took their information anyway, walked over to the computer and did a few searches. "Here, I have found your house," said the snobbish woman as she ripped a piece of paper out of the machine and handed it to Sam.

Sam was not too pleased by the lady's attitude, but he gently took the paper out of her hand. His face was filled with anger to see the citizens praise them one minute and mistreat them the next. The family was escorted to the sorting field by a security guard. The guard apologized to the family for his coworker's attitude and told Sam and his family that he still believed in Sam. He also said that Baja would be set free and the elders would wake again. With a smile on his face, the security guard took the keys out of his pocket and opened the main gate to the house farm.

The family stood on a ledge that was about 200 feet tall and watched as houses were checked in and out of storage. It was like going to the store and buying a house

off the shelves. The houses were on a large belt that moved back and forth. There were big houses and little houses all in line to either be stored or un-stored. After the houses reached their destination, workers pulled them off the line. The movement was so in sync that even Grandpa David was impressed.

Peter held onto his father's coattail as he looked all the way down. There were thousands of houses as far as the eye could see. Peter and his family were a long way up, they could even see other families buying or retrieving their homes. Suddenly the belt stopped and Peter's eyes grew.

"Is that our house, Father?" asked Peter.

"Yes, sweetheart, it is ours, totally untouched," said Jane.

The image of the house was in 3-D. With a turn of a golden dial, the guard let the family see every aspect of their home the way they'd left it. The house was huge, like a royal palace. There was a courtyard, tennis court, swimming pool, and a royal garden where the birds were still humming and flying around. Jane's touch was everywhere. There were huge plants the size of hills that wound up to the sky. There was also a Beanstalk that never seemed to end; it just kept going and going. Goldfish were

frozen in the pond waiting to be thawed. Peter's eyes grew bigger and bigger as he saw all that the home had to offer.

The guard told the Carrot-Tops to go inside and check everything out to make sure it was the way they'd left it. It was like stepping back in time for the family; everything seemed to be in slow motion. Sam was overcome with emotion, and so were Jane and the rest of the family. Sam trembled as he went near the door to turn the knob. For a minute, he could not do it; it was too overwhelming for him.

Grandpa David placed his hands on his son's shoulder assuring him that everything would be okay. Sam took in a deep breath and exhaled slowly. He closed his eyes and opened the door with a quick turn of the wrist. Dingo suddenly jumped out of Peter's pocket and ran into the house. Jane was upset, and she told Peter to leave Dingo in the wagon. But Peter didn't listen, and off Dingo went, leaping and hopping up and down the stairs. Peter was right on his heels, but Jane was angry, truly not at Peter, but at all the time they had lost.

Sam, Jane and Grandpa David slowly entered the house. The family walked through the massive hallways and into the entertainment room, where Jane rubbed her hands over the furniture, reminiscing about the good times they'd had. She

sat on the edge of the sofa and looked over the pictures on the table. One was of Peter as a baby and the others were friends and family. Back in the good old days, Jane was a well respected socialite. Every afternoon, ladies would come over either to gossip or talk about life in Baja. Jane missed those days.

Because everything was frozen in time, the home was the way they had left it. Jane continued to walk off by herself into the kitchen where water was still boiling on the stove and the ice box was open just as the housekeepers had left it. Then she walked out to her favorite place, the garden. The plants and trees were still alive, only frozen in time.

Jane stopped to pet a bird that was at a standstill. She could see the bird's eyes moving, but the bird could not move. "Soon I will set you free, little one," she said to the bird.

Everything in the house and its surroundings would be frozen in time until the family moved it out of the house farm. Jane walked through the house looking from room to room and so did Sam.

Sam found his office, and sat back in the leather chair, reminiscing about all the projects he had left unfinished. He took off his glasses and burst into tears.

The pain was so great that he slid out of the chair and fell to his knees asking, "Why?" His tears would tear at the heart of any human. Sam stayed on the floor until he got himself together. He finally got the nerve to get up and look around. There were papers all over his office flying in slow motion through the air with a timeless touch.

On one paper, Sam could see some of his work. Before he was kicked out, he was in the process of creating the finest and toughest army for Baja. There were sketch drawings of animals, great and small, wearing armored silver-plated suits. There were animals that were half human and half horse carrying bows and arrows. Sam gently pushed the paper aside as it moved through the air in slow motion.

Down the hall, Sam could hear Jane rumbling, so he went to see what all the racket was about. "Honey, are you all right?" he called out to her.

"Yes, dear," Jane replied.

Sam watched as his wife stared at the nursery they had for Peter before he was born. Everything was still intact -- from the finest cotton blanket, to the crib made of the finest maple. The room was covered in toys that were gifts from the Carrot-Tops' family and friends. Teddy bears great and small lined the wall. There were train sets that went

"choo-choo" around the room. It seemed just like yesterday to Jane. She put her hands over her eyes and began to weep. To the Carrot-Tops, it seemed like their lives had been taken away.

"We must go, honey," Sam said gently.

As they walked through the doors of the courtyard, they could hear Peter having fun with Dingo. Water was splashing with the slow movement of time, and leaves gently glided through the air.

Jane shouted to Peter, "Come on. We must be going."

Sam realized that his father was nowhere to be found. They searched the entire area of the courtyard until they found him in his favorite place, his gift shop. Grandpa David was a special man with the skill of making and producing the finest toys for all the little children throughout the land. He made antique dolls and train sets. There were kites and teddy bears everywhere. Sam watched as his father touched his past.

Grandpa David was overwhelmed by all that he had lost, and yet he was looking at the past. Sam placed his hands on his father's shoulder letting him know not to worry. He promised his father that he would make everything all right. Although they could not start over, he would make the rest of their lives worth living again.

Grandpa patted his son on the shoulders and said, "Sam, this is not your fault. This is the way of the prophet."

The family got their emotions together and headed out of the door. They continued to look back at a place they once called home.

"Is everything intact?" the guard asked.

"Yes," said Sam.

The guard then processed the paperwork and a huge train came out of the clouds with a loud "choo-choo." It had to be at least 200 feet long, and there were other houses and property on it. The train was red and silver, and its paint sparkled in the sun's rays.

The guard gave the workers the okay to load the house and take it out of frozen time. With a few pushes of the buttons, the house was out of the bubble of time, and loaded onto the train. The guard notified the family that the house would be delivered to their old address, 511 Cherry Street. With so much emotion built up, the family only could nod their heads to answer the guard.

"Wow, that train is great!" shouted Peter.

The guard just smiled at Peter, and off the family went out the door and through the tall gates of the house farm to their waiting wagon. As the family loaded up, a

huge group of people were waiting, just to get a glimpse of the family. News had spread far and wide to the countrysides, and even in the heavens. Everyone knew the Carrot-Tops were back in town, but the family had so many other important things on their minds, like finding Sam's mother and Jane's family. Off they went, the sun was soon to go down, and they wanted to make it off the roads and home before nightfall.

The ride was long, but the sights were wonderful for their eyes. The family remembered how great and beautiful Baja was. There were unicorns grazing in an open field, and then flying up in the clouds whenever they heard people coming. There were also purple, yellow, green and red horses being sold at an outdoor auction. Peter stood up in his seat because this was so amazing to his young eyes.

As they got closer to where Grandpa David and the others stayed, a feeling of gloom came over the family. It was as if a dark cloud just passed over and stayed in that one spot. The scene was so depressing; Dingo clawed Peter's shirt out of fear. The trees and flowers were dying, turning ash gray in color.

Peter watched as the trees tried to move, but their roots would break from years of rotting. The screams the trees made were heart wrenching. Everyone in the wagon

covered their ears.

"Just a few more feet," said Grandpa David.

By the look on everyone's faces, no one wanted to be there. They were disgusted. As the wagon went closer into a deep forest, hundreds of people came running out. Most of them had their hands out, begging for food or anything. Grandpa David pushed them out of the way and introduced them to his family.

One lady burst out and said, "Because of you, Sam, we are here. We were your loyal servants and got punished for it."

Sam had no words to say but sorry, but the people did not accept his apology. For years they had suffered for Sam's sins against the elders. He got out and stood on a hilltop, and told the people he would make everything all right. Right now, he had to find his mother. Grandpa David pointed in the direction of his wife. Under a tree sat an old lady, worn out, and her clothing was dingy and old. She continuously coughed and held her chest. Her hair was in disarray.

"Mother! Mother!" Sam called out.

"Who is playing games?" the frail voice answered back. Sam went to his mother and held her hands letting her know he was back. "My son, I knew you would not forget us," said

Sam's mom Dorothy.

Jane, Peter, Dingo and Grandpa David joined in on the family reunion. They hugged and kissed. Dorothy was glad to see Jane, and for the first time was introduced to her grandson, Peter. Dorothy told Sam about how they had suffered in the hot underground tunnels as punishment for Sam's sins. She spoke of the abuse, the hunger, and the many cold nights. Sam was not only angered by what his mother was saying, but also by the knowledge that his brother Marcus had not been any help to them.

By Dorothy's accounts, Marcus let the authorities take them away because, for many years, he felt Sam got special treatment from his mother and father. Dorothy said she loved both of them, and Marcus was jealous of all the power Sam had, from running his own armed forces to making sure the citizens of Baja was well taken care of. Everyone in Baja respected Sam, and Marcus felt as if he had to walk in Sam's shadow.

Sam told his parents that he had to get them out of the dark and depressing forest, but his parents did not want to leave unless everyone was leaving.

"Honey, we have a house with thousands of rooms," Jane said. "We will get all of them on their feet and then they can move on with their lives."

Sam quickly agreed. He then stood on the hilltop once again and told the people of his plans. Some were reluctant, but many others were willing to go. Anything would be better than being poor and homeless. The crowd began to gather up their few belongings and was ready to start walking to Sam and Jane's mansion. But before they could leave, Jane had one thing to do.

Her heart would not allow her to leave the trees and flowers in a rotting state. She gathered her strength together and touched the largest tree in the center of the forest. It gave root to all the trees near and far. Jane's hair began to blow in the wind; she could feel the trees' pain, and she saw all the horrors they had seen. With all her might, she pushed her hands toward the trees and let her powers flow. Within minutes, the trees stopped crying and screaming. Their leaves began to turn green; their roots began to have life again. Fruit began to appear, and so did the animals that once fled. This was so overwhelming for Jane that she passed out.

Sam and the family ran to her side and picked her up. As Sam was leaving with Jane's lifeless body, a deep voice came from the trees, "We will always be at your service," and then the voice disappeared.

Birds started to make their nests in the trees and the

dark clouds suddenly moved away. The forest was once more bright and inviting again. Birds sang and the trees and Beanstalks began to grow. Wow! How amazing Jane's powers were to the people watching.

Sam and the other men carried Jane and the older women to the wagon, while the strong and young walked behind. Dorothy began to fan Jane with a torn piece of paper. Little by little, Jane began to open up her eyes, but she was still weak. She began to mumble about all the pain she saw, and how a war was coming. No one really paid attention to what she was saying. They just wanted to get her home safe and sound.

Peter and Dingo began to make new friends as the older adults worried about grown-up concerns. This was a time of fun and excitement for Peter, not only did he get to stay up later, but he got to have fun doing it.

Little did they know that they were being watched by a group of trolls, maybe eight to ten of them. They stood four feet tall. Their bodies were gray with white polka dots, and their eyes were long and slanted. They had thin lips and large razor teeth. These creatures constantly drooled and slobbered all over the place. They smelled horrible, and to most people, they were disgusting. The townspeople called them Goonies. They watched every move

made by the Carrot-Tops. It was apparent that they were reporting to someone. The Goonies made sure to keep out of sight, but not to lose contact with the family.

Dingo knew something was wrong; his animal senses began to tell him another creature was somewhere close. He began to tug on Peter's shirt.

"Down, boy," said Peter, but Dingo kept on until Peter finally paid him some attention.

When Peter knelt down to Dingo to see what was the matter, Dingo stuck his fingers out pointing in the direction of the noise. The Goonies were hiding behind a great big bunch of trees.

Peter sensed something was wrong and put his hands to the floor. Suddenly the earth began to shake, and his orange hair began to blow back and forth like a whirlwind. His eyes were fixed on the target. Holes started appearing out of nowhere, big ones and small ones. One by one, the Goonies began to scream as they fell deep into the holes. The adults came running.

"What's the matter, Peter?" Sam asked.

Peter explained that they were being watched and he had caught the perpetrators in the hole. Sam pushed Peter aside and held an oil lamp above the hole. A creature jumped toward Sam and startled him, but the hole was too

deep for the creature to escape. Everyone started to gather around the rim, watching the creature's every move.

"These creatures are from a dark side," said Grandpa David.

Sam reached out, grabbed the creature, and it began to shiver and turned into a ball. "Who are you?" Sam asked the creature.

"We are your brother's keepers," the creature replied.

Sam knew then that his brother was up to no good and they had to hurry. He told his son to close up the hole with the creatures inside, and so Peter did. With the power in his hands, he conjured up the dirt, and buried the creatures inside. The people were amazed once again by Peter's powers, but there were also a few jealous ones in the crowd. Some people clapped, and some snickered in disbelief.

As the group continued to walk on, Sam and his father had a long talk. David told Sam that his brother was way beyond help and the evil had total possession of him. David described to his son the pain he and Dorothy had gone through at the hands of Marcus. They went from living like royalty to the pigpen, at the hands of their own son. Sam told his father he was very sorry and assured him everything would be all right soon.

The group continued to walk toward home. Peter was excited to see his new home fully. Dorothy and Jane sat quietly in the back of the wagon. Suddenly, it began to shake violently. Dorothy looked out, and she was in the air. Sam had used his powers to levitate everyone into the air. The people were now flying; this was the only way to get home quickly before nightfall.

Through the sky they went. The children were having the most fun touching the clouds. The birds moved out of the way, and the long trees shrunk to make way for the herd of people.

"Wheeeeeee!" said they kids.

Up and down they moved and chased each other. This was the first time many of them had been completely free. The adults were placed in the back. Many of the older ones were afraid, but Sam put their fears to rest assuring them now that he would not drop them. Faster and faster Sam flew them through the air, going in and out of trees, flying over vast stretches of land. People on the ground were pointing and shouting with surprise. One kid on a bike rolled into a patch of hay when he saw the crowd in the air. People were running, trying to catch up with the flying people. Some were running to neighbors, telling them what they had seen.

The fresh air did Jane a whole lot of good; she woke up smiling, asking for her family, until Dorothy filled her in on what was going on. Jane pushed her hair back and looked out of the wagon window, and smiled at her family to show she was okay. This gave Sam more strength to move the wagon even more quickly. Suddenly, the wagon and the people came falling down slowly from the sky.

"We are home," said Sam.

The Carrot-Tops' home had arrived in one piece, safe and secure. It was no longer frozen in time. The house was like a castle -- there must have been hundreds or even thousands of rooms. It was like the Carrot-Tops were kings and queens of Baja. The home was fit for royalty. The crowd of people stared at the enormous house and wondered how was it that Sam kept all of this when their homes were either destroyed or taken away. Some people in the crowd were happy to have a warm place to bathe and sleep, while others were becoming very jealous of the Carrot-Tops.

The people went through the house feeling and touching things. It had been years since they had even seen or in fact been in a house as luxurious as this. The people were like kids in a candy store -- they wanted to feel and touch everything in sight. Some people were even trying to steal little knick-knacks outside in the garden, before they even

went into the house.

"There will be none of that. Anything you want is free. There is no need to steal," said Sam.

Peter ran up to the door and waited on his father to open it. One deep breath and Sam gave the door a turn, and swung it open. Everything was just like they had left it, only this time, nothing was in an altered state. The cats were running around the house and everything seemed to fit in place. Sam went and lifted his wife out of the wagon and brought her into the house. With Jane resting comfortably on the sofa, Sam invited everyone in for a hot meal and a fresh bath.

Some people began to grumble, they were upset that Sam still had all of his wealth and they had nothing. He tried to ease the tension in the crowd, but no one wanted to listen. They were all jealous of the luxury Sam and his family had.

"All of you have been loyal to me, and I will see that you also get all that you left behind," said Sam.

But, no one wanted to hear that. They were upset. They had lost everything because they were Sam's followers.

"Why should we trust you?" one man asked.

"Because we all have suffered," intervened Sam's father.

But the pep talk did no good, and off went the crowd, grumbling and complaining. Only two people stayed behind, Red Fox and Samantha Grey. Red Fox was half-man half-fox. He was one of Sam's loyal friends and commander of his army. Red had grown old and worn; his fox fur was matted and his demeanor was that of hopelessness.

He looked Sam in the eyes and asked him, "Will you make me like I once was?"

Tears began to fill Sam's eyes and he let Red Fox know that he would do everything in his powers to make things right.

Then Samantha Grey stepped forward. She was a young woman, no more than twenty. Her gifts of being a ninja had served Sam's army very well. Samantha was of Asian descent; her long body and jet black hair made her stand out in a crowd. She had taught thousands of Sam's soldiers how to fight and how to respect the art of becoming a ninja, and her army was unstoppable.

Samantha explained to Sam that she had had to hide in the Black Forest when the elders kicked him out of Baja, and she did not want to get killed like the others. Sam went over and gave her a big hug, and told Samantha everything would be all right.

"Don't blame yourself for running," he said. "It was

the right thing to do.”

But Samantha still felt like a coward, since she could not protect Sam's family from being punished at the hands of the elders. But Sam never held it against her. He understood that at the time, she had to fight for her own life.

Red and Samantha were the only people in the crowd who stayed, the rest left, intent on trying to reunite with their families that they hadn't seen in ten plus years. Sam understood that they were angry with him, so he let them go, knowing that most of them would be back once they were rejected by their families and friends.

The remaining guests made themselves at home while Peter and Dingo were having a blast running through the house. Up and down the staircase they ran. Jane was pleased to see her son finally finding a place to call home. It was kinda strange to the Carrot-Tops to be back in their house that had been vacant for years.

That night was so strange for the family that they couldn't sleep, so the night was filled with stories by the fireplace. Deep down inside, everyone was wondering what tomorrow would bring. Jane began to tell Peter of a great primary school, the great Waldorf Academy School. She told him it was a school of possibilities, and that whatever his

dreams were, the school could make them come true.

"Oh boy, I can't wait!" said Peter.

Jane told her son that he would fit right in with all the other kids, unlike back in Georgia. For a moment, Georgia seemed strange. They seemed to have been gone from there for so long already. So, they put thoughts of the human world in the back of their heads and continued on with the stories by the fireplace.

Red Fox slowly came down the stairs; his fur was all wet and shaggy. "Oooh, that was a great bath!" he shouted. "It has been so long since I had a good hot bath like that."

The family just laughed and welcomed him to sit by the fireplace. Jane noticed that her mother-in-law was missing and went up the stairs to find her. Dorothy was in her old room stroking the pillowcase.

She heard Jane coming and said, "It has been years since I slept on a bed, it seems so strange to me."

Jane sat on the edge of the bed with Dorothy and gave her a big hug, promising that Sam would make everything the way it was. Dorothy put her feet in the bed and crawled up into a ball.

Jane went down and told Sam about his mother. He rushed right up to her bedside to make sure that she was okay. Sam saw the state his mother was in, and ran to the

phone and called a doctor. David ran to his wife's side and comforted her.

"It's the years of digging in those nasty tunnels that has her sick," said David.

At the same time, Sam was on the phone talking to the doctor, asking him to get there right away. Within a few seconds, he appeared out of thin air. It startled everyone for a moment. Sam went over and tried to shake the doctor's hand, but it was only a hologram of the doctor that told the patient and their family what to do to help their loved ones.

The hologram of Dr. Doo came on with a computer-generated voice telling the family to boil hot water with lotus leaves and place them on Dorothy's chest. The family was stunned for a while, but did what the hologram told them to do. Dorothy went in and out of a coma. Sam was very sad, and he begged his mother to hold on just a while longer.

Before anyone could say another word, the medicine worked. Dorothy was still ill, but was feeling much better. She leaned over to her son and asked him to bring Peter forward.

Peter went forward to hear what his grandmother had to say; she whispered, "You are the eighth key."

Peter did not understand what she meant and just went on agreeing with her because she was ill. She fell fast asleep and everyone left the room. The computer-generated image vanished and the door bell rang. Jane walked to the door and opened it slowly.

An older gentleman walked in and said, "Hi, I am Dr. Doo."

Jane was caught a little off guard and proceeded to take the doctor upstairs. Dr. Doo explained to the family that the computer-generated image stayed with a person who was ill until he arrived. This was a far more advanced technology than the Carrot-Tops were used to. The doctor examined Dorothy and told the family she would be fine; she just needed a little rest and clean, fresh air. Dr. Doo also let the family know how wonderful it was to see them back in Baja, and that he supported them one hundred percent.

The family was amazed to see the support they were getting from all over Baja, and this made Sam more determined to fight. The night was quiet and everyone went to bed waiting for tomorrow to come. Yet, Sam could not sleep. He walked through the house, pacing back and forth, trying to take in all the emotions, and to find out where his life had left off at.

He went and sat at his office desk, reading the papers from ten years past. The headline was the exile of the Carrot-Tops. The report made the Carrot-Tops look like a disgrace. Sam read the report over and over again. In his mind, he could picture and replay the event again and again. He went through his office with a fine tooth comb, looking for anything out of the ordinary. He knew that his brother would probably try to set him up again.

Sam suddenly fell asleep in his office. The spirits of the seven elders came to him, one by one in a ghostly fashion. They swarmed around the office and said in soft voices, "Sam, Sam, wake up." The voices repeated their request one by one.

Sam woke up, but he was also now a spirit. He walked out of his body to be in the same form as the spirits. Sam looked back and saw his body lying lifeless, sleeping away, then he turned his attention back to the spirits. He tried to reach out to them, but a force field stopped him. To Sam, it felt as if his legs were made out of iron. The spirits warned Sam that they must talk quickly and he must listen.

"A war is coming and Peter is the key. If we do not awake in the time before the war, Baja will be lost forever. We know you are not the one at fault. Your brother

is, and he must be stopped or we will lose everything," said the spirits.

Sam acknowledged them, and promised the spirits that he would try to make things right and Baja would not be lost. The spirits reminded him that there was nothing that they could do while in hibernation and the longer they hibernated, the less powerful they would become. It had now been ten years and they needed to get out of hibernation as soon as possible. The spirits' images began to fade in and out, and then suddenly, they disappeared.

Sam woke up in a pool of blue goo; it covered his entire body. He ran to the bathroom to wash his face. He could not stop thinking about what the spirits had told him. After a quick check on everyone, Sam was back in his office, thinking about the way in which he could save Baja.

Chapter 6

Waldorf Academy

Morning had arrived, and the skies were bright purple. Everyone was a bit in awe of what was happening. Grandpa David told everyone it was okay. He said a purple sun happens in Baja every six months. To Peter, this was the best thing that had ever happened. He reached for his father's telescope and looked into the skies.

"Woowww!" said Peter.

The family was happy to see Peter settling in so well. Everyone had something to do today. Jane had to put Peter in school; Sam, Red Fox and Samantha Grey had a serious mission to work on -- saving Baja and waking the elders. Grandpa David had to watch Dorothy and make sure she remained in good health. Everyone's day was planned, but as we all know, nothing ever goes according to plans.

The doorbell rang while everyone was eating breakfast. It was a reporter from the London Times. He was a slender-built man with black-framed glasses, and he had a suspicious air about him. Before Sam could invite him in, he barged his way into the house.

"I am Isaac McPhee, the London Times reporter," he

said.

Everyone at the table stared at him.

"What in the world do you want?" asked Red Fox.

"Well, what everyone wants, which is an interview with the boy," said Isaac. Since Red was a protector of Sam and his family, he kicked the reporter out of the house. As he was being escorted out, he shouted, "So tell me, folks, how will it feel to be responsible for destroying Baja twice?"

No one answered as Red Fox kicked out the reporter. News had spread all over Baja so quickly that people were coming from all over to get a glance at the house where the boy savior and his family were living. Jane was very upset that this might be putting a lot of pressure on Peter, but by his reaction, he did not care. All he wanted to be was a kid, and be loved by everyone. The only thing on Peter's mind was making new friends.

A tabby cat suddenly leaped onto the table and began to talk. "Jane, I have missed you," said the cat. Jane screamed with excitement. It was Felix, her cat.

"Where have you been? I looked all over for you."

Felix began to lick his paws, and jumped into Jane's arms and let out a soft "purrrrr."

Jane explained to the family that Felix was a magical cat given to her by a man selling jumping beans, and from

then on, Felix and Jane remained the best of friends.

"Who is this little one?" Felix asked.

"That's Peter, our son," said Jane.

"Oh, you have been away too long, Jane. We must catch up," Felix replied.

Jane filled Felix in on everything, but she was more excited to see her old friend again. Peter was amazed to see a talking cat and wanted to take it with him.

"No, no, you can't take Felix anywhere. He likes it when he's home," said Jane.

"But, Mom, I will be the newest kid on the block, and I will need something to break the ice," said Peter.

"No!" said Jane as she rushed Peter upstairs to brush up for his meeting with the school.

One person was not happy, and that was Dingo. Ooh! He did not like Felix. He began to chase Felix around the house.

"Behave, you two!" shouted Jane, and each animal went their separate way.

But today was also a big day for Jane. She wanted to find her parents to see if they would accept her again. She picked up the phone to call and then hung it up again. She was very nervous about making that very important phone call to her family. Poor Jane never seemed to have the

courage, and instead walked away from the phone.

Finally, Sam came and held her hand while Jane made that important phone call. She listened as the phone rang on the other end.

Someone picked up and said, "Hello, hello."

Jane could not say anything; she was at a loss for words.

Then Sam got on the phone and asked to speak with Mr. or Mrs. Burgandy.

The voice replied, "This is Mrs. Burgandy."

Sam quickly gave the phone to Jane. "Mother! This is Jane; I have come back to Baja."

But the voice said nothing and the phone went completely dead. There was disappointment in Jane's eyes, but she did not let on and told Sam that it was the wrong number.

But the day was just beginning, and before Jane and Sam were ready to leave the house, a sudden knock was at the door. The face looked so familiar, but neither Jane nor Sam could put a name with the person until he introduced himself once again.

"Hello, I am Patric Stewart; we met on the ride over here."

"Oh, yes," said the Carrot-Tops, Sam and Jane

remembered Patric.

Jane and Sam asked him what brought him back to see them. Patric explained to the family that he was the headmaster over the schools and the entire world of Baja until the elders woke. Jane was a little reluctant to hear what Mr. Stewart was saying, but she was caught up by his charm, and listened to every word. Patric was quite the ladies' man, always neatly dressed with a well shaved head and the finest suits in the entire galaxy of Baja.

He explained to the Carrot-Tops that he wanted Peter to be in the best school with the other gifted kids. So, he wanted Peter to go to Waldorf Academy, a place for only the gifted. In all, there were over one million kids in the gifted program. Jane was very surprised and asked how that was possible, to have so many kids in the same place at one time. Patric explained that when the elders went into hibernation and the Oracle read that a gifted child would release the spell, everyone in Baja began to have children to try to save the world as they knew it. After many births and many years of waiting, none of the children could undo the spell.

Patric also said that Peter must be a gifted child to be born out of the world of Baja. "A ghost can not survive out of the realms of Baja and on Earth." He went on to say

that for years and centuries nothing like this had ever been done.

Peter was the first ghost to be born on the side of the dead to the living. More importantly, Peter was born outside of Baja. No childbirth had ever been successful outside of Baja. Jane wanted to get up and leave, but every time she did, Mr. Stewart would bring her back in with his charm. Jane and Sam finally gave in and told Mr. Stewart that Peter would attend Waldorf Academy.

Mr. Stewart was excited and told Jane he could not wait, but Sam had a strange feeling about Patric. Nevertheless, he agreed and didn't listen to his gut feelings. Sam was still concerned about his parents, but they had so many things to do. He told his father he would be gone all day and to take care of his mother.

"Peter, come on. Time to go," shouted Jane.

Peter came running down the stairs. Jane told him about his new school and how he will love it. Peter was so excited! He was ready to go, rushing out the door, leaving his lunch and everything behind.

"Slow down, son," said Sam in a precautionary sort of way.

All of the Carrot-Tops family went to a wonderful school for all the gifted children in Baja. Jane and Sam

were excited for their son. For the first time in a long time, Peter would feel like he belonged.

As the family stepped outside, ready to go, Red Fox pulled up in a white and gold flying vessel. What a beauty! The vessel was very clean, and the white paint shone in the sun. The peanut butter colored leather seats were exquisite. The vessel was like nothing anyone had ever seen before, except for Sam's father.

David was not only a creator of toys and gadgets, but also the futuristic weapons and transportation in Baja. Red Fox explained to Sam that David wanted his grandson to go to school in style. He also explained to Sam that this transportation was hidden in the caves below the house. David hid it well to protect and preserve it when they were banished out of Baja.

Sam went over to the vessel and slowly touched it. It had wings like a bird that spanned out for miles. The car slowly and silently hovered over one spot. Sam was impressed by his father's work, and looked toward the window where his father was, and gave him a thumb's up.

"Jump in," said Red Fox.

Peter ran toward the vessel and the doors automatically opened. Inside was totally awesome. Everything could be run by an invisible force.

Red Fox and Sam were in the front seat as Jane and Peter sat in the back. Sam loved the way the vessel took off; for once, a happy childhood smile crossed his face. He was like a kid again. The ride to Peter's new school was a fun trip. At last, the family began to see a newly developed Baja, a planet they had so long missed and hoped for.

Fairies in their pink, blue and green dresses followed the car and waved to the family. Oh, yes! Baja was unique in itself. Peter tugged on his mother's skirt as he saw giants and their kids sliding down a huge Beanstalk. At the right rear of the window, Jane glanced out and saw her neighborhood, and a sudden rush of emotions came over her.

"Are you okay, mother?" asked Peter.

"Yes, son, I was just thinking of all the fun I had when I was a kid."

Peter smiled and continued to look out of the window. There were so many things to see in the skies, from falling rainbows, to giant plants. It was all new and unique to him, so he took in all the sights. The vessel moved so fast and silent, everyone was pointing and calling out to the skies.

"Look!" said a woman taking her kids to school.

Everyone's eyes were fixed on the skies. There was a

massive object up there that no one had ever seen before. Everyone gathered around, from police officers to news reporters.

"We have a welcoming committee," said Jane.

Red Fox lowered the massive object, ordering the crowd to make room through a loud speaker. Everyone moved, and the door flew open.

"Who's inside?" asked a bystander to a reporter.

Then through the doors walked the Carrot-Tops family. People began to take pictures and walked up to Peter trying to shake his hand or even touch him. Peter loved all the attention, but not Sam. His mind was on the war at hand. But as any good parent, he played to the crowd, and then walked in the school. This school was huge; over one million students, and each one of them had a gift of some kind and came from galaxies near and far away.

Up above in the skies was a unicorn race. This was a part of an annual school sport, some unicorns and their riders were dressed in red and the others in black. They flew through the skies dodging and jumping through invisible rings that appeared and then disappeared.

"Oh, boy! That looks like fun," said Peter.

"Don't worry, son. You can join once you start your new school," said Jane.

As the family walked into the school, they were greeted by Mr. Stewart. "I have been expecting you, come on in."

Jane and Peter were all smiles, but Sam was not too happy with Mr. Stewart. For some reason, he had a bad feeling about Mr. Stewart. As the family walked to Mr. Stewart's office, there was very little talking until Sam asked, "Why do you want my son here? Is it because of his abilities, or you just want to exploit him?"

"Neither, I just want a young man this gifted to attend one of the brightest schools in the land," replied Mr. Stewart with a devilish grin on his face.

As the family stepped into the office, it was like walking into a freezing storm. The office was very cold, so that their breath froze in mid-air.

"It's cold, Mother!" shouted Peter.

"I will adjust the heat," said Mr. Stewart.

Within minutes, the office was nice and toasty.

"Why is it so cold?" asked Jane.

"Well, I suffer from a rare illness. I need to be cool at all times," said Mr. Stewart, and he motioned the Carrot-Tops to take a seat.

As the family sat down, they were treated like royalty. Servants brought hot cocoa for Peter and brisk tea

for Mr. and Mrs. Carrot-Tops. Mr. Stewart looked Peter all over, from his orange hair to his different colored shoes. All Mr. Stewart would say is "Ummh, hmm." It made the Carrot-Tops very suspicious of him; so suddenly Jane grabbed Peter from Mr. Stewart's hands and sat him on her lap.

"What are you looking for?" asked Sam.

"Just to see if the boy is truly the one," said Mr. Stewart.

He went on to tell the Carrot-Tops that most kids in this school had some sort of power, but none like Peter's -- so powerful and well controlled for a boy his age. Unlike Peter, all the children were born in Baja. Peter was the only ghost child born on Earth and out of the world of the living dead.

Mr. Stewart also told Peter's parents that most of the kids' powers only lasted a while and never returned. That's why there were so many kids at the school. Baja was short on talented and powerful kids. Once a child's powers left them, they were given a pension and kicked out of Waldorf Academy. This was very displeasing to the Carrot-Tops, and they let Mr. Stewart know how very unhappy they were with him.

Nevertheless, Mr. Stewart did not care about the

Carrot-Tops liking him. All he wanted was to bring the elders back from hibernation and get Baja back as one of the most powerful ghost worlds. Sam wanted the same thing, but not at the expense of his son, or any other child.

As the family continued to talk to Mr. Stewart, Peter noticed the lion's head and eyes moving, but when he looked again, the movement would stop. Mr. Stewart's office was very weird and strange, as if they were in another dimension. Every once in a while, Peter noticed ghostly figures walking by, yet none of the adults were able to see them.

"You have many spirits in your office!" shouted Peter.

"What do you mean, son?" asked Sam.

Peter explained to his parents that he saw figures moving back and forth, in and out of Mr. Stewart's wall.

"Nonsense! What an imagination," said Mr. Stewart.

"But it's the truth," said Peter.

"Hush," said Jane to Peter.

"Our son never lies, Mr. Stewart. Something is in your office, that's why it is so cold," said Sam.

"Nothing is here, check if you like," said Mr. Stewart.

Peter ran over to the wall and began to slowly touch it. He could feel an eerie finger run across his face, but when he turned around the figure was gone. He quickly

shouted to his parents, but no one could see the figure, so Peter gave up trying to convince the adults of what he was seeing.

As his parents and Mr. Stewart talked, Peter eyes were intensely fixed on the walls. They seemed to stretch up and down, longer and longer. The colors seemed to blend into one. Suddenly, a strange figure jumped out of the walls and disappeared so quickly Peter could not keep up.

By Mr. Stewart's emotions, he knew what was in the walls. He gave a phony grin to Peter's parents, and every once in a while, he would glance at Peter. For some reason, Mr. Stewart was not to be trusted. He seemed to be a very secretive man, and could be in more than one place at a time.

Peter knew he would have to convince his parents that something was very wrong with Mr. Stewart, and now was not the time. He also knew his mother wanted the best for him, and he wanted to make his mother happy.

As his parents talked to Mr. Stewart, the ghostly figure came out again, motioning to Peter to hush and watch. Peter watched the figure as it rumbled through Mr. Stewart's office. The ghost had no face, just a long black hood that covered it from head to toe. Every time the figure came in the room, the temperature seemed to drop.

Suddenly the room began to form ice, and then snow!

As Peter went to motion to his parents, he froze. He was solid like a block of ice. His face was pale, and his skin turned white. As he looked toward his parents, they were also frozen in their seats. Jane was frozen as she let out a burst of laughter, and her breath was frozen in thin air. Sam was taking off his glasses as he was frozen. The only thing Peter could do was move his eyes back and forth.

He glanced at the ghost talking to Mr. Stewart, but could not make out the words. The strange figure looked back and glanced at Peter with his faceless head. This was frightening to Peter, and he began to scream. But his screams were frozen solid, and all that was left was the frozen air.

Peter drifted off to sleep in the block of ice. He could vaguely see the hooded ghost leaving, and then the temperature went slowly back to normal. Things began to melt quickly, and Mr. Stewart called in a group of little fairies to clean up the place. They came in to dry the place with the air from their wings. A thousand of them were like a whirlwind. The fairies spun and twirled as some of their wings flickered with different lights. Then it was as if a sand storm touched down. The fairies worked until everything was thawed and the office was dry again.

Peter and his parents began to wake up out of the frozen block of ice. No one knew what had happened. It was as if time stopped and then started again, but Peter knew something was wrong. He told his parents he wanted to leave, but not until Mr. Stewart charmed Peter with stories of playing with children his age and riding the magic rainbow and Beanstalks. Peter did not want to lose the opportunity to see more of Baja and to make new friends.

"Well, Peter, you still want to leave?" asked Mr. Stewart.

"No, sir!" Peter shouted.

"Come, let me take you on a tour of the school," said Mr. Stewart.

Peter and Jane were very excited, but Sam still had a feeling that something wasn't right. He went along with Mr. Stewart and his ideas. All Sam wanted was for his son to attend a prestigious school. Mr. Stewart hurried the family out of the office with his sly grin, a grin that never seemed to wipe from his face. Every day he wore the same smile as if it were painted on.

Mr. Stewart called for his secretary, and off they went through the school. "Are you ready to see your future?" Mr. Stewart asked Peter.

"Yes, sir, show me," said Peter.

The family and Mr. Stewart walked up to a giant door. Peter could hardly see all the way to the top. The door read "Waldorf Academy" and had an etched drawing of seven warriors and a group of lions.

Peter and his family stared at the image repeatedly, it was fine art. The images seemed to be moving. Peter and his family took a closer look at the lions, and when they got closer to the image, the lions began to move. Peter rubbed his eyes thinking he was imagining things. As he looked back to the art, the lion jumped out. Both Jane and Peter covered their faces, and when they looked back, everything was back to normal.

"Honey, did you see that?" asked Jane.

"No," replied Sam.

"I saw it, Mother," said Peter.

Suddenly, the door gave way and parted in half. It slowly opened, but Peter and his family could see a little bit of the school, and what Peter saw, he loved.

"Oh, what a beauty!" said Peter.

"What, son?" asked Sam.

Peter explained to his parents that he saw a large flying fish. Then the doors completely opened. Peter was right! The place was like heaven, children were everywhere, and the scenery was out of this world. Some of the children

were riding flying fish in the air. The fish were multicolored; some were red, white, orange, green and blue. The children were strapped in tight to each fish, holding a leash. The fish were all different species; there were whales, sting rays, sharks and marlins.

One of the children swooped down so Peter could take a closer look at the animal. This creature was beautiful; his blue big bugged eyes glanced at Peter and everything around him. Then it began to lick itself. It was covered in white with blue polka dots. This was something Peter had never seen and he was very impressed.

"Mother, look! It's out of the water and on land," said Peter.

"Yes, dear. Baja is full of surprises," replied Jane.

Peter went up to touch the animal and it took off into the skies.

"Oh! It's okay, son. It's a little shy, you will have to train it," said Sam.

What a magnificent creature. It looked like a silver metal animal; its skin glittered in the sun as it flew away. Then Mr. Stewart took the family closer to the river that was flooded with a milk-like substance. There were kids riding magic seahorses.

The children sat on the seahorses with leather

saddles. There was a race going on, and each seahorse had a number printed on its side. Just like the other animals of Baja, they were just as beautiful and charming. The seahorses were at least ten to twelve feet tall, and the same or more in length. On them were the magical symbols of Baja. Their skin was made out of some type of flexible metal; they looked almost like they had skin made of silver.

There were only three types -- white, black and gold, and pink. Pink was the rarest according to Mr. Stewart. To acquire these types of seahorses, hunters had to travel to the Black Forest where it was very dangerous, so seahorses came at a very expensive price. Mr. Stewart glanced over at Sam as he was talking to Peter about the seahorses, assuming that Sam had no money if his son wanted the seahorse.

Sam just nodded at Mr. Stewart, knowing his intentions, "If my son wants it, I will purchase it for him," he demanded.

Jane looked out and whispered in her husband's ear, "Honey, you know we are not established yet. We can't afford this school or anything in it."

"Don't worry, honey. I will find a way," Sam said.

At this time, Mr. Stewart was smirking because he heard everything that was said. He replied, "If you agree

that Peter can stay here, I will supply all his needs and wants."

"No, no, we can afford it," said Sam as he looked at Mr. Stewart in a vengeful way.

As the adults talked, Peter watched the race and cheered on the winner. The other children began to stare and point. "There goes the boy who was born out of Baja," one child said. They all stopped and watched as Peter took a tour through the school.

Then suddenly, Clara Cabbage stepped forward and yelled, "Peter, Peter! Remember me? It's Clara from the Captain Johnny ride."

Peter ran to Clara and gave her a big hug. "Yes, I remember you. How could I forget one of the most tomboyish girls?"

Clara took that as a compliment and began to blush. The two friends hugged again, and Peter introduced Clara to his parents.

"What a beautiful girl you are," said Jane to Clara.

The school bell sounded. "We must go, but I will see you around," said Clara.

Jane and Sam were shocked to see Peter had a friend already, mostly because it was a girl.

"See, he's making friends already," said Mr. Stewart.

"Oh, Mother and Father! Can I go to this school, please? I love it!" said Peter.

"But you haven't even seen all of it," said Sam.

So, Mr. Stewart took them further into the gates. There was plenty to do at Waldorf Academy, from swimming, riding seahorses, seeing flying fish and going to the moon. There were also trips to the giant and the Beanstalk, and the magic classes along with regular academics. The building that housed the students was humongous.

The school was built like a castle with over 200,000 rooms. The grounds had to be mowed by beavers and very fat cows. The castle school was all brick and had the emblems of the elders. This school was almost like stepping back into the Egyptian era. There were columns upon columns of hieroglyphics on the walls and all over the building.

There were statues of pharaohs; some were huge while others were small to medium. It was very intriguing to Peter. He'd read about Egyptians on Earth, but never thought he would ever see something like this in his lifetime. Everyone was impressed. Even Sam had to admit the school was great for his son. As the tour went on, guards stood by the doors guarding entrances and exits.

"Why all the guards?" asked Sam.

"Well, these kids are the keys to Baja. Some may be

worthwhile in the future, and it is my responsibility to make sure they are safe," said Mr. Stewart. "Besides, these children belong to the richest citizens of Baja. If anything happened to their children, it would be my head!"

Sam liked the fact that security was tight, and these were no ordinary security guards. These were monsters and giants that were built like mountains. They were huge! On their faces and bodies were the symbols of Baja, burned into their flesh. Some guards carried sticks; some carried big clubs like in the caveman era. Their eyes were always glancing back and forth over the children, making sure everyone was accounted for. These monsters could sense danger and fear a mile away.

Peter gazed upon the huge monsters, making eye contact with them, but to the monsters, Peter was just the size of a mere ant. "This place is a dream!" shouted Peter.

"I am so glad you like it," replied Mr. Stewart.

As the family continued to walk inside, the place became even more beautiful. There were huge plants that whistled and burped out bubbles.

"And who made these plants, Peter?" asked Sam.

"Mother!" shouted Peter.

"You're right, my son," interrupted Mr. Stewart.

The plants were so beautiful. Jane had taught them how

to talk and communicate with people. The plants had become family. When the plants saw the Carrot-Tops coming, they shrank down to size. "Our mother has returned!" shouted one of the plants, and they all came slithering down. One by one, they used their leaves to pick Jane up into their arms and spun her around.

"Oh, how we missed you," said one of the plants.

"I missed you too," said Jane.

Everyone laughed and had a ball. Jane explained to Peter that they had had to leave before she could see her plants fully grown, and at that time, they were still in flower pots.

"So someone must have taken them," replied Sam sarcastically as he looked over to Mr. Stewart.

"Well, all I can say is that I acquired them from a close friend, before you two left Baja," said Mr. Stewart.

Jane also introduced Peter to the flowers and plants. They all put their leaves together and began to clap vigorously as he stepped forward.

"The boy king has arrived!" shouted the plants. One plant took her leaves and looked Peter over from head to toe.

"He is perfect. I have never seen a child born outside of Baja that lived to tell about it," said the plant.

"We must go," said Mr. Stewart.

For some reason, Mr. Stewart wanted the family away from the plants. He wanted something kept a secret. Mr. Stewart pushed and hurried the family on with the tour. But there was no more convincing Peter, and his family was hooked. Waldorf Academy was a great school for Peter, and Baja was a great place for his family. As the school bell rang, the classes let out, and the hallways were packed with children.

All the kids managed to get a look at Peter. Some ran up to touch him, while others stayed back and looked him over. There were whispers through the crowds of the boy king. Word passed so fast through the school, but Peter was more excited to see them than they were to see him.

"Kids, I want to introduce you to Mr. Peter Carrot-Tops and his family," said Mr. Stewart.

The children began to clap and welcome Peter to Waldorf Academy. Jane and Sam were happy to see their son finally fitting in with his peers, so they pulled Mr. Stewart aside and told him they would be pleased to let their son attend the school. Mr. Stewart just gave that sneaky, weird smile that he always did.

Out of nowhere, Mr. Stewart magically pulled out a contract and asked the Carrot-Tops to sign. He explained to

them that it was just a standard contract that all parents had to sign and made the Carrot-Tops believe it was just for enrollment. As they signed the contract, blood began to fall from the pen ink, and then it turned back into ink. Jane and Sam did a double take, they weren't sure of what they were seeing, but they looked at the joy on Peter's face and continued to sign. Once the signatures were on the paper, Mr. Stewart could care less about anything else.

What the contract said, they would never know. Mr. Stewart took off waving his hands and told Peter's parents to have him back at Waldorf at 8:00 a.m. every morning, and he let his secretary lead the family out.

"Well, I think he got what he wanted," said Jane to Sam.

"Well, I have a bad feeling about this too," said Sam.

As the family left Waldorf, Peter was still overjoyed from his visit. Jane could hardly keep him still -- he was like a kid on sugar. His parents were happy to see their son was finally excited about something. Jane and Peter stopped at a uniform shop in the village shopping area, while Sam and Red Fox met Samantha Grey in the village to discuss military business.

The village was a huge area that looked like a Christmas town. Cobblestones were all through the town with

secret codes and hieroglyphics. There were bakery shops, toy stores and many more merchants selling to the citizens of Baja. As Jane and Peter walked through the town, everyone was pointing and staring. Of course the orange hair on Peter made them more noticeable.

For Jane, it was great to be back in Baja, her home she had missed so much. Peter and Jane shopped for uniforms for him to start school the next day. It was a fun time for mother and son to spend quality time together. Even though there were friendly stares and pointing, Jane did not let this ruin time with her son.

They passed her favorite shop, Cotton Candy Ice Cream. "Oh, Peter, my dear, you have to try this ice cream!" said Jane.

Both of them ran up to the store door and inside they went. It was an ice cream shop tucked away in a little corner, and was one of the locals' favorites. The shop was like a candy land -- there was candy decor for miles and miles. Every candy known to man was at this store, but the favorite was cotton candy ice cream. Peter's eyes grew as he saw many selections to choose from. For the first time in a long time, Peter had the choice of pigging out on pure sugar. The shop was very busy; people were walking in and out.

There was a jolly old man at the counter waiting to serve children big and small. His name was Mr. Smork. He had a great long blue, purple, yellow and red beard, and long white hair. His laugh was filled with joy and happiness. He remembered Jane from years back.

"Welcome back, Jane. Can I get you your favorite of yellow cotton dip?" said Mr. Smork.

"You still remember," said Jane.

"I will never forget anyone's favorite treats. And who is this young man?" said Mr. Smork.

"Hi, I am Peter Carrot-Tops. Could I try the strawberry cotton dip?" said Peter as he extended a handshake to Mr. Smork.

"You sure can, young man," said Mr. Smork as he belted out a jolly old laugh.

Peter and Jane watched as three little elves made their cotton candy ice cream. The elves began to whip the cotton until it fluffed out of the bowl. Then they added magical sprinkles that made the cotton candy puff up.

"Wow, that's the largest ice cream I have ever seen!" said Peter.

Jane and Mr. Smork laughed, they were glad to see a child's face full of joy. People began to crowd the store as Jane and Peter were leaving. The news had gotten out,

and once again, the little corner ice cream store was in the news.

"Bye, Mr. Smork!" shouted Peter as he and his mother walked away.

People began to push and shove just to get a look at the boy king and his royal family. Peter and Jane walked the cobblestone streets skipping and eating their ice cream.

"Oh, this is so good, Mother!" proclaimed Peter.

Off they went to sit on a bench in the park where Peter and his mom talked about starting a new school and how Peter must be very careful of the power he now had. Peter took his mother's advice and gave her a big kiss on the cheek. From there it went on to laughter and tickles, Peter laughed with happiness.

"Mother, I am truly happy here in Baja," said Peter.

"Don't you miss Georgia?" Jane asked.

"No, I never fit in, but now I am in a place where I truly belong and people accept me for who I am," said Peter.

Then off they went. Peter and Jane hit the toy store named Santa's Box. Peter could not believe his eyes. It was like an amusement park. There were rides, reindeer and contests. It was the place everyone wanted to be, and it even snowed inside. Peter ran up to the door as a nutcracker greeted him, but Jane stood outside and gazed at

the store. It was the way she last saw it, the big doll and teddy bear hanging from the roof, and the big face of her picture as a little girl in the center.

This store was built in her honor by Sam's father to help all the kids of Baja to have toys, whether it be for birthdays or Christmas. It was taken away from her and her family when they were exiled out of Baja. Jane tried to control her emotions, but was unsuccessful at it. Peter came running back, asking his mother what was the matter. She explained the story of her picture and how the store was once owned by their family.

Peter gazed up at his mother's baby picture and belted out, "Mother, you are so pretty."

Jane just smiled, held onto Peter's hand and walked into the store. It was truly a toy land. There were life-size riding trains, dolls, stuffed animals and all the latest toys a child could want. The atmosphere was filled with joy and children laughing. It was as if Peter and Jane had walked into Santa's North Pole. Peter took off and began to play with the disappearing flying balls.

Suddenly, a short, stout old lady approached Jane. This lady was very short; she only came up to Jane's knees! She wore her hair in one old-fashioned bun, and let her glasses tilt at her nose. "Mrs. Carrot-Tops," the squeaky

voice said.

Jane quickly turned around. "Oh! Ms. Sweeney, how are you?"

"Fine, now that you're back," said Ms. Sweeney.

Jane explained to Ms. Sweeney that they did not own the store anymore, but Ms. Sweeney had great news for Jane. She said that since her family was reinstated, everything that was taken away from them would be given back in full and with interest. Jane could not believe her ears.

"Are you serious?" asked Jane, as she shook the daylights out of Ms. Sweeney.

The two ladies sat and talked for a while. Ms. Sweeney caught Jane up on as much gossip as she could, then she took Jane by the hand and introduced her to her new staff. Most of the employees were happy to meet her, but they were more interested in Peter. Jane called him over and introduced him to all of her employees.

Jane let Peter know that there had been a change of fate, and she would regain ownership of the store. Jane let everyone know that she would be returning to work the next day, but in the meantime, she had to pick up uniforms for Peter. He and Jane left the store waving bye to all her friends. Jane was so excited; she couldn't wait to tell Sam and his father.

Chapter 7

Betrayal

Quickly, Jane stopped by the tailor shop, watching as Peter got fitted for his uniforms by three small chickens. Their shop was called the "Taylor Chicks, where all your tailoring needs are complete." One worked at the top, one in the middle and one at the bottom. Sometimes all three of them were on top of a table or each other, but they quickly moved like the speed of light, one behind the other.

They stitched, sewed, pressed and measured, spinning Peter around and around. He looked as if he was in a whirlwind, but he was enjoying every minute. All Jane could think about was starting back to work at her own business, something she loved doing. She couldn't wait to tell Sam.

As the chickens finished tailoring Peter's uniform, they told Jane the uniforms would be ready in an hour and would be delivered promptly.

Jane said, "Thanks," and off they went to meet Sam, Red Fox and Samantha Grey in the center square.

Everyone seemed to be on top of the world. Things seemed to go according to plan, when Jane looked out of the corner of her eye and saw a ghostly figure, just staring

and watching every move they made. Peter saw the fear on his mother's face.

"What's wrong, mother?" asked Peter, and before Jane could say anything, Peter saw the ghostly figure too. He explained to his mother that this was the same figure he saw on the ride to Baja and in Mr. Stewart's office.

"Why didn't you say something?" asked Jane as she shook Peter.

He began to cry and Jane quickly hugged her son and apologized for what she had done. As they both turned around, the figure was gone. This was very frightening to Jane and Peter, so they walked faster to the center square to warn Sam about what they had seen. Jane and Peter ran up to the table where Sam, Samantha and Red Fox were sitting.

"What's wrong, Mrs. C? You look like you saw a ghost," said Samantha.

"We have," said Peter quickly as he looked over his shoulders in fear.

Sam comforted his wife and son, then they all listened to Jane and Peter as they described the ghostly creature. At the same time, the creature appeared again across the street. Peter hid behind his father. This time the ghost seemed to be very angry, not saying a word, just making fighting movements. The onlookers were afraid. People began

to scream and panic all over town. No one stayed to fight. Everyone seemed to be afraid of this creature. Dust began to fly through the air in slow motion. Even the dust particles took the form of an angry face and began to scare the people in the square.

Sam used his powers to lift the creature into the air as Red Fox attacked it. Jane quickly reached into her purse and pulled out some magic seeds. On the ground, the seeds rolled and suddenly began to grow. Jane put Peter on the branch as it grew taller and taller into the air.

Samantha Grey jumped in to help Red Fox as they fought with the creature, but it seemed to have remarkable strength. Sam was having a hard time using his abilities to keep the creature in the air. Sam was growing weaker and weaker by the minute. He fell to the ground, still trying to keep his powers going, but whatever it was, it was draining him dry.

He finally let go and the ghost fell to the ground, but Red Fox and Samantha kept on hitting and fighting the creature. Samantha used her kung fu and every martial art form she knew, but the creature was hitting her from right to left, throwing her around like a rag doll.

Peter saw his family in trouble, and he slid down the tree branch and began to work his powers on the ghost. Back

and forth Peter grew holes, swallowing up the ghost. Sparks began to fly from the ghost. Colors burst out of his eyes. Red, blue and green flames sprayed into the air like a comet.

But the creature still had a lot of fight left in him, and as he was about to get up, Peter created a hole small enough to bind the ghost so it couldn't move. All one could see was the ghost's head, the rest of the body was hidden in the hole.

"Great job, son," said Sam.

Samantha and Red Fox patted Peter on the back. Sam walked up to the creature as it began to mumble and foamed at the mouth. The noise the creature made was crushingly painful to the ear. Sam grabbed it by the neck.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

The creature would not answer, and suddenly Sam ripped off the ghostly cape in anger to find a little devilish-looking troll. It was covered in mud, and the smell was outrageous. Everyone held their breath as the odor swept past their noses.

"Oh! My goodness, you stink!" said Red Fox.

"And so does your mother," said the creature.

Red Fox was not amused and went to punch the creature before Sam stopped him.

"Once again, why are you here?" asked Sam.

The creature began to whistle and roll its big black eyes around and around in circles, but never answered. Samantha Grey stepped forward and kicked the creature.

"Okay, calm down," said the creature to Samantha.

"We want answers, and we want them now," said Samantha as the creature caught its breath.

It told of how Marcus Carrot-Top paid him to keep an eye on his brother and his family. "I was promised a palace in the kingdom when it crumbles from the fall of the elders," said the creature.

"Where is Marcus now?" asked Sam.

The creature explained that Marcus was in the forest with the seven wizards. He advised Sam not to go there because his powers were weak and no match for his brother. He began to chuckle at Sam. Sam immediately grabbed him up and ordered Red Fox and Samantha to take it to the prison.

"No, no, not the prison! I hate it there," squealed the creature.

Red Fox and Samantha grabbed the creature by its neck and pulled it out of the hole.

As the creature passed Peter, he whispered, "You don't look like a boy king. You can't stop what is coming."

Samantha grabbed him by the neck and threw the

creature into a wooden box, and off they went.

Peter was a little shaken up and he ran to his father with a big hug. "I'm all right, son, and thanks," said Sam.

Jane joined in on the hug as the crowd looked on and clapped. "Something is truly wrong, and we will get to the bottom of this," said Jane.

"Oh! No, just me alone will do it. I can't risk you getting hurt. I can't ask you to follow me again," said Sam to Jane.

With a stern voice, Jane let Sam know that they were a family, and as a family, they would fight together, and no questions asked.

"Yeah, Dad, we can do it," said Peter.

"Relax, squirt, I want you to have a normal life, not a life of fighting," said Sam, but Peter was not accepting that. He was going to fight on the same side as his father.

After an exciting day, the Carrot-Tops were finally on their way home, but Jane wanted to make a stop at her old home to look for her parents. Finally, she had the courage to face her fears of her family disowning her.

The road was long, quiet and very dark. A sparrow in the tree made a calling sound as if warning someone was coming. Suddenly, the noise stopped and the trees and shrubs began to shake violently. All that was noticeable

were large shadows and yellow cat's eyes.

Jane told Peter to get down lower to the floor of their vehicle. She knew something was very wrong. Then, out of the darkness, a big black cat jumped in front of them. It was the size of ten polar bears. Symbols glowed in the darkness and gave light to a nametag which read "Oscar." Jane's eyes grew bigger and bigger as the cat claws poked out, ready for an attack.

"Oscar, it is me, Jane," Jane shouted.

The cat stopped for a minute and began to talk. "It is impossible," said the cat.

"No, it is I," said Jane.

As Jane repeated her name, the cat began to break down and cover its ear, rolling in the middle of the road. With caution, Jane and Sam stepped out of the sky vessel and approached the humongous cat.

"What's wrong?" Jane asked Oscar.

"All these years, we waited for you to return and you never came. Now in front of my eyes, here you stand," he said.

The cat's eyes were dead, and its rough scruffy voice sounded as if he had seen better days. Oscar explained to Jane that they had been fighting the silent war between Baja and the wizards of the dark forest, and their leader

was an evil man named Marcus.

Sam blushed with disappointment when he heard the name of his brother. Anger and disappointment filled his heart, so Sam questioned the cat. "Why is there a war? What has my brother done this time?"

Oscar was very reluctant to talk to Sam. He took his nose and nudged Jane into a corner to speak with her privately. Sam was very upset and threw his hat to the floor, demanding the cat come back at once. Oscar ignored Sam and kept on talking to Jane.

Meanwhile, Peter looked out from the sky vessel and watched all the action. Oscar told Jane that Marcus was building a league of monsters to attack Baja because he wanted to become king and ruler over the ten thousand cities in Baja. Oscar explained that while Jane and her family were banned from Baja, they were not forgotten and were deeply missed. He told her that her family was safe, and was running an underground safe house so when the war began, at least some citizens of Baja would be able to escape.

Jane was still in awe over the size Oscar had grown to. She began to rub her hands through his coat, back and forth. She reminisced of all the fun she'd had with Oscar and her childhood home. Oscar then gave her a wet slobbery

lick on the face to wake her up. Jane snapped out of her dream world and asked about her parents.

Oscar pointed with his huge claws. "They are over there."

Behind a twelve-foot iron gate lay Jane's childhood home. Through those doors was where she would find her parents. She ran back to the car to inform Sam of all the information she had learned from Oscar, and that her parents were on the other side. She was quite nervous to see her parents; for years they blamed Sam for their daughter's banishment.

Before they pulled up to the gates, Oscar stuck his big head through the sky vessel window. "And who is this little one, Jane?"

"This is Peter, my son," said Jane.

"Yes! The boy king who shall save Baja; I look forward to serving you," said Oscar.

Peter was still hiding low to the ground but managed to peek for just a second. He could not keep his eyes off of Oscar. "What a huge cat, Mother!" said Peter.

"Well, he wasn't always that big. I think it was the milk," said Jane jokingly.

Then Jane began to choke from nervousness. She was afraid to meet her parents, but she knew deep down in her

heart she had to make things right.

Oscar gave the guards at the gate the sign to let the car through and they did. The big iron gates opened and Oscar's shadow could still be seen several feet away. As Jane's eyes caught sight of her old home, her eyes began to tear up. Sam held his wife's hands closely and gave them a big squeeze.

"Honey, it will be all right. We are Carrot-Tops. We will make it as always," said Sam.

As they approached Jane's old house, everything seemed to have died. All the plants and trees she'd grown were withered and dead. The place almost looked deserted, but Jane and her family got out of the sky vessel and approached the house.

A butler opened the door. In his old scruffy voice he asked, "Jane, is that you?"

"Yes, it's me, Willard, and I brought my family," said Jane.

Willard the butler began to tear up and hurried to let them in. Jane looked around the house. What a disaster! The house looked like it hadn't been cleaned in years. Stray animals were running through the house and so were homeless people.

"Where is Mother, Willard?" asked Jane.

"She will be back any minute now, Madame Burgandy," said Willard.

"No, it's Mrs. Carrot-Top now, Willard," said Jane.

Willard apologized and began to look Jane over from head to toe. Jane introduced Peter and Sam.

"What is going on, Willard? This place looks depressing and dilapidated," said Jane.

Willard explained to Jane that after she left, her mother could not take the isolation from her friends and the people of Baja, and began to keep to herself and threw a pity party. He told Jane that they did everything to try to get her back into the swing of things. Nothing worked, until one day, Jane's mother had a vision from the elders that Jane and her family would return.

Willard explained that this was the only time her mother ever got out of bed, and now she was fighting the evil spirits to free Baja and its people. As the story got intense, Jane sent Peter to sit by the fireplace, out of adult conversation. But Peter could still hear everything, and it also helped that he put his ears to the walls.

Willard told Jane and Sam that a war was coming, and the people of Baja needed to get ready. He said it seemed everyone was so lackadaisical about fighting, and it felt like Baja was too peaceful to ever be in a war. But Marcus

Carrot-Top and the seven wizards were coming, and coming with an army of demons and imps.

This was why Jane's mother, Mrs. Burgandy, started an underground army with tunnels and secret passages built to house the people of Baja once the war came. Mrs. Burgandy was so busy she let the place go.

"And where is my father?" asked Jane.

Willard stalled for a minute, but Jane wanted an answer and she wanted it now. He told her it was too much for her father to handle, and he walked out and was never heard from again. There were search parties and even a visit to the Oracle, but Mr. Burgandy was never found. Everything was just as he left it. Jane was very upset at her father for leaving her mother all alone, but she also blamed herself.

She walked through the house, trying to turn back the hands of time, wondering and wishing that she could go back into her childhood days and spend time with her father; wishing that she could undo all the wrongs and make them right.

Jane went to her old bedroom and everything was still the same. Even though her mother was upset that Jane disgraced the family, she still loved Jane and missed her dearly. In Jane's room there were antique dolls and old

doll houses. The pink ruffled bed set was still on the bed collecting dust. The place looked like it had never been touched since she got married and left home. On her bed laid an old doll, one she had never seen before. The eyes began to glow and a strange sensation began to come over Jane.

Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted a creepy image. When she turned around, it had disappeared. Jane was very frightened and began running and screaming down the stairs. She told Willard and Sam what she had seen.

"They're everywhere," said Willard.

"Who?" asked Jane.

Willard explained to Jane that the creatures of the forest were all over Baja. They were filthy creatures created by the seven wizards and Marcus. They were imps of the underworld, and they mostly came out at night, but had been seen in the daytime as well. Willard began to look for his magical book of secrets.

"What's that for?" asked Peter.

The huge book was purple and the pages were made of thin cloth, layer by layer, until it weighed over fifty pounds. The book had the same symbols as everything in Baja, and it glowed back and forth like a breathing motion.

"Where did you get that?" asked Jane.

Willard told Jane and the rest of her family that he got the book from a magical store on the outskirts of Baja, but he really didn't know how to use it. All he knew was that when something evil came around, the book opened and did what it was supposed to do.

"Let me give it a try," said Peter.

It had a big dial on the cover and a lock on the back. Willard watched intently as Peter opened the book. Once the right combination was given and set, it popped open and a bright light shone through the house as if it was scanning the room. The light was so bright, but yet there were no visible images. Suddenly, blood-curdling screams came from all over the house. It was like echoes of horror. Everyone covered their ears; the sound was so overwhelming to their ear drums.

Then bubbles of smoke began to burst as the creatures began dying. Apparently the creatures were all over the home. They were invisible to the naked eye. No one knew that they were there. One by one, they burst into a cloud of smoke and fumes. The smell was horrible, and disgusting blue and green guts splashed the walls and everything in their path. It was the grossest thing to see, but Peter thought it was very impressive.

"Willard, we're going to leave. Tell Mother I will

talk to her later," said Jane.

"Wait, how did you do that, son?" Willard asked Peter.

"I don't know," said Peter.

As they were leaving, Jane's mother showed up. It was not the same lady she had known all of her life.

"Mother, is that you?" asked Jane.

"No! It's the grim reaper," said Jane's mother, Mrs. Burgandy. The comment was sarcastic and rude.

Mrs. Burgandy did not seem as if she was happy to see Jane. She looked rundown, and her clothing was ruffled and dirty. Her hair was a mess, like birds were making it their home, and her nails were long and dirty. Jane looked her mother over from head to toe and could not believe what she was seeing; Jane was stunned for a minute and did not know what to say. She stared at her mother. Her mother stared back, but the look Jane was getting from her mother was cold and callous.

Jane did not know the woman standing in front of her. She was not like Willard had made her out to be. Mrs. Burgandy did not miss her daughter, nor did she care if Jane was safe or not.

"This is all your fault for marrying Sam Carrot-Top," said Mrs. Burgandy.

She pushed Jane out of the way, as if she was rubbish

on the side of a street corner. Jane was hurt and tried to call out for her mother, but Mrs. Burgandy kept walking into the house. Jane followed her intensely.

"Mother, what is wrong with you? Why are you treating me like this?" shouted Jane.

Mrs. Burgandy explained to her daughter that she was scorned and verbally abused by the town. She said, after Jane ran off with Sam, the Carrot-Tops became a disgrace. Her daughter was married to one of them, and the people in the town were upset and angry at Mrs. Burgandy for having a disobedient child like Jane.

Because of the Carrot-Tops, their family name was also ruined and put to shame, everything was lost. Mrs. Burgandy was no longer the center of attention from the town's upper society. Worst of all, Jane's father up and left, never to be heard from again.

The hate showed in Mrs. Burgandy's eyes for her daughter. She wanted Jane to never come back to the house again. All she was concerned about was the loss of her wealth and status in Baja. Jane told her mother she loved her and walked out of the doorway of the old sitting room.

Willard passed by and told Jane how sorry he was for lying to her, and that her mother missed her. He said he only did it to have Jane stay. He thought maybe once her

mother saw her, she would change her hate into love. Jane accepted Willard's apology and asked him to take care of her mother.

Before Jane left, Willard gave the magical book to Peter and told him to take good care of it. As Jane and her family left the Burgandy's mansion, she could not help to look back. Suddenly, everything began to turn to stone, the dried up trees in the courtyard, the starving dog on the front porch. It was like a virus spreading.

"Run, run," said Sam as the house began to crumble.

Piercing screams filled the air. Jane wanted to run back and help her family, but it was too late. Sam grabbed her by the hand and jumped into the sky vessel, but there were no keys.

The stone virus was coming closer and closer, it looked like a tidal wave. Sam jumped out and used his powers to lift him and his family into the air. As they looked down, the house was being swallowed up by a black hole. Everything was going down into the hole. It was as if a wall was crumbling and then being swallowed. Jane saw Oscar trying to escape and was frightened that the stone virus was going to catch him.

"Honey! Oscar, help him please," said Jane.

With all his energy, Sam lifted Oscar into the air

just as the virus was going to attack him. Between helping Oscar and his family, Sam's powers were getting weak. He had to lay them down in a safe area. As soon as the stone virus subsided, Sam set his family down. Everyone caught their breath as they lay on the grass trying to understand what had just happened. Peter ran into his parents' arms as Oscar looked on and panted for air.

"What's going on, Oscar?" asked Jane.

Oscar explained that rumor had it that her mother made some type of deal with the wizards to get Jane and her family into the house so they could be destroyed. Jane was angry at Oscar for not telling her earlier, but Oscar explained that the prophecy had to come true.

"What prophecy?" demanded Sam.

"The prophecy that Peter somehow will know how to decode the book and save Baja. Whether you guys like it or not, Peter is the boy king, and I will be his protector," said Oscar.

"So my mother risked her life for us?" said Jane.

"Yes," said Oscar.

Oscar explained that after Jane and Sam left the city of Baja, many people were upset and turned away Mrs. Burgandy and all her family. There was a curse on the Burgandy and Carrot-Top names, so she made a deal with the

seven wizards of the forest.

From then on, Mrs. Burgandy gave up on life. Oscar assured Jane that her mother loved her. He said when Mrs. Burgandy found out that Marcus and the seven wizards were behind the fall of Baja, she changed her mind about Sam, but it was too late. She had already made a deal with the devil. In order for her to save Jane and her family's lives, she had to act as if she hated Jane to get her out of the house in time before the stone virus hit. Most important was for the magical book to get passed on to the right hands.

The book, for some reason or another, could not leave the house. Everyone who had tried to take it out would burst into flames. Not even Willard could take it out. He didn't even know how to use it. Oscar took his huge paw and patted Jane on the head gently as he comforted her. He reassured Jane that her mother loved her and had to sacrifice herself to save her family. Oscar reminded Jane that there were underground cities and her mother started them all.

"The war is coming. We must be ready," said Oscar.

"Wait just one minute. How do we know we can trust you?" asked Sam.

"Well, I am all you have right now!" said Oscar. "My

mission in life is to protect the boy king. I was groomed for this part many, many years ago."

Jane looked on in amazement and bewilderment. She never knew when she was pregnant that she would be carrying a baby boy so special.

"We must leave, the imps will be coming," said Oscar.

As they walked along the debris, Jane looked every once in a while over her shoulder at the home she once knew, and that was now in rubble. She looked for anything that she could pick up and save, but Oscar stopped her. Jane picked up an old locket, and Oscar warned her that evil was everywhere, and told her not to bring evil into her home. Jane quickly dropped the locket.

As it hit the ground, the locket turned into stone right before Jane's eyes. She began to cry hysterically, Sam could not keep her from sobbing. Peter felt really bad for his mother, and anger began to grow in his heart. Oscar pulled Peter aside and talked to him while Sam comforted Jane.

"Peter! Listen, my boy. There are good people, and there are bad people. What side do you want to be on?" Oscar asked.

"Well, the good side of course," Peter replied.

Oscar smiled and walked away. In his heart he knew

that Peter would always do the right thing, that's why he was chosen. Jane's eyes glanced over all the rubble that was left behind. Her childhood home was gone and so was her family. Sam could no longer comfort his wife. Jane began to cry and he quickly used his powers to levitate everyone into the air.

"It's been a long day, and it's time we all went home," said Sam.

No one said a word on the way home. They were flying like birds of the skies, but their hearts were so lonely. No one muttered a sound, they all just looked out to the horizon where the beanstalks grew and the giants slid up and down. The waterfalls were changing color in the night air, from red to blue and then to green. This was like a fireworks show to Peter. He enjoyed it very much. It was as if nature was trying to comfort them.

Word had spread, and even up in the air, thousands of feet above the clouds, animals were welcoming the boy king known as Peter Carrot-Top. Flying dragons quickly came up from behind and blew fire of glittering flames. The flames danced to welcome the boy king. Then the dragons did an air dance and flew away. Peter noticed the beauty of the dragons. All had the magical symbols of Baja, and all were wearing armor of protection. For the most part, these huge

giants were very friendly. Peter watched as their orange and yellow tails glowed in the dark as they waved good-bye. Although the ride home was fun to watch, there was too much under the surface going on. Everyone wanted to be home.

"A few more minutes and we'll be there," said Sam.

No one answered, not out of rudeness, just out of sadness and depression. Sam felt bad for his family and began mumbling to himself. Sam blamed himself for everything, even the evilness of his brother Marcus. He felt as if he'd let his brother down somehow.

Oscar glided his way closer to Sam and looked him in the eyes. "This is not your fault. The prophecy must be fulfilled. This was not your doing."

"How do you know? You're just a dumb talking cat!" shouted Sam out of anger.

Oscar said nothing more and just glided his way back in line. Sam was going to apologize, but Oscar moved too quickly out of his way. Finally they could see home in sight. Everyone started to get a little anxious. They couldn't wait until their feet hit the ground. As the dust touched their shoes, off everyone went in their own direction. Jane ran to the garden oasis. Peter ran up to his room with his magical book in hand. Sam flew into the house and into his office, slamming the door shut.

Oscar was left outside, but he followed Jane to the garden oasis and kept her company, like a good friend should. She could not control her weeping, but Oscar was there to comfort her in every way possible. Jane was feeling anger and rage. He went to her side and cuddled next to her. Jane slowly calmed down and began to stroke his ears like old times. A smile suddenly crossed Jane's face. She quickly gave Oscar a big hug, letting out all her anger and frustration in tears.

Like a good pet; Oscar stayed by Jane's side, licking her face with his big tongue. She just smiled and went on into the house with him. The house was very quiet, but someone seemed to be having a good day. Jane walked up the stairs to jolly music playing. It was David and Dorothy Carrot-Top. Dorothy was feeling much better and was up singing and dancing with her husband. Jane ran over and gave her a big hug.

"I can't believe it's you," said Jane.

David explained that Dorothy was feeling much better and he was happy to see that everyone was home so they could have a big family dinner. Jane explained that the entire day was horrible, and everything that could go wrong did.

David gave Jane a big hug, telling her everything

would be all right and that in the end, it would all make sense. Jane told him that he might want to go and comfort his son because he was down in his sorrows. David nodded and went downstairs to Sam's office while Jane and Dorothy prepared dinner.

Before Jane went downstairs, she stopped off at Peter's room. He was in deep thought, and didn't even hear the knock on the door. Peter was slowly and carefully studying his magical book.

"Give it a rest, honey! You had a hard day today," said Jane.

"Mom, what if I can't save Baja? Will we be exiled again?" asked Peter.

"No, son, we are here to stay. A ghost can't enter the real world more than once. If it happened, we would be destroyed," said Jane.

Jane continued to reassure Peter that everything would be all right and that even if Baja wasn't saved, she would always love him. She also reminded him that his big day of school started tomorrow. Peter gave his mom a big hug and a smile.

"Wash up for dinner," she said as she left his room.

Peter felt much better, and began to study his book even more as his mother left the room. As he opened the

magical book to page fourteen, a big face appeared. It scared Peter and he quickly closed the book, and ran into his closet. He peeked out of one eye to see if anything was coming after him, but there was nothing. Peter slowly approached the book again. The face appeared, but it said nothing. It was like a blue genie, with eight long arms covered in gold and silver bands. On the bands were the codes of Baja, just glowing in the dim light.

"Hi, who are you?" Peter asked.

"I am Merseft, the genie, here to grant all your wishes and true desires," said the face.

Peter was so excited he could hardly contain his emotions. A big grin came across his face and he was ready to use his new powers.

"Be very careful, with power comes great responsibility," said Merseft.

Peter closed his eyes tightly and repeated the words in the magical book. "To the mirror, to the walls, to all things great and small, grant my wish after all."

He kept his eyes closed tight and wished for his mother to have a table of feasting. The aroma of baked chicken, ham, turkey, apple pies, buttered corn and breaded pork chops filled the house. Everyone came downstairs.

"Jane, what great cooking," said David.

"Oh! Thanks, but I did not cook this meal," said Jane.

She and Dorothy were quite confused since they were the only two women in the kitchen and they had not yet prepared dinner.

In came Samantha and Red Fox.

"Oh! That food smells great, let's eat!" said Red Fox.

Jane explained to everyone that neither she nor Dorothy had made dinner yet. As they walked into the dining area, there was Peter with his mouth filled, chewing on a piece of chicken leg. The table was set for feasting; it was dressed and made for royalty.

"Oh! My, this is good, Mom," said Peter.

Jane wanted to know where the food came from. Peter let his family know the magic book made his wish come true. Jane was very skeptical and asked Peter to show her the magical genie. He ran to get the book, but as he opened it, there was nothing inside. Peter did everything he could to make the genie come out, but the pages were silent. It left Peter feeling as if he was a tattler.

He begged his family to believe him, but they dismissed it as a young boy's fantasy. Nevertheless, they ate, but Sam was missing. Jane asked David to go and talk to his son. As everyone feasted on the finest dinner in Baja, there was a lot more to talk about, but no one

brought up anything that happened that day. This was a time for laughter and happiness.

"Yes! Food brings the family together once again," said Dorothy.

As David went upstairs to his son's office, he glanced over his shoulder and saw his family eating and being merry. This brought joy to his heart. For so many years, he missed out on a true family, one he thought that he might never see again. With a big, wide smile on his face, he had found peace.

But Sam was in no mood for eating. His views about Baja had changed drastically. For the first time, Sam wanted to be a ghost in the human world. He wanted to back out and leave Baja to fend for itself.

"Why should I fight for a world that exiled my family and I?" asked Sam as he talked to himself.

Suddenly came a gentle knock on the door.

"Son, may I come in?" asked David.

Sam mumbled under his breath and slowly opened the door to let his father in. The look of disappointment was all over Sam's face. Gently David consoled his son and gave him a gentle touch on the back, letting him know that everything would be okay. David began to tell Sam how they never gave up hope that one day Sam and his family would

return. He told Sam to hang in there and to never give up hope. Sam had few words to say. His heart was filled with anger, not only at the events of that day, but what also took place in Baja.

To make matters worse, the brother he had loved and trusted was now his enemy. David began to put his son's heart to rest letting him know that no matter the outcome, the two would always remain brothers, one for good and one for evil. With a few moments of silence, Sam was ready to join the family for dinner.

Out of the office and down the stairs they went. Sam was not happy, but he knew he had to put on a happy face for his family. Everyone was glad to see him joining them for dinner. After a word of prayer and thanksgiving, the entire family began to eat and share moments of happiness.

There was Dingo, pulling on Oscar's ears in a playful manner. Peter and Samantha Grey were practicing judo moves. Jane and Dorothy were catching up on old times, while the boys talked about war strategies. The house was happy, the mood was delightful. Through all they had been through that day, everyone managed to come together and be a family, which was more important than anything in the entire world.

As dinner was coming to an end, there was a knock at the door. The family wasn't expecting anyone to come over

that late at night; so, with caution, Sam and Red Fox went to the door. Slowly Sam opened it. It was some royal guardsmen in uniform. They told Sam that they were sent to him by Mr. Stewart. The guard informed Sam that the Ambassador Forest was under attack by Marcus and the seven wizards.

"Are you sure?" asked David.

"Yes, sir," said the guards.

The Ambassador Forest was the place where all of Baja's wealth, healing, and magical beings came from. Now it was under attack. Sam went into his army mode and began to immediately plot a way to save the forest.

"Tell Mr. Stewart that we will be in the Ambassador Forest by mid-day tomorrow," said Sam to the royal guards.

As he closed the door slowly behind him, he realized that this was his mission: to save Baja. But he was also concerned for his son's well being. Immediately, Sam informed the family of what was going on. Red Fox and Samantha Grey were ready to fight. Jane was also on board, but Sam did not want his wife to go. Jane insisted, as a family, they would eat and fight together. Of course Peter wanted to go, but the answer was a definite "No!" from both parents.

Peter was told to stay home and help his grandmother,

but he had other plans. The entire family was now in a warrior's mood and mindset. Peter quickly ran up the stairs and into his room to try to get the genie Merseft to come out. Slowly he opened his magic book and the genie's face appeared.

"Hellloooooo!" said the genie.

Peter was very upset that Merseft did not show his face in front of his parents and family members. Merseft explained to Peter that parents never understand. Reluctantly, Peter agreed. He began to tell Merseft of the plan to save the Ambassador Forest.

"Yes! Peter, I am very familiar with the forest, but why is it under attack?" asked Merseft.

Peter explained to Merseft about the evil of his uncle Marcus.

"Your wish is my command," said Merseft.

Peter let Merseft know that somehow, there would have to be a look-alike of Peter to fool his parents while Peter snuck off with them to war. Merseft explained to Peter that he would forfeit and miss the first day of school, but Peter wanted to be with his family fighting side-by-side for good.

Meanwhile in the garden, Jane was practicing making deadly vines, some with razor-sharp thorns and others with

deadly odors. A look of intensity came over Jane's face as she perfected every step. One by one, Jane made deadly plants that were under her control.

In the other courtyard, Red Fox and Samantha Grey practiced fighting and using special weapons that Sam's father made for them. There were swords and body armor that glowed in the darkness of the night. The armor was made completely out of pure gold, one-of-a-kind, with magical, built-in protection. To test if the armor worked, Red Fox launched at Samantha with a sword, and suddenly, the armor began to glow, and covered her from head to toe as if she was transforming into a huge giant. Red Fox was amazed and began to step away from Samantha because, by now, she had grown to at least nine feet tall. The armor was impossible to penetrate, as Red Fox tried to cut into it with his sword. Every scratch made on the armor healed as if it was skin on a human body.

There was no way to penetrate this secret weapon. When the fighting was over, the armor returned to an ordinary breast plate. Samantha was most surprised at the advancement in technology. She rubbed the breast plate with her fingers over and over again, looking at it back and forth, not believing what she had just witnessed. To both of their amazement, that was the greatest weapon they had

ever used, and ran to tell David and Sam how much they liked the armor.

Back in Sam's workshop; he was fitting Oscar the cat with his own breast plate. Because Oscar was so huge, it was taking Sam and David both to fit the plate onto Oscar. He enjoyed every moment of the pampering. Suddenly, through the door ran Samantha and Red Fox. They were filled with excitement over the new armor David had made.

"Well, I am so happy you like it," said David.

Then they looked up and saw Oscar.

"What a beauty!" said Red Fox.

"Well, thank you very much!" said Oscar.

"Oh! Silly cat, he is talking about your armor," said Samantha as Oscar began to blush.

"We have a lot of work to do," said Sam.

Sam was a little overwhelmed and on edge, but managed to keep his emotions in place. Through the night, the team of friends began to practice the skills that they had hidden for many years. David was a great builder of many things, and not only toys for holidays and gifts. He was also the creator of the greatest fighting weapons. As a child, Sam had noticed that his father could build and make anything he set his mind to. Sam had the best and most unique toys imagined by anyone. He was most popular in his

school. Sam remembered the days working side by side with his father to build anything they wanted. Now that time had come again.

As the adults were practicing their skills, Peter was upstairs in his room making magic. A gentle knock came upon the door. It was Dorothy, Peter's grandmother.

"Hi, Nana," said Peter.

Dorothy gently smiled and rubbed Peter's head. She began to tell Peter of the emotional stress for a little boy to have to save his world, but Peter felt he was up to the challenge. Never once did he complain about his burden. Dorothy was very impressed by her grandson's attitude. As she was leaving the room, Peter held her by the hands letting her know that everything would be all right. Suddenly, Peter's magic book began to glow a solar green.

"What's that?" asked Dorothy.

Peter told his grandmother of the genie. For the first time, the genie came out in the presence of an adult. Peter was so happy to prove to his family that he was not making it up.

"Sonny, we knew you were telling the truth, but we didn't know how powerful it was," said Dorothy, but was just in joy to see that Merseft the genie had appeared.

"Well, hello, lovely lady," said Merseft to Dorothy.

A soft reply from Dorothy came out. She was so amazed at the size and shape of the genie that it was a little frightening, but Dorothy knew that this mystical creature was harmless.

"May I grant a wish for you, madam?" asked Merseft.

"No, no," said Dorothy.

She told Merseft that she would leave everything in God's hand. She kissed Peter on the head and off she went.

"Oh, thanks, Merseft, for showing yourself," said Peter as he ran to hug the genie. The genie was made out of thin air and illusion, and Peter fell through him and landed on the floor. "Ooh, Ouch!" said Peter.

Merseft began to laugh. As he laughed, clouds of smoke filled the room. Then Peter began to join in the laughter. It seemed like Merseft and Peter were made for each other. Someone was getting a little jealous though, and it was Dingo.

"Oh! Settle down, boy. You're still my best friend," said Peter as Dingo began to bark constantly at Merseft.

Dingo jumped on Peter's bed and kept one eye on Merseft. Merseft was trying to do anything to make Dingo happy. He made a huge bone appear. He made fluffy toys that squeaked appear, but he could not get Dingo to take it. Dingo stuck to his guns and cuddled up to Peter. Peter saw

this as a friendly sibling rivalry.

A voice shouted, "Off to bed, Peter. You have your first day of school tomorrow."

Peter quickly jumped into bed, after a very long day of things going wrong. Jane came upstairs with a cup of hot cocoa and a warm blanket. She covered Peter and Dingo, gave them both a goodnight kiss and off she went. Peter was out as fast as the lights, and so was Dingo, but there was much to do in the Carrot-Top household. In David's office there was much building and designing going on. He was working on the most advanced technology, from laser bows and arrows to manmade contraptions. David felt right at home, and he was becoming his old self again.

Jane worked on some of the most potent plants and trees she could think of. One of the plants was so potent; it began killing the rest of the plants around it. Jane called it the viper plant. With one spray of its mist, it would wipe out acres of trees and vegetation. The viper was huge and grew by the second. It dug its roots into the rich soil of Baja and began to grow constantly. There were huge vessels showing through the stems of the plants as it absorbed nutrients from the earth. After feeding, the plant would spray purple and green mist which killed all of the surrounding plants.

Jane had to tweak and fix this plant. It was one of her most powerful works yet, but with the viper around, the other plants and trees would not come out of the soil because they were afraid. They kept their roots and leaves buried in the ground, shivering from fear of the viper.

"Sorry, little guys and gals," said Jane.

When the plants saw that it was all right to come out, they quickly did so. A smile came upon Jane's face to see all of her creations come alive, something she loved doing and missed while exiled from Baja.

On the other side of the courtyard, Sam, Red Fox and Samantha Grey practiced their fighting skills. Sam practiced moving two-ton rocks with his mind. One minute the rocks flew in the air, and the next they were on the ground as if they were thrown there by a giant. The rocks made a loud crash onto the ground causing the ground to rumble for miles away.

Red Fox, with his military skills, was the sharpest arrow shooter and a skilled fighter. His one special skill was turning into a gentle fox, so harmless and innocent, and then when danger arose, he changed into a half-man half-fox fighting machine. He had a great disguise to get into the forest and talk with the forest animals. Because of this ability, he could blend into the forest, going

virtually unnoticed.

But Samantha was skilled in all the martial arts of fighting. She had conquered armies and villages. There was a hefty bounty placed on her head, but this never worried her. Because of her skills, she had managed to escape capture every time. The team practiced all night, until Jane announced to everyone that it was time to get some rest.

Because so many people had forsaken Sam and the entire Carrot-Top family, he only had an army of five instead of an army of thousands. Nevertheless, he was going to save the forest from his brother and the seven wizards. Most importantly, Sam wanted to not only restore the Carrot-Top name, but to protect his son from having to face the evil axis of Baja. Everyone went inside to take a rest, for tomorrow would be a day of fighting and sorrow.

As Peter lay in his bed sleeping, he began to dream a great and terrifying dream. He could see himself standing over his own body in a dark and gloomy wilderness. He was being chased by huge sand worms. They were huge and ugly, diving in and out of the sands. The huge monsters sprayed sand pebbles out of their noses, like dolphins spray water. They were ugly, filthy creatures, with hair all over their bodies that was shaggy and matted.

They snapped at Peter with long claw-like teeth. He could not believe how real this dream felt, so he began to run as the creatures got closer and closer. But Peter was no match for beasts this size. After Peter was through running and tired out, he finally stopped and created one of his large black holes.

It was a gift of tremendous power, but Peter still had not perfected his abilities. With a little fear and a will to escape, he created a hole so large that it swallowed up the entire desert. As Peter looked down, all he could see were the creatures and their home going down a spiral twist. The amount of power frightened Peter.

He found himself standing on an abyss of thin air; there was nothing in sight but darkness. Peter began to run as fast as he could, but was getting nowhere. There was darkness after darkness. No matter how fast or far he ran; it was as if he wasn't even moving. Peter began to panic, crying out for his father, but no answer came. Then he felt an evil presence. He looked from left to right, hoping to see something, but nothing appeared. Then Peter curled up like an infant in thin air and began to rock himself, saying "It's not real, it's not real," over and over again.

Then a voice said, "Yes, it is."

Peter jumped up as if fire was under his butt and

looked around. A blue light was coming out of the abyss, it had an evil presence, and his hair began to blow.

Through the abyss came a man, slender in build, with long black, flowing hair. In his hand he carried a walking cane with a huge glass bulb on its top. The bulb changed bright red as he came closer to Peter.

"Are you afraid, my child?" the voice asked as it came out of the abyss.

Peter said nothing, just watched as the man came forward. He walked in slow motion, as if he was gliding on thin air. His body was adorned with the finest fabrics and armor that was all black and shiny metal. As the man came closer, half of his face was covered by a silver mask, as if the mask was burned onto his skin.

One thing this stranger couldn't hide was a little bit of orange hair that stood out on the side of his mask.

"Uncle Marcus!" Peter shouted.

"I am not your uncle, nor will I ever be," said the man, but in his heart Peter knew about that it was his uncle.

Because of this, Peter was not afraid anymore. The man came closer to Peter and showed him the destruction of Baja through the crystal ball that he took off of his walking stick. A voice taunted Peter over and over again of how

Baja would be destroyed and how he and his family would be put to shame in a prison camp.

"You evil man! My father will never let you get away with this!" shouted Peter.

The wicked man laughed hysterically. The laughter continued like a roaring echo that became louder and louder to Peter's tender ears. The next thing Peter knew, he woke up screaming with his mother and father at his side.

"Oh, Mother, I had a bad dream," said Peter as his mother rubbed his head.

"It's okay," said Jane.

"Everything will be all right," said Sam.

Peter began to mumble and tell his parents of the awful dream he had of his uncle Marcus planning on destroying Baja and all its beauty. Somehow, Sam knew his brother was getting stronger from some type of mystical powers. His heart grew angry. He quickly tucked Peter in, kissed him goodnight and out the bedroom door he went. Jane stayed behind to make sure Peter fell back to sleep, but Sam went to see his father. David was resting in a chair. It was obvious he had been up all night, planning and drawing weapons and attacks.

Sam saw this and decided to let his father rest peacefully, so he went into his mother's room and talked to

her. Dorothy could tell that her son was very angry and asked him what was the matter. Sam explained that he did not understand why Marcus was the way he was or why he would betray the Carrot-Top name in a disgraceful manner. He wondered what went on in Marcus' life that he no longer respected the place they called home for many years.

Dorothy looked with disappointment and disgrace at her son. She had no explanation why Marcus was the way he was. All she could do was speculate. She told Sam that ever since she took Marcus to see the Oracle when he was a little lad, his attitude and behavior changed. She told him that Marcus might be the destroyer of Baja, but they had no idea because they were never allowed into the room to hear what the Oracle said to Marcus.

"Through it all, son, please remember that Marcus will always be a part of us," said Dorothy.

But Sam was not feeling the love. Marcus had disgraced their family name, and Sam was going to make him stand up and pay for all of his evil doings.

Chapter 8

First Day of School

Morning came bright and early. The sun in the sky changed color from yellow to blue, then pink and green. To the people of Baja, this was a great way to start the day. But, in the Carrot-Top household, it was Peter's first day of school after coming back home, but he had different plans.

He wanted to go fight on the side of his father. Peter quickly jumped out of bed and summoned the genie Merseft. As he arose out of the magical book with his sleepy eyes, Peter commanded him to make a double look-alike to fool his parents. This would give Peter the ability to be in two places at one time.

Merseft was a little hesitant, letting Peter know that parents are smarter than they look, but Peter was confident that it would work. With the power of a magical spell and a room filled with glowing smoke, the genie conjured up a look-alike.

"Wow! He looks just like me," said Peter.

"Well, isn't that what you wanted?" asked Merseft with a sarcastic tone.

Peter went over and touched and poked the look-alike. He couldn't believe his eyes to see a real duplicate of himself. Peter knew in his heart of hearts this plan would work. He wanted so badly to fight on the side of his father and grandfather, but his parents were not having any of it. They wanted him protected because of the prophecy of the elders. If Peter was indeed the eighth key, they must protect him.

The look-alike Peter was dressed and ready for school, courtesy of Merseft. Now it was time to put the look-alike to work. Peter sent it on its way downstairs to breakfast while he awaited his parents' departure. There was only one small problem, the look-alike was too stiff moving and the personality was off. As he (it) went downstairs, Jane and Sam noticed right away something was wrong.

They began to ask the look-alike many silly questions like, "What is your favorite orange?"

The look-alike had no idea and said, "Well, orange of course."

"Ha, ha, ha. You're wrong," said Sam.

"My son's favorite orange is strawberry, grown in the finest parts of Baja," said Jane.

They knew Peter was up to something, so Sam went to the neck of the look-alike and saw a little button. When he

pressed it, the look-alike was cut off. Sam and Jane laughed.

"It's a little early for him to be skipping school, isn't it?" asked Sam.

"Yes, indeed, we must get to the bottom of this," said Jane.

She went on to tell Sam of Peter's new friend, Merseft the genie, and yes, he was real.

"So the book does work," replied Sam.

"Yes, but he has yet to harvest its bigger powers. We must watch him," said Jane.

The Carrot-Top household was very busy that morning. They had a new day at school, and they had to try to save one of the most secret forests of Baja, the Ambassador Forest.

"Peter, get down stairs now," said Jane.

At first, Peter hesitated and didn't appear until the next louder call of his mother. "Yes, Mother!" he said.

Jane ordered her son to get ready for his first day of school. Peter begged his parents to let him go with them, but they answered no. They told him that there would be many more times for him to save Baja, but today was the first day of school. Peter hung his head low in reluctance to go, although he was excited. He wanted to be in both

places at one time. But nevertheless, Peter had to get ready for his first day at Waldorf Academy.

As Dingo chased Oscar through the house and the phone began to ring. Peter was upstairs getting ready.

"Honey, your ride will be here any minute," said Jane as she shouted to Peter.

He quickly got dressed and ran downstairs and ate his favorite, mushroom pancakes and turtle eggs.

"Slow down, son," said Sam as he watched his son gobble down his food.

Jane was just smiling and watching Peter, a proud mom to see her son on the first day of school where he was very happy to be, and where he would always fit in.

As soon as Peter finished eating his breakfast, there was a loud roaring noise over the Carrot-Top's mansion. Everyone stepped out to see what or who it was. They slowly looked up into the sky as a big shadow was cast over their house. It was Peter's ride to school in style. This flying creature carried a disc on its back that was filled with children. Peter could see his soon-to-be classmates looking down at him.

"Wow, what is that?" asked Peter.

"It's your ride to school," said Sam.

The creature was so unique and huge. It was bright

yellow and red in color with the mystical symbols of Baja on its body. Then a jolly old man stepped out of the ride as steps suddenly appeared in thin air.

"All aboard, all aboard," said the man.

Peter gave his parents a hug and quickly ran up the stairs, looking back to get his parents' approval. He was torn between leaving his family and starting life at a new school. Peter could see all of his new classmates through the windows of the disc, and the children on board were also eager to see the boy king that everyone had been talking about. As Peter reached the top of the stairs, he waved good-bye to his family.

Then he was stopped by the driver. "May I see your pass?"

Peter search and searched but could not find any kind of pass. "I think I forgot it, sir," said Peter.

"Well, we will have to find you one," said the driver.

The driver reached into the same pocket that Peter had searched and pulled out a golden pass. It was embossed with Peter's picture in gold, and it glittered in the sun. His parents could see it all the way on the ground.

Peter's eyes followed the gold pass as the driver waved it in his face, back and forth went his eyes. The pass was so tempting to grab, but gently Peter took it out

of the driver's hand. A smile came on the driver's face telling Peter that he would be just fine, and he gave Peter a gentle push on his back into the ride.

The loud bird squawked as it began to take off. The massive wings had to pick up speed before it could lift itself off the ground. Because of the size of the bird and its wings, it kicked up so much dust in the air it made seeing quite impossible, but Jane and Sam, with Peter's grandparents, waved good-bye to their son.

The massive bird flew up into the air as the disc on its back spun and glittered in the sun's rays. Peter slowly walked down the aisles of the ride. It was like stepping into a futuristic world. All the children were neatly dressed in their uniforms. The ride was equipped with everything from talking gadgets to miniature robots picking crumbs up off of the floor. There were attendants that served drinks, juices and any food your heart desired. Kids began to look and whisper. Peter began to brush his orange hair back with his hands as a sign of nervousness, his freckles increased as they multiplied in seconds.

Then a voice shouted, "Sit here, Peter!"

Peter followed the voice until he reached where it was coming from. All the way to the back of the ride sat a person that he had seen before.

"Miss Clara Cabbage," he said. A beautiful girl with fiery long red hair braided into two ponytails; her mismatched shoes caught Peter's eye.

"Yes, Peter, it's me," said Clara.

Clara and Peter were shy with each other, but somehow they seemed to make the best of friends. She reintroduced him to the friends he met on the Captain Johnny ride.

"This is Robert Clark, Zack Bean, Nicholas Webster and Benjamin Franklin, who is also known as Ben," said Clara.

Everyone gave a big hello to their new friend Peter. The entire time, the children on the ride began to just stare at Peter, until Clara got them to look away by sticking out her tongue, and making green saliva bugs jump out and fly into the air. The bugs let off a green smelly odor, and the rest of the kids began to cough and cover their mouths and noses.

"That is so cool," said Peter.

"Okay, my little ghosts, quiet it down," said the driver.

Peter knew then that he would have no reason not to fit in here. In his heart, he knew he'd chosen the right school. Clara's last display gave the kids something to talk about rather than look at Peter.

"If you think that is cool, look what Zack can do,"

said Clara.

But, Zack was a little shy. He was one of the easiest people to make friends with. His bright blond hair set him apart from the rest. He was hesitant to show off his talents until Nicholas coaxed him into it.

"Oh! Come on, Zackey boy, you can do it! Show off those useless talents," said Nicholas jokingly.

Once Zack got his courage up, he held his breath in tight and began to blow and blow. Suddenly, a huge clump of snot fell from his nose. Zack commanded it to turn into a cute little puppy.

"Whoa! That is gross and cute at the same time," said Peter.

The rest of the children on the bus began to choke and gag, and yet some thought it was cool. Then a long slender hand came across Peter's face. It was like rubber, and it had at least ten watches that graced it, and they all glowed with the symbols of Baja. Peter couldn't seem to get those mysterious symbols out of his mind. The watches were encrusted with sparkling rocks, and all had the face of a different animal from tigers, bears, to seahorses, and many more.

The watches were mystical to Peter's eyes. Whether it was his imagination or not, the animal faces seemed to

move, and when he glanced back at the watches, the faces seemed to stop moving. Peter looked in the direction of where the long arm was coming from and who it belonged to.

A skinny, Beanpole of a boy stood up, "Hi, Peter. My name is Robert Clark."

Robert was very slender. Besides being skinny, everyone noticed his dark, jet black hair, all slicked down and greasy. He was at least seven feet tall, and he didn't hesitate to show off his ability to disappear in thin air. Robert was so slender, if he turned sideways, no one could see him. He paraded up and down in the ride showing off his talent. One minute you saw him, the next you didn't. One minute his head would show with no body attached, or the kids might see an arm or leg every now and again. The kids were going wild clapping and cheering.

"Okay, kids, settle down," said the driver.

Then a loud roar came from the back of the bus. It was Nicholas Webster, the class clown; a little on the heavy side with baggy clothing and thick eyeglasses.

Then a voice shouted, "That's all he can do is roar. He has no talents."

Nicholas was sad because indeed all he could do was roar, but Peter was impressed and started clapping. This made Nicholas very happy and so proud of his roar that he

roared so hard the windows on the ride cracked. Everyone suddenly began to take notice of little old Nicholas, and in the end, he got the last laugh.

"Last but not least, this is Benjamin Franklin. We like to call him Ben," said Clara.

Peter waited with anticipation to see what Ben's talents were. Suddenly Ben turned around and his entire face was covered in fur, pure white fur. He had long blue hair and piercing black eyes. Peter was a little shocked, but played it off and gave Ben a handshake. Ben went on to explain to him that he had a gene disorder that had made him so special.

Out of excitement, Ben jumped into the aisle of the ride to demonstrate his abilities and gift. Without a thought, he changed into a huge white shaggy monster. He was so big that his weight began to sink the ride and squash anyone in his path. Ben began to burst out of his uniform and shoes, but he didn't care, he wanted to show off his talents.

"That's enough, Ben," said the driver, and within seconds, Ben was his normal self with the exception that his uniform was torn and he had holes in his shoes.

"That is soooo cool!" said Peter.

"Now, Peter, show us your talents," said Zack.

"Oh! It's not that cool like yours are," said Peter, but he wanted to fit in.

As everyone watched, Peter explained to the children his talents of making large holes. Everyone wanted to see, so Peter stood up and stretched his hands out of the window. With a minute to concentrate, he began to make a large hole in the sky. The kids were amazed; the sky had opened up as if someone had sliced it. As they looked into the hole in the sky, they saw things they had never seen before, like a mystical land of fairies and seas that were multicolored. Kids hurried to the windows wanting to get a closer look.

"Wow, there are more worlds out there," said Clara.

Peter had made a great impression on his new friends. But there was one thing he did not know how to do, and that was how to close a hole. Once he opened one, it was hard for him to close it. Many holes that Peter made never got closed.

"Okay, Peter, that's enough," said the driver.

Peter immediately stopped, but he left behind another open world that no one knew how to close. It was all in harmless fun. The children on the bus kept looking back at the magnificent display of a new world. Even the driver was impressed, but the fun abruptly stopped when a voice yelled

from the back.

"Is that all you got, Carrot-Flop?" This person was making fun of Peter's last name.

Clara immediately recognized the voice and shouted, "Oh! Shut up, Steve!"

All the children looked back, waiting on Steve's response. Steve Capri was a big bully, bigger than most of the children his age. He had one strand of hair that stuck up from his head. No matter how he brushed it back, it always seemed to stick up at attention. The children dared not tease him; they knew that he was a rough-and-tumble kid. But Clara was not afraid of him, and that made Steve even more upset.

But like all of these children, Steve had a gift, and his gift was smelly feet. He quickly pulled off his shoes, and his feet began to grow huge, and then a black odor choked the air. The children and staff on the ride began to choke constantly. Even the driver had to suspend the ride in mid-air to catch his breath.

The driver hurriedly walked down the aisle and grabbed Steve by the collar, and took him into the restroom to put his shoes back on. Steve was not going quietly.

He yelled at the driver like a spoiled brat, "I am going to tell my parents! Do you know who my parents are?"

"I do not care who your parents are. They left me to take care of you, and that's what I am going to do," said the driver.

As the driver and Steve left, the remaining children raised their heads up slowly as they searched for clean, fresh air.

"He is a stinker," said Clara to Peter.

They both laughed, until Steve's friends came forward to confront Clara and her friends, "Laugh now, cry later," said Jamyra Jam. She was a skinny brown child. Her complexion was flawless, and she had blue eyes and long white hair. She was very pretty, but underneath that prettiness was a bossy, spoiled little brat.

"Who is that?" Peter asked.

Clara explained to Peter that Jamyra Jam was the ice princess of Waldorf Academy, and her parents were the founders of the black moons.

"What are the black moons?" asked Peter.

Ben jumped in to tell Peter that the black moons were discovered by the Jam family. The moons produced black dust to keep Baja energy efficient without looking for other fuels and dangerous substances. Because of the Jam family's discovery, Baja had never worried about light or energy.

Everyone warned Peter to keep a distance from Jamyra,

because once she got mad, she would turn anything into solid ice, and it would take days to thaw. Peter gave a big gulp and looked over his shoulder as he felt Jamyra staring at him.

"Oh, don't worry, Peter. She's only allowed to use it in emergencies. If she does without an emergency, she will be in big trouble with the elders," said Zack.

Peter was relieved to hear that, and watched as Zack pointed out all the other kids in Jamyra's group. There was Millie Spoon, an anti-social girl who only showed one eye because her hair was always covering the other. She was very slender with waist-length long black hair and big saucer eyes. Her gift was invisibility. Zack went on to tell Peter that Millie was by far the nicest out of the entire group. She only hung out with Jamyra and the others because Steve Capri was her cousin.

Then Zack showed Peter a slender-built young man who was very handsome, quirky and over confident. "His name is Michael Beetle-Bug, but do not call him by his entire name," warned Zack.

Peter watched with great interest as Zack explained the cool kids to him. Zack went on to tell Peter how Michael's family owned the beetle-bug farm, one of the largest in Baja. The farm was responsible for producing

beetles that protected vegetables and other foods. The bugs were man-made and went out every day protecting many farms in Baja from annoying pests.

Michael was average-sized and always dressed in all black. He was the only child in school that could pull off his gift. When Michael turned around, Peter saw his gift. He had wings like a butterfly that were black and had white polka dots all over them.

But, they were no ordinary wings. When Michael got upset, they turned into razor wings, sharp enough to cut through almost anything. What was most annoying about Michael was the buzzing sound that came from his wings. Clara seemed to think he did it on purpose.

Last but not least, there was Sam Salmon. No one wanted to sit by Sam because he was not only sloppy, but huge. His clothing was dirty and his shoes untied. He was constantly eating, with food pouring from his mouth. He was gross, constantly digging in his nose and pulling his underwear out of his butt.

Sam had to be carried in a glass container when he became unruly. His gift was blowing huge fart balls that were green and slimy. Sam never used his gift to better humans, just for a cheap laugh. He was ordered by the academy to be transferred in a glass tube until he could

behave himself.

"Thank goodness," said Peter.

"Yeah! That is not a pretty sight," said Clara as they both began chuckling.

Clara and her friends reminded Peter that the other side would not be happy with him being their friend, as she pointed toward Jamyra and her crew, but Peter was very comfortable with which side he'd chosen. He was a young man that was always true to himself and dedicated to the people he called his friends.

So much commotion on the ride distracted Peter from seeing the real beauty of Baja. There were trees that reached up to the heavens, and giants climbing the Beanstalk. The giants always waved to the children on the ride and ran up the Beanstalk. Peter was impressed by what his eyes witnessed up close and personal.

"Has anyone ever gone to the top of the Beanstalk?" asked Peter.

"Yes, when you sign up for field trips," said Zack.

"I can't wait to sign up," said Peter.

As they rode to school, the bus was very quiet as the children admired the scenes of Baja. Trees sang and danced, flawless in the air. Bright stars made pictures in the skies, from teddy bears to lions. There was always a show

for the children.

This was also the time for the bus driver, Mr. Stamp, to relax and give the children the history of Baja. He was also their guardian angel, watching over the young future of Baja. He took the history of Baja very seriously. Although at times, his speeches could be very boring, causing the children to take a brief nap. But, oh, not Peter!

He wanted to see all that Baja had to offer. This was his first day at school, and he wanted to enjoy every minute of it. Not one time did Peter worry about his parents. In fact, he forgot that they were going to the Ambassador Forest.

As Peter was daydreaming, a loud voice spoke, "Good morning, students. Sit up and pay attention."

"Who is that?" Peter asked Clara.

"That is Mrs. Laura Dean. She is over 200 years old and the meanest teacher in the school," said Clara.

Mrs. Dean was very old, but once in a while, she tried to make herself look young again. Her skin was pale, and she wore bright red lipstick. Her hair was jet black and came down to her knees. She always wore military style boots and gear, as if she were going to war. She walked around with a cane that she used to slap the hands of rude

children or to hit the desk when no one was paying attention.

Mrs. Dean's face appeared in a cloud of blue mist. The face went down the aisles of the ride, barking orders at the children. "Tie your shoes. Fix your shirt. That skirt is too short. Sit up straight." The orders went on for a while.

Most of the children feared Mrs. Dean and never wanted to cross her path. When Mrs. Dean got to Peter, she looked him over a few times. Peter's face was turning bright orange as he stared into space.

"Don't think for one minute because you are supposed to be our savior that I will let you get away with murder," warned Mrs. Dean.

"No, sir!" said Peter.

The children laughed hysterically until Mrs. Dean shut them up with her angry voice. "That's 'No, ma'am.' you little brat."

When Peter realized that he'd made a mistake, all he could do was apologize over and over, but it did not help his case any. Afterwards Mrs. Dean disappeared from the blue mist from whence she came.

"That was a close call," said Nicholas.

The ride had become rowdy once again, children being

children with horse playing, the throwing of papers and passing notes, and all the girlie gossip taking place. This was what Peter wanted, a normal life and a school where he would not be rejected.

A few air miles away from school, another ride pulled up next to the children of Waldorf Academy. It was the school of S.C. McPhergerson. This was also a bright school and had many rival competitions with Waldorf Academy. Peter looked around at the children on the other ride. They were all dressed in army armor because S.C. McPhergerson was an army school, and the students wore the attire to match. These kids were ruthless. They seemed to be little warriors in disguise. Some of the children had on crowns; some had bows and arrows over their shoulders. They looked as if they were ready for war.

"And to think my parents almost chose that school for me," said Peter to his new friends.

The children from S. C. McPhergerson stared down the children from Waldorf. One kid yelled out, "We will get you this year at the Comet Bowl, you losers!"

"Oh! Shut up!" said Jamyra, and both rides went off into their own separate directions.

"What is the Comet Bowl?" asked Peter.

"I will handle this question," said Jamyra. Jamyra

went on to tell Peter that the Comet Bowl was only for the experienced comet riders. It was where schools compete to destroy comets in the sky.

Each school creates their own amount of comets, and each comet came with a big surprise inside. Everyone had to watch the other team, their comets could be dangerous. Once a rider had fallen off three times, he or she was out of the game.

"That sounds cool," said Peter.

"Not for you, you little puppy dog," said Steve.

"Oh! Shut up, he's probably better than all of you," said Ben.

Jamyra and her crew were not happy about Peter wanting to join. They considered him to be weak. Besides, she was the captain of the comet team.

"Okay, kids, we're here," said Mr. Stamp.

Peter's eyes grew like saucers when he saw the landing strip at Waldorf Academy. It was a huge runway with lots of other transportation coming and going. He hadn't seen this particular area on his tour of Waldorf; it was amazing; children and teachers were coming and going. The different animals used for transportation were breathtaking. There were many huge birds with discs on their backs carrying many people. They were huge, with bright colors and the

Baja symbols.

Some were getting cleaned and fed by handlers. The animals were well taken care of. What was so unbelievable were the huge giants that were green and blue in color, carrying large domes on their backs. In these sand domes were people eating and drinking, dropping off children for school. They had come from many worlds over.

Waldorf academy was well known all over, and by the beauty of the school alone, Peter could see why. He and his new friends scanned their badges as they came off of the ride and stepped onto another seated ride.

"What is this?" asked Peter.

"It's a transport that takes you to the center of the school where students interact and meet up," said Clara.

The ride was shaped like a capsule and was cherry red in color with gold trim. There were so many gadgets and knobs on the ride. The capsules could hold at least ten students, and Peter and all of his friends got in. This was exciting to him. The capsule scanned each student and greeted them by name. After the voice scanned Peter's friends, it came to him.

"Good morning, Sir Carrot-Top, glad to see you could make it," said the voice.

Then seatbelts came out and buckled the children in,

and a machine printed out the children's assigned classes for that day. Luckily for Peter, he was in the same classes with all of his new friends. Clara reminded him that every day it's a new schedule. As the children took the capsule to the center of the school, they were offered many healthy morning snacks. Each child had a package of cotton worms.

"Oh! Gross," said Peter.

"Actually, it's really good," said Nicholas.

Peter watched as the worm wiggled in the package, ready to come out. He could not force himself to open it. Clara opened her pack first and gobbled down her worm. The worm was pink and filled with vitamin cotton candy.

"Now that's my kind of lady!" said Zack as he watched Clara gobble down her cotton worm.

When Peter saw that it was okay, he quickly opened up his package and tasted his worm as it moved in his hands. "That's not bad at all," he said.

The friends laughed and giggled as they rode the capsule through their school. Peter's new friends told him that every morning the entire student body must meet in The Center.

"What is the center?" asked Peter.

The Center was a place where all the teachers came together to welcome the students, his friends explained. He

started to daydream, looking out the capsule window.

Waldorf was spectacular. There were tunnels and mazes, and there were elves and fairies working on the tunnels. He saw many spectacular sights. There were creatures he had never seen before. To Peter, this school was a big playground for his imagination.

"Peter, Peter, are you ignoring us?" asked Robert.

"Oh! No, I was so amazed by the tunnels," said Peter.

"Well, quit your daydreaming or the teachers will put you on moon duty," said Zack.

But Peter never paid any attention to his friends' words and kept on staring out of the window. Suddenly, the capsule stopped and a long winding robot mechanical head came in and began scanning the children. The face on this robot was scary looking. Peter flinched for a minute.

"Oh! Peter, it's okay. It's only Mr. Lobo," said Clara as she explained to Peter that this was a precaution the school took to make sure the students were always who they said they were.

"Yeah, because we have a lot of shift changers who can take another form," said Robert.

It was a lot of information for Peter to take in, but he went with the flow and did as the other children did.

As Mr. Lobo came forward and scanned Peter, he blurted

out, "Umm, ha, ummh, ha. Okay, you're good. Get out."

The children jumped out of the capsule and were in "The Center". The place looked like a palace, with servers for the children and caterers running everywhere. The atmosphere seemed to be from the time of the pharaohs on Earth. There were huge statues, golden spheres, secret doorways and passages that mysteriously opened.

The teachers seemed to speak in codes, but everyone understood them except Peter. His new friends were there to help him out. The codes went as follows: 8, 5, 12, 12, 15. This made no sense to Peter, but Clara jumped in and showed him in the air how to read and interpret the codes. In Baja, the entire code system was made of numbers. So 8, 5, 12, 12, 15 meant "hello." "H" is the eighth letter of the alphabet, and "e" is the fifth letter and so forth.

The hard part was getting your brain to count the letters fast and then translate them. Clara told Peter it was going to take time and practice. He was excited. It was like he was a part of a secret force.

Clara showed him how it was done as she walked over to Jamyra and said, "8, 5, 12, 12, 15."

Jamyra responded by saying, "19, 8, 21, 20 - 21, 16," (shut up).

Then Clara responded by saying, "6, 18, 15, 7 - 6, 1,

3, 5," (frog face).

Everyone around them laughed as Clara called Jamyra a frog face. Jamyra went angrily to get a teacher. The teacher came over and scolded the two ladies in code. Everyone knew what she was saying, except for Peter. He almost had it figured out, but his brain was a little slow.

"Don't worry, you will get it," said the teacher.

"And my dear friend, Peter, that is how the code works," said Clara, laughing and sticking out her tongue at Jamyra.

Before the assembly began, the children tested out their gifts in "The Center". Jamyra turned things and student into ice. Clara blew green spit frogs and bugs all over the place. Robert used his slender body to slip through the crowds and trip other students. Zack and his snot boogers were everywhere. Zack had kids pinned to the walls with his snot.

Ben turned into a big bear that pushed kids all around the halls and room area. Then Nicholas began to roar and roar as he cracked walls and broke glass with his loud echoing sounds. Peter joined in and began to create small holes that swallowed up everything in their paths.

The children were going wild, acting like they were losing their minds, playing and horsing around. Then

suddenly, hovering from above was the head of the school, Mr. Stewart.

"Quiet down and stop this ruckus immediately!" he said.

The children immediately stopped the horse play and paid attention to Mr. Stewart. "The Center" was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Mr. Stewart informed the children that he was very disappointed in the way that they had behaved and everyone would have moon duties.

The children gave a big "Boooooo!" as they all hated moon duties and had better things to do. But Waldorf was such a prestigious school, no student wanted to get kicked out.

Mr. Stewart led the students in prayer and the assembly began with announcements. Then the bell rang for classes to begin, but before classes started, Mr. Stewart introduced Peter, the boy king, to the entire student body and faculty. Everyone turned to get a glimpse at the one boy the prophets claimed would save Baja, but Peter was on the shy side. His face began to turn bright orange, and his hair curled up from sweat. But the students and faculty gave him a big round of applause, and then the children were on their way to classes.

"What are moon duties?" Peter asked Zack.

Zack explained that when you had moon duties, you went

to the Elk Mountains and cleaned off the 400 moons of Baja. The dust on the moons had to be cleaned every week to keep the bright moonlight, and to regulate the temperature of Baja. Zack also explained that it could get messy and the moon dust stunk, and it was very dirty.

"That sounds so cool," said Peter.

"You won't say that when you're there," said Clara, but to Peter, this was another adventure for his curious mind.

The sounds of the bells rang through the halls, "Ding dong, ding dong." Kids began rushing to class; they didn't want to be late. Clara told her friends they must hurry.

Their first class was biology with Mr. Randel Hunter. Mr. Hunter was the kids' first teacher they saw most mornings. He was on the strange side; he talked to all the animals before he cut them open and dissected them. The children saw Mr. Hunter as slightly odd and overwhelmingly crazy. He wore a tribal mask over his face that was made of dead animals' bones and skin. Even his clothing had to be made of animals. He never smiled and always tried to scare the children with the new creatures he caught for them to dissect.

No one knew what Mr. Hunter looked like; as he was always wearing the tribal mask. The only thing showing was

his golden hair. It was braided into many small braids, and then into bigger ones. Clara, Peter and the rest off the children ran to class, just in time before Mr. Hunter turned around.

He saw that they were almost late and said, "Nice of you folks to join us." The classroom filled with laughter, and in a mean voice, Mr. Hunter belted out, "Quiet now!"

The classroom quieted and the children paid close attention to the board as Mr. Hunter wrote his lesson plans for that day.

"Peter Carrot-Top, don't be late to my class ever," said Mr. Hunter as Peter took a big gulp in embarrassment. "You and Millie Spoon will be lab buddies," he said.

Some of the children laughed, and some made kissing noises until Mr. Hunter made all the commotion stop.

Peter slowly walked over to Millie and said, "Hi," as he sat down to start his first day at school. To Peter, this was all he ever wanted and imagined. He was quite content at Waldorf Academy and felt at home with his new friends.

Chapter 9

New Friends

The first day of school was going quite well for Peter. He had met his new friends and some associates that were very much the opposite of him, but he was having a great day.

Mr. Hunter gave his class their first assignment by cutting open a sea pig. Each student had their own pig; the creature was bright pink with white polka dots, bitty ears, no feet or arms, just a body that looks like a big balloon; and small little eyes that sunk into the back of its head.

Of course Jamyra was in the corner squirming and screaming; begging Mr. Hunter to let her dissect something else, but she could not pull her charm on Mr. Hunter. She had to dissect the sea pig or do extra hours of moon cleaning. Jamyra was not happy with this and threatened to tell her parents. That did not faze Mr. Hunter, and she had to dissect the sea pig. The entire classroom began to laugh at her weakness until it came to order with Mr. Hunter slapping the ruler on the desk.

"Quiet, and I mean it!" said Mr. Hunter.

It was the first day in his class, and everything was

going fine. But Mr. Hunter forgot to tell the children that the sea creature held inside its belly green slime. The minute each child cut into their sea pig, the slime was all over them; from head to toe. It was nasty and stinky, and the slime was soon all over the walls and desks. Some students, like Peter and his friends, thought it was cool, while other students like Jamyra were upset and did not see the humor in it.

Jamyra began to cry and ran out of the classroom complaining about her hair. Millie went after her to calm her down, but Peter and his friends stayed and finished their dissection. Mr. Hunter got great joy in seeing some of the students upset, but he was also pleased to see the many that stayed and finished their assignment. He gave all the students time to go and wash up for their next class. The children ran out of the classroom; many couldn't wait to get the stench off of them. The boys ran to their restroom and the girls did the same. It took forever for the girls to get cleaned and dressed.

Meanwhile in the boys' restroom, Sam Salmon the bully began to pick on Peter by calling him names like "Peter Flop-a-Lot, dumb," and many other stupid comments. Peter just ignored him, until Sam started shooting green slimy fart balls at him.

The restroom was so smelly that kids ran out holding their noses. Sam let out a big fart ball and it engulfed Peter and took him straight into the air. The odor was so horrific that Peter could not breathe. He knew he had to get out of the fart ball, and quick. He saw the edge of the door open and pushed the bubble on the door's tip to burst it. As it burst, down came the slime from the fart ball. Sam thought that it was hilarious and couldn't stop laughing. Peter was very angry and ran to his backpack and pulled out his magical book calling on Merseft.

"Master, what can I do for you?" asked Merseft.

Peter commanded Merseft to sew Sam's mouth shut, and with a blink of an eye, Merseft made Sam's mouth disappear. He couldn't talk and was afraid of Merseft and his powers. Sam ran to the mirror and found he had no mouth. It was gone; more like it disappeared into his skin. Peter quickly put his magic book away as Sam ran out of the restroom and through the school wildly. By then, a crowd had gathered, and the teachers were called in to handle the situation.

Peter tried to explain to the teachers that were gathered around him what really happened, but Mrs. Maryanne LaFloor, a math teacher, grabbed him by his collar and sent him to the headmaster's office.

Peter was a little bit upset. It was his first day of

school, and he was getting called to the headmaster's office. As he walked along; Sam was caught running and crying by one of the teachers who saw that his mouth was missing. The teacher also began to scream and sent Sam to the nurses' station.

After this excitement, the school guards ushered all the children back to their regular classes. Peter meanwhile sat patiently as he waited in Mr. Stewart's office. Peter had been to his office before and hated it. Mr. Stewart's office was just too spooky.

As Peter was waiting, another student came running and crying out of the headmaster's office. Peter was shocked to see this student cry because he was a big green giant with four arms. Peter wondered what Mr. Stewart would do to him, if he'd made a giant cry.

Then the secretary came over and said; "Peter Carrot-Top, Mr. Stewart will see you now."

Peter was very much afraid. He gulped, and his legs began to shake as he walked into Mr. Stewart's office. As he entered, he quickly began to explain to Mr. Stewart what had happened. But Mr. Stewart was furious, and told Peter that he did not want to hear it.

Just as Peter was getting his sentence out, Mrs. LaFloor brought Sam into the office. Peter saw that Sam was

uncomfortable and he began to feel sorry and apologized to Sam for closing his mouth.

"Now, if you promise not to pick on me, I will release your mouth," said Peter.

Sam quickly agreed and Peter pulled out his magical book. When Mr. Stewart saw the book, his eyes glowed and were fixed on it. Peter called to Merseft to release the spell. When Merseft appeared, the people in the room were amazed. Merseft quickly looked around and began to get an eerie feeling.

"Hey, Peter, can I talk to you for one minute?" asked Merseft.

Peter looked confused as he followed Merseft into the corner where the genie told him that this office had an evil aura. Peter agreed with Merseft. He quickly removed the spell off of Sam and returned his mouth to normal. Before Peter could close his magical book, Sam was up to his old tricks again.

"I am going to get you, Peter Carrot-Top," said Sam as Mrs. LaFloor dragged him out of the room.

But before everything was said and done, Mr. Stewart told Sam and Peter they had extra hours of moon duty. Sam was very upset and wanted to hit Peter, but he saw the headmaster looking at him. Peter was fine about the extra

hours of moon duties because he didn't know what lay ahead of him.

As Sam left the office kicking and screaming, Mr. Stewart wanted Peter to stay around and show him more about his magical book. Peter was not too sure, and asked to leave as he hugged his school bag. Mr. Stewart was not giving up. He wanted that magic book for some reason. But Peter was no fool; he knew something was not right and ran out the door with his magical book clinging to him. The minute Peter left Mr. Stewart's office; the walls opened and out walked the hooded figure, breathing very rapidly.

"That is the magical book of the elders. How did a child get the book I have ordered you to get?" the hooded figure asked.

"Good question, I have no idea," said Mr. Stewart.

"Well, we must get it in my possession," the figure explained to Mr. Stewart.

Then it went back into the walls and disappeared. Mr. Stewart was pacing his office and pondering how a young lad could have the book of the elders. He was cautious not to make any sudden moves that would cause suspicions. Mr. Stewart kept a close eye on Peter through his looking glass, which was a silver mirror that could see all around the entire school and Baja. He just had to say the person's

name and the mirror found them, no matter where they were.

Mr. Stewart repeated Peter's name twice and the mirror immediately found Peter in his classroom. Mr. Stewart watched through the looking glass every move Peter made. He wanted to know where the magical book was, but Peter never displayed it again.

Back in his math classroom, Peter was very quiet. This was not the first impression that he wanted to make. Mrs. Dragon was Peter's math teacher. She had three heads that constantly argued with each other. The three heads seemed to weigh Mrs. Dragon down. She walked with a hump in her back and her spine protruded out, pushing out of her body. Each of the three heads was different. One looked like a witch with a mole by her lip, the second was a very beautiful young woman, and the third one had no face, only a mouth and tiny ears that stuck out on the sides. There were a few strands of hair on its head, but when the heads got to fussing with each other, they pulled on the little strands of hair until there was no more.

The students found this amusing and hardly got any work done in Mrs. Dragon's class. This was amazing to Peter. He had never seen a sight like this. He was shell-shocked. When the heads asked Peter a question, he could not respond because his mind was more focused on the three

heads.

"Well, Mr. Carrot-Top, if you can not concentrate, maybe we will have to move you to Mrs. LaFloor's math class," said head one.

"Oh! No, Mrs. Dragon! I love this class," said Peter as the children began to laugh at him.

Finally, it was break time and the children met in "The Center". Peter told Clara how spooky Mr. Stewart was, and Clara agreed with him, stating that most of the people in Baja said he had gone mad, but she never finished telling Peter why Mr. Stewart had gone mad, she quickly changed the subject and asked Peter how he'd made Sam's mouth disappear. Peter told Clara the secret along with their other friends. Ben wanted Peter to use the genie to make their moon cleaning time fast forward, but Peter was a little leery about using the genie to cheat. Nevertheless, he wanted to make friends, and told Ben that he would think about it.

"Great," said Ben.

"But you can't tell anyone," said Peter.

Ben agreed and told Peter that he would see him later. Peter and Clara watched as Robert entertained the crowd with his skinny tall body by stretching into anything from balls to long poles and acting as if he was a plastic man.

The children whom he was entertaining seemed to be impressed and cheered, but when the cheering got too loud, immediately the guards came. Robert disappeared behind a pole where the guards could not see him; he was so skinny he could hide behind a vine and not be seen, and the other children scattered and disappeared into the crowds.

Robert was behind the pole making fun of the guards as they patrolled the area, but they could not see him. Some of the other children could, and they began to laugh as Robert constantly made funny faces behind the guards' backs.

"What are you guys laughing at?" one guard asked.

"Oh, nothing," said Clara, and the guards went on their way giving Robert an opportunity to come out and join his friends.

They all began to laugh at the guards; this was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Peter and his friends had Mrs. Laura Dean next on their class schedule. They were not happy about that, Mrs. Dean was a tough teacher and did not fool around. The children hurried off to class and quietly sat in their assigned seats.

"Peter, I will like you to sit in the front, since you have been starting so much trouble on your first day of school," said Mrs. Dean.

Peter quickly moved, obeying his teacher, but looked back at his friends. Mrs. Dean was teaching history, and today they would go on a field trip. The class began to cheer, but Mrs. Dean quickly put an end to that. As the class was waiting on their assigned world to explore, Mrs. Dean was having trouble keeping her form. She was over 200 years old, but tried to pass herself off as a twenty-five year old. Sometimes she can not hold form and the spell wears off, and when it did; she became the ugliest creature you have ever seen! Her face turned into a mummy, dried bones and flesh fell from her body, she had no teeth or hairs, just a few strands; and every once in a while her bones would crack and break.

She then quickly called for the beauty fairies by looking into the huge mirror on the wall and summoned them. The mirror had codes that Peter quickly jotted down on his piece of paper. Meanwhile, the fairies came flying into the classroom in packs, with magical oils and misty sprays. Then Mrs. Dean was all better again. Not only did she look younger, but much meaner.

After that small mishap, Mrs. Dean pretended as if nothing took place, and went on with her teaching as usual. She took out a huge magical clock that was covered in gold, with diamond encrusted numbers and hands that told the

time. The base was like a stairway that allowed a person to climb up it to set it. The clock began to glow with the symbols of Baja.

Mrs. Dean chose Peter to be the one to set the clock, but he did not know what to do. She informed Peter that he needed to know the history of Baja and be prepared for class. But, nevertheless, she taught Peter how to use the clock, which entitled a person to freeze time; because where they will be going, time needed to stand still. Peter ran up the stairs of the clock and manually moved the hands of time. The clock began to glow, and then a huge bright light shot out of it, and suddenly everything in the classroom was frozen in time.

Peter only noticed this when the classroom became very eerie and quiet. As he looked over his shoulder, everything was lifeless, and suspended in time. Robert playing with his ten watches was motionless, Jamyra combing her hair was suspended in time, but the grosses were Zack slinging snot boogers into the air. The only people who were not affected were Mrs. Dean, because she was as old as time, and the person setting the clock, Peter.

Mrs. Dean came over to him and held his hands as he slowly turned the dials of the clock. Suddenly, everything was back to normal and the students did not know what had

happened.

"Woow," said Peter.

Mrs. Dean informed him that the dial is only to be set once the time is established for the field trip to begin. Then it was time to pick the destination, and Mrs. Dean called on Millie; she was so shy and nervous that she disappeared into thin air. Jamyra constantly held up her hands for Mrs. Dean to pick her, but instead, she picked Michael. He flew up to the front of the class with his powerful wings, brushed his hair forward to make it spike into the air, and then took time looking at himself in the mirror.

"Oh, would you get on with it?" said Mrs. Dean.

Michael walked up to the chalkboard and put his palm print on it. The board began to glow, and then out came a golden map. It flew out like a flying carpet, and was made of pure gold. All the drawings on it were outlined in silver; anyone would think that this map would be heavy, but it was as light as a feather.

Peter's eyes became enlarged when he saw the spectacular map. Michael reached up with his hands, and as he was going to spin the compass, Robert stretched his Beanpole of a hand all the way to the front of the class and spun it. Michael was very upset, and began to get

angry. The compass spun and spun until it finally landed on Sliver Bridge.

Michael ran across the classroom and began to jump on Robert, when Mrs. Dean stopped them and gave each child more hours of moon duties. They were both unhappy, and the entire class began to laugh. Mrs. Dean made them hush.

Peter quickly raised his hands and asked. "What is Sliver Bridge?"

Mrs. Dean explained to Peter that no one knew; the map picked somewhere special to go every day, and no one had explored these worlds. Peter and his classmates thought that it was very cool, and began to jump for joy, until Mrs. Dean had a headache.

"Settle down, children, you're acting like a bunch of savages," she said as she hit her ruler harshly on the desk.

Now that the golden clock was set and the map had picked its destination, it was time to leave. Mrs. Dean offered the children a few snacks that they could take with them; cotton candy worms, mac-A-doodles, and crackling eggs.

"What is mac-a-doodles?" said Peter to Clara.

She responded by telling Peter that mac-a-doodles were macaroni baked inside a hot dog, and covered with melted cheese.

"Wow! That sounds good," said Peter.

Then Clara went on to explained that crackling eggs were scramble eggs that crackled and popped while you're eating them, and they can only come from one bird in Baja, the cherry blue bird. Peter thought that all of this was very fascinating. Then Sam ran in front of the line and grabbed all the crackling eggs before anyone else could get any.

"You pig," said Jamyra.

Then Steve came forward and let his feet out and his toe jam filled the entire classroom.

"You are so gross," said Ben.

The scent was so overwhelming that Millie once again disappeared. Mrs. Dean was called in and gave Steve more moon time, and told the children that they needed to be on their best behavior. She let the children know that they were going to an unknown part of Baja, and they needed to show respect.

"We will, Mrs. Dean," said the children.

She decided to take another teacher with her and chose Mr. Oliver McPhee, who was second in command at Waldorf Academy. Mr. McPhee was very strict, and wore his glasses on the bridge of his nose. Yet he had no eyes or mouth; he was pale and skinny in color, his skin looked as if it was stretched and tight on his body. Even though Mr. McPhee had

all of these afflictions, he could see, hear, and move normally. There was no getting passed this teacher with anything; many had tired, and got harsher sentences of moon duties.

All the children knew of Mr. McPhee and his strictness, and knew how far to go with him. Clara made sure Peter was informed on what he could and couldn't get away with. After everyone got their snacks together, it was time to leave. With a secret press of the codes on the map by Mrs. Dean, a bright light flashed through the classroom, and then an archway appeared. The children were excited, but also nervous.

The golden clock was set and it was time to walk into the unknown. With a deep breath, the children and teachers walked through the arch; Peter and Clara were the first to go in, and the sight was amazing. Everything was still, the clock had paused time, and now it was time for the children and their teachers to explore the world they had enter. Peter was excited; this was the most amazing thing that he had ever experience.

There were a number of sliver arches in this land, as far as the eyes could see. The doorway that they entered from led to a long silver bridge; it glowed with the symbols of Baja. Michael, with his cocky attitude, demanded

that he put the first step on the bridge. As he did so, he began to run back; something had frightened him badly. The children began to laugh, but deep down inside they were afraid too.

Peter went forward and looked around; the place was so beautiful and magnificent. There were trees that produced golden apples; the skies were bright blue and white, large birds flew in the skies, and there were tiny little mushroom houses that held fairies. What frightened Michael so badly was that the silver bridge was built many miles up, and the only thing one can see when looking down was clouds and hilltops, and cannons filled with large snakes and dragons.

As Peter got closer and pushed the clouds out of his way, it was a sight to see. There was a huge troll giant guarding the bridge. The giant was chained to a rock, but had enough room to move around. Peter was frozen by the size of the creature, and in came the entire class to look.

"Oh, that is so beautiful," said Mr. McPhee.

The giant was filthy and muddy; he carried a big long club in his hands, and saliva dripped from his mouth. It was a good thing everything was frozen in time, because the size of the saliva would hurt someone! Sam went over and stuck his hands through the glob of saliva, and played in

it.

"Oh! Don't you ever touch me," said Jamyra.

"Now, children, no fighting," said Mrs. Dean.

Everyone was impressed by the size of this creature; it must have been thousands of feet tall. As the classmates and their teachers crossed the bridge, it began to glow, and the glow became brighter and brighter. Suddenly, an angelic woman appeared with a glow around her; the most gorgeous beauty one could lay their eyes on. She was covered in all white clothing, wings that expanded eight feet in length, and skin so pale it was almost white. She never said a word; just smiled and watched as the children and their teachers crossed the bridge.

"How come she is not still in time?" said Millie.

Everyone was in shock as this was the first time they had heard Millie speak.

"You can talk?" said Mr. McPhee.

But to answer Millie's question, no one knew why the woman could move. Maybe it was a force stronger than the clock, which was able to un-pause itself. As the group finally came to the end of the bridge, they were greeted by even more beautiful surroundings. The children's eyes grew large with excitement as they saw huge stone caves that were made into homes, and out the windows, the students saw

small people. They had human features, but their bodies were covered in dust balls that came in all different colors. There were white, red, blue, pink, black, and many more colors. Because their bodies were made of the dust balls, this made their bodies light, and some of them were flying into the air. It seemed like they used the wind and the breeze to get around; even the tiny babies were having fun.

To Peter and his friends, this was truly an adventure; as they looked around, the place featured cannons that swept millions of miles down, and there were people flying large birds with saddles on their backs. This seemed to be the way of transportation, and because everything was frozen in time, the children got a closer look at the cannon flyers. All the riders seemed to be wearing the same uniforms; some had jackets with the Baja symbols that glowed, and others just had jackets with no symbols. Maybe these were the ones in training. The birds were huge, with large wingspans and long beaks; their bodies were short like a pig, but with just enough room for the riders. Over in one corner, it seemed like the riders were either attacking or confronting another unknown rider. This rider was different from the rest; his bird was black, with red glowing symbols, and the rider was all in black with a hood

that covers his entire body.

For a minute, Peter was startled; it seemed like the figure on the black bird was staring at him, and his eyes were moving. Peter blinked for a minute, and the rider and his black bird were gone. Peter tried to tell his friends, but no one had seen the rider but him; everyone was admiring something else.

Deep down in his guts, Peter knew something was wrong, but continued to observe. As the students walked even farther, there was a big castle made of glass, but yet no one could see inside. The children ran toward the castle, but were cautioned by their teachers to take it slow and be careful. Then, before they could get to the bridge of the castle, out of the corner of their eyes they noticed huge giants tending the land, cleaning the castle walls, and toting stacks of hay on their backs. The giants seemed to be workers for the castle. They looked like the ones Peter first saw when he was coming to Baja. They were large and green, some had large ears and some had horns; they all had the glowing Baja symbols, and their clothing seemed to be made of fine cotton that had been woven with golden thread.

Everyone was afraid; these creatures were huge and they had no expressions on their faces. Peter went up to one and measured his feet against the giant's feet. The

other children played around the giant because, for the most part, they were told to stay away from the giants of Baja. So, this was like a daredevil stunt, and they were the stars.

The children were having the time of their lives, seeing things they only imagined and dreamt about. Peter could not help but admire the castle with its glass domes and doors, and the bridge was made out of thin glass. He looked, and he saw fairies blowing sand and turning it into glass to repair the bridge; it seems like everything surrounding this castle was made of glass. But, this glass was magical. As the children got closer and looked through it, they saw the words "make a wish". The children pointed at the words, and the teachers came over to see what the fuss was all about.

"Now, be careful what you wish for," said Mr. McPhee.

Each child pushed their faces up to the glass, and wished for something. Jamyra wished for a diamond crown; it was so beautiful, it glowed with the symbols of Baja, and it was crystal clear; an envy to the eye. Inside was inscribed, "If you tell a lie, the crown will be stuck to your head, and grow out of control until the truth is told".

Steve wished for some cool sneakers for his stinky feet. The sneakers were red and white with angel wings that

made them fly. Steve began to test them out in the magical land, and up, up, and away he went. Millie was very shy, and wanted dark shades to cover her eyes. Getting her to the glass was a chore. Finally, the kids got her to say her wish again with confidence.

"Come on, Millie, you can do it," said Clara.

Millie closed here eyes and her wish was granted; the shades where white with tinted lens, with Baja symbols on the edges and the rim. Millie was so cool; she started to have a little more confidence. But, the shades were not for confidence or protection; she could see through walls and any objects, once the shades were on her. These shades were made only for her eyes.

"Way to go, Millie," said Mrs. Dean.

Michael wished for armor to protect his wings, and it was granted. The armor glittered in the sun's rays; it was blue with Baja symbols, and was made of the finest steel metal. The children helped him put his wing armor on; and when they did, the sight was breathtaking, it was very beautiful. Michael began to fly around faster and faster than ever, he loved his new wing armor. Sam quickly jumped in and asked for a lifetime supply of slim gum.

"There is no such thing as slim gum," said Peter.

But before he could get the words out of his mouth,

the slim gum appeared. Sam began to chew the gum immediately, and blew slim all over the children. Mrs. Dean took him by the ear and pulled him off into a corner. Sam went yelling and screaming while the rest of the children laughed as they were covered in gooey slim.

"Well, it's much better than fart balls," said Millie.

Robert asked for another watch, only this one he wanted to make it snow. Suddenly, a golden watch appeared on his arm.

"Not another watch," said Jamyra.

The watch was made of the finest jewels: rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and other gems. The band was made of the finest leather, which was red in color. Robert then set the hands of the watch to snow and snow appeared in the air! But, because it was natural, it was frozen in time like everything throughout this enchanted land.

Zack then asked for seven golden tickets that would last a lifetime to enter the largest carnival park in Baja. They would be for him and all his new friends. Everyone was so touched and moved; the tickets appeared in a magical box, inlaid with velvet, and they shone in the sunlight. On the tickets were lifetime memberships, and all of his friends' faces were chiseled in gold and silver; yet the tickets were flexible and soft. Zack then passed out the

tickets to his friends, which were Robert, Peter, Clara, Ben, Nicholas, Millie, and one for himself. The children accepted the gift with honor.

It was then Clara's turn. She held onto the glass wall and wished for a golden sword that shot fire. A moment later, it appeared! The sword was so pretty, as it shone with the purest of silver and edges of gold. The Baja codes and symbols glowed on the sword and then, before Clara could test it out, a magical glove appeared, to match the sword. It had the same Baja symbols and codes.

Clara slipped her right hand into the glove, held the sword in the air and shouted, "Fire come forth!"

It did so; but because fire was part of nature, it was also frozen in time until the children returned to the classroom and took the magical clock off of pause. As Clara called forth the fire, it was in the form of a large dragon that many could see from miles away. She was so happy, like a kid in a candy store.

Then it was Nicholas' turn. He asked for an art pencil that would never run out of lead, as he was an artist. A golden pencil appeared in his hands; it was just like an ordinary pencil, but the rubber was protected by a golden cap, and the pencil was made of hard steel that could never break. There was even a golden case for the

pencil. Nicholas began to draw a flower in the air, and within a few seconds a real flower appeared. Once again, because it was part of this world, and time was paused here; it just stayed suspended in the air.

"This is way cool," said Nicholas as the children admired his drawing.

The flower was so beautiful; the colors were so bright and lovely.

"This may be your calling," said Mr. McPhee.

Ben then rushed to the wall and wished for a super cape; he was very specific, he wanted it red, with a big B on the back. At first, the wish took a while to produce. Ben began to get sad as he thought his wish was unattainable, but as in life, all good things take time. A black box appeared with the Baja symbols; Ben watched as the symbols glowed. He followed the codes with his eyes and then opened the box. The cape jumped out and tied itself to Ben's clothing. It began to blow as if a strong breeze was passing through it. The cape had everything Ben asked for, the big B was black and it also glowed with the codes of Baja.

"Up, and away," said Ben. The cape picked him up and flew him around. "Wooooooooo, I love it," he said.

Then, last but not least, it was Peter's turn.

Everyone wondered what the boy king would ask for. Out of the corner of his eyes, Peter saw Mr. McPhee writing down everything that was going on.

"What is that you're writing?" said Peter.

"Oh! Nothing," Mr. McPhee replied.

But indeed, it was something. Peter went up to the wall, paused for a second, and said his wish. He wished for a box of one thousand little army soldiers that would be under his command and his command only. He also added that the little soldiers would only fight for good and not evil. A short smile came across Mrs. Dean's face; she was proud of his choice. A trunk-sized box appeared; it was also black, with the Baja codes and symbols, and it only opened to Peter's thumbprint. When it did, it was a great surprise; the tiny little soldiers stood about six inches. They were all dressed in armor, equipped with swords and helmets, and the army had girls and boys whose skin glowed with the Baja symbols.

The soldiers were all different colors, they could fight in all different positions, and they were stacked in the box like dominos, all nice and neat. Peter commanded them to come out, and the soldiers jumped out of the box one by one; they truly looked like a miniature version of an army force.

They all saluted Peter and asked, "Who do we attack, in the name of good?"

"No one yet, this was just a drill," said Peter.

This was too much for Ben, and he fainted into Mrs. Bean's arms.

"Peter, that is so awesome," said Clara.

Peter then commanded the army back into their box; each member of the little army knew their spot, they jumped back into the box, and it magically closed.

"I lived for this day," said Peter.

"Ben, you are too heavy, get off of me," said Mrs. Dean.

All the children were happy with their gifts. They played around for a while, but it was time to move on and explore the land even more, but the children were hungry and asked to pull out their snacks. The classmates and their teachers rested for a while. As they sat and ate lunch, Peter was still impressed with his cotton candy worm; Steve ate his crackling eggs, some of the children ate lunch, while others fidgeted and played around with their new toys. Peter could not take his eyes off of his box of one thousand toy soldiers.

"Can you believe this, Clara?" said Peter.

"This is so amazing," said Clara.

But Mr. McPhee wanted the children to eat up so they could go exploring before time ran out. The children gobbled up all their fizz pop, mac-a-doodles and crackling eggs, and were ready to go again.

Once again, the classmates walked in a group, leaving the teachers behind to watch. The children talked amongst themselves of how great it was to have come on this trip, and their new gifts, but Peter's senses were telling him something else; his red Carrot-Top hair began to stand up on his head.

As Mrs. Dean and Mr. McPhee continued to talk in private, whatever they were saying was very secretive, because when one of the children looked back, the teachers pretended like they were not talking at all. They began to act strange, twisting their thumbs, or pointing to the air, and there was nothing there. So, Peter kept a closer eye on them, but wanted to enjoy his trip. After walking for a few minutes, the children and their teachers came across a jungle filled with wild birds, monkeys, snakes, and other unidentified creatures.

"What in the hell is that?" said Steve.

Millie quickly pulled off her shades, and Peter and his friends' eyes bugged out. This was a one-of-a-kind specimen.

"You watch your mouth, Steve," said Mrs. Dean.

But, they were surprised. It was about eight feet tall, green in color with black polka dots, and it had to weigh at least a thousand pounds. Its features were like an earthworm, but a million times bigger; it was spewing some type of green foam from its mouth, and it seemed to be trying to get away from something.

As the children and their teachers examined the creature, they noticed that the big worm was being attacked by small little Zulu tribe people. They were the size of ants, and they attacked the creature by the millions. The people had spears, ropes, fire, and knives. They were on this thing like flies on a carcass, but everyone noticed that the creature had no glowing symbols of Baja.

So, they discussed amongst themselves that this creature was created just for food. Peter got on his hands and knees to see the Zulu-like people up close; then all the other children followed suit. The tribe was so beautiful; they wore their warrior hats, and golden shields and breastplates. Their arrows were made from red ruby; their skin was dark in color, and they all had blue eyes. Their hair was jet black and braided into one, with the tip of the braids covered in a golden latch or bow.

Their sandals were made of tough hide and dyed to the

color of their choice. Peter was up so close that he could even see the sweat on the brows of the Zulu-like people. He wanted to touch them, but was stopped by his teachers, in fear that with one wrong move, Peter could probably kill one of the people because they were so tiny. They looked like a colony of ants.

"Something is wrong," said Clara.

"And what is wrong now?" said Sam sarcastically.

Clara explained to the group that the Zulu-like people looked like they were harvesting for a long hibernation. Why else would a colony of people go after a meal that could last them for years? Sam dismissed it by calling Clara a do-gooder. But Clara and Peter noticed the difference. Peter now knew in his heart that something was wrong and maybe, just maybe, he was the one that would have to save Baja.

Peter wiped the look of worry off of his face, and pretended as if nothing was wrong. The children quickly followed the line of the Zulu-like people to find out where they came from. A few feet down through a small passageway cut in the jungle lay a huge mound. It was made of thick black dirt; there were thousands of mounds as far as the eye could see. This black dirt was made up of sparkling gold dust and diamond chunks. It looked as if the Zulu-like

people were storing energy; the diamonds were a powerful source of energy and light. On the right and left side of the mounds stood two larger-sized Zulu people; they were a little taller and bigger, at least two feet tall, and much larger in size, but had all the same characteristics of the smaller Zulu-like people. The larger ones seemed to be guarding the homes of the smaller tribe members, and in return they got food and half of the harvest. The taller Zulu-like people stood at attention, guarding the mounds with persistence and honor. To the human eye they were small, but to the tiny eyes of the Zulu tribe people, they were giants.

Peter and his classmates were please with their findings, and suddenly the loud clock began to chime, it was the clock Peter had set at school; it was letting the children and their teachers know that it was soon time to be heading back.

"Oh! Just a couple more hours," said Jamyra.

"No, because if we do not make it out in time, we will get caught up in a time warp," said Mr. McPhee.

Jamyra was none to happy; she walked off like a spoil brat stomping and kicking. The two teachers just shook their heads in disgust with Jamyra's attitude.

"Just a few more minutes and it will be time to go,"

said Mrs. Dean.

The children broke free and started looking around as quickly as they could; they wanted to get in all the sights they could see. Mrs. Dean sat on the grass while Mr. McPhee went over by a large tree and started acting strangely, as if he was talking to himself. Peter and Robert saw this commotion and immediately went over secretly. They hid behind a big tree and watched the conversation between Mr. McPhee and himself. Some of the words that Mr. McPhee was saying became a little distorted to Peter and Robert; they could only make out a few of them, which were: "the seven chosen have picked out their gifts".

Peter and Robert looked at each other in amazement, and began to question in their minds whether or not they had made the right choices. Robert used his long slender body to quickly move closer, without being seen by Mr. McPhee. As he came into view, he saw Mr. McPhee talking to a hooded stranger. Robert could not see a face for this person; all he could see was that this person was dressed in all black and carried a scary walking stick. Mr. McPhee continued to talk to this person.

Robert slipped back to Peter and whispered to him what he had seen. Peter then remembered that he too had seen this hooded person more than once, and it was becoming very

strange. As he and Robert started to leave, Peter stepped on a branch that made a loud crunching noise, and Mr. McPhee quickly came around the tree and began to look around. Peter was saved by Robert's quick thinking and elastic arms that grabbed Peter out of the shrub area and back with all the children. When Mr. McPhee came out, he was still looking around, wondering if anyone had heard him.

"What's wrong, Peter? You look like you have seen a ghost," said Ben.

"Hush, and act normally," said Peter to Ben.

The children played it as if nothing had happened, and Mr. McPhee was left wondering what was the noise he'd heard, and where it came from. He glanced the children over to see if he could spot the one who made the noise; he had become so paranoid, but none of the children gave him what he wanted, and he looked very disturbed and confused.

"Children, it's time to head out," said Mrs. Dean.

The children got up, and formed a line and started walking back in the direction that they had come from. Robert began playing with his now eleven watches, speeding the hands around and around. He did it so much and so long, the watch let off a bright glow that knocked the children to their feet. Mrs. Dean and Mr. McPhee could not believe their eyes, it was as if the sun landed and burst in front

of their eyes, the rays were so bright. Millie's shades came in handy to protect her eyes. Then suddenly, it was dark and then light again.

The children jumped up in wonder and amazement at what had just taken place. Robert looked at his arm and his watches were glowing in order, up to down, and so forth; the faces of the watches became brighter, and he tried to take them off, but the latches could not come off. Once Robert put a watch on his wrist they remained for the rest of his life!

As the children and their teachers looked around, they noticed that time had been disturbed and everything was beginning to move slowly. The huge giants were moving toward the children and their teachers.

"Run, run!" said Mrs. Dean.

All the children began to run, faster and faster, until Sam couldn't keep up, his weight was holding him back.

"We are putting you on a diet, once we get back," said Mrs. Dean.

Sam smirked it off, and kept on looking back. When he saw that the giants were getting closer, he then mustered up the strength and began to run as fast as he could. Millie and Jamyra were the first to cross the bridge, but the big monster troll was now coming alive, and he began to

raise his huge club in the air to hit the children and their teachers. Yet, because time was still moving slowly, it gave the children and their teachers enough time to miss being hit. But, one person was stuck behind, and that was Steve, always the last one. He even let Sam beat him across the bride. As Steve was coming across, his shirt got hooked by the troll's club, and up in the air he went. Peter immediately jumped into the air and held onto Steve's legs. Then Clara jumped onto Peter's leg and they managed to break Steve loose by tearing his shirt from the spikes on the club. But, they did not notice that they were very high in the air, and down they came, falling.

Sam quickly began to chew on his slim gum and blow a big bubble of slime to catch his falling classmates. Suddenly, the children fell into the slime bubble gum and began to bounce around; slime was everywhere, and the children were covered from head to toe, but they were safe. Sam loved the fact that he had a real chance to use his slime gum; it was so cool to him. He was very proud of himself that he had saved the day, and not Mr. goodie-two-shoes Peter.

Yet, Peter was happy they didn't get hurt, and let Sam take all the credit. But, they had to hurry; time was now moving really fast, and the magical door they came through

was closing very quickly.

"Run, children," said Mr. McPhee.

The children ran faster and faster, constantly looking back; time was speeding up, and they were far away from the magical door entrance. But, the children and their teachers continued to run. Peter was the last in line, to keep his friends and classmates from lagging behind. Suddenly, he got an eerie feeling to look back, and when he did, he saw the hooded figure coming his way!

Time was speeding up so fast, Peter could see the figure moving, for some reason this thing also knew how to manipulate time, even though everything was in slow motion; Peter could still see the figure moving, and making evil facial gestures. The large black bird it was riding on began to scream and everyone heard the piercing sound and quickly turned around.

"Keep moving," said Mrs. Dean.

The children ran faster and faster. Peter noticed some of the symbols coming off of the bird and he kept them in his mind. They were not like the symbols of Baja, and they glowed bright red as if they were on fire. As the children ran, they could see the passageway into their classroom. One by one, they ran through the magical door, and as Peter was the last to enter, the hooded figure latched onto his

shirt.

As Peter turned around to look, he saw the figure up close. He began to scream; the figure was so ugly and hideous. Peter began to scratch and kick until he was loose. He ran through the door and fell onto the classroom floor. There was still a second left on the clock, and the hooded figure managed to push his hands in and grab Peter's leg. He and his friends began to fight the hooded figure off until the time ran out, and the magical door closed. Because the hooded figure's hand was still in the door at the time of closing, it was sliced off! The cut was so clean, as if a sharp laser had cut it. The hand fell on the floor; the children began to scream, and as they screamed, the hand began to move and chase them all through the classroom, until Clara got a chair and smashed it. Black and green guts oozed out of the hand, then fumes filled the rooms; then from the door they'd entered came a loud cry. The children covered their ears and ran out of the classroom.

"Whoa, that was the coolest day I have ever had," said Michael.

"Oh! Shut up," said Mrs. Dean.

The children were shaken up, and it was a good excuse to take a short recess.

Chapter 10

Fitting In

All the kids in the classroom gathered around Peter and wanted to know what had happened, and what the creature looked like. He explained to his friends what he'd seen, and then told Clara about the weird conversation Mr. McPhee and the figure had had. At first Clara, did not believe him, until Robert spoke up on his behalf. Clara was confused and amazed.

"We must get to the bottom of this," said Clara.

"I know, but it can only be between us friends," said Peter.

In the group Peter included Millie, not only because she was a great person to be around, but her shades could see through walls, and she could become invisible. That would be a great asset to their gaining knowledge to find out what was going on in Baja.

As the children rested, the bell rang; and it was time to go to their next class, which was Water Horse. Clara told Peter that he would love this class. He was very excited; if his next class was anything like his first few classes, he knew that he would have a lot of fun.

Water horse racing was one of the school's most popular sports. Everyone wanted to take this class, but the price of a water horse was very expensive, and only a few hunters were trained to catch them. As Peter entered the classroom, everyone turned around and pointed, as they had now all heard about him. Peter was like a celebrity in his school, but he was very shy and modest about his celebrity status. Still, he played along with the game, hoping that the fascination of him saving Baja would soon end or wear off.

Every child ran up to Peter for a photo shot, and an autograph. He forgot Clara was in the background as he got carried away. When he noticed this, he immediately acknowledged his friend Clara Cabbage. She was quite pleased with his announcement, and immediately began to blush.

"Why do you want to hang out with a girl, when you can hang out with cool dudes like us?" said one of the children.

"Oh! Shut up, Larry," said Clara.

Larry was a tall skinny child, with his hair sticking out all over his head. His pants were ripped and he wore a big cowboy belt buckle. Larry was the son of Mr. Stewart, and because of this, he got away with too much. Many of the children thought he was cool, and wanted to hang out with

him. Jamyra even had a secret crush on him, but so did most of the girls. Larry had no special powers or anything; some said that he was the "black rain" over Baja, but the children were not allowed to say that or they'd be sent to the office.

Clara was still upset with Larry, and she opened her mouth wide and let her green slimy bugs attack him. All the children began to laugh. Larry was upset and went storming out of the classroom. Then the teacher walked in and immediately got the class quiet. She then stepped out to see what was the matter with Larry. In the meantime, the children wanted to know about the secret trip Peter and the others had gone on.

Peter gladly explain what he got as a present, and showed it off to the classroom. Then Clara, Ben, Millie, and the others showed off their gifts. Some of the children were very jealous; not many of them got to see a different land that was so spectacular. Most of the time, the clock took them to a land of mammals and dinosaurs, or a land with only trees, or to something boring.

Peter thought that it would be cool to see dinosaurs and plants, but the other children looked at him as being a nerd. Then the teacher walked back into the classroom and demanded that Ms Cabbage apologize to Larry. Clara did not

want to do it, but to avoid going to Mr. Stewart's creepy office, she apologized with a fake smile on her face. Larry did not accept it, and this made Clara even angrier.

"That was rude, Mr. Stewart," said the teacher.

She then thanked Clara for apologizing and asked everyone to be seated and pay attention. She introduced herself as Miss Moon. To Peter, she was the prettiest teacher he had ever had. Her long blond hair, soft pale skin, deep blue eyes, and nice body were all stunning. What Peter didn't know was that Miss Moon made striking noises with her long nails to get the class' attention; it was like running sharp nails down the chalkboard.

"Here it comes," said Clara.

"What?" said Peter.

Before Clara could tell Peter to cover his ears, Miss Moon ran her nails down the chalkboard, and the children were in tears. Peter could feel his eardrums shaking inside; his skin began to crawl and his eyes began to water up.

"Oh! That hurts," said Peter.

"Must you do that?" said Larry.

Miss Moon introduce herself to Peter, and then Peter to the entire class; some children began to clap and others began to boo.

"Oh! They are just jealous," said Clara.

"Well I am glad to have a friend like you," said Peter.

Clara smiled; then Miss Moon told the children to go and change for their next assignment, and then she told Peter she would show him his seahorse. Peter was so excited to see what his seahorse would look like; he ran into the boys' locker room and changed quickly.

"Slow down, Peter, it is not that serious," said Robert.

But Peter was too excited to negotiate with the boys. They began to jokingly tease Peter as he ran out of the locker room with his swimming trunks on backwards. The laughter filled the halls, and many of the teachers came out, ordering them to keep it quiet. Finally, Clara told Peter that his trunks were on backwards. He was so embarrassed; he began to blush until his face turned red. He ran as fast as he could back into the locker room to change, and came out within minutes.

"Well done. I see you got it together," said Michael as he clapped his hands.

"Enough," said Miss Moon, as she escorted the children to the swimming hall.

Peter was so excited that he talked all the way there.

"Blah, blah, blah, blah," said Sam as he made fun of

Peter.

But Peter did not mind, for he knew that Sam was nothing more than a bully. As the children got closer to the swimming hall, Peter could hear the sounds of the seahorses; in his mind, he was wondering which one was his. The children and their teacher came to a big golden door, and each child was scanned by a bright light.

"What is that?" said Peter to Clara.

She explained that the light checked them for any fleas or germs they could spread onto their seahorse. The seahorses were very delicate and anything could cause them to become sick and die. Clara explained to Peter that she'd already lost one horse.

As the light went down the line, scanning everyone, it stopped on Sam, and nudged him out of the line. The flea detector light went off, and everyone began to laugh. Miss Moon had to tell Sam to sit this session out. He was very upset and began to hit the machine. Miss Moon called security and had Sam escorted to the principal's office. He did not go easily; he went kicking and screaming all the way down the hall.

Everyone else passed the health test, and the golden door began to open. It was like seeing paradise; there were palm trees, coconut trees, the water was crystal clear, it

was like a big manmade lake for millions of miles. There were caretakers in the water looking after the seahorses and feeding them. It was like a fantasy island, white sandy beaches, exotic creatures, and sunny bright skies.

Peter fell in love with the environment right away. Miss Moon got the children in line to introduce Peter to his new seahorse. She asked him to cover his eyes until she told him to let go. Peter followed her command, and when she told him to let go, he could not believe his eyes. Standing in front of him was a bright orange seahorse, one that had never been seen before.

This horse was purchased for Peter by his father. It had a big gold pedant with the initials P.C. and its pendant glowed in the sun. The seahorse was so beautiful that Peter was lost for words. The seahorse was strongly built, with big blue oval eyes, and weighed about 2000 pounds. It had long orange hair on its tail and head, just like Peter. This seahorse looked to be between a seal and a dinosaur.

Miss Moon asked Peter what he thought, but he was lost for words. He continued to take in big gulps of air, as he could not believe his eyes on how beautiful this creature was. He began to stroke the hair on the seahorse, and it giggled and rolled on its back like a dog. The seahorse

began to wag its tail; wanting to play with Peter.

"Play with me, Peter," said the seahorse.

"It also talks?" asked Peter.

"Yes, of course," said Michael.

Clara explained to Peter that seahorses speak in bubbles; when the bubbles burst, that's when the sound and words come out. Peter waited and saw that his seahorse was letting out a huge bubble. He waited for the bubble to burst and then he heard the words, "Play with me."

Peter was so impressed with his new pet that he wanted to play right away; but Miss Moon informed him that he had to learn how to feed, clean, and take care of his seahorse. Peter was up for the challenge.

"Where do we began?" said Peter to Miss Moon.

Suddenly, Miss Moon handed Peter a bag of smelly roaches; they were huge, weighing at least ten pounds, and big and ugly. Their bodies were filthy and slimy, their eyes looked like bat's eyes, and what an awful smell! But this was the seahorse's favorite meal. Everyone had to feed their seahorse at least fifty of these roaches. Peter's stomach began to turn and he quickly ran in the bushes to vomit.

Clara came running toward him. "Are you okay?"

Peter answered with a shake of his head, wiped his

mouth and went back to class. The other children began to laugh, especially Michael and Larry. These two young men wanted Peter to fail, but he had a great backup plan; he had great friends in Clara, Millie, Robert, Ben, Zack, and Nicholas.

His friends quickly gathered around him, showing him all the tricks to feeding his seahorse. The key to feeding a seahorse without smelling the roaches was to throw the entire disposable bag in the water. Clara let Peter know that the bags were made out of corn husks, and could be eaten by the animals and broken down by the environment. Peter was happy to hear this, and the class went on.

Many of the children wanted to know where the rare seahorse came from. Miss Moon let the children in on the history of the orange seahorses, which are only born once every ten years, and are very rare to find.

"Your Dad must have paid a lot for this," said Zack.

Peter was kinda happy that he was the center of attention, but this time he did not forget to include his best friends. He and the rest of the children began to groom their seahorses and play with them for a while. Peter and his seahorse ran up and down the manmade beach, jumping in and out of the water. His horse always wanted to play, but Peter was tired; and the seahorse began to playfully

splash him with water from its tail. Peter began to giggle and started playing again.

"I think I will name you Bouncer," said Peter, and the seahorse clapped its seal-like fins and jumped back in the water to play again.

Peter loved this school, he couldn't wait to go home and tell his family. Then for the first time, Peter realized that his family was off at war, and he began to worry. But, because Waldorf was so much fun, he let his worry slip away. Yet, in the back of his mind, his family came first.

Nevertheless, it was time for the class to begin. Miss Moon ordered everyone to get on their seahorse and get ready to race. Michael did not like the idea of Peter having one of the most fancy and expensive seahorses around; so he talked with Larry to hatch a plan to make Peter come in last place. But, before the race began, Miss Moon pulled out a golden saddle for Peter to put on his horse. The saddle glowed with the Baja colors; the codes lit up on the saddle as they ran up and down the straps. It was almost mesmerizing.

Peter gazed for a minute, and then came to his senses and threw the saddle up onto his seahorse. He noticed that even his initials were engraved into the saddle. This made

Peter feel even more special, and the new saddle made his seahorse look even better. He was ready for the race, but Larry and Michael had other plans.

Peter whispered in his seahorse's ear saying quietly, "Let's beat them!"

The seahorse let out a loud scream, and the bubbles with the words, "You bet," came bursting out of his throat.

This bonding was an amazing sight to see; Peter and his new seahorse Bouncer having the time of their lives.

"On your mark, get set, go!" yelled Miss Moon.

The race was off; Peter and his classmates were in a tight race. First, Clara would pull away, then Michael; but out of nowhere came Larry taking off so fast it was as if his horse was on a shooting star.

Clara knew that Larry was cheating and yelled, "You cheater," and pushed her seahorse to run faster and faster.

The obstacle course was so beautiful; the classmates had to race over high ocean waves, through caves, under waterfalls, and through swamp lands. This was where Larry's seahorse slowed down; he had pushed his seahorse too far, and the seahorse was tired. So, like a mule when it is pushed too hard; it stopped working and become very stubborn and unruly. Larry could not get his seahorse to move or even get up; it sat on the side of the swamp eating

the leaves and bugs. Larry was very upset and began to kick the seahorse. It got up and ran off, leaving Larry stranded by the swamp. He watched as his classmates passed him, laughing.

He shouted at Michael, "You better win for us!"

But Michael was no match for Clara and her seahorse. She also had one of the rarest seahorses in Baja, and she treated her animal very well. In return, it treated her well by winning many tournaments.

"Go, go!" said Clara as she shook the leash to her seahorse.

Once again, Clara was in the lead, with Peter in second and Michael third. Over and under bridges of water, through mud holes and swamps; Clara managed to stay in first place. She could see the finish line ahead.

"Just a little more to go," she said to her seahorse.

Clara's seahorse mustered up more energy, and pulled away from the pack. Clara crossed the finished line first, and then Michael and Peter were a close tie. First Peter pulled away, then Michael, and at the last minute, Peter heard Clara, cheering him on, and he found the strength to make his seahorse move faster. Peter overtook Michael to come in second. Miss Moon was very amazed to see how well Peter and his seahorse adapted to their new environment. As

Peter and Bouncer made it to shore they were greeted with a big hug by Clara.

"I am so proud of you, Peter," said Clara.

Miss Moon and the rest of the class gave Peter a warm hand clap. He was very proud of himself and began to blush.

"Where is Larry?" Miss Moon asked.

The children pointed toward the swamp, and Miss Moon sent the security fish to retrieve Larry. Security fish were half man half fish; they glowed with the secret codes of Baja all over their scaly skin. They had no feet, just a fish tail; their upper bodies were human and the lower torso was a fish. They were beautiful creatures, their fins soft as feathers, and they came in many shades of colors from yellow to green and in between. They wore an armor breastplate that said, "Waldorf Academy". The security fish went to get Larry; in the meantime, Larry's seahorse came swimming up fast; something was wrong. The seahorse was going too fast to stop; until suddenly it ended up on the beach, belly up. Larry's seahorse began to vomit and poop all over the place.

"What a horrible smell," said Clara.

Miss Moon and the remaining students went over to see what was wrong with Larry's horse. As the class and their teacher got closer, Miss Moon notice that Larry's horse was

throwing up horse flies. They're big and black, with a mosquito-look and long suckers. But horse flies are also fed to seahorse when someone wants to cheat; they make the seahorse speed up too fast for its heart rate. With time, the horse collapses and dies.

"I will see that Larry get suspended for this," said Miss Moon as she rubbed the sick seahorse's belly.

Animal control was called, and they took the sick seahorse away. When the security fish brought Larry back to the beach with his other teammates, no one wanted to talk to him; not even Michael.

"What have you done?" said Michael to Larry.

Larry shrugged his shoulders as Michael asked him the question.

"You know the rule of Baja, no living thing is to harm another," said Miss Moon, as she grabbed Larry by the ears and sat him in the sand in a corner by a palm tree.

Miss Moon was so upset; she gave the children the rest of the class period to go over to the wacky Fun Factory.

"Oh, Boy!" said the children as they jumped in the air with excitement and laughter.

As the children got ready for their trip, Larry was being hauled off to the principal's office by his collar.

"Let me go, now, I am going to tell!" said Larry to

Miss Moon.

Miss Moon did not care and continued to grab Larry by the ear and take him to the principal's office. The children began to laugh at Larry as they saw him acting like a big baby. As they laughed, Larry promised to beat them up after school; this got him into more trouble and made Miss Moon pulled on his ear harder. Down the hall, Larry shouted and threw a tantrum, but it was not fazing Miss Moon who continued to pull him to the office.

"What is the wacky fun factory?" said Peter.

Zack explained that it was the happiest place in Baja, and to get in you must have a pass, but a pass is six thousand barks.

"That's \$6,000 dollars in your world," said Ben.

"Why so expensive?" said Peter.

Ben and Zack explained to Peter that only the rich and famous with their families were able to go to the Wacky Fun Factory, because it was especially built for them.

"The rich are very snobbish," said Zack as he pushed up his hands to his nose, showing how the rich turn up their noses at the less fortunate.

Peter began to laugh and asked the boys how they would ever afford to get in. Ben explained that Waldorf academy gives away a few passes a year, and they were lucky this

time to get one. But then Zack thought of the wish he'd made. He had golden tickets for him and his friends to enter any amusement park they ever wanted. He ran to his locker and searched for the tickets, and found them in between his books, as they let off a glow.

Zack and his friends began to jump up and down, now they could afford to stay in the Wacky Fun Factory longer, because on a regular ticket time runs out, but on Zack's, they had unlimited time for him and his friends.

"Come on, let's get Clara and Millie," said Peter.

The gang went to get Clara and Millie to tell them the good news. They were so excited and began to jump up and down in the hallway, until a teacher told them to quiet down. The teacher's name was Mrs. Ghost, she taught anatomy on how to be a ghost. Peter and his friends quickly apologized and went on to the pit stop.

The pit stop was a moving machine that would take them to the Wacky Fun Factory. When Peter saw this contraption his eyes bugged out of their sockets.

"Oh! That is so cool," said Peter.

The pit was a runway made of candy colors; it was so long that the children could not see the end, and the cotton candy clouds blocked them from seeing what was up ahead. As the clouds finally moved, a tall skinny man with

glasses and long blonde hair stood in front of them. Peter became frightened and held onto Zack.

"Oh, you little girl, it's only Mr. Smorge, the factory operator," said Robert, as he laughed jokingly at Peter.

Mr. Smorge was pale and had a peculiar look to his face.

"And who do we have here?" said Mr. Smorge.

"It's Peter Carrot-Top," said Ben.

"The Peter Carrot-Top that the whole of Baja is talking about?" said Mr. Smorge.

"Yes, sir," said Ben.

"Well, step right up," said Mr. Smorge, as he pointed to a brown wooden treasure box.

Peter was still afraid and hung tightly to his friends. The big treasure box opened up and a magical red carpet came flying out with a few of the Wacky Fun Factory helpers. They were all dressed in clown outfits with bright colors and hats to match. They brought the children balloons and treats.

"Try these, it's our new candy, called Jolly bombs," said Mr. Smorge.

"What are jolly bombs?" asked Peter.

Mr. Smorge explained that jolly bombs were mouth

gushing, great tasting apple cherry flavored juice candies that turned a child's entire mouth different colors. When the children heard this, they ran up and grabbed handfuls of the new candy that was making its debut in the Wacky Fun Factory amusement park.

First Peter's tongue turned green, then Clara's blue, Millie's was purple and the other children's were pink and black. But that was not all to the jolly bombs; from now on everything the children's lips and tongue touched would turn the color of their jolly bombs. Robert tried his out and took a bite of his pencil; it immediately turned black. Then Peter chewed on his shirt, and his white shirt went to green.

"That is really cool," said Millie.

The children began to jump up and down with excitement; this was the trip of a lifetime. They got to go to the park, and were the first ones to try out the new jolly bombs before they hit the Baja market. The children were so happy, and couldn't wait to see what the rest of the amusement park would have. They began to walk up the red carpet of the treasure chest, until they got to a golden door, where Mr. Smorge immediately appeared again.

"How do you do that?" said Peter to Mr. Smorge.

"Well, we're all ghosts, we can move in and out of

everything. You should know that, Peter," said Mr. Smorge.

Clara jumped in and told Mr. Smorge that Peter had been living in the land of the living humans, and was not too familiar with ghost attitudes.

"Well, we will have to work on that," said Mr. Smorge.

He then asked for the children's tickets, and when he saw the golden tickets, his eyes grew large.

"Where did these come from?" said Mr. Smorge.

The children explained, and immediately Mr. Smorge wanted to buy them, but they were not for sale; none of the children were willing to part with their tickets. When Mr. Smorge got to Jamyra and her friends, they just had regular tickets and Mr. Smorge told them that they were only on an hour's pass, and if they had the golden tickets that they would be able to stay as long as they wanted. Jamyra got upset and demanded that Millie give her ticket to her, but Peter jumped in and told Jamyra to get lost and Millie would not give up her ticket. Jamyra gave Millie an evil look and walked off.

"I will get you, Millie Spoon," said Jamyra.

Mr. Smorge explained to the children that whose names are on the golden tickets are the only ones who can enter on that card; so there was no need for Jamyra to get all upset. Millie would not give her the golden ticket.

Nevertheless, the children were happy that they were going to the Wacky Fun Factory.

"Come on, step right up, kids," said Mr. Smorge.

The children ran up the stairs and onto the carpet. A great big golden door opened like the wings of a bird. Jamyra was the first in line; she handed the attendant her ticket, and was first through the doors. Then the remaining children followed. Inside, the children got on a moving red train, and the inside of it was nice and clean. The outside was candy apple red with shiny metal silver outlining everything.

The children could hear the "choo-choo", and they watched as the train pulled away from the station. Then they were lost in the clouds and couldn't see anything; the academy was nowhere in sight. It was as if Peter and his classmates went into a time warp. The train catered to children and families; it had pink carpet, the interior walls were made of candy, and the ceiling was painted to look like a big bowl of chocolate pudding. It was so good; Zack was tempted to lick the walls! That was, until Mr. Smorge came by and tapped him on the head.

"Ouch! That hurt," said Zack.

"It was supposed to," said Mr. Smorge, as he kept a better eye on the children.

Peter and his classmates could hear people talking, but didn't know where it was coming from. So, Peter made everyone be quiet so he could pinpoint where the voices were coming from. He put his ear to the wall, and heard the voices again.

"It's coming from the wall!" he said.

The others rushed over and began to listen; they couldn't believe that the walls were talking, but they were. Ben got in closer and removed a cookie display from the wall, and then peeled back the candy wallpaper. What he saw was unbelievable; there were tiny little people living in the walls!

They were going about their daily lives as if everything was normal. The other children jumped over to see the tiny people. Then Mr. Smorge came by, but the children were so intrigued with their new finding that they didn't notice him behind them.

"They are called Toonies," he said.

The children jumped away from the hole, and went back to their seats; blaming everything on Ben. But, Mr. Smorge just chuckled and walked off.

"What are the Toonies?" asked Jamyra.

Mr. Smorge shouted back, "They are the oil that keeps this train moving to the Wacky Fun Factory."

The children loved this adventure, and all the experiences they were having. Servers dressed in candy costumes began to bring them treats and snacks. Peter and his friends gobbled down the desserts and fruit snacks, but he couldn't help looking out the window. He noticed that the train was flying through the air!

"This is impossible," he said.

"What?" asked the others.

Peter pointed out that the train was flying.

"Oh! How cool is that?" said Clara.

Off into the sky the train went like a big red rope winding through the air; while the children's faces were pushed up against the glass, looking out to see the skies. The red train flew through a burst of cotton candy clouds, all in different colors; there were blue, pink, red, black, purple and many more. The smell of candy filled the train; the children could almost taste the candy.

The train went down tunnels made of candy canes, and flew through waterfalls made of milk; the entire land seemed to be made of candy. This was truly a wacky fun ride. Down on the ground, the children noticed Ferris wheels, rides galore, and an "all you can eat" candy sign. The children began to jump up and clap.

Then a voice came on the train, "Quiet down, you

brats!" it was Mr. Smorge.

But Peter and his friends did not care; they just wanted to have the time of their lives, they could hardly keep still until the ride stop. As they were coming in for a landing, golden belts came out of the seats and strapped the children in.

"Welcome to the Wacky Fun Factory," said a voice on the speaker.

The children once again shouted and clapped, but this time they were not told to keep quiet. As soon as the golden belts release the children, they were up in the air and out of their seats waiting to un-board the train. Then little elves came on board with candy balloons and large lollipops. The elves were two feet tall and cuddly; they had on the golden Wacky Fun Factory cast member badge, and colorful uniforms. They began to sing the Wacky Fun Factory song.

"Oh! Welcome to our world of joy, a world of toys for girls and boys; we welcome you to our land of dreams, and milky streams; with candy lands and little ant farms," (singing).

When the song was over, everyone began to clap and couldn't wait to un-board. Peter was the most excited of all his friends. The world of Baja was new to him, and he

wanted to experience every minute of it.

Then one of the elves came and announced, "Everyone with a golden pass step this way."

Peter and his friends quickly stepped right on up. The short, stout little elf looked up at Peter and his friends, and scanned their golden passes over and over with the magical glasses that popped out of his head. On the inside of his glasses the word "authentic" floated off the ticket and onto his eyes.

"These are authentic, let them go in," said the elf.

But Jamyra, Michael, Steve, and Sam had to stay back; they only had a regular pass. Once again, Jamyra got upset and turned the elf into a block of ice. For this disruption, she was quickly handed over to the Wacky Fun Factory security guards, and sent back to Waldorf Academy.

The guards were the most splendid thing Peter has ever seen. They walked around with golden shields that had different card symbols on them. One group was the ace of hearts, and another came by that read the king of spades. These guards never smiled or let their guard down. Their big helmets covered their faces and all one could see were their lips moving. Jamyra went kicking and screaming, as usual.

"What an embarrassment," said Clara.

The children then got a lecture on how to behave in public, by the senior elf. The speech went on and on, until the children were nodding off asleep, and then the elf stopped talking.

"Okay, kids, this way," the elf pointed the children into the special magical cart that was only for people with the golden pass.

Peter and his friends were excited, and then they got into a bubble gum pink cart that was driven by a large pink fluffy monkey. He had on a chauffeur's hat and a tight jacket. Peter was amazed to see the size of such a creature. The monkey chauffer greeted his passengers, and opened the door for them. The bubble gum cart was amazing inside. First, on the outside it was a shinny pink, and that carried into the inside. The interior smelled like bubble gum, and the seats were soft and cushiony plush. The mats on the floor were also made from the same type of gum. The children piled into the cart, and watched as it took off.

"Hold onto your golden tickets, you will need them," said the driver.

The children held their tickets tightly, put them into their pockets, and latched them with their buttons. Now it was time for them to enjoy themselves. First stop was the

Blue Mountain. The children jumped out, and off they went running. Blue Mountain was the place everyone wanted to be, it was made up of different levels of surfing, an easy, medium, hard, and very hard.

Peter and his friends were first in line because they had the golden tickets; so they got special treatment throughout the day at Wacky Fun Factory. In line, Peter and his friends chose the medium surfing level. They put away their bags and changed after meeting up on the slope. They ran to the first wave.

Blue Mountain was spectacular; there were large surfing waves, water so blue and crystal clear, and the medium level was so big that it could hold ten thousand surfers at one time. Peter and his friends were given special boards, each fit one of the children's personalities. Millie got a board that was all white with a big green bear engraved on the front, and it talked to her.

"Cool," said Millie.

Peter got an orange board with a fiery red outline. It was engraved with a lizard that also talked. Clara got a blue board that had little white elves that all talked. Robert got a black board that shot out different color stars, and Zack got a purple board that turned into a little submarine. Nicholas got a surfboard that was grey

and it shot water up into the air like a water hose. And lastly, Ben got a yellow board that made big giant bubbles in the water. The first water bubble that he made was so huge that it caused a big tidal wave, but no one seemed to mind.

Everyone was there to have fun, and since very few people get a golden pass, the children were more celebrities in their own rights. Peter was amazed to see all the different kinds of people and ghosts in the Wacky Fun Factory. There were people with fur, there were monkey people, there were small elves, there were reptile people, people that were half man half animal, there were visitors who looked like real ghosts, and so forth. Peter's mouth dropped open as he saw all the different groups of people living in harmony together and having a great time.

"Close your mouth or you'll get flies," said Zack.

Peter and his friends began to chuckle and then they took off to Blue Mountain. Peter could not get over the beauty of the mountain; the large palm trees, the giant birds that flew overhead, and the real lava volcano that oozed out green slime gum. It was great to be a kid in the land of the Wacky Fun Factory.

There were thousands of people in the water, swimming and surfing, and just having a jolly old good time. Peter

and his friends jumped into the water; they were all ready to surf. Pigeons came on a board surfing by. Clara's board began to talk and tell her how to surf. She was excited to hear her board talking, and put it up closer to her ear. The image talking was like a 3-D hologram. It told Clara and her friends to hit the waves, and so they did all.

The children began to surface. Robert's black surfboard shot out stars, and the children in the water began to try and catch them. Zack turned his surfboard into a submarine and went under water where he saw large sea snakes with golden crowns on their heads, large plants that flourished on the bottom and blinked in many different colors and then shot the colors into the air causing great fireworks. Every time this happened, the crowd would cheer and jump up to catch the falling colors.

Millie's board had a green bear, and when she touched it, the hologram awoke and took her by the hands; and began to surf with her. Peter's lizard hologram also came off of his board, and began to teach him how to surface; the two went flying through the air and riding the big waves.

"Weeeeeeeeee," said Peter.

Meanwhile, Clara was followed by her army of hologram elves that came off of the surfboard to surf with her, and Nicholas programmed his surfboard to shoot water ten to

twenty feet in the air. The crowd went crazy, the children had the entire park having more fun than normal, and Ben had his surfboard making giant water bubbles that burst in the air and water splashed all over the park. They created giant surfing waves.

The children were having the time of their lives, but a few of their classmates were extremely jealous and felt that Peter, Clara, Millie, Robert, Ben, Zack, and Nicholas were having a much better time than they were. So Sam and Steve decided that they would steal two of the golden passes from their classmates and go through the park enjoying all the free things that they were getting.

While Peter and the rest of his classmates were having fun, Steve and Sam went into the boys' restroom and took Peter and Robert's golden passes. Sam was the first to break into Peter's locker, and then he helped Steve to break into Robert's and not be seen. Steve let his foot grow large, and then give off an odor that was out of this world. The stench knocked out anyone who was at the door for a minute. This made them almost invisible, because when Steve's foot let off an odor, it was always followed by a green misty foam cloud, and the two could hide in the stink cloud. The two boys were happy that they had pulled off this heist, and began to give each other their secret

handshake. Everywhere the two boys went, the stench was knocking out people for a minute.

"Sam, I am so glad you are immune to my toe jam," said Steve.

"No, I am not immune; I am holding my breath," said Steve as the two boys went laughing down the sidewalk of the park.

The first place they stopped to use their golden passes was Blackberry's Ice Cream Shop, one of the largest shops in Baja. This was where tiny dwarfs made ice cream for the park attendees; and the two boys ordered ten scoops of blackberry ice cream, a yummy ice cream that was coated with black chocolate and red strawberries. The ice creams were over a foot tall, and Sam and Steve ate and ate until the ice cream began to melt all over their arms in the hot sun. The two boys had ice cream in their hair and all over their faces; with the golden passes, they were treated like royalty.

Their next stop was the Browler Hole, which was a prehistoric town lost in a time warp that had been invaded by the human species. The town consisted of large holes, and in those large holes were different types of entertainment. There were plenty for the visitors to do; the town was untouched by time, it was perfect in every

way. Fresh breezes, tall trees that ascended into the heavens, rocks that had different gods and spiritual leaders carved into them, and tall statues made of wood and stone. Everyone in the Browler Hole lived in harmony, with cobblestone streets and flowers that sang and sprayed fragrances into the air.

Browler Hole was built by small pezzers, which were small two foot high red dwarfs. Their skin glowed with the Baja symbols and was covered in mud because they were diggers; they dug holes for a living. The pezzers were very kind to mankind, and in return for their protection and kindness, mankind was allowed to stay and live with the pezzers. This land was immaculate; there was no trash on the streets, the entire surroundings were clean and tidy.

There were millions of tiny houses made of straw and mud; there were also life-sized shops and entertainment made for the visitors. This side of the park was very exclusive, and only members with a golden pass could enter. The two boys showed their golden passes and were immediately allowed into Browler Hole. The place itself was another park within a park. It was huge and had acre upon acre of land; Sam and Steve couldn't believe that they got into this exclusive park. The two boys began to make fun of Peter and his friends; laughing about how they would find

out that their golden passes were missing.

Browler Hole had a large watering hole; this was where the prehistoric fish and animals were seen. For the first time, the boys could see a bushel cat. It was being held down by ten hunters; it must have been at least two thousand pounds with a fluffy brown and white coat, paws the size of moving carts, and long tusks that curled up in the air. This animal was a cross between a cat, an elephant, and a pig.

Sam and Steve ran up to see the creature; this was their first time laying eyes on such a magnificent beast. The lines were long, and Sam and Steve could not see too well; it was too bad that in here everyone had a golden pass. So, there was no special treatment. Nevertheless, Sam and Steve waited their turns to touch the creature. It was soft and fluffy, its fur blew in the wind, and the creature was very docile. The boys were allowed to hug and take pictures of themselves with the animal.

But, the really fun part of Browler Hole was riding the "Goo Ride". It was a long slippery tar mud slide that slid the visitors for miles, up and down, through hoops and turns. The only thing needed for this ride was a tough bathing suit. Sam and Steve jumped in line and put the golden passes in their pockets; they were ready for the

slipping to begin.

Once in the line, each visitor was drenched in the goo to make slipping easier. Sam and Steve accepted the goo, and were thrilled to have black goo slime all over themselves. But, some of the parents in the park was too dainty to get dirty, and so were fine with having a great time with their children without going on the ride.

Sam and Steve were having the time of their lives. Down the slide they went, slipping and turning; their entire bodies drenched in black goo. This was a never-ending ride that kept on going and going. The boys slid through rings of goo, then they went sliding down a steep mountain into a puddle of goo. Up and down turns, through and over hills; the screams of the boys were the sign that they were having fun. Steve and Sam were truly excited when they slid through different colors of goo; first there was blue, then yellow, then red.

"Boy, this is fun!" shouted Sam as he slid by Steve.

After about an hour sliding and playing in the goo, Sam and Steve got cleaned up and headed for Wally World, their elite status as golden pass members allowed them access to many of the exclusive areas of the park.

"Off to Wally World," shouted Steve.

The two boys were picked up in a shinning black flying

carpet transportation that seated eight. The red carpet was laid out for the boys in the form of steps. One by one, the boys climbed until they were at the very top of the ride. In they jumped and showed their passes to the driver. A little tiny old man was the driver, and it seemed as if he could hardly see; he wore thick eye glasses that made his eyeballs magnified even bigger. Steve and Sam were a little nervous of the old guy driving them, and began to tease the gentleman.

"Hey, old man, get us there safe, all right!" said Sam.

But the driver never answered and spitefully slammed his foot on the pedal. Off the carpet ride flew, knocking Sam and Steve on their butts. The driver began to chuckle hysterically, while avoiding trees and huge flying bird.

"Off to Wally World," said the driver.

Sam and Steve were too busy hiding on the floor of the ride, fearing for their lives as the driver missed trees and birds by mere inches.

Meanwhile, at the Blue Mountain water hole, Peter and his remaining classmates had had enough fun and were ready to move on. They turned in their surfboards and headed to the guest area to see where they could go next. The next place was Wally World, a land that was describe on the map as ten million feet up, and the only way to get there was

by the magic carpet ride. The land was said to be the home of giants and their families; no humans had ever lived on that land.

The map talked about the beautiful lagoons, and ribbon colored skies. There was much to do in Wally World; there were pit fights to watch, giant vs. giant, and there were sky rides where each person saddled up a fly fish and took to the skies. The first fish and its rider to cross the line would win a great prize.

To Peter, this all sounded interesting. Little did he know that Robert's and his passes were gone. Peter and his friends had no idea of what was in store for them. As the children left Blue Mountain and proceeded on their way to the changing room, Michael casually walked over and began snickering at Peter and his friends.

"Where are you lovely folks going next?" said Michael, as he laugh louder and louder.

"We're going to Wally World," said Clara.

Peter invited Michael along, but he wanted to go somewhere else and turned down the offer.

"You might not be going either," said Michael as he splashed Peter and his friends with water from his wings.

"Oh, you are just jealous," said Zack.

Peter noticed that Michael was by himself and wondered

where his other partners in crime were. Things began to look fishy, but Peter left Millie and Clara to head to the changing room with the boys. Suddenly, a loud scream was heard, and everyone ran into the hallway.

"My golden pass is missing!" said Robert.

Someone had stolen Robert's golden pass. Everyone checked their passes, and Peter was missing his pass too. He sat down on a bench and put his face in the palms of his hands; he was clearly upset. His hair began to turn from orange to deep reddish, and it stuck up as if it was ready to shoot out fire.

"I knew Michael was acting strange. He knows who has our passes," said Peter.

Clara and Millie heard the commotion and came running. At this time, the news had traveled in the hallways. Clara and Millie were shocked to find out that Robert and Peter's golden passes were missing. So, after the children got dressed, they walked up to the Wacky Fun Factory guard and reported their passes missing. In the world of Wacky Fun Factory, this was a big deal; the sirens went off all through the park, and the clouds in the sky turned gray and gloomy. The guards and the park officials took this very seriously, which surprised the children.

One by one, a different guard came up to the children

and asked them to explain their story. Peter and his friends told the same story over and over again; until Peter got frustrated with all the questioning, as if he and Robert were the ones who stole the passes! But the guards cleared them and summoned Mr. Smorge.

"I knew you kids would be trouble," said Mr. Smorge.

But Peter explained to Mr. Smorge that Sam and Steve had stolen their passes. Suddenly, Mr. Smorge summoned the great searcher of the skies to locate Sam and Steve. A big face appeared in the clouds that looked mystifying and strange. Every time the voice spoke, his words formed in clouds that came crashing down onto the children. The voice had a loud thunderous voice.

"Who dares spoil the people's fun?" asked the voice.

"Sam and Steve," shouted Clara, as she was pulled back by Mr. Smorge.

"That is no way to request the great searcher's help," said Mr. Smorge as he hid tiny little Clara behind him.

He explained to the great searcher that two golden passes were missing, and that one belonged to the boy king Peter Carrot-Top.

"Not *the* Peter Carrot-Top," said the voice.

"Oh yes! This is the one," said Mr. Smorge.

Then the great searcher of the sky made search dogs

out of clouds, and sent them forth to sniff out Sam and Steve. The cloud dogs were like hounds; they were wild and began running through the air looking for their targets.

"Woo, they are some big dogs," said Robert.

As the cloud dogs took off in the air, they were made of clouds so huge that the entire park could see them and thought it was a show. Little did they know that a pair of thieves was on the loose. The crowd began to clap as the dogs took off in search of their prey. Peter and his friends were very upset and explained that they all wanted to go to Wally World. But, because Peter had no golden pass, they were being forced to stay put.

"Well, I think I can pull some strings," said Mr. Smorge.

The children jumped up screaming and hopping with joy.

"Calm down, you little brats, I don't want people to think I am nice," said Mr. Smorge.

"But you are," said Millie.

Suddenly, the red carpet ride came swooshing down to pick up the children. Peter and his friends had a look of relief and excitement on their faces; they all hopped in the ride one by one. As Peter looked over to the right, he saw Michael standing all alone.

"Would you like to go?" said Peter.

"I do not need your charity," said Michael.

Deep down, Michael really wanted to go, but his pride got the best of him.

"Don't worry about him," said Robert.

But Peter was a different kind of person; if he had fun, he wanted everyone to have fun. Whether they were his friend or not, Peter loved everyone. But Michael was rude and stubborn and didn't want to go. So Peter and his friends pulled off and never looked back once. The children were now on their way to Wally World, a land of dreams and fantasy. The carpet ride went up into the air, flying into the unknown. The children peeked out of the window and looked at all the beauty of the Wacky Fun Factory.

From up high in the air, they could see how the amusement park worked. It was hitched together with gold and steel pipes all through the land. Workers were coming and going through secret tunnels buried deep in the sands. The park itself was built in a clear bubble that was made of thick glass. To the children, this was amazing and beautiful.

The children had forgotten about Sam and Steve for a minute, and focused on the beauty of the park. Up in the air the carpet ride flew, dancing around the trees in the air, ascending and then descending, making the children

hold onto their seats. The carpet ride was a true ride in itself. The children loved it; they were cheering and clapping for the driver.

"Peter, did you know your mother grew these plants?" said the driver.

The children looked around and saw the huge plants crawling up the side of the ride. These plants moved with the motions of snakes; they were quick and fast, and that frightened the children for a minute, until one of the plants got close to the glass and began to lick out its tongue like a dog. The children began to laugh and waved back to the plants as they slowly disappeared into the clouds.

"No, I did not know my mother made these plants, sir," said Peter.

The driver went on to tell Peter that all of the plants all over Baja were made by his mother, that Jane had the power of the green thumb. Peter sat back and admired his mother's work and gave a compliment to her.

"Yes, my mother is sooooo cool," said Peter as the rest of the children laughed.

The ride suddenly took a turn up into a large beanstalk, where the children saw fairies and tiny elves with wings gathering sap in a bucket. The creatures waved

to Peter and his friends.

"What are they doing?" said Ben.

"Just gathering sap and stalk for their family," said the driver.

Peter and his friends were amazed to see such interactions going on with species that they had never seen before. These fairies and elves were so small, about two inches in height, so it took a swarm of them to collect the sap. On their wings, the symbols of Baja glowed, and with all of them in a group, they lit up the otherwise dark stalk.

"Oh, they are so cute and precious," said Millie.

The driver looked back in his mirror and saw that the children were having a good time, and he just smiled and chuckled at how much the children were learning and enjoying themselves. The driver then sped up, and the carpet ride got faster and faster; up and away the ride flew into the air. The children's seatbelts began to tighten. The ride flew up into the air like a rocket, all the children could see were different colored clouds of dust; there were red, blue, green, orange and black dust clouds that glittered in the skies. It was so colorful that there was nothing else the children could see. But, the driver had taken this route many times and knew where he

was going.

"Hang on, we have a thunder cloud coming," said the driver.

The ride began to shake vigorously back and forth faster and faster. The children were thrown around in the ride like rag dolls; the seat belts gave out and Peter and his friends went floating around in the ride.

"Hold on to something," said the driver.

The driver did not look panicked at all; apparently, he had been through this before. But his main concern was the children. The thunder cloud was a big burst of sparkling dust that grew into a huge comet ball and burst every now and then, causing a new thunder cloud to form. As the children held on to a pole in the ride, and each other, they couldn't help but look at the magnificent thunder cloud. Even though it was dangerous, it was beautiful, and when the cloud finally burst, colorful sparkles went everywhere, and out of the thunder came a small group of tiny rainbow colored bears. There had to be millions of these tiny little bears. They jumped out of the cloud, continuously spreading the sparkling dust through the air. These tiny bears were giggling and laughing as they went around starting thunder clouds.

"They might be cute; but they're dangerous," said the

driver.

"Well, why do we need them?" said Zack.

The driver explained that without these cloud bears there would be no thunder clouds, and without thunder clouds there would be no fresh air. The driver then pointed to the right and showed the children that the colorful sparkles from the clouds sucked up all the impurities in the air and kept the air in Baja, and many worlds, safe enough to breathe.

"Wow that is pretty neat," said Peter.

After a few seconds of aftershock tidal waves, everything soon began to calm down, and the children and their driver were back on route to Wally World.

"Few more minutes and we're in Wally World," said the driver.

The children began to clap and whistle, they were happy that they would finally be there. As they got closer, they began to see huge giants sliding down beanstalks; some were with their little ones, and others were going to work. They had lunch boxes, tool belts and working hats. These giants were huge and green; their green skin glowed with the symbols of Baja; their tiny green ears stood above their heads, and their big blue eyes were so penetrating to look at. These were some of the most beautiful creatures of

Baja.

The ride swayed over for the children to get a better look at the giants, and all they could see was a huge eye looking at them. Millie began to scream and Clara covered her mouth.

"You don't want to scare them, do you?" said Clara.

Millie shook her head no, and Peter went up to the window of the ride and began to wave at the huge creature, and it waved back.

"Did you see? He waved at me," said Peter. He was so excited that he could hardly contain himself. "Are we there yet?"

"Just a few more minutes," said the driver.

The ride soared up into the air with a small burst of help from a rocket plant. The plants were designed to burst into the air every few seconds, and off the children went. Their ride was flying into the air, and they were enjoying every minute of it. As they were going up, the children began to see a bright hole in the sky. The sun was shining bright, and they could see a large opening up ahead. When the ride reached it, they landed on a long silver-lined runway in the clouds. There were park workers ready to help the children get off.

"Welcome to Wally World," said one of the workers, as

the children filed out of the ride one by one.

"Have a lot of fun," said the driver as he pulled off, waving goodbye to the children.

Peter and his friends were all excited to be in another part of Wacky World; and from all they had seen, this place kept getting stranger and stranger by the minute. But, the children were enjoying every minute of it. However, not far from Peter's mind was the fact that Steve and Sam stole his and Robert's golden passes.

As the children were walking to explore the park, they noticed the pack of cloud dogs holding something in their mouths like a rag doll. Then Peter saw Sam's fart balls as he tried to get away from the dogs; they were coughing because Sam's fart balls were unpleasant. The odor made the dogs water at the eyes, but they still held onto Sam and Steve.

People were running from the outrageous smell; the air in the park turned a grayish green, and Peter and his friends quickly covered their noses and ran toward the commotion. As Peter and his friends approached, they saw Steve kick off his shoes and grow his feet until they were the size of the giants and let out his toe jams. Now the park smelled like fart balls and toe jams! The park security was called, and they came marching in as if they

were going off to war. One of them commended the cloud dogs for catching their fugitives. The dogs began to wag their tails as clouds of puff went everywhere, and then the guards threw the dogs large pieces of bones. Each dog had a bone to himself and they ran off, leaving Steve and Sam in the care of the park guards. Peter and his friends ran up to Sam and Steve.

"You jerks, you stole our passes," said Robert as he began to check Sam and Steve's back pockets.

When he found them, he quickly pulled them out of their pockets. The guards quickly confiscated the golden passes, until Mr. Smorge arrived. As he walked in, Millie ran up to him and apologized for her classmates, but he did not want to hear that and told Millie to step aside. Being a huge man around the park, Mr. Smorge stormed down the sidewalks, grabbing Steve and Sam by the ear.

"You two brats, come with me," said Mr. Smorge as he took Sam and Steve into a secret opening in the wall.

Then Mr. Smorge ordered the guards to give Peter and Robert back their golden passes, and after their visit to Wally World they had to return back to Waldorf Academy as soon as possible. Everyone in the park was intimidated by Mr. Smorge, and when he spoke, everyone jumped.

Peter and his friends decided to enjoy what was left

of the day; and what a great day it turned out to be. The giants in Wally World were very pleasant; even though they were huge, they always looked out for the visitors on the ground. Wally World was beautiful; there were thousands of birds in the sky writing letters and words in the air. They even made pictures!

There were also tons of rainbows in the sky that burst with colors and were edible. Peter and his friends began to lick their sleeves and shirts; the rainbow bursts tasted like candy, from strawberries to lemon, even sour apple. The children were having the time of their lives. Even though the day started off rough, it was beginning to look very good.

After the rainbow bursts, the children headed to the candy cave, where they got a golden bucket and were allowed to dig for one of the sweetest candies in the world: "YELLOW MELON". The yellow melon was worth a fortune on the Baja market; it was a hard candy that was yellow on the outside, but on the inside it was sweet melon candy sand.

The children ran into the cave and began to dig with all their might; just a few pieces of yellow melon could bring the children a big allowance back home in Baja. Peter and his friends did more eating than saving, but the little that they saved was well worth it back home. Every time the

giants walked the earth they would open up, and a burst of yellow melon would sprout out of the ground. The visitors would hit the floor as the hard candy sprayed into the air. Once the candy landed, the visitors would fill their buckets to the rim.

After a few hours in the cave, Peter and his friends went on to see the giants' village. This was an eye opening tour for the youngsters; there were big green giants with their little big green families going about their daily duties. Some were carpenters, some were tree pushers, which was the giants going into the fields and pushing over trees to make logs so their entire village could have wood to burn to keep them warm. The giants were also fishermen, guards, teachers and noble men. They greeted the visitors of Wally World with respect and happiness.

The giants and the visitors co-existed without any problems. Peter and his friends were even taken on a beanstalk ride where they were placed on a giant's back, and then the giant would slide down the long beanstalk like a roller coaster.

"Weeeeeee, this is fun," said Peter as he hung on tight to the giant.

The beanstalks were long and strong; the giants could slide down them with ease, but to the children it looked as

if the huge giants were going faster and faster. The beanstalks went through cloud after cloud causing the children to also get a mouthful of clouds and dust, but they did not mind; they were enjoying themselves.

After the beanstalk ride, the children were taken to a feasting table prepared by the giants for the park's visitors. The meal was humongous; one turkey leg was the size of the children! So, it took all of Peter and his friends to eat one of the turkey legs. The giants began to laugh as they saw the guests trying to pick up or eat a turkey leg or other foods. Everything was extra super-sized.

It took Peter and all of his friends just to lift the turkey. He climbed up on a big bowl of fruits and sat on a huge grape as he nibbled at a large strawberry. Then, suddenly, one of the giants picked up the bunch of grapes with Peter stuck on the stems. The crowd began to scream, fearing that the giant would eat Peter.

"Oh! It's okay, I will not eat you little buddy," said the giant as Peter hung on by the stem.

The crowd began to laugh and clapped as the giant put Peter back down.

"Woo! That was cool," said Peter.

"No, it was not, you almost got eaten by a giant," said Millie.

But Peter saw it as an adventure and began to laugh as he shrugged his shoulders at the thought that he could have been eaten.

It was getting late, and the clock began to chime for Peter and his friends. Suddenly, Mr. Smorge arrived and told the children they could only get on one more ride, and then it would be time to go.

"But, there are tons of rides here," said Robert.

"Well, you have to choose one, or your time will run out," said Mr. Smorge.

The children chose to go on the comet ride; because of their golden pass status, they were moved up to first place in the line. The children were jumping with excitement, and couldn't wait to go on the ride. The other visitors looked on as the children with the golden passes ran through the line, but most of the onlookers wanted to get a look at Peter, the boy king who would save Baja.

People began to look and point; Peter and his friends were so amazed to see how many people from all over Baja, and the many galaxies, had heard of Peter and knew who he was. At this time, Peter was a local celebrity, but his friends kept him grounded, and reminded him that he was there to protect Baja and not for the fame and glory.

Clara grabbed Peter by the hand and they ran into the

comet ride, leaving the visitors behind stirring. The first cart was open and available for Peter and his friends. The ride began to start; the room became a misty black, it was so dark the children could not see their hands in front of their faces. Then a loud thundering noise echoed from the back of the ride.

Suddenly, the children were startled by bright lights. They began to open their eyes, and when they looked down they were up on top of a solar moon. The moon was black and green with yellow and white rings. The ride then shot like a rocket into the air, and off the children went. The kids began to scream from the excitement they were having from the twists and the turns of the ride; the visual effects were magnificent.

The children's senses were telling them that they were on a real rocket, and they were experiencing a real deep space voyage. But, in reality, the children were on a simulation ride in a big glass ball. Millie and Clara held onto Peter as the ride got faster and scarier. Zack was screaming so much with his mouth open that spit was flying all through the air.

"Watch your slobber," said Ben as he wiped Zack's spit off of his face.

Yet, a little saliva did not spoil the children's last

ride; they continued to have fun and were grateful to get a second chance. The comet ride went through the air like a speeding rocket; it flew through the space rings. Then there was a simulation of the comet ride being chased by a space ship. Peter and his friends began to scream as the ride got faster and faster.

As Peter looked back at their chasers, he noticed that it was the same black hooded figure that he had been seeing for some time now. He began to rub his eyes and opened them again. Soon the hooded figure was gone, and Peter knew that something was wrong, and as soon as he got back to Waldorf he would be investigating it with his friends.

For now, Peter blocked out the hooded figure and continued to have fun with his new best friends. Finally, the ride was over and at the exit of the ride Mr. Smorge and his team of helpers were waiting for the children in the shiny red train.

"All aboard," said Mr. Smorge.

No one wanted to leave, and they begged Mr. Smorge for a few more hours, but the answer was no.

"I have to get you kids back to your studies," said Mr. Smorge as he made the children load into the train one by one.

Their sad faces did not put a damper on Mr. Smorge

heart; he chuckled at the extent the children were going just to stay a few more hours. But, he was a tough man and did not fall for the sad puppy-eyes that kids make to their parent and older adults. The children boarded the train and waved goodbye to all the people looking on. These children were now fan favorites everywhere, but then Michael came crashing in, almost missing the ride. It was a good thing that he had wings to catch up before the train went through the secret tunnel.

Nevertheless, on the way back home, Michael never said a word. He was upset that he did not get to go to the other theme parks like the rest of his classmates, and he began to sulk all the way back home. Because the children were so good, Mr. Smorge let the little servant elves bring the children gifts and lots of snack foods.

The children had t-shirts that said "look at me, I went to Wally World" or "I am a golden pass member", they also got fruit baskets that were made of giant fruits, which was one big apple that was giant-sized. They were built into a fruit basket to hold many more fruits. Then there were candy baskets, robotic toys, and because Michael was a part of Sam and Steve's stunt, he was limited to his gifts. But Mr. Smorge still made sure that Michael got a gift too. That was the first time in a long time that

anyone had ever seen a smile on Michael's face. He lit up when Mr. Smorge called his name for his gift basket. After a long day of fun, the children fell asleep and drifted off. Then a loud horn blew and woke them up.

"We are here," said one of the elf servants as he held the horn in his hands.

"Please don't blow it again, my ears are ringing," said Michael.

But the elf gave Michael attitude, and blew the horn even louder, right in his ear. Michael went running off the train. Peter and his friends gave Mr. Smorge a big hug and thanked him for the trip. Mr. Smorge hid his emotions and pretended he did not care, but the tough exterior soon melted away, and he began to blush and waved goodbye to the children as they walked down the royal red carpet.

The children stayed on the sidewalk until the red carpet rolled up and the train had disappeared into the abyss. Peter and his friends were so excited by so much fun that they'd had that they forgot about the moon duties they had to do. But, waiting on the sidewalk was Captain Red. He was a no nonsense behavior teacher; he wore a patch over his left eye, and his short red hair shone in the sun. He had an athletic build, and wore army boots and khaki pants and a jacket. He carried a spider monkey on his shoulders

and a whip in one had. All the children at Waldorf Academy were afraid of this man and never wanted detention with him. Waiting on the side of Captain Red were Jamyra, Steve, Larry, and Sam.

"Who is that?" asked Peter.

"It is your worst enemy," said Clara.

Captain Red sent his spider monkey to gather up the children. The monkey jumped off Captain Red's shoulder and onto the ground. The monkey began to twist and turn, causing spider webs to form; it then shot out spider webbing from its hands, and the web began to bind the children together, shaking and pushing them into one group. Michael tried to fly away, but the spider monkey sprayed its web into the air and pulled Michael down. He was very upset and began to kick and shout, and for this type of behavior, he got even more moon duties.

"Get that nasty creature, its messing up my beautiful wings," said Michael.

Peter and his classmates were covered in spider webs; they couldn't move or talk, all they could do was listen to what Captain Red had to say, and it was not good.

"Listen, all you brats; it's time for your moon duties. I will have no misbehaving or escaping, or I will send Jasper, my spider monkey after you," said Captain Red.

All of the children were dreading this moment, because those who knew Captain Red, knew that he was not one to be toyed with. He was strict and stern with the children; even some parents thought that he was too harsh. But, Waldorf Academy demanded discipline, and that's why most of the wealthiest and admired children attend the school.

"This is not good for my first day at school," said Peter as he mumbled through the spider web to Clara.

Captain Red ordered the spider monkey to let the remaining children loose, and sent Peter and his classmates to quickly get changed into their cleaning gear. He and his friends had to put all the gifts and presents they got away, and all their book bags into a secure locker; then they had to get dressed in one of the ugliest uniforms in all of Baja. They were dark old plumber's overalls that were stinky and dirty. Then the children were to form a line in the center of the school where everyone could see them. One by one, the children marched in a straight line with Captain Red leading, and shouting. "Left, right, left, right."

Peter and his classmates were not happy at all, and many of them were mumbling and complaining that they were being humiliated in front of the entire school. Captain Red led the children through the center of the school, where

their schoolmates taunted and teased them. The children pointed at Peter and his friends; as the entire school began to laugh louder and louder. Peter was embarrassed, his cheeks began to turn red, but he was still excited to see what moon duties were all about. Jamyra and Larry were the least cooperative in the bunch, and for this they had to stay longer and clean more moons.

"Oh you never learn, Jamyra; keep your mouth shut or you'll get us all in trouble," said Clara as Jamyra acted out in the center of the school.

"That tantrum is going to get you nowhere," said Captain Red.

Jamyra finally stopped acting up and got in the straight line, hanging her head low so that no one in her classes could see her face. After the total embarrassment, the children were led into a damp storage room where they were allowed to get all their cleaning supplies. One by one, they grabbed up their brooms, mops, and buckets. They had polishing cloths and scrub brushes.

"Here, Peter, get some gloves, you're gonna need them," said Ben.

Reality was now sinking in for Peter that he was going to do some long manual labor. Nevertheless, Peter faced his conscience and was ready for his punishment. After the

children got their cleaning supplies, they were taken to the transport room where they were suited up into long white overall-type protective clothing. Captain Red also suited up, and when the children were done, he led them through a long tunnel that never seemed to end. But, in reality, the children were already walking in space; all that was protecting them was a dark tunnel, because Baja was built on the outskirts of space and time.

"How far are we going?" asked Peter as he whispered to Zack.

"Not too far, we are already there," said Zack.

He then explained to Peter that they were in a secret tunnel that transported cleaners to the moon. Many years ago, when Baja was built, they made a promise to the surrounding neighbors in space that they would keep the moon clean, to shine light on their worlds. Without the moon being clean, most of the surrounding planets, including Baja would die in darkness, and all the plant life and ghost spirit life would be lost.

Soon Peter understood the importance of moon cleaning, and that it was a great way for the children to appreciate their world. Then the walls of the tunnel opened up and folded back, leaving the teacher and his students in space. It was so beautiful and remarkable; there were thousands of

stars flying by the faces of the children in slow motion. Inside, the children could see little worlds, each star held a different world and different species.

Peter was mesmerized by the beauty of the tiny stars that held the big worlds inside of them. He tried to catch a star, but it floated by. There were also hundreds of moons, and on the moons were workers cleaning them. The workers waved to say hello to Captain Red and his dentioneers; they all waved back. Peter could see the workers cleaning and scrubbing; they were putting hard work into cleaning the moons. When they were done, the moon shone so brightly that Peter and his friends had to put down the visors on their space suits. By doing this, Peter could truly see the beauty of the moons, and why it was important to clean them.

The workers got into every crook and cranny, making sure that each moon was spotless. Peter turned around in awe of his surroundings to gaze upon a thick black substance coming toward him. He began to run back toward his friends; the black substance looked like the hooded monster he had seen before. The way it moved through space, the shapes it formed as it move; Peter was really afraid, until Clara explained to him that it was more likely a garbage collector. It picked up all the dead moon bugs, and

all the dirt they cleaned and scrapped off the moon. This moving phantom was there to protect the areas of space; it ate all the waste and everything floating into space. Peter was very inquisitive, and wanted to touch it, but he was quickly stopped by Captain Red.

"Don't do that, boy, you'll be dragged into space and eaten."

Peter quickly yanked his hands back and kept them to his side. Because this was his first time on moon duties, Captain Red and Peter's classmates explained all the do's and don'ts to him. He sucked it up like a sponge.

Peter wanted to know everything there was about moon duties; he found it very fascinating. After the black mass disappeared and went somewhere else, Peter began to look around. Space was so beautiful, there were different color moons, like the colors of the rainbow; there were shooting stars and flying space rocks that would burst into a parade of colors and then let off a loud boom with a crackling noise. It was like watching fireworks on a parade. Time in space seemed to shift, and large holes appeared and then closed quickly.

During a few of these episodes, Peter could see many different worlds, and for a minute there he thought that he saw Earth, and his old hometown. As he began to look even

harder, the hole quickly closed up, leaving Peter guessing and wondering what he'd just seen.

"Okay, enough looking, young man; get back to work immediately and I will inspect your work," said Captain Red as he tapped Peter on the shoulder with a long stick and pushed his cleaning bucket into his hands.

Peter was so into what he was looking at that Captain Red's attitude did not faze him. Clara had to shake Peter until he came to, and told him to get to work. But Peter was in such shock at the wonders of space, until he daydreamed into the abyss.

"Snap out of it," said Robert as he also shook Peter.

Then Peter came to. "This is so beautiful."

"So what? Get to work," said Robert.

Peter's classmates laughed at him. He was a little embarrassed, but immediately got to work, while still looking out of the corner of his eyes at all the beauty of space. Peter mumbled under his breathe, "I am so glad to be here."

Captain Red wondered if Peter was going crazy. "Stop talking to yourself, son."

Peter immediately got back to work scrubbing and cleaning the moon of debris and moon bugs. Some of the bugs were disgusting and strange, some had big soccer eyes with

fur all over their bodies; some were covered in dust, and decomposing. The foul odor that came from these creatures was horrendous and gross. But Peter and his friends kept cleaning the moon. Peter soon found out that cleaning the moon was no easy matter, especially when Captain Red was hanging over your shoulders making sure that every nook and cranny was spotless.

Finally, Peter and his friends got a small moon clean; the moon shone where there was once dust and debris. The light was so bright that Peter could see miles into space. He saw how the moon made plants live and grow. A huge black space plant began to grow once the moonlight shone on it. To the children, it was like watching Mother Nature in slow motion. The plant stems rose out of the moon, then the leaves began to grow, and then the petals and so forth; until there was a complete plant.

Suddenly, a big moon bug came out of nowhere and ate the plant and flew away. The children were caught a little off guard; until Captain Red explained to them that that was what Mother Nature was programmed to do, and that was to feed the world. No matter how horrible it looked, everything served a purpose.

The children quickly got back to work on the second moon, and when they were done, Captain Red gave them the

okay to leave. But Jamyra, Steve, Sam, Michael, and Larry all had to stay behind and do extra moon duties. They did not like this, not one bit and put up a big fuss, but they knew the more they complained and the more they acted out; the longer they would have to stay and do a long list of moons, and there were hundreds of moons. So, the remaining children got to work scrubbing and cleaning while Captain Red stood over them watching.

Peter and his friends were free from detention and were on their way back home. School was out and the bell rang; the children were full of excitement and ready to go home. Peter wanted to stay at school, but was worried about his parent fighting the war in the Ambassador Forest. He and his friends met up in "The Center" to board their ride and to say their goodbyes until the next day. Peter explained to Clara how much fun he had had and didn't mind the moon cleaning. Clara began to giggle at everything Peter said, and then the teasing began on the way home.

"Peter and Clara sitting in the tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g," Millie, Nicholas, Zack, Ben and Robert sang.

"Oh! Shut up, you jerks," said Clara as she laughed at the teasing.

Peter and Clara, from that day forward, were the best of friends; and not forgetting the others: Millie, Zack,

Ben, Robert and Nicholas. This group of children became the closet of friends and they never did anything without each other from that day forward. Millie even stopped hanging with Jamyra and all her brat friends; she was glad to find a great group of friend that she could be herself around and was never under Jamyra again. Jamyra was not happy with this, but Millie was, and from this day on Millie and Peter became good friends.

Chapter 11

Off to War - Part 1

Meanwhile, as Peter was in school, his parents and other family members were going to war to save Baja from the hands of Marcus Carrot-Top. Sam was very unhappy at his brother and the fact that he had ruined his family name for years. Yet, deep down inside, Sam truly loved his brother and he was torn between fighting for Baja and fighting his brother. Nevertheless, Sam had to make a huge decision on how he was going to handle the war and the conflict with his brother.

He got the crew up and ready as soon as Peter left for school. Red Fox and Samantha came up with great plans on

how they would attack the wizards in the forest. Meanwhile Sam's father David was building weapon upon weapon, until he got them right. Jane was still practicing her skills to create a deadly plant, if she needed to rely on it. She took out an old jewelry box that was given to her many years ago. It was golden on the outside, engraved with pictures of a large green plant. The colors on the box were so vibrant; it did not even look old. As Jane opened the box, a small beam of light caught her eyes. There was a tiny blue seed the size of a quarter, and it began to hop and jump all over the inside of the box, which was protected by a red velvet cloth.

Jane remembered receiving this box when she was a little girl, after the entire world of Baja had discovered her talents for planting. She was told only to use this blue seed in the event of life or death, and to always protect it and to never let it get in the wrong hands. Even when Jane was on earth, she never let the seed out of her sight. Wherever she went, so did the blue seed, which was called the seed of great destruction.

Jane held the seed up to her eye sight and saw its great beauty. There was no other seed like it throughout the galaxy, and what Jane held in her hands was very powerful. She put the seed in a pouch that was hooked onto

her belt. Jane had now made and gotten all the plants and formulas that she would need on the battlegrounds, and then it was time to go.

The Carrot-Tops and their families said a prayer to the Lord to guide them and keep them safe through their journey, and then the five of them were on their way, along with Oscar the cat.

Dorothy stayed home to wait for Peter when he arrived from school. She kissed her son and husband goodbye and a look of worry began to fill her face. Sam let his mother know that everything would be okay, and if something were to go wrong that she and Peter would have everything they'd need for the rest of their lives. By this time, the tears were falling and Sam began to wipe them from his mother's eyes, letting her know that everything would be okay. To get her mind off of things, she should head down to the toy store and start making toys since Christmas was coming. Dorothy agreed to this and took off.

At this point, there was no turning back; everyone in the group had a huge task ahead of them. First, there were only five of them and they were going to face seven powerful wizards and the unknown Ambassador Forest. Sam wished that at this time he had more men, and as they were leaving the house a huge shadow covered up the sun. At

first, Sam and his family thought that they were under attack, but it was far from the truth.

Up in the air was a large golden balloon, but not just any balloon, one made by the hands of Sam's father. It had the Baja codes and symbols that glowed up and down its sides. The balloon was made more like a floating capsule that hovered in the air; it was equipped with powerful rockets and jet propellers. The balloon was large, but yet so quiet in the air, it was as if the balloon had some type of stealth abilities.

"What is this?" asked Sam to his father.

"Just a little gift I cooked up," said David.

Sam and his family stared at the beauty of the jet for a while; it was large and magnificent. It was built to hold at least one thousand men. David explained to his son that many years ago, before Sam was kicked out of Baja, he developed and built many secret weapons because in a dream he was told that he would be the supplier of the war. At first, David admitted that he did not know what this dream meant, but one of the elders came to him in the dream telling him that destruction was coming and Baja needed to be protected from its enemies.

So, many years later, David had developed many secret weapons and hid them in a tunnel under the mansion. This

was the first time that he had even told Sam about all of his works and the hiding place in Baja. David explained to his son that everything happens for a reason, and that the elders would be protecting them all through the war. Sam nodded his head in agreement, and began to accept the fact that he must now be ready to fight for Baja and the Carrot-Top's name.

David then made a big surprise move and called Samantha Grey to come and take the keys to start the large vessel. Samantha couldn't believe that David was entrusting her to drive it, but what he was teaching his son was how a real leader builds faith in his soldiers. David was now letting Sam know what it takes to be a leader in the war ahead and showing Sam to trust his people to achieve a satisfactory result.

A white light came down as Sam pressed a button to release the winging stairs. Everyone began to load the vessel, when suddenly there was the sound of the loud marching of footsteps and men chanting as if they were going to war. Sam and his teammates stood ready to fight.

As the gates opened, there were at least a few hundred men, all dressed in armor and fighting gear. Oscar began to growl and salivated, letting the intruders know that he was ready and willing to fight to keep his family safe. As the

men came in, they immediately saw that the Carrot-Tops were ready for war. But, they were not there to start a war, but to help them fight it.

These men were David's friends when they were all slaves in the underground, but many of them had turned their back on David and Sam. David had sent out one last plea, and asked the men to join him in the war to save Baja. At first, there was no answer; so David thought that the men were still angry and did not want to help save Baja. After all, Baja had made them slaves; now the same men and women that were slaves were fighting for the world that once enslaved and mistreat them.

David was very surprised to see all of his old friends again; it was like going back in time. David told Oscar to settle down and let the big cat know that these were their allies. David went toward the line and hugged a huge guy; his arms were muscular and solidly built. His head was bald, and his skin was very dark. He had big white teeth that had fangs out the sides. His hazel eyes made him so breathtaking; he was humongous, and the size of his hands could crush a person to death. Around his neck he was adorned in golden jewelry. The only thing he carried was a bow and arrow; the arrows were sharp and long, hanging out of the protected bag. The arrows and the bow glowed with

the symbols of Baja, and his name was Boweloft.

David introduced Boweloft to his family, and then all the rest of the soldiers came marching in. Boweloft explained to David that he was angry at the way Baja had enslaved him like a dog, but found it in his heart to forgive and to come back and help his friend. David was very pleased, and gave Boweloft another big hug.

Boweloft had also convinced the eight hundred women and men to come too, but he was sad to tell David that two hundred of the remaining men and women went to fight on the side of the wizards. David was not surprised, and he already knew the ones who would betray him. But, somewhere in his heart, David was hoping that there would have been a little mercy on their part, and they would have stuck with him through thick and thin. Yet, David was happy to see Boweloft, a man who was an honest leader and a fighter.

Oscar went around sniffing the entire army so that he would be able to track anyone by their scent. The next thing that happened was that the mass of people began to load the vessel one by one.

"Now this is an army," said David to Sam.

"But, father, how many of these men can we truly trust?" said Sam.

"None, you will just have to watch them and take a

chance," said David.

Sam felt as if his job of leader had just gotten a lot harder; he now had eight hundred men and women that he did not know fighting in his army, and he didn't feel as if he could trust any of them. That these were the same friends who had once betray his family filled him with dread, but David let his son know that, in life, there must be a give and take. At this point, they needed all the help they could get, because without these fighters there would be no way that they could take down the wizards and their evil supporters.

Sam agreed with his father, and boarded the vessel with the other fighters. The fighters were from all over the four corners of Baja; many of them made or brought their own weapons, and unlike Sam, many of them already knew what to expect. There were knives, bows and arrows, swords, shields, and every type of weapon imaginable. The crew was ready for a war.

What David did not tell Sam was that he had promised all who joined his army millions of the Carrot-Top fortune. If Sam had known this, he never would have agreed, but David knew that he had to somehow get the attention of Boweloft, since he was the leader and the voice of the underground people. The strategy was very successful.

David knew what it would take to bring out the help that he wanted, but at this time, Sam was too immature in the game of war and did not need to know everything. The hundreds of men and women joining the fight for Baja had all pitched in and load the vessel. One by one, they began to load food, weapons, camping equipment, and all the necessary items that they would need.

Finally, the vessel was loaded; Samantha started the engine and ordered everyone aboard. This was the last call, as the engine started and flames shot from its pipes. Sam gazed upon his home that he was leaving behind a second time, but this time would be different; he was going to prove that his family was innocent for once and for all. Sam now had the look of a warrior in his eyes; he was ready to fight, and there was nothing that would stop him.

Meanwhile, up in front, Samantha was getting a crash course in air training. This was a model vessel that she had never seen before, and David was teaching her how his machine worked.

"You are a brilliant man," said Samantha.

David just smiled at the compliment and continued showing her how the vessel worked. It had the fanciest gadgets, like a talking face to guide her as a second pilot, and screens that the pilot could see everything that

was going on way in the back of the vessel. The inside was inscribed with hieroglyphics and other codes of Baja, which no one knew what they meant. The only people that could interpret new or old codes were the elders, and they were in hibernation.

Codes of Baja were on everything the average citizens buy, from clothing to fabrics, to food. So when David bought all of his materials, the codes were already embedded into the materials of the vessel, and many other things that he made. All of the fighters on the vessel were complimenting the creator; they had never seen anything like this before and were going through it like miners on a search for gold.

"Relax and eat," said Sam.

There was plenty of food to feed the army for days. The soldiers ate and ate until they began to settle down and take a nap. There were songs and music playing in the background as the vessel went up in the air, and they were on their way to the Ambassador Forest.

Jane was very nervous that some of the men on the plane were not as trustworthy as her father-in-law might like to think. So, she shared this distress with her husband; and while the soldiers were asleep, Jane and Sam called a meeting. They all voiced their concerns to David,

and he assured his family that there would be nothing to worry about, that these were good people.

Yet, these were also the people that turned their backs on the Carrot-Top family when they were exiled from Baja. This was the concern of Jane and Sam, but David brushed it off and once again assured his family that he had it under control. However, there was, at times, a look of worry in David's eye. But, this was a chance that they had to take if they wanted to win the war. David was a fighter and a leader, and he saw this situation through the eyes of a leader.

"Sometimes you have to make deals with the devil," said David to his family.

After the brief meeting, everyone went to take a long rest; the Ambassador Forest was miles and miles away. Everyone needed to be well-rested and ready to fight in the morning. Yet, there were a few restless bodies walking through the vessel. Many of them were second guessing themselves and wondering if this war was really worth the risk of losing it all.

When David saw this he gathered up the team and talked about the good times, which he promised would come back again. After a few drinks of wine and a stomach well filled, the vessel of men and women began to shout again,

and their spirits were high to go to war. As Samantha drove the vessel toward the map coordinates, the passengers looked out of the window and stared out on a world they were sworn to protect.

From above, Baja was a mystical place, the long silver and golden vines that reached out to the heavens, courtesy of Jane Carrot-Top. Baja was mystical upon itself, the only place in the galaxy where ghosts could stay alive and make a good life, until they were called to the next level to reach the kingdom of the Creator. The skies began to burst with rainbows that, every once in a while, would attached themselves to a cloud or two.

The sun shone brightly in the afternoon skies, and large dragons flew through the air at the speed of light; gracing the fighters with their wonders. These dragons were called onox's, and they were the protectors of the skies over Baja and beyond. They were also very playful. Many of them came close to the vessel, teasing the passengers to play with them. Sam threw a turkey bone out of the window and watched the dragons chase after it.

Too bad he left out Oscar, because Oscar had become very jealous and wanted his fair share of the human food. So Sam gave in and gave Oscar a big hug and a large turkey bone that he delightfully went into the corner of the room

and ate to his enjoyment. But, not too far in the sky, Samantha noticed a hooded dark creature approaching. Somehow, Sam and Jane had seen this hooded creature or had heard about it, but neither she nor Sam could put their thoughts together.

The creature came playing through the skies on large bats with long white fangs; there must have been a dozen or so of these hideous creatures. Samantha dove the vessel, ducking and dodging the hooded creature. She watched and watched, but was not afraid; somehow she knew that this thing was nothing more than a big bluff.

But others on the ship took the threat very seriously and started to unpack their weapons. The hooded mask man came close to the vessel. No face, eyes or features could be seen, just the eeriness of a ghostly visitor. He ordered the vessel to turn around and not enter the Ambassador Forest. But on a large speaker, Sam told the hooded mask man that they were getting into the forest one way or another.

The masked man was not too happy and demanded the vessel once again turn around, but Samantha never complied, and drove the vessel ever faster. Behind the vessel, the hooded mask man kept up and began to throw some type of sun rays at the vessel. It was built strong and could withstand

the abuse for a little while.

Meanwhile, the men on the vessel began to take out their bows and arrows, and began to shoot at the nasty bats that were flying and bumping into the vessel causing mayhem. These creatures were huge and powerful; they possessed the strength and ability to move through the air twice as fast as their size might make someone think they could.

The fighters on board kept shooting powerful golden arrows at the beasts. Boweloft was at the head of the pack, ordering their fire and every move. Jane began to command her plants to come out of the earth and attack, and so the plants did. They came out with long stems and vines, reaching up to the skies, ready to eat anything in sight, and the big bats were just the right serving. As the bats flew around, bumping and biting the sides of the vessel, Jane's plants came out of the ground like a swarm of bees. These plants were huge and grungy looking; fangs came out of the sides of their petals. They were carnivores, and they wanted all the meat they could find. Because they hid deep below the surface, they had a dusty old color to them; their leaves were dark gray instead of green, and once summoned, these plants destroyed everything in sight.

"Attack!" shouted Jane.

As the plants started eating the large bats, one by one, the plants ran their vines up the sides of the bats and snagged them like fish on a fisherman's hook. The plants sucked and drank the blood of the bats, and chewed up their bones.

Meanwhile, the hooded mask man kept on ordering more bats to attack, but instead of attacking, the bats were outnumbered by the plants that Jane had summoned. One by one, the plants ripped out the hearts and flesh of the bats and munched on their bones. The hooded mask figure flew off on his one remaining bat and shouted, "Stay out of the Ambassador Forest!"

Into the clouds he went, leaving behind the stink of old bat carcasses. All the fighters in the vessel began to cheer and were encouraged by David to keep on fighting. He was a man of words and leadership. Sam admired his father very much and wanted to be just like him; so Sam began to study David to see how to lead an army like he once had.

By the latter part of the day, David had all those who were second guessing themselves filled with pride and joy to be a fighter for their world. The men and women on board were now much more confident that they were doing the right thing. The cheering and eating went on for hours as David and Red Fox went out to walk the vessel to inspect the

damage. It was damaged very badly and was leaking vital fuel that they needed.

The Ambassador Forest was miles away; and to make matters worst, they were soon over the Azul Sea, the most dangerous sea in the universe. It was created by the elders a long, long time ago; to protect the entrance of Baja and its surrounding moons, just like the Ambassador Forest. The Azul Sea was rarely traveled, and those who had dared to take it never returned. Red Fox told David that he had to tell the crew that they all had to abandon the ship and force land on the Azul Sea.

David told Red Fox not to get the fighters down, that they had just won a victory over evil. Red Fox insisted that they needed to know, but because David was the captain, he commanded Red Fox to keep quiet until the time was right. So, reluctantly, Red Fox said nothing to the crew, but was very disappointed that he was forced to keep a secret that he did not want to.

Inside the vessel, David called the main crew, which was Sam, Samantha, Red Fox, Boweloft and Jane, together. David explained to them what had happened and ordered them not to tell the rest of the crew for the simple fact that he did not want hysteria to breakout and the crew start to second guessing themselves. The team agreed not to say

anything until the time was right.

Suddenly, in the pilot pit, the screen on the dashboard began to blink with the word: "emergency". It showed that the fuel level was almost gone; then it was time to tell the fighters that they would soon have to land in the Azul Sea. David took a deep breath and got the crew's attention. Sam reluctantly held back the seriousness of the situation, fearing that he would lose all of his fighters. But David went on and told the crew that the bats had destroyed the fuel tanks and the vessel would have to make an emergency landing, in the sea of the Azul.

"Sea of the Azul? Are you crazy?" shouted one fighter.

This got the attention of the other fighters and fear began to set in, and soon everyone wanted to back out of the mission. For this, they were chastised by Boweloft and the others. There were pep talks and great war stories; but most of the crew was afraid to go on.

So finally, Sam offered to let them leave and take the emergency ship back home before it was too late. Most of the men got up and began to run toward the emergency exit, until they heard Boweloft scream.

"You cowards, never in your life have you stood for something; now is the time."

This got everyone's attention, and the crowd stopped

running and began to turn around. They apologized, and took their places on the vessel; most of the fighters were embarrassed that they acted that way, and apologized over and over again. Sam and his family accepted their apologies, and gave them all the support they needed.

The vessel had become very quiet; everyone was on edge and nervous, most of the fighters were very young and had never been part of a war. Most of these men and women came out of the slave camp that David and Dorothy were in; so they had good reason to be afraid and nervous.

Soon after that, all the lights in the vessel began to blow out, one by one; the power was failing and the vessel was going down slowly. The crew was told to jump out into the Azul Sea. No one wanted to jump first; the water from above was a thick black slush, and the waves were very powerful. There were dragons and many beast-like creatures swimming in the water; some of them were mystifying and strange looking.

There were the beaver sharks, the first known sharks to have fur on them and the size of an average horse and carriage. They swam in packs, and were always ready to eat. Then there were the flying fish; they were the size of a tuna, but they had beautiful butterfly wings and red and white skin. They flew into the air for about a minute and

sprayed green algae all over the sea to catch food in the thick slim. Although these creatures were beautiful, they were very deadly; one intake of the algae and a person would decay in seconds. The Azul Sea was filled with many unknown creatures and species that many in Baja had never seen or knew that they existed.

Then Sam remembered that when he led his army in Baja the first time, he had a friend that used to sail the Azul Sea. He thought his friend was nothing more than a storyteller; until one day he brought back the head of an Azul dragon. From that day forward, Sam always believed everything this woman said, and they became good friends.

She promised Sam that she would be sailing the Azul Sea all of her life, and that if he ever needed her, to send out an SOS, and she would rescue him. Sam never thought that he would ever need this woman, and that he would never travel to the Azul Sea, because it was forbidden by the elders. But this friend of Sam's was a daredevil, and she wanted to explore the ins and outs of Baja.

Sam and Samantha used the last bit of energy from the ship to send for help. They sent out the magical codes that Sam had kept in his memory for many years. The SOS went out across the Azul Sea like a rainbow of musical notes; the

codes were sophisticated and complicated; only a man or woman with Sam's knowledge could ever decipher them, and know how to send and receive these secret messages.

The codes told a story across the late afternoon skies; they had everything in the message, from the number of people on the vessel to their destination, and the coordinates of the vessel. The code was so beautiful to watch, like a symphony in the skies; as the codes went to their destination they lit up the skies and showed the Azul Sea for what it was; fish attacking fish, and huge never before seen mammals tearing each other apart. Their way of survival was kill or be killed.

Yet, while the Azul was very dangerous, it was also so beautiful. The crew sat and looked out the windows until the last light shut off, and then the vessel got very quiet. The sea became violent, throwing the vessel back and forth. Sam was gambling on the chance that his friend, after all these years, was still sailing the Azul Sea. David told his son that no one makes it out of the Azul Sea and tells about it.

"Maybe the guy was lying," said Red Fox.

But Sam did not want to think that he had believed a lie for all of these years. As the skies got darker and there was still no word; Sam was ready to give up. He knew

there was no way for the entire crew to be saved; so all the boats should go to the women and young men of Baja. Perhaps, if they survived, they would be the next generation of survivors and caretakers of Baja.

Sam and his family had to come up with a plan B and some way to save Baja; even if it meant only one person survived to tell the story. And, just as Sam and his father were going over plan B, there was a big gush of water into the ship. The ship was being invaded by a blood sucking octopus! The creature was covered in blue fur, and the black slush of the Azul Sea was all over its body. The eye on this creature alone was the size of two carriage wheels; the tentacles were long and sharp, its body wiggled and moved as if the ocean was inside of it, and when the creature opened its mouth, inside was forty rows of sharp teeth. There were hairs and bones stuck in the teeth.

Sam immediately used his mental strength to push the creature into the air and away from the vessel, but it was so heavy that he couldn't move it out of the way. As time went on, the creature continued punching holes in the vessel with its twelve tentacles. Water began to fill the huge vessel very quickly; everyone began to scream and panic. Samantha came forward from the pilot pit and began to do martial arts on the monster, but it just took one of

its sharp tentacles and hung Samantha by her clothing to the vessel's wall. The tentacle was so sharp and powerful that Samantha had a hard time freeing herself.

Jane had no plants to control, and the only plant seed she had was in the baggage area. So, while the animal was fighting with the other crewmembers, Jane ran to the baggage area, through the thick slush, and got the golden box with the magical seed. But then, a violent shake of the vessel from the huge creature made Jane accidentally drop the box. She watched as the box slipped out of her hands and into the ocean. She tried to catch it, but the Azul Sea had claimed it. The loss and sadness filled Jane's eyes; she'd had that seed from the time she was a little girl, and now it was lost in one flick of the wrist.

Meanwhile, David and Sam began to cut away at the creature's long tentacles. It began to scream a piercing sound when its limbs were being cut off. Boweloft ordered his men to shoot as many arrows and weapons into the creature as possible. Each crewmember began to fight with all their might and abilities, but this octopus was not a quitter either. It put up a fierce fight, and was not letting the vessel go.

The fighters aimed for the creature's eyes and tentacles; they were looking for anything that they could

either puncture or cut off, but the creature, with its twelve arms, made it impossible for the crew to succeed. As the crewmembers were being swallowed up into the ocean one by one, there was a beacon of light from the north. The ship made a large horn-like noise to alert the distressed that help was just a few feet away. Suddenly, the rescue ship set off a large bright flare into the evening skies that lit up the air for miles to see.

"Help is here!" shouted a fighter.

Sam was happy; his friend had finally pulled through. From out of the rescue ship crawled mongolores, which were sea monkeys that carried flesh-eaters in their fur coats. They were cute cuddly creatures, but they could never be kept as pets because of the dangerous flesh-eaters that they harvested from their coats.

One by one, the mongolores crawled onto the huge octopus and sprayed the flesh-eaters onto the skin of the creature; within seconds, the octopus began to turn the vessel loose. The flesh-eaters used their powerful claws to embed themselves in the octopus' body, eating and sucking everything in sight. The octopus began to shake violently as it was slowly dying and screaming from all the pain that it was in. The flesh-eaters were the size of a one pound dog, but by the time they finished eating, they could grow

to the size of an elephant.

Out of the mist and the evening sun came a long wooden pirate ship, made from the finest wood, gold and steel. There were at least three hundred crewmembers on board; the flag of Baja waved up high in the air, and the sign of hope came upon the remaining fighters' faces. The ship was at least a hundred feet long; the naked eye could not see its tail end. This ship was built for adventures and dangerous situations.

One by one, the crewmembers of the pirate ship came aboard and began to rescue Sam and his team. Just in time, before David's war vessel went down. The men from the pirate ship were rough-looking; they never cracked a smile or showed concern on their faces. They did their jobs and went about their daily duties.

Once on the pirate ship, a long slender beautiful woman with jet black hair that blew in the wind, black leather clothes and boots that were tight to the skin came forward. She watched over the rescue operation, and waited until Sam and his crew were all on board; beat up and tired, Sam hardly recognized his friend.

"Bella, is that you?" said Sam.

"Sam Carrot-Top," shouted Bella as the two hugged and gave a friendly kiss.

"Everyone, this is Bella," said Sam.

"You didn't tell me Bella was a girl, or looked so beautiful," said David, as Sam blush with embarrassment.

"You didn't tell me either," said Jane.

She got a bit jealous from the moment she laid eyes on Bella! She looked Bella up and down and saw how beautiful she was, and went for a walk along the ship.

Bella was one of the toughest women known on the Azul Sea. Most people counted her stories as myths and fairy tales, but Sam was the only friend that truly believed in her. Bella and Sam were friends from primary school, and they both died on the way to school when they were a part of the world of the living. In real life, they were best friends, and even in death as ghosts, they stayed best friends.

Baja was a place where only the dead have a second chance at living, if their lives were cut short; and from that day forward, Bella had always wanted to be an explorer. When she was fourteen, she sailed one of the oldest and toughest seas on the seven moons. This gave Bella instant fame and fortune. The crew was shocked to see a woman sailing the waters of the Azul Sea, and living to tell about it.

Meanwhile, on the deck of the ship, Sam was explaining

to a jealous Jane that Bella and he were best friends in another world, before he even met Jane. Jane had stopped crying and put her jealousy aside, and headed back to the front of the ship where the crewmembers were listening to Bella. She told her story as to why she had only one eye, and about the golden patch that covered it. But first, the crew looked for any surviving members. Unfortunately, none were found. Their bodies decayed once they swallowed the toxic waters. Sam was very sad and wanted this war to end peacefully, without anyone losing their lives.

Bella gave him a pep talk and said, "My heart ached when I heard that you got exiled from Baja."

She wiped Sam's face as Jane looked on. Sam quickly noticed the intense look in Jane's eyes, and introduced Bella formally to his wife. Bella was a strong, confident woman and let Jane know that Sam was never interested in girls like her; that Sam liked girls like Jane.

"So see, you have nothing to worry about, Sam is a good man," said Bella to Jane.

Jane let down her guard and finally gave Bella a warm welcome and gratitude for saving them. Bella then sent her men out to do a search and rescue of anything that was worth finding and salvaging. At this time, the crewmembers of Sam's ship were given hot baths, food and a warm and

comfy place to lay their tired bones.

The pirate ship had everything on it, from a huge gallery to a large kitchen; there were offices and wine rooms. The ship had at least three thousand rooms and an entertainment area. No one could believe the size of this ship, and how fast it moved through the waters.

Because David was also a maker of things, he fell in love with Bella's ship right away, and wanted to reproduce one when he got home. But Bella would not give him the blue prints; she considered them personal and valuable. She also let David know that the ship was a ghost ship that could disappear and reappear in minutes, and all the work and new technology came from a secret source that she would not give out. David began to offer Bella thousands of dollars if she would say the maker's name, but she was very wealthy herself and did not need his money.

Yet, she played along with David, and said she would consider his offer. But deep down, Bella was an originalist; she wanted to be the only one with something, and this made her come across as snobbish; but she had her reason for this. Because of her secret nature, Sam loved this about Bella; he loved the confidence that his friend had.

But Jane wanted to leave this ship as soon as possible

and asked how long it would be before they got to the Ambassador Forest. Bella became very interested and loved the adventure; for many years she had been trying to get into the forest, but it was always guarded and locked. No one ever came in or out.

Bella filled Sam and his crew in on what she had seen for many years going on in the Ambassador Forest. She spoke of lights and the cries of demons coming out of the earth; of how the earth shook violently at night, and the strange creatures that came and went from it.

So, all night long, Bella told stories around the gallery kitchen as the crew ate and feasted on the finest meals. While Bella told the story, Jane walked off and back up to the front of the ship. Samantha followed and began to comfort Jane; she let Jane know that all there was between Sam and Bella was close friendship, and that Jane had nothing to be jealous about.

Yet, how could she not be jealous? Bella was a beautiful young lady; just gazing upon her beauty would make anyone fall in love with her. Even though Jane took Samantha's words into consideration, she could not get over the fact that her husband never mentioned Bella's name, not one time. Sam had told stories about the Azul Sea, but never mentioned Bella, and now Jane knew why; because Bella

was a girl, and Sam knew that Jane would ultimately become jealous.

But after a breath of fresh air, Samantha and Jane went back down in the belly of the ship where all kinds of stories were being told by Bella. She had already become popular with the crew; she was like one of the guys. Sam was also sitting there, listening and gazing at Bella. Jane went over and pulled him by his shirt collar, and asked him to stop the love gazing at Bella. Sam gently kissed Jane on the lips, and pushed her aside as he went back and listened to Bella's stories.

Jane ran off to a room that was set up for her, and lay on the bed, crying and weeping. David then pulled his son aside and gave him a lesson in how to tend to a woman who sincerely loved him. David let Sam know that his wife loved him and was afraid, and he needed to go in and talk to her. Sam did so, but he told his father that there wasn't anything going on between Bella and him. They were just friends who had been away from each other for a long time, and now it was time for them to catch up on old times. David just shook his head and pointed Sam in the direction of his wife.

Sam gently knocked on the door and comforted his wife, letting her know that he would always love her, and that

Bella was just a friend who happened to be a woman. Jane accepted this and went off to sleep in her husband's arms.

The sun had finally set, and the Azul Sea was nothing more than darkness. The feasting and storytelling was over, and the crew turned in for the night. Bella then set course to the Ambassador Forest, and left the ship in the hands of her crew. While everyone was asleep, Boweloft searched the ship over and over again. It had secret tunnels that seemed to never end; pictures that were not pictures at all, but were watchers over the ship. Boweloft watched as the eyes on the pictures followed his every move; and then there were the secret closets that strange cries came from. Yet, Boweloft could not see who was making those cries.

He stepped into the closet and suddenly sank to the bottom; the floor of the closet was made of sand, one wrong step and it would swallow you up. Boweloft went down, screaming and trying to cling to the wood panel with his fingernails, but he had no luck. He began to fall faster and faster, down the deep hole that led to nowhere. Boweloft could see the grains of sand as they passed by him.

The sand began to cover his entire body and wrapped itself around him. Boweloft fought and fought with all his might, but there was no way of getting out of this trap; it was as if the sand was alive. Finally, Boweloft landed at

the bottom pit, where a strange little boy was crying in the corner. He looked as if he was starving and had not eaten for days. The boy was chained to the walls and had on a rusty cloth garment.

Boweloft called out to the young boy in the darkness, but he never turned around; so Boweloft called out again, asking him to say something, but the child never did. All he did was shake violently in the corner of the pit, and let out these piercing cries of help. The screams were so excruciating that they made Boweloft's ears bleed!

The sand at the bottom of the ship was thin and hard to walk through; what little light was left in the oil lamps showed glimpses of the boy's face, and it was not a pretty sight. This boy had bat wings, black eyes, long black, matted hair that was in much disarray. He let out a loud cry, and launched himself at Boweloft, but he quickly pushed the boy out of his way.

"What kind of creature are you?" asked Boweloft.

"I am the sixth wizard; I can make all of your dreams come true," said the boy.

"You can't be," said Boweloft.

"But I am, my name is Hoyle," said the boy.

He went on to tell Boweloft that he was Hoyle the Magnificent Card Thrower. His wizard skills in card

throwing were the best around; no one was a match for his powers, until he was captured by the Huntress Bella of the Azul Sea.

Boweloft did not believe Hoyle and asked him, if he was so great, how come he was captured by Bella. Hoyle went on to explain that he was the wizard that the world was talking about, the wizard who got sick and the only way that he could be saved was to get the rhino plant from the Azul Sea. While he was seeking the plant on his own, he was captured by Bella and her savage crew.

Then Hoyle began to snarl and bark; showing his disgust with Bella and all the citizens of Baja. He had nothing good to say about Baja, and Boweloft could relate to this, because he was once a prisoner of Baja and had seen firsthand how cruel Baja had become. Hoyle went on to pick Boweloft's brain, and asked who he was here with. Not thinking, Boweloft told the story of the Carrot-Top's and how they had returned to Baja to save it from destruction.

The creature began to laugh a wicked laugh, telling Boweloft that it was too late, and that no one could save Baja; the elders had been sleeping too long to ever be awakened. Boweloft's eyes began to grow with concern and he began to second guess himself as to why he was there. The creature was playing and messing with Boweloft's mind;

that's why Hoyle was stuck in the sand pit where he could never use his mind powers to do wrong.

Boweloft was in the middle of the greatest escape in Baja history. Hoyle got control of Boweloft's mind and summoned him to release him immediately. Boweloft had now become a zombie, and began to move in the direction of the creature. Once Hoyle saw that Boweloft was in his sight, he dragged Boweloft closer to him and began to drink his blood to regain his strength.

After sucking Boweloft dry of blood, the creature's bones and flesh began to grow strong again. His flesh began to heal, the color in his skin came back, and his bat wings were no longer old and tattered. Hoyle began to grow stronger and stronger; he was no longer feeble and weak, he was strong again. He looked over the lifeless body of Boweloft; a once strong warrior had become victim to the card thrower.

Hoyle began to laugh and jerk with pride; he was once again set free. He had cheated death again to become one of the most powerful wizards to overthrow Baja. An evil wicked laughter filled the belly of the ship, and roaring sounds went through the walls, awakening every member of the ship. Candles were lit, bows and arrows were taken out of their protective sheaves; the remaining warriors were ready for

war.

They all jumped out of bed and headed to the deck of the ship, but when they arrived, they saw nothing but the night skies. But deep down below, through a ship's window, they saw a strange creature dragging Boweloft's body like a rag doll across the wooden floor of the ship. The crew began to point and whisper.

One man shouted, "It's Hoyle the Card Thrower of the seven wizards!"

All the crewmembers were surprised and became afraid of the creature. Suddenly Bella jumped from her cabin to the upper deck, ready to fight the creature. Sam, Jane, Red Fox, and Samantha joined in the fight. Meanwhile, they began to question Bella on why she had one of the seven wizards on her ship, and what was she hiding?

But there was no time for small talk; Sam and his friends began to battle the creature. Suddenly Hoyle jumped from the belly of the ship to the deck, breaking the wooden floors and boards. He had grown, he was not the weak little boy wizard anymore; Boweloft's blood had enough nutrients to fatten him up. Hoyle began to mumble and roar at Bella, showing the disgust and disappointment he had with her. Saliva began to spray from his mouth.

The corners of his eyes and mouth began to form a

white texture that hung down like sap; his cry was that of a bleeding sound that pierced the eardrum. His face began to pull back to his head; no one on the ship had ever seen anything like this, how could a little wizard boy become a humongous creature? Hoyle summoned forth his magical cards by reciting a secret spell of the wizards.

"Hummm, chanting."

Through the thick night skies came a ball of light no bigger than a human thumb. The light came over the ship and burst into an explosion, knocking the crew off their feet. Out of the light came a deck of golden cards.

Sam began to mumble to himself, "I've seen those cards before, on the train to Baja."

Hoyle began to throw his cards; he had them turning into swords, diggers, knives and balls of fire that chased the crewmembers. Bella was the first one brave enough to stand up to Hoyle's weapons. She began to fight the fire balls with her shield and swords; and Sam began to try and move the creature with his mind powers. Meanwhile, the other crewmembers began to fight and attack the creature.

Samantha began to fly through the air using her ancient karate skills, kicking and punching with the power of ten men. Red Fox began to attack the creature with his fighting skills as he avoided getting killed by Hoyle's

sharp knives that were coming straight at him.

Hoyle had created a circle of weapons that were wearing the crew out; the weapons were coming non-stop as the crew tried to deflect the attacks. Jane then summoned her plants, but none came; she had no plants in the Azul Sea that were under her command, and she had lost her magical seed. Just as Jane was disappointed in herself, a quick dagger came at her heart, and Bella stepped in the way, blocking the dagger with her shield.

"That was a close call," said Bella.

She pushed Jane to the safe area as she worked on the monster's lower body. The more Hoyle came under attack, the more cards he threw out. But in a deck of fifty-two, he was coming up short, because the crew was killing all of his weapons. Each card that Hoyle threw out was either eliminated in a thick black smoke by Bella, Red Fox or Samantha.

Hoyle was running out of cards; the crew was aware of how to beat him, and one by one they began to attack his cards. So every time Hoyle threw out a card, the crew would attack the card instead of him. By doing this, it caused Hoyle to get weaker, and as a last resort, he threw out twelve cards of queens, kings and jokers. The symbols popped off of the cards like a magical book. They were all

dressed in their card attire; the queens and their gilded gowns and crowns, the joker in his outfit, the kings with their crown and capes, and they were each from a different suit. Whether it was a club, hearts, spades or diamonds; the cards attacked the crew.

One by one, the cards began to fight the crew; these cards were very powerful, they came equipped with powers of fighting and battle knowledge, and this was when the crew needed all the help they could get. Bella shouted to her crew to fight, and keep fighting no matter what. The crew grew enough courage and strength to continue fighting the creature, but Hoyle was also strong and powerful.

He divided and conquered; as the crew was fighting his cards, he began to join in. So now there was a much bigger problem; from all the fighting and the war going on, the ship began to sink from the holes and damage. Yet the fighting continued, and the crew defeated the cards, and then turned against Hoyle.

But it was too late, Hoyle had flown away with the bones and decomposed body of Boweloft in the mid morning sky. Sam and Red Fox began to shoot arrows at Hoyle as he flew away, but it did no good, he was long gone with their friend.

"We must hurry and leave, the ship is sinking," said

Jane.

But, there was nowhere to go; the sea of Azul was dangerous to swim in and the creatures of the ocean were waiting for an appetizer. Bella summoned her captain of the ship.

"Mario, get us to port quickly," shouted Bella.

Mario answered, "Yes! Ma captain," as he ran down to the ship's control room and pressed a magical button.

The button gave the ship the ability to speed through the water ten times its normal speed. Suddenly huge propellers came out of the sides of the ship, and tiny monkeys began to put up new sails; running back and forth over the ship to get the sails up and in place. Then wings came out of the sides like those of an eagle spreading its long wings for miles.

Suddenly a blast came, and the ship shot through the water like a rocket, blasting through everything in sight. The crew had a short amount of time to get to the Ambassador Forest before the ship sank. Bella and the crew held on tight as they rode through the rough seas and up and over very large waves. Dead fish dropped onto the decks of the ship from the blast and firepower of the ship's engines.

"Faster!" shouted Bella to her captain, Mario.

But the ship was going as fast as it could, any more pressure and it would split into pieces, leaving the crew stranded in the Azul Sea. From the look of the creatures that called the Azul Sea home, this would not be a good idea.

For a few hours, the ship held up, and just as the crew was almost there, the ship suddenly stopped. Mario ran up to the deck and let Bella and her crew know that the ship could no longer take the strain, and they would have to get off here. The crew was a mere twenty feet from land, and they had no way of getting there because the Azul Sea was still there.

Bella tested the waters, and let the crew know that it was not safe to enter. One fighter who was upset by the death of Boweloft demanded that he go and find help, but he was quickly stopped by Bella.

"Old man, are you dumb beyond your years? This sea will kill you in seconds."

But the man shrugged Bella off, and began to tell of the story of his friend Boweloft who was savagely eaten by a big bat creature. To honor his friend, he would save the crew. The old man jumped in the water. The minute his feet hit the thick black waters of the Azul Sea, he was eaten!

"You fool," shouted Bella.

She explained to the rest of the crew that she did not want any more heroes; the sea consisted of tiny creatures that feasted on the bodies of mammals, the human variety. Each crewmember got the point as they watched their friend being swallowed up by the Azul Sea. Many tried to help the man, but it was too late, he was gone for good; his stubbornness and arrogance caused him to lose his life, and Bella had no sympathy for him.

The looks on the crewmembers' faces was one of sorrow and defeat; until David came in and began to revive the crowd, telling them that they had a reason to be sad, and to take that sadness and turn it into joy, one of revenge for their friends' lives. The crew began to cheer and shout until they could do no more.

"Father, you have a way with words," said Sam, as he patted his father on the back.

But there was still no way off of the ship; until Jane saw a vine on the land. She helped grow the vines and tresses of the forest, Jane summoned the vines to come forth and build a bridge. At first the crew thought that Jane had lost her mind and was suffering from some type of hysteria, but suddenly the ground shook and the vines began to do a snake dance from the shore. They called out to their creator Jane; this was there mother, the one who

started their lives, the girl with the magical green thumb.

Bella ordered one of her monkeys to fetch her binoculars. As the monkey came running back, Bella quickly looked into the ends and saw that the vines were building a bridge for them to cross.

"It is really happening," said Bella as she passed the binoculars to Sam.

And so it was; the vines began to build a bridge for their master, a mother they had not seen in years had come back to them. The vines crawled on their belly like snakes, did twists and turns in the air to step up and support their weaving together. The vines kept building until there was a bridge that led from shore to Bella's ship.

"Good job, honey," said Sam, as he kissed Jane on the cheek.

For once, Jane was glad to see that Sam had acknowledged her in front of Bella, and it was Jane's time to be in the spotlight instead of his good friend Bella. Bella smiled and enjoyed the couple as they made up. Everyone ran for the bridge made by the vines. Jane kissed the vines and told them thanks, that one day she would come and spend time with them. The vines let off a gentle cry to let her know that they understood and would wait for her return.

Across the bridge they went as Bella left a few of her crew to fix the ship. The members of the crew took every weapon that they could find, and every supply that they could use. They were now on unknown territory. But, before Jane could get very far, a crewmember shouted.

"Jane, we found your box!"

Before Jane could answer, she saw the glitter and the shine from the box. She ran back, pushing through the crowd of fighters to get to her box. She was happy to again touch the special box that she had thought was lost forever.

The crew settled on the shores of the Azul Sea, speculating on where to go next. They got something to eat and relaxed on the shores, until it was fully daylight. As daybreak came, and the men who stood guard woke everyone up from a long awaited nap, the crew stared at the forest.

It was the most beautiful thing that anyone could look upon. There were streams made of silver mercury; trees and plants that bore all kinds of fruits, big fruits, small fruits, yellow, orange and red fruits, even blue fruits. The area gave off a pleasant smell of blueberries. There were giant earthworms that Bella killed for supper; she threw her dagger, it landed in the creature's heart. Then she gutted the creature and wrapped the pieces up in leaves for dinner.

Some of the crew were a little disgusted with Bella's wild adventurous side, but they admired her bravery and courage. There were mountain tops that snowed, and big snowballs and avalanches would fall down, but by the time they hit the bottom, they would be melted by the hot sun. The Ambassador Forest was under lock and key; there was a huge statue with a golden dial around its neck. The statue was about forty feet tall, made of stone, and dressed in African tribal colors, with a huge stone book in its right hand, and the outline of the sun on its head.

The forest was guarded by some type of force field, and there was no way in. They could see through the force field, but getting in was another story. Oscar walked up to the force field, and suddenly it sucked him in!

"My cat," said Jane.

"Oh, he's okay," said Bella.

Oscar licked his paws and face, and waited for his master, but Jane and her crew could not get in. That was because Oscar was an animal of Baja and not human. The forest was made for animals, so they were the only ones who could come and go. To test their theory, Jane ordered Oscar to come out, and without a problem, he came bursting out of the force field bubble. As the crew got closer, the giant statute began to move and talk.

"Who dares enter into the forest of the holy center of Baja?"

"It is I, Sam Carrot-Top, the protector and savior of Baja," said Sam.

But the statute said nothing else, and then a code appeared in the heavens; if Sam and his crew could figure out the code, they would be able to enter. The codes were placed in the heavens with the clouds and birds, which made it harder to determine the answer to the puzzle. But Bella had no problem figuring out the secret codes. With a few minutes of adding and deleting, she came up with the answer.

"Through one secret and two lies, lies the key that will untie. Knock three times on the sun dial and the heavenly gates will open wide," said Bella.

"Great job, Bella," said David as he took a stone and hit the dial three times.

At first, nothing happened; then out of the blue the dial began to turn slowly, then faster and faster until sand covered the crew from head to toe. No one could move an inch, and then the sand turned into a sand storm, taking the crew and all its members into a spiral turn. Everything seemed to be spinning out of control, and then the crew was dropped in the middle of the forest.

One by one, they fell from the sky, leaving Oscar as

the last to enter. Because he was a cat, he landed on his feet, but the others fell flat on their backs, crying out from the bumps and bruises. The crew looked around and was astonished that they were in the middle of the Ambassador Forest.

Everything was silent, too silent, unlike the shoreline, in the center of the forest was dead, lifeless. Dead birds and animals filled the ground; plants began to die, as if they had not been watered in years. Jane ran over to a big oak tree and began to grow it again with her magical green thumb. She watched as the tree went from old and dying to young and with green leaves. The tree began to cry out and tell Jane of an unlikely visitor of the forest who had come and destroyed everything, who had made everything dark again.

Jane and Sam looked at each other and mumbled together, "Marcus."

The tree began to crawl away with one look at Bella.

"Wait," said Jane as the tree slithered away like a snake in the ground. "One look at you, and he ran."

Jane began to question Bella and her ties to the forest, but Sam stood up for Bella and noted to Jane that she had saved her life. Jane then pulled David, Samantha, Sam, and Red Fox aside. She voiced her feelings on Bella,

and that something was wrong; how could she guess the answer to the secret gates so quickly? And why was she here anyway? One of the questions was: was Sam too close to Bella to see that maybe she could be a spy? He defended her to Jane, but Jane was not buying her phony act and told Samantha to keep an eye on her.

David had also become suspicious of Bella, but his son was too involved with Bella to see that she could possibly be an enemy. Jane had nothing more to say to Bella as they went through the forest. The crew could feel an eerie feeling of someone or something watching them, and they kept their guard up as they walked through the forest and saw all the destruction.

Suddenly the ground began to shake and the leaves and branches from the dead trees and vines gathered up and formed a huge monster that attacked the crew! Oscar began to pull at its braches, but it kicked Oscar off of it, and made its way over to the hundreds of fighters in its path. One by one the tree creature began to bellow its way through the crowd of fighters, who were chopping at the roots of the tree creature. But the branches and roots on the creature were so strong that it bent most of the fighters' swords.

"Order your vines to stop," said Sam to Jane.

Jane put her anger aside and commanded the vines to stop. For a minute, it seemed to work, and then the trees began to die off and turn evil once more.

"I order you to stop," said Jane.

But the tree creature continued pummeling through the crowd of fighters, kicking and throwing them into the air and out of the force field. David watched as Bella pretended to help, but she wasn't really fighting the creature at all. She was instead controlling the creature with a small golden disc. David kept Bella in his sights as he went and helped the others.

Jane then tried to summon the other trees in the forest that were alive and had not succumbed to the evil of the forest. All the trees that remained came crawling through the forest like an army of ants. One by one, the trees Jane summoned came and formed one big tree to fight the evil one. Her trees were filled with colors of bright origins; the trees formed up to look like a giant with stone armor, helmet and shield.

The two giant trees began to fight, good versus evil; as they fought, this gave the army time to chop and cut at the evil tree's limbs. One by one the old, rotten limbs fell off, but they kept growing back, and this made the team have to work even harder on chopping down the limbs of

the evil tree. The army had to duck and hide as huge tree limbs were falling from the air. Jane's tree was beating and winning against the evil tree. She popped open her magic box with the bean seed and threw it into the air. The seed did a spin and a twirl and exploded with a blast. Rainbow colors flew into the skies; everyone stopped and looked for a minute, but nothing happen.

"Please tell me that that is not all that bean seed does," said Sam.

But Jane had no idea what the seed really did; she had never used it before, and this would be her first time ever using it. Jane was very disappointed when nothing happened; the seed just fell to the ground and sprouted a little plant. Bella gave off a wicked smile, and the evil tree monster began to laugh as it bent down and put its big face against Jane's face.

"Oh, what a cute little seed," said the evil monster as it got back into the fight with the vines Jane had created.

But that little plant began to grow very quickly, and it attached itself to Jane, crawling up her legs like a green snake. The plant then turned black, crawled itself to Jane's arm and attached itself from her elbow to her fingers. It was now under her control; the plant began to

form into anything, from a huge hammer that smashed the toes of the evil rooted tree to a plant that spit fire and set the roots of the evil tree ablaze.

The plant turned into a huge fist and began punching and hitting the tree to the ground. Jane had become a super hero; the fighters stared at her, they were amazed to see what a little plant could do. This little plant was very powerful and helpful in the fight. Once the evil rooted tree was on fire and fell to the ground, the army of fighters began to hover over it, cutting off its roots one by one, until they hit the main core and chopped it off. The tree died instantly, and once again the forest became quiet.

Jane then summoned her good vines and trees to go forth and nourish the other trees of the forest since a war was coming, and they would be needed to defend Baja in the fight of its life. Jane's healthy trees went forth like race horses running through the forest, letting the weak and dead trees suck on their barks and leaves, bringing most of them back to life. Everyone could see that the forest was getting brighter again; animals started to come back to life. The forest was awakening from its sleep of darkness.

While Jane was being congratulated by her army of

friends, Bella slipped away into the cover of the trees and shrubs. Sam searched high and low for Bella, but she was nowhere to be found. Bella was gone; she had disappeared into thin air. David and Samantha got the army together and told them that they had a spy, and her name was Bella. When she was caught, she had to immediately be killed, upon the orders of the elders of Baja.

Sam looked on in surprise as his father had turned on his friend. But David went to his son and explained that he saw Bella controlling the tree creature with a golden disc. Bella knew the secret of the gates because she had been here before. David went on to tell his son that not everyone was his friend.

"But Bella was like a true friend, I can't believe she would do this to me," said Sam.

"Well, believe it," said Jane as she shouted at Sam for not trusting her, but instead trusting Bella. "I tried to tell you that something was fishy about her, and yet you countered that I was being jealous!"

Jane walked away from Sam; he hung his head low and stood by a shrub for a minute to think. He then put the pieces of the puzzle together and came running back to tell the crowd, but no one was ready to hear what he had to say. He had to apologize not only to them, but to Jane. So he

did; he apologized to the entire crew and to his wife. Jane forgave him, but was reserved in what she said, to make everyone think that she was all right inside. But Jane was truly upset and disappointed with Sam, and he knew this, but he wanted the both of them to play it off until everything was settled and then they could deal with it.

Sam went on to say, "The guardian of the gates was telling me that I needed to be careful, that my enemy was right under my nose."

Chapter 12

Off to War - Part 2

Though one secret means Baja, a secret and holy place, a mystery to mankind and two lies, which meant the first was when Sam and his family were being exiled from Baja over a lie told by Marcus his brother. And the other lie was that Bella was not his friend and that she was partners with Marcus in some way. But there was more to the secret message of the guardian angels. Sam had yet to put the remaining pieces together, but he was close to doing so.

Sam had feared that he might have to kill his brother for Baja to eventually have peace. The army had to move on; they must defeat the seven wizards of the forest before all life on Baja was destroyed forever.

The army marched through the forest for hours. Jane noticed that the plants, vines, trees and shrubs were dying again, and she knew that evil was not so far away. Oscar walked in front, to protect the army with his keen senses he would notify them of danger. Jane let everyone know that evil would soon be approaching because all of her trees were still dying and there was no good reason for it.

Sam knelt down to the ground, he could hear the

stomping of horse hooves; they were coming faster and faster. Oscar ran toward Jane and told her that they must get off of the main path, an army of riders was coming and they would not be able to defeat them. Jane let everyone know to get off of the main path and into a swamp area.

They had to move quickly because the seven wizards were sending out their riders to capture them. Everyone immediately went off into a dark swamp area where there was little light, and it was wet and cold. Suddenly everyone could hear the loud sounds of the horse riders; they were coming through the forest at the speed of terror. Trees were being knocked down and trampled over by the massive size of the riders and their horses.

The riders were of unknown origins, and came onto the planet of Baja to seek and destroy. They were made up of men and women that rode together through the planets causing havoc and destruction. Somehow these riders made a deal with the seven wizards, and were now working with them to destroy Baja. The riders' faces were never seen; they wore military armor and clothing that had the red glow of symbols and hieroglyphics.

They had stiff movements, like that of a puppet, and they dressed all in black and rode massive wild horses. The horses were made up of tiger and horse blended together. It

seemed as if they had been crossbred with each other. Therefore, they were great hunters. The Carrot-Tops and their army were no match for the riders, so they decided to split up, and made a vow that if anyone got caught not to give away any information.

As the agreement took place, the swamp began to split apart, and the wild movement of the water separated the army. Some went down dark tunnels leading to nowhere, and others went downstream. Jane and Samantha went down the dark tunnel, while Red Fox, David and Sam went downstream. Jane tried to stay close to Sam, but the water was too rough and they split apart. The Ambassador Forest was new to everyone, and no one knew where they were going.

Suddenly Oscar caught up with Jane and Samantha, and they all began to sink down into another part of the forest. It was as if they were swimming through sand. This part of the forest was covered in sand, golden sand that glittered so much that Jane and the few remaining army fighters with her could not see a thing. Then the forest opened up again, and spit Jane and the army into a valley of sand.

As Jane and the fighters tumbled to the ground, everyone was a little light-headed from the wild ride that they had just taken. Jane quickly ordered everyone to get

up and stay alert, but there were still a few who were a little out of it. Once everyone was okay, Samantha and Jane moved on with their plan, which was to get out of the Ambassador Forest with the key.

Everyone agreed that this was the only way to save Baja; no matter what happened, the last person must fight for honor and to the death to save Baja. As Jane and her army looked around, everything was made of sand. There were sand domes, sand houses, mountains made of sand, and there was even a sand lake. Though the sand moved like water, it was made up of only sand. The lake was very dangerous, as Jane and her army soon found out.

One fighter went to simply touch the sand lake, and it pulled her in; there was nothing anyone could do. The thick sand soon swallowed up another of Jane's fighters as they tried to save the first one. The lake was like quicksand; once it got a hold of your body, there was no letting go. Jane and her fighters could hear the woman's screams of terror and fear.

"Move away from the lake," said Samantha as she quickly secured the area.

Oscar went ahead of the pack to sniff for danger that might lie ahead. The loss of two fighters weighed heavily on Jane's heart, and she began to weep. Samantha was there

to quickly console her, telling Jane that she could not cry in front of her army or they would become weak and never respect her. Jane quickly wiped away her tears and moved on.

The desert sand was now getting to the fighters; they were becoming fatigued and began to see things that were not there. Jane informed Samantha that hysteria might be breaking out in the army. So Jane and Samantha took Oscar to search for water or food. All Jane needed was a small water plant, and she could have it produce enough water to supply the army. Everyone with a little strength began to search and dig for a water plant, with no luck.

Most gave up and sat down to catch their breath. The sand area was an amazing sight to see, but was a harsh place to live. Yet, at one point in time, this area had been inhabited by someone; and this made Jane want to search even more for people. Suddenly Jane saw someone looking out of one of the dome windows, but when she looked back, the face had all but disappeared.

Jane went on to see what she had seen. Oscar and Samantha walked over a large hill, and they got the shock of their lives. Over the hill lay a large town filled with people. They had never been seen by anyone before. In all of Samantha's travels, she had never seen anything like this; the people were all made of sand! They had the

appearance of a human, but were nothing more than sand.

Jane watched as one of the sand people blended into the walls and rocks. These people could manipulate their bodies into anything that had to do with sand. They could change into rocks, mountains, and even stones. When the sand people saw Jane, Oscar and Samantha approaching, they began to hide and turn into objects of sand. Jane began to speak to the sand people.

"We come in peace," said Jane.

But this did no good, the sand people began to evaporate into sand. Then suddenly dust and sand began to fly into the air like a sand storm, pushing and moving everything around. Jane and the others began to run for their lives back over the hill, but the sand formed an arm and grabbed Samantha by the legs. She began to fight and Oscar jumped into the storm to rescue her. The sand then dropped Samantha to the ground and formed itself into a huge dog the size of Oscar, and began to fight Oscar.

"We must go!" said Samantha to Jane.

Jane did not want to leave Oscar, and she painfully turned away and began to run as Oscar kept the sand creature occupied. As Jane and Samantha were running, they stumbled on to a water plant. Jane quickly used her powers to grow it out of the ground. The water plant flourished

and water began to burst from its leaves and petals.

Jane continued to use her powers to make the plant bigger and bigger; then she commanded it to send its roots with water to the remaining fighters over the hills. The plant obeyed Jane's orders, and sent its roots over the hill to the remaining fighters who were weary and depleted of water. The roots burst through the sand, carrying water to the thirsty. Suddenly the roots shot out of the ground and sprayed the thirsty fighters with water. They jumped up and began to cheer for Jane as they regained their strength from every sip of fresh water.

Meanwhile, over the hill, Jane, Oscar and Samantha were still battling the sand creature. When Jane saw that Oscar was in trouble, she took the roots of the water plant and began to spray water onto the sand creature. This made the creature soaking wet and it could not move. Its sand form had now become mud and it was too damp and heavy to move.

The sand creature fell to the floor, releasing Oscar. Everyone could hear the loud thumping as chunks of sand fell to the floor. That was the reason that no water was stored here, it was death to the sand people. When humans came, the sand people knew that humans needed water, and because of this, humans were always frightened away.

Jane wanted to explain to the sand people that the sand would dry out and everything would be back to normal, but no one said anything. The sand people came up and retrieved the body of their beloved that was in big chunks. A wild sand storm came, and it took away everything that was made of sand. Jane and the others weren't hurt, but the sand storm was like a tornado, coming in and picking and choosing everything in sight.

After the storm was over, everything that was made of sand was gone, and the sand now revealed a hidden temple that had been hidden for millions of years below the ground. Jane and her fighters had found the temple because she got the sand people to move, and with them moving they left a clue to the world of Baja. Jane and Samantha summoned her fighters from over the hill. They all came running, ready to fight; they had now become full of strength as they once were.

As the fighters came over the hill, their eyes were set on the beautiful hidden temple, which was made of pure silver and mercury. The temple was in the form of a round sphere. There was a very small door opening, and it would open and close every few minutes. Jane and Samantha watched and timed the door. As the army came over the hill, everyone approached the temple together.

It were such an amazing sight to see; there were rings like Saturn around the sphere, and huge sculptures made of steel guarded the entrance, from a large snake to a king-size dragons. These sculptures were made of the finest metal and top craftsmanship. The detail work on the temple was amazing; it had ten planets that circled its atmosphere way up above.

For some reason, Jane had seen one of these planets before and began to gaze upon it, but it had not yet come to her as to where she'd seen it before. Nevertheless, Jane ordered a few men to stay outside, and a few to go in with her and Samantha to investigate. As Jane and her fighters came closer to the temple, it began to glow with the symbols of Baja. This was something they had recognized before. As Jane came to the entrance of the temple it read: "The first temple of Baja, The temple called Azul."

Samantha interrupted Jane and told her that there were stories about this temple in the library of Baja. This temple was said to be a myth, and in it lies the true key to the elders.

"The true key?" said Jane.

Samantha went on to tell Jane that legends had it that the elders put out a fake key, and the true key to their existence was hidden in the temple. If the story was true,

then Jane and her family were not responsible for the lost key of Baja; hope formed in Jane's eyes. Maybe the legend was true, and that there might be another key that could awaken the elders and have them save Baja, and clear her family's name.

Jane kept thinking this to herself, and marched without fear into the temple of Azul. She and her fighters timed the door, and waited for the exact moment that the door would open again. They hurried and jumped into the doorway before the door closed again. Once inside, the temple looked as if it was the day it was built; everything was immaculate. There was no dust or debris inside; there were solar lights all around. Walking inside was like walking through a maze; there were twists and turns that led Jane and her team right back to where they had started.

Jane noticed an unusual painting on the walls; it was of a man and a little boy crossing a river in a small boat, and the man was pointing. Jane followed where he was pointing, and began to test the theory that a message must be hidden in the picture. It pointed to a huge lever in the side of a wall. Jane asked Samantha to use her ninja skills and jump to release the lever. It stood out to Jane because, in the area, the lever was the only thing adorned with rubies, gold, and silver. If it was just a lever, it

would not be as nice as this one was. Samantha jumped into the air, flipped the lever, and suddenly the floor began to move in a circle. Oscar began to hiss and scratched at the floor.

"Keep cool," said Jane to Oscar, as everyone waited to see what this floor was about to reveal.

The floor kept on rotating until it was high in the air. Suddenly the air began to get thick, and it was harder to breathe. Most of the fighters were getting lightheaded and faint; some had nose bleeds, but Jane and Samantha wanted to see what lay ahead. After a short ride, Samantha and Jane got to their feet and discovered that they were up above the temple; where the ten planets lay.

It was an amazing sight to see, being on top of a temple, looking over the ten planets. They looked close enough that if your hands were stretched out, you could touch them. Then the dial on the floor tilted over, sending Jane, Samantha and a few of the fighters flying into a planet; it was like flying through a hoop of fire. Once in the planet, Jane and her fighters were faced by a huge rock monster. The monster had once been tied to chains, as Jane and her fighters saw the old loose chains dangling from its hands and legs. The rock monster immediately began to throw huge stones at the army. It would burp up five to ten rocks

at a time, and then throw them at Jane and her fighters.

Everyone scattered out of the way. To this creature, this was nothing more than a game, but to Jane and her fighters, this was their lives. Everyone split up and tried to trick the rock monster by running in different patterns, but the monster had different plans. It burped out rocks and shaped them into tiny rock monsters for each of Jane's fighters.

Jane and her team were now in the fight of their lives. The only way to stop this rock monster was to clog up its mouth so that it would stop burping up little rock monsters. Samantha moved in on the large rock monster with her ninja skills, kicking and punching it in the mouth, but the monster was affected very little. So the team had to devise another plan; and they came up with a plan called divide and conquer.

As the tiny rock monsters were chasing the other fighters, the fighters came together and crossed paths. By doing this, they caused the rock monsters to collide with one another causing a big burst of dust and stone particles into the air. The huge rock monster began to cry as his children were destroyed. So he then tried to burp out more little rock monsters, but Jane and her fighters were not having it. They all climbed up onto the rock monster,

starting from his feet to his head.

Some fighters tickled his toes and the creature began to laugh and then stumble. The other army of men continued to crawl on the creature, causing it to sway in one direction. As it swayed, it began to fall, and as it fell, the fighters jumped off, one by one; leaving the creature to fall on its own. It began to sway heavily, causing it to stumble quickly.

All of a sudden, the creature fell to its knees with a loud pounding, shaking the ground and everything around it. It had landed so hard that its stone structure started to crack and crumble. Jane ordered all the fighters to take cover; the creature was about to blow any minute. Just as the fighters ran for safety, the creature began to break apart; sending rocks flying into the air, almost knocking down some of the fighters. The huge creature broke into tiny pieces, sending pieces of its body into the atmosphere.

"Great job, team," said Samantha.

The fighters began to roar in victory over another win. But Jane was not that thrilled.

"If this was easy, I would not like to see what hard looks like," said Jane.

Then a piece of the golden key emerged out of a left behind stone; it glittered in the sky. Jane quickly went

and picked it up. She and her fighters glanced over the key; it was so beautiful to gaze upon, the way and manner by which the key was made took skill and perfection. All the codes and hieroglyphics of Baja were inlaid on the key, from the tiniest of details to the large drawings; everything was done with perfection and care.

Jane quickly wrapped the key in a sack cloth and hid it away from everyone by placing it in Oscar's pouch.

She whispered in Oscar ear, "Don't let this out of your sight."

"You have my word," said Oscar.

Then a magical door opened and the fighters with their leader ran out as quickly as they could. The magical door led to a dark cellar where there were skeleton bones of armies who had tried to come and get the magical key. The elders were smart enough to break the key up into three pieces. Dead men tell very few tales, as their bones lay on the cold floor.

Jane looked over the men whose bones lay lifeless, and noticed that they were all from the Baja royal guards. But, why was Baja sending men on a secret mission to find a key that never existed? Jane realized that the reason these men were on a secret mission was that someone had found out that the key Sam lost might not have been the key after all.

That's why her family was allowed to come back into Baja. So therefore someone in high power must know that they made a mistake, and never informed her and her family. The one person that came to Jane's mind was Mr. Stewart, the ruler and caretaker of Baja. Now everything started to make a whole lot of sense, but Jane had to get the message to her husband and friends. That meant that she would have to find them.

As Jane and her fighters were leaving, a skeleton of an army soldier began to move and talk! His bones had dust all over them; his army uniform that was once pristine and clean was nothing more than rags. As he walked toward Jane, his bones began to fall apart, but he managed to catch her leg. Holding on with all of his might he screamed.

"You have birthed the boy king who would come and save us; hurry and leave before the dark falls."

And then the soldier pointed toward a sealed doorway. This was a little eerie and scary to Jane and her fighters, but nevertheless, they had to move on. Jane cautiously looked back at the soldier and he was not there anymore. As Jane looked around, she noticed the soldier's bones walking away into a bright light.

"Let's get out of here," said Jane.

The fighters quickly broke the seal and moved out the

door leading underground. At first there were no lights or anything in sight. All that Jane and her fighters could see was blackness. One fighter lit a match and was frightened by what he saw. At first they all saw a huge beast, but as the light got brighter, they realized that it was just a statue.

Oscar demanded that everyone stop, and they quickly did. Oscar told Jane that this must be the tunnel and cities that her mother and other citizens of Baja built for the coming war. It was so much for Jane to take in; she began to move very cautiously through the tunnel. As they came closer and closer, they could hear people talking and whispering. Jane quickly cautioned her fighters to move slowly, and that this could be a trap.

As they got to the end of the tunnel, there was a big barn fire going on. People were chanting and dancing around a huge statue; the people almost seemed to be in a place of worship, and others were going about their daily duties. From up above, Jane and her fighters were at least twenty feet up. They did not know how to get down; so Samantha, without thinking, used her ninja skills to flip and twirl into the air; landing like a cat on her feet, right in front of the ceremonial fire.

Some of the people below were impressed, while the

worshippers were very upset that Samantha had ruined their ceremonial dance. One worshiper began to spit at Samantha, speaking in a different tongue, and called her a devil and a hypocrite. Samantha was a tough girl, and demanded to know who was in charge. One of the worshippers pointed to a man in a long red robe; it seemed to catch Samantha's eyes by the way it moved through the air like a snake crawling on the floor. The robe itself was hypnotizing and jaw dropping; it glowed with the symbols of Baja and other symbols no one had ever seen.

"Leader, I need a word with you," said Samantha.

As the figure turned around, Samantha had the shock of her life; it was Mr. Stewart, the ruler and keeper of Baja.

Mr. Stewart came closer to her, mumbling, "Don't I know you, young lady?"

"Of course you do, I am Samantha Grey, fighter of the Carrot-Top family, and what are you doing here?"

The look on Mr. Stewart's face was one of shock and disbelief. He began to look around the room, secretly wondering where the others were. Samantha explained that they were stuck on the ledge up top. Mr. Stewart immediately summoned the underground citizens to retrieve the others.

"You have a lot of explaining to do," said Samantha.

"I owe you no explanation," said Mr. Stewart.

Then Jane and a few of her fighters were pushed into the area where Samantha and Mr. Stewart were having their private conversation.

"Mr. Stewart! What are you doing here?" said Jane.

Mr. Stewart was in shock to see that it was Jane Carrot-Top, and began to slur his words. Jane wanted an explanation, and she wanted it now. To her, the mystery of the key and why they were let back into Baja was now solved. But Jane was far from the truth. As Mr. Stewart was about to explain to Jane and her fighters the situation, Oscar attacked him, snarling and nipping at his face.

"Don't trust him, he's evil," said Oscar.

Jane began to rub Oscar on the back, letting him know that she agreed with him, and Oscar quickly jumped off of Mr. Stewart keeping a close eye on him. After a few minutes for Mr. Stewart to catch his breath, he took Jane and her fighters to a large gathering area where they were introduced as the mother and the fighters of the boy king.

The crowd began to clap, and offered Jane and her fighters everything that they could imagine, from expensive jewels to food and clean clothing. But Jane was not into all of this, and Mr. Stewart began to tell her that this was the tunnel that her mother and mother-in-law and

father-in-law helped construct. Mr. Stewart let Jane know that a war was coming and he must make sure that at least a million people of Baja survived, and the only way to do that was to set Sam Carrot-Top up as a destructor of Baja, the evil one. The people of Baja needed a lie to get them into the mode of saving their planet.

Chapter 13

Own Their Own

The first key was a fake, but the real key was out there, somewhere. Mr. Stewart pulled Jane aside and showed her a third of a key that he had found while in the temple of the Azul many years ago. Jane played it off, but she knew that he was telling the truth because she had a second third. All they needed was one other piece and the key would be complete. Jane noticed the same perfection and beauty in the piece Mr. Stewart had.

Jane became angry and slapped Mr. Stewart across the face for setting up her husband to go on a mission with a fake key, and being betrayed by his brother. Mr. Stewart assured Jane that it had to be done; it was in the scrolls of Baja for this to take place. Jane did not care about the scrolls; her husband and family were ruined over a fairy tale prophecy.

Mr. Stewart assured Jane that it would all be worth it in the end. He took Jane's face into his hands and gently rubbed the tears away, telling her that she had given birth to a boy king who would retrieve the other part of the key. Jane quickly took Mr. Stewart's hands off of her face and

turned away in anger.

"You have turned two brothers against each other," said Jane.

"Marcus Carrot-Top was going to turn on his brother, because he was jealous of him, even from birth," said Mr. Stewart.

"I don't believe you," said Jane.

Mr. Stewart told Jane that she would soon know the truth, that Sam had hidden away for many years from her that his brother Marcus from birth was always an evil child, and that at night Marcus used to worship the evils of Baja. Marcus was the only child born in Baja without a secret power, and because of this Marcus became jealous and wanted what Sam had. The only way to get it was to join the seven wizards of the forest.

"Who are these seven wizards?" said Jane to Mr. Stewart.

But he wasn't ready to tell; he turned his back to Jane and his face began to frown in disappointment. He then quickly turned around and told Jane that one of the seven wizards was his twin brother Mirus Stewart. Jane became bewildered, and just stared at Mr. Stewart; she could not believe what she was hearing. Could it really be true?

Jane let Mr. Stewart know that she did not believe

him, but he began to prove what he was saying was true; he described to Jane the figure that Peter saw in his office. That was his brother Mirus coming back and forth in time travel from the forest. Mr. Stewart went on to tell Jane that his brother also had a son named Larry who went to school with Peter, and Larry had no powers either. He was afraid that Larry would join his father in doing evil, so he moved Larry into his home at a young age. Yet, everything he tried to make Larry a good child failed.

Mr. Stewart told Jane that he was hiding Larry from his brother, because Baja didn't need another evil wizard, and that was why Oscar growled at Mr. Stewart, because Mirus and Patric Stewart are twins. Patric then showed Jane an old picture of him and Mirus growing up in Baja. Jane looked at the picture closely and she could see the evil in Mirus' eyes.

Suddenly, the boys in the picture seemed to move. Jane quickly dropped the picture and ran out of the area, trying to catch her breath. Patric ran after Jane, explaining to her that he loved his brother just as much as Sam loved his, but they were both evil, and that they must be stopped. Mr. Stewart went on to explain the entire story to Jane's army; everyone listened with care and concern.

Patric went on to list the seven wizards for the

fighters. He named his brother first. Of the seven wizards, one was said to be deathly ill, and the six were looking for a rare rhino plant; they were Mirus, Marcus, Bella, Louis, Cilus, Hoyle, and Horitio. These seven wizards were not born with powers, but got them through the first set of seven wizards. When a wizard was sick and had to die, before they left, they had to turn their souls and powers over to another; because of this, children of Baja who were not born with powers, were considered outcasts.

They would go and seek powers from the wizards of the forest. Patric went on to tell the army that Cilus was the sickly one, and that he had been sick for some time now. Cilus was but a mere child, maybe ten to twelve years old, and he was gifted with the power of death. One look into his eyes, and he would suck a soul into the abyss; the soul would crumble to the ground in mere ashes.

"We must get that rhino plant," said Samantha.

Patric went on to tell Samantha that the plant was rare, and would not be easy to take; it was guarded by the twelve-headed bull monster. Many men had tried, and not one made it close enough to even grab the plant. After all that they had been through, Samantha felt as if they could get the plant before the wizards of the forest.

Samantha began to gather up her team, and told them

the plan, letting them know that it was too late to turn back now; and for the sake of Baja, they must continue fighting. Samantha got the army going; they began to cheer and held up their fists with pride.

Patric walked away silently as Samantha wooed the crowd into a frenzy. He then went to console Jane, and let her know that they would win the war, and that they would save Baja. All it would take was a matter of time. The look of worry was still in Jane's eyes, but she felt that she must fight for the sake of her child and the many other young children in Baja. Patric held Jane closely in his arms as Samantha looked on. When she saw this, she immediately interrupted them.

"Keep your hands off of her; for all we know, you could be a part of the wizards' imps!" said Samantha strongly.

Patric walked off hesitantly and upset; he was insulted by what Samantha had said, but the comment gave Jane something to think about. They must be very careful about who they trusted; they must determine what was real and what was fake. Jane pulled herself together and was ready once again to go to war. Jane ordered the army to get a good night's rest because tomorrow would be a test of will.

Jane then called to Mr. Stewart telling him that they must find her husband and the others. Patric quickly ushered Jane and Samantha to a secret room. In it was a huge golden eye; the eye would open and shut, and each time it seemed as if it was storing information about the subject in question.

"I have never seen anything so beautiful," said Jane, as she went over and rubbed her hands on the eye statue.

To Jane it felt almost alive; she could feel a heartbeat and a pulse rushing through the object.

She quickly jumped back, causing a bit of a panic. "It's alive!" she said.

"Yes, my dear, it is," said Patric.

He explained to Jane that this golden eye had been found centuries ago, and no one knew how exactly to use it, but by simply asking it to show a subject or place, the eye seemed to find it very quickly. Jane and Samantha still could not get over the beauty and fascination of the ancient piece.

Suddenly the object gave off a bright light and a voice said, "What shall the seeker seek?"

Mr. Stewart quickly replied for Jane, "We seek the whereabouts of an army of good men fighting for Baja."

The eye sent out flying balls that turned into disk-

shaped objects that flew through the sky. Within seconds Jane, Samantha, and Mr. Stewart could see over the vast land. The objects went flying through the air like runaway rockets. Jane and the others watched intently to see where the disc would take them. Jane carefully looked in search of her husband and the others over the large land mass. She and the others could see the forest that was once lush green turning into nothing more than dried up dead trees.

Everything in the forest was now becoming dead and gloomy; the trees and plants yelled out for help, and the animals of the forest began to die one after another. This disease that the wizards had placed on the forest was spreading very fast; everything that once lived was now dying by the minute. Then out on a corner, the eye spotted some movement in the bushes, and it focused over in that area. As the eye got closer, Jane could make out her husband's orange hair.

"Thank goodness he's alive," cried Jane.

But her happiness was too soon; the eye picked up that Sam and the others were running from the dark riders, some of the soldiers were being caught and slaughtered right on the spot, blood and guts splashing everywhere. One of the soldier's limbs rolled by Sam, and he quickly held his breath and stayed calm. He could feel the head of a dark

rider's horse above him; the evil horse was sniffing and smelling through the bushes where it thought someone might be hiding.

Sam knew that these wild horses were not good with smell or tracks, so he and the others remaining became as still as possible. For a minute, Sam thought that he was caught, as the horse gazed over his head, but the horse did not detect him. Sweat began to fall to the ground in puddles from Sam's body; it was apparent that everyone was afraid of these dark riders; their faces were never seen, the only thing noticeable was a dark evil force. With no luck, the riders moved on in search of others that they could either capture or kill.

Jane asked Mr. Stewart to help her husband and the others. He let Jane know that he could not risk the wizards finding out about the underground city.

"You fool; all you care about is your precious city! What about Baja and its people?" said Jane, as she began to get angry.

After a quick and painful tongue-lashing from Jane, Mr. Stewart decided to show her and the others an escape route that would lead them to where her husband and the others were. Whatever she and the others did, they must never return back to the underground city, or ever tell

anyone where they had been. Jane quickly agreed and walked away, leaving Mr. Stewart in awe and wondering if she would keep her promise.

Jane and Samantha quickly went and woke up the other soldiers and told them that their plans had changed, and that they would be leaving now. Some of the soldiers began to mumble, and others began to question Jane's and Samantha's leadership.

"After all we have been through, you question my leadership?" said Samantha.

One of the soldiers in the background shouted. "You two are nothing more than mere women!"

Samantha quickly walked over and slashed out her sword; ordering the soldier to a one on one combat. But she was quickly pulled off of the soldier by Jane and asked that she save all of her strength for the war ahead. Reluctantly, Samantha obliged and let the soldier know that this confrontation was not over. So, in the end, all that was left to save Sam and the others were Oscar, Samantha, and Jane. The rest of the soldiers hung their heads low in shame as Jane ripped them apart.

"You are not soldiers, you're nothing more than cowards. All of you have enjoyed the fruits and pleasures of Baja; now you leave her for demons to bleed her dry."

She gathered up her fighting gear and headed out of the meeting area. Behind Jane came Oscar and Samantha, consoling her, letting her know that they would be behind her no matter what. After a pep talk amongst themselves, Jane, Oscar, and Samantha headed to Patric's private room to be led to the secret tunnel. Jane kept on looking back, hoping one soldier would change their mind, but no one did. Everyone was too afraid to fight; they were tired, afraid and weak.

Jane kept on walking; she was filled with anger and envy of these soldiers, but there was no time to sulk, she must save her husband. Baja could not be saved without him. Mr. Stewart led Jane and the others through a long secret tunnel; every once in a while she would see names and messages scribbled on the walls of people who had died to build the secret tunnel.

Just as she was about to take her eyes off of the tunnel, she saw her mother's name, and for a moment she paused, and began to rub the wall like a baby, soft and gently with strokes going up and down the sides of the name. Jane traced her mother's name with her fingers, as if she was re-writing it all over again.

"Come, on we must go," said Oscar.

Jane quickly came to her senses, and as she was

leaving, all the names on the walls began to glow!

"This has never happen before," said Mr. Stewart.

"Then we must be doing something right," said Jane.

She quickly got her frame of mind back on track, and was once again focused on saving her husband and the rest of the crew. Yet, for a brief moment, she could feel her mother's presence. As a sudden wind came through the tunnels and kissed Jane upon her rosy cheeks, she knew her mother was with her, and began to muster up even more strength.

As the tunnel began to end, Mr. Stewart let Jane and the others know that this was as far as he could take them; the rest was up to them. Before he departed, he handed Jane a disc object; it was glowing and had the secret codes of Baja. Mr. Stewart told Jane to throw the disc into the air, and the disc would open up into a traveling vessel that was faster than the speed of light. Jane quickly thanked Mr. Stewart, who then directed her to stay on the wooden path and that it would lead her to her husband. But they must hurry; it was not safe to be in the forest at night. The dark riders were constantly watching over the forest.

Jane and the others ran to the end of the tunnel, looking back ever so often until Mr. Stewart and the tunnel seemed to disappear into thin air. Soon Jane, Samantha, and

Oscar were out on the wooden path. Quickly they began to run. To make up time, Oscar threw Jane and Samantha on his large back and off they went. Oscar's legs were so powerful and strong, he was going so fast that Jane and Samantha saw nothing but tree branches in their faces.

Chapter 14

Losing a Friend

The two women began to duck and dodge the branches as Oscar ran and whipped through the trees. Jane and Samantha held on tight, because Oscar was not slowing down. Through the trees and over streams and hills, Oscar ran with power, trampling the dead trees and leaves that filled the ground. Jane noticed that all of her plants were dying, even the ones she'd tried to save. They cried out for her, but she could not stop, she yelled.

"I promise I will be back to save you all, and everyone who is responsible for this will pay!"

But this did nothing to heal the hurt all of the plants and trees were feeling; they just cried out for her more. Jane felt terrible inside; but Samantha reminded Jane that there was no way that they could stop right now, they must keep going, and she promised Jane that she would come back with her to heal her beloved plants.

Right now, they were in a middle of a war. Jane quickly shied away from the cries of her plants, turning a blind eye in order to not feel the pain. Yet, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed that her plants and all the

vegetation were sick, something was killing them very rapidly. Tears began to flow from her eyes. She quickly hid the tears from Samantha, but everyone knew she was hurting.

Suddenly Oscar came to a stop as a huge tree fell in their way. The tree was dying and begged Jane for help.

"Help us, master," they all cried.

Jane and the others watched as the tree did its best to pick itself off of the ground. It kept crying out for Jane; this time she couldn't ignore it. She jumped off of Oscar and began to heal the tree with her touch. Suddenly the tree's limbs and roots began to flourish with color, and it picked itself up. Its bark began to get brown again and the leaves began to grow rapidly.

"Oh! You have the green thumb all right," said Oscar, as the tree began to heal, and quickly embedded its roots into the ground.

The tree began to pass along life to the next, then all of the trees began to rise from the death and dried up limbs they once had. They began to move wildly in the winds; praising the heavens for their quick return from death. Then they bowed to Jane, singing and praising her name. The trees, one by one, like a set of dominos, fell to their knees over and over again.

Jane was filled with emotions, and asked the trees to

get up as she wiped the tears from her eyes. One of the trees took its branch with a little leaf on it and wiped Jane's face ever so gently, letting her know that they did care. Oscar once again reminded Jane that they had to leave; the others were waiting and in need of their help.

Jane immediately thought of a plan, and asked the trees to help her find her husband and friends. The trees put their leaves to the ground; they could sense the heartbeat of anyone. Immediately, they turned their branches and leaves in the direction they needed to go.

"You must hurry," said the trees.

Jane and Samantha immediately jumped on Oscar's back, and quickly took off down the path the trees had made for them. The trees began to wave and say goodbye as Jane and the others raced through the path. Jane looked back once or twice to make sure the trees were all right, and she noticed that the trees were covering up her path so that no one could track them. Jane was proud of her trees, not only was she able to save them, but they were able to save her. So, on their way they went; Oscar flying along, and Jane and Samantha holding on for dear life.

"We must get there before nightfall," said Jane, as they passed the many splendors of the Ambassador Forest.

They noticed that everything was now being infected,

mountains and stone structures began to crumble right before their eyes; rivers and streams began to dry up as if someone was sucking them up with a straw.

"Baja is dying," said Oscar, as he continued to race through the forest.

"We must find that rhino plant," said Samantha.

Further up the stream, dead fish and other sea creatures were gasping for air as there was no water. Animals were dropping from the sky; every size, every species, and all were fighting for life. As Oscar continued to run through the forest, Jane glanced something spectacular, an old ancient Mayan temple.

There was an eerie feeling of evil coming from it, but the temple was so beautiful. Huge Mayan statues graced the entrance, with large rock monsters guarding the temple. At a closer look, Jane saw that people were being carried in by chains and ropes. She immediately told Oscar to stop and get a closer look. Samantha was not thrilled with this idea, but let Jane do as she wished.

"Let's see if there is anyone we know," said Jane.

Before the words could leave her mouth, her eyes were on Bella. "Well, well, well; if it's not the brave Bella."

Samantha quickly crouched down behind a tree to get a better look; and sure enough, it was Bella. They were

bringing some of the fighters that were with Sam and the others. From a far distance, Samantha spotted David, and gasped a deep breath of air.

"Oh! No, they caught Sir David," shouted Samantha.

Jane quickly put her hands over Samantha's mouth, as any little noise could carry far. It was as if Samantha's words floated on thin air. Suddenly, the words hits Bella's ears, and she immediately sent her rock dogs out to search. They were huge, with strong iron breastplates and helmets; all of their muscles were made of huge rocks. They were mean-looking and evil; their eyes were completely black and they constantly foamed at the mouth.

"Go and bring me human flesh," said Bella.

The rock dogs took off running.

"Oh no! We must leave," said Jane, as the rock dogs came tearing through the forest, knocking down trees and vegetation.

They had picked up on Jane and the other's scent, and they were now on the hunt. Jane and Samantha jumped on Oscar's back and they took off, but it was too late; they were now being chased by the huge rock dogs. Jane was so afraid, she closed her eyes from time to time, but every time she opened them, they would be right there, breathing down Oscar's back.

Samantha pulled out her iron bow and arrows, and began to shoot the creatures as they came full force behind them. But the iron arrows did very little damage to the rock dogs; a little chip here and there did not slow these massive creatures down, and the more Samantha shot at them, the faster they came running.

At this point, Oscar became very tired and began to slow down; he could no longer run, and he was running out of energy. Suddenly Oscar collapsed to his knees, throwing Jane and Samantha into the shrubs and trees. Oscar began to wrestle with the creatures, but he was outnumbered. The creatures ganged up on him and began to tear his flesh apart.

"Don't worry about me, run!" said Oscar.

Jane looked back with tears in her eyes, and began to take off running, leaving Oscar to fend for himself. He put up a good fight, until he saw that Jane and Samantha were far away; then he gave up, his body was savagely torn apart. His blood filled the ground, the symbols of Baja that were on Oscar died as he did, and the rock dogs savagely dragged his body back to their master. Jane and Samantha got away; they quickly ran through the forest avoiding all main pathways. As soon as they were well away from danger, Samantha began to blame Jane for stopping.

"We were told not to stop," said Samantha.

Jane could not do anything but hang her head low, sobbing. She was in distress; she had lost her best friend once again, and began to blame herself. Samantha had no pity; she began to walk along the path without Jane. Shortly afterwards, Jane followed. No one said a word; both ladies continued to walk the long pathway, intent on saving Sam and the others.

"We must keep fighting, we can have a pity party later," said Samantha.

But deep inside, Samantha was sad and hurt; after all, Oscar was part of the family. She stopped to get a drink of water from a stream that was running out of a tall mountain rock. Samantha washed her face as she let the tears roll down; she did not want Jane to see how hurt she was. After all, she was supposed to be a warrior.

As Samantha went to drink the water from the stream she noticed an awful stench. "This water is poison!"

Jane rushed over and took a quick sniff; the water was indeed poisoned, and that was the main reason all the plants, animals and vegetation were dying. The seven wizards had poisoned the waters with the same sickness as the wizard Cilus had. Samantha quickly wiped her face with the sleeves of her shirt to get the poisonous water off of

her face.

"We must keep going," said Jane.

The two ladies got themselves together and began walking the long pathway. Oscar was no longer alive to move them fast through the forest, and he was no longer there to protect and warn them of danger. As they walked, there were death and destruction everywhere; plants were once again dying, vegetation had become poisoned, and the stench of death was in the air. Old tombs and ruins were completely destroyed, stone and rubble were scattered all over the ground, statues that once guarded the entrance to the secret forest were nothing more than dust, and destruction was as far as the eye could see.

There was no living thing in sight. Jane held back her emotions; this was no time to stop and save any more plants and vegetation, because they would die of the poison in the Ambassador Forest. As Jane walked, she continually looked back, hoping to find any signs of life anywhere, but there was just death. Jane promised revenge for the plants of the forest; she promised that whoever was responsible for this would pay a great price.

After hours of walking, Jane and Samantha were finally close to finding Sam and the others. Jane began to run ahead, awaiting the comfort and loving arms of her husband.

Samantha quickly ran after her, warning her that this could be a trap. This time, Jane listen, slowly walking instead of running. Jane and Samantha checked out their surroundings, but could not find anyone. Jane feared the worst, thinking that Sam and the others had been captured like David and held in a prison camp.

"This is the right spot, so where are they?" said Samantha.

She held out a reflection glass in the sun, and the glass began to glitter in the sun's rays. Samantha sent out a code to anyone alive who knew how to send codes by the sun. At first, nothing happened; so the two ladies sat and waited. Then, through the dead leaves and vegetation, a code came back.

"It's them, someone is alive," said Samantha to Jane.

The two ladies began to run and hopped over the dried up vegetation, hoping to find anyone they had lost. Jane and Samantha kept running, as if they were running from someone. Their emotions got the best of them, and both ladies began to cry uncontrollable.

From beneath the vegetation, out popped Sam and Red Fox with a few of the remaining fighters. Sam was glad to see his wife, and was happy that both ladies had made it out alive. There were no words, just emotions as the

fighters reunited with Jane and Samantha. Sam held Jane in his arms for a long time, and Red Fox held onto Samantha, kissing and rubbing her cheeks. The two men apologized to the ladies for leaving them behind, but both women knew that there wasn't anything either of them could have done to save them from what had occurred.

Nevertheless, Sam and Red Fox hurried the ladies out of the path, letting them know that the wizards had sent out hunting dogs. Jane began to cry, telling Sam and the other fighters that the hunting dogs had killed Oscar, and that David was captured by Bella and her imp friends. Sam's conscience began to bother him, and he apologized once again to his wife for not believing her about Bella, and because of his loyalty to her, he had caused many lives to be lost, and Baja to crumble. Jane turned around and comforted her husband, letting him know that all was not lost, and he would help in saving Baja.

"We must continue to fight or forever be slaves of the wizards," said Jane.

Red Fox, Sam and the remaining fighter agreed. Sam and Red Fox quickly took Jane and Samantha into a dune under the ground. The dune was huge, earthy-looking and felt soft and loamy. Its tunnels were long; from the scratches and carvings in the dune, Jane knew that they were in a large

bird's nest. Large white and gold eggs were still lying in the nest, lifeless.

As Jane and the others walked about ten feet in, there sat a large bird, slouched over, and foaming at the mouth. The bird was huge, and had to weight about two thousand pound. On its head was a large crown made out of pure gold and the finest silver. Just like most things in Baja, the crown glowed with codes and symbols. The feathers on the huge bird began to fall off, one by one causing a big cloud of dust.

"It is dying," said Red Fox.

He explained that the bird had been poisoned from the water, and no matter what they did, there was no way of saving any of the animals unless they got the rhino plant. Jane and Samantha let the others know that they had experienced this as well. Samantha rubbed the big bird's head and whispered in its ear.

"We will revenge your death."

After this, the bird gave up and died; the huge crown and symbols stopped glowing. The bird turned into dust and blew away in the wind.

"We must keep moving," said Red Fox to the others.

He and Sam were pretty beaten up; they looked tired and worn out. Red Fox was missing patches of fur on his

tail and face, Sam was badly cut and bruised; so were the other fighters. Yet, everyone vowed to move on and not to give up. They quickly moved the heavy bird's eyes to the entrance of the dune to block anyone from coming in, and then quickly began to move through the underground tunnel.

Inside this magnificent tunnel was a long history of the protectors of Baja. Sam explained to Jane and Samantha that the bird's name was Ofus; he was one of the original founders and protectors of Baja, and he was thousands of years old. There were many like him, but they were scattered throughout the region. They were very hard to find, because they were the first birds to ever live underground in dunes.

The cave had marvelous paintings of centuries ago; at times, the paintings seemed to come alive. They showed a great nation being destroyed and enslaved by the evil of the seven wizards. The pictures also showed how beautiful Baja once was; there were moons that came down and sat on the roads and farm lands. All the people of Baja were skilled in every level; there were machineries, pyramid builders, artists, teachers, wizards, and great beasts from many worlds away.

Everyone lived in peace and harmony; until one day a great key was found by a little boy who showed it to his

father, who was a code breaker. His father deciphered the codes and became the most powerful man alive, except he was evil. He began to rule with an iron fist. Turning people into slaves, he began to build statues and pyramids to his liking; instead of serving the people, he served himself.

As Sam was telling the story, Jane got closer to the drawings and a picture seemed to move. She could not believe what she was seeing, and rubbed her eyes for a minute. She grabbed Samantha.

"Look, doesn't this picture remind you of Mr. Stewart?"

Samantha quickly ran her fingers over the picture.

"Yes it does."

Sam and Red Fox wanted to know what was going on. The two ladies explained that they were in the company of Mr. Stewart in the underground city, and he had an evil twin brother. Red Fox questioned Mr. Stewart's truthfulness.

"I never trusted that man, from the moment I first laid eyes on him," said Red Fox.

"Let's not jump to conclusions, let's wait on the truth," said Sam.

"We don't have time to wait on the truth, many men have died!" said Samantha, as they continued to walk through the tunnel.

The bird was of great importance, he had gold upon

gold, and there were treasure chests and small rooms filled with gold and valuable gemstones. As they walked further through the tunnel, they came upon a surprise; there were three golden doors that glowed with the secret codes of Baja.

"Where could these doors possibly lead us?" said Sam.

"From the experiences we've had, I am not looking forward to it," said Jane.

No one knew which door to open, or even to open a door at all. There were so many mysteries in Baja that did not need to be opened; so everyone was being careful. The fighters got ready and held up their few remaining weapons. Sam and the others took a deep breath and exhaled.

Sam then quickly chose door number two. A bright light burst out of the door opening; then it swirled around the room like tornado winds. Everyone fell to the floor and up against the walls. The ball of light began to spin and make little white balls of light. They circled around the room, scanning everyone's faces; then they joined together and became one huge ball again.

Suddenly the ball let of a huge bang and sucked Sam and the others into a new dimension. The boom was so loud that it could be heard for miles. The people in Baja also felt it, but brushed it off as just an old earthquake. Yet,

the wiser and older citizens knew that it was something more, and fear came into their eyes. They began to gather up their grandchildren and closed all their stores. Many other citizens went on with their daily lives, as if nothing had happened. But unknown to the ignorant, there was plenty going on; a war between good and evil was taking place right under their noses.

Back in the tunnel, there was something strange and magnificent going on. Sam and the others were in the big ball; the light was so bright that they had to close their eyes. Sam and the others could feel themselves tumbling down; going nowhere. Their eyes were tightly shut and their hearts were thumping in fear. They had no idea as to where this was leading them.

One by one, they began to tumble down a long stem-like vegetation; the further down they went, the less bright the light became. They were now able to open their eyes, and when they did they got the shock of their lives; everything was green and lush. The trees had big red and silver apples the size of a wagon; the wind blew by tiny fairies that flew in swarms of at least a million.

Everything seemed to be alive and prospering. After everyone had tumbled down the hole, they looked back and saw that they had slid down a huge, big old tree that had

been around for centuries. The birds must have found a way here by digging. The tree stood about two hundred feet tall, massive in size, with moss and huge mushroom growing from its bark.

"Where could we be?" asked one of the fighters.

"I have no clue," said Sam. "People talk about many worlds in Baja, but many thought it was nothing more than myths of the old people."

Before anyone moved, Sam made sure everyone was all right and accounted for.

"Make sure we all stick together," said Red Fox.

Samantha could see in her friends' eyes that they were scared and tired, especially Red Fox. He was hurting so badly, but there was nothing she could do. So, Samantha finally went up to Red Fox and told him to get in the back and she would lead the crew. There was no arguing with Samantha; once she made up her mind, she never turned back. So Red Fox and the others let her lead. The land was massive; Samantha had no idea where to go first. Everyone began to look over this immense land and see the huge roots that were connected to the tree.

"These roots can lead anywhere," said Jane.

Everyone nodded in agreement. The roots seemed to go in a million different directions, over and under the

planet. As they walked, they could feel tremors coming from the ground; whatever it was, it was big, and coming their way. Samantha told everyone to stay close, and behind the tall grass and plants. As the team walked on, Jane noticed that the plants and vegetation were clinging to her. Some were singing, some were spitting out cotton seeds from their center, and one plant pulled off its petals and inside it was filled with fresh drinking water.

Jane gracefully took the water and began to drink; it was refreshing, and she then passed it on to the others. It was the freshest water they had tasted in a while. Jane then took her green thumb and healed the plant where it had broken the petals off. The petals grew back instantly; then the plant began to sign, sending codes to the others.

"It seems like they love you," said Sam as he hugged his wife.

Jane was pleased to see that something was surviving and living well. Suddenly a magical pathway appeared, and a huge leaf dropped from the sky.

"They want us to pile in," said Samantha.

Everyone did; the leaf was big enough to hold them all. Once everyone was in, the plants began to blow on the leaf, sending Sam and the others flying down the magical pathway. It seemed like a wild ride, but the plants were

taking them to their destination. The ride went on for a while, and then it suddenly stopped at the end of the pathway.

The crew could still hear the loud tremors on the ground. Whatever it was, it was getting closer and closer. Jane and the others peaked from behind a huge flower. The flower came alive and pushed Jane and the others into the open.

"Master, we have been waiting for you," said the flower. It sounded sad and depress. "The great war is coming and you have come to save us."

Big tears dropped from the flower and splashed on Jane and the others. This flower was huge, like nothing Jane or the others had ever seen. It had a human face, but its entire body was a plant, with stems, roots and leaves. Its skin was pale white with rosy cheeks, and silver titanium hair the glittered in the sun. The plant was at least eighteen feet tall, long and slender like a snake. Jane could not believe her eyes; she stood and gazed upon this marvelous creature for several minutes.

"Forgive me, but did I make you?" said Jane.

"Of course you did, silly master," said the plant.

It went on to remind Jane of how she formed them. When Jane was a little girl, she was brought to the elders as a

gifted child. They put in front of Jane a rare plant that grew on certain children of Baja. When she touched the plant, it grew, consuming the children with it.

"Oh, yes! I remember, your species was called the Naffaldorfs."

Jane was amazed to see what her green thumb had done; for so many years she had blocked out this event. But this was a short meeting; the plant quickly moved itself back into the ground as the loud tremors got closer. When Jane turned around to question her plant, it was gone, totally vanished back into the earth, obviously something was coming. All the plants were afraid and began to disappear into the earth, leaving only a small ant hill dome.

"Don't be afraid, whatever it is, we will help," said Jane.

But the plants never stuck their heads out, knowing better of what was coming. As all the plants vanished underground, this left a better view of the land, and now that Jane and the others could see better, they noticed that something was sucking the land dry. The earth began to crack from the lack of water; there was no rainfall, and under the ground was the last source of water. Jane knew then why the plants wanted her here, but what was causing this was the same thing causing everything else, the

seventh wizard Cilus.

Once Jane and the others found the white rhino plant, its powers would heal the plants and also Cilus. This was a risk they had to be taken or everything would die. As Samantha led the way, she noticed a huge group of strange monsters were coming. They were about fifteen feet in height, muscular, and huge; their size alone would frighten anyone. They came in packs, all carrying white sacks, as if they were going into the fields to hunt and farm. There was no running from these huge creatures, and as they got closer, Jane noticed that they were also a type of Naffaldorfs with their human appearance, but their bodies were covered in plant and vegetation. They were a living, moving garden of plants and flowers. Jane and the others were speechless.

"Let's try to communicate with them," said Sam.

"That seems like a bad idea," said Red Fox as the creatures got closer.

Not only did the creatures outnumber them, but their size alone would frighten the bravest men. Jane and the others waved to the creatures as they came forward. At first, Jane thought that the creatures might run them over, but they stopped. As Jane got a good look, she was amazed to see the beauty of these creatures; their eyes were pitch

black, some had silver hair, and some had golden hair. Others wore the finest linens, while some clothing seemed to be ravaged and worn. Yet, through it all these were a beautiful species.

As the leader of the creatures knelt down, with a loud voice, he said, "Master, our master has return."

He shouted it back to the others, and then they all knelt down, praising Jane. She had no time to bask in the glory; she wanted to know what was going on. Sadly enough, the creatures told Jane that the water supply was running out, and the only way that they could survive was to eat their relative plants in the meadows. The creature had a sad look on his face as he told Jane the story. The plants and flowers in the meadows produced more water, and because of this, they were a great source of food to the creatures.

Jane was hurt, but knew that they were only killing the plants in the meadows for survival, not out of evil or jealousy. That's why the plants in the meadows would bury themselves in the earth to hide from the creatures. The creature went on to tell Jane that it was never like this before, and that something was truly wrong. Baja was under attack, many of their people had die, and back in their village many were still dying. They were the gatherers; it was their responsibility to find water to keep their

species alive.

"Maybe I can heal them," said Jane.

"But we need water," replied the creature.

Jane explain to the creatures that the only way to stop the vast spread of drought was to find the white rhino plant.

"Yes, of course, we know where it is," said the creature.

Jane and the others were glad to hear that, but there was more; the creatures went on to tell Jane that the rhino plant was guarded by a satanic creature. No one had come back alive when trying to get that plant. For centuries now, many had tried, and failed.

"Well we can't afford to fail," said Jane.

The creatures were ordered by their master Jane to stay outside the meadows and wait for her return. They were told not to feed on their distance relatives in the meadows. Jane promised she would return with plenty of water. It was a warm statement, but Sam felt as if his wife had promised something she couldn't deliver. Yet, he never said a word; he went along with his wife's plan and supported her every step of the way.

"How do we get there?" said Jane to the creatures.

The creature then whistled up into the air, and an

army of large wind hawks flew down. Their wingspan was long and massive, they had horns on their heads with a grip for holding on, and they were sable in color. From their outer appearance, these birds looked very frightening, but they were the gentlest creatures in the vast meadows of Baja.

Jane and her fighters were frightened, but quickly learned that the creatures were very gentle, and they were their only means for flying up high in the air to get to the area of the rhino plant. As the hawks landed, they were well groomed and taken care of. They were strong and healthy creatures of the air, and they all landed in a synchronized order, all by rank.

"Who is the leader who would guide us?" said one of the large birds.

"I would," said Samantha.

Without hesitation, a bird threw Samantha up on its back, and showed her off as the leader. Once the other birds recognized their leader, everyone else was loaded onto the hawks. With their large beaks, they picked up everyone remaining. Getting up on these huge creatures was very hard and uncomfortable. Once the hawks were matched with their riders, their backs sank down to take the form of the person riding them, making it more comfortable in flight.

"Now that was cool," said Samantha.

As the hawk fitted her to his back, Samantha and the others were then given lassos to tie around their bird's neck for a better grip. Now it was time for take off; up, up into the air one by one the birds took off, leaving nothing more than wind in their rider's face. The plants and leaves on the ground began to blow from the heavy wind that was propelled by the birds' wings.

"Remember to keep your word," said Jane to the creatures.

They promised not to harvest any more of the other plants in the meadows until she returned.

"We will keep our word," said the leader of the creatures.

As they watched Jane take off into the air, the hawks were moving so fast that all their riders could see was a puff of cloud every now and again. The riders held on tightly as the hawks flew through the air. Soon deep down below, Jane and the others could hear a loud chanting; then there was a loud roaring.

"We are here," said the hawk to Samantha.

The leader of the hawks told the others that this was as far as they could go without being spotted by the manta rays of the air.

"What are the manta rays?" said Jane.

The hawk explained that there were huge black flying manta rays; they covered the skies in blackness, feeding on anything in the air. They were fast, and their wings and devil's tails helped propel them in the air. They couldn't touch the ground because they had no way of taking off; so if they were to come down low, Samantha and the others should pull them to the ground.

The hawk also told Samantha that the chanting was from the talking stones, the stones worshiped the guardian of the rhino plant, and they would sound an alarm once they spotted an intruder. These stones would be easy to spot by their red glowing symbols.

"Whatever you do, run when you come in contact with the stones," said the hawk.

Everyone was a little tense, not knowing what to expect. The hawk reminded Jane and the others that they would be waiting right here for their return, if no harm or danger befell them. They also let Samantha and the others know that, since the hawks were the only ones that could get here, they must protect their lives, because Baja would need someone to retrieve the plant, if something happened to Samantha and the others. They nodded in agreement, and off they went into a dark and unknown forest, wondering if

they would ever return to the land they loved.

Chapter 15

The Dark Forest

Quietly the team ran through the forest, trying not to disturb anything; Samantha and the others could hear the roar of the large beast protecting the plant. Suddenly, as the team was moving through the forest, Sam could feel that they were being watched and told everyone to pick up speed. The team began to run, until they could not run anymore.

Whatever Sam was feeling, was coming close; the slither on the ground and the crunching of the tree branches made the crew run even faster. But it was too late, a huge snake came out of its hole and was ready to eat! It was gray and white, with blue eyes and a red tail, the size of about two hundred men. Something was moving in its belly, another victim of some sort. Its scales began to flake off from the fast and furious chase; on its belly glowed a red symbol, and on its back were wings for flight. Yet, it seemed like one had been half cut off. It sniffed the crewmembers and decided to attack; barley missing one of the fighters, everyone split up.

Using this tactic made the huge snake confused and it didn't know which one to attack. The snake became angry and

lashed out at the first moving target it saw. Slithering faster and faster through the trees, the snake got a hold of Red Fox, crushing his ribs. He reached for his pocket dagger, and once in his hands, he stabbed the snake in the eyes with all of his might. The snake began to shake and quiver in pain, then it let out a long hiss, while dropping him to the ground.

Samantha reached out her hand and grabbed onto him, pulling him inside a small hole with the others. But a few men were still out there and the angry snake was having its way with them. As blood dripped from the snake's eyes, it sprayed big splashes of blood all over the place, and with one fast swoop, it caught one of the fighters. Wasting no time, it swallowed him up.

From the small hole in the ground, Sam and the others threw darts and arrows at the snake; they used all they had to help their fallen fighters. Finally the snake was killed from all of the poisonous darts and arrows. It took its last breath and lay trembling on the floor, and then its body became lifeless.

Samantha and the others came out, and Sam and Red Fox quickly cut out the snake's belly to save their fighter. But, it was too late, he was nothing more than skeleton bones; the acid in the snake's belly had eaten him up in

minutes. Sam was upset, but was quickly consoled by the others.

"We can't stop, we must keep moving," said Red Fox.

And quickly they put the event behind them, and moved on; this time they were much more cautious of their surroundings. The skies above were quickly getting dark.

"It must be the flying manta rays," said Sam.

From down below, these creatures were much bigger than what the hawk had described. They were huge flying sting rays with the same red symbols glowing on their bellies, huge horns protruding from their heads, a large spiked tail, and huge eyes that could see for millions of miles.

Samantha ordered everyone to keep moving, and not to stop. She also told everyone to stay low to the ground; the manta rays would not attempt a landing. Everyone stayed low, moving as quickly as possible, and tried to avoid any contact with these creatures.

Suddenly one of the fighters' swords made a spark, and caught the eye of one of the manta rays. Quickly it came swooping down, trying very carefully not to touch the ground. Samantha pushed the fighter out of the way and belly down on the ground, nearly getting killed herself.

"That was a close call," said Samantha to the fighter.

The fighter just nodded, she was in shock to say

anything.

"Cover your sword, the glitter from it attracts them," said Samantha to the fighter.

The fighter quickly covered her sword and crawled on her belly to safety behind a huge rock. Everyone was safe other than Samantha. As she tried to get behind the huge stone, a manta ray came from behind the mountain top and was now face to face with her. Samantha stared into its big black eyes as if she was being hypnotized. When Sam saw this, he threw a huge rock at the creature, startling it. It took its eyes off of Samantha, and she was now unparalyzed. She quickly ran for cover, but the manta ray caught up with her, pushing Samantha to the ground with its huge tail. Not only was the tail huge, but it was also sharp, giving Samantha a large cut across her legs.

Samantha tried to run in pain, but couldn't. She was only a few feet away from the safe spot, but could not make it. She lay lifeless on the ground, unable to move. Blood began to pour from her cut; the manta ray was now circling its dinner, waiting for the right moment to pick up her lifeless body. As the manta ray came down, with all the strength she had left, she pulled out her huge sword and stabbed it through the heart.

The manta ray let out a loud cry, then fell to the

ground. Red Fox quickly ran out and pulled Samantha to safety. From behind the rock, Samantha and the others watched as the manta ray began to stumble and fall; it tried to flap its wings, but it did no good, it was stuck on the ground. When the other manta rays saw this, they swooped down and grabbed the manta ray as food.

The others began to fight over the food in the air; pieces of guts and bones flew right past Samantha and the others, leaving a horrible smell. In the air, the other manta rays were feeding on their own kind, fighting over the last pieces of meat and bone.

While this was going on, Sam quickly bandaged up Samantha's wounds with a piece of his shirt and ordered everyone to move out quickly and stay low to the ground. At the end of the forest was nothing more than desert. Skeleton bones of people who had tried to come here were visible. There was a warning sign for anyone who came this far to turn back.

As bad as Sam wanted to turn back, he knew that he had to move forward, but getting through a hot sea of desert was not going to be easy. Sam decided to use his powers of levitation to carry everyone through the desert. So, he did; one by one, he levitated everyone. No one was left behind. Because of the number of people he had to carry, it

put a lot of strain on Sam's mind, but he was determined to do it.

Low, and out of sight, they all levitated through the air, not knowing where he was going, the heat from the desert made Sam hallucinate and he began seeing things. Once again, Sam saw the image of an elder telling him that his son Peter was the key. Sam began to mumble through the air, but no one was listening; everyone seemed to be worn out from the heat of the sun.

Then there was nothing more than darkness; for hours it was like staring into the abyss. Soon Sam saw a little glitter of light; his eyes could barely open; his face and hands were badly sun burnt, and his tongue had an urge for a taste of water. Finally Sam got his mind together and began to sit up. He noticed that he was in a small room; there was a tiny cup of water with a tiny piece of meat.

"This is like eating elf food," Sam said to himself.

Sam began to wonder where he was; as he went to stand up, he bumped his head on a small overhang. Sam quickly looked around, and saw nothing familiar. He started to get out of bed. The last thing he remembered was carrying the fighters over the desert. By now, Sam knew that he was a prison of war.

As he began to move around, Sam noticed that he had no

clothing, he was butt naked! He quickly covered himself in shame, and began to look all over the room for his clothing. Then he heard little footsteps coming up the stairs. He quickly stood behind the door and waited for whoever was approaching. Then he jumped out, and what he saw was remarkable; the tiniest of elves that ever existed, standing only ten inches tall, and with blue fur.

"Oh, you're awake. The others are waiting for you down stairs," said the elf.

"Where is my clothing?" said Sam.

"Well, your clothing was soiled and had the dingiest stains. So, we washed them," said the elf with a smile.

The elf summoned another elf to bring Sam clothing, and he gave them to Sam. It was a nice feeling to have clean clothing. Sam thanked the elf and asked to see his family. The elf led Sam down a large tree trunk where they were all live.

"Where are we?" said Sam.

"Why, in Baja, of course?" said the elf.

Where in Baja was on Sam's mind, but he was too busy admiring the place to say that. The place had thousands of pictures on the walls, all of generations of elves. They all lived in a huge big tree, all one million of them. The elf introduced himself as Dunbar, and began to tell Sam how

they were found by the other elves as they were out hunting for food.

"I must have blacked out," said Sam.

"Yes, you did," said Dunbar.

Sam wondered if his friends and family were all right, and before he could ask, Dunbar told him that they managed to save everyone. He then told Sam that Sam must have been very tired because he dropped everyone in a man-eating lily plant. If it weren't for the screams of the others, they would have never heard them, and they would all be gone.

Sam once again thanked the elf, and Dunbar went on to tell Sam the boring story of how they hunt the lily plant for special healing powers. If they were not out that day hunting for medicine and food, Sam and his friends would be lost. But Dunbar was also an opportunistic elf; he loved the tick and the tock of Sam's old watch, and asked if he could have it.

"After all, I did save your lovely wife," said Dunbar.

Sam quickly, without hesitation, gave him the watch. Down the long small hallway they went; Sam was too tall to stand up straight, always hitting his head or squeezing in a tight spot. Dunbar just laughed and chuckled at Sam as he tripped and hit his head all the way down the spiral wooden staircase.

What a beautiful home it was, everything inside was carved from the tree; the chairs, the picture frames, the tables and the lamps. There were little elves running all over the place, zipping here and there and everywhere. Sam cautiously watched his step, being careful not to step on any of the tiny little elves. Finally Sam was downstairs with the others; the entire crew looked as if they were sardines in a can. They were all squeezed together and looked as if they were uncomfortable, but they wanted to be good to their host and not complain of the tight spot.

"Oh, honey, I am so glad you're okay," said Jane as she gave Sam a big hug.

Everyone thanked Sam for trying to save them. Because of this, Sam's spirit was lifted and he was ready to fight another round with the seven wizards.

"We must be leaving," said Sam.

Sam thanked the elves and promised them once the war was over they would return and reward them for their services. Before they left, many of the elves came up and gave Sam and the others special magic powders and medicines. Then they were handed paper sacks with food in them. The only thing wrong was that the food was elf-size, but nevertheless, no one complained; just gave thanks and they were ready to head out.

Dunbar then led his new friends down a secret tunnel that only a few elves knew about. It had a golden rock in front of the door; it glittered and shone. With a punch of the secret codes on the rock, it rolled away and opened a door to a mystical place.

"This is the way," said Dunbar; as he pointed to the hill where the white rhino plant lay.

The first glance of this land was spectacular. There were plants and flowers that were made of puff balls; they would burst into the sky and float like balloons. It was raining in some parts and snowing in others. There were many new and never before seen creatures, like an invisible bird and two-headed snakes. Most of the creatures were harmless and went about their daily lives; while others, like the silverback apes, were terrorizing the forest, eating and killing anything in their path.

Dunbar let Sam and the others know that the silverback apes did not eat human ghosts. Sam and the others were glad to hear this, and one by one Sam and the others spread out and were glad that they could finally stretch. They said their goodbyes to Dunbar, and began to walk toward the way to the plant. The secret entrance and the opening behind them simply vanished, as if it was never there.

Once in the area, Sam and the others remained at a low

profile, looking and watching the air. But, little did they know they were now in a battleground. First a hissing sound was becoming louder and louder, and then suddenly the ground started to move. The birds and animals of the forest began to scatter. Once Jane and the others saw this, they knew something was coming.

"Keep moving, something is coming," said Red Fox.

Everyone began to move fast, running through tall silver grass that cut like razors and plants that popped up out of the ground and shot fire out of their mouths at anything moving. No matter what, Red Fox ordered the fighters to keep moving. No one could see anything; they could just feel an eerie presence of something coming.

"Head for that big oak tree," said Sam.

Just as everyone was running toward the tree, a great big bug emerged out of the mud and began to attack. It was like no other, beautiful like a red and black lady bug, but vicious like a black spider. With its long teeth and razor-sharp antennas, the bug began to hiss and snarl at Sam and the others.

Everyone was sort of in a panic; they had never seen anything like this before, so huge and so quick. The fighters began to back up slowly, and started to run, but the monster bug had set traps of large holes all around

them. Every time one would run, a deep hole would open up and swallow them up.

"Stop moving," said Sam to the fighters.

But they were in too much of a panic, and they kept moving. One by one, the holes swallowed them up; the dirt covered their faces, causing them to die of suffocation. Sam and the others begged their fighters to stay put, but most of them were too scared and began to run. Their lives were lost because of this foolish mistake.

One by one, they vanished through the sink holes, gobbled up like a Christmas feast. Sam held his head low every time he lost one of his fighters. The huge bug sat there and waited. Once everyone stopped moving, it became impatient and began to walk back and forth, pacing. Sam realized that she was not moving toward them because it was waiting for all of them to die. Sam ordered everyone to stay still.

After hours of waiting, the creature got tired and went to collect her dead. It burrowed itself into the ground and began to move under the sand like a snake. The sand moved like ocean waves, kicking up and disturbing the plants and trees that were rooted there. Suddenly, something made a big burst into the air, with sand flying everywhere. It was the creature, and with it, it carried

the bodies of all the dead fighters wrapped in some type of web.

Sam and the others saw their friends for a last time; being carried away in the mouth of an unknown creature, the looks on the dead men's faces were that of fear. They died screaming, with their mouths open, or hiding with their hands covering their faces. Sam could not bear to see this; he began to doubt himself and his leadership, but Red Fox reminded him that now was not the time for him to be feeling sorry for himself.

Sam quickly pulled himself together the best way that he knew how, and told anyone who wanted to turn back now that they were free to go. To Sam's surprise, many wanted to leave; they were all afraid and wanted to go back home, where knowing nothing would keep them safe.

"You cowards!" shouted Samantha.

Jane quickly covered Samantha's mouth with her hand and allowed the men to leave. She thanked them with her husband for their service and told them that they would always be heroes in her eye. Samantha remembered the disc that Mr. Stewart gave them in the underground city, and told Jane to pull it out of her back pocket. For a minute, Jane forgot that she even had it.

"Mr. Stewart told us that once we were in trouble,

throw the disc into the air, and it would open a door back home to the underground city," said Jane to the others.

They carefully listened to every word. Jane held the golden disc in the air, threw it up into the sky, and watched it unfold like a letter. From the center, the disc opened, and a bright light emerged and let out a long beam of light.

"This is your chance to leave, take it," said Samantha to the fighters who wanted to leave.

At first, there was a little hesitation; then one by one, the fighters got in a line and headed toward the light. Not only were they ashamed that they had given up, but they were sad that they were leaving behind friends and family. When all was said and done, there were only two young fighters remaining.

"This is your last chance, kids, take it or leave it," said Sam, but the two young fighters shook their heads no.

Suddenly the magical door of the disc closed, and the disc disappeared with it. By now, all that remained were Jane, Sam, Red Fox, Samantha, and the two young fighters; everyone else had either died or ended up leaving because they could not handle the war.

"My father always said I could never control my men, and he was right," said Sam with a disappointed look on his

face.

But the others rallied behind him, and said that he was doing an excellent job. Now it was time to figure out how to get out of the bug's trap. The huge creature was by now long gone, but it left behind many traps of sinking sand; one wrong step, and a man could be swallowed up in an instant. Sam used his powers of levitation to get the team members over to the other side. One by one he levitated each person, then himself. Once everyone was safe, they all stood by an oak tree and took time to catch their breath.

"There is no more time for rest, we need that white rhino plant, and we need it now," said Samantha.

By that time, everyone had become frustrated with the entire situation and began to fight amongst themselves, one against the other. Everyone blamed each other, until a loud voice said. "Shut up, you bumbling fools!"

Everyone looked around to see where the voice was coming from, but no one could see anyone. Then out of a puff of blue smoke came a white cloud; sitting on top of the cloud was a yellow frog.

"Did you say something?" said Jane to the frog.

"Of course I did, who else could it be?" said the frog in a sarcastic tone. "Well, where are you folks off too?"

Jane explained to the frog that they were on their way

to the center top to retrieve a white rhino plant. Well, before Jane could finish her story, the frog began to laugh, holding its stomach and falling off of his moving cloud.

"Oh! That is so funny," said the frog.

"Why is it funny, little toad?" said Red Fox with an angry look on his face.

The frog explained that the white rhino plant was so rare that it was placed there for a special reason, and it was guarded by one of the most vicious beasts Baja had ever seen. The frog told the team that there was no way they could get the white rhino plant. Many people had been after that plant for centuries, and millions of people had lost their lives trying to get it.

Jane and the others could care less, and explained to the frog that if they did not get this plant, the whole of Baja would be lost, and there would be no citizens left to keep on fighting. Once the frog saw that they were serious, it became serious too, and told of a legend of how the plant was once retrieved and then put back for the next generation. The frog told of how the plant was once plucked from its roots many centuries ago. In the cloud that the frog was riding on, it showed a view of how Baja once was, and how the white rhino plant had come to be so important.

Jane and the others carefully watched as the clouds played out the events right before their eyes. With only a few of them left, they hovered around and watched every minute of the legend. It went on as follows: a long time ago, the elders created a plant so outstandingly different and powerful that they could not keep it in Baja. The plant was filled with too many powers, and if it got into the wrong hands, it would cause a big problem for the elders.

So they guarded the plant with a big unstoppable beast, one that had no respect for anyone; one that was savage and evil. But one man was determined to get the white rhino plant. He heard his parents talk about it; he climbed up to the mountains and dug a tunnel under the beast. For days and weeks he stayed in the forest, avoiding death many times, but his greed had overwhelmed him by the power he could achieve by obtaining the rhino plant.

He was chased by beast and huge snakes. One time he was almost eaten by a huge lizard, but managed to cut himself loose from the lizard's grip with a powerful sword. After weeks of digging and being chased by scary creatures of the forest, he finally saw a beam of light to let him know to stop digging and that he was at the surface.

The young lad waited until the time was right; once the beast walked over the hole, he drove his sword at the

beast, killing it instantly. The sword went straight through the beast's heart, and it began to stumble and roar; until it finally fell off the side of the mountain, splattering guts and blood all over the place.

The young lad came out of the hole in the side of the mountain and shouted and screamed. Animals of the forest began to talk, and the word was passed through Baja and other worlds like a shooting star. Once at the top, the young lad grabbed the plant in a choke hold, pulling its roots from the ground and shouting, "I did it, I defeated the beast!"

Once the plant was pulled out of the ground, within minutes everything began to turn black and die. The lad immediately died holding the plant in his right hand. The trees wither away, the streams immediately dried up, and the animals fell from the skies. Life was being eliminated.

Once the elders saw what was happening, they came in on a magical moon, all dressed in sparkling white robes. Their faces were never seen, and they took the young man to the moon and the elders re-planted the white rhino plant. Once in the ground, the plant sent off a burst of light, and with the light, seeds began to fly. Because of what happened, the elders hid many white rhino plants all over the galaxy and beyond. The young man was never heard from

again. Legend had it that he was reincarnated into the beast that now guards the plant.

"What was this young man's name?" said Sam.

"Elmilio."

"Why did the plant kill everything?" said Jane.

The frog replied, "You as a plant grower should know; you never kill something that is alive, it's like pulling the heart out of the body. The trick is to only take what is needed."

Jane looked in amazement to know that the frog knew of her. Before another question could be asked of the frog, it disappeared as if it was never there. Jane's brain was racing, thinking of everything possible that this legend could mean. Then she came to the realization and shouted.

"Instead of ripping the plant out of its soil and killing it, all we need is a petal or a leaf," said Jane.

As simple as the solution was, no one had thought of it.

"That's why I married you," said Sam as Jane smiled and the others cheered her on.

"Good job, Jane. Now the trick is getting up there," said Samantha.

Once on the other side, the team felt safe and began to take their time, but Jane noticed that the roots on the

trees were moving, and the dirt was being disturbed.

"Run!" shouted Jane.

Everyone began to run; the tree stems and roots were running after Jane and the others, as if they were hunting them. Red Fox ordered everyone to split up, causing the roots to tangle amongst each other and tie in a knot. But as soon as one was tied up, another came chasing them. Jane and the others were running for their lives, up and over, under and up, over rocks and tree barks. Once most of the trees were all tied into knots they could not move. They began to holler and scream, so piercing that Jane and the others had to plug their ears. One by one the trees fell, still attached to each other in a knot.

Jane tried to comfort the trees with her touch, but quickly found that her powers were not working in this part of the land. The trees seemed to be under some type of different spell; they were not listening to her commands. Then suddenly the trees withered and died one by one, turning into nothing more than mere ashes.

The ground began to sink in and little man-eating plants came forth. They were no more than the size of a common house pet, but they were plants that ran on all fours like dogs. They were brown and blue in color, with a spec of white, and these little things were ferocious. They

chased the team all over the place, nipping and biting at their heels. These little plant eaters were eating everything in sight; Samantha began to chop at the creatures with her sword, either cutting off their stems like paws or their razor-sharp petals.

Soon the team was becoming outnumbered by these plants, and Sam and the others had no choice but to run. As Sam and the remaining members ran toward the area of the rhino plant, the creatures turned back; showing fear, they quickly ran in the opposite direction, leaving Jane and the others wondering what was next.

At the end of this part of the forest, everything was water; the water was black and muddy, thick like quick sand, and every once in a while an underground volcano would blow, sending mermaids flying into the air. They were filthy and stunk from the thick black waters; their hair was matted and their faces partial visible. Their scales seemed to be dried up like old fish, fangs hung from their mouths, and even though they had the appearance of a human, they were not.

Sam and the others watched them from behind a tree. The mermaids seemed to be having a day of fun, but it quickly turned into a day of survival for one. Sam and the others watched as the group of mermaids singled one mermaid

out and began to fight with her. Sam wanted to step in, but was advised to let nature take its course. The mermaids continued to beat on one of their own, until a huge wave came and pushed them out to sea, sending the badly beaten mermaid to shore.

"This is our chance, let's go," said Sam.

As they walked up to the water, the mermaid let out a moan, she was in pain.

"Well, we can't leave her," said Jane.

The others did not want anything to do with this creature, but being the kind-hearted people that they were, they just couldn't leave her wounded. As Jane got closer to the mermaid, with caution she flipped her over. This mermaid was not as disfigured like the others; she was perfectly intact, she looked like the girl next door. Jane took a little of the water that they had in their containers and poured it over the mermaid's face.

The mermaid awoke and was very frightened; she slowly crawled back into the water, looking over her surroundings, but did not run away. She started to cry and let off a moaning song that seemed to hypnotized Jane and the others. The only one not hypnotized was Red Fox; his animal instincts seemed to block it out. When the mermaid realized that, she went further back into the water, and Jane and

the others came out of their hypnotic trance.

"That was really strange, it was like being buried alive," said Samantha.

Still, the mermaid did not leave; it came up closer to the strangers and stared at them.

"Why are you here?" asked the mermaid.

"Baja is in danger and we must save it from a deadly spell," said Jane.

The creature glanced Jane over, and began to come forward, frightening Jane; so she moved back a little. Then the creature came out of the water and began to grow legs right before Jane's and the others eyes. Everyone was in amazement to see such a transformation take place. After the tail had turn into legs and the mermaid was human, she was covered with cuts and bruises; her skin was pale, and she looked sickly. The mermaid dropped to the ground and begged for more water. Jane gave her the entire container of water, and then the mermaid began to talk.

"I am an outcast, I am not as pretty as the others, so they taunt me daily," said the mermaid.

"You're the prettiest, your sisters are ugly," said Red Fox.

The mermaid told Jane and the others that it was said that her father was a sailor and an adventurer; he came

here many years ago, and never return.

"Where are you trying to get to?" said the mermaid.

"To the other side, so we can climb the mountain," said Sam.

"You seem like good people, I would take you there, but it is very dangerous; they say the beast lies there," said the mermaid.

"Wait, it could be a trick," said Red Fox.

Everyone waited for the mermaid to go first. Suddenly the mermaid jumped on one of the last remaining fighters and carried him into the water. The fighter struggled and called out for help, but there was nothing anyone could do. Then Jane remembered that she had a magical seed. With a dab of water, she attached the seed to the palm of her hand. It began to grow into a wild vine, running up and down the sides of Jane's arm. She commanded the vine to make a rope, and so it did, allowing Jane to throw it out to the fighter in distress. The vine split into two and went after the mermaid, tying her up. Jane pulled the fighter out of the water; he was badly bitten and began to change. His skin became scales; his legs began to curl into the fetal position and began to form a tail.

"Oh, now we must leave him," said Jane.

Sam ordered the fighter to fight, but it was too late,

the fighter had no more strength; he was now under the powers of the mermaids. As Jane had the mermaid in a hold with her powerful vines, she questioned it.

"You tricked us," said Jane.

"Of course, you fools; we saw you coming and we smelled you. The others are waiting on their dinner, which is you!" said the mermaid as she changed back into her original ugly form.

The plant fit on Jane's hand like a glove, and its vine covered up the mermaid from head to toe and strung her up a tree.

"Try getting down from that, you can't be out of water too long," said Jane sarcastically.

Out of all the fighters that Jane and Sam had, they were all gone except one, and Sam vowed to the fighter that he would do everything to protect her. But this young fighter was brave and demanded to fight on. Yet, deep down inside, Sam knew that the young fighter was very much frightened.

"We must leave before the others come back, looking for their sister," said Red Fox.

As soon as they started to leave, the others returned. When they saw Jane and the rest of her friends were free, and not dead, they came out of the water with a vengeance.

Their tails turned into feet and they were now walking. These creatures were very powerful, throwing Red Fox and the others around like rag dolls. One by one Sam and the others went flying through the sky; the mermaids were very powerful. Sam shot a poison dart into one of the mermaids' chest causing it to immediately fall to the ground.

Jane made her magical seed turn back into a wild vine, stringing up the mermaids one by one. Through the air they swooped, and into the tree. They were no match for Jane's magical seed. Finally they were all up in the tree, arguing with each other, saying who should have set the trap. To hush them up, Jane sent a vine to cover their mouths, and soon they were balled up in a cocoon-type vine.

"We must keep moving," said Red Fox.

Everyone started moving, looking back on their friend who was now turning into a mermaid himself. There was no hope for him, he was gone. The one who was most hurt was Sam; he had lost another fighter under his care and command.

There was no time to be sad; they had to cross the lake. It was so huge and scary, with fur-like toads and huge rock crabs. The water was so black that no one could see the bottom. Jane decided to use her vines to make an aerial ladder. They quickly went to work, forming and twisting to make a ladder. Once it was made, one by one,

Jane and the others climbed on with just their hands holding on and their feet hanging toward the water. Every once in a while, the raging waters would send a weird looking fish flying through the air, frightening Jane and the others.

"We need to move fast before something else comes," said Samantha.

The team began to move faster and faster through the air, using their feet like pedals to help them make it across. For some reason, Samantha looked back and saw the bitten fighter getting into the water. He was already changed and was on the hunt for food.

"The fighter is in the water, keep moving," said Samantha.

Everyone did so; they moved as fast as they could, using all the strength and power that they had. They had to get away from the fighter that was now changed into a mermaid, and was in the water coming after them. The team moved faster and faster; no one had forgotten that this mermaid was once their friend and a fighter of Baja, but they had no choice but to survive.

The fighter was no longer their friend; he had change into a species that most had only read about. His muscular body grew thick scales, his feet were now a tail, his skin

had become pale and dirty from the muddy waters, and his eyes glowed with evil. This was not their friend anymore, this was an animal of the forest, and the team had to remind themselves of this, and keep moving. Because this fighter could no longer be saved, the ex-fighter came swimming faster and faster through the murky waters; until he caught up with Jane and the others.

"Faster!" shouted Sam.

The remaining members kept on moving, faster and faster, but the ex-fighter caught up and began to snap and gnawed at Jane and the others. Then he began to throw muddy slime from the water at his friends. The water was so toxic that once the slime hit the vines, it began to kill the plant instantly. The vine caved in and began to break, sending Jane and the others flying through the air uncontrollably.

Everyone screamed as the vine took them on a wild ride; it was slowly dying and losing all of its strength, but it was trying to hold on, to help its master and her friends. Meanwhile, down in the water, the mermaid began to laugh hysterically, waiting to feast on the ones who would fall into the ocean. But, unexpectedly, the vines managed to grab the remaining fighters and threw them to safety. One by one Jane and the others landed on a hilltop as the

vines tried to save them all.

Red Fox was the last to be thrown to safety, and just as he was almost to the top, the vines began to die and let go of him. Landing on the side of the rock, immediately Jane and the others rushed to his side. As the mermaid saw this, it began to swim faster and faster, until it was at the same rock that Red Fox was on. It slowly crawled up the side like a slithering snake. Red Fox was badly hurt, but fought off the mermaid. With a touch of its long fingernails to Red Fox skin, he shouted out in pain. The toxin was entering his body; Red Fox's fur began to fall off, his body began to wither away, and with saliva foaming at the mouth, he mumbled to his friends.

"Go, I am a dead man!"

Everyone looked on in horror; Sam could not levitate his friend to safety, his mental abilities seemed to be drained. Sam began to cry out in agonizing pain for his friend; the tears flowed and everything seemed to be cemented in time. Red Fox's body had now succumbed to the toxins of the water, and was being feasted on by the mermaid; all that was left on the rocks were traces of blood and bones.

In the air, Sam and the others could see Red Fox's spirit passing on, up and up it went; until it disappeared

behind a cloud no longer to be seen by anyone. Sam and the others were torn up inside. Was it really worth it to keep going? They had already lost thousands of fighters, who left behind children and families. This lay heavy on Sam's heart, and he wondered if he was doing the right thing. But it was now time to keep moving. Sam and the others quickly wiped their tears away and started up the hill, often looking back to see if, by some weird miracle, Red Fox would be there.

There was nothing but an eerie feeling of losing a good friend. Sam could still see the bones of his friend lying on the hillside. Just a few more feet, and Red Fox would have been safe. There was nothing the team could do but look down to the place where their friend had die, and watch the creature that was once their friend feast on Red Fox.

Sam huddled the team together and told them they had to keep moving. No one was really in the mood for a pep talk, but they stood and listened. Sam let the others know that they were almost there, and that everyone must keep fighting. Yet, inside Sam was filled with anger and hatred. He was risking his life for a place that once exiled him and his family; now he had to be the one to save it, causing him to lose most of his friends and families.

Yet, being the kind and passionate man that Sam was, he also knew that he was doing something right. Samantha was taking it the hardest; she and Red Fox had been friends for many years, and now, in an instant she had lost her best friend. Samantha began to curse Baja and the elders, her voice became so loud that the birds in the trees began to scatter. Her voice echoed through the forest, and then she suddenly fell to her knees and pounded on the ground with her fist until it began to bleed.

Everyone gave Samantha room to grieve, but they had to keep walking. They did so; with no one hardly saying a word. They had now left their dead friend way behind, no one knew where they were going; they were just following Sam.

The mountain top was filled with wild flowers called jumpers. They played and jumped on anything passing by; running through the fields like wild rabbits. No one minded the silly flowers; they were more a stress reliever to the remaining members. Jane admired all the plants and flowers on the hillside, touching and nourishing the ones that needed it.

"Why are you helping them?" said Samantha to Jane.

"Because I am a grower of all vegetation," said Jane.

Samantha wanted everything to die like her friend had;

she became very angry at Jane for caring for the plants, letting Jane know that she was very naive and crazy for caring for something that could kill them all. Jane knew that Samantha was angry, and walked away with one of her flowers on her shoulder, carrying it like a baby.

Sam pulled Samantha to the side and talked to her; he tried to comfort her by letting her know that everything would be all right. Samantha was so angry that she just walked away from Sam, leaving him talking to himself.

After a brief rest underneath a tree, Sam let the others know that the time had come for them to keep moving and the sun was going down. They must make it to the very top and retrieve the white rhino plant. Sam told the team that, if one person made it, it would have to be Jane, to re-grow the rhino plant for many generations to come. Everyone nodded in agreement, and off they went.

As they walked, it began to snow. At first, the snow was very light, and then it kept coming down heavier and heavier. Jane and the others began to tremble from the cold. Out of the blue, the sky began to send down tons of snow; no one was prepared for this. Out of the corner of her eye, Jane saw a willow plant; one she remembered as a little girl. Her father used to gather them up to make her a coat. The willow plant was a thick furry plant; the fur

hung from its branches.

Jane told the team to gather up a bunch of the willow plant, and everyone did. She taught them how to make coats out of it by folding it into a certain pattern. Once this was done, everyone had a nice warm coat, and Jane healed the plant. It grew more willow fur right before everyone's eyes.

Jane's powers were amazing, but by this time everyone wanted to leave. Sam had a hard time figuring out why his powers would not work; his levitation was on and off, sometimes it would work fine, and other time it would not work at all. Jane let her husband know that maybe the stress he was under and the evilness of the forest had something to do with it, but Sam began to doubt himself and wished that his father was here by his side.

Jane let her husband know that it was time that he became his own leader and stop depending on his father. Sam agreed with his wife and got the team together with a heart warming speech and the power to fight for all they had lost. The team's spirit rose, and they were willing and ready to fight again. This was the last chance to get it right, and the team was willing to sacrifice everything that they had to make it work.

Through the thick snow and the blazing cold winds, the

team struggled up the long hill, climbing for days, and then weeks. To make it up to the top took three weeks, but to Jane and the others, it seemed like it was no time. But, indeed it was. Time had passed so fast that the ones on the ground never felt it. When they looked at each other, they could tell; Sam's orange hair was now down his back, everyone's hair had grown, their eyes were puffy from lack of sleep and their hands and feet were frozen solid. They had frostbite, and everyone looked at each other as if they were looking at complete strangers.

"We have lost a lot of time," said Jane, as they stood near the top of the mountain where the rhino plant lay.

Sam and the others could hear the loud chanting and roaring of the monster.

"We must get to the mountain top," said Sam.

As Sam tried to levitate, his powers would not work. He was frustrated and began to once again doubt himself; until Jane slapped him across the face and told him to get over himself and have faith in his own power! Sam rubbed his face from the harsh slap, and started to believe in himself. He began to think as a leader and a captain.

Sam told the others what to do, where to go, and how to fight. There was no more time to have self-pity, it was time to fight and revenge all those who had died. So the

four remaining members went toward the creature. The chanting became louder and louder until it was almost hypnotizing. The team finally came face to face with the creature. From the bottom, Sam and the others saw the creature that was protecting the plant; a huge beast that paced back and forth, guarding the plant with its life.

Sam wanted to find a way to the top, then he remembered the story the frog on the cloud told him, and his plan now was to find a way underground. He asked his wife to use her seed to grow a plant that could pierce the ground and dig a tunnel big enough to fit them all.

Jane took the seed out of her pocket and touched it with her thumb, causing it to sprout out quickly. Then she placed the small plant on the ground and watched as it dug its roots into the soil. She commanded it to grow and make a tunnel under the earth to fit them. Immediately the plant went to work; the dirt above began to move as the plant grew and went deeper underground. Rocks and stones began to change their positions, other plants and shrubs began to move as the plant made a pathway for its master.

As the team waited, Jane searched around for plants that they could eat. There was an orange plant whose leaves were orange and red. This plant let off hot steaming water that tasted like tea. Jane brought back enough for everyone.

"Oh, that is good, it's like drinking a cup of hot tea," said Samantha.

Everyone began to drink, until Jane noticed that she had one extra stem of hot brew in her hands. "Where is the young fighter?" she said.

Everyone looked around and noticed that the fighter was gone; the last of the remaining fighters had now vanished. Jane and the others quickly ran looking around, hoping to find her.

"Where could she have gone? She was here just a few seconds ago," said Sam as he searched the area with his eyes.

Jane quickly grew a plant that would take her way up into the air, and she searched for the fighter. Out of the corner of her eye, Jane spotted the fighter running toward the mountain top where the beast lay. The fighter was greeted by a strange visitor in a black cape. Jane watched intensely to see what the visitor was telling the fighter, but no words were shared among them, just a silent communication. Jane quickly lower herself from the plant and told the team what she'd seen.

"We were betrayed," said Jane as she explained to Samantha and Sam what she had just seen.

Suddenly Sam rode the plant up to see if he could see

anything else. The plant took him high in the sky. He saw the dark hooded stranger leaving as the fighter was whisked away in some type of air bubble. Across the mountain top, Sam could see the chanters getting ready to go to war. Sam realized that they would be outnumbered by the thousands.

Sam came down from the plant and told Jane to give the plant digging the tunnel more power to move faster; they had to be leaving. The monster was building an army of men, and they were heading their way. Jane touched her plant with her thumb, gently giving it a huge dose of growth. Jane's thumb began to turn green as the power from her body went into the plant's stem. The plant began to grow larger and larger, burrowing through the mountain top faster and faster, causing a huge tunnel to form.

One by one, Jane and the others jumped into the tunnel, and quickly closed it up behind them. Jane and Samantha packed the entrance with dirt, hoping to seal the hole. Everyone was amazed to see how wonderfully the tunnel had been carved; the vine was very artistic, leaving leaf marks and strange carvings that began to glow. The vine powered its way to the top of the mountain. Once at the top, the vine peeked out, catching the rays of sunlight on its leaf; then the vine slithered back down to its master, letting her know that the top was near. Then it crawled

back into the small magical bean seed.

"Good work," said Jane to the vine as it crawled back in.

Jane immediately tucked the magical seed away in her pocket; then off they went, the final three. They ran through the tunnel, following the path that the vine had set out for them. On the walls a story was portrayed of the beast and the rhino plant. Apparently, Jane and the others were now in an ancient tunnel. This was the find of a lifetime!

Jane slowly passed her fingers over the carvings in the stone, and read the secret messages of the beast that protected the white rhino plant. As the team kept on moving, they could still hear the chanting of the worshipers of the rhino plant and the beast. They could also hear thousands of marching footsteps above the ground.

"They are looking for us," said Sam.

The entrance to the tunnel was now being dug through by beaver dogs, huge dog-like animals the size of a miniature horse. They were mean and ugly, always drooling from their sharp long yellow teeth, and covered with matted and grungy looking grey fur. They gave off an awful smell! The beaver dogs were a cross between a house rat and a horse; one of the most hideous creatures one could ever

see. Jane and the others could hear the growling and the scratching at the entrance; the beaver dogs had picked up their scents and were on the hunt.

"Faster, faster" shouted Sam as he pushed Samantha and Jane forward; himself staying in the back.

As Sam and the others were running through the tunnel, they were stopped by a glowing light coming from beneath the sands. Quickly, Sam brushed away the dirt and discovered a small hole that he could see through. Once he looked down, he saw something that was so incredible, a long sword about five feet in length, made of pure gold that shone and sparkled. On the tip of the sword was a round crystal ball that gave off a bright glow every so often. For a minute, Sam was mesmerized by what he had seen and completely forgot about being chased.

"They're coming, get up!" shouted Jane to Sam.

As Sam went to move, the entire floor caved in, taking everything with it. Jane and Samantha screamed as they went tumbling down the sides of the opening. Everything was pitch black; the only thing visible was the glow off of the sword. The army of chanters was on their trail, and now in the tunnel. But they did not know that there was no floor underneath them, and many of the chanters fell down, taking with them their beaver dogs.

Sam fell to the bottom first, hurting his back and shoulders; right behind him was Jane and Samantha, tumbling down. Samantha used her ancient kung fu skills to help her gracefully land on her feet. The place was completely dark; the sword glowed and lit up the room, giving Sam and the others a few seconds to find each other.

The light also showed what was in the tunnel, and that was a treasure hunter's dream: gold and gems were scattered everywhere and secret books that opened and closed on their own. Sam quickly reached for his match and lit a fire. The air inside the cave was thick and stuffy; this room or chamber had been closed for thousands of years.

Once the light was lit and Sam could see better, he called out to Jane and Samantha. Brushing off the dirt from the fall, the three managed to find each other, glad and relieved that everyone was okay. Jane told Sam that some chanters and their beaver dogs were after them. As the room lit up, the only things Sam could see were small, tiny beetles crawling up and down the walls. It was an eerie sight; one beetle turned into two, and two into ten, and so forth until there were thousands crawling up the walls.

The beetles seemed to fill the room in seconds, as if they were watching what was going on, and in the corner a sudden movement took place. The gold coins began to move,

and the movement gave off a loud sound. Sam approached what was moving in the corner, and with its back turned, Sam called out to the chanter. It would not turn around; the figure was small and tiny, dwarf-like. The chanter suddenly turned around and gave Sam the shock of his life; it was wearing a scary tribal mask, and was not showing its face.

"We mean you no harm," said Sam as he motioned to Jane and Samantha to stay back.

Sam noticed something strange about this chanter; he was wearing an old watch that Sam had given to an elf named Dunbar.

"Dunbar, is that you?" asked Sam.

Dunbar quickly took off his mask, and acknowledged Sam. He explained to Dunbar that they were friends, but Dunbar said Sam was a traitor for having had a fighter in his army that sided with the seven wizards. Sam explained to Dunbar that he did not know this, and that he was also betrayed by this fighter. Dunbar told Sam that the young lady's name was Bissella, and she was one of the seven wizards' daughters.

Once again, Sam was upset with himself and began to swear and kick things around. Coins and treasures went flying through the air. Sam was very upset and disgusted with all the mistakes that he had made. Dunbar quickly

realized that Sam was telling the truth and ordered his other chanters to stay away. Sam and the others were surprised to see that they were surrounded by thousands of chanters that had also fallen through the hole.

They were relieved that they knew Dunbar, but did not know that he was a chanter. Dunbar explained to Sam and the others that, for many years, they had been the protectors of the white rhino plant. Their job was to sing and chant to the beast to keep it angry for many centuries, so that no one would dare try to obtain the plant. It was a very powerful object that could cause the destruction of Baja and many worlds beyond.

Dunbar told Sam that he did not trust them when they were seen with Bissella. The wizards had been trying to get the rhino plant for centuries. Sam explained to Dunbar that Baja was dying and that they must obtain the plant.

"But the plant could not be moved!" shouted Dunbar.

Jane came into the conversation, letting Dunbar know that they didn't need the entire plant; they just needed a stem, pedal or leaf. She let Dunbar know that she was a grower of plants and could grow almost anything. A little skeptical, Dunbar gave in, letting Sam and the others know that they were on their own, and that he could not be a part of what they were trying to do.

For centuries, his family was commissioned by the elders to chant and disturb the beast so no one would ever want to come and disturb a plant that was so powerful and dangerous to the entire universe. Dunbar motioned to his other chanters to start moving out, and they began chanting. One by one, the chanters left through a secret hole.

Sam tried to follow, but the hole was too small for him. Sam, Jane and Samantha continued to look around the place, not only was it filled with gold and treasure, it was filled with the history of the rhino plant. Jane quickly brought the light forward and began to read up on the rhino plant. The ancient scrolls told of a powerful plant that fell on Baja millions of years ago, causing a big bang and blast. Anyone touching the plant became so powerful that many rulers and kings could not handle the power. They began to have slaves and the power of the plant went to their heads; they could not control themselves and the power was too great for them.

So keepers came and moved the plant and placed it in a safe place; where, for thousands of years, it had not been found, until now. Jane explained to her husband that the plant was very powerful and she was deeply afraid of turning into a bad person. Sam assured his wife that he

would be there to bring her out of the spell, if anything should happen. There were thousands of books and manuals, there were ancient paintings and old scrolls, and treasure as far as the eye could see.

As Samantha studied the paintings on the wall, she realized that they were once again in an old temple. There were pictures of how the temple once was; it was a thriving metropolis, everyone was wealthy and everyone lived in harmony, until the arrival of the plant. Once found, power and greed took over, and it caused the destruction of the entire population. As Samantha flipped the pages of an old book, there was a sword like the one that was glowing above. Samantha kept on reading. Finally she got to the part where the sword was placed in the possession of the people to cut off a small chunk of the plant, If there was ever a situation that the plant was needed.

The sword was not just a sword; one had to be strong enough, brave enough, and their heart pure to even lift the sword. That's why for many years the sword lay on the top of the secret altar; because no one had come along with all those qualities to remove it from its resting place. The white crystal ball at the end was a formulated spell that would protect the person who touched the plant to not succumb to evil. The blades on the sword were the only ones

powerful and strong enough to cut through the plant.

The book also had a warning not to pull the plant from its roots; killing the plant would mean destruction to their world and many worlds beyond. Samantha explained this to Jane and Sam, and they were now thinking of a way to obtain the sword. Sam went through his mind, thinking of who would be the best candidate for obtaining the sword. He quickly ruled himself out and left the decision between Jane and Samantha. Jane feared with Sam and her family being exiled would cause the sword not to move.

So the only one left was Samantha. She was not afraid; she had a look of determination on her face as she accepted the challenge ahead. As Sam and Jane lit up the room even more, they found out that the room was in the center of a volcano, and if one fell down or off of the edge, there was no way of ever coming back. The room also revealed more treasures and secret entrances that were blocked a long time ago.

The doors were sealed shut as if they were glued together. When Sam looked around, the walls were covered with huge white spiders that seemed to be frozen in time. They were white and furry, with evil black eyes, foam coming out of their mouths, and one spider seemed to be eating a body of either a soldier or a native person.

Because of all the web and dust, it was hard for Sam to tell. He picked up a long stick and tried to shake the spider, to hopefully get it to drop whatever was in its mouth.

Out of the corner of Sam's eye, he could see the spider seem to move, but when he turned around, the spider was not moving at all. Sam quickly put down the stick and returned to what he was originally doing. But his eyes remained focused on the spider. The room was also guarded by long huge snakes that were lying in their nests. The walls were inlaid with plant-like people, the ones Jane and the others had seen before. But these plant-like species were not the friendly type. They carried weapons on every part of their bodies, they had no eyes, just an outline of a face, and their bodies were a make up of mold and moss.

As Jane got closer, their bodies also let off an odor. Jane feared in her mind that everything in the room might still be alive. Meanwhile Samantha was still reading the old scrolls and they told that if the person who handled the sword was not pure, they would immediately be pushed into the fire below, and once the sword was moved, everything in the room would come alive. Samantha shared this with Sam and Jane, and they had to now find a way to escape once the sword was lifted from its resting place.

Suddenly magical block steps appeared with the symbols of Baja glowing faster and faster.

A loud thunder approached, and then a voice boomed. "Who is the sword bearer?" said the voice.

Looking everywhere to find out where the voice was coming from Samantha answer, "I am."

"Well come forth and take the first step. If your mind is not clear and your heart is not pure, you will be sentenced to the lake of fire," said the voice.

Samantha quickly took the first step, which took her high into the air. As she was riding through the air on the moving steps, Samantha could see the spiders and snakes on the walls were now starting to move.

"Get in place, they're moving," said Samantha as she shouted to Sam and Jane.

Sam quickly grabbed Jane and decided to find a way out. They pushed and pulled on the doors, but none of them would even budge. As they kept on searching for a way out, Samantha was headed to the top. Suddenly the voice appeared and the steps to the sword stopped, shaking and twisting, it gave Samantha a little scare.

"This is your first challenge," said the voice.

Then a whole entire line of steps appeared, and on each one stood a creature of unknown origins. They were

ready for battle, adorned in fighting gear and swords. Samantha was ready for war; she activated the armor vest that Sam's father had made for her. In the secret pocket of the vest was a small thin mirror. Samantha had no idea what to do with it; she held it up as the creatures began to approach her, and nothing happened. The creatures were on a war path, smashing bricks and causing destruction all around.

It had been many, many years since these creatures were ever let out, and now they were on a violent path. Samantha used her ancient ninja skills to jump and hurdled over the creatures, still keeping the mirror in her hand. From the ground, Sam and Jane tried to help Samantha, throwing things at the creature, but they were too far up in the air.

While running and jumping, the mirror turned into a black liquid that oozed out of the mirror case, and onto the steps. At first, nothing happened; then suddenly the black liquid formed a puddle that went down the steps. As the creatures watched and laughed at the black oozing puddle, they were now stuck; they could not move or even take a tiny step. The black goo had the creatures stuck, except for two.

One flew from the highest steps all the way to the

floor, sending off a loud pounding thump. This creature was going after Sam and Jane. Then the one at the top came after Samantha. She took a sword off of one of the stuck creatures and began to fight with the one that was chasing her. Back and forth Samantha and the creature fought; tumbling and rolling almost off of the secret steps. Swords were flying through the air, slicing and cutting, missing Samantha by inches.

When the sword of the creature snipped off one piece of Samantha's long jet black hair, she became upset and lunged into the air, slicing the creature's head off. It stumbled and fell into the sea of fire. Green goo was everywhere, splashing against the walls of the temple and onto Samantha. The other creatures began to cry and moan for their dead, but Samantha had no time to waste, she needed to get to the top and get the sword.

Meanwhile, on the ground, Sam and Jane were fighting the creature that had escaped from above. The creature was upset and began to throw and smash its fist against the walls of the temple, causing huge holes. Through the holes the creature made, Sam and Jane could see land of some sort, and they began to taunt and tease the creature so that it would continue making the hole bigger. The creature was tormented by Sam and Jane until it had made a great big

hole in the wall and all Sam and Jane had to do was to get away from the creature, and wait for Samantha to get the sword and a piece of the rhino plant.

Once the hole was made, Sam taunted the creature into following him. He was running fast, and the creature was quickly following. Sam did his best to get the creature to fall over the edge, but it was not falling only slipping every now and again. Finally Jane ran from behind the old columns and kicked the creature over the edge into the sea of fire.

"Good job, honey," exalted Sam as he gave his wife a big hug.

The cries and moans of the creature filled the old temple, echoing all the way back up to Samantha. She smiled, knowing that her friends were okay, and that they had destroyed the creature. Samantha continued her climb back toward the area of the sword. Then she was stopped by a mystical woman on the steps offering her gold, silver, and the finest gems; even offering Samantha an orb that could grant her every wish. Samantha's one wish was to get her friend back; she wanted Red Fox to return to her. She wanted things to be the way they once were. The mystical woman began to read Samantha's heart, and because of this, she could see all of Samantha's desires. Samantha was now

in a daze, imagining that Red Fox was alive. Meanwhile, the unknown woman was weaving glass all around Samantha. From the ground, Sam and Jane could not see anything but a large glowing light.

"Something is wrong," said Jane to Sam.

Sam looked around for the book that Samantha was reading, and once he found it, he read all the levels to obtaining the swords. The first was the creatures of the unknown, and the second was the lady in white, who traps your soul and body in a glass that nothing could get through, but the magical sword. The scroll told of many who lost their lives to the lady in white; those who wanted to turn back the hands of time, or those who wanted material possessions. Sam knew that all Samantha wanted was her friend back, and that was why she might be caught in the lady in white's spell.

Sam explained this to Jane and immediately Jane reached into her pocket and grabbed a hold of her magical seed, but the seed had died. There was nothing to sustain its living, no water or food. Jane tried to revive it, but the seed had died; it had done all it could for Jane and the others. Sam began to panic; he reached for long old binoculars, so he could see Samantha, who was now covered up in glass webbing from her feet to her waist.

"We have to do something," said Jane.

Sam tried his levitating powers, but it was limited and only worked for a few seconds. So he picked up a sword and threw it at the lady in white. She blocked the sword with the weaving of glass into the air, forming a barrier between her and the sword. Sam shouted at Samantha.

Slowly Samantha began to come out of the spell as she heard Sam's voice. Samantha became frightened, and tried to move, but she was stuck in the glass web. The lady in white continued to try and offer Samantha everything her heart desired, but Samantha was now aware of the evil spell the lady in white was putting on her. Samantha refused to accept the gifts and the promises; she began to count out loud and the lady in white began to get irritated and black tears began to fall from her eyes. Her skin began to turn green and wrinkle, her beauty was all but gone and she was now a witch.

The more Samantha counted, the more the lady in white changed into her original form, which was a green witch. The glass on Samantha's body began to break off, layer by layer. The more Samantha ignored the witch's promises and kept her mind occupied, the more the web of glass fell off, hitting the floor, smashing and sending glass flying through the air. As one of the glass pieces flew passed Sam

and Jane, they could see what Samantha was wishing, and that was to be with her friend Red Fox. Samantha was angry that he died, and wanted him back.

Sam was glad that she was okay, and watched as Samantha headed toward the sword as if nothing had happened. Deep down, they all knew that Samantha was hurting, through her tough-girl image, she was sad, and wanted her friend to return to her. Samantha quickly put all of her feelings aside and went on to retrieve the sword. Just one more step and she was there. The sword grew bright and the mysterious voice came.

"Well done, you may obtain the sword," said the voice.

Samantha was a little afraid; her hands began to shake and sweat, she gazed upon a beautiful sword. With all of her might, she closed her eyes and reached for the sword. It was as if an electric current had swept through her body. As she picked up the sword and held it toward the sky, everyone stood and waited to see if anything would happen. Nothing did. Samantha was indeed the one to obtain the sword.

"Great choice, honey," said Jane to her husband Sam.

Sam smiled and gave a sigh of relief. Samantha quickly and carefully brought the sword down to her side; the light from the sword went out and stayed in the glass globe at

the end of the sword. Suddenly the temple began to shake and fall apart, statues began to hit the floor, sending pieces of stone and clay flying through the air. The snakes, spiders and creatures on the walls began to move.

Sam grabbed the book of the sword and hurried to Samantha to come down. She began on her way down as she was attacked by one of the huge spiders on the wall. She quickly fought it off as Sam and Jane ran over to help her by setting fire to the creatures. As the creatures burned, Jane quickly grabbed Samantha by the hand and led her toward the hole in the wall.

Suddenly the plant creatures pulled Jane by her legs and tossed her across the room like a paper doll. Jane was out for a minute, until Sam came to her aid, shooting fire at the creatures with an old bow and arrow that he had found in the temple. But, the creatures just kept on coming and attacking Sam and the others. Finally Sam grabbed ahold of Jane and dragged her out through the opening where Samantha was waiting.

As soon as they were out of the temple, it began to crumble faster and faster, sending smoke and dust everywhere. Once outside, Sam and the others could see where they really were, and though the outside was flourishing with life, they were now at the home of the

white rhino plant and the beast that protected it.

Samantha quickly held onto the sword as her eyes gazed up toward the large beast. At the bottom of the hill, Samantha and the others could hear the chanting of the worshipers. Sam, Jane and Samantha quickly moved behind a large rock that sat a few feet away from the creature. They were all afraid, thinking of ways in which they could defeat this huge creature to get to the plant.

Sam was fresh out of ideas; once again he began to doubt himself, and did not want to be responsible for any more lives lost. Then Jane took over and made up a plan. She now took the role of her husband as leader and protector of Baja. There was no more time for a pep talk, so she got everyone together and gave them the plan. Samantha was to cut the rhino plant while Sam and she distracted the beast.

Everyone jumped into action, and as soon as they came from behind the rock, the monster was waiting for them. It stood many feet tall, with huge expandable wings that it opened and closed. Its mouth spew fire that would scorch the skin, it had horns coming out in all directions, and with its yellow cat-like eyes it glanced over Sam and the others. It was an unknown species of dragon; it seemed to be half-bat and half-dragon.

This creature was nothing like what the locals had talked about, not even close. This dragon was huge, with a triangular tail that wrapped around its body, and black dirty and matted fur that was stuck to its skin. The beast glowed with red symbols when it gave out a loud roar.

The chanters began to scatter as it caused rocks to crumble down the hillsides. The beast was tied to a heavy chain that prevented it from moving any distance. It opened up its large claw and then lashed out at Jane. She dove in between the creature's legs as she motioned to Samantha to get the plant.

Samantha quickly jumped into action, using her ninja skills and leapt into the air. But the creature was not happy, and began to lash its tail at Jane, cutting her across the face and knocking her out. When Sam saw this, he quickly snapped out of his self-pity and ran to his wife's side, dragging her back behind the rock. Sam lunged at the monster with all of his force; the monster continued to roar and upset the rocks on the hill, which came tumbling down like an avalanche, running over most of the chanters.

"Go for cover!" shouted one of the chanters.

All the clan began to run, hiding behind huge trees and stones. Sam continued to punch the monster in its belly with all of his might. The monster continued to scream and

moan, as it could not reach Sam. Finally the monster sent its tail under its belly, picked up Sam, and threw him across to the other side.

Samantha had finally gotten to the beautiful flower; this was like no other plant. It was all white, made of the finest silk, its petals were big as elephant ears, and its stems were strong and muscular. At the end of the petals were rhino like horns that dripped some type of brown sap. Samantha pulled out the long sword and stood at a distance as she tried to cut the plant. It was not easy; it was as if Samantha was cutting into rock.

Not paying attention, the monster came and hit Samantha over the head, sending her one way and the sword the other way. There was no stopping this creature, it was too big and they were outnumbered. Sam tried to talk to the creature in a calm voice and explain to it what they needed the plant for. But the creature was not in the mood to talk, and continued to kick Sam and the others around.

Sam was frustrated and upset; with one final move, Sam jumped onto the creature's back and began stab it with the small knife that he had in his war shoes. The creature cried out and tried to wiggle Sam off, but Sam was not budging. Sam held onto the creature's fur with all of his might; not letting go, and continued to stab at the

creature.

From the creature's fur came a large flea that stuck its fang into Sam's shoulder. Sam shouted from the pain and his blood was everywhere. The huge flea began to drag Sam into its nest on the dragon. The nest was filled with hungry babies the size of horses. In pain, with the fangs of the flea still in his shoulders, blood began to pour from Sam, and the flea and her babies began to suck up the fresh blood.

Sam shouted out for Samantha, who was still trying to recover from the hit of the dragon. Samantha got up, leapt into the air and onto the back of the dragon. She pulled out her sword and began to cut Sam out of the grip of the hairy flea. Once Sam was free, she slid down the back of the dragon and lay at the end of its tail.

Trying to compose himself and catch his breath, Samantha was at the top of the dragon inside the nest of the fleas, killing and destroying all of them. It was a vile sight to see. Fleas had crawled under the dragon's skin and made it their home; there were millions of tiny eggs and thousand of them were about to hatch.

As Samantha got rid of all the fleas, she noticed that the dragon was not moving or putting up a fight. She peeled her way out of the skin of the dragon, noticing the

calmness and the non-movement. Samantha slid down the back of the dragon to find it lying peaceful on the ground, licking its paws and being content.

Neither Samantha nor Sam could believe what their eyes were seeing. Sam quickly moved out of the way of the beast and went to check on his wife who was slowly coming out of her head injury. Samantha ran for the sword to cut the plant, and found herself face to face with the dragon. It looked Samantha in the eyes, and licked its yellow teeth as if it was preparing for dinner. Samantha pulled out the sword and held it up to the creature's face.

The creature said. "I have been in pain for many, many years. All I needed was someone to remove my tormentors, and you did this kindness. I will always be grateful."

Samantha and Sam were very surprised by the creature's attitude. For millions of years it was tormented by the huge fleas that were embedded underneath its skin, and the chanters made the fleas crawl more, and this made the dragon irritated.

"You're very welcome," said Samantha.

Then the dragon had one last favor, and that was to remove its bondage, which were the chains that kept it on the mountain. Samantha was a little skeptical and began to cut at the rhino plant before she let the dragon free.

Samantha cut faster and faster at the plant, but it was very stubborn. Finally the dragon instructed Samantha on how to hold the sword and which way she needed to cut.

"Face the sword west and cut at an angle," said the dragon.

Samantha did not want to be tricked and continued cutting the way she was at first. When she found that it was not working, she then took the dragon's advice and cut in the manner that the dragon had suggested. Slowly Samantha could feel the blade penetrating the stem. She sliced the rhino plant in half, but with the first cut the plant began to die, and then everything started to die. The trees on the hills, even the grass began to wither faster and faster.

Once Samantha noticed this, she called out to Jane. Still trying to recover from her hit, Jane was slowly coming around, but not fast enough. Sam picked up his wife and quickly carried her over to where Samantha and the plant stood.

"Work your magic, honey," said Sam to Jane.

Jane quickly stretched out her hands and laid them upon the rhino plant. Jane's thumbs turned green, and within a few seconds the plant grew right before their eyes; it became one again, its petals and stem grew

stronger and stronger as it attached itself to the soil in the ground.

A bright light appeared as the plant began to heal itself; the trees that were once dying began to flourish again. The grass became greener, and the plants grew wild. Jane gave all the energy she had left, and then passed out in her husband's arms. Jane had saved the rhino plant and possible Baja.

Samantha kept her promise to the dragon and broke the chains that held the dragon to the top of the mountain. When Samantha cut the chains, she quickly stepped back, fearing that the dragon would attack, but it did not. It began to circle around like a dog chasing its tail, and then the dragon flew off into the air, opening its huge wings that blocked out the sun.

A bright stream of light came out of the dragon's mouth and shot into the heavens; then, with a loud bang and a huge burst of colors into the air, the dragon came back down to where Samantha was. Still keeping her guard up, Samantha aimed her sword at the dragon. It shed all of its fur and muscles; out of the dragon came a primitive looking boy, slender in build, like that of a Native American.

The young man never said a word, just ran away and disappeared into the forest. Samantha ran to see where the

young man went, but never saw him again. His spirit was free, and he disappeared into the woods. As Samantha turned around to get a glimpse of the rhino plant once more, it also disappeared, and so did the carcass of the dragon. All that was left was an old wise saying: "Judge not by appearance, but by the action of your subject."

All this time, many elders and citizens of Baja were judging the beast, but never took the time to ask why? And the answer was as simple as killing a few fleas. Millions had died because of the ignorance of many, but to Sam and Samantha this was a lesson well learned. With a few minutes to wrap their minds around everything that they had been through, Samantha gave a wild call to the large hawks that had dropped them off.

Her call was not ignored, the hawks were on their way with plenty of other hawks to help transport them home. Samantha and Sam were glad to see their friends once more. They stood on the mountain top waving to the hawks as they circled around. The hawks flew down, scooping up Sam, Samantha and Jane. Jane was a little out of it, but was comforted by her husband.

"Well done, well done," said the hawk to the remaining fighters.

The hawk explained how the lands were now flourishing,

but they needed to quickly plant the remaining half of the white rhino plant. Faster and faster the hawk flapped its wings, dipping and dodging through the clouds. Up, up and away the hawk went; it was in a hurry to let Jane heal and plant the white rhino plant.

Soon Sam and the others began to drift off into a deep sleep. As the hawks flew vigorously through the air, Sam began to dream about all the things he had gone through, and began to see what scared him most. Sam began to twist and turn as he continued to dream; he thought of his brother, one he loved so much, and the one he might have to destroy in order to save Baja.

Sam then saw a figure of his brother in his dreams. Marcus Carrot-Top was not happy with his brother, the ghostly figure of Marcus began to call Sam a loser, and that Sam could come and join him in the land of the wizards where he would never be exiled. Marcus began to show Sam of all the wealth and power his family could have, and with the two of them, they could take over Baja.

But even in his sleep, Sam was a good man, and turned Marcus down; something Marcus did not accept too well and began to get angry with his brother.

"Sam, you fool, Baja once exiled you and your family, and now you want to save them? You're a fool!" shouted

Marcus to his brother as saliva spewed out of his mouth in anger.

Sam begged his brother to stop, and come back to Baja where he could be a free man. Marcus refused and began to strangle Sam in his sleep. Sam quickly woke up to notice that they were still in the air. Then a big dip landing by the hawks woke Samantha and Jane. Everyone noticed that it was really bright and hot; it was so hot that Sam and the others could see the heat waves in front of them.

The hawk instructed the three to walk through the heat. Holding Jane up, Sam and Samantha followed the hawk; it didn't seem to mind the heat, it seemed like it had been here before.

"Hurry, quickly, just a few more steps," said the hawk.

Chapter 16

Serenity

And then they all were in a place of serenity; the three survivors were now in the center of Baja, in the core, where life was said to have began. Sam and the others walked out of a cave and looked on to pure beauty; waterfalls that were the colors of the rainbow, fish jumped through air that was also multi-colored. Huge trees that flourished with silver strawberries and gold apple nuggets.

Certain parts of the stream were crystal clear, where Sam quickly took a deep refreshing drink. He then scooped up some in his hands and passed it to his wife. Slowly Jane sipped, and then sipped some more. The water was so refreshing that Jane began to gain a little strength to pull herself nearer the water's edge.

Even the grass seemed to be made of a patch of clouds; it was so soft to walk on, and it even floated in the air now and again, taking one of the survivors afloat in the air. For the first time, Sam saw a smile from Samantha.

The flowers began to sing a comforting melody, and danced as if they were in a ballroom. Rabbits were red, white, green and pink, and hopped passed Sam and the

others. The hawk continued to walk at a brisk pace; while Sam and the others began to gaze on the beauty that they had never seen before. Soon moving liquid lava in the form of dogs began to head toward the hawk and Sam. They both ducked as the dogs ran over their heads.

"Oh, don't worry, their just water dogs," said the hawk to Sam and the others.

Sam was surprise and caught off guard; there were so many things that he had never seen before, like the mountains that moved, or the huge cloud babies that played in the skies all day making cloud balls and throwing them at each other. They were so cute and adorable, with their pristine white diapers and their cloud-like bodies.

Sam was even surprised by the three silver moons that shot off fire to light the volcanoes that were thousands of miles away. But what surprised Sam and the others were the large golden birds that stood seven feet tall, and their golden chicks. The huge birds laid golden eggs on a huge white cotton basket. The birds stood on one foot; with their blue eyes, they watched Sam and the others until they were out of sight.

"That is amazing," said Sam as he glanced over his shoulder, looking back at the birds.

Then Sam and the others came to a large black iron

gate. Sitting at the gate was a huge monster with horns on both sides of his head. The monster was green and silver, his skin was made of fish scales, it was at least ten feet tall, and had to weight about three thousand pounds. It had huge hands and feet that were web-like. It was adorned in a white kilt with the Baja symbols. Covering its neck, ankles, and wrists were huge golden bands with secret codes that sparkled now and again.

"Jasper, come lend me your ear," said the hawk to the huge giant.

Jasper bent down, its face was so huge it covered the hawk. The hawk whispered something in the giant's ear, and then they were free to pass. The giant never blinked or turned away from his post. The huge gate opened up and there stood a large white castle. It would be the envy of many castles, with its manicured lawns and its polished clear see-thru windows. There were silver ponds for the ducks and their chicks, and flowers that replanted themselves in different shapes and colors. There were trees that moved around the grounds leaping about.

Small mini volcanoes shot fire balls into the air for entertainment. There were horses that wore golden crowns and galloped through the massive landscape. They came in all shapes, sizes and colors. Also doing a welcome were the

mystical toads that would disappear in a cloud of smoke, and then reappear.

There was a drawbridge with huge carved stone statues that scanned everyone crossing the bridge. Once on the bridge, a long white and gold gondola appeared. The hawk told Sam and the others to climb aboard; the captain never said anything, just kept on looking ahead in his well maintained uniform and sailor cap. The captain rowed the gondola through the crystal clear water; it was so clear Sam and the others could see the bottom of the river. They saw things that they had never seen before; huge manta rays that were covered in blue fur. They jumped out of the water like a dolphin and splashed back.

"Oh, you show off," said the hawk to the manta ray.

Sam just smiled at the hawk with its sarcastic humor, but Sam loved that about the hawk. What he wanted to know was, where were they going?

All the hawk said was, "Just wait and see."

Sam and the others focused their attention on the water, how calm it was and how beautiful. Fish swam past them; large sharks and octopus also swam by. Sam wanted to reach out and touch one, but the hawk nipped at his hands.

"Oh dear, don't do that, they're savages," said the hawk.

All Sam could do was laugh. The boat approached the castle that Sam and the others had seen from miles away. It glowed with Baja symbols; it was so huge and massive that no one knew where the castle started and where it ended, except the caretaker.

"Who is the caretaker?" asked Samantha.

"You will meet her soon," said the hawk.

Off they went out of the boat and onto the castle grounds. Then the castle began to move further away; that's why the castle seemed closer when Sam and the others entered the gate. When they finally got to it, it was further away than they thought. The hawk explained to Sam that it was a way of protection from enemies.

"Oh! What enemies?" said Sam.

The hawk never answered and pushed Sam and the others toward the massive doors. They were solid gold and decorated with gems and rubies. Huge statues guarded the door, looking on to see who entered and left. Samantha noticed that the statues were moving, but when she showed Sam, they stopped.

"This place is very strange," said Samantha.

"Oh! Hush, little girl, it is not strange it is artistically weird," said the hawk and kept on walking.

All Samantha could do was smile at the hawk and follow

his every command. Once inside, Sam and the others were greeted by five large black cats like Oscar. They looked identical to Oscar.

Jane broke out of her daze and shouted, "Oscar!"

But the cats did not respond; all they did was circle Sam and the others, watching their every move. Looking at them from head to toe, sniffing and pushing them with their noses; the hawk warned the others not to make any sudden moves. Jane kept on whispering to Sam that they looked so much like Oscar that they must be his family.

Then down the stairs came a whistle, and a tall slender shadow appeared, dressed in a butler's uniform. He had come down to welcome his visitors. At first, the butler was not fully turned around, but when he made a full turn, Jane cried out.

"Willard, Willard, it's me, Jane."

For a minute, the butler paused, and then he fell to his knees. "Oh! Thank God you have made it," said Willard as he looked Jane over.

Jane explained to Willard that she thought he was dead, but Willard was very much alive, and had a lot of explaining to do. First he invited his guests into the massive library. There were huge globe chandeliers and lighting fixtures, and books flew across the room from one

shelf to another. Willard explained that the magical books liked to read each other and find out more about one another. There had to be more than a million books that sat in specially made maple bookshelves that spanned all the way around the huge room.

The floor was carved out of magical stones that no one had ever seen before. The stones displayed the entire universe, and if one looked hard enough, they could see all the planets and the moon moving. Sometimes it would show the destruction of a planet; this time it showed the destruction of Baja right before Sam's eyes.

"We need to hurry," said Sam, as he remembered that there was plenty that they needed to get done.

To a small corner Willard pulled Jane aside and explained that he had been living in this castle for million of years. He was nothing more than a creation that could outlast time, but Jane shook her head, not wanting to believe Willard's story.

Willard explained to Jane that he was sent by his creator to find a child with a gift so extraordinary she would help save Baja. The gift was not Jane's green thumb, but the little boy named Peter that she carried inside of her. Peter was the gift to save Baja and the worlds beyond. Willard went on to tell Jane that he was sent to watch over

her until she became a grown woman.

Willard was ordered by the elders to protect and care for Jane, not to let anything ever happen to her, and he took his job very seriously and took care of Jane even better than her parent could ever do. Jane just fell into Willard's arms, crying on his chest, sobbing and moaning about Oscar and her mom. Willard explained that Oscar had done his job, and so had her mother and he offered Jane another cat like Oscar, if she wanted one.

A long time ago, Willard was the one who brought Jane Oscar, and he was the one who planned to give Peter the magical book with the genie Merseft. Jane was a little in shock to know that her life was planned many years ago, that she was the one who carried the child to save Baja. Now that reality was sinking in, Jane had to take a break and she walked over to a chair and fainted.

Sam, right by his wife's side, shouted at Willard. "Why did you upset her?"

Willard explained to Sam that Jane was just exhausted and needed to rest. Sam rubbed his wife's head gently as she fell into a deep sleep.

"Enough of the fighting and the stroll down memory lane, we need to see the creator," said the hawk.

Off Willard went to summon the creator. Shortly,

Willard came back, and opened up the door for the creator. Everyone wanted to get a look at the creator; no one noticed that, like a ghost, she flew passed them. The creator had long blue hair, and her skin was pale with blue polka dots all over. Her teeth were so white that they shone; she was tall and slender, and well-maintained. Her cherry red lips whispered words, but no sound came out.

She lived in a bubble that she could escape from once every twelve hours. Her blue eyes glanced across the room, and back into her bubble she went. Sam and the others seemed to have been in a fog; it was as if the creator had stopped time and then made it run again.

When Sam and the others laid eyes on the creator, she was the most beautiful thing that he had ever seen. The hawk immediately bowed down to the creator, and the others quickly followed. Then the hawk explained to the creator that they must plant the white rhino plant at the core of Baja, which was in the center of the castle's back yard. The hawk explained that Baja was dying and it was an emergency that the rhino plant got planted.

The creator never said a word, just watched with her big blue eyes and pointed at Jane lying in the chair. The hawk quickly ran to Jane's side and lightly gave her a shaking. Jane woke up, slowly rubbing her eyes. When she

saw what was before her, she became frightened.

"Do not fear, I am here to protect you," said the creator.

Jane looked around amazed and saw that everything was all right. She then stood firmly on her feet, and asked the creator if she could help them save the rhino plant.

The hawk interrupted Jane's train of thought and burst out saying, "My Lord, we need to plant the rhino plant in your secret garden. If this falls into the wrong hands, Baja will be doomed."

The creator just smiled and gently rubbed the hawk's furry face, and off she went floating in her bubble. She motioned to Willard to take them out to the back, and Willard complied.

"Hurry, hurry," said Willard.

Everyone ran behind Willard. When Jane went and checked on the rhino plant, it was almost dead, breathing slower and slower. The plant needed nourishment and care.

"We must hurry," said Jane to the others.

As everyone ran, they all felt as if it was too late; the plant was dying and there was no way to bring it back to life again. Willard led his friends out to a secret garden; it was enormous and breathtaking, the air was crisp and fresh. Waterfalls did a parade of dances; plants grew

as tall as the eye could see, with many arrays of colors to choose from. Wild pink frogs jumped from pod to pod, and large ants carried food from one colony to another.

It was like stepping into an ancient jungle; wild animals climbed from limb to limb, knocking down tree branches and fruits; often times missing and knocking someone on the head. Everyone was impressed, but what was more surprising was in the middle of the land stood the creator. She was out of her private bubble and had now grown into a large white tree. It shone in the middle of the forest; bright light came off of the tree.

From the moment everyone saw this, they knew that she was the mother of nature and all things that grew. Secretly the creator had been hiding what was really troubling her; she was also dying, from the same thing as one of the seven wizards. The wizards had poisoned nature and because she was the mother of nature, she was also poisoned. She was holding on to faith that someone would come and save her.

She took all the strength she had to try and save the remaining parts of Baja. The white rhino plant was a part of her and she was a part of it; together they would make an amazing recovery. Jane noticed that the creator was becoming weak and weary as she hung from the trees with vines attached to her body; she was losing strength.

The vines took the nourishment from her and spread it through the lands of Baja, but it was not enough, her nourishment could only go so far. The white rhino plant needed to be planted and kept alive. The creator just moaned and groaned as the vines and trees of the land sucked out all the nourishment from her body. She finally fell to the earth, having no more nourishment to give the trees, and the vines let go of their creator.

It was a horrible sight to see the once beautiful creator now nothing more than skin and bones. She needed help and she needed it right away. Jane quickly jumped into action, turning her thumbs green she placed them on the creator's head to give her enough energy to stand up and to hold on. Then out of the bag she pulled the white rhino plant and placed her green thumb on it. Gently she rubbed the plant from head to toe, but she feared the worst; the plant was not coming to life and Jane began to hang her head in disappointment.

Sam walked over to his wife and whispered, "I love you."

Jane then gave off a worried smile, but continued to rub the plant. Her thumb began to turn greener and greener, sending the color all the way up her arm; it was as if her skin was changing into another color. Jane began to panic

and scratched at her skin, but it did not take the green away. The color continued to move up Jane's arm faster and faster. Suddenly her skin color came back to normal, as if nothing had ever happened. Jane was in a daze and stared at her hands; checking them over to make sure she was back to normal.

There was no more time to waste; the hawk insisted that Jane hurry up and save the creator. Jane quickly crawled back over to the rhino plant on her knees, picked up the plant ever so gently and caressed it gently. Jane dug a shallow hole and placed the rhino plant in, covering it up with the dirt. She pulled out a little water, and sprinkled it over the plant.

All they could do now was wait and see. Everyone looked on with nervousness and anxiety. Suddenly the ground began to move, and the dirt began to fall aside. Jane ran over to the hole and watched without blinking. Up from the dirt arose the white rhino plant, still weak and frail. Jane rubbed its petals very gently with her green thumb; the more Jane rubbed the plant the more it grew.

It became stronger and stronger, bigger and bigger, it was twice the size of the original plant, and the hawk quickly ordered Sam and Willard to bring the weak creator toward the plant. As they brought the creator to the plant,

things started happening; the rhino plant sent its long tentacle-like roots to attach itself to the creator. One by one, the plants roots attached to the creator, feeding her with nourishment and all the nutrients she needed.

After a short while, the creator's color began to return; she was no longer sickly-looking. Her skin was nice and firm, not old and wrinkled; her hair began to grow back where it had fallen out, and her lips were no longer blue and pale but bright cherry red.

Jane and the others cried out with excitement and joy; for once something had gone right. As the creator became stronger, she summoned the trees, flowers, and plants to come and feed on her, and to send nourishment through their roots to all living things throughout the land of Baja. The trees, plants, and flowers began to drink the nourishment from the creator. They began to feed on her like a wild pack of dogs on their mother's breast.

Right before Jane and the others; the tree and plants began to flourish, they became bigger and stronger, their colors were brighter and those that were once barren began to grow fruit. Once the vegetation was finished feeding, they laced themselves deep into the earth, sending rich nutrients to all the plant life of Baja.

Jane pressed her ear to the ground, and could hear the

vegetation singing; she could feel their roots moving through the ground, carrying the much needed nourishments. Plants began to pop up and produce more trees and plants, giving Baja the clean air that it so badly needed. After feeding from their creator, the trees gathered in a circle and whisked the creator away. No one knew where she had gone, but Willard.

"Oh! She will be back, she has gone to rest," he said.

Jane was disappointed; she wanted to talk more with the creator, but never had a chance.

"Good job; you were always my little girl," cried Willard as he wiped Jane's tear from her cheek.

Willard reminded Sam and the others that they had to hurry. Just like the creator has been healed, so would the evil wizard. Now Jane and the others were in a panic; they had to get back to the main land of Baja. But first, they had to save Sam's father David from the grips of Bella and Marcus.

This was not a problem; Willard had a special thing to get them there. He quickly moved Sam, Jane, and Samantha along to a secret tunnel. Once in the tunnel, Willard had three large rabbits, fully equipped with saddles and ropes.

"There is no way we can get there with these," said Samantha.

Willard just chuckled. "These are not your average rabbits."

Willard whispered into the rabbits' ears, and their ears stood pointing in the air. Then he ordered the three to jump onto the rabbits. With no other questions to ask, the three said their goodbyes and jumped onto the rabbits.

The hawk began to sob. "Oh! I will miss you all."

The hawk wiped the tears from his eyes. With a little spank on the buttocks, off the rabbits went. These rabbits were built for flight; with their long wings they began to fly through the secret tunnel. Once in a while, everyone would look back to make sure all three of them were one behind the other.

Samantha began to rub her rabbit's fur coat; it was so soft and beautiful, never in her life could she imagine something like this could exist. The flying rabbits were so fast that everything Jane and the others passed was just a blur. Faster and faster the rabbits went, flying through tunnels and secret places under the earth. Once in a while, Sam and the others would see symbols of Baja glowing underground or unknown species of animals that they had never encountered in their lifetime.

This was a wild ride for the three; there were so many emotions going on inside each one of them, but each took

the time to enjoy what they got to see. Jane could see her work still being played out right before her eyes as she saw the roots passing nourishment to one another. It was like watching a mother bird feed her young.

From that moment on, Jane knew how important her gift was, and began to appreciate it more. Plant life was now on its way back to Baja and to the ill wizard. Sam was expecting the worst; now his own brother and a group of wizards would try and take over Baja, and it was all in his son's hands to stop this from taking place.

For the first time, Sam began to worry about Peter and hope that he was all right. This was a really big task, and Peter had to be ready, the faith of Baja was now in his hands to pass onto his son. He hoped that his son was mature enough to handle the pressure, but first Sam had to save his father and the other members that were captured by Bella and the remaining wizards.

As Sam and the others flew underground, going through twist and turns, they noticed that they were finally coming to a slow mode.

"We must be there," said Sam as the huge flying rabbits gently bucked Sam and the others off of their backs.

They were instructed by the rabbits to climb the vine that would take them to the surface. With no questions

asked, Sam, Jane, and Samantha began to climb the huge vine to the surface; it was a long way up. Sam remained at the bottom while Jane and Samantha took the lead. The three scraped and climbed their way to the top; it was a long climb, and everyone was tired and sweating from it.

Once everyone made it to the top, for the first time their eyes gazed on the vast destruction the disease had caused Baja. The vegetation was wilted and wasted away; the trees lay lifeless in the middle of the roads, and dead animals left nothing more than their skeletons on the ground, scattered by the winds. Even giants and other large species of animals had been affected.

It has been weeks since Jane and the others were on this side of Baja. They gazed upon the destruction, but they felt comfort knowing that the cure was on its way; coming through the veins of the roots of trees and plants from all over. There was no time to waste; Sam and the others had to find David and the remaining fighters.

Jane and Samantha quickly informed Sam that there were massive rock creatures that had chased them before, and everyone needed to keep a lookout. Sam acknowledged what he had heard with a nod, and off they went into the forest to save David and the other fighters from Marcus and Bella.

Not too far into the forest, Jane felt her roots

starting to heal the lifeless trees. They were sending valuable nutrients and the cure of the white rhino plant to the sick and dying vegetation. Suddenly the trees began to come alive and their color burst with brightness. Trees that were once dead began to move and pick themselves up; their bark was no longer brittle, but strong.

The trees grew bigger and stronger, digging their roots into the dirt to pass on the healing powers of the white rhino plant. Flowers began to grow right before their eyes, popping into the air. The forest that was once dark and gloomy became bright again.

"The powers of the rhino plant are working," said Samantha to Jane.

All Jane could do was smile, her hard work had paid off, and now Baja would be safe from all death. The only thing left in their way was the seven wizards, and how to lock them away for good. Through the forest, Jane and the others ran with nothing more than a sword and worn out shield and helmets, but they had no choice but to fight with what they had.

Jane and Samantha showed Sam the way to the temple in the forest where they saw Bella and Marcus take David. The three quickly ran through the forest, trying very hard not to make a lot of noise or be seen. Suddenly Jane came to

the same place where Oscar had died; nothing more was left but a large skull of her beloved cat. Everything had vanished away, taken by the wind or other animals. Jane knelt beside the skull and began to sob, until she was picked up by her husband.

"Honey, I am sorry, but we must go," said Sam.

Jane continued to cry and looked back at the spot where she'd lost one of her best friends. It was a sad moment; no one knew what to do or say, and that made the rest of the way very quiet and somber. Suddenly, in the bushes, Sam could hear something moving and growling. He motioned to the others to keep low and quiet.

As the three squatted down behind the tall grass that seemed to have grown overnight, in the fields were three of the large rock dogs. Their savage behavior was clear as they feed on a large dead bird. Their bodies were covered with the animal's blood; their savage ways became clear as they fought with each other over the carcass.

Suddenly one of the dogs began to sniff and picked up a scent that was familiar; the scent of humans. Sam motioned to Jane and Samantha that it was time to start moving out. On their hands and knees, the three began to crawl faster and faster; and the more they moved the more the rock dogs began to take notice.

As they crawled, Jane made a sudden stop as she could feel something was over her shoulder. She was right; it was one of the massive creatures, sniffing through the grass. Looking for the scent its nose was picking up, Jane could feel the thinner of the large animals walking closer to her. She could hear its panting from a mile away. She remained still as the creature stood right over her.

Suddenly a big glob of saliva from the creature's mouth covered Jane's entire body as it stood over her. It still could not see her because of the tall grass. The creature began to push the grass aside with its nose, but still couldn't find Jane, and because of the saliva, her scent was no longer present.

From afar, Sam and Samantha had made it to an opening in a rock before they noticed that Jane was in trouble. Sam began to come back for his wife, but Jane motioned him to go back; she would be all right. Feeling uneasy, Sam watched from the crack in the rock. Jane began to talk to the grass to make her a pathway to safety. The grass began to grow violently into the air; it picked Jane up and carried her on a wave.

When the creatures saw this, they began to run after Jane. They picked up speed and were closer and closer to Jane, but she kept on talking to the grass through her

green thumb, and the grass protected Jane from the creatures. With the sharp edges of the creatures, they began to cut through the grass, but with a vengeance, the grass came back and fought for its master Jane. The grass turned itself into strong ropes that tripped the creatures, and then held onto them and tied them to the trees.

But this did not work for long. The creatures were too massive and powerful; their finely sharpened bodies cut through the grass like paper, and they were back to chasing Jane. Suddenly Jane disappeared into the tall grass; the creatures did not know where she went. Then she popped up here and there, making the creatures irritated, and finally they lost interest.

Just as Jane made it to the opening in the rock, one of the creatures came out of nowhere and blocked her. Jane trembled in fear, her eyes became saucers, and just as the creature was about to attack, Jane was pulled into the rock opening by her legs. Something had pulled Jane into the rock; falling and hitting her head, she blacked out.

When she awoke, there was nothing more than darkness surrounding her. Jane noticed that she could not move or talk; so she began to moan, and then she heard another moaning sound. She knew that she was not alone. Suddenly a light shone into the cave, and when it did, it held a

creepy secret. Jane, Sam and Samantha were covered in cobweb from head to toe. Once again they were in the web of a spider, but as the light shone in the cave, they were not the only ones. There were hundreds of bodies, some dead and some alive; most were now skeletons hanging from out of the sides of cocoons.

Sam and the others looked around vigorously, panicking and trying to figure out what to do next. Yet, the decor of the cave got their attention; not only was there a foul smell and green slime everywhere, but there was something massive moving in the dark corner. When the light from the sun came into the cave brighter, the face of the creature became apparent, and then fear came into the hearts of its captives. The light gave way to the most hideous creature ever to grace the eyes of anyone.

The creature was massive in size, overweight and dirty; it was the size of a large man-like giant. Its head was almost the size of its five thousand pound body; it had a red halo that glowed above its head, its eyes were pure black, and around its neck laid layers of thick gold bangles and chains. There was a chain that hung from the creature's nose to the top of its lip, and globs of snot dripped from the creature's nose onto its stomach.

This was a nasty and unclean sight to see. The

creature's stomach was hairy and very dirty, bugs and roaches crawled out of it; at one point the creature picked up the bugs and began to eat them. One by one it chomped on the same insects that fed off of it. When the creature moved, everyone could hear the clinging of its chains, and its shortness of breath.

When it raised its arms, the truth came to light, the creature had two sets of arms that were like lobster claws. It used the claws to crack the bones of the dead and to dig in its nose. What was very odd and peculiar about this creature was the fact that it spewed cobwebs out of its mouth; it was a very disgusting thing to see. This creature had not only lived here for centuries, but it seemed like someone had kept it for a pet.

As the creature became comfortable in its spot that was made of nothing more than a few dirty rags and hay, a glow in the wall appeared and was followed by an opening. A slender figure came out, graceful and unafraid. Dressed all in black; from the cocoon, Sam and the others got a good look at this figure. It was Bella; of course, she had kept the creature as her pet and come to see how it was doing.

The creature crawled up to Bella like a little child to its mother. She kissed his large face and blew into his face; he loved this. The creature began to smile, showing

his yellow fang-like teeth. Bella checked to make sure her pet had everything it needed, but she also let out a secret, telling it that she wanted it to go to war in a few days.

The creature jumped for joy as Bella told him how many Baja citizens he could store and eat; how he could break their bones and make stew out of their bodies. The creature clapped and chuckled at his master's words. From above Sam and the others knew that they had to get out of there, but they were careful not to make any sudden moves; Bella did not need to know they were there.

As the reunion between beauty and the beast took place, a huge spider began to crawl up Sam's leg. He did not want to scream, and tried to hold it in. Then the spider began to burrow into Sam's skin. He bit his lip to stop from screaming, but he was moving too much and the cocoon began to shake.

It fell from the air, missing Bella by a mere inch. The creature became upset, picked the cocoon up, and sprayed more cobwebs from its mouth and stuck it back up to the cave ceiling. Jane and Samantha were afraid for Sam, thinking that Bella would order the creature to open the cocoon, but she did not. She only paused for a minute and then left the room out the hole she had come through.

That was a close call for Sam, but the other hard part was trying to get out of the cocoon and then getting the spider out of his body before it was too late. Samantha knew that they had to move fast; she wiggled until she managed to set her small knife free. She cut through the layers of webbing.

Once she saw where her friends were, she had to make a move. Out sprang Samantha from her cocoon and onto the cocoon of Jane. Quickly, like a wild woman, Samantha cut and ripped through the layers of webbing. Once Jane was free, she hid in the spaces between the other bodies.

Samantha flipped through the air with her ancient ninja skills, going to save Sam. The creature began to move, tossing and turning from its nap. Jane motioned to Samantha to hurry up as the creature was awakening. Samantha quickly freed Sam and was now trying to cut the spider from under his skin. With a quick jab of her knife, Samantha stabbed the spider and pulled it out of Sam's skin.

The spider was now dead, letting off toxic foam. With blood dripping from his leg, Sam quickly crawled down to where his wife was, and then Samantha followed. They all stayed there until it was safe to make another move. They kept a close eye on the creature as it tossed and turned.

Finally it was safe to move and try to get out of the

cave. Samantha jumped down to the secret entrance where Bella had come in, and tried to find a way to open the door. There were many codes that were carved into the walls centuries ago. With a few rubs and a push on the secret codes, nothing happened.

But something was happening in that room; the creature began to wake and saw that his catches were trying to escape. It swung its arm into the air and let out a loud cry; then it sprayed cobwebs from its mouth all over the place, trying to catch Samantha as she jumped and cart-wheeled through the air. There was no time to figure out the codes, the three had to go the way they came in.

Samantha motioned to Sam and Jane to come on, and so they did, crawling from their hiding spot as the creature went wild, smashing and tearing up its own nest trying to prevent his dinner from getting away. But the three dodged and ducked the massive creature; until it became even angrier and began to smash holes in the walls.

The cave began to crumble slowly, pieces of clumped dirt fell, causing a major cave in. Sam, Samantha, and Jane ran out of the cave, fearing for their lives. The monster followed them; continuing to smash and destroyed everything in its way. The creature began to moan and groan, as if it was in major pain, but it was just unhappy that its meal it

had escaped.

Out of the cave Sam and the others flew, falling to their knees as they caught their breath. But it was too late for the creature; it got trapped by the heavy dirt that covered it up to its neck. The creature let out a loud cry causing the birds and other animals to fly away.

His mother heard his plea, and Bella ordered her rock dogs to go and see what was the matter with her beloved pet. From a distance, Sam could see the rock dogs coming; with their massive size and shape cut-rock bodies that glittered in the sun's rays. They were in the middle of nowhere, there was nothing more than fields. So once again, Sam tried to use his gift of levitation to move them into the air.

Samantha and Jane began to worry, since Sam's powers were not always there for him, but they both concentrated with him, and up and away they went into the sky. Sam was very excited; finally something had gone right for him. But his happiness was short-lived; his powers were weakening and the three began to plummet to the ground.

Screams filled the air as Jane and Samantha were expecting a nasty fall. But as they fell, a huge tree covered in white moss caught the falling three. Jane kissed the tree on its limb and held on tight. They remained on

the tree limb until the rock dogs lost their scent.

They kept quiet as the dogs ran off back to the temple to tell their master.

"We must move fast," said Sam.

Down the tree the three slid, one by one, falling to the ground and taking off running. They headed toward the old temple with the plan of saving David and the other fighters. Once they got closer to the temple, they hid behind a tall plant until it became dark.

From a distance, they watched as Bella and the other wizards turned David and the others into slaves. They had the fighters of Baja building and making weapons for the war. They were beaten and mistreated; some of the men who were once fit were now nothing more than skin and bones. Bella and the other wizards were starving the fighters, yet insisting that they work all day and night.

Sam began to cry for the fighters; they looked frail and near death. He could not believe the woman he once called a friend was behind this. Not only did he have to face his brother, but he also had to face his best friend.

As night fell, the skies opened up so bright, a huge glow of light came from the temple. There was singing and chanting; something strange was taking place. Then the skies lit up like fireworks again. A face appeared in the

sky; it was a ghostly image of an old mummy with skin and bones that had been dried up for centuries. The mummy was hooded; one could not see its face. It began to chant with the chanters on the ground.

"What is going on?" asked Jane.

Sam explained that Bella and the other wizards had just awakened Cilus. The mummy that was sick was now well again. Because the white rhino plant saved Baja, it also saved Cilus. Now that all the water and vegetation was cured, Bella and the others made a potion to cure their seventh wizard. He was deathly sick, and he had poisoned Baja with his sickness.

Now that Baja was well, so was the seventh and final wizard. It was time for all the wizards to join forces and take over Baja. Now that the temple was in a ceremonial phase; it was the perfect time for Sam and the others to sneak in.

As Sam, Jane, and Samantha got closer to the temple, they found that getting in would be much harder than they thought. The gate was guarded by huge ape-like creatures that stood at least ten feet tall, with long hairy white fur, and they weighed about a thousand pounds. They carried large swords, golden chest plates, and golden helmets to cover their heads. They would stomp and kill anything

trying to get in or leave.

Lining the hills to the temple were large blue bullfrogs. They floated up and down like a row of musical notes, and slept all day. But the slightest of noises they heard would cause them to emit an irritating humming noise. To the citizens of Baja, these frogs were known as crying frogs; to Bella and the other wizards they were their security feature. So the only way in the temple was to dig underground.

"This would have been a great time for Peter to use his skills," said Sam.

Jane was not pleased with the idea, and gave Sam an unpleasant look. Samantha noticed a stream that led under the bridge to the temple. That was their best way to get in, and they all agreed to take the chance. One by one, they walked up to the water's edge and slowly and quietly eased their bodies into the water, trying not to make a sound or anything that would get them noticed.

Sam, Jane and Samantha rode the current of the stream to the temple, holding their breath and going underwater, they passed the huge apes guarding the entrance. For a minute, one of the apes noticed something and headed toward the water. It looked around but saw nothing. But underneath the water Sam and the others were holding their breath and

trying not to run out of air.

The faces of the apes were very scary and caused Jane to use more oxygen than normal. She could not hold her breath any longer, as the huge ape looked on. Sam quickly grabbed Jane by the hand and swam as fast as he could with her, until they were clear of danger.

Out of view of the creatures, Sam pulled Jane's head out of the water, allowing her to catch her breath. Jane began to apologize, but Sam let her know that it was okay. The most important thing was that they were safe and everyone was all right. Sam waited for Samantha to catch up with him and Jane. When Samantha arrived, they were now inside the gates of the temple, but they had to get out of the water fast. Something was approaching at a fast speed; big bubbles burst out of the water, letting Sam know that whatever was coming their way was massive.

Sam ordered Jane and Samantha to get out of the water and run as fast as they could. One by one, Sam helped the two ladies out of the water, and as he was about to leave, something pulled him by the legs back into the water, causing a big splash. Because of all the chanting going on in the temple, it fell on deaf ears. Sam was putting up a fight, punching and kicking whatever had ahold of him. Then the creature let Sam go and fixed his eyes on Jane and

Samantha.

"Run!" said Sam, as the creature leapt out.

What they saw paralyzed Jane and Samantha right in their tracks. Out of the water came the largest black alligator anyone had ever seen. With its green eyes and sharp yellow teeth, it had huge legs and feet that gave way to large claws. The alligator was covered in black fur, it roared like a raging beast, and took a swipe at Samantha, cutting her across the face.

The beast was hungry and ready to feed. The huge alligator swung its tail around and whipped Jane to the floor. Samantha quickly pulled out her sword and lunged at the creature, striking it in the eye. Meanwhile Sam pulled himself out of the water, but being badly beaten, it took a long time for him to make it to shore.

As the creature licked its tongue at Jane, it was ready for a feast, but Samantha was on the creature's back stabbing and beating it with her sword. The sword did little damage to the creature, but Samantha's poking and stabbing made the alligator irritated and it began to buck Samantha off of its back. Samantha held on tight and kept on hitting away.

Jane got out of the way and ran to safety behind a huge tree; upset and mad. Sam began to take on the creature

once it knocked Samantha off of its back. Sam began to change; something was going on, his orange hair began to twirl and stick up in the air. His arms and neck began to turn orange, and with a loud roar he picked up the alligator by its tail and threw it back into the stream.

As it landed and made a big splash, Sam and the others took off into the yard of the temple. Sam slowed down to catch his breath, wondering what had happened to him, what was his body going through? How could a skinny, tall, frail man like him pick up a thousand pound alligator with no problem?

That was the question on everyone's mind. Sam's body was changing, something strange was going on, but it was no time for a family moment. Sam and the others had to save David and the rest of the fighters.

With Sam's hair all stuck up in the air, Jane smiled and said, "I like that look on you."

Sam could do nothing more than blush at his wife's comment. Running through the massive temple grounds made Jane and the others tired; so they decided to hide out for a minute to catch their breath. Hiding behind a tall statute of a wizard, Sam heard footsteps coming their way. It was the foot guards for the temple, all dressed in white with tribal masks on. No one could see their faces; they

marched through the courtyard watching and guarding the temple.

This gave a little time for Sam to come up with a plan to get to the prison camps that Bella had prepared. The foot soldiers marched one by one in a harmonious line, never out of tune, watching and looking for anything suspicious. Suddenly Samantha accidentally stepped on a tree branch, and it made a loud noise.

The foot soldiers stopped, and began to look through the trees, searching and peering for an intruder. One by one, they leapt over one another like acrobats in a circus. Flying into the marsh area, there was no place for Sam or the others to run, so they had to fight. Out jumped Samantha with her sword, fight, followed by Jane and Sam.

The three were nervous and scared, but they knew that the show must go on, and so it did. The foot soldiers began to fight and tumble with Samantha and the others, but it was not as easy as they had thought. Samantha was a skilled fighter, using her ninja skills she fought with the foot soldiers, giving them a long drawn out fight while she instructed Sam and Jane to go and get help.

Sam did not want to leave Samantha alone, but he saw that she was doing fine; so both Jane and Sam took off through the temple grounds, looking for any survivors.

Meanwhile, foot soldiers were on their heels; the faster Jane and Sam ran, the foot soldiers ran even faster.

As Samantha fought, slashing the soldiers with her sword, Jane broke away from her husband and went in another direction, and so did the soldiers; half followed Jane and the other half followed Sam. This was a strategy of divide and conquer; the foot soldiers cornered Jane in a dead end. She had nothing to fight with, just her gift of growing.

"Ha, ha, ha, what are you going to do now, little lady?" said one of the soldiers.

Jane quickly touched the tree that she was leaning on, and it immediately came alive and recognized Jane as its healer. With a loud roar, the tree picked Jane up and sat her on a branch, and then went after the foot soldiers. One by one, it kicked and threw them with its branches and limbs. The foot soldiers tried to scatter like household mice, but were caught by their garments, picked up, and tossed through the air by the tree.

Jane kissed and rubbed the tree, thanking it for saving her. Now it was time to save her friends. Jane told the tree to follow the foot soldiers that were chasing her husband. The tree snapped Jane tightly in a hole in its trunk and began to run after the soldiers. It was a scary sight for the foot soldiers to see a large tree running

after them; they screamed like cowards as the tree tossed them one by one, through the air they went, crying and screaming as they ran through the temple grounds.

Even Sam was afraid to see the tree as it came face to face with him. Then Jane popped out of the tree trunk to let Sam know that it was okay. Sam was relieved and glad to hear that. Up onto the tree Sam climbed, and then Jane had the tree make a u-turn and pick up Samantha. She was running from a group of foot soldiers, and as she ran toward the tree, so did the foot soldiers.

When the tree made a loud roar, it blew the soldiers through the air. As one of the soldiers tried to summon help, it was crushed by the roots of the tree like a hot marshmallow on a stick. Jane ordered the tree to move faster toward the prison camp.

Just as the tree made its way over to the camp, it was pulled below the surface. Screams filled the air as Jane and the others were quickly tossed out of the tree. On the ground, one by one they rolled, each getting a mouth filled with dirt. No one had any idea what was going on; then the ground began to shake and quake. Earth began to fall into the open hole; Jane and the others quickly moved away; out came a large statue built from the finest stones. It stood about twelve feet tall, and was in the form of a barbarian

man. With its shirtless body and leaves for an undergarment, it carried a large shield and sword made out of silver and gold. Huge gold bracelets graced its arms and ankles; its hair was made out of the finest white silk, but when this creature turn around, it had no face!

Masons were still carving its face. Before the alarm went off, the creature knocked the masons off of it, and began to crawl out of the hole. With no face, just an eye, it was fixed on Jane and the others.

"Run!" shouted an unknown voice.

Before Jane and the others could see where the voice was coming from, they were pulled to safety by unknown men. The creature came out of the ground like a hungry bear, searching and scavenging for its prey. The huge statue began to chew on the tree that saved Jane and the others.

The tree called out for Jane, but there was nothing she could do. Although she wanted to save it, she knew that it was too dangerous; she and the others continued to hide behind an old headstone in the center of the courtyard.

As the monster came closer and closer, knocking over everything in its path, Jane and the others got a close look at the people who'd saved them. Behold, it was a few of their fighters who had managed to stay alive and breakout of the camp. The fighters were also glad to see

Jane, Samantha and Sam. These men and women looked as if they had been through a tough time; they were ill, dirty, and some were badly wounded. But they were still willing to fight and save Baja.

Before they could talk further, they had to destroy the statue that was coming after them. One by one, Sam and the others threw rocks to knock out the eye of the statue, hoping to stop it from seeing them. They kept throwing, but just barely missed the eye. The statue was not pleased, and came after its attackers.

With its shield, the statue blocked the incoming rocks and stones, then opened its mouth, and out jumped dead corpses by the hundreds. One by one, they began to run after Sam and the others. They were nothing more than skin and bones with a little bit of flesh still hanging onto their bones. Worms crawled out of their mouths and eyes. They smelled like rotten fish, and their old musty bones creaked as they moved. It was as if an entire graveyard had come alive inside the mouth of the statue.

The corpses were endless; there was no way anyone could stop this influx of evildoers, but Samantha would not give up. She ordered everyone to fight to the death, but it was useless. The harder Samantha fought, the more the dead came after her; piling on top of her one by one, biting and

chewing at her bones. Samantha tried to kick them away, and once again Sam got angry and began to turn orange.

His skin turned from its original color to orange slowly, creeping up his entire body, and then his orange hair began to do a twirl into the air as if it was being blown by a fast wind. One by one, Sam went through the crowd, punching and kicking his way to save his friend Samantha; and one by one the creatures huddled around Sam like a tidal wave.

Then it became silent; not a sound, as if the air had gone deaf. Jane began to fret for her husband and friend, but then out of the blue, like a mad man, Sam threw the large group of corpses into the air. Sam was filled with a massive dose of strength and power. The dead went flying through the air like a wind blowing a leaf, but once again, the statue let more corpses out of its mouth, and it became too much for Sam to fight off.

Finally out of strength and breath, Sam's body fell to the floor. The corpses began to cheer and clap for their master; then through the air, on a flying bat, came Bella. The bat was large and black, even its eyes were black, and it showed no sign of fear whatsoever. The bat's chest and head were protected by a silver helmet and silver breastplate. On top of the bat sat Bella on a finely made

saddle with a lasso in her hands as she ordered the bat to stop and lower her down.

Bella was nicely dressed, with her long black see-through dress and cape; knee high leather boots, and a golden helmet that protected her head. Her long black hair flowed in the wind, her cherry lips made her face look so innocent and friendly.

As she was being lowered, through the air came another bat with a rider, Marcus. He had on a finely crafted leather cape and uniform, and he too wore a golden helmet. On his chest lay a golden breastplate that glowed with red codes. A section of his orange hair could still be seen through the gaps of the helmet.

The silver belt that held up his pants had a skull belt buckle that also glowed in the dark. Out of the buckle came a whip that he used to beat his bat with. Pain and agony made Marcus happy; anything that suffered made him happy.

Bella and Marcus were two evil people in love. Once Marcus landed, he and Bella kissed and showed their affections for each other. Then Bella ordered the dead corpses to scatter. When they heard Bella's voice, they scattered like scared dogs, whimpering as they moved back into the mouth of the statue.

At first Sam and the others went unnoticed by Bella and Marcus, because they were so heavily covered by the dead corpses. But once the corpses moved away, Marcus noticed his brother by his orange hair. Marcus quickly ran to his brother's side, but not before Bella pulled him away, replying that Marcus was turning soft and should not feel for his brother. Bella told him of how he needed to remember that Sam was his enemy now and not his brother.

Marcus' eyes glow a bright green; he quickly moved from the side of his brother and began kicking and spitting on him. This was what Bella loved to see, two brothers against one another. Jane shouted at Marcus, calling him a traitor, and neglecting his family name. Marcus slightly turned around and then continued to listen to Bella as she ranted and raved of how powerful they would be once they did away with Peter.

There was no remorse or any type of regret in either Marcus or Bella; they had now officially abandoned and betrayed the one man who truly believed in them. But they couldn't care less; they were on their way to being the proud rulers and elders of Baja.

Bella ordered her remaining foot soldiers to take Sam, Samantha, Jane and the other fighters to a holding cell, and to put one of the rock dogs as a guard. The foot

soldiers loaded Sam and the others into a carriage and headed them toward the camp. Out of the bars, Jane and the others could see the deplorable condition that Bella had David and the others living in.

Some of Sam's men were chained to the ground with thick layers of chains; there was little water and very little food. Many of the fighters were ill and dying; even many more were starving to death. As Jane looked through the corner of her eye, she saw a heap of dead bodies lying along the way. Many of them were Sam's fighters, and many were innocent citizens of Baja that were captured as slaves and put in a camp to appease Bella.

Jane covered Sam's eyes as he lay on the floor of the wagon, she did not want him to see how mistreated his men were, how their bodies were thrown to the side like old garbage. But Sam got himself up and saw the horrible sight.

He shouted to everyone, "We are here, we will fight together!"

But no one wanted to hear that; there were only a few that still had a little fight left. As the wagon came to a complete stop, out jumped the foot soldiers, dragging and pulling Sam and his friends out of the wagon. They then tied Sam and the others to a large chain as if they were wild dogs.

Sam did his best to get loose, but the chains were too strong; they were much stronger than Sam, and made out of a silver liquid that no one had ever seen before. The other prisoners just stared at Sam and the others. To see their leader captured and now a prisoner like they were was depressing.

As the dust from the ground floated through the air, on her bat horse came Bella from the sky, with Marcus not far behind. Bella was happy, this was the capture of her life; she couldn't wait to show off her catch to the other wizards. Bella whipped Sam with her lasso, and then took here long nails and carved a code onto Sam's chest.

Once Bella finished, the code glowed, his body shook violently, and then Sam was knocked out. Jane called for her husband, but he would not answer. Then Marcus came face to face with Jane as saliva spew from his mouth, and his spit became acid.

He bent over to Jane and whispered in her ear, "I am number one now."

Jane moved her face away from Marcus as his breath stunk and turned into green foam. As Jane was about to insult Marcus, she noticed another figure moving in the background. It was very dark, and the hooded figure stood in just enough light so that she could only see the mouth

move.

It shouted to Bella and Marcus, "We must get the boy, and quickly."

Then, just as quickly as it came, the hooded figure disappeared into thin air. Jane worried about Peter and knew that they must find a way to escape. As Bella and Marcus left for the night, they carefully added more foot soldiers to guard the new prisoners.

Jane looked around wildly; to see if she could find any familiar faces. Behind one of the tents stood a skinny man, unrecognizable to Jane, but he motioned to her to keep quiet, and so Jane did. She watched and waited for the man to come closer, and when he did, it was David!

Jane was filled with excitement and wanted to hug him, but was chained to the floor. Her father-in-law David was still alive and still had a little fight in him. All night the foot soldiers stood watch, but just as the night was coming into full darkness, many of them dozed off for a little wink of sleep.

David quickly ran over to Jane, hugged and kissed her rosy cheeks. As the foot soldiers slept, David quickly used some type of mirror gadget to loosen the chains. They were hooked to some type of force field, and David being a man of inventions came up with a way to deflect the force field

from Jane's chain.

The two quickly and quietly snuck off into the bushes as the other men kept a look out. David explained to her that for weeks he had been trying to escape, but he'd had no luck. Still, he had found many secret passages to the temple, and maybe one would lead out to Baja.

Jane was more concerned with Sam and the others. David explained that, come tomorrow morning, they would all be free. Quietly and quickly, David freed a tired and weary Sam. He looked upon his son with pride and comforted his badly beaten body in his arms. Then Samantha and the others were freed, and dummies made of grass and twigs took their places. It would only give them enough time to make it to the main temple. After that, everyone had to fight for their lives. Fireballs graced the night sky; they covered the entire area of the temple. Then a beam of light shot down inside the temple.

"Oh, no! Cilus has risen," said David.

He explained to everyone that Cilus was the sick wizard, and now, because of the white rhino plant, he had risen and was now better. Jane apologized for her part in saving the plant, but it had to be done to save Baja. No one blamed Jane; they all knew that it was a must for the citizens of Baja. Soon after the huge light of fireballs,

the chanting began.

Then there were shouts of, "Hoo-rah!" all through the night.

It was no time for sleep; David and the others had to get a move on. David tried to wake his son; the scratch on Sam's chest was still glowing red. David hung his head and wept; no one knew what was wrong until he explained that Sam would not be coming back home. Bella had poisoned his heart and mind with the scratch. She had invested his body with evil.

"Sam will soon be fighting us," said one of the remaining soldiers.

Jane did not want to leave her husband, but the others pulled her away as Sam's body shook violently and out of control.

"Move it, move it!" said David as Sam change.

With all the commotion, the rock dogs woke up and howled at the moon. The dogs sniffed the dummies and noticed that they could not get a scent; so the dogs barked and barked until the foot soldiers woke up. When they noticed that their prisoners were gone, they sent out a search party.

Meanwhile, Jane and the others were running fast through the woods, trying to find a safe place to hide.

They could feel evil coming over their shoulders, so they ran faster and faster, but it did no good. The black Ryders came on their huge horses, stomping and tearing up the forest for David and the others. This time, the Ryders seemed to be more powerful, their horses glided through the air as if they were on ice skates. Then from a golden staff they shot fire beams at Sam and the others. Not only were the black Ryders more powerful, but they had developed new weapons and skills.

Many of the fighters that were left with David got killed or injured as the fireballs went into the air. David could not look back; he had to get as many as he could to safety. David and the few remaining others ran through the woods, tripping and falling over one another; nearly getting hit by one of the fireballs.

Suddenly David moved a secret rock that glowed and it opened up into a large hole, swallowing David and the others up. The fall was frightening, there were many screams coming from the dark; no one knew what to expect, except David. He was a very private man, so he told no one what he had found when he was allowed to go into the forest to relieve himself. So no one knew of this secret hole except for David; and besides, he could trust no one. Many of the men had turned against him, settling for the cheap

and worthless life Bella had offer them. Only a few of the fighters were loyal and stayed to the end, and this was what David had expected.

He had planned for this day, and that was what he wanted to try and teach his son, about trusting and when not to trust. David wanted his son to be a leader just like he was, but he now felt as if he had pushed his son too hard. As the group fell helplessly down the black hole, no one could see or hear anything; they were falling into the abyss.

Then they finally saw light, a glowing object from afar. As they fell, the object of light came and caught them like a fisherman's net. The group landed on a pillow of soft clouds; no one had a single scratch. No one was hurt, but many were frightened. They had no idea what they were looking at; the object was a ball of just light that changed into many colors.

Then it took on a human form; there was no face to put to this entity, but there was a humble voice, so low that everyone could hear it only in their mind. The voice was soothing and comforting, it hummed to the weary souls, and then it let them stand on the ground. Most of the fighters could not stand, they were trembling too much. Their legs buckled and shook; they could not believe what they were

seeing in front of them.

A figure made out of colors that stood as tall as most trees; it lived many miles below the surface of Baja. As it past most of the fighters, they shied away; many of them lost control of their bowels, and had to be excused, but not David. He was a peacemaker, and as he talked to the entity, it took the form of the person that it was talking with. At this moment, it was David. He explained to the creature that they were being chased and needed to hide out for a minute.

The creature never said a word out loud, but whispered in David's head. "Why do you run, if you're an innocent man, my friend?"

Once again, David explained to the entity of the war that was coming to Baja, but the entity insisted that the elders would save them. David was not too sure of that. With a passionate plea, David asked the entity to save them, even as the Ryders flew down into the cave!

For a minute, it looked as if the entity was not willing to save David and the others. But at the last minute, it changed its mind, raced up to the top and greeted the Ryders with a scorching blow of fire. The Ryders quickly scrambled out of the hole, knocking and pushing each other out of the way. When one of the Ryders

took a fall off its horse, it crashed to the ground.

Everyone was curious to see what was hidden under those black hooded robes. As his hands shook uncontrollably, David approached the dead Ryder on the floor. He finally got up the nerve, and pulled back the robe to reveal an amazing surprise; all that lay beneath was a two foot-tall miniature elf. Its skin was very black and scaly; the only thing that was visible was its fang-like white teeth, and a little patch of white hair.

The wizards had given the elves the ability to stretch and make themselves tall, but the fall broke and crushed every bone in its body. The Ryder was now nothing more than a dead carcass to feed to the wild. David quickly threw the hood back over the Ryder, covering up its grotesque body. Everyone was now a little at ease to know that the Ryders were nothing more than small elves that were given powers by the seven wizards.

David and the others then patiently waited for the entity to return. When it did, it let David and all know that it had chased away their captors. The entity moved around the cave, carrying its light with it. David quickly ordered the rest of the fighters to get up and follow it. They all followed the entity as it moved through the cave.

The cave was old and the light gave way to the history

of the entity, which had been there for millions of years. The walls told the story of why the entity was formed; its main purpose was to make night and day. That was how Baja and the other worlds woke up to morning. Each day, the entity flew up to the sky to produce a nice morning sun; and at night, it left and crawled into its hole like a worm.

The history of Baja was fascinating to many, but this was no time for history. David wanted out of there; he explained to Jane and the others that Sam would be coming to find them, and that he would not be the same man. Bella had poison his blood and sent evil into his heart and body, there was no telling what the outcome would be.

The most important thing was to get back to the main land of Baja and find Peter; he was the key to all of this. Jane was in no mood for talk about saving Baja; she had just lost her husband and now she might lose her son. Jane cursed the day she came back to Baja; she wanted to return to the land of the living where she was free. She wanted to return to the simple life of Baja.

Finally her emotions settle down, and she knew that Peter was chosen by the elders before he was born, and it was the right choice. David and the others quickly consoled Jane; this was also hard for them. Not only had they become slaves, they had also lost many friends in the battle, and

they had sacrificed too much to quit now.

The fighters and David continued to follow the entity as it led them to one of the most remarkable places that had ever been seen by the eyes of men. This place held the key to Baja existence; the room was immaculate, everything was made from crystal, and there were ancient armor, helmets, bows and arrows, all made from crystal. There was also a vessel powered by the energy of crystals. The vessel hovered inches above the floor, and would move from side to side in a slow manner.

David loved technology, and this was something he found very interesting. The vessel was nothing more than an oval, transparent piece of crystal that glowed with the Baja symbols and codes. Once everyone touched the crystal in the room, they immediately seemed to create more energy. They all had more color in their skin; everyone looked and felt more alive, and the wounds and cuts on their bodies miraculously heal.

The entity curled into a ball and watched the interaction of David and the others. Then the entity became one, then two, then three entities, all in one. David was a little surprised, but tried to keep calm and not show the rest of the fighters that he was afraid. The entities formed a circle around David and the others. Just as David

thought the entities were about to attack them, they did not. All they wanted to do was drink and absorb the power from the crystal, just like the others had done.

The entity explained to David that this was where it got all its power to keep the skies lit up. David was relieved, and gave thanks to the entity once more for saving them. Then a loud howling noise approached. The earth rumbled, and the crystal broke onto the floor as if an earthquake had erupted.

"We must leave!" shouted David.

David quickly begged the entity to let him take the crystal ship. Once he got approval from the entity, the fighters climbed aboard. David had no idea how to run the ship, but he had to learn fast; something was coming in the winds for them. With a few moves and a push of a crystal, the ship revved up.

Then silently it floated into the air. All of a sudden, through the cave, Sam came flying down. But this was not the Sam everyone knew, this was something else, something Bella and Marcus had created. Sam's orange hair was noticeable, but everything else about him had changed. He had scary wings like a bat that spanned miles; he could spread and retract them as he chose. His body was muscular and solidly built.

The scratches Bella left on Sam's body were still visible and still glowing red. His eye's looked demonic, and his tongue was long and cut at the end like a snake. But his white ivory horns were the scariest of all; they were sharp at the tips, and one of the horns was covered in blood. Jane quickly covered her face in fear as she pleaded with Sam from the inside of the ship.

Sam was no longer in his body; whatever Bella had done to him, Sam was now a changed man. Sam fought head to head with the entity, but it was wining as it darkened the room. Everyone could hear Sam breathing like a wild hog, but no one dared to move or stir up any commotion.

When the entity turned its light back on, it and Sam went at it again, hitting over the crystal. That was causing almost all of the power source in Baja to stop; chunks of crystal went flying through the air. Back and forth they took swipes at one another, causing harm to each other, but there was nothing the entity could do any more. Without the power of the crystals, it was becoming weaker and weaker. He could no longer fight with Sam, his glow was diminishing quickly.

Sam then belted out a loud wicked laugh that echoed through the entire cave. Then he saw that David and the others were getting away. Sam flew up to the ship with his

powerful wings, rocking it from side to side with his might. The fighters bounced from wall to wall as they watched Sam attack. Jane begged her husband, but it did no good.

Then she showed Sam the locket that he gave her to keep forever. For the first time, Sam showed a sign of regret and sadness. He rubbed his huge paw-like hands over the window of the vessel. Jane cried silently, the tears rolled down her face in pain. But then a loud woman's voice came out of nowhere, ordering Sam to kill them all.

Once Sam heard the voice he was back to his old self. Jane or David knew the voice coming from the darkness was Bella, and she was accompanied by Marcus. He also ordered his brother to kill everyone in the vessel. Sam was struggling with his brother's request; his head ached and blood dripped from his ears. When Bella saw that Sam was having a hard time she dug her claw-like nails into his skin and scratched him some more.

Suddenly Sam's attitude changed; he became more violent and dangerous. Sam jumped on the vessel, punching and striking it with his hands, but the crystal glass was so tough that it did not break. In the meantime, David was trying desperately to learn how to control the vessel. As he was doing this, Sam hit the vessel with his massive

wings, rocking the ship once more.

Then suddenly, David got the ship started, and off they went, up into the air and on their way out of the cave. But Bella had a plan waiting for them at the top; she had awoken her stone mummies to attack and jump on the vessel to weight it down, and they did so. The minute David got the vessel to the top; it was attacked violently by stone mummies that weighed tons.

One by one, the stone mummies jumped on the vessel. They were adorned in the finest carved armor and weapons. Their faces were covered in a colorful ancient tribal mask, and they attacked the ship with their stone weapons; banging and slashing away at it. The vessel was holding up very well, until Bella summoned more of her rock mummies. They could be seen from miles and miles away, as if they were going to war.

They roared and chanted as they ran and jumped on the moving vessel. Everyone inside was afraid, as David lost control of it. It swayed and shifted in many directions; disturbing the crystal and rocks that held up the cave foundation. David was also afraid; the look in his eyes showed fear for the first time, as the vessel fell toward the floor from the weight of the stone mummies. Bella and Marcus just stood and watched with evil grins, and they

forced Sam to see what he had done to his family.

Bella whispered in Sam's ear, "Your son is next."

Those words made Sam angry and upset; he roared, causing the cave to crumble and shake. Sam flew up to the top and helped push the vessel safely to the top, knocking away the stone mummies and defying Bella and Marcus. Bella let out an evil scream as she saw Sam helping David and the others get away. She called out all her forces to stop them.

Jane said goodbye to her loving husband one more time as Marcus flew up and fought with Sam. He and Marcus went head to head, fighting and tormenting each other, but Bella was not happy. She jumped on her pet bat and flew after the vessel. David was far away, but that did not stop Bella, she was determined to catch up with David and the others. She wanted that vessel destroyed; she could not afford to let them get away.

Bella beat on her pet bat, demanding that it fly faster and faster, but the crystal that powered the vessel was too fast for Bella and her common bat. She was not happy at all, and spit and beat on her bat, blaming it for not catching up to the vessel. The bat let out a heart-wrenching cry as Bella whipped him, one lick after another.

Finally Bella decided to turn back after she could not catch David and the others. She quickly flew back down to

the cave where Sam and Marcus were still fighting. By now, the cave was a total mess; most of the crystals were broken. The walls of the cave had hole after hole, and yet Sam and Marcus would not stop fighting.

Bella belted out a loud whistle, "Cut it out, you two are on the same team; we must get to the meeting place in Baja."

She got Sam and Marcus to stop fighting amongst themselves, but Bella was still not pleased with Sam's actions. She went up to him and gave him a hard slap across the face. By now the poison from Bella's nails was setting in, and not only had Sam grown more powerful, but he was meaner and bigger now. Even his bat-like wings had muscles.

Marcus was not happy with Bella making Sam as strong as he was; Marcus pressured Bella, telling her that she had made a huge mistake, that his brother loved his wife and family, and because of this love could overpower anything. Bella paid no attention to Marcus, and brushed him off as if nothing happened.

This made Marcus angry and upset; he jumped onto his pet bat and rode off, leaving Bella alone to deal with Sam. But Sam was very compliant, as if Bella had a spell over him, and off Bella went leaving the entity to die in its home. With its last ounce of strength, the entity stretched

out its hand to plead for help. Bella laughed and spit on it, jumping on her pet bat and flying off.

Even though Sam was pumped with hate from Bella's evil spell, his heart felt for the entity who had risked its life to save his wife. Sam was having a spiritual war, between the good and evil inside him. His head hurt, and the room started to spin out of control. Then Sam quickly flew out of the cave, holding his head from all the pain he was in.

Bella was not far behind; she secretly watched Sam and was upset that her powers were not having the permanent effects that she wanted. Even though Sam had changed into the creature Bella made him to be, he still had love in his heart. Bella did not like this, and was fearful that Sam would not stay with her and the seven wizards. So Bella had to make a quick decision, and her decision was to kill Sam after she used him to get next to his son.

Chapter 17

The Awakening

Bella sent her watch dogs to keep a close eye on Sam, and report back to her. Wherever he went and whatever he did, Bella wanted to know. But there were more important things on her mind. Now that the seven wizards were all in good health, it was time to finish the ceremony and attack Baja. Bella flew back to the temple to meet with the other wizards.

The ceremony had begun, and standing in the center of a white outlined circle was the youngest of all, Cilus. He was the wizard of soul snatching; a dark-skinned wizard with long, black leather-like hair. The tips of his hair were like razors that would slice anything by a simple touch. Cilus was between the age of ten and twelve, but he was not a child. Cilus was estimated to be anywhere from one million to one and a half million years old. The more souls he sucked in, the younger he looked and the longer he stayed alive.

Cilus was the missing piece of the puzzle; the wizard world could not work without him, just like the elders couldn't be awakened without each other. Then to be

sacrificed were three of the men in David's army. They stood in the circle with the wizard, trembling at their knees. Their legs were shaking uncontrollably; one bowed down to the ground and begged Cilus not to take his life. But Cilus was a cold-hearted wizard.

Cilus stood over the three men as they were being held down by heavy stones, and pressed his fingers into each man's skull, ripping out their brains and devouring their souls. Cilus ate the men's souls up one by one as the souls came floating out of the men's lifeless bodies. It was a grotesque sight to see, but for the love of power, everyone was willing to turn their heads away.

It had been many years since Cilus had tasted another soul; he roared out to the heavens, and licked the blood off of his lips like a wild animal. Then Mirus approached; he was the twin brother of Patric Stewart. Mirus had no special skills, and neither did the others. They waited on Cilus to bestow on them their greatest fantasies of power.

Mirus was tall, slender and well fit; he always carried in his back pocket a golden boomerang. He was a well cut and well groomed wizard, nothing was out of place. He had shaved his head bald, and had a tribal symbol of a star on his head. Approaching Cilus, he asked him to grant him the power of invisibility. Once Mirus got his power, he

immediately tested it out, disappearing and reappearing. Mirus was thrilled and excited; he wanted to go to war right now, he wanted to use his powers right away for evil, but was quickly calmed down by Bella.

"You fool, slow down, the elders would eat you alive, it's going to take all of us to defeat them," said Bella.

Mirus quickly kept his excitement under control, and pushed Bella as he walked by. Next in line to be crowned was Marcus, the brother of Sam. Marcus did not need any powers, from the last encounter with the wizard Cilus; he'd got all the powers and abilities that he could handle. The meeting was just for old time sake, to catch up on what had been going on while Cilus was asleep.

Cilus wanted to see if Marcus was still the young angry man he had met many years ago. Marcus did not disappoint him; he professed his hatred for his brother and for Baja. After this satisfied Cilus, he kissed Marcus on the hands and told him that he was free to go. But Cilus was still not sure about Marcus; his blue eyes glowed as if something was truly wrong with Marcus.

Hoyle the card thrower was next. Cilus just smiled at him and gave him a new deck of cards to throw. Hoyle quickly tried them out; out of a golden box he pulled a set of cards that glowed with red symbols. His evil face gave a

big grin; he snatched the cards out of the box and threw one directly at Bella. She never budged or made the slightest move. A card glided across the room with an eerie silence, and snipped off a lock of her hair. Bella watched as her hair fell to the floor, but never made a move.

With an angry tone she mumbled, "I will meet you in the court yard to settle this."

Hoyle just laughed his wicked laugh, which echoed through the temple. Cilus noticed that an animosity among the wizards had developed while he was sick, and demanded that it stop. Cilus reminded the wizards that they were not the enemy; the enemy was Baja and its elders. But the wizards were jealous of Bella and Marcus, fearing that they would try to take over. Bella quickly resolved that issue with Cilus and told him that the other wizards were just jealous. If it wasn't for her, he would not be alive.

Once Cilus heard this, he graciously thanked Bella and ordered the servants to adorn her in the finest gems. Bella kissed and rubbed Cilus' face; she even played with his razor-like hair, enjoying the pain she got when his hair cut her skin. Bella already had her gift from Cilus, the gift of poison, and no matter how Cilus offered to give her more, she only wanted that gift.

Cilus then went to the wizard Louis, a tall, humongous

white giant. His skin was so pale and scary looking; white flakes of skin fell to the ground every time he walked. Louis had no hair on his head; he was a filthy creature with bugs and rodents crawling all over him, in and out of his ears, nostrils and ears. He had a bull-like ear ring that was pierced through his nose. His teeth were yellow and sharp, and his paw-like feet and hands were built up with calluses and dried up, dead skin. No one wanted to be around Louis, not only because of his flaky skin, but because Louis had a terrible odor; everyone had to hold their breath as he passed by.

Mirus whispered to Marcus, "I hope Cilus gives him the power of freshness."

The two wizards laughed at the joke, and that disturbed the ceremony. Cilus ordered them to stop right away, and when Cilus spoke, everyone listened. Cilus gave Louis the power of leadership in the army; he would be the first thing people saw when they were going to war. Cilus gave Louis the ability to stretch his hands for miles to catch a moving target before it hit, or to catch a prisoner from a distance.

To test out his powers, Cilus ordered the guards to bring in another prisoner, and demanded that the prisoner run. When the prisoner ran, thinking that he was set free,

Cilus then ordered Louis to reach out and grab the prisoner who was yards away, somewhere in the court yard. With a stretch of his hands and new found powers, Louis captured the prisoner, drawing him in like a fish on a line. Louis loved it; he quickly bowed down to Cilus, thanking him for his powers.

Then there was Horitio the wizard with no face. He hid from the world, and spent most of his life scaring people in the forest and the countryside. Horitio had no powers either; he was one of those children who was born with no powers and was cast aside by his parents; left in the forest to die. Horitio was a disgrace to his parents, who had sons and daughters that had powers and were chosen by the elders of Baja. This made Horitio very angry and upset, and this is why he sought out the help of the wizards.

Cilus loved the fact that Horitio had no face, and all Horitio ever wanted was a face. But Cilus did not grant it, this made Horitio angry and upset. Horitio was an average size young lad, with the spirit to go to war constantly. He was not afraid of anything; his hair was blue, and his skin was covered in tin. Horitio was a tin man, yet he never knew it. After a childhood accident, Horitio was severely burned, no part of his skin could be saved, and the only thing that would heal his pain was the feel of tin on his

skin. So his parents applied tin, and it grew over his skin as if it was replacing the real skin.

Cilus took one more look at Horitio and decided to give him eyes and the ability to snatch people's faces. Once Horitio was blessed with his eyes, he looked around the room and saw colors and people for the first time. He saw what he looked like for the first time. Even though Horitio had only eyes, he was happy to be able to see. He looked around the room over and over again, and saw that everyone was not the same, that they were different and that it was okay to be different.

His real power was the fact that he could snatch people's faces. Once again Cilus called in the guards to bring him a prisoner to test out the power. The prisoner came in with a fearful fright on his face. While the guards held the prisoner down, Horitio walked over to him, put his hand over the prisoner's face, and with one wave of the hand, the prisoner had no face.

The prisoner screamed and shouted, but his screams fell on deaf ears as Horitio held the prisoner's face in the air. It was like a picture; one could see the prisoner's face moving and screaming. Horitio then put the face in a jar to keep; even while doing so, the prisoner's face kept screaming. On the floor lay the prisoner, still

alive but faceless, searching and scouring the floor for his missing face. All the wizards laughed and chanted to Cilus, but the prisoners cursed them and told them that the elders were coming and would soon be awakened to defeat them all.

Cilus just laughed, and said, "No one can awaken the elders without the key, and no one knows where the key is."

The room got quiet and the prisoner belted out loudly, "They found a little boy who will save and awaken the elders! Haven't your wizards told you that?"

The prisoner was escorted out of the room by the guards. Cilus was very upset that everyone had been keeping this secret from him, but Bella quickly assured him that the child would be killed. Bella told Cilus that the child was the nephew of one of his wizards, Marcus Carrot-Top.

Marcus was upset that Bella had put him on the spot, and he was called to the throne of Cilus. Marcus explained to Cilus that by some freak accident Peter Carrot-Top, his nephew, was the key to saving the elders. Peter was the first ghost born outside of Baja, in the land of the living, and was born with special powers to create holes of any size, and sometimes the holes lead to other worlds.

Cilus was very interested, and told Marcus that it was his duty to capture the boy. If he did not, he would be

killed. Marcus assured Cilus that he would have Peter in his custody before the war. Marcus mentioned that they had captured Peter's father, and Bella had turned him into some type of flying creature who still had a heart of love for his family.

"Is this true?" asked Cilus to Bella.

"Yes it is, but I am working on him," said Bella.

Cilus was not pleased with Bella or Marcus, and ordered them to stop fighting each other, and take care of the problem at hand. Marcus was so upset that Bella told on him and made him look incompetent in front of Cilus; he told Cilus that Bella had a secret crush on Sam Carrot-Top and that she was not to be trusted.

"Neither can you!" shouted Bella as the two fought.

Bella used her powers to throw Marcus into the wall of the temple, causing the temple to shake and crack. Marcus used his powers of strength to throw her into a glass window, causing it to shatter into pieces. This did not stop Bella, she was a tough young lady, and had more power and strength than even Marcus knew about. Bella flipped and attached herself to the wall of the temple and threw daggers at Marcus, hitting him in the shoulder.

Finally Cilus put an end to all the fighting and fussing between the two; but from this moment on, Bella and

Marcus had bad blood between them. Yet, they had to come together to form the army that would take over Baja. Once the bickering and fussing had ended, Cilus sat at the table to discuss plans to take over Baja.

Suddenly watch dogs came in, whispering in Bella's ear that something was going on with Sam. He was now changing back into his original form; the poison Bella had place in his body was wearing off, and Sam might escape. Bella ordered her watch dogs to find him.

Meanwhile, Sam was in the forest near the temple wandering around in a daze. He did not know where he was or who he was; he stumbled and fell to the ground, calling out for his family. He slowly changed back into his original self; either the poison was not strong enough or the love Sam had in his heart outweighed his hatred.

Slowly Sam lost his wings and monstrous features; he was now becoming his old self again. His memory slowly came back; from a distance he could hear the heavy breathing of the guard dogs from miles away. He knew he had to get out of the path and find a hiding place, but he was weak and stumbled and fell. Sam stumbled into a lake and wasn't seen again. The water from the lake covered him from head to toe, and the waves took him away.

Sam's scent was soon lost by the guard dogs, as they

searched for hours and then days. They went back to their master, telling her that they had lost Sam. Bella was not happy, and beat on her guard dogs like a wicked master would. The dogs whimpered and cried. Although they were huge stone dogs, they couldn't or wouldn't dare to attack their master. Bella had them under a powerful spell, one that she thought she had Sam under, but her spell did not work on him.

Sam was gone forever and Bella got nervous; for the first time, she feared their leader Cilus. Bella pretended to take care of the problem in front of him, but she had no idea where to find Sam. Nevertheless, there was a war ahead, and Bella wanted to be a leader of that war.

Chapter 18

On the way home

Meanwhile up in the sky, Jane, Samantha, and David, along with the other crewmembers were on their way back to the mainland of Baja. Many of them had smiles on their faces to be finally going home, and many had frowns for all that they had gone through and all the people that they had lost. Especially Jane, she hardly ate or said a word; she kept looking out of a window to see if a miracle would bring Sam back to her. Once the mainland came into view, people clapped. Some were crying, and others had no expression or emotions at all; they were happy to see all that they had missed, but there were still signs of a disaster. The cure of the white rhino plant was just taking effect; some trees were still down, some lay lifeless on the floor, while others let out a moaning sound.

The cobblestone streets were cracked and bricks were broken; stores and courtyards were totally destroyed. There were many animals lying lifeless on the floor, on top of houses, and all over the place. There were signs of a struggle, but the good news was that people were still alive.

Outside there were people cleaning and putting their lives back together. The entire community pulled together and helped one another. Then from a distance in the air, Jane recognized Peter and his friends outside, helping clean up all of the debris. Peter made large holes to swallow up all of the debris; while beside him was his genie Merseft, who was magically making shops and food parlors back the way they were.

Jamyra froze all the dying trees to preserve them until the cure hit their roots, while Robert helped by stretching his body to be in more than one place at a time. The remaining friends cleaned, raked, and helped their neighbors.

Mr. Stewart was in the public square telling reporters how he appreciated the gifted children using their powers to help Baja. Even though he was playing it calm, he knew that Baja's existence was at stake.

He became nervous when a reporter asked him, "Through my secret sources, I hear that Baja is under attack."

Mr. Stewart denied everything, but then the angry citizens demanded an answer. A riot started, and Mr. Stewart was ushered away by the royal guards.

"No further questions!" shouted one of the guards.

Every citizen knew that Mr. Stewart was lying, and

they came together secretly to start their own army. If a war was coming to Baja, they wanted to be ready. Little did they know that a war was already on the way.

Jane told David to lower the vessel when she saw her son. Before the vessel could even touch the ground completely, Jane was rushing out. She called out to Peter frantically. The crowd was surprised to see a vessel of this kind in their sky.

"It's Jane Carrot-Top," one of the bystanders said.

When Peter heard his mother's voice he followed the sound until he found her. When they saw each other, it was the sweetest reunion; they hugged and kissed. Jane did not want to let go, and the crowd cheered.

Jane ran up to the reporter and gave a full report; she talked about the war that was coming, and that the wizards of the Ambassador Forest were building the strongest army possible to attack Baja. They wanted to take the place of the elders! Jane went on to name all the wizards, not leaving out Patric's brother Mirus. Jane told the people not to trust Mr. Stewart; that for some reason, she thought he was involved, and how Mr. Stewart left them to die in the forest. Before Jane could finish the press conference, the story was printed and shipped out the door.

Every newspaper boy and girls were on their bikes

delivering newspapers to all the homes in Baja, and messages were even sent through the air by talking birds to the far reaches of Baja. David tried to hush Jane up, but it was no use; she was angry that she had lost her husband and was sent on a deadly mission by the caretaker of Baja.

Peter was glad to see all of his parent's family and friends, but he was especially glad to see his grandpa. When Peter asked for his father, no one wanted to give an answer. Tears came to Jane's eye, and his grandfather just turned his head up to the sky. David broke the news to Peter that his father had died, that the wizards of the forest captured him and put an evil spell on him.

Peter cried out, sending chills up the spines of many onlookers. He ran through the vessel, searching and screaming for his father, but Sam was nowhere to be found. Peter became angry and ran off. Jane followed him, but she was stopped by David; he let her know that Peter needed time to grieve, and to let his friends take care of him. Clara, Nicholas, Ben, Zack, Robert and Millie went to see Peter.

Meanwhile, there was no time for rest; David had to get the people ready for war, whether they were fighters or not. He had already lost most of his best fighters in the forest; so the only ones left were the royal guards and the

citizens of Baja. David let everyone know that no matter their background, powers or no powers, their help would be required. David let the citizens know that this was not a time to be afraid; they had to fight and preserve Baja for the generations to come.

There was whispering throughout the crowd; many of the people were afraid, most had never fought in their lives, and many of them made up the population without powers. The crowd became silent, but David kept on encouraging them to step forward and fight for their land. After a few minutes of silent, one by one, they started stepping forward; men, women and children, all would play a role in saving Baja.

Once David saw this, he smiled with pride; the fighting citizens had stepped forward. He was never prouder to be a Bajaian, and congratulated everyone for taking a risk. But there was no time to waste; David ordered everyone to head home and build the finest weapons they knew how to, or make anything that would help the fighters, whether it be medicine, food, water, or any necessities. The citizens sprang into action.

Meanwhile, Peter's friends consoled him. Clara tried to make her green saliva bugs into a funny face get him to smile, but Peter was not in the mood. Robert even twisted his body into a balloon, but Peter just pushed him aside.

Then Zack came up with an idea that intrigued Peter.

"Let's go and find your father," said Zack.

"That's crazy," said Clara.

Peter loved the idea and told everyone that he must go, and those who were coming were welcome, and those who were afraid could stay. They were all afraid, but because Peter was their friend they went along with him to help protect him. They all made a pact, eleven of the children put their differences aside and went along to help Peter.

There was Clara, Millie, Robert, Zack, Ben, Nicholas, Jamyra, Steve, Michael, Sam, and Peter. The children were their own little army. They put their fears aside, and planned how to get to the Ambassador Forest. Before they left, they had to go home and sneak out. Peter told each of his friends to make sure to pack light, and only the important stuff; to bring a lot of food and water, and most of all, not to mention anything to anyone or act strange around their parents. Peter told his friends that they would meet behind the ice cream shop in town.

Later that day, all the children went home and did their chores, ate dinner with their family, and turned in to bed early. Once all the good night kisses were done, one by one, the children snuck out their bedroom windows.

Nicholas was the only one who almost got caught, because he

was making such a racket coming out of the window.

But each child made it on time. Little did they know that there was someone in the bushes watching them. Seeing that Peter and his family were so popular, eyes were always on them. But the children did not notice whatever was in the shrubs watching them. They were in too much of a hurry to meet at the secret spot.

Once there and everyone was accounted for, they came together on how to get to the forest; it was far away. Zack brought up the time clock at school, but school was too far and it was heavily guarded. But then Peter commanded Merseft to make a fast moving vessel to carry them. Merseft tried to talk Peter out of doing such nonsense, but was not successful. Peter had already made up his mind that he was helping his father, no matter what. As Peter flipped through the great big book that held Merseft and all of his spells, he came across one for the spell of flight.

"This is it!" shouted Peter.

Peter pointed at the only object he could find in a hurry, which was a huge garbage dumpster, and recited a spell to turn it into a flying object.

"Spell of flight I call to thee, take me to the skies and above the trees; high and low I would go, make this dumpster a vessel boat," repeated Peter.

There was a glow in the air, and all eleven children watched as the spell took place. The garbage dumpster bent and twisted; the sound of crushing metal hurt their ears, but when it was done, low and behold there was the most magnificent vessel made of gold. It was made for royalty, and was so beautiful the children had to touch it to see if it was for real, and real it was.

The vessel glowed with the symbols of Baja; the power turned on inside, and it was equipped with a 3D image driver. The children ran on board, this was the coolest thing that they had ever seen. The vessel was made of the finest material; there were leather seats and soft rugs. There was enough food to feed an army; the vessel was stacked from floor to ceiling with the children's favorite snacks.

The outside of the vessel was more like a cube that had wings that lifted from the sides. In the shrubs, hiding was an on looker. For a minute, Clara thought that she saw something in the shrubs, but when she did a double take, it was long gone.

"Maybe I'm seeing things," said Clara to herself.

But she was not seeing things; there was something out there lurking in the bushes, watching everything they did. But the children were too excited about being on their own

vessel. Each of the children ran through the huge structure, exploring their new home; they had not yet come to grips with the fact that they were going to the most dangerous part of Baja, and they were mere children with no adult supervision.

The children ate their candy worms and cotton popcorn. Peter loved the cotton popcorn as it popped its kernels and turned into cotton popcorn. This was the greatest trip of their lives. Clara and Steve played around with each other; Clara spit her green saliva bugs at him, while Steve smashed them against the walls. Then Steve took one of his special shoes and let his feet grow, and then the toe jam came out.

It stank up the entire vessel, everyone ran for cover until the odor dissipated out of the vessel. Nevertheless, it was time to go. The 3D captain of the vessel ordered everyone to take a seat, and when the children did; their seatbelts immediately strapped them in tight. With a quick startup, the vessel took off; the children looked out the window to see their town. Peter pointed at his house while the other kids did the same. Peter unlocked his seatbelt and went up to see the 3D captain. He was see-through; it was a clear imaginary image, and it was well dressed in a detail fashion. He was also proper and polite.

"Where too?" asked the captain.

At first Peter could not give an answer, but then he said, "To the Ambassador Forest."

"Right away," said the captain.

Peter and his friends were so intrigued with how real the captain looked, and it was hard to wrap their minds around the fact that he was just a programmed image. As the children headed toward the Ambassador Forest, Peter reflected on what he was about to do. There had never been a child sent to the Ambassador Forest; in fact, adults never went there unless they were ordered by the elders or the caretakers of Baja!

But Peter did not let his friends know that he was afraid and that he had no idea of where to find his father. So, Peter looked out of the window and prayed to the Father above to help him find his father. Once out of the mainland of Baja, the children were seeing things that they had never seen before, only what they had heard the adults talk about.

There were six moons, all different colors; there were huge flying birds and animals in the skies. The children pointed and were awed at what they saw; it was like being on a field trip to an old museum. Peter and his friends were now seeing the things that his parents had seen, and

it was a beautiful sight.

After a long night of sightseeing, the children took a nap, but Peter stayed awake, gazing at the stars and the moon in the sky. He hoped he had made the right choice. Soon, Peter drifted off in a deep sleep. He dreamt of his father, finding his lifeless body in the Ambassador Forest. Over Sam stood Mr. Stewart, who was beating Sam to death with some type of weapon. Peter screamed out to Mr. Stewart to leave his father alone, but little did he realize that the dream was now reality. Everyone on the vessel could hear him scream. Clara quickly shook Peter to wake him up.

"You are having a bad dream," said Clara.

Peter was filled with emotions; he was also dripping in sweat. Sam quickly ran and got Peter a glass of water. From that moment on, everyone vowed to stick together no matter how scared they got. Once everyone agreed, all the children suddenly went back to sleep; they were sleeping like new born babies. Peter left Merseft in charge as they slept. Merseft duties were to watch over them, and if he saw anything strange, to wake them up immediately.

Merseft took his job seriously and patrolled the vessel up and down, keeping a close eye out, looking for anything suspicious. But oh how the world of Baja had so many things that no one had ever seen. Merseft, a genie,

who could make anything appear, was also surprised to see the other lands of Baja. He too glanced out of the window every now and then, gazing upon the heavens.

"What a beautiful sight," Merseft mumbled.

Suddenly the vessel gave a little jerk, and it sounded like scratching was going on. The children were immediately awakened by Merseft, and the captain went to see what it was. By him being 3D, the image generator could move him anywhere in and out of the vessel. Soon the captain announced that there was an intruder and the hatch was opening. Clara was ready with her green saliva bugs to attack whatever it was.

The hatch opened slowly, and the children were ready to attack, when a voice shouted out, "It's me!"

It was none other than Larry Stewart.

"What are you doing here?" said Clara.

Larry told them that Jamyra invited him. Clara was upset and threw a pillow at Jamyra, telling her she couldn't keep a secret if it was to save her life. No one wanted Larry there, not even his friends; Larry was just an inconvenience.

"Who else did you tell?" said Peter to Jamyra.

"I told no one else, I swear," said Jamyra.

Everyone was upset with Jamyra, but they could not

waste time now. Peter was more concerned with Larry, not with the fact that he did not have any special powers, but that he was easily persuaded and could flip on them at any time. Jamyra apologized over and over again, but no one wanted to hear it. Clara then fixed her mouth to send a large green saliva bug, and burst it all over Jamyra.

Green slime was everywhere! Jamyra was not happy and was very scornful of Clara's green bugs. She screamed and ran to the restroom to wash off. Everyone laughed, but the laughter was cut short as Larry found himself a seat on the vessel. Nevertheless, Peter set down some ground rules for Larry. He wanted Larry to know that he was now on their team, and reminded Larry that his father was a part of the seven wizards and he must not switch sides.

"Whatever," said Larry as he sat with his hands folded, and his legs crossed.

Peter did not like this sign, and made Larry promise that he would not switch sides. Everyone stood over Larry waiting for his answer, being the bully that Larry was and wanting attention, he took a while before he answered.

Finally he said, "Okay, I'll stay neutral."

Everyone accepted his word, but Peter secretly reminded everyone to keep a close eye on him. Larry went through the vessel, rambling for food while the others just

sat back and watched every move he made.

Peter got the team together to make a plan on how to save his father. All of the children brought their special gifts that they got in school. Peter had his box of small fighters, and the others had their special gifts. Soon the captain announced that the Ambassador Forest was six more hours away, and lights would be going out on the vessel to conserve energy; everyone was ordered to get a good night's rest because tomorrow would be a long day.

As everyone slept, the time clicked by until morning came. The sun was shinny brightly, and the children were awakened by a huge white bird. It had a large red beak, huge dark eyes, it carried the magical symbols of Baja in a straight line down its back, and it was staring in their window, admiring the children. Everyone was startled for a minute, and then realized that it was just a huge harmless peacock.

The captain announced that they had arrived in the Ambassador Forest. To the children's eyes, it was a beautiful place, one with ancient temples, golden sands, huge rocks and waterfalls; it was like stepping into a fantasy land. Huge stone temples guarded the opposite sides of the forest. Life there was also coming back to normal; Peter saw his mother's work in affect. Trees came to life

right before their eyes, plants sprouted up everywhere, and vines crisscrossed the golden sands like snakes.

The vessel quietly landed, making sure not to cause any disturbance. Peter asked Merseft to cover the vessel with vegetation to hide it from prying eyes. Merseft quickly stumbled through his book of spells, first accidentally covering the vessel with a pink blanket, then finally getting it right and covered it with vegetation.

"Oh, you silly genie," said Peter as he laughed at Merseft.

First the children got something to eat; hot banana pancakes were made for them with blue syrup.

"Those were was the best pancakes and crackling eggs I have ever had," said Steve.

Suddenly someone asked, "Where is Larry?"

Peter called out for Larry, but there was no answer; he was nowhere to be found. Then the captain mentioned that Larry had left the vessel. The children ran to the window and saw Larry running across the desert floor. Peter was furious that Larry had lied and did not keep his promise. At the same time, everyone gave Jamyra a mean look. They were upset that she'd told Larry of all people.

"Well, I could have told the reporter for some cash, but instead I told Larry. You all should thank me," said

Jamyra.

Needless to say, no one wanted to thank her; the mean looks remained on their faces until Peter asked Jamyra to freeze Larry so that he could be caught and tied up until they came back from saving his father. Jamyra was reluctant, but since everyone was upset with her, she agreed to freeze him.

Jamyra's hair blew in the wind, her eyes turned pure white, a cold chill came upon the vessel, and Jamyra stretched out her hands and pointed in the direction that Larry was running. She sent a freeze bolt at him. At first Larry dodged some of her ice bolts, but on the third try she got him. Larry froze from his feet to his head. As he was freezing, begged Jamyra to let him go, that he was going to tell his uncle. Even though Jamyra wanted to let him go, she knew that it was not the right time and that Larry had made them distrust him.

Before Larry got totally froze he shouted, "I just wanted to see my real father!"

But before anyone could change their minds, the ice had taken over. Everyone hauled together to lift Larry's ice cold body back into the vessel. Now that he was safely tucked away, it relieved most of the worries of the children; they did not have Larry's attitude to deal with

anymore.

The captain reminded the children that they had to leave, that night fell quickly here, and Merseft reminded Peter that the spells in the book only lasted three days. Peter and his friends were under more pressure; they all quickly bailed out of the vessel, one behind the other. With an old hand-drawn map of the forest, Robert instructed the team on where to go.

Meanwhile the forest was coming alive; huge plants were popping out of the desert floor, and as they burst into the air they sprayed out seeds that in a few seconds grew more plants. This was amazing to the children, to see plants and flowers pop out of the ground and grow before their eyes. But this was no time for sightseeing. Robert was the guide and the one with the map, and he was moving really fast.

Peter reminded everyone to stick together and not to lose sight of what they were there for. Just as he said that, they came upon the most beautiful blue polar bears. They were large, but docile; in their mouths the mother and father had their cubs, carrying them along the golden desert. The polar bears were harmless and never made a move toward the children, as long as they stood clear away.

"Oh! They are so cute and fuzzy," said Millie.

As the children walked along, they could feel the ground beneath them sinking.

"Move quickly, this is black tar," said Robert.

The children ran as the black tar tried to get ahold of them. The black tar had hands that were web-like; it tried to grip and grab at the children, but they ran, jumping through and over the tar. But the black tar was not giving up; it swarmed its way toward the children like a snake on its belly. Screams of fear filled the air.

The black tar grabbed Millie by the legs and pulled her under. Robert quickly made his body into a beanpole so she could hold on while Peter created huge holes to devour the black tar. Peter's hair spiked and his freckles turned even more orange. Suddenly he created a huge hole that swallowed up the black tar.

The children cheered, "We did it!"

Indeed they had, they had defeated a forest monster that only the legends had talked about the way it swallowed men whole, or the way many armies had succumbed to its powers.

"We must move fast," said Robert.

Millie thanked Robert and Peter for saving her, but to them this was what friends did for each other. The children headed toward an open field when they heard the thumping of

hooves. It was the black Ryders coming; they could smell visitors a mile away.

One of the Ryders pointed toward the moving bushes in the forest; it was where Peter and his friends were standing. The black Ryders came running through the field like wild horsemen; Peter and his friends panicked and they ran in different directions, jumping and falling over rocks and debris. The black Ryders did not let up either; they kept on coming and coming until they caught up with the children. All the kids were running by each other, screaming and could not seem to get it together; until Jamyra decided to freeze the black Ryders.

She twirled her hands until they became frozen and cold-looking, and then she sprayed out a blast of cold air onto the Ryders until they were frozen solid. Everyone was still afraid because they could still see the Ryders eyes moving. Jamyra wanted to touch them but Peter pulled her hands back quickly.

"Are you crazy? We know nothing about them," said Peter to Jamyra.

"Quickly, we must move," said Robert.

The children went down a passage way heading to the golden temple that was on the map that Robert was reading from.

"Maybe your dad is in there," said Clara.

Peter just shrugged his shoulders and was unemotional about it; as if he did not know if he could really save his father. Still, he was willing to give it one last try. As the children headed toward the golden temple, huge statues of Indian chiefs guarded the temple gates. The statues were alive with color; the red, white, blues and greens of the feathers on the Indian statues' headdresses were bright and vibrant, as if they were just put there days ago.

Everything around the temple was adorned in the most beautiful colors one could imagine. Things seemed to be going as well as possible, until the Indians moved! At first the children were not sure of what they'd heard, and were afraid to look around. Suddenly the footsteps became louder and louder.

Peter turned around and saw the Indians coming from the back, front, and sides of him and his friends. The children were full of fear; they did not know what to do. Jamyra began screaming of course, and Robert, with his slender body, hid behind one of the tree branches. The Indian statues came closer and closer, until Peter finally decided to tell the others to calm down so he could speak to the statues.

"We come in peace; we are from the mainland of Baja.

Please, we ask for your help."

But nothing Peter said was working, the statues came closer and closer with their thunderous footsteps. They weighted so much that every time they came closer, the ground would seem to sink in. When Peter noticed that nothing he did or said was working, he decided to make giant holes to sink the huge giant statues. Peter's orange hair stuck up into the air and became brighter. His hands formed an orange glow that then created the holes; one by one the massive Indian statues fell through the holes.

They were sinking faster than Peter could make the holes; the giant statues went down moaning and groaning. Then the dirt from the ground covered the giants from head to toe, leaving nothing more than their heads poking up above the dirt.

"We must hurry," said Zack.

All of the children hurried along, they ran through the temple gates, and suddenly they were approached by a very tall Indian ball thrower. The Indian was a very tall man who wore a turban on his head. His arms stretched out for miles, and so did his legs; his skin was dark and ashy. He wore no shirt and on his chest were the symbols of Baja that glowed and flickered at a more rapid pace than other, normal codes. The Indian only wore a white cloth around his

waist area. In his hands he held big crystal balls that turned into fire balls, and he threw them at whoever he pleased.

The Indian ball thrower sat on a spinning disc that allowed him to move forward, backward, and side to side. He had no eyes, nothing sat in his eye sockets except for two golden eggs. The ball thrower sat in the middle of the temple grounds and protected its entrance.

Millie quickly became invisible and ran toward the temple doors to sit and wait on her friends; then Steve took off his shoes and his feet grew huge and hair. He let off an odor that was so stinky that the ball thrower coughed and cover his nose. All the children covered their noses and mouths.

"Steve, you jerk, tell us when you're going to do that," said Michael.

The ball thrower threw the balls of fire at the children who ran and hid from the flames coming through the air. Michael pulled out his wing of armor from his backpack, put it on, and his own wings became powerful. He flew above the ball thrower, but not for long. The ball thrower threw fire balls at Michael. He taunted the ball thrower and flew in front of his face faster and faster.

The thrower was not happy and threw even more balls of

fire. Trees and shrubs were burning everywhere; there were small patches of fire all over the temple floor, burning uncontrollably. Then Steve put on his shoe wings that were given to him in the school trip and flew Michael over the ball thrower's head. They distracted the ball thrower as they signaled to the others to try and cross.

But the ball thrower had another trick up its sleeve. From behind his back, four more hands came out, like an octopus. They dangled in the air, and each hand held more balls of fire.

"Oh! No, not more hands," said Jamyra.

Sam blew himself up into a big ball of farts; he sucked in the fresh air, and then let out a fart ball of slime all over the ball thrower. He was not happy with this little stunt, and ran after Sam. But Sam also brought his gift, which was a gum that turned into slime. Sam chewed and chewed until he could not chew anymore. He spit out the gum, and it turned into a ball of slime right under the ball thrower's feet.

He got up off of his floating disc and tried to chase Sam, but because the gum was made of slime, the thrower stumbled and fell. He could not catch himself; the slime was so slippery that the ball thrower went sliding into the walls of the temple. This made the ball thrower very angry,

and he got back on his disc and hovered over the children. Peter could not make a hole that would suck the thrower up because it would not stop moving.

The ball thrower laughed, "Ha, ha, ha, you silly brats."

Zack blew snot out of his nose, and turned it into a huge giant that would fight the ball thrower. But the ball thrower was not impressed. So Zack blew and blew until the snot was a few feet higher, and then the snot giant formed, and went after the ball thrower.

The ball thrower threw fire through the snot bugger, and all it did was melt the mucus. The giant snot formed again and again as the ball thrower fired more fire balls its way. Then, at the last minute, Zack ran to freedom, and then had the snot splatter all over the ball thrower. He screamed aloud until the walls of the temple shook.

Then Clara and Nicholas came as a pair. As Nicholas roared at the ball thrower, Clara formed spit and saliva of green mucus bugs that swarmed and attacked the ball thrower. Nicholas' roaring talent was so loud and thunderous that it caused an earthquake. Clara pulled out her golden sword that shot fire dragons. The fire dragons attacked the ball thrower.

As they fought, Peter, Ben, and Robert were able to

get to safety. The two creatures fought until the fire dragons destroyed the ball thrower; it disappeared into thin air. The only thing left was all eight fire balls. No one dared to touch them because they did not know if something else was forming.

The children ran inside the temple and, oh it was such a beautiful sight! Inside were three small pyramid temples that were different colors of gold, from red to blue to green. Everything in the temple was made of gold or gold bars. The walls were even perfect, and the grounds were well manicured. The children walked the grounds with caution; there were magical symbols everywhere.

Inside the temple there was blue electric water that, if you drank it, it would shock you. On the temple walls were drawings of the elders, which were all defaced. No one could tell or see who they were, but since Millie was a code breaker they had her try and see if there were any clues on how to get to the heart of the Ambassador Forest. As she read, a big blast of firepower came through the grounds, the tiles and bricks of the temple cracked.

"Hurry, Millie, is there anything?" said Peter.

Millie quickly glided her hands over the hieroglyphics, but was sad to report that there was not much there for her to read. Peter and the others were

disappointed, but they had to go. For some reason, a sea of lava was headed their way. Millie quickly put on her magical shades and looked through them. Since the shades could see through anything, Millie saw a small opening in the wall of the first temple, and led the others to it; running as the sea of lava approached closer and closer, missing the children by mere inches.

All of the children quickly ran through the opening, and were now in temple number one. Inside, the temple was very dark and none of the children could see each other; they were going by touch, and felt the walls and each other to stay close together.

Clara lit her magical dragon sword. The fire formed a dragon and it filled the entire temple with light; it was an amazing sight. There were rows and rows of mummies in a straight line; many of the children were scared, but Michael was so cocky that he flew over to get a better look. Millie decided to play a trick on him, and disappeared and hid by a mummy. When Michael passed by, she'd make the mummy move; and that's exactly what happened.

The mummy moved, and Michael went running back; all the children laughed and teased him. He blushed, but knew he deserved it, and it was his own fault. As the light got brighter, the temple was filled, level by level with dead

mummy corpses, and there were one hundred levels of mummies. On the very last level there was a mummy in a chair. For a minute, Peter thought it moved, but as he rubbed his eyes back into focus, he decided that maybe he was seeing things.

The temple walls also had the drawings of the elders defaced, but on one of the walls it showed a picture of a small baby with orange hair being held by the elders facing the heavens, and a star pointing at the earth.

"Peter, that looked just like you," said Clara.

Peter quickly denied it, and turned away, but Millie deciphered some of the codes and came up with a name: "Peter of Earth". The children knew then that the elders and their prophecy was real, and it was coming to pass. Peter was a little stunned, but quickly regained his composure.

"We must protect you," said Clara to Peter.

"Yeah, Peter, you are Baja's only hope," said Millie.

For the first time, Peter really accepted who he was and what was his plan in life. For the first time, he went back in his mind and saw how he was made to be the person that he was. Peter thought of how he stood up to bullies, how he remained who he was, despite what others thought; how he obeyed and respected his parents and the elders of

his community. Peter realized that he was being trained for the job that was now ahead.

Clara shook Peter out of his daydream because the mummies seemed to be moving. One by one, the mummies marched and marched, as if they were marching to the beat of some drummers. The children had nowhere to go but up. As the mummies marched and grabbed after the children, those that could fly, flew, and those that had special abilities that could be used, used them.

Peter opened up holes in the ground, his orange hair stuck up in a frenzy, and his hands turned orange. Out of his hands, a blast formed a series of holes that gulped the mummies down, one by one. The mummies came alive, and they were scary and ugly, with their teeth half falling out of their mouths. Their jaw bones were falling off, their bones were so brittle that some of them broke and crumbled to the ground.

The mummies hooked the children by using their old wrapped up white cloths. Robert slid by the mummies because he was so skinny that they hardly noticed him. Clara used her fire dragon sword to burn up the mummies; Ben pulled out his magical cape and flew over them. They tried to pull him down, but Ben got away.

One by one, the children made it to the top. Jamyra

turned the mummies into ice, but the temple was so hot that it melted the ice. At the top of the 100th level, there was a twelve-headed clown. Each head spun around like the hands on a watch, and each face had a different expression. In the clown's hands, he held a big wooden hammer that had to weight about one hundred pounds. The clown wore a big white clown outfit with red fluffy buttons that came down the front. Its faces were made up with makeup so there was no way of telling what was really underneath it all.

It grinned an evil grin, and chased the children. Millie disappeared because she was afraid; Michael flew into the air and kicked the clown with his feet, but it did no good. Clara sent her green saliva bugs at the twelve heads, but it only lasted for a few seconds before the clown was chasing them again. Behind the clown stood a small golden door that had rubies and gems embedded in it. The door was glowing and a banging was coming from it.

"We must make it to the door!" said Peter to the others.

One by one, they tried to make it up to the top, but the clown had super fast speed. It zipped from one end of the level to the other, knocking some of the children back down to the floor while others tried to climb up. But they were getting pulled back down by the mummies; there were so

many mummies, and the temple was so crowded that the air was getting thick.

Steve once again took off his shoes and let his hairy feet grow, and then let off the stinkiest toe jams. The mummies coughed, and many ran out of the temple. Steve laughed, but the other children were getting choked and turning green from Steve's toe jams.

"Oh, Steve, I told you to warn us," said Clara.

Steve just laughed and stood on the ledge, and twinkled his toes as the mummies ran out of the temple. When the smell wore off, they came back in, trying to stop the children from going through the golden door. Millie made it over to it because she was invisible, and began trying to pry open the door. As her friends battled the gigantic clown, Millie deciphered the codes on the door and touched them in the order she felt they went in. She pressed star, blue moon, horseshoe, birds, and some other mystical symbol.

At first, nothing happened; then the banging and pushing on the door ceased, and then the glow went away. Millie did not know what she'd done; she thought maybe she'd done it wrong. But, it was not wrong; suddenly the magical door flew open and a burst of red and yellow light blasted through the room. The wind was so strong that it

blew the children and the mummies away.

Out of the door flew millions of tiny fuzzy critters; they were soft fuzz balls that were in multi colors, light enough to float through the air with just a blow of air. Two big boggle-eyes sat on the top of their heads, and they had skinny arms and legs like a spider. They made a funny noise that was a little irritating to the children, but this was such a great sight to see, no one did much complaining. The fuzz balls ran through, pushing everything out of their way, leaving the path open for the children to enter, but they still had to deal with the giant clown.

The giant clown zipped back and forth like a lightning bolt. Neither Peter nor his friends could keep up with the giant because of his speed. So, the only thing they thought could slow him down was some of Sam's green slime gum. Sam chewed and chewed until the slime oozed out of the corners of his mouth; then he knew that it was ready. He spit out the oozing slime gum onto the ledge where the clown was zipping and making faces at the children.

During the next pass, the clown stepped in the slime gum and went sliding down the levels. Peter and his friends cheered loudly; they quickly climbed to the top of the level, while the giant clown went tumbling down over the mummies that were chasing Peter and his friends.

Once at the top, the children looked down to see the crowd of mummies coming back up. Clara pulled out her golden fire dragon sword and commanded it to burn down the levels. The dragon became a ball of fire and began burning the levels, spewing fire from its mouth. After the levels were on fire and burning, Clara put her magical sword away, and out the magical door they went. Everything was so bright and colorful; it was as the children were sliding down a rainbow.

"Weeeeeeee" they shouted.

The only thing the children could see was the multi colors; that's why the fuzzy critters were so colorful. When Peter and his friends landed at the end of the rainbow slide, it led them to a door that led them to the outside of the second temple. Outside, the children noticed that they were all multi colored, just like the critters they saw in the first temple. Their skins had change to many colors of the rainbow.

"Oh! Great, my hair is a mess," said Jamyra.

"Whatever, let's go," said Robert.

The children were afraid to go to the other temple, not knowing what they would have to face. So they all got ready, stood in a line, got their powers ready, and burst through the second temple's gates. They were now inside the

second temple walls; it was purple and gold, it glittered in the sun, and every time an animal passed by the temple door codes of Baja would pop up everywhere.

Peter realized that they were even made up of codes; their bodies had turned into codes, each child had different codes on them. Millie tried to read each of her friends' codes before they disappeared, but it was too late; there was not much to tell in that short period of time. As the children walked through the second temple, it was filled with huge flowers, vines and vegetation. Up in the air, huge grasshoppers flew by and dropped poop on the children.

"That was gross!" shouted Peter at the grasshopper.

A grasshopper swooped down and picked up a few of the children and threw them on its back; then another came and scooped up some more of the children and threw them on its back.

"I think we are dinner," said Millie.

"I hope not," said Clara.

The grasshoppers made a sudden landing inside the main walls of the second temple. As water plants sprayed bubbles of water in the air at the grasshoppers, the water plants caused the grasshoppers to lose their food. Peter and his friends ran away as they were dropped to the floor by the

grasshoppers.

Once in the main hall, there was an eerie silence. It was as if something was coming. The children stayed alert and kept watch; when suddenly a huge spider, red in color, with a silver stripe down its back, sprayed webbing from its mouth, trapping some of the children. The first to be caught were Peter, Jamyra, Clara, Robert and Zack.

The spider spewed its webbing, and all of the children were caught in its web. The spider twirled the children in more webbing to keep them from escaping, and then it went after the remaining children. Michael's powerful wings and Steve's magical flying shoes helped them to bypass the spider. It sprayed webbing all over the temple walls, all over the vegetation, and barely missed the children.

Millie became invisible and headed toward the web to free her friends; while Steve, Nicholas, and Michael kept the spider busy. Millie was afraid to climb the web, but Peter encouraged her to get through it. Step by step, he gave Millie the confidence to believe in herself so she could climb the web. It was huge, and hundreds of feet up. There were skeletons of men who had tried to cross before; now they were nothing more than bones.

Peter told Millie to free Clara first, seeing that she had a sword that could burn through anything. Once Millie

found Clara, she was about to cut her loose, until she got a strange feeling. It was the spider behind her, but it could not see Millie, only sense her presence. When Millie turned around, she screamed so loudly that the spider heard, and tried to catch the invisible sound.

"Hurry and free Clara, Millie," said Peter.

Millie quickly ran to where Clara was, and began pulling the thick webbing off of her, layer by layer; until Clara's hands were free. She reached in her pouch, and pulled out the sword, calling upon the dragon of fire. Out burst the dragon, roaring and burning the spider's web.

The other children were distracting the spider while the dragon, Clara and Millie used their magic to free their friends. Steve took off his shoes and let his feet grow to produce toe jams, but that did not bother the spider. Nicholas roared until the spider's ears hurt; it fell on the floor in pain.

After Clara was free, she formed her saliva bugs, and they came out in a swarm and attacked the spider. Yet, that was not doing the job either; until Peter opened up a hole and let it swallow the spider. There was nothing left of the spider, only a hole into another dimension.

"Peter! We have to teach you how to close those holes," said Clara.

That was one of Peter's faults; he could open a hole, but could not close it. And many times his holes opened to unknown worlds. But, now was not the time; the children had to hurry and find Peter's father before the spell wore off.

After defeating the spider, a huge wooden door rose up. There was nothing on the other side. It was eerily similar to this side, so the children prepared for a war again. As they cautiously walked through the opening, there was nothing more than some statues that had spider webbing all over them.

"There must be more spiders," said Peter.

As the children walked and walked, it seemed as if they were ending right back where they started.

"It's a reverser," said Robert.

A reverser was a force field that sent you back to where you started, but the children could not see it. Every time they started to walk toward the opening, the reverser pushed them back. Peter had the idea to split up and try running. As they did so, they were all reversed and sent back to start! This was proving to be a real challenge; and the children had to rest for a while.

As Clara played around with her saliva flies, she noticed that they would reverse back to her, which was pretty cool. Now she had an idea to use the flies to guide

them. She sent the flies out, and they wove their way through the reversal and made it to the other side. Animals have more instincts than Clara and her friends.

As the children followed Clara's saliva flies, they passed through the reverser. Once they got through it, they looked back and saw that the reverser was nothing more than some type of mystical pathway. Its reflection could only be seen from one side; the reverser was nothing more than a door made of some liquid that is invisible on one side and visible on the other.

Nevertheless, Peter and his friends were on a mission; they were now prepared to handle anything. And just as they thought, the second temple was easier; the other side of the reverser led them into a big area with nothing more than sand, a few large dunes, and mountains. This did not look good for the children, but from miles away they could see the door to the other side; it glittered and glowed in the sun's rays.

"We must get to that door," said Peter.

"It is not going to be easy," said Clara.

The children took off running through the desert, kicking up dust and sand everywhere, and from the depths of the sand a sand octopus rose up! It had at least a couple hundred tentacles, a massive head and deep black eyes, and

its body was covered in yellow and red fur. The children had never seen a sand octopus before; this was a creature that they only knew to be a fantasy.

Suddenly the creature attacked, tentacles came from every direction, grabbing every child and throwing them up into the air. Screams filled the air, and the children fought and hit the huge monster, but this did little or no damage. Since the creature was oversized and could not feel their little hits, one by one the children danced through the air on the octopus' tentacles; it was like riding a rollercoaster with screams filling the air.

Millie tried to disappear, but was still in the grip of the creature. Peter tried to create holes, but they did not work here because the creature was already from the deepest depths. Zack sent out his snot buggers and covered the octopus' eyes with green slime. It worked for a little while, but failed because the creature's eyes were so huge that it took a lot of snot and buggers to glop up the eyes. Sam made fart balls that were disgusting, not only did they smell, but when they burst, they left slime all over the place. Luckily it was mostly on the creature and not on his friends.

The octopus let some of the children loose, due to the nasty slime on its face and the smell. Once Millie was

free, she ran toward the magical door ahead and turned invisible. Steve and Michael carried Peter and Jamyra, because they were the only two that could take flight. Sam chewed some of his gum, and threw it on the desert floor where it turned into slime. The remaining children slid on it toward the magical door.

Once the octopus removed the slime from its eyes, it noticed that the children were getting away, and chased after them. And oh, what a chase it was. The octopus dove in and out of the sand, kicking dirt and dust into the air, and every once in a while it brought up a treasure chest or two. But no treasure chest could keep the children away from the magic door.

As they slid on the slime gum, they could hear their friends telling them to run. Millie was still working on the codes of the door, trying everything to get it open. Once she had cracked the codes, the door produced many more magical doors, all with numbers on them. The children had to choose one. Millie picked door number eleven. Peter and the others waited for their remaining friends to get away from the octopus, but it made waves of sand that sent the children riding high through the air, as if they were surfing.

"We're almost there!" said Clara.

As the huge tidal wave of sand came closer to the magical door, each remaining child jumped off and into the pathway to the magical door. Once in there, everyone rushed through the door and shut it tight as the creature was only inches away from catching them. Peter and the other children took a deep sigh of relief, as they made it through another temple.

Chapter 19

More challenges

On the other side were more challenges. The next one was to beat and defeat the three brothers; the air gods. They wore crowns of golden flowers, their hair was black and curly, and extended in the middle of their backs, and their clothing was made of the finest silk. These brothers were as large as mountains, they were triplets and they controlled everything in the air.

Right now, as the children entered the magical door, they found themselves in a fighting arena. As the Air Gods looked down on the children, they laughed and teased the children that they would never pass through the golden gates. The children could see it from afar; it was made of pure gold with silver rods as its bars. On the other side awaited a beautiful land of dwarves, elves, and many mysteries.

"Let the games began!" shouted the air Gods.

The three brothers stood and looked over the arena. Out of the air came a large giant. The three brothers had formed clouds to make giants, and it came racing down from the sky. It tried to stomp on the children. Peter and the

others dodged and ducked to avoid being stomped on, but the cloud giant was not easing up. It was built as if it was made of stone.

The clouds began to be packed up together to form a hard outer core. The children tried to run through it, but the clouds were too thick, none of them knew how to defeat such a creature. Then came roaring from the arena seats; suddenly there were onlookers. No one knew where they came from, they just seemed to appear out of thin air, and that was just about right; all the people in the arena seats were made from clouds. Many of them flew away as the wind blew, and many of them lost their body parts.

As Peter watched, an arm came flying by his face, and it was nothing more than a puff of clouds. Apparently the gods did not take the time to make their people as well as they did their monsters. The cloud monster roared and blew out rolling balls of clouds that knocked the children over. The only thing left to do was to try and outrun the monster.

The children had nothing to fight with. As they ran, Peter noticed that the monster was losing some of its clouds. So Peter huddled his friends together, and came up with a plan; they were to run in different directions to spread the clouds thinner. Once it was vulnerable, Peter informed his friends that they would make a dash for the

golden gates.

The idea seemed promising, and the children ran in different directions. The cloud giant ran after them as the crowds screamed and cheered for the gods and their monster. Peter and his friends had no one cheering for them, so they had to cheer for themselves. As the children ran, each one took off in a different and opposite direction, causing the cloud monster to lose patches of its cloud puffs. Once Peter and his friends saw this, they gave each other high fives.

"Great job!" said the children to each other.

The cloud monster started making cloud rocks that it tried to smash the children with. One by one the cloud rocks came out of the air, falling at a fast rate of speed, and causing the children to run for their lives. The crowds cheered for the cloud monster, their roars were so loud that the children could hardly hear each other. Defeating the cloud monster was not as easy as it looked. The longer the children waited to run and spread the cloud monster thin, the more the cloud monster produced more cloud puffs to replace the chunks that it lost.

The children felt their strength surge, and they ran their hearts out. The cloud monster did not know who to chase, and as it tried to chase all of the children, the

more patches of cloud it lost. The children cheered for themselves, and they kept on running faster and faster. Soon the cloud monster became thin, and was dissipating right before their very eyes.

"Run toward the gates!" shouted Peter to his friends.

As they ran, and the gods saw they were getting away, they sent an army made of nothing more than cloud puffs. This army of fighters came out of the skies ready for battle; some had swords, some had arrows, while others had hammers and hatchets.

The cloud army looked so real, the children were stunned for a minute and were in a daze, until Millie shouted, "Run!" as she deciphered the codes on the golden gates.

The cloud army came down in the thousands, chasing the children; Peter and his friends ran their hearts out as the crowds roared for their defeat. As they were running, Clara fell and stumbled. Steve came with his flying shoes and scooped her up while the other children ran and ran. The cloud army threw cloud bombs at the children. As they exploded near their heads, the cloud bombs were so loud and thunderous that they shook the entire stadium. The army shot arrows at the children, one passed by Peter, missing him by an inch.

"Keep running!" said Peter.

The children could see the golden gate ahead, and Millie standing there waiting for them, encouraging them to run faster, and faster. Peter and his friends did, even as the army of cloud fighters was catching up with them. The children ran and dove into the open area of the golden gate, where they were greeted by fairies and fresh energy water.

Peter looked back at the cloud army and saw that it was disappointed that they'd lost, and the gods were very upset. They made the skies cry black rain; the monster cloud and the cloud army were washed away and evaporated as if they were never there. Peter and his friends were proud of themselves, and hugged each other in victory, but the hard part was just beginning. At the end of the golden gates was a land of fantasy; there were flowers that bloomed over and over again, and let off sweet smelling fragrances.

Small elves stood by the gates handing out energy water in a leaf-like cup. The children drank and drank until they could not drink any more. They were all tired; they had fought for hours in the Ambassador Forest. The children sat under a palm tree and rested for a while; there was so much peace on this side. The creatures on this

side of the golden gate were nice and friendly.

Peter and his friends made lots of new friends. Then Robert told everyone that it was time to go. They all shrugged their shoulders as if they did not want to leave this relaxing environment, but the other door was waiting, and no one knew what to expect. If the other temple was hard, then this one would be harder. The children said goodbye to their new friends, and got on their way.

A silver door lay ahead. The children walked faster, just to get it over with, and then burst through the door. Waiting on the other side was a giant fat Buddha. It was adorned with golden anklets and bracelets; its skin was very pale, and it wore nothing more than a big diaper.

"Oh, this is going to be fun!" said Peter sarcastically.

The Buddha's face seemed to have the appearance of mud splatters. It stood at least ten or eleven feet, and it stomped its feet over and over again. Every time it did, the rocks from the mountainside came tumbling down.

The symbols of Baja glowed all over the Buddha, it seemed to want to wrestle with the children; stomping its feet as if it was ready to attack. The children ran and split up, but the Buddha had other tricks up its sleeves. It touched its face and took its outline off! The outline

turned into a mask of multi colors that spun through the air and shot out splatters of mud. The mud splatters turned into little mud warriors that came after the children.

Mud and dirt were being flung from everywhere; the Buddha beat on its chest as the mud warriors formed and then attacked the children. The mud warriors were no more than two feet tall, and all had little weapons, whether it was a spear, bow and arrow, knife or club; they were all armed with a fighting tool.

"This doesn't look good!" said Clara, as she ran alongside Peter.

Steve used his magical shoes to fly into the air, and Michael used his wings, but the mud warriors attacked them with mud ball canons that hit Michael and sent him tumbling from the sky. The Buddha held his stomach and laughed out loud. Sam then used his fart bubbles to catch Michael as he fell.

"It's a nasty smell, but thank, pal," said Michael to Steve.

Millie pulled out on her shades to find a secret passage, but there was none. Yet, there was something hidden under the flying disc the Buddha had. It was a small object that glowed, and every time Peter ran by, the object glowed brighter and flashed rapidly. Millie told Peter that

there was something hidden under the Buddha's flying disc.

But there was no way out; the children knew then that they had to fight this giant beast. Jamyra brought forth her gift of frost; she held out her hands and, as they turned icy cold and white, a burst of cold air came over the area, and then a shot of ice. The little mud warriors turned into chunks of ice, but this was not going to hold for long. Jamyra could see her ice melting right before her eyes.

The Buddha saw what Jamyra was doing, and took off his mud face to make more mud warriors. To help Jamyra, Robert took his watch off, and turned the golden dials to make it snow. The mud warriors got cold and shivered, and with Jamyra making ice, the mud warriors stopped fighting and huddled together for warmth.

The Buddha was not happy, and shot fire from its mouth, defrosting everything. To stop him, Peter opened some large holes. He held his hands tight, until they turned orange and magical dust flew out that, in turn, became a black hole. The Buddha jumped and jumped all over the place to avoid the black holes. Then it hopped onto its disc and flew away. It seemed there was nothing to stop this creature.

Then Clara tried; she conjured up a huge glob of her

green saliva bugs, and ordered them to attack the Buddha while he was flying on his disc. The green flies went into the air, attacking the Buddha. He fought, and then opened his mouth to spit mud at the flies. Many of Clara's flies fell to the ground and died; the mud was very toxic. But Clara could produce as many flies as she wanted.

The Buddha opened its mouth and sent mud flying to his face where a mud mask formed to protect him from Clara's flies. The children were getting fed up; nothing they did seemed to work. The mud warriors defrosted and came after the children, sending them flying and running.

Clara pulled out her fiery dragon sword and called upon it to attack. The sword let out a roar, and the dragon of fire flashed through the crowd of mud people, scorching and burning their little behinds. The mud warriors turned into clay that grew hard because of the fire. This was the only thing that seemed to slow the warriors down.

Nicholas gave off a big roar, and from the loudness of it, the clay warriors cracked and broke. The children had found something that they could use to stop the mud warriors. The dragon of fire flew east to west and north to south, burning everything; while Nicholas roared aloud and broke all the clay warriors.

The Buddha flew on his disc up high into the air, and

saw what was happening. He swooped down and tried to catch one of the children, but they were diving and dodging him. Then he went after Clara's dragon of fire, but it was too fast. It swooped by the Buddha.

Then Zack conjured up some snot buggers from his nose, and had them form into a wall of goo. The Buddha was flying so fast that he did not see the snot wall, and flew into it. He struggled to get out, but was stuck. The snot was sticky, and had the Buddha caught like flies on a sticky trap. The children cheered and realized that the Buddha was trying to get loose, so they hurried and ran over to the secret floor that was hidden by the Buddha's disc. They opened the passage, and as they opened the small box-like door, a glow burst out of the hole, sending the children flying to the ground.

"What was that?" shouted Millie.

Peter gazed upon the opening. In that small area laid a golden glove that glowed with the symbols of Baja. Yet, the glove seemed to be for something special and someone special. Every child tried to put the glove on, but it would not fit. Then the last was Peter, and the minute he touched the glove, it began moving and sliding across the floor, like a fish out of water. It jumped right onto Peter's hand; it was a perfect fit.

"Peter, I told you that you are a special child," said Clara as Peter blushed.

"We must leave, the Buddha is trying to break free," said Robert.

The children sent Michael to fly up and get the Buddha's disc so that they could ride back. He got on the disc, but did not know how to fly it; he went spinning and twirling through the air. Then Ben put on his magical cape and flew up with Millie so she could decipher how to control the disc. It took Ben a while to catch up with Michael. Once they did, Ben dropped Millie onto the disc to have her decode the symbols, and find out how to fly it.

It took Millie less than a minute to do it, and then she swooped down to pick everyone up.

"Oh, this is so cool!" said Peter.

The disc had just enough room for all of them. Millie was in charge of flying the disc, and Robert was in charge of the directions. The disc had a nice comfy spot, and the children relaxed as they flew through the air.

"What do you suppose the glove does?" said Clara to Peter.

He had no idea; he just knew it was cool. Then Millie interrupted, and said that the glove held the answer to either getting the eighth key or it was the eighth key. No

one knew for sure. Well, whatever it was for, Peter held onto it very tightly.

The children then took a quick nap as Millie stood guard. Then, as the sun was setting on their first day, the children parked the disc in a tree and let it hover. The night went by fast; it seemed like the children just went to bed; but in the forest, time is of the essence. The children woke up to bright colorful little birds singing.

"Oh, that is so cute," said Millie.

The birds puffed up and turned into bigger birds. The children screamed and took off through the air, but the birds chased right behind them.

"Faster!" said Clara to Millie.

Millie made the disc go faster, and eventually the birds turned back around.

"That was close," said Robert, as he looked over at his friends.

Then from above, Peter noticed a temple below them. It had people working in the yards, and they seemed like they were moving somewhere.

"Let's go down for a better look," said Peter.

Millie took the disc down lower, where there were men and women chained up; they were held as slaves, and making weapons and fighting gear.

"This must be where my father is being held," said Peter as he peered through the crowd.

He saw no sign of his father, but he did recognize the symbols of his father's army. Peter then noticed that the prisoners were being watched over by large rock dogs; so he tried to find another way into the temple, without being seen. As Peter searched around the temple grounds, he saw a shadow behind a tree; at the same time, Millie lowered the disc. There was a person lying in the shrubs, and one thing that made Peter's eyes pop was that the person had orange hair!

"Father!" Peter shouted.

The person did not move. Peter lowered the disc and jumped off, calling to his father. Thinking the worst, Peter slowly turned the person over, and yes, it was his father, Sam Carrot-Top. He was still alive and breathing, but he was a little bit out of it.

Peter and his friends lifted Sam onto the disc, which was harder than it looked, but the children pulled together and got the job done. Peter hurried and got the disc into the air, where he shook his father to try to wake him up. Clara tried to get Sam Carrot-Top to drink some water, but he was too busy mumbling in his unconsciousness. The only thing that was left was for Steve to pull off his shoes and

let his toe jams wake Mr. Carrot-Top. So, Steve did it with pride. He snatched off his shoes, grew his feet and let the odor lose. At first, nothing happened, and then Mr. Carrot-Top choked and gasped for air.

"Father, father!" Peter shouted.

Sam Carrot-Top thought that he was dreaming, and closed his eyes again; until Peter called his name a few more time. When Sam finally caught his breath, he touched Peter as if he didn't think he was real. Then Mr. Carrot-Top rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not seeing things.

"Son, where am I?" said Mr. Carrot-Top.

"In the Ambassador Forest!" shouted Millie.

"Who are these children?" said Mr. Carrot-Top.

"These are my friends, father, and we came to save you," said Peter.

Mr. Carrot-Top eye's filled with tears; he was so proud of his son and gave him a big hug and kiss. "We must leave," said Mr. Carrot-Top to the children.

Sam went on to introduce himself to the children and they did the same, as many of them showed off their powers to him. Sam was impressed by the children and their bravery, to come this far and get him.

"Hi, Mr. Carrot-Top, I have the same name as you, my

name is Sam Salmon," said Sam nervously.

"That is a great first name," said Mr. Carrot-Top.

He looked over the temple ground, warning the children to stay high in the air to avoid being seen by the seven wizards. But, it was too late, the wizard boy Cilus was out walking the grounds and he spotted the disc. He sent an army of black birds to attack the disc.

Mr. Carrot-Top climbed into the controls as the black birds came out of nowhere. They were huge birds with a few feet of wing span, and their chests were covered with golden armor. Their bodies glowed with red symbols, and the birds flew violently at the disc, hitting and bumping it, causing it to tip and shake.

The children held their heads low to avoid being pecked by the birds' beaks. The birds squawked louder and louder, as if they were calling for backup. Mr. Carrot-Top sent the disc weaving and flying through trees and over lakes and mountains, but the black birds were right behind them. Some of the black birds got under the disc and tried to over turn it. The children screamed as Mr. Carrot-Top did his best to control the rough ride.

"Hang on tight, kids, it's gonna be a bumpy ride!" said Mr. Carrot-Top.

The children clung together for dear life. Then

thunder came from the skies, and behind that was Bella, riding her black bat-like creature.

"I want you dead, Sam Carrot-Top!" said Bella as she looked Mr. Carrot-Top right in the eyes.

"Over my dead body, I have a village to save!" said Mr. Carrot-Top.

This made Bella furious. As she helped the black birds attack the disc even more, Jamyra got up and used her powers to freeze the birds in the air. They plummeted to the ground because the ice made them too heavy to stay in the air. Bella was not happy with this and sent lightning bolts that hit the disc. It went spinning out of control.

Zack formed a soft landing pad with the buggers from his nose. It was so nasty, but it was the only thing to make the landing softer. The children and Mr. Carrot-Top jumped from the fallen disc to Zack's landing pad; they were all covered with green mucus.

"I must wash myself very well, when this is over," said Jamyra.

Mr. Carrot-Top just laughed, and then ordered everyone to run. As they all ran, Mr. Carrot-Top made sure that everyone was together, because he could sense that the rock dogs were on their way. He heard rumbling in the ground, then feet thundering on the ground like wild horses.

"Keep running!" shouted Mr. Carrot-Top.

The children ran faster and faster, but Zack and Millie could not go any more; they had to stop, and as Millie stopped, there was a big rock dog breathing right over her head. She could feel its hot breath on her neck; she trembled and was too afraid to turn around, so she disappeared.

That impressed Mr. Carrot-Top. "Good girl," he mumbled.

Millie came closer to her friends, un-noticed by the rock dogs; the dogs became confused and looked around as if they were chasing their own tails.

"Go, go!" said Mr. Carrot-Top quietly.

Peter and his friends softly crept toward a hole in the rocks. Suddenly all of them seemed to disappear into thin air, but they were hiding in the cracks of a rock. They could hear the sound of Bella chastising her pet rocks for losing Sam Carrot-Top and the children. The rock dogs whimpered and begged for forgiveness, but Bella had had enough. She struck the dogs with lightning, turning them into nothing more than dust.

Mr. Carrot-Top made the children remain quiet as they watched Bella pace back and forth by the opening of the rock. Bella was not pleased; what would she tell her master Cilus? Bella flew up onto her bat and took off.

The children started to leave, but were held back by Mr. Carrot-Top; he told them that it was a trick to get them to come out into the opening. He knew what type of woman Bella had become, and he did not trust her one bit. Mr. Carrot-Top and the children stayed crouched in the opening for hours. Finally Bella got tired of trying to see if Mr. Carrot-Top and the others would appear. She flew back to the temple with an empty hand to show Cilus.

Mr. Carrot-Top rushed the children out of the hole and headed toward home. It was a long way, and Peter told his father that they had a ship, but they had to hurry if they wanted to use it. Peter told his father that the ship was a spell that only lasted three days. After that, it would turn back into a trash can.

Mr. Carrot-Top ordered the children to hurry; maybe they could find another way out of the forest and back to the mainland. As they were leaving, Sam Carrot-Top took one last peek, and noticed that Bella and the seven wizards were finished forming their army. He also noticed that some of his men were left behind. Many were so brainwashed that they truly believed Bella and the other wizards were their friends and on their side.

Sam hated to leave the men that he'd fought side by side with. He wanted them to be free, but the only way to

do that was to free Baja. Mr. Carrot-Top congratulated all the children on using their powers for good and not evil, and to always remember to be each other's support. Peter and his friends became closer after Mr. Carrot-Top gave them those words of advice. It was no time for special moments; blasts of fire balls came flying through the air as they were being attacked.

"Run, children!" shouted Mr. Carrot-Top.

The children hid behind Mr. Carrot-Top because there was nowhere else to go.

"We know this forest by heart, we will always find you," said Mirus.

"Mr. Stewart?" shouted Peter.

"No, son, that's not Mr. Stewart," said Sam Carrot-Top.

He explained to his son and his friends that Mirus was the twin brother of Mr. Stewart. The children were in shock and wondered why Mr. Stewart never mentioned it.

"Oh, man you look just like my principal," said Jamyra.

But Mirus was not the talkative type; all he wanted to do was fight and cause trouble. He attacked Sam Carrot-Top with his invisibility, punching him everywhere on his body. Millie got upset and turned on her invisibility powers and threw rocks and stones at Mirus. "You bully, leave him alone!"

Mirus was very surprised he was not the only one who had invisibility. As Mirus was distracted, Sam Carrot-Top attacked him. The two men fought, until Jamyra turned Mirus into a block of ice.

"Nice timing," said Sam Carrot-Top to Jamyra.

Sam could still see Mirus' eyes moving, and with the help of the children, they pushed the block of ice into the river. Sam and the children ran toward the temple, hoping that maybe they could find a way home. But as they were leaving, there were dagger cards being thrown at them and bursting into rays of colors and gases.

"Cover your mouth and nose," said Sam Carrot-Top to the children.

Hoyle the card thrower kept throwing cards. He had grown into a big green slimy monster with his teeth as yellow as the sun, and an odor that would kill anything living. He ran after the children, sending them in many different directions; and at one place there were three more rock dogs waiting for the children. They had the entire forest surrounded; the rock dogs were determined to catch anyone to give to Bella.

These dogs were huge, and no match for Peter and his friends. So they decided to try and catch the dogs instead of fighting them. While Mr. Carrot-Top and Hoyle fought,

the children were capturing the three rock dogs. First Robert slimmed his body down to hide behind a very skinny tree. The dogs were confused and could not find him. Robert peeked out and pulled his head back in; teasing and taunting the huge animals. As the dogs became distracted, Sam Salmon chewed his wacky slime gum and let it ooze out of his mouth onto the floor. The ooze was slippery and thick.

Sam told Robert to run from behind the tree, and as the dogs gave chase, they slipped; the ooze made them crash into the rocky mountain so hard that their bodies shattered into tiny pieces. When Bella saw the commotion, she flew back down. This time the children were ready for her. Clara sent her green slime flies to swarm and attack Bella before she reached the ground; then Michael used his wings of flight to fly into the air and taunt Bella's bat. It became irritated, and twisted and turned, throwing Bella from its back. Like a cat, Bella landed on her feet, and wiped the slime Clara's flies had left on her face.

"You little brat, I am going to get you!" said Bella to Clara.

Clara ran, and Bella gave chase, and then she was suddenly stopped when she saw Peter hold his orange hand out, ready to make a hole.

"You wouldn't dare to do it!" said Bella to Peter.

"Oh, yes I would," said Peter.

He formed a hole just big enough for Bella to slip in. As it formed, Bella tried to call her bat, but it was too busy being chased by Michael in the air. Bella went tumbling down the hole; and out of the blue, Marcus appeared, causing Peter to lose focus.

"Uncle Marcus, why are you doing this?" said Peter.

But Marcus did not respond; he just threw balls of fire at his nephew. When Sam Carrot-Top saw that his son was in trouble, he rushed to his side, scolding his brother for going to the side of evil. Sam pushed his son out of the way and fought with his brother. It was a sad sight to see; two brothers fighting it out, one for good and the other for evil.

Peter forgot all about Bella as she crawled out of the hole, grabbing Peter by the legs and dragging him into the black hole. Peter screamed, and Ben came flying down with his magical cape to save him. With one swoop, he grabbed Peter from the grips of Bella. As they turned around and raced back up to the top, Bella was not far behind.

"Don't you ever go away?" said Peter to Bella.

She just gave off a wicked smile and laughed.

Meanwhile, Clara and the rest of the children helped Mr.

Carrot-Top fight the other wizards. Nicholas roared so hard that Hoyle's cards broke every time he tried to throw them. Clara filled Marcus' face with slime flies so Mr. Carrot-Top could get an advantage. The more Sam Carrot-Top fought, the more he changed into something. He became, green, then orange, and then the color went to his right hand and it grew the size of five men's fists. The fist was so strong it knocked the wizards out, one by one, with just one punch.

It was the coolest thing the children had ever seen. Mr. Carrot-Top's hand was so huge that it could pick up one of the wizards with just its finger. Sam himself was surprised by his powers; seeing as his power of levitation seemed to have gone away. All the children could see were wizards, one by one flying through the air. Now that Sam Carrot-Top had his powers, there was no way of stopping him; he was kicking butt left and right. Wizards and anyone that stood in his way were being tossed aside like yesterday's trash.

Then came Louis, the wizard of elasticity. Louis came from behind a tree limb that was thinner than the width of a thread. His arms could stretch as long as he wanted them. Louis stretched his hands into the hole to grab Bella. Then he used his hands to wind and curve through the forest like a snake; he was searching for the children without moving

from where he was standing. The children ran from the long hands; they were not only scary and spooky, but just plain weird. Robert let Louis chase him around a tree until his hands were tied up.

"You fool," said Bella to Louis.

His hands were now stuck and the children laughed. Jamyra froze Louis' hands together. He was in pain from the cold, and could not move his fingers because of the frostbite.

"Get me out of this!" shouted Louis to Bella.

She completely ignored him and went after Peter; she wanted him. If Peter were caught, then Sam would surrender. Peter was too smart for Bella, every step she made, Peter had a hole ready for her to step in. She called her bat to come and scoop her up, but it did not respond; it was too busy being chased by Steve and Michael.

Seeing that they were outnumbered and losing, Bella called upon Cilus to come and help. He came with Horitio, the wizard of face changes. He came down throwing fire balls from his hands; it seemed fire balls were the number one choice of weapons among the wizards. Horitio tried to take Sam Carrot-Top's face, but he didn't stay still long enough for Horitio to grab ahold of his. So he continued to fight with the fire balls, as Sam used his newfound

strength to beat up the wizards. Cilus was not having this; he was embarrassed to see his wizards not able to beat a bunch of kids, and came down throwing a flying disc that changed into a huge giant with a large club.

"Oh, no! Not another giant," said Peter.

It was more than one giant; they came down in pairs of three, every time Cilus threw a disc into the air, it changed into some form of giant. Cilus himself looked like a little boy, like Peter and his friends. Peter tried to make friends, but Cilus was not having it. He did not want to be Peter's friend, and threw four discs into the air. As he did, Clara shot them out of the sky before they got a chance to form into whatever giants were going to come out of them.

Clara took her golden sword and called upon the dragon to knock the disc out of the sky, but there were still three giants left to get rid of. The first was a huge white bear that beat on its chest and roared. It had a massive head, and super-sized paws. It attacked the children, and they ran through the forest, screaming and hollering. Millie disappeared, as always; Jamyra tried to freeze the bear, but it was too big and too strong. It broke loose from the ice Jamyra put around its legs. Sam Carrot-Top took on the giant bear, using his strong hands to lift and

threw him to the floor. Back and forth Sam used his powers; finally Sam spun the bear by his feet, and then let go and sent the bear flying into the abyss.

Next was a large dragon that was so yellow that it matched the sun. It had big blue eyes and a tail made of sharp spines. It flew down shooting fire from its jaw at the children, burning trees and anything in its way. On the dragon's back was Cilus, controlling where it went. At first, the dragon attacked Mr. Carrot-Top, but had no luck; he held on to its sharp spine tail and tried to bring it closer to the ground. The dragon was very powerful, and pulled away from Sam, but Mr. Carrot-Top kept a firm grip on its tails, even as his hands bled from the cuts of the spine. Nevertheless, Sam hung on until the pain was too much to bear, and then he let go.

The dragon then went after Peter and his friends, who were already being chased by Bella and a few of the other wizards. Sam Salmon produced a few fart balls and burst them in the air, causing the dragon to squirm a bit. This gave Mr. Carrot-Top another chance to catch ahold of its tail; and he did just that. Sam Carrot-Top spun the dragon around faster and faster, causing it to throw Cilus off of its back and onto the floor, where he was now face to face with Peter.

"So you are the boy king," said Cilus to Peter.

"No, I am just a boy," said Peter.

Cilus had an unsettling look of disgust toward Peter, but Peter was not backing down from him. "Maybe we can be friends."

Cilus laughed his wicked laugh, and then pushed Peter to the ground. Cilus started to cast another spell, when a slap in the face from Clara's green saliva bugs knocked him down. Peter quickly got up and moved toward Clara. Cilus had a hard time fight off Clara's green saliva bugs; he got so mad and created another monster. This one came from the clouds. At first, they rolled in and then there was nothing but silence. Cilus thought maybe his magic was not working; but oh, it was working very well.

The clouds shook as if something was trying to get out; and what jumped out of the clouds was nothing more than some cute little mushroom people! They were soft as feathers, and their bodies were in the form of mushrooms. They were white with red polka dots. These little critters giggled all the time as they hopped from cloud to cloud. Peter and his friends relaxed, thinking that these little mushroom people were nothing more than harmless critters of the forest. But they were not at all harmless; they were big trouble for Peter and his friends.

At first, the mushroom people did nothing more than play around. Cilus got ticked off, and sent a lightning bolt to the clouds. It hit a few of the mushroom people, causing them to attack. Out of their little hands came balls of soft clouds that at first looks so innocent, but then they burst in the air and sent down flying daggers and electric sparks. Peter and his friends ran once the first cloud puffs went off.

Cilus was happy and shouted, "More, more, you fools."

The mushroom people threw more, but never moved. They just sat on the clouds and attacked. They were so delicate that they could not touch the ground or they would evaporate into thin air. They were more of a nuisance than a big threat. Nevertheless, Peter and his friends had to deal with them. Peter tried to hide from one of the electric bolts, but it caught him and gave him quite a shock. Peter's head was smoking and his hair was fried. His friends laughed, and then got right back to work trying to defeat the mushroom people. Jamyra tried to freeze them while trying to protect Mr. Carrot-Top from Bella, who was coming up behind him with her nails out and ready to poison him again. Jamyra froze Bella's nails, and then her freezing power was blocked by the mushroom people who put up some type of shield to protect them in the clouds.

Cilus tried to fight with Peter; the two boys hit and punched each other until they fell into one of Peter's black holes. Screams came out of the holes as they fell, but most of the children were too busy battling to notice. Millie disappeared and flew up with Ben to try and capture one of the mushroom people to hold as ransom. Even though Millie was invisible, for some reason the mushroom people could still see her. They could detect body heat through their big blue saucer eyes; they knocked Millie to the floor with one of their bolts, and then sent down a hail of electric sparks upon Mr. Carrot-Top and the others.

The children, and even some of the wizards, ran for their lives; sparks were flying everywhere, the ground was becoming so electrified that no one could stand on it without getting shocked. Bella was still trying to defrost her nails, and the other wizards flew off into the hole where Peter and Cilus were. That's when everyone noticed that Peter was not around.

"Oh no, they must have taken him!" said Clara.

Sam Carrot-Top turned around quickly and dove into the hole, when he found out that his son was missing.

Meanwhile, the remaining children were left to fight with the mushroom people and Bella. Ben used his ability to change into anyone, and pretended to be Cilus. He commanded

the mushroom people to go into the darkest corner of the forest and give light with their electricity. At first the mushroom people did not leave; they were a little suspicious, and one flew down and circled around Ben. He tried to keep a straight face and hold the appearance of Cilus together, but those who knew Ben knew that he had issues with getting a look-alike face to stay. But this time, Ben held it until the mushroom people jumped back onto their clouds and went away.

"You fools, that is not Cilus!" said Bella as she came running after Ben.

It was too late; the mushroom people had taken off so quickly that when Bella turned around they were gone. She was furious and chased after Ben with her bat. He used his magical cape to fly through the air, up and over clouds, in and out of tree trunks, and up and over trees. Bella was not having a good time; not only was she wasting time with a bunch of spoiled brats, a war awaited. Bella quickly turned around and headed into the temple. She summoned a flock of black birds to go after the children. There were so many black birds that they covered the skies and made the sun go down; there was nothing but darkness.

Clara used her magical sword to give light to the area.

"We must get out of here!" said Zack.

All the children decided to jump down the black hole to find Peter and his father.

"They'll need our help," said Robert.

As the black birds came flying through the air, one by one the children jumped into the black hole. It was so deep that there were huge worms and tree roots growing everywhere. Clara used her magic sword to draw light into the hole. She led the pack as they began their endless fall. Soon, from deep down, Clara spotted the remaining wizards also falling. Ben used his cape to fly by Clara to see where the wizards were going.

As they saw Ben, the wizards threw balls of fire back at him and the other children. The fire went flying by the children's heads causing them to feel the heat across their faces. This did not stop Clara or the other children from wanting to save their friend. Clara fought back with her magical sword, turning it into a dragon and sending it after the wizards as they threw their fire balls.

The fire dragon ate the fireballs, gobbling them down. The wizards pulled out all the magical powers they had, from fire balls to laser blasts, and Hoyle threw his cards at the children. When the cards hit the sides of the hole, they burst into clouds of smoke. This slowed the children down because they could not see. The smoke was thick and

grey; there was no way of seeing anything ahead, so the children stopped and waited for the smoke to clear.

"Oh great, while we sit here, Peter could be hurt," said Zack.

"Be a little more patient," said Clara.

The smoke cleared, but there was nothing in sight. It seemed like the wizards had found a place to hide. As the children continued to fall, the wizards came out of nowhere and were now in back of the children. The wizards had managed to find a ledge, and stayed on it until the children went by. Jamyra used her ice freezing, while Clara sent her green saliva bugs flying at the wizards. They dodged Jamyra's freeze power, and only a few of them were caught by Clara's flies.

Jamyra and Clara decided to put their powers together to see what would happen. Clara spit out her green bug flies, and then Jamyra lightly froze them. It was a great idea; now Clara's flies were hard and strong from the freezing. They flew around the wizards, now looking like white snowflakes, but when they touched any part of the body, everything froze immediately. Mirus was the first wizard to fall victim to the concoction. The two girls laughed and giggled together for the first time; they were now becoming friends.

Mirus was falling faster; the weight from the ice seemed to weigh him down. When the other wizards saw this, they decided to move out of the way. Many of them used the fire balls to melt the flies, but they were too fast for the wizards' dumb fire balls. The other wizards were not happy, and used their powers to block the children with a wall of fire. Jamyra turned it into ice water, and the children floated through, laughing at the wizards, and that made them even angrier.

Jamyra stretched out her hands to form a wall of ice to block the wizards that were behind them. As it formed, Hoyle was trying to run through and made it halfway. His body got frozen within the ice, and he let out a loud scream. The other wizards tried to stop, but they too ended up hitting the ice wall.

"That will keep them out for a while," said Robert as he congratulated Jamyra on a job well done.

Finally the children could see a bottom, and down there was Peter; they could tell by his orange hair. Standing over Peter was Cilus, holding a magical stick with two golden horns at the end of it. The horns from the staff seemed to have a tight grip around Peter's neck. Next to Peter was his father, who was not moving due to a hit on the head from a rock. Blood was everywhere, but Peter was

not going to let his father die; he fought with Cilus. Peter mustered up enough strength to push Cilus away, and then Peter took his two hands and pried the staff with the horns away from his neck. Cilus saw that Peter had grown powerful and took off; he jumped on his magical staff, it turned into a flying broom, and up the hole he went.

Meanwhile, Clara and the others chased Cilus all the way to the top, where they lost sight of him. Then they went back down to assist Peter. He lay on the floor, still trying to catch his breath. He managed to crawl over to his father and kissed him on the forehead.

"Stay with me!" Peter cried. Tears fell from his face onto his father's head. The cold touch of the tears seemed to wake Mr. Carrot-Top. "Oh, father, you gave me a scare."

All Mr. Carrot-Top could do was lie there and smile, until he got his strength back.

"We must get out of here," said Peter to his friends.

He told them that the holes he made led to different worlds, and he did not want to be sucked into a time warp. At that moment a bright light came through the walls of the hole; that process was starting!

"Go, go, go," said Peter, as he pushed his friends toward the top of the hole.

Ben and Michael used their flying powers to fly with

Mr. Carrot-Top to the land above. Jamyra was in charge of forming an ice bridge to the top, so that the rest of the children could make it out. She quickly formed the bridge and the remaining children ran to the top, even as the hole got bigger and started to open up to another world.

"Faster!" said Peter.

The children ran and ran until they could not run any more. So, they walked at a quick pace. Meanwhile, as the children looked back, they could see the hole opening up to another world. When the hole got bigger, everyone took a peek; the world was so beautiful, one that no one had ever laid eyes on. From what they could see, the land had mystical creatures, huge dragons with crowns as large as their heads, silver oceans and waterfalls, and the people seemed to live in huge stone homes. The beaches had sand that glittered in the sun. Peter and the other children could hear the soothing sounds of the ocean waves; they were in a daze.

Millie shouted, "Snap out of it, the hole is growing!"

The children realized that they were being hypnotized by the hole so it could swallow them up. The hole had almost caught up with them; the children ran faster, and to make matters worse, Jamyra's ice bridge was melting. The more she tried to produce more frost; the sunlight coming

from the other world was so hot that it melted the bridge.

The children sped up; passing all the wizards they had frozen on the way down. Clara noticed that a few of the wizards were missing, along with Hoyle. But they did not have time to study the wizards; they had to get out of the hole before it ate them alive and transported them to another world.

When the children made it to the top, they were greeted by Ben, Michael, and Mr. Carrot-Top. Also, the black birds that were chasing them when they first went down into the hole were still there.

"Keep still, don't move," said Peter, as the birds were now sleeping.

They had waited so long for the children to come back out; they formed a nest and slept on the edge of the hole. Little did these black birds know that there was a surprise coming; the hole was about to swallow them up and take them to another world. The children tip-toed softly out of the hole, one by one, as the opening to the other world barely missed them. Suddenly, the hole gulped up the birds like a last meal; all that was left on the ground were a few feathers.

"That was close," said Peter.

Now that night was falling and the remaining wizards

were back at the temple, the children could get a rest. Peter's father started to really come around and collect his senses. Once again, the children had made it through another test, but they were going on the third day. Robert knew that they only had hours to get back to the vessel to make it back home to Baja safely. He gently shook his friends to wake them up and back on schedule. Most of them did not want to wake up, they were tired and exhausted, but they knew that either they got up and started moving or became the wizards' prisoners.

Mr. Carrot-Top was still a little woozy, but he was able to stand on his own two feet and walk. Suddenly they heard a hovering above.

"Behind the trees!" shouted Peter to his friends.

Up above in the sky was none other than their vessel. Merseft was looking out the window, and Peter jumped out and signaled to him. He flew it down to his family and friends. Merseft blabbered on about how the spell was going to wear off, and that they would be stuck in this scary place forever. But, he was glad to see Peter and the others. Yet, he had some bad news.

"What bad news?" said Peter.

Merseft told how a woman all in black found the vessel and thawed Larry out. He told her that he'd found out that

Mirus the wizard was his father, and he wanted to be with him and become a wizard.

"Who is Larry?" asked Mr. Carrot-Top.

Peter explained to his father that Larry was a student at his school, his uncle is Mr. Patric Stewart, and he treated Larry more as his son than his nephew. Peter told his father that Larry had no special powers, and was only accepted at Waldorf Academy because of his uncle. It made sense to Peter and his father that maybe Mr. Stewart was in with his twin brother to take over Baja.

"But in the meantime, we must leave," said Merseft.

The children were glad to be on board, where there was food, water, and a nice place to take a nap. Everyone piled on board, and the 3D pilot took off his cap and introduced himself. He reminded the children that they were running out of time, as this nice flying vessel would soon be nothing more than a trash can again.

"Oh hush, we know, now start the vessel," said Jamyra.

Peter could not help but feel hurt knowing that they had left Larry behind. He would become nothing more than an evil seed like his father. As the vessel took off, the children looked from above and saw all the destruction that was done to the forest, the supporter of life in Baja.

Mr. Carrot-Top saw how his son was looking so sad, and

said, "Don't you worry, when the elders arrive this will be over."

Peter just nodded to please his father, but in his heart he was very worried about what was going on, and he was the one who was supposed to stop it. Peter felt like a failure, and went to the back of the vessel and moped.

"Oh, stop putting so much pressure on yourself; we did our best," said Clara, as she sat next to Peter eating her cotton candy worms.

Peter laughed as Clara had a worm hanging from her mouth. "You little pig," said Peter.

Clara smiled and said, "I did my job I, got you to smile."

She went off to be with the other children as Peter stared out the window. He could see men of his father's who were once fighters turned into slaves cutting down the trees of the forest to make weapons and tools for the war. Sam Carrot-Top wanted to save them, but knew it was too dangerous. Still, he promised in his heart that he would be back, and he would save all who would come with him.

One by one, the trees of the forest fell, and animals were scampering to find a way out; their home as they knew it was being destroyed, burned to the ground. All Peter and his friends could do was just watch as their men destroyed

the entire forest, causing animals that had lived there for centuries to find another home. The wizards were being careless, and did not care about what they were doing to their own world.

Meanwhile, the children fixed Mr. Carrot-Top plenty to eat and drink, as they too ate and drank and took quick naps. Many of the children had nightmares with wizards and ghosts, and just like the perfect father, Sam Carrot-Top was there to comfort them. Although he was badly beaten and bruised, he kept watch over the children until they were out of harm's way.

As Sam Carrot-Top looked past the forest and onto the Azul Sea, he saw large fleets of ships filled with giants and monsters. They were starting to gather for war, and in the center of it all was his brother Marcus. There must have been at least a thousand ships, with creatures that were only created for war; many were wearing the red glow codes. None of them were made of the Baja symbols, so the red codes meant they were made of wizard's blood. These creatures were savages; they ate fish right out of the water raw and unclean. Many of them looked like mystical beasts; some were half-beast half-stone, while some had heads as big as the moon and tiny bodies.

Whatever scary things the wizards could conjure up,

they most certainly did. They wanted the people of Baja to be afraid of them; they wanted them to be so afraid that they would not fight, just give up and become slaves of the forest. Tied to the back of the fleet of ships were huge land monsters, like the sand octopus that buried itself and lived under the sand. There were at least fifty of them; they were huge, weighing at least a ton, with their fur-like bodies that came in many different colors.

Then there were elves that stood two feet tall, all locked in cages; they seemed to be under a spell of some sort. Then there were huge giants and large tigers, elephants and dragons, and many more. It was as if one was seated and watching a circus pass by.

Sam Carrot-Top was a smart man; he took mental note of what he'd seen as the vessel past over the seas and on to land. There was a parade on the roads leading to Baja, a parade of nothing more than war. The roads were filled with dark Ryders, and leading the way, on a huge throne up on a giant elephant, was Bella. Her throne was decked out in the finest gems, her seat was made out of jade and silver, and a golden saddle was made to fit the huge elephant to place her throne on its back. She had maidens fanning her as the elephant carried her through the hot roadways. Behind her was a long line of ground vessels; there were canon

throwers that were so huge that they had to be operated by a giant.

The giants came in many colors and shapes; some were fat, some were skinny, and some were hairy, but they were all fit to be called a giant. A group of a thousand men were armed and fitted with the most advanced swords, bows and arrows, and sharp knives. They were all dressed alike, and marched to a silent tune; no one could hear it but them.

Then there were another set of fighters, but they were skeletons, there had to be at least five thousand of them; all adorned with golden breastplates to protect the fake beating hearts that Bella had made for them. They were dancing and jumping into the air, showing off their skills. Behind them were Bella's rock dogs that she'd made stronger, faster and bigger.

Baby dragon pups were way at the end of the line, chained down and mistreated. All Bella wanted them for was their firepower. Bella's army was the longest; there were so many creatures and monsters that she'd formed that there were no names for. There was an elephant-type with long wooly green fur and ten ivory horns sticking out from its face. Then there was a creature with ten eyes that spun around and around; it had nothing more than a balloon-type body and eight legs. What this creature did was nothing

less than amazing; it would jump into the dirt and suck up the trees and vegetation with one gulp. There were trees all around, and then suddenly they were gone; nothing but a small hole as a reminder as to where they'd once stood. There were also red, black, green, and multi colored lizards that Bella had her men feed to the other animals. Like the cute bunnies in their nesting holes, Bella was cruel and heartless; she truly was a witch.

As the children woke up from their naps, they saw Mr. Carrot-Top staring out of the window. So they joined him and saw a sight that was so scary they hid their faces. Then they came back to the window and gazed upon how powerful the wizards seemed; they had built an army from stones, and raised the dead to make their bones fight for them. The wizards had split into several groups, making them so much more powerful, but Mr. Carrot-Top reminded the children not to worry, that the elders would awaken and fight for the citizens of Baja.

That's when Peter reminded his father that he still did not have the key to unlock the elders. Peter told his father of the secret glove he'd found in the temple. Mr. Carrot-Top wanted to see this treasure his son had found; and when Peter brought the bag carrying the glove forward, it glowed just as it did before. Mr. Carrot-Top quickly

dumped the contents of the bag out, and he gazed upon a true find. The golden glove was in pristine shape; it was so beautiful, just like the last time he'd seen it. Peter and the children were amazed to know that Mr. Carrot-Top had seen the glove before. He explained to the children that when he was guarding the key, he had to wear this special glove that allowed the carrier to hold the key. Not everyone could wear the glove, it was blessed and made by the elders for a certain individual, and that individual was Peter.

"I told you so," said Millie as she wiped the sleep out of her eyes.

"Have you tried on the glove?" said Mr. Carrot-Top to his son.

"Yes, father, I tried it on, and it only fit me, not my friends."

As the children listened, Mr. Carrot-Top told of how once in the special square in Baja, the boy who the glove fit would call upon the key, and it would come from out of the depths of the earth; searching and flying, until it was reunited with the glove. Then the wearer of the glove had to open the doors to the elders with the eighth key.

All this time, Peter had felt as if he had failed his father, his friends, and most importantly, the people of

Baja. But all this time, he had the key right in front of him. Peter jumped up and down as his friends cheered him on.

However, Mr. Carrot-Top knew that having the key could become a burden more than a joy. For now, he did not want to tell his son about the bad part, until it was time; he just wanted his son to enjoy being with his friends and know that he was not a failure. He was the one the prophets spoke of.

Even though Peter was very happy, the thought of actually being the savior of Baja had not taken effect yet. After a few more cheers of happiness, the captain came out in his 3D form and notified them that they would be reaching the mainland of Baja soon. The children were so happy, they cheered again, but then suddenly the captain said that they would have to hide behind the clouds because something big and unknown was heading their way.

The children and Mr. Carrot-Top rushed to the window, where they saw the wizards Mirus, Hoyle, Louis, and Cilus leading an army of the sky that was headed toward the mainland. Cilus was riding an eighty foot long orange dragon that had three tails; its eyes were so huge and round. Cilus sat on the back of the dragon on a golden saddle, and the dragon had a wingspan of at least thirty feet. Next to Cilus was Hoyle, riding a large bird with a

tail that had fangs at the end. Then there were Mirus and Louis on some type of flying disc; Peter and his friends remembered the disc from when they went to the golden temples.

Somehow the wizards got ahold of the technology and made their own. Then there was Larry riding his own floating manta-ray with a sharpened spike tail and jet black in color. Larry sat on his golden saddle and held a magical staff. This was not the same Larry the children knew; he seemed to be more evil. The thought of having all that power had gotten to him; Larry had a wide smile on his face, he was now with his father, and was considered a wizard. That's when Peter noticed that one of the wizards was missing.

"Where is the wizard Horitio?" said Peter.

The children looked through the huge crowd, but no Horitio was found.

"He must have been eaten by the hole," said Clara.

Peter nodded in agreement. Behind the wizards was an army of the air. Cilus had created a wide range of creatures to attack Baja by air. There were birds by the thousands that were fitted and equipped with fire balls and smoke bombs. Then there were huge bats that were in groups of a thousand, carrying fighters on their backs; there were

also huge cloud giants made of nothing more than clouds. There were porcupine people, their skin dark in color and protruding from their skin were needle-like spines that were not only sharp but poisonous.

Cilus also had a huge army of armadillo men; their outer shells were so tough that they could withstand anything, and according to Cilus would be the first line of defense for the wizards. On the backs of a thousand birds were scarecrows that had come alive through the spells of the wizards. The scarecrows were made of nothing more than hay, but were in the form of men. They were given life by Cilus to seek and destroy anyone who would not bow down to him and his ruling. Then there were a group of a million critters that were known as the fuzzys. They were fur ball creatures that shook off their fur, and once the fur was off, it turned into needle-sharp pins. With a million of them being shaken at one time, they would make a great weapon to stop the army of Baja.

Peter and his friends were amazed to see all the power formed by the wizards; they seemed more powerful than the citizens of Baja. Mr. Carrot-Top thought the same thing too, but he did not want to let the children see that he was also afraid and surprised by the wizards' army. Deep down inside, Mr. Carrot-Top was hoping that his father, a

master of inventing, had come up with something that could withstand the armies of the wizards.

Mr. Carrot-Top made the children believe that he had seen this all before, and that there was nothing to worry about. Once the children heard that, they became more relaxed and were confident that they would be able to defeat the wizards and all of their monsters.

Once the children had settled down and were less afraid, Mr. Carrot-Top pulled his son aside and told him that once he called upon the eighth key, there was no turning back. The eighth key held special powers, and that was how he'd lost his brother to the wizards. Mr. Carrot-Top told Peter that his brother was jealous of being born with no magical powers, and not being the one the elders wanted. When Marcus saw that he was not getting the attention his brother got, he decided to turn on his own flesh and blood. Marcus was very upset that he was not the chosen child, and became very jealous, and hated Sam all his life.

It was the elders who made the choice of having a person in charge while they hibernated. Sam Carrot-Top told Peter this so that he would be aware that there were many people out there who would be very jealous of him. Peter needed to be very careful who he called his friends. Peter

graciously took his father's advice and wondered what the elders would look like. Suddenly the red light in the vessel went off, and an alarm sounded.

"What is going on, Merseft?" said Peter.

"We are running out of time; we have to move from under these clouds," said Merseft.

He explained to everyone that the spell was wearing off, and that they had to move before they no longer had a vessel to ride. The captain quickly moved the vessel from beneath the clouds, and put it into top speed. It went flying through the air, passing unnoticed by Cilus. Then on to the mainland of Baja it went. Peter and his friends were glad to be going home; after all, they had snuck away from home. The children waited with anticipation as they could see the town square.

"We're almost there," said Peter, as he pointed out the window.

No one was expecting the town square to be empty. There was no one in sight; all the stores and houses were boarded up, the roadways were bare, and there was not even a stray dog in the streets. Now Sam Carrot-Top panicked, and wondered if Cilus had somehow done this. As the vessel got closer to the town square, he noticed that there were many missing trees and vegetation; he explained to everyone

that the town was getting ready for war and that they were in hiding.

"We must place you in the town square, so you can call upon the elders," said Clara, as she gently turned Peter's face in her direction.

Peter was in a daze looking out the window.

"No time to be afraid now," said Robert.

"We are all in this together," said Mr. Carrot-Top.

Finally the vessel was over the square. The children couldn't wait to land. As soon as the vessel landed, the spell was up and the vessel turned back into nothing more than an empty large garbage bin.

"Oh, that was a close call," said Ben, as he licked his fur.

"Oh, you are so gross," said Jamyra to Ben.

There was no time for pity as Mr. Carrot-Top grabbed Peter by the hand and led him to the town square. Sam shouted, "Everyone, come outside and watch Peter call on the elders!"

At first no one came; the roads and pathways were very quiet. Then out of nowhere men women and children rose out of the ground. They were hidden underground by special holes. When Jane saw her husband and son she ran toward them, not believing that it was really them. She poked and

probed both Sam and Peter, and when she found that they were real, she broke down in tears.

"I thought I'd lost you both," said Jane, as tears fell from her face.

Jane was not the only one happy, but the other children's parents came running to give their kids the biggest hugs. The other citizens cheered the children for saving Sam Carrot-Top. The children felt as if they were royalty, but there was no time for fun. Sam Carrot-Top announced that Cilus and the other wizards were on their way, and that Baja must prepare for the worst. He explained all the evil forces that were coming, and that the citizens must not be afraid. If they were afraid, they would be easily defeated. The crowd moved aside for David Carrot-Top to come and shake his son's hand and give him a big hug.

"I did not want to leave you," said David.

"I know," said Sam, as he gave his father a big hug.

This was followed by Samantha and Dorothy. But Sam Carrot-Top had a surprise for the townspeople; Peter had found the glove to call upon the eighth key. When they heard this, their hearts became brave again, hoping that this time it was for real, that the elders would come out of their hibernation.

Chapter 20

The power of the key

Sam put Peter in the center of the square, and told him to repeat after him, but first he had to put on the magical golden glove. When Peter pulled the glove out of the bag, it glittered in the sun; the codes of Baja glowed all over it. This time more rapidly than before. Peter put his hand in the glove and it fit perfectly. The glove sparkled with different sun ray colors; there were rays of blue, green, yellow and red, all in one. Then it went silent; nothing else came out of the glove.

Sam Carrot-Top told his son to repeat these words. "I held my hands up to the sun, moon, and skies of Baja that were created for you and I. To protect this precious land, I call upon thee elders, come and awaken, hear our cries; you promised you would never leave or forsake us. Arise and come to you people, we ask of thee."

Peter repeated the words just like his father had told him. At first, nothing happened; then the glove slid off of Peter's hand and burst into a big golden dust ball that flew all over Baja. The golden dust formed back into a glove, sliding right back onto Peter's hand, as if had

never left. Then everyone could hear the ground shaking. It rumbled violently, overturning trees, stores and farm land. The citizens were instructed by Sam Carrot-Top to remain calm, and they did. From a far distance, Peter could hear the key calling him. He floated into the air as the glove took him to meet up with the key.

"The key is coming!" shouted Peter to the crowd.

Everyone waited in anticipation, and then Peter's hand uncontrollably stretched forward and reached into the air. From a distance, the people could see the glitter from the key in the air. The key had been collected from all parts of Baja, one piece from Mr. Stewart's neck, another from Oscar; who had passed on to another world, and the last piece came from under the elders' temple.

A lady in the crowd shouted, "It's coming, it's coming," repeating over and over again in excitement.

One person stood and watched in the crowd, and that was Mr. Stewart, who did not want any part of these festivities, for some reason. He didn't have a happy look on his face. After all, the elders did leave him in charge. But nevertheless, Mr. Stewart was not happy at all; he turned and walked away. Many of the people noticed and called him back.

"Don't you want to see this?" said a bystander.

Mr. Stewart said nothing, and just turned his back and left.

Finally, the key was in the air, and it was reunited with the glove. For the first time, everyone got to see what the key looked like. When it merged with the glove, it gave off a big sonic burst that filled the air with silver dust. Everyone coughed and rubbed their eyes; dust was everywhere. Then, all at once, the dust cleared up as if it was sucked up into a tube.

Peter fell to the floor with the key stuck to the glove like a magnet. He got up and showed the crowd the key. Everyone was in awe; the key was one of the prettiest Peter had ever seen. The jade was so hypnotic and attractive; the key was made up of a mixture of jade and silver with a hint of gold. There was no shape like this known anywhere. When Sam saw his son becoming too attached to the key, he quickly ran over to Peter and covered it up.

"Peter, remember what I told you," said his father with a stern voice.

Peter then realized that he was falling hard for the key, and apologized to his father.

"We must carry you to wake the elders," said Peter's grandfather David.

As soon as Peter and the crowd ran toward the elders'

temple, they were stopped by Mr. Stewart and a group of skeleton kings.

"I can't let you wake the elders," said Mr. Stewart.

Everyone was surprised and pushed toward the temple. Mr. Stewart ordered the skeleton kings to attack. They were nothing more than bones; they were decorated with the Baja symbols and they were on Mr. Stewart's side. They all had armor and long swords as their weapons.

"Why are you doing this, Mr. Stewart?" asked Peter.

Mr. Stewart scolded the crowd and told them that he didn't want to see his brother die at the hands of the elders.

"I knew you were evil," said Samantha, as she jumped in front of Mr. Stewart with her ninja powers and cut him across the face with her sword.

Mr. Stewart ordered the skeleton kings to attack, and they did. They multiplied in numbers and attacked the people, but it wasn't as easy as Mr. Stewart thought. He was not going to get away. Sam Carrot-Top rushed his son over to the area where a small hole was in the ground. He ordered Peter to stay there and wait until he got back, but Peter wanted to help with the war. He had to get into the temple with the elders.

Peter called upon his friend Ben to use his cape and

take him to the temple. Ben cut loose from his parents, and ran to help Peter as his parents fought the skeleton kings. As Peter and Ben were about to take off, Mr. Stewart came on a black bat, just like the one his brother had, and chased Peter and Ben.

When Jane saw that her son was being chased, she immediately called upon the trees of Baja to attack. Jane's fingers grew green and she dug them into the ground, causing the trees and vines to respond to her call. Meanwhile, as the trees grew, Peter and Ben were still being chased by Mr. Stewart. He had a big long wand that could change into anything. At first, it was a golden headed snake that hissed after Peter and Ben; then it was a swarm of stinging bees. Patric Stewart just laughed, and told Peter he was nothing more than a foolish child to think that he would save Baja.

"Don't listen to him," said Ben.

Ben and Peter took off and headed toward the temple of the elders. As Mr. Stewart followed, Jane's vines came to life and flew through the air, twirling and spinning, causing Mr. Stewart to tumble off of his bat-like creature. The vines then wrapped themselves around the bat creature and sucked it underground. Everyone could hear the bat squirm and scream as the vines crushed its body.

Then Jane had her trees come alive and chase Mr. Stewart as he dropped out of the air and ran toward the elders' temple to find Peter and Ben. In the meantime, Jane was also using her powers to awaken the trees to come forward and help her fight. The trees and the vines pulled their roots out of the ground; their master was calling, the one who had saved them was in trouble, and needed their help. The trees, flowers, and shrubs sent signal codes all over the land to summon the other trees and flowers to come and join in the fight. And join they did! Trees came by the thousands, they stomped their roots on the skeleton kings; the plants and trees were fighting side by side with the citizens of Baja.

Millie and Clara teamed up and used their powers to help defeat the skeleton kings. Clara opened her mouth and her green saliva bug flies came pouring out, covering the eyes of the skeletons so they couldn't see. The people took advantage of this and fought harder.

Then Millie disappeared and reappeared, causing the skeleton kings to lose focus as she ran through them unnoticed and tied Jane's vines around the feet of the skeletons. When they tried to run toward the crowd, they fell flat on their faces. Millie was so happy, she laughed as the skeletons fell one by one, tumbling and falling over

each other. Once on the floor, the crowd swarmed over the skeletons and tried to capture them. But the skeletons were so strong, even though they were made out of bones; they pushed through the crowd like a knife through paper. They knocked the people to the floor as if they were nothing more than rag dolls.

Jamyra made her hands freeze, and pointed them toward a group of skeleton, and they froze instantly; their bones shook, and soon they were nothing more than a block of ice. Jamyra did this over and over, until there was ice everywhere; even the citizens were cold.

Since Robert was so skinny, he used his body to slip in and out of the skeleton kings, secretly moving their chest plates, leaving them open to attack. As some of them went to attack, their breastplates fell off, making it easy for the people to destroy them. Each chance the citizens got, they attacked and destroyed a skeleton king by ripping out their mechanical heart.

Clara stood side by side with Samantha; they pulled out their swords and fought with the skeletons. Clara called upon her fire dragon, and out came a burst of heat. She directed the dragon toward the skeletons, and ordered the dragon to burn them to a crisp. It did so; the skeletons tried to run, but they were no match for Clara

and her powerful dragon sword. The face of the fiery dragon followed the skeletons, throwing fire balls from its mouth, burning and charring them.

Michael used his powerful wings to fly above and drop smoke bombs inside the crowd of skeletons. They let out a piercing cry and called for their master, but no one came. Mr. Stewart was too busy chasing Peter and his friend Ben. Steve then took off his shoes and let his toe jams out; his feet grew big and the odor did a good job. But it was also chocking the citizens. So Steve hurried and put back on his magical shoes, and flew to catch up with Peter and Ben.

Meanwhile, Sam Salmon took in fresh air and made fart bombs. He blew them in the direction of the skeletons, and they got blown away. Then Sam would chew his slime gum and throw it on the ground, causing the skeletons to slip and fall. But the skeletons kept on being produced, and their numbers were getting larger and large. They had the ability to multiply ever time their existence was threatened.

Zack then roared aloud, and as he did, the people covered their ears and moved out of the way. Zack's roar was so loud that it shattered the bones of the skeletons, and the bones went flying through the air; there were bones coming from every direction. That was the loudest roar Zack had ever done; store and house windows were blown out.

Zack's roar commanded everyone's attention.

Meanwhile, Sam and Jane were fighting side by side again, along with David and Dorothy. Dorothy was great at making potions; she made a few thousand for the war, and was about to use some for this unexpected turn of events. She mixed potions to turn a few pieces of old rags into ghosts; they were all equipped with bows and arrows and huge hammers. The rags had two holes for eyes, and that was as far as human features went. They floated on thin air, and Dorothy sent them after the skeletons. The rags went flying in groups, attacking the skeleton kings with their hammers, and bows and arrows.

"You are all right for a grandma," said David lovingly to his wife.

Dorothy just smiled and continued to whip up potions to help her people beat the evilness of the forest. The rags glided through the crowds of skeletons, hammering their heads to the floor; while other rags covered their faces and threw them into one big bag. Dorothy decided to take out her potion of burping balls. She gave the children each a burping ball, and as they burped uncontrollably, huge bubbles formed that engulfed the skeletons and took them up into the air, taking them far away. The skeletons could not get out of the bubbles, and they tried so very

hard. The bubbles were made of a strong magical material.

Dorothy made the children's day; they got a big kick out of burping out loud and not getting into any trouble for doing it. Soon the skeleton kings withered away like old leaves; many were caught and put in jail, while others went floating away or turned into nothing more than dust.

As the people kept on fighting, Peter and Ben were still being chased by Mr. Stewart. He used his magical wand to produce a flying disc that came in behind Peter and Ben. Ben flew with Peter in his hands as Mr. Stewart came from underneath and pulled Peter by the legs causing him to lose one of his shoes. Peter tried to fight with Mr. Stewart, but it was not working; Mr. Stewart was much more powerful than Peter could ever be.

Peter wiggled and fell out of Ben's hands onto Mr. Stewart's flying disc. He tried to push Peter off, and onto a bed of thorns. When Jane saw this from a distance, she again summoned her plants to protect her son. The plants ran through the elders' temple grounds like snakes, sniffing and searching for their master's child. Soon the trees formed a soft bed as they saw Mr. Stewart push Peter off of his disc, and toward the thorns, but they were no more, they had now become soft flowers. Mr. Stewart was not happy; he had to stop Peter and his friends from awakening

the elders. The elders only had a few more days to be asleep, and if not awakened, they would sleep for another ten years, leaving Mr. Stewart in charge once more.

The people refused to let this happen, and everyone fought with all their might. When Mr. Stewart saw that the skeleton kings were disappearing, he sent in stone armies that came in the form of hard sculpted stones. They were well-equipped with the finest weapons of destructions and were ready for war. Their eyes glowed and every time they ran or walked, their bodies made a weird rock sound, like two rocks rubbing against each other.

Mr. Stewart hollered, "Beat them if you can!" and went after Peter.

Sam Carrot-Top went after Mr. Stewart as he chased Peter. Sam Carrot-Top's hands grew orange and his strength became more powerful. He picked up a rock the size of two large homes, and threw it at Mr. Stewart, hitting his flying disc and causing it to malfunction. This gave Peter enough time to run across the courtyard. The elders' temple was so huge; the grounds were massive in size. Peter had no idea where he was going, but he knew that he had to run or Mr. Stewart would catch him. Sam Carrot-Top ran after Mr. Stewart causing him to look over his shoulders every now and then.

"You touch one hair on my child's head, and I will see to it that you never see the light of day!" shouted Sam to Mr. Stewart.

"You foolish old man," said Mr. Stewart.

Off Mr. Stewart went behind Peter with full force, using his magic wand to make walls appear to block Peter from entering the temple. Peter didn't have to worry; his father was right behind him breaking down the walls.

"Way to, Dad," said Peter.

Sam Carrot-Top just smiled and rushed his son on, "Hurry, Peter, you must get into the main hall of the temple. Place the key in the golden box that sits by the largest throne, and then move away."

Off Peter went, as Mr. Stewart still tried to block him by making magical walls appear. Then Steve came flying in on his magical shoes and tried to grab Peter by the shoulders and fly him up to the center of the temple. But, it did not go as planned. Mr. Stewart grew eight arms like an octopus and snatched Steve out of the air and threw him aside. Steve flew through the air, screaming as he could not stop himself. Mr. Stewart threw Steve so hard that he crashed into a tree; luckily Jane had a tree catch him, or he could have ended up hurt. Steve thanked the tree for catching him and then slid down its bark.

The people were so busy trying to fight the stone armies that they could not worry about what was happening to everyone else. The stone armies attacked the people, throwing thousands of rocks into the air, hurting most of them. The rocks that the stone army threw were so sharp and heavy, they hurt the citizens one by one. The stone army was much more powerful than they had expected; nothing seemed to be able to slow them down. The citizens hid in the secret tunnels that they had built underground in preparation for the war. Only a few of the citizens with powers were ordered to stay by David; who was the leader of their army.

Meanwhile, Jane and the remaining others were forced to stay and defend Baja. Jane had her plants and trees come together to crush the stone army; she then made her fingers turn green and summoned a plant that had been hidden away for centuries. Jane was trusted to keep this plant a secret, because it was so dangerous. Jane called upon the piranha lion plant. It eats everything in sight, and when it was finished, Jane would have to kill it or it would eat everything in the land. This would cause extinction among the Bajaians and their land.

As Jane called upon the piranha lion plant, she placed her hands in the dirt and said the secret spell. The

piranha lion plant emerged; everyone could hear the growl coming from underneath the surface. The roads cracked and gave way; soon there was a large petal sticking out of one of the cracks. Soon the plant emerged its big head from the opening. Everyone got out of the way, except for Jane. This plant looked like a dandy lion, only with fangs all over it. From the petals to the roots, the fangs were sharp, and very dangerous. It dragged its body across the roadways, making a scraping sound as it crosses the road. As everyone ran from the plant, Jane ran to it, comforting it. The piranha lion plant was not happy about being awakened and roared.

Jane told it, "I have dinner for you," as she pointed toward the stone armies.

She let the giant plant sniff her fingers to let it know that she was the one who summoned it, and she was the one who would give it commands. Jane ordered the plant to attack and eat all it wanted. Before she could get the words out of her mouth, the plant took off, chewing on the stone army like a snack. Most of the stone army members ran, but they could not outrun this plant. Not only was it very hungry, but it was very fast, with sharp fangs and a very healthy appetite.

Jane jumped on the back of the plant and watched as it

ate each stone army member one by one, or sometimes two by two. She had to remain on the massive plant to kill it when it was finished doing its job. If she let it go, it would only cause destruction all over Baja, and she would be responsible for it. At the base of the plant's stem was a soft red area; that was where Jane would inject the poison to kill it. To do this she had to remain on the back of the plant. The plant was having the time of its life, all the food it could imagine was right in front of it.

Meanwhile, Sam Carrot-Top was still trying to catch Mr. Stewart, who was trying to prevent Peter from entering the temple of the elders. Mr. Stewart threw fire balls at Sam, slowing him down a little. Soon Peter's friends joined Mr. Carrot-Top and went after Mr. Stewart. Jamyra tried to freeze his wand, but missed. Then Mr. Stewart threw a fire ball at her, knocking her out a bit. Clara jumped in front of Jamyra, who was down on the floor trying to compose herself, and sent her green saliva bugs at Mr. Stewart. They swarmed around him and were soon attacking him. Mr. Stewart rubbed his face to try and get the bugs off, but Clara's bugs liked to stick around.

Michael caught up with Peter and continued lifting him to the top of the temple, where he could wake the elders. Michael used his wings and flew through the window of the

temple with Peter in his hands. Once inside, they were in a place no child was every allowed, unless called by the elders. It was immaculate, there were golden statues of kings and queens, and treasure chests filled with gold coins and silver dollar notes. There was enough money to buy anything a child could every want.

Chapter 21

Meeting the Elders

Long rugs were made of the finest cotton; a flame blazed in the background, awaiting the elders, and there were three waterfalls that showed the faces of the elders in the water. The walls seemed to grow as one entered the room, and the halls had hieroglyphic pictures of every beast and creature known in the world of Baja, and beyond.

The seats where the elders sat were made of pure gold with rubies studded all over the arms and legs. Around the room were the sarcophagi of twelve people in a glass case; they seemed to be so real. As Peter went over and looked at the glass casing, the sarcophagi seemed to move! It gave Peter a fright, and he quickly jumped back screaming. Michael was a little afraid too; he was not that big tough guy as he acted as in school.

The walls of the temple changed colors, and there was an opening that led to another room, but Peter remembered what his father said, and placed the key in the golden box on the side of the largest throne. He quickly put his hands over the golden box, and the key melted like butter on hot toast! It became nothing more than liquid gold that slid

down a hole in the golden box and disappeared. But, what was really happening was that the key was opening each elder's hibernation box. The key Peter had was the eighth and final one, making the chain reaction complete. Mr. Stewart burst through the window, and Mr. Carrot-Top was right behind him.

"You're too late, he already did it," said Michael to Mr. Stewart.

Mr. Stewart pushed Michael and Peter out of the way. "You dumb little brats!" he said as he tried to stop the chain reaction of the eight keys.

But Mr. Stewart could not find where the secret opening was. As Peter got Mr. Stewart in his sights, he tried to create a hole, but it did not work.

"Son, no one's powers work in this temple but the elders," said Sam Carrot-Top to his son.

"Yeah, you silly brat," said Mr. Stewart as he patiently waited to see if the key really would work.

Everyone waited patiently; Mr. Stewart paced the room back and forth, he bit his nails constantly, waiting for something to happen, but nothing did.

Meanwhile, back outside, the piranha lion plant had devoured all the stone army men, and it was time for Jane to destroy it. She did not want to; she began thinking of

Oscar, her beloved cat that died in the forest. But she had no other choice; even though she was the lover of plants, she had to destroy this one because of its sheer size and the destruction it would cause. The plant would eat just about anything in sight and never stop eating.

Jane kissed the flower good-bye, and injected it with the poison. Then, just like the plants Jane once cared for, this plant became sick and withered away. Slowly it lost its strength; Jane could not watch, so she just started to walk away. When she did take a sneak peek back, the plant was gone, withered and blown away by the wind.

Samantha comforted Jane in her arms, but there was little time for crying. Jane had to go to the temple and see if her son and husband were all right. After the battle, the people started to come out into the square again; they were told that Peter had reached the temple. The people sat in the square and waited for word. Meanwhile, Peter's friends and Jane headed to the temple. Clara's mother tried to stop her, and told her not to go, but Clara insisted that her friend might need her. She convinced her mother that she would be all right.

Meanwhile, in the temple, Peter and Michael, along with Mr. Carrot-Top and Mr. Stewart all waited.

"Maybe we are too late," said Peter to his father.

"No, we are right on time," said Mr. Carrot-Top.

Soon the lights dimmed, the walls moved, and the stone structure rocked. Twelve tombs came out of the ground with a loud roaring noise, instead of the eight Peter had expected. The tombs were glowing with the codes of Baja. One by one the tombs glowed; they were the most beautiful coffins anyone could lay their eyes on. Each one was made out of some type of antique wood, and the codes on them seemed to be hand-carved. There were symbols and drawings on each one that were drawn with golden ink of some sort.

One by one, the coffins flew into the air; they formed a circle and danced around. Each coffin stood over a throne; then they opened and the elders came out. They were like heavenly bodies! Peter's and Ben's eyes grew larger as they gazed upon the elders that they had always heard their parents talk about. Each elder was different, but they all looked alike. They were some sort of Egyptian pharaohs, all of a different color, but they all looked alike at the same time. They were brown skinned, red, blue, yellow, orange, purple, green, white, black, pink, Burgandy, and multi colored. All of the elders were adorned with large crowns with hieroglyphics and gems. The skins of the elders all glowed with the codes of Baja. Their eyes were jet black, as if they could see inside someone's soul.

Peter and Ben were afraid, they did not know what to do or what to say as the elders awoke. They opened their mouths and looked up to the heavens as some sort of mist came floating into their mouths. Then from their mouths cockroaches came out and fell dead to the floor. This freaked Peter out, and he ran and hid behind his father. Sam Carrot-Top knew not to speak without the elders' permission, but apparently Patric Stewart did not heed this, and he approached the elders. He was struck to the floor.

The head elder, which was the yellow one, held onto a glass sphere to see what had happened to Baja in the last ten years that they had been hibernating. What the elders saw was most pleasing, but when they got to the present, they were very disappointed.

"Come forth, Sam Carrot-Top," said the yellow elder.

The elder touched Sam Carrot-Top's heart and searched it very well; he saw his hurt and his pain. Then the elders all joined thoughts to see what the one elder was seeing. They saw all of Sam Carrot-Top's pain, they saw how he was wrongly accused of betraying Baja, and the elders apologized to him, and gave him a disc of honor. It was filled with smaller magical symbols, and the elders told him that he would know what to do with it when the time

came. Peter continued to hide behind his father.

"Come forth, my child," said the yellow elder.

As Peter came forward, he was still afraid. The elder then searched Peter's heart, and saw all the good that he had done. The elder gave Peter back the key and glove, and told him that he could choose to keep the glove and go on saving the galaxy, or he could give it back and pass it on. Peter loved the adventure, but was afraid to disappoint the elders.

They read Peter's mind and said, "You would not disappoint us."

Peter was a little shocked to know that they knew his every thought. The elder acknowledge all of Peter's friends, those who started out as his friends and those who just became his friends. Peter decided to keep the key and glove, which was very pleasing to the elders; it showed that he had character, even though he was afraid to mess up. He did not take the easy road, which was to give it up; he took the road least traveled and very scary.

"I know a war is coming, and you're afraid," said the head elder to Sam Carrot-Top. Sam acknowledged the elder.

"Don't worry, we will be fine," said the elder.

Soon Jane and Peter's friends came bursting into the temple, ready to fight with Mr. Stewart. When they saw that

the elders were present, they quickly knelt down to them. For the first time, the children were seeing a group of mystical creatures that they only used to hear their parents talk about. Jamyra and Clara could not stop staring at the elders; they were so strange looking, like nothing they had ever seen.

The elders acknowledged the children and their part in saving Baja. Each got a medal that was unique to each child; soon they would find out what their medals could do. Then the elder called Jane up to the throne. He touched her heart and saw her pain, and like her husband, she was also given an apology and a secret disc. The elders reminded the Carrot-Tops that they were chosen for this task, that all that happened to them was already written in the codes. Jane let out a tear, and from behind the elders walked Oscar.

"Oscar, is it really you?" said Jane.

"Yes, the one and only," said Oscar.

Jane forgot all of her problems as she rubbed her hands through Oscar's fur. "I missed you so much," she cried.

Oscar just licked Jane on the face and sat next to her. The elders let Jane know that they would have brought her mother back, but she was more comfortable in another

world. The elder told Jane that she would see her parents one day very soon; just right now, the time was not right. Jane accepted the elders' wishes and never mentioned her parents again.

The elders then turned toward Mr. Stewart, lying on the floor. They scolded him for betraying their trust. When he saw that he would not convince the elders to trust him, he opened fire on them with his magic wand. But it did not hurt the elders; they were protected by a force field. The elders mentally lifted Mr. Stewart into the air and placed him inside a huge animal carcass that lay behind the walls. Mr. Stewart screamed until he became horse. The bugs inside the dead carcass ate him alive; all the powers he had, and he could not get out of the animal rib cage.

"That is his sentence for betraying us," said the head elder.

For the first time, the elders decided to go outside and meet the people; it was time to give the people hope. It was time they knew who they were fighting for, and who they should be loyal to. All twelve elders rose from their thrones and floated out the door into the town. The people of Baja were in total awe; they pointed and stared at the elders, their hands waved in the air, wanting to be touched by just their garments. As the elders gazed upon the

townspeople and saw that they were afraid and fighting for the land of Baja, the elders promised them bounty as they could never conceive.

"There will be plenty according to your good deeds," said the elders.

But first, there was a war coming, and the elders had to go and mentally prepare for it. They sought out David and Dorothy Carrot-Top, and told them even though one of their sons was evil, they would have mercy on him because of their good deeds. All Dorothy could do was cry and show great appreciation to the elders by bowing to their request. As the elders went to prepare for the mental challenge ahead, all the people could not believe what they had just witnessed. They were afraid, but they were happy to see after all these years a face that would save them.

The people were now filled with hope; they were ready to fight and put an end to the war. Then they heard marching coming forward and there was also a foul odor in the air. This time it was not Sam or Steve, it was a group of Bella's beast; they had now entered the outer rings of the mainland of Baja. The alarm went off.

"Now it is time to unveil my newest creation," said David.

Everyone gathered around to see what his new invention

was. David was the father of invention, he seemed to make anything he could dream up, and what he'd made was nothing less than spectacular. On the outer rings of Baja, David had installed electric rings; they were electrified rings that flew from one end to another with the speed of light. Once activated by an intruder, the rings shoot off non-stop, slicing through anything in their way.

Bella and her army of beasts were the first to test out the new technology. As the alarms sounded on the mainland, the electric rings went off. They went flying across the outer rings of Baja. The citizens could see the bright colors of the rings from where they were standing. The rings sliced through Bella's army, decapitating many of her men and strange beast. When she saw this, she went into warrior mode and instructed her men on what to do. By this time, she'd had lost ten thousand of her men and beasts to the electric rings. Bella quickly drove her men and beasts from harm's way, but on the outer edges of Baja lay devastation. The sand was soaked with blood from Bella's men and beasts

Bella ordered her people to keep low and look out for any other devices. No matter how much magical spells she knew, Bella could not stop the electric rings. So she decided to go ahead and plow through. She lost many more

men and beasts, but they finally got past the rings. As Bella came into the town square with her men, millions of citizens were waiting for her.

"Oh, this is going to be fun," said Bella, and then she ordered her beasts and men to attack.

Thousands of skeletons with swords attacked.

"Oh, not them again," said Jamyra.

Then there were huge sand octopi that came through the crowds, eating and devouring the people. Bella laughed, but was quickly approached by Samantha, who wanted to get even with Bella for the time they were in the Azul Sea.

"You can never beat me," said Bella to Samantha.

Samantha pulled out her sword, and the two women warriors fought; jumping and leaping over everyone. Bella cut Samantha on the side of her face; then Samantha took out her magical star blades and used them to pin Bella to a tree. Jane ordered the tree to hold Bella as long as it could, and the tree did just that, wrapping its limb around Bella's waist. It squeezed tight until Bella spit up blood.

Samantha went over and continued to use her martial arts skills on Bella; kicking and punching until she was out cold. But that was not the end of Bella; she was playing dead. Bella broke away from the tree and turned it into wood chips. Jane could hear her tree crying. Bella

then jumped on Samantha's back and fought with her.

Meanwhile, the other citizens were fighting stone men, dark Ryders, skeleton armies, huge elephants, and Bella's favorite man-beast with claws that cut people's heads off. This was a very bloody war, but where were the elders? They were still in their meditation zone. Peter, on the other hand, was swallowing monsters with his black holes. Sam Carrot-Top was making his fists turn orange so he could have super strength. He used that to throw and swing monsters every which way.

Clara used her saliva bug flies to swarm and pester Bella and her men. Jamyra was freezing as many things as she possibly could; Robert used his watch to make it snow, and the animals that could not take it, died on the spot. Sam Salmon used his fart balls and let them burst, sending the enemy flying into the air. Michael used his powerful wings to zip back and forth supplying cures and medicine for the sick and injured.

Steve knocked them out with his toe jams, and Millie was disappearing and secretly tying up men with their own chains. Bella had huge giant elephants knocking down homes and structures. Some elephants were throwing people all around with their ten tusks. Dorothy had saved her secret potion for the last. She sprinkled a little gray dust on

the floor, and a cyclone appeared. At first it was small, and then it grew larger and larger and swept away half of Bella's army.

Bella then called upon her sand man giant. It was huge, made from pure sand of the desert, and nothing seemed to be able to penetrate its source of energy. It went round the town, sinking people in quicksand from houses, temples, schools and stores. Then, from out of the back of the line came another sand man. It turned into quicksand, causing everyone to be stuck. Peter moved his hands from under the thick sand and conjured up a black hole that the sand monster sunk into.

Jane called all of her plants, flowers, and vines to come and bury Bella with their roots. The plants and other vegetation came from miles away; they hovered around Bella like wolves around a piece of meat. Some of the vines had sharp tentacles that sliced Bella as they wrapped around her. The plants and all the roots of the trees attached themselves to Bella and carried her way below the surface, where they buried her alive.

Now that Bella was gone, her pets ran away, back to the Ambassador Forest. Then, from the air, Cilus, Larry, Horitio, Hoyle and Mirus came flying down on their bat-like creatures. David had something in store for them. The air

space of Baja was covered by a bubble that would bounce the enemy off of it.

Cilus and his team of wizards came in and hit the force field, not knowing it was there, and causing most of his monsters and men to fall off and injure themselves. Cilus was upset and used his magic staff to remove the force field and let his team of monsters in. Peter and the citizens of Baja had another battle on their hands.

First down was a team of armadillo men. There were thousands of them, their shells were hard and nothing seemed to be able to penetrate them. They shot fire arrows at the speed of light, hurting thousands of Baja citizens. The only solution to this was to have Peter make a great many black holes, and so he did. His hair stood up on his head and turned even brighter orange, and the orange went to his hands where he formed holes to swallow up the armadillo men.

Then there were the cloud giants, and this time they were flying on a magic disc. It helped the giants move quickly through the air, and it was equipped with laser power. The cloud giants came gliding on the disc, shooting lasers from every side. The people ran as the lasers cut through everything. Some of the citizens hid underground, but many remained above.

Samantha used her armored helmet and breastplate that David made for her. With one touch, the armor covered her entire body. It glowed with Baja symbols, and could withstand anything. Samantha looked like a walking metal statue.

"That is very cool," said Peter to his grandfather David.

Samantha stood in the way of the cloud giants, and when they came her way, she used her magic sword to slice their disc apart. The cloud monsters were knocked off of their special disc and onto the floor. Other than that, they had no special talents or powers, and were then blown away by Dorothy's tornado creation. The cloud monsters blew away like leaves in the wind, never more to be seen.

Hoyle came down, throwing cards that turned into smoke blasts; sending the people flying all over the place. Behind Hoyle were the scarecrows that came down and tried to grab up all of the children of Baja. The scarecrows had heads like pumpkins that were made of glass. The rest of their bodies were nothing more than hay, and inside their chests beat fake hearts that were made for them by Cilus.

Peter and his friends fought with the scarecrows as the other citizens dealt with Cilus and his other creations. As the scarecrows went around snatching up

children, Peter and his friends were right there to save them. Peter made a few of his black holes, while Clara shot fire from her golden sword at the scarecrows, causing them to burn. Because the scarecrows were made of hay they burned very easily.

Then Peter remembered that he had a gift from the school trip. He took the black box out of his bag, opened it and let out his army of little fighters. These little people were very small, their skin was very black, and the codes of Baja were imbedded in their skin. They came ready for war with their bows and arrows, hatchets, hammers, knives and flying daggers. Peter let them out, and they attacked the scarecrows, cutting them into tiny pieces. Hay was flying through the air as the little army shredded them to pieces.

Jamyra froze many of the scarecrows with her ice touch; Michael and Millie got the children to safety as the scarecrows tried to kidnap as many of the children as they could. Ben then took his magic cape into the air and caught the scarecrows that were trying to take the children. Robert hid his pole-like body around a tree, where he snuck in and out of sight, causing the scarecrows to bump heads as he tied their straw together. It was so funny, as the scarecrows bumped heads, that Robert had to laugh.

Cilus sent his porcupine people down, and Samantha quickly put on her full armor. One stick from these quills would cause death; so Jane sent her thorn-like razor plants to take on the porcupine people. Jane called upon her green fingers and summoned her razor plants. They came through like a fast moving blade, cutting off the porcupine people's quills.

Then Larry came down with his father, Mirus Stewart, and they unleashed the fuzzies on the people. The fuzzies were cute, but they were capable of mass destruction; they sent down sharp liquid razors that were very strong and durable. But Zack had a trick up his sleeve; he roared so hard that the fuzzies could not take it. They puffed, and once they puffed, they could no longer send down liquid razors. So, for a while, it was raining razors that sliced through anything: trees, houses, the roadways, and structures.

Cilus was furious, and sent out his mud people, who came in groups of thousands upon thousands. They were nothing more than a glob of mud, and they were more of a nuisance than a threat. Then from the seas came Marcus with his group of creatures, but he too was a victim of David's electric rings. Many of his men died by the rings, and he wanted to take revenge.

As this was going on, Millie disappeared and reappeared beside Larry, who was down on the ground helping his father fight. Millie begged Larry not to join his father in the destruction of his own land, but Larry was upset at Millie. She had powers, and he did not.

"Children in Baja without powers are considered outcast!" said Larry to Millie.

Millie explained to Larry that it was just a myth that his uncle put in his head, and he would spend his life regretting all that he had done. But Larry had his mind made up; he was treated like a prince by the wizards.

"Cilus, only wants your body to house his spirit, because the one he has is too sickly," said Millie.

But Larry did not want to hear any of it. He flew off on his bat as Millie disappeared. Sam Carrot-Top saw his brother Marcus ready to wage war on Baja.

"You fool!" said Sam Carrot-Top.

As soon as he said this, Marcus punched him in the face. Sam and his brother fought; no one interfered, and Sam made his hands turn orange and then grew muscles that were so strong, he sent his brother flying into a tree. Marcus came out of the tree, shooting fire balls at Sam, but they were blocked by Samantha's shield. Even Samantha begged Marcus to stop what he was doing, but didn't listen.

Marcus brought more creatures to fight; the poisonous spiked octopus with twenty-four tentacles, and large elephants with ten long sharp ivory tusks sticking out of their faces. The elephants ran through the town, stabbing as many people as they could with their tusks; until little bitty Clara reached in her backpack and took out her magic sword. She cut the tusks off of the faces of the elephants.

Then there was a big bang; whatever was coming was something huge. As the people looked around, they saw it was the twelve elders; they had combined themselves into one to form a giant monster. It was twenty feet tall, white skinned with red polka dots, and a long trunk sat on the face. It had ears that stuck up in the air, huge blue eyes, and a tongue that was made of sharp prickly ivory razors. Each elder's color was present; the elders went after all the animals and creatures of Baja, picking them up and throwing them far away from Baja.

Then the elders came to Cilus as he tried to run. They grabbed him and took a bite from his neck, delivering poison into his body. Cilus shook, his life was draining out of his body, and then he crawled over to Larry and hung onto him. Cilus stole his soul and ran off. Mirus was upset that Cilus betrayed them, and went after Cilus, but turned around to see his dying son in Cilus' old body.

Then the elders went after Marcus, but Dorothy screamed and they remembered their promise to her. They took Marcus and placed him in a magic pod, where he would remain for many years. Marcus' family got a chance to say bye, but he spit on them and closed his eyes as the elders took him away.

Mirus disappeared with Larry into thin air, and the elders went back to their temple. The war was finally over; Baja was severely damaged and the citizens would have to come together to rebuild it. Peter and his friends were held up as heroes. The Carrot-Top family was held as caretakers of the elders, and the Carrot-Top name was restored to good standings. David was now the new gatekeeper of Baja, and Samantha became the new principal of Waldorf Academy. She gave up fighting and always honored her fallen friend Red Fox.

The elders were awake for another month, and even though Baja was badly damaged, the people put on a royal parade to honor the elders. It was filled with costumes and dancing, fireworks and plenty of food. Peter and his friends ran wild through the parade; the elders sat on the thrones as they watched their people having the time of their lives, and the war was now over.

Peter and his friends took an oath to remain friends

no matter what; they had been through so much together. From a distance, Peter thought that he saw Mirus, but when he looked again, the figure had moved.

Back in the forest, Mirus was crying over the loss of his son Larry. He vowed revenge on Cilus, and his screams were so loud they could be heard far away. Mirus went into hiding, and no one saw Cilus again; besides, he was now in the form of Larry Stewart.

Back in Baja, everyone was celebrating victory over the seven wizards, and everyone watched as the elders were put into hibernation again, not to be disturbed for another ten years. Whatever came up, the land of Baja would have to pull together.

Peter was now back in school and getting along great with his friends. There was no more animosity between Jamyra and Peter; there were no more two sides, there was only one. Instead of Peter racing seahorses, he brought in a new racing sport from earth: soapbox racing for all the children to try. His grandfather made the soapbox cars and the races were off and running. The school had the new racing program, and many sponsors came from miles away. Some children got scholarships to exotic worlds, but what everyone wanted was the lifetime pass for the Captain Johnny show.

In one of the races, Peter was car #8 and in the lead, and out of the blue he was passed by someone. The crowd cheered as the winner crossed the line, and it was none other than Millie Spoon, who was congratulated by her friends.

Jane went on to open and run her toy shop with her mother-in-law Dorothy and her father-in-law David. They made the toys and played Santa Claus. That year was the best year; Robert made it snow with his watch and Zack used his magic pencil to draw and build up the town. Everything he drew on paper came to life. Zack was very wise in what he drew; he only drew things that would improve Baja and keep it safe.

Jane had something she and Sam had to do, and that was go back to earth through the oracle and leave everything to Mr. Jones. When Jane and Sam went back to their old home, they saw Mr. Jones was having a hard time with the land; the government was giving him trouble and sending people to cheat him. So Jane and Sam decided to help him; they came to Mr. Jones as ghosts and showed him where they'd hidden millions of dollars and the magic seed. Jane told Mr. Jones to move up north and start over.

In the meantime, she would not let anything grow on this land again. Mr. Jones wanted the Carrot-Tops to come

back, but they explained to him that they could not, and were happy where they were. Mr. Jones took the money and seed, and quickly moved his family. Jane used her green thumb to poison all the vegetation in the land, making the government pay for what they had done to Mr. Jones. Without anything else to do, the Carrot-Tops headed back to their home in Baja.

THE END