

Isaac's Fantastic Adventure

Novel by

Andrew Mark Hamilton Brooks

Free Gentle Truth A Moment
Before Your Beauty is Made
To Whisper

Created

January 2002 – October 2006

Copyright © 2009 by Andrew Brooks

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission by Andrew Brooks.

The First ChapterSprout and Wrinkles

The Second ChapterThe Blue Ice Cream Cone

The Third ChapterDad’s Orange Car

The Fourth ChapterMaking a Point and Breaking It

The Fifth ChapterTBG Management Corporation

The Sixth Chapter Glasses and Mustaches

The Seventh ChapterBlam-Dasher-Blue

The Eighth ChapterGooglewhak-Wadge-Star

The Ninth ChapterThe Thunder Stone

The Tenth ChapterNumber Hundred Two and Thirty Seven

The Eleventh ChapterThe Anticlaus

The Twelfth ChapterIsaac’s a Hirameki Tsuwamono

The Thirteenth Chapter.....Black Sunglasses

The Fourteenth Chapter.....When Trouble Calls

The Fifteenth ChapterVinegar, Moldy Socks and Fish

The Sixteenth Chapter.....Making A Plan

The Seventeenth Chapter.....Looking For Trouble

The Eighteenth Chapter.....Using the Mega-Zapper

The Nineteenth ChapterHow It Works

The Twentieth Chapter.....What’s a New Factorian?

The Twenty-First Chapter.....Master Flaminghands Visit

The Twenty-Second Chapter.....Getting Tested

The Twenty-Third Chapter.....Frosty the Snowman

The Twenty-Fourth Chapter.....The Island of Momparoompa

The Twenty-Fifth ChapterInto the Sky

The Twenty-Sixth Chapter.....Elvaloovaloof of the Year

The First Chapter

Sprout and Wrinkles

Many years ago, there was a young boy who had an incredibly silly idea bouncing around inside his head: What would it be like to have ears the size of baseball gloves? See, it was a very silly idea. It was an outrageous wish that grew even more preposterous as it continued to dance inside the boy's inventive skull, becoming more and more vivid in his thoughts as he lay silently in his bed trying very hard to get to sleep. By the time this idea had become as ridiculous as it could possibly get, the boy had – believe it or not - decided that he only wanted one gigantic ear and it was to be - no, it had to be - right on top of his head!

Imagine that.

What next, a nose the size of a beach ball?

Teeth you could ski on?

As he thought about this some more, the grin on his face widened until a shudder ran through his body. In response, he pulled very hard at the heavy blankets that were covering him, bringing them right up to the level of his eyes. This helped him feel more comfortable, but it didn't make him entirely forget it was almost two in the morning and that he had a problem, a problem that was much bigger than the ear he wanted on top of his head.

You see his bedroom was very cold. It was so cold that the heavy blanket around his shoulders felt paper-thin. While he began struggling with another blanket, the boy's semi-frozen brain wandered back to the event that was responsible for his current misery.

Without much effort, he was able to see a sharp image of himself playing catch with his older brother in this very same room early that day. Sadly, during one of the tosses his brother had forgotten to put out his hand to grab a hold of the ball. And because his older brother happened to be in front of a closed window, there was a loud crashing noise that followed.

So what does this have to do with an ear the size of a baseball glove? Well, everything. When the window was broken and stayed broken, even when the parents came upstairs to see what was going on, it caused his mother and father to look seriously at the glass littering the floor of his room. This shortly resulted in the father sternly tapping his foot on the floor as he asked what had happened. It seemed pretty obvious to both of the boys that the answer was very straightforward: the window was broken. And that the other brother, surprise, surprise, was to blame. It took the father less than thirty seconds to convince them that they were both responsible for the damage. With that done, the father looked worryingly at the window and then to his breathe, and asked what was to be done about the broken window and the terribly cold air that was entering the room because of it?

Normally, this predicament could have been dealt with rather quickly. All one would have to do was to look up the number of a window repairman in the phonebook and dial it shortly afterward. The father of the household was a clever enough person to realize that and immediately went about calling such a person. But to his displeasure, nobody on the other side of the receiver answered when he dialed the first number, and the second number, and so on, and so on.

It wasn't that the rest of the people in the city they lived in had suddenly gone away or all the window repairmen in town had decided not to answer their telephones in some kind of mysterious window repairmen conspiracy. The problem rested with the time of the year. After all, when the window was broken, it was already December the 24th and very close to dinner. Therefore, all the window repair people were at home eating with their families and not bothering with such things as going to people's homes and fixing their windows, even if the windows were broken accidentally (or so both the brothers claimed).

Due to this, there was a little boy in a bedroom that was very cold. His father had tried his best to cover the broken window and keep the room warm. He used wood and a lot of other stuff, but none of it worked as good as the glass that was missing. The boy's mother offered to make a bed for him in the basement. The boy said he would rather sleep in his room. These were brave words. Even his older brother was impressed when he heard them. And the young boy probably meant them when the window was broken, but if he were asked for his opinion that night when the temperature outside became very, very cold, there would be the distinct possibility that the boy would of said something quite a bit different through his chattering teeth.

So far most of this makes sense, but why on earth would he want an ear the size of a baseball glove on top of his head? Would having such an enormous ear provide him with enough heat so that he could keep warm? No, he didn't want an ear there for that purpose. You see, he already had eight very, very thick blankets covering – well, smothering him. His mother had gone throughout the house and found whatever covers were available and placed them on top of him. This was a very nice thing for her to do;

however it made it very difficult for the boy to hear anything. Thick and warm blankets covered things such as ears that are still on the side of the head.

Nevertheless, his ears hadn't moved, nor did he have a new oversized one attached to the top of his head. Leaving him with no other alternative than to cover and uncover his head time and time again so that he could keep himself warm and still be able to hear what was going on around him. And that night, especially that night, the boy wanted to have very good hearing. After all it was Christmas Eve and he wanted to know if anybody was downstairs.

Other nights he wanted to hear nothing more than the music coming from his radio, of which he was very fond of, and ignore all the other creepy sounds coming from the house. Ignore the creaking sounds and weird echoes that often rose out of the rooms below him. But as he lay there in a mild state of frozen wonder, he would have loved to hear any sound coming from the living room. This only makes sense since that was where the Christmas Tree was and where Santa Claus was supposed to be at any moment.

But then his mind came to a stop when he heard the following:

Click, bang.

The young boy stopped breathing for a moment. Was it his imagination? he wondered, as he held his breath, or was . . .

Click, click, plack.

“No”, he stuttered to himself with vexed confidence, “that wasn't my imagination.”

He knew that. Well, he was sure it wasn't his imagination. He then asked himself if it came from his radio. Slowly, he began to pull back at the thick blankets covering him

and struggled to sit up against their weight. Then, carefully, he positioned his ear (the normal type) beside the radio to determine if the sound he heard, or thought he had heard, was part of song being played. Because he had such a good memory for songs, it didn't take him long to recognize the tune. It was a relatively new song, but if it were heard today on the radio it would be called a 'golden oldie'. More importantly was the fact that the young boy knew that there was no click, or bang or even a plack in the song.

Click, snap, click.

There it was again. The cold air in his room was making the clatter coming from beneath him sound very sharp. Feeling that he couldn't just sit there and do nothing, he got completely out of bed. Out of habit, he reached for his bathrobe on the dresser, but since he was already wearing it, he allowed his hand to drop to his side. He almost put his hand under the bed to get his slippers, however, he gave a pause and looked down at his feet and saw that he was already wearing them. So with nothing else to put on, he gingerly crept over to his bedroom door and ventured out into the corridor.

There to his relief, was nothing more than a slight rush of warm air and an empty hallway to greet him. Being that he knew his way around the house very well, he moved into the darkness, and didn't even think about touching the light switch. He broached the top of the stairs and moved down each step without making a single noise. When another click, plack crashed into the air, it almost caused him to slip. Lucky for him though, he was wise enough to have held onto the stairwell railing.

In less than a minute, he was down the stairs and into a room adjoining the living room. Having no real clue what to do next, he stood in the darkness waiting for some kind of sign. It came when the click, click noise showed up once more. However, up

close the noise, to his surprise, sounded familiar. The boy screwed his mouth up and tried to figure out why. And as he proceeded to put even more concentration into his efforts, he heard yet another sound. Somebody was coughing. Right away the boy could only come to the conclusion that Santa Claus was on the other side of the door and he was having trouble getting on with things because he was sick. The boy was sure of this and it resulted in him throwing caution to the wind and placing his hand firmly on the doorknob in front of him.

He turned it slowly. Perhaps, he thought, he could stroll up to Santa and offer him something for his cold. The boy had remembered that his mother had a bottle of medicine in the kitchen . . . no, in the bathroom, for coughs. Yes, it was a red liquid that was on the top shelf of the cabinet in the bathroom. Hopefully, he told himself, if Santa took the medicine he would feel better. Then, well, Santa could get on with his work and the boy would have less time to wait until he could ogle and shake all the toys that were going to be left for him under the Christmas Tree.

The young boy maintained these thoughts in his young head and continued to slowly open the door. When the door was opened wide enough for him to look inside he was shocked. There was no Santa standing before him. In the glow of the bright lights flashing away on the Christmas he saw that there was another boy like himself, but this one was walking around in a very peculiar way. Instantly, the young boy recognized this non-Santa person as his brother. And when he looked down to see why his brother was much taller than he had been a few hours ago, he also managed to solve the mystery of the click, click, bang, click, plack noise coming from this room: hockey skates. He was wearing hockey skates!

“Wrinkles, what are you doing?” This question resulted in the boy called by this funny name, one invented by his younger brother, to turn around very quickly. Following a gasp of surprise, his older brother lost his balance and fell backwards into a chair that was right behind him. It took his brother a few seconds to recover himself and when he did, Wrinkles managed to not sound as guilty as he should have as he turned his body to see his younger brother.

“Oh, how are you doing, Sprout?” Wrinkles added, making a point to pronounce the t at the end of this word louder than the rest.

“Where did you get those skates?” Sprout asked in a hot whisper.

“From under the tree, there was a nice box with my name on it, so I opened it up.” Wrinkles answered just as he normally did. He went straight to the point and was precise as possible.

“But you have to wait. You have to wait until morning.” Sprout sounded very angry. He was. Not just angry, but also immensely upset. Evidently, he was really looking forward to seeing Santa Claus. Seeing this non-Santa had turned his mood upside down and inside out.

“I could. That’s true,” Wrinkles continued calmly. “Mom and Dad have said that in the past, but they didn’t say that last night.” Before the boy could tell his older brother off further for making up a story, he realized that his brother was right. In the aftermath of the broken window in his room, the normal routine of the house was upset. It was upset enough for his mother and father to have forgotten to go to each of the boy’s bedrooms and tell them, in no uncertain terms, that they were to wait until the morning

until the entire family got together to open their Christmas gifts - with morning beginning at 9:00 am and not in the middle of the night.

“You’re – you’re . . . you’re being tricky,” Sprout answered back with slightly less emotion in his voice.

“Tricky? Sprout you come up with the funniest descriptions sometimes. I don’t think I have done anything wrong.” Once he said this, Wrinkles gave his younger brother a telling look, one that meant that there was nothing else to say about the matter. Yet, deep inside of Sprout, he was dying to go right up to his older brother and call him a ‘butt head’.

“Anyway, what do you think of my skates?” Wrinkles asked as he undid the laces and pulling hard on the ankle of the right boot.

“When you were standing up you looked like Sally Robins,” Sprout said with a smirk on his face.

“Sally Robins?” Wrinkles answered, looking very surprised.

“Yes, you know, when she showed up for the dance in those really tall shoes. She almost fell over a couple of times. I saw her.”

Wrinkles was dumbstruck. Not only was he being compared to a girl walking around in her first pair of high heels, but Sprout was bringing up somebody he liked. Worse yet, Sprout knew it.

“You, you don’t know what you’re talking about. I was doing a great job walking around until you snuck up to me.”

“Snuck up? Oh you mean like a couple of weeks ago, when you walked up to Sally at her locker? Is that what you call it when you go to a girl’s locker to talk?” This

comment startled Wrinkles. He could barely speak. Sprout was thinking of something else to taunt his brother with, but suddenly he felt really tired.

As his head grew heavier, his eyes began to focus on something very strange by the Christmas Tree. Seeing that something had caught his brother's attention, Wrinkles, who was becoming as tired as his brother, forced himself from his chair and staggered over to the tree. He saw a strange sight there as well. Slowly a sickly green light was emerging in the air close to the Christmas Tree. It caused the darkness that enveloped the rest of the room to weaken.

Steadily the color was becoming clearer and larger. This scared both of the brothers. In turn they tried to find some place to hide. Unfortunately they had chosen the very same old blue couch directly across from the tree, but fortunately they had jumped in behind different ends of it. And as their bodies struck either end of the couch, the greenish glow by the tree became even darker and a startling shape started to form inside of it.

The outline of this object was fuzzy and meaningless at first, then in the course of a few more seconds it grew distinct and the form of a misshaped person began to grow in the middle of the unearthly glow. Both boys gasped as the shape became the threatening silhouette of a man, one that looked like nobody they had ever seen before, one that was almost as tall as the ceiling. It was hideous, a macabre beast that belonged nowhere else but on a movie poster about creatures who wanted to take over the world. It was the kind of beast that walked around and shot laser blasts at all the humans running away from it. However, because whatever it was was presently standing in their parent's living room

beside their Christmas Tree on Christmas Eve, it was far more horrible than anything the brothers had ever come across in their lives, imaginary or real.

All of this was so frightening, it caused Wrinkle's and Sprout's skin to tighten around their bodies, making it hard for them to move. They could do little else than look on as the thing broke free of the greenish glow and began to move about.

On top of how scared they felt was a putrid smell that had entered the room. To Sprout, it was as if somebody was squeezing his stomach with a hand made of ice. It almost caused him to become sick. Wrinkles experienced a similar sensation, but to him it was as if there was rotting meat in his mouth. He could feel his tongue moving around as if it was trying to escape. The smell was so powerful, that if it were present by itself, it would have caused both boys to run out of the room. Yet, the need to sleep was even stronger. It blocked almost everything else from their minds.

Although the force that was affecting Sprout was potent enough to cause Wrinkles to close his eyes and drift off to sleep, the younger boy had enough strength to keep one of his eyes open. Unfortunately, it didn't make what he was looking at any more pleasant. The shape seemed even more horrific as it came closer and the ragged fuzziness that had first surrounded it had completely melted away. However, since he was so tired he couldn't focus on the image, so it made it impossible for him to see any of its features.

Without a moments hesitation the enormous figure walked over to the tree. There it bent forward and brought its hand out, casting a dark shadow over the presents. The hand was covered with a thick coating of armor. The rest of this colossal being was a mess-work of steel and heavy metal.

For a few moments the hand was still. Then something happened. A strange light started to flow out of its palm. The color was red like blood. This unyielding light bathed the presents in an unnatural glow. In a matter of seconds, one of the gifts began to shake. In response, the creature slowly stood up. Once it reached its maximum height, it brought its massive foot down on this gift. When the foot was lifted, the present was crushed beyond recognition.

Sprout was incredibly angry but with almost all of his strength gone he could do nothing more than watch. His emotions, as well as his body, were stressed to their limits. Consequently, when the vile creature turned and knocked over the Christmas Tree the torrid of anger that lit up Sprouts thoughts was too much for the young boy. It soaked up the rest of his strength, causing his remaining eyelid to close and he was asleep in a moment. The brutish creature was unaware of any of this and in the next moment had disappeared back into the greenish pool of light.

* * * * *

The Second Chapter

The Blue Ice Cream Cone

“Yuck,” said a very unhappy boy standing by himself in solemn misery. Before the young boy, whose name was Isaac, could think of anything else to say, “Yuck” jumped out of his mouth two more times. Each time he said it, he meant it. He really, really, really did.

For inside his mouth was a terrible taste. To Isaac, it was even worse, maybe even a million times worse, than when he went into his parent’s kitchen and experimented with a strange assortment of food. At that time, his recipe for an enormous stomachache had consisted of coffee grounds on top of a cracker, along with some pickles and fish that looked like it had been dropped on the floor. Then without a second thought he had opened his mouth as wide as he could and popped this ghastly creation right into it.

If his taste buds could have screamed they would have.

As he recalled this unpleasant memory, Isaac shut his eyes very tightly. He thought that he could escape the taste if he pretended not to notice it. Unfortunately for Isaac the taste inside of his mouth wasn’t aware it was being ignored, or perhaps it did and was punishing him for not being a good host.

Or, maybe, he had forgotten to breathe for a while and when he did . . .

“Blah,” Isaac yelped in disgust. Tears were rolling down his checks. He was fanning his open mouth with all the exuberance of a fireman trying to put out his own pants.

Now the inside of his nose was almost on fire.

“Phew,” Isaac announced in a loud voice and shook in revulsion. His body rocked so much that something in his right hand was released and dropped to the ground. There the ‘something’, which was a very large paintbrush, the type used to paint the side of a house, hit the ground with a wet slap. It stayed upright for a second and then toppled over.

Reluctantly, Isaac looked down and saw, to his great dismay that some of the paint on the brush had splattered onto the floor. Slowly Isaac leaned down to pick it up, however since the end of the bristles, along with the handle of the brush, were now covered with a huge glob of blue paint, it made it harder to hold onto.

With it back in his hand, the paintbrush once more reminded him of a fancy ice cream cone. The kind that looks very really tasty.

But, the paint was not tasty, and in fact, as poor Isaac had found out a minute or so ago, it was as bad as licking the side of a house, or maybe worse. Maybe a billion times worse. His tongue felt as if it was about to leap out of his mouth and find someplace nicer to stay.

Yet, even if young Isaac could not be blamed for being curious and wondering what a color this vibrant and rich tasted like, he could be held responsible for the reason why he was in his parent’s basement by himself in the first place. Yes, if someone came up to young Isaac that very moment and asked him what this was all about, he would of fainted with embarrassment because his answer made as much sense as licking the side of a house.

As it just happened to be, this boy of about ten had an idea the other day that would not leave his head, a quality that was common in this family, a dauntless characteristic that was especially strong with the male members. When it first began turning around his brain, the idea didn't seem all that bad. After all, as he had repeated to himself many times after first coming up with this scheme, if the idea worked it would have solved most of his troubles.

However, before any of this could be explained, a noise had entered the basement. It was caused by somebody walking on the main floor above him.

This caused Isaac to become startled as he looked up. As he did, his hands clenched. This resulted in his fingers feeling sticky and cold. With the noise stopping for a moment, he carefully inspected his fingers to see what had happened. What he saw made him wince. It just happened that before he was startled by the commotion upstairs, the fingers of both of his hands were resting near the middle of the paintbrush. Unfortunately when the clatter shook him, his fingers had slipped off the handle of the brush and wrapped themselves tightly around the bristles, thereby causing the blue paint to be pushed deep under his fingernails.

His eyes shot up to the ceiling as the noise returned.

It suddenness surprised him so much, that he dropped the paintbrush once more. Some time passed before he had the courage to pick it up. With it safely in his hand, he asked himself how he was going to clean his hands. Before Isaac figured this out the noise returned with a thump. As the noise grew louder, his fingers got colder. Isaac could have saved himself the bother and not looked down, but he did anyway. Once again, his fingers were around the bristles. His little fingers were bluer than before.

Then, without notice, a louder series of thumps announced themselves, and before the last of these sounds died away, a sharp creaking noise split the air.

“Isaac. Isaac where are you, dear? Oh, Isaac where are you?” called his mother opening the basement door. Her voice repeated these questions a second time as she looked down from the top step. She was back from her afternoon jog around the neighborhood. She was not only back, but back early.

“Hello, Isaac. Are you down there, dear?” With the door fully open, this allowed the sunlight that had filled the main floor of the home to flood into the basement. It not only illuminated such things as the washer, dryer and the furnace, but a little boy who had his back turned toward his mother.

“Good there you are. What a run. I never thought I could go around the neighborhood so quickly.” Isaac silently agreed and slowly turned around, all the while being careful not to expose his hands to the incoming light. “So what have you been doing down there?”

For a moment Isaac’s brain froze solid. His mother might as well have been asking him how much his school would have weighted if it was built on the moon. Lucky for Isaac, right there and then, his mother was better at making up excuses for him than he was.

“Have you been working on your model again?”

“Yeah, I . . . I’m waiting for the paint to dry,” he said weakly.

“Paint to dry? Don’t you have anything more exciting to do than waiting for paint to dry? Well since you are waiting, I can tell you what Mrs. Smith was telling me during our run together.” His mother started to talk as her fifth son began to listen.

That's right, her fifth son – a pretty remarkable number when you consider the rest of the family.

In total, believe it or not, there were 12 children in the Anderson family: 6 girls and 6 boys. Second off, and this is truly remarkable, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had the habit of having children on the same date. That is to say, all their children had the same birthday, but on different years. And to compound the strangeness of their family, their children arrived at the Anderson home one after another, which was to say, that for a time, each and every year had a new child attached to it

So there you have it. The Anderson's had a very unique way of being predictably unpredictable. However, this was not entirely true. One of their children did not follow any of these rules. It was a boy and he had a birthday that was uniquely his own. He hadn't come into this world right after his previous sibling by one year and nobody arrived the year after him.

Makes you want to ask a question, doesn't it? Like who was the boy that was so different? Well, of course it was Isaac Anderson. Yes the very same person who was still standing in the basement waiting for the rest of this description to be finished while his mother continued to talk about Mrs. Smith and her various interests. Therefore, let's just save him anymore aggravation and list all the children and their ages: Walter, 3; Neal, 4; Jack, 5; Patricia, 6; Tony, 7; Isaac, 10; Alice, 13; Joan, 14; Lisa, 15; Michelle, 16; Andrew, 17; Shirley, 18.

There he is – right in the middle; at least when it came to ages.

Naturally, this arrangement would make you think that Isaac Anderson was the center of attention in the family. Yet, he wasn't.

In fact, nobody seemed to take that much notice of him. The younger children played most of the time with themselves and the older ones did the same thing, leaving Isaac in the basement trying to find something to do.

And today, before his mother had arrived to open the door to see what he was up to, Isaac was finding something to do. Though he did like to come down into the basement and make models, most of which were plastic motorcycles, he wasn't down there because of that. He was down in the basement at that moment because he was getting really tired of not being noticed. Even his other siblings were aware from time to time that Isaac could be standing in the same room as them and they wouldn't know it until he walked out of it. Andrew Anderson, the oldest boy and very prone to opening his mouth up and being rude, had joked to Michelle and Lisa that he had almost sat on a chair that Isaac was on because his little brother blended into the upholstery so well. Sadly, Isaac had been in the room during the conversation.

Isaac could have been angry with Andrew, but he was normally a very level headed person. He knew that his older brother wasn't saying this to be intentionally nasty. Isaac had to face it that what his brother had said was true. Isaac did blend into his surrounding. On his report cards the teachers made a big deal of how quiet and nice he was. When his parents read this, they told Isaac that he was a good boy and that they were proud of how nice he was at school. Hearing this, he only shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

Yet inside his head, he often wished it was different. He wished he was like most of the children in his home room, just like the children who made funny noises in class, just like the children who could giggle whenever they spoke, just like the children who

could impersonate the teacher when she wasn't looking. Though he wished it, Isaac could never make himself do any of these things. Well, that's not entirely true. He had once brought a joke book with him to class. Right after finishing his math, he had attempted to memorize a couple of really funny jokes. And when he was sure that he had read and remembered the best of them, Isaac had tapped the shoulder of a boy named William in front of him so that he could get his attention. Not only did William not laugh, William actually yawned and looked sleepier after the joke was told.

That was three days ago and in those three days Isaac had come to realize that things had to change for him. He knew that in order for this to happen he was going to have to do something so outrageous, so over the top that the other children in his class would have to notice him, even the boy who often made funny noises with his face.

This resulted in Isaac ending up in the basement that day. And that was why Isaac had a blue paintbrush in his hands. When he had first walked into the basement he was fully prepared to paint one of his arms blue. Yes, the entire arm – from the shoulder to the end of his fingertips including the thumb. Using the same can of paint Mr. Anderson had used to paint the swing set in the backyard. Following this, Isaac was going to go over to the same shelf and bring down the yellow can of paint. With this color, he was going to paint his other arm.

Enthusiastically, he had taken down the blue can and began to open it. Ten minutes later he was still trying to open it. The paint around the seal had dried. It was only after Isaac had found a very long screw driver that he managed to get it open. Due to this difficulty, he didn't have much time to find a paintbrush and very little time to paint his arms.

However, in those precious moments before his mother arrived home, his stomach had made a number of loud groans, each of them reminding Isaac that he had forgotten his after school snack. As a result of this oversight, Isaac had been extremely hungry. Hungry enough, perhaps, to believe for a moment that the paint on the paintbrush in his hands had been something he could eat.

Before Isaac could think about this anymore his mother asked him a question.

“How are you doing, dear? Are you going to stay down there all day or are you going to come up?”

“Stay” Isaac said without much thought then wondered if his mother had been talking about Mrs. Smith.

“Stay in the basement? I thought you would be outside with the rest of the family. After all . . . after all, with what your father is going to do is for your benefit, as much, if not more, than anybody else’s.”

Isaac closed his eyes and then he remembered everything.

His mother was right. This was a very, very special day. It was a day that the entire family had been talking about for more than a week. How could he have possibly forgotten? But Isaac had. Somehow the thought of painting his arms blue and yellow had blocked out what his father was about to do.

The Third Chapter

Dad's Orange Car

Isaac felt a little sick as he started to run up the basement stairs. Not only sick, but also somewhat embarrassed about forgetting an event as important as the one his mother had brought up. What made it worse was that his mother was absolutely right. Isaac's father was about to do something quite unusual and more than a little dangerous. And Isaac was partially responsible for it happening.

As he reached the top of the stairs, he noticed how quiet it was. None of his other 11 brothers and sisters were on the main floor. To have nobody on the first floor of the Anderson home was very strange. The other thing that got his attention was the sound of yelling and screaming that was coming from the backyard.

"Isaac I think your father's going to be starting very soon," his mother said as she disappeared out of the back door. And even before the door had a chance to close, Isaac had sprinted toward it and managed to get through it with his on jacket before it closed.

That was when things got very loud and cold. There in front of him was a very, very weird scene. Well, not weird for the Anderson home. Even the neighbors that had come out of their houses that afternoon to see what was happening expected to see weird things occurring in the backyard of the Anderson's home. Nevertheless, in the history of weird happenings in the Anderson's backyard, a backyard that was enormous, this one event was probably right up there with things that even the Anderson's wouldn't have expected to be doing.

Apparently, Isaac had forgotten how strange this day was going to be, because when he first saw it, he was temporarily stunned. And it didn't help one bit when his father's car shot past him making all sorts of noises. That's right, his father's little orange car was in the backyard being driven around the edge of their property. Being that their backyard was pretty big it allowed for the car to go pretty fast. But that didn't take away from the surprise of seeing a grown man, Isaac's father, driving around in the family car as if he was some kind of racecar driver.

Isaac carefully stepped down from the back porch and went toward the rest of his family, which at that moment included everyone, except of course, their father.

"Please, Mom, make him stop. This is all too much for me," came the emotional voice of Patricia. When things like this happened, she was always one of the first to go up to her mother and say that she didn't like what was going on.

"Well, that may be true, Patricia, but your father is trying to make sure everybody is aware of how dangerous things like this are."

Isaac was close enough to his mother to hear how serious her voice sounded. It was common for Mrs. Anderson to sound this way when her husband was trying to show the rest of the family how dangerous certain activities were, which for Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, was not an uncommon thing to be involved in. Indeed, having twelve different children, with twelve different ages, with twelve different personalities could and often did result in their children doing an assortment of activities that would make both of their parents shake their heads.

After hearing his mother's troubled voice trail off dramatically, Isaac focused for a moment on Alice. She was standing by Lisa who was shivering. As he considered

saying something meaningful to her, perhaps a well placed ‘don’t worry, it’ll be okay’, he saw one of his bothers jumping up and down in the near distance. It was Andrew and he appeared very excited. As he focused on his brother, Isaac’s eyes smacked right into an object behind Andrew that caused them to flash open. Sitting on the ground was a wooden ramp. It was about a meter in height and about three times as long. Turning his head to the right, Isaac saw that there was another ramp like this one about 30 metres away. Shirley and Joan were beside it and both of them were looking at it pensively.

“Andrew, Andrew”, shouted Isaac moving toward his older brother. Andrew didn’t seem to hear him. Isaac tried again, with the same response. As he was trying for the third time, the other boy’s head turned downward and pulled back as if he was surprised.

“There you are. Where have you been? Missing the good stuff like usual. Well, here we are. It’s jumping day. I thought he was kidding when he told us. You know, bluffing. But there he is. He’s really going to do it. I can’t believe it, but there he is.” Andrew’s mouth remained open a bit, and his eyes and head bobbed up and down as he appeared to be following the bumpy movements of Mr. Anderson’s car as it continued to lap the outside of their property.

“Dad doesn’t bluff. He will do it.” Isaac wanted to say more, however, he always had difficulty saying things when he needed to say them. Put him in front of any group of people, even if that group consisted of only one person, and he would do nothing more than clamp his mouth closed. There was almost nothing in this world that could cause him to jabber like most of the other children in his class. Yet, there was the one exception. That involved the topic of motorcycles.

Yes, that topic somehow triggered a mechanism in his head which caused him to release the heavy springs that usually kept his mouth very well-sealed.

“I know you’re right, he doesn’t bluff.”

“Then we should go over to mom and stop this.”

Andrew’s face turned down, “You know what’s going to happen if we do that, don’t you? I’ll have to promise not to do anymore jumping. I don’t know if I can do that, and what about you, Mr. Isaac? If there is no jumping allowed in this family, what’s going to happen to your dream of getting a motorcycle?”

“What do you mean?” Isaac asked his head filling with dread.

“Well, Mr. Isaac, if I don’t get to jump and you don’t get to jump, then we won’t be allowed to get anything that can jump. I am surprised you don’t get the connection.”

Isaac was very surprised that he hadn’t gotten the connection until that very moment. The collision of ideas immediately welled in his head. He blinked a couple of times and felt weak. Fortunately there was a small tree stump beside him that he could sit on.

As he sat there and thought about what his brother had said, Isaac began to relive a moment in his recent past that was very much like this one. Without much effort he saw himself at the family kitchen table pouring milk into a cereal bowl. It was his second helping that day, and so far nobody had said a word to him. This hadn’t bothered him. It gave him a chance to concentrate on looking at the cereal floating in the bowl in front of him. He had put his spoon into the dish trying to push the cereal together to see if he could make a little island, however, the chair next to him had made a loud scrapping noise as somebody moved it away from the table.

Following this noise was another one. It was the solid thump that came from a magazine being dropped right next to his cereal bowl.

“Look at that. Would you look at that? The new models are in and they look wicked, absolutely crazy, faster and better than last year.”

“It came already?” Isaac said in a sudden rush.

“You bet it did. Went down to the store first thing and got the magazine.” Andrew’s hand then flipped open the book and by chance it opened to a page that showed a motorcycle that Isaac had been reading about for almost a year.

“Holy handlebars, is that the RMX 80? Is that really it? Would you look at it. Look at it. Look at the tires. Look at the tank. Look at the seat. Look at the rear swing arm. Look at the engine. Holy handlebars.” With that said, everybody at the breakfast table was instantly aware that Isaac had to be looking at something dealing with motorcycles. This was because whenever motorcycles came up in conversation it turned this quite, nice little boy, who had trouble telling jokes, into a babbling surge of raw energy, a strange and marvelous boy that would always use the phrase ‘holy handlebars’ or some other piece of a motorcycle right after the word ‘holy’ to mark the transformation.

“Did someone say, ‘holy handlebars’?” asked the man at the other side of the table who had been hidden behind his newspaper for most of the morning.

“Ah . . . Ah, I might of,” answered Isaac. He looked around at the other members of the table and saw how serious all of them had become. Andrew was clever enough to bring the large box of cereal closer to his face so he could hide the wide grin that had developed there.

“So, if I heard you right, and you did say ‘holy handlebars’ I would guess that the other young man beside you had given you something to do with motorcycles?” His sure voice asked pleasantly.

“Well – well, Andrew did put magazine in front of me,” Isaac replied after a brief pause to consider what to do next.

“Is that right, young man? Are you responsible for bringing such reading material to your impressionable younger brother?”

“Yeah, I guess I did, Dad. There’s nothing wrong with it, is there?”

“Nothing wrong?” he began as he folded up his paper and tapped the top of the cereal box next to him to emphasis his next sentences. “Well, if you showed that magazine to Walter or Jack or Neil there would be nothing wrong. Of course there wouldn’t be, they are very young and not apt to do silly things. However, Isaac could get himself into unfortunate circumstances given his love for motorcycles. After all, they are dangerous things that become even more dangerous if you get onto them and do silly things with them. Don’t you agree, Mother?” The use of the word ‘Mother’ was a very sure sign that the day that had begun as a peaceful breakfast was going to turn into one of those lesions the Anderson clan sometimes expected from either the Mother or Father, but mostly from the Father. Often at the slightest hint of one of the children considering doing something with the faintest mention of danger, either parent would react.

“Yes, you are very, very right, Father. Quite right.”

“But Dad, “Andrew started, sincerely believing he had to speak up right away, “Isaac’s just looking. It’s a nice book, the pictures are interesting. Besides, if nobody gets him a motorcycle nothing bad is going to happen.” He ended his sentence by

thinking that this might be the very day that he could win one of these family discussions on family safety. Too bad for him, his instincts were wrong. Even before he gave himself a moment to enjoy the possibility of victory, his father allowed his face to become even more solid.

“Well, Andrew, let’s think about this. If we were in a neighborhood without any other children I would have to agree with you. You know, what you would expect if we were on a desert island, by ourselves. Or, if both of you went to schools without any other children. In either case, I would have to agree with you. But, we are in a neighborhood with other children and you both go to schools that aren’t deserted. And you know what that means?” The question was pointed toward the little girl who was watching everything with a great deal of curiosity. It was Michelle, and sometimes she could be as intolerably realistic as her parents.

“Oh – I think you’re right dad. For sure, you’re right. Isaac might get it into his head that if he doesn’t get a motorcycle from one of you that he can hang around one of the other kids - like the Smiths - and start using theirs.”

Isaac wished his legs were long enough so he could have kicked his sister. But she was right, the Smiths had a motorcycle and they were only a few blocks away. Moreover, he had been over there not too long ago. And on his trips there he had often informed the two youngest boys that one day he was going to get himself a RMX 80, and if they allowed him to practice for the time being on their motorcycle he would give them a chance to ride his when it arrived.

“Come on Dad, what’s so wrong with wanting a motorcycle, really? There are some good places around here that are far away from traffic?” As these words flowed out

of his brother's mouth, Isaac wasn't sure why Andrew was sticking up for him so much. Not that Andrew was all that bad. If it wasn't for the upholstery remark a while ago, Andrew was a pretty good brother, except Isaac couldn't shake the feeling that his 17-year-old brother had motives of his own. It was no secret that Andrew liked motorcycles as well. Perhaps, Isaac wondered, if his father did clamp down on his own future motorcycle activity, it could affect Andrew as well. He wasn't sure, but it was a thought that was staying in his mind as his brother spoke.

"It isn't the problem with traffic that worries me. It is the worry about what can also be done with motorcycles. They are used often to jump things, aren't they?" Mr. Anderson kept on looking at his older son waiting for him to try and convince him that this wasn't true. Not surprisingly then that Andrew was at a lost for words.

Immediately, in a remarkable display of conformity, all six children younger than Alice, including Isaac, said jump at the same time, which made the older children uncomfortable because most of them were ready to forget about the whole issue of motorcycles and get on with eating their breakfasts on that Saturday morning. However, the younger group didn't understand what was going on and this permitted Isaac through honest ignorance to continue his questions over the topic of motorcycles.

"Jump a RMX 80? That's a pretty good idea. Why didn't I think of it? It's a very fast bike. It could almost go quicker than the DST 100. That's an awfully good bike as well. Yeah, why didn't I think of that before? Jump a RMX 80." Before he uttered another word he understood that he had said something he shouldn't have. His big brother beside him looked as if he was about to pass out. His older sisters, Alice, Joan, Lisa, Michelle and Shirley looked positively dumbstruck.

“I will say this for you, Isaac, at least your enthusiasm is honest. That is a good quality you know. But you also have another strong quality that the rest of your brothers have as well, especially, Andrew. You can get an idea into your head and keep it there until it is covered in a mat of spider’s webs, keep it there until somebody helps you get rid of it. I guess then,” he started to say, building up his voice so that it could be very melodramatic, “I will have to do something to make no member of this family wish to jump a motorcycle, any motorcycle.”

“Something?” asked the children as a group, very gravely.

“Yes, something,” Mrs. Anderson added, sounding as if she was a teacher asking all of them to go the Principle’s office, “ I am afraid your father has to do it.”

“So, here we are, Dad’s going to take the old car and jump it to stop us from doing anything like it. Ever! No jumping and nothing to jump with. Not for you, not for me, not for anybody.” Andrew had not moved since Isaac had started to recall some of the events that had lead to this day. He just stood there following Mr. Anderson in the orange car. “Oh, well, what happens, happens, I guess. Maybe I shouldn’t have brought in that magazine. If I was smarter I would have given it to you in your bedroom.”

Isaac wanted to say something, give an indication to his brother that there was more to it than the magazine or anything else that happened in the kitchen that day. Even if there was the slim possibility that Andrew would have taken the blame for bringing the magazine into the kitchen to begin with and the outcome that followed, there were other things that Isaac did that nobody else was responsible for, or for that fact, knew.

Two nights after the jumping discussion, Isaac had gotten home with a very neatly typed piece of paper in his school bag. When he went upstairs, the paper was taken out of the bag and placed very carefully on top of the desk in his room. Over the next hour he made sure that all his facts and figures were correct. During dinner he didn't mention it to anyone. It wasn't until he knocked on his father's study room and walked inside that the paper was shown to Mr. Anderson.

"Hi dad, can I talk to you?"

"Sure. What can I do for you?"

"Ah, it's about what I said awhile ago, you know, about the jumping thing."

"Yes, what about it? Are you going to tell me that you will promise never to jump a motorcycle? If you are, then I will not have to take actions in order for you and the other boys in this household to stop jumping, or indeed, to ever start it." Isaac wasn't really thinking about what his father was saying. He was instead concentrating on the idea that had come to him the previous day. What he was going to do was very risky and he knew it. However, Isaac really loved motorcycles and he hated the idea that if he promised his father never to jump them that meant he would lose out on an activity that looked like a lot of fun.

"Ah – not exactly, Dad."

"Not exactly?" his father's voice almost crumpled in shock.

Sheepishly, Isaac produced the crisp sheet of paper that had been in his hand since he entered the room. With it clearly in front of his eyes, his father could see a number of detailed pictures written on it.

“Well, please explain this to me.” Isaac’s voice was slow at first as it tried to be calm and make everything he was saying sound important or plausible.

It took him awhile to say everything he wanted to. Once he finished talking, Isaac had taken a deep breath and tried to smile. He father had tried to smile as well. It was an expression that stayed with him until he started to look at the ceiling. And by the time his gaze had bounced off the floor a couple of times, there was little trace of it left on his face. In its place was a look of deep admiration.

Mr. Anderson then sat back heavily into his chair and pushed his fingers through his jet-black hair. “I don’t know what to say, I really don’t. You are telling me that if you were allowed to jump a motorcycle you would be very, very careful. So careful, that you have taken all the information that you know about the RMX 80 and have figured out how fast you would have to be going to do certain jumps.”

“Yes, Dad. I went to our science teacher, Mr. Perch and brought the idea up to him. He had a free afternoon and helped me write this stuff up for you. If I work at it some more I’m sure I can do it myself. He told me that what he showed me works for anything - even on your car, dad.”

Up to that point Mr. Anderson was feeling a considerable amount of pride and amazement. Both of which were centered on the fact that his son was using science, and not emotions to state his arguments. These delightful feelings had become so strong in Mr. Anderson that he was extremely close to giving his son permission to eventually buy a motorcycle - that was until his son had said the last sentence.

“The car?” Mr. Anderson said with a surge of excitement in his voice.

“Yes . . . the car.”

“That’s true isn’t it? So . . . young man, what would you think if I told you that I was going to jump the family car next week?”

“Jump the family car? You’d get hurt.”

“Yes that is true. Very, very true. Do you like the idea of me jumping a car then?” Isaac’s legs had felt numb at the time and he was sure he would have crashed onto his backside if he had given himself a few more moments to think about it.

“Dad, please . . . I get what you are saying.”

“You do?”

“Seeing me jump a motorcycle is as bad as me seeing you jump the family car. Please don’t do it. I understand. I won’t do it. I won’t. I promise I won’t.” His voice was very sincere. The panic in his throat was causing his words to become hoarse. And it almost stopped Mr. Anderson from thinking about jumping the family car anymore. However, like his son, he was the type of person that once they got an idea in their head, especially the incredibly silly ones, it was going to stay there for an awfully long time.

“Well, Isaac that is a nice thing for you to say, but I am afraid that I have to do what I have to do. Perhaps you would give me your promise, but what about Andrew? I saw the look on his face, and what about Walter, Neil and Tony? In a few years they might start jumping motorcycles as well. First they would be jumping over the front fence then they progress up to people and then perhaps even buildings. I can’t have them jumping over our own house. There are airplanes to think about. No, I have come to the realization of how serious this matter could become if I don’t do something about it right here, right now.”