

The Heaviest Things

A bald eagle is shown in flight, soaring from the lower right towards the upper left. The eagle's wings are spread wide, and its white head is clearly visible. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. A prominent lens flare or light flare is visible in the upper left quadrant, partially overlapping the eagle's wing.

J.H. Sweet

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*To the power of everyday magic,
and to those who care*

Contents

Chapter One

Mrs. Cory

7

Chapter Two

Christmas in June

14

Chapter Three

The Answer at the North Pole

22

Chapter Four

Coral Castle

31

Chapter Five

The Storyteller

39

Chapter Six

Two More Stories

46

Chapter Seven
Camp Gilmore
52

Chapter Eight
The Real Paul Bunyan
57

Chapter Nine
Mr. Beresford's Wall
63

Chapter Ten
The Mix Up
70

Chapter Eleven
Another Funeral
77

Chapter One

Mrs. Cory

Henry Goodwin had lived next door to elderly Mr. and Mrs. Cory for all of the ten years of his life. When Mr. Cory passed away in the late winter, Henry went to the funeral with his parents. He also helped his mother carry a casserole over to Mrs. Cory the week after the funeral.

For the next three months, Mrs. Cory kept inside and to herself, and Henry didn't think of her much. His mother, along with a few other neighbors, occasionally checked on the woman by bringing her food and sometimes carrying her mail from the street-side box up to her house. However, Henry was too busy with homework,

track meets, science projects, and weekend fun with friends to notice anything going on with his neighbor.

When the first week of summer rolled around, Henry happened to be in his front yard when Mrs. Cory came out of her house to pick up four newspapers that had collected by her front steps. If she had looked up, Henry would have wanted to wave to her. However, he might not have been able to wave because he was having some difficulty overcoming the shock of seeing Mrs. Cory in such a changed state. Indeed, Henry barely recognized her. A formerly plump woman, who had regularly fed the neighborhood kids home-baked treats such as nutty fudge and caramel popcorn balls, Mrs. Cory now looked wasted away to nearly sticks and bones.

She never looked up, so Henry didn't need to worry about overcoming his shock to muster a greeting for her. After Mrs. Cory went back inside her house, Henry made his way down the block to visit his friend Jacob Lampley, as

planned, for an afternoon of batting practice and playing video games.

Later, when he was back at home in his room, Henry puzzled over the change that had come over Mrs. Cory. How could such a thing happen? Indeed, Mrs. Cory now looked so thin, Henry wondered how her scrawny legs were even managing to hold up the rest of her body.

At dinner, Henry brought up the subject to his parents.

“She’s evidently wasting away with grief,” his mother told him. “I’ll take over a couple of casseroles for her freezer later in the week, but I’m not sure how much good it will do because she’s just not eating much of what people are bringing her.”

The next morning, when he was sitting on the front steps with his glove and ball, waiting for Jacob to come over, Henry noticed another elderly neighbor, Mr. Beresford, down the block mowing his lawn. Henry knew that Mr. Beresford had lost his wife a couple of years back. In contrast to Mrs. Cory, Mr. Beresford was very robust looking; and he was evidently

healthy enough to do a lot of yardwork because Henry often observed him pruning, watering, edging, and mowing.

Later in the day, after Jacob left, Henry saw Mr. Beresford sitting on his front porch. Wandering down the block, Henry called to the man from the sidewalk, “Hi, Mr. B!”

“Hello, Henry,” Mr. Beresford responded. “Come on up here and take a load off.”

Since this was evidently a good time for Mr. Beresford to have a visitor, Henry accepted the invitation and made his way up the front walk and porch steps to take a seat in a glider chair next to his neighbor.

“So,” began Mr. Beresford, “what have you been up to these days?”

“Just ball practice and hanging out with Jacob,” Henry responded. After a long pause, he added, “My mom’s taking more food over to Mrs. Cory.”

Mr. Beresford nodded. “That’s good; she’s looking a little thin.”

“My mom says she’s wasting away with grief.”

“That’s probably true,” answered Mr. Beresford.

After another long pause, as he considered whether or not he should say what he was thinking, Henry took a deep breath and asked, “Did you waste away when Mrs. B died?”

Mr. Beresford didn’t seem to mind the question, and he smiled softly as he answered. “I did catch the flu that year, from being run down, and I guess I might have lost a few pounds; but I gained it all back again at Thanksgiving and Christmas because my daughter-in-law is a really good cook.”

“So you didn’t waste away like Mrs. Cory?” Henry asked.

Mr. Beresford shook his head as he said, “I guess grief is different for each person.”

The two sat together without speaking for a couple of minutes before Mr. Beresford said, “Mrs. Cory’s heart is very heavy, I think.”

After a few moments, Henry asked, “Is there anything we can do for her?”

Mr. Beresford answered somewhat slowly. “There are ways to lift a heavy heart, but what

might work for one person may not work for another.” Sighing, he added, “My heart is still heavy sometimes, but I try to keep busy, and I have a lot of family that tend to visit a lot.”

“I don’t think Mrs. Cory has much family,” said Henry.

“You’re right,” agreed Mr. Beresford, “she doesn’t.”

After pondering Mrs. Cory’s heavy heart for awhile, Henry ventured to say, “We can lift really heavy things these days, like boulders and big metal beams for buildings.”

“Yes, but a heart is different,” responded Mr. Beresford. “It is an abstract thing, not something physically heavy like a refrigerator or a chunk of granite.” After a moment’s thought, he added, “But you might be on to something, and it’s certainly worth thinking about. How can we lift something heavy, even if we can’t see it? People have been able to come up with all sorts of ways to lift amazingly heavy objects. So if we recognize that some of the heaviest things in the world are connected to the mind and to the soul, we should still be able to figure

something out because human beings are really clever that way.”

Henry didn't quite understand what Mr. Beresford was rambling on about, but he really did want to find a way to help Mrs. Cory, if possible, especially because what other people were already doing didn't seem to be working.

“Yes,” added Mr. Beresford, “this bears further study, kind of like a research project. However, I'm really too old to take on something like this. I'm afraid someone else will have to figure out how some of the heaviest things in the world can be lifted, whether or not those things actually weigh a lot on a scale.”

In his mind, Henry thought he might like to take on a research project such as this, but he didn't really know how to begin.

Chapter Two

Christmas in June

The answer as to how he might begin the research project found Henry a few days later. He had continued to puzzle over what might be done to help Mrs. Cory. Few boys his age would have worried about something such as this; however, Henry really liked Mrs. Cory, and he couldn't seem to get over seeing her so frail and sickly looking.

Though the subject of an elderly widow and her heavy heart wasn't something Henry would normally talk about with his friends, he did touch on the subject one afternoon at Jacob's house. The boys were watching television and keeping an eye on Jacob's six-year-old sister, Alexis, because Mrs. Lampley was out running

errands. Jacob had known Mrs. Cory a long time too, but he hadn't seen her lately.

"She's really skinny now," said Henry. "My mom says she's wasting away with grief since Mr. Cory died, and Mr. Beresford says she has a heavy heart."

"But that's not something you can do anything about," said Jacob.

Henry shrugged. "Mr. Beresford seemed to think there are ways to lift a heavy heart. He couldn't tell me how, but he said that because human beings were smart enough to have figured out how to lift heavy objects, we should be able to figure this out too."

Jacob didn't have any good ideas on the subject, and he was skeptical. "Just because people have invented machines to lift heavy stuff, doesn't mean they can figure out how to lift something that isn't even real to the touch. You can't even see Mrs. Cory's heart, and you can only imagine that it's heavy."

"But machines aren't the only way to lift heavy things," Henry argued. "People have learned how to use leverage to lift things. Plus,

there are whole mysteries that haven't even been solved yet about how some really heavy things have been moved. They still don't know for sure how they built the pyramids, or how they moved all those giant stone heads on Easter Island."

Jacob had to agree. "I see what you mean," he said. "But those are things that are physical. A heavy heart is more along the lines of something magical or spiritual."

Alexis had been listening to their conversation, while she played with her dolls, and she suddenly couldn't resist telling them, "Santa has to lift a heavy sack of toys every year, and he doesn't use a machine."

"See, that's what I'm talking about," said Jacob, smiling. "That's something magical that we'll never know the answer to."

"I know how you can find out how Santa lifts his sack," said Alexis. When the boys didn't say anything, she added, "One of Santa's elves lives on the next street."

Jacob had to laugh. “Mr. Gold is not an elf, Alex. He’s a little person. And you shouldn’t call him an elf, because that’s not nice.”

“He is too an elf,” insisted Alexis. “His house is full of Christmas stuff all the time. He showed Rosemary and Megan and me his Christmas town. And he gave us snowflake cookies, and he knows how to cut paper snowflakes, and he said we could come back any time we wanted.”

Jacob often humored Alexis in her beliefs about things such as unicorn sightings and elves living in the neighborhood because he didn’t want to hurt her feelings. He also thought it was good for her to have a healthy imagination. However, surprised by what she had just said, Jacob was now somewhat worried about his little sister and her friends visiting the house of a neighbor who wasn’t well known to them, so he suggested to Henry, “Maybe we should pay a visit to Mr. Gold.”

“Good idea,” said Henry, who could understand his friend’s concerns.

The three set off right away for the next block.

Still worried about what his sister had told him, Jacob asked, “What else did you do at Mr. Gold’s house?”

“Megan’s mom was with us,” she answered. “I think she paid Mr. Gold for fixing a clock.”

Both boys were relieved that a grownup had been with the girls when they visited the man. However, the idea of seeing a Christmassy house in June was rather appealing, so they still decided to make a visit.

As they walked, Henry’s mind turned back to their earlier discussion, and he said, “I was also thinking about those cases where mothers lift whole cars by themselves when their children get trapped underneath them.”

“That’s adrenaline,” said Jacob, “so it can’t be in the same category as lifting a heavy heart.”

They reached Mr. Gold’s house in less than five minutes. The only evidence of a Christmas theme from the outside of the house was a poinsettia doormat, which the boys wiped their feet on after ringing the doorbell.

Mr. Gold answered right away.

“Sorry to bother you, Mr. Gold,” Jacob began, “but Alex here told us about your Christmas town, and we were wondering if we could see it too.”

“Sure, c’mon in,” the man answered. “Hello, Alexis,” he added, as they entered a large foyer and living area that very much resembled a Christmas wonderland.

“This is my friend, Henry,” Jacob said to Mr. Gold.

Shaking Henry’s hand, Mr. Gold said, “Nice to meet you.”

“Alex got it into her head that you work for Santa,” said Jacob, with a slightly uneasy laugh.

“Well, I wouldn’t be able to tell you if I did,” answered Mr. Gold as he led them into the living room. Winking at Alexis, he added, “The North Pole Employment Agency demands strict secrecy.”

Both boys smiled and Alexis giggled.

As they sat down on a large sofa, Mr. Gold offered them fancy Christmas-tree sugar cookies from a plate on his coffee table.

“I can see why people might think you work for Santa,” said Henry, indicating their surroundings as he reached for a napkin. In addition to three brilliantly lit and colorfully decorated trees, the living room contained numerous polished snowglobes, shiny garlands, star-shaped lanterns, glittering icicles, fluffy wreaths, Santa figurines, and many other Christmas whimsies. A winding path through the furniture and trees, bedecked with fake snow and lined with lit luminaries, led to the back porch, where Mr. Gold kept his miniature Christmas village.

“Plus, I make things and fix things in my workshop,” said Mr. Gold, pointing to a work table in the far back of the living room that was full of small tools and other gadgets. “So that’s somewhat elf-like,” he added. In addition to the tools and gadgets, a blender and a remote-controlled car occupied the table. A ham radio was set up on a large desk next to the work station.

“We were wondering...” Jacob began, glancing at Henry.

Henry knew what his friend had been about to say. He also knew that Jacob had stopped himself because Henry was really the one who needed to ask Mr. Gold the question.

“Yes?” asked Mr. Gold.

“This might sound a little strange,” Henry said, hesitantly, “but we were doing some research on how people lift heavy things...and we were wondering....”

By this time, Alexis was getting tired of waiting for the boys to get to the point, so she said, “Can you tell us us how Santa lifts his heavy sack?”

Mr. Gold smiled as he answered. “If I knew, I wouldn’t be able to tell you, would I, because that would mean giving away my North Pole employment status. Remember...”

“...strict secrecy,” Jacob finished, with a laugh.

“Exactly,” said Mr. Gold with a nod. “However, it is a good question, and it’s good to question things like that.”

Chapter Three

The Answer at the North Pole

As they were munching more cookies, a snowglobe on the end table beside Henry drew his eye. He could have sworn when he sat down that the scene inside was that of Christmas carolers; but now, the globe featured a log cabin in a snowy wood. Looking closely at the cabin, Henry thought he could see a small waft of smoke coming from the chimney. He was also surprised to see gently billowing snow inside the glass. He had always thought that snowglobes had to be shaken to get the snow inside to swirl.

Henry was shaken from his thoughts when Mr. Gold asked, “So, are you ready to see the Christmas village?”

“Yes, please!” cried Alexis.

“I’ve added a couple of houses since you were here last,” he told her.

Rising to follow Mr. Gold to the back porch, Henry couldn’t resist lightly touching the base of the snowglobe on the end table as he passed. As a sharp tingling sensation passed through him, all of a sudden, Henry was no longer standing in Mr. Gold’s living room. He was instead in a snowy wood facing the front door of a cabin that looked exactly like the one inside the snowglobe.

A robust man with white hair and a fluffy beard was just coming out of the cabin’s front door. After looking somewhat quizzically at the visitor, and nodding hello, the man made his way to a woodpile on the side of the house to get an armful of firewood. When he returned to the front of the cabin, the man invited Henry inside. “You’ll soon freeze out here without a coat,” he said.

In a slight state of shock, Henry hadn’t even felt the cold until that moment. As the gentleman beckoned from the top step, Henry

quickly followed to find himself in a small living room with a cozily lit fireplace.

Placing the wood into a bin beside the fire, the man smiled broadly as he shed his coat and unwound a thick muffler from his neck. Though he wasn't wearing red clothing, with his pink cheeks and wire-rimmed spectacles, the man easily could have passed for Santa Claus; and since Henry was already having a most surprising summer day, he decided that this was probably true.

Finally finding his voice a few moments later, Henry said, "I'm assuming that this is the North Pole and that you are Santa Claus."

"You assume correctly," said the robust man, taking a seat in a fat chair by the fire and indicating another fat chair next to the one he was occupying for his guest.

"I'm kind of conducting a research study," Henry continued, as he sat down, "on how people lift heavy things." Hesitating slightly, he added, "I was wondering...could you tell me how you lift the heavy sack every year?"

The man answered right away. “I use *Jollity Dust*. The elves collect it for me all year long. After we fill the sack with the presents, I sprinkle the dust all over it, so it’s nice and light to carry.”

In possession of the information he was seeking, Henry could think of nothing else he wanted to ask, which was incredible, since most people would have been able to come up with about a million questions for Santa Claus if they happened to meet him.

“Well...thank you,” said Henry.

“You’re very welcome, young man,” Santa answered, rising to lead Henry to the door.

As he was heading down the front steps, Henry happened to notice another cabin just a little ways down the lane from Santa’s house. A large sign beside the front door read, North Pole Employment Agency.

Reaching the bottom landing, Henry’s hand rested lightly on the shiny brass finial knob of the stair rail, and as suddenly as he had been swept away from Mr. Gold’s living room, Henry found himself back again. Alex, Jacob, and Mr.

Gold were just coming in from the back porch. Her eyes shining, Alexis said breathlessly, “The toy shop is my favorite.”

In somewhat of a daze, Henry made his way down the lit luminary path to catch up to his friends. Jacob noticed the odd expression on Henry’s face, but he didn’t have a chance to question his friend because Mr. Gold said, “So, you opted to stay with the cookies, rather than see the Christmas village.” (Henry still had half a cookie clutched in his hand.) “That’s plenty okay,” laughed Mr. Gold, “It’s a compliment to my baking. But you shouldn’t miss seeing the train set in the basement.”

Henry was not able to speak just yet because he was still in a state of shock over what had just happened. Or...did it? Now that he was back in Mr. Gold’s warm living room, he thought maybe he had only daydreamed his visit to the North Pole and his chat with Santa.

Mr. Gold next led the group downstairs to see nearly half a mile of train tracks winding through another Christmas village and an expanse of hilly countryside.

When they came back upstairs, Mr. Gold picked up three Christmas bows that were nestled in a small silver bowl on the fireplace hearth. “This is a funny coincidence,” he said. “Or...maybe it’s fate,” he added, with a wink. “I have three magic bows here, and there are three of you. I have such a big family, and I was trying to decide which of them should get the bows. I was having a lot of trouble deciding because I knew several of my cousins were going to be pretty mad not to get one. Now, I don’t have to play favorites. There are three bows and there are three of you. That must mean something.” With this, Mr. Gold presented Alexis with the red bow and Jacob with the blue one. As he handed Henry the green bow, he added, “They can grant one wish each, but only one, so use the wish wisely.”

The bows looked just like ordinary stick-on Christmas bows. Though they politely accepted the gifts, Henry and Jacob were more than skeptical. Alexis, however, cradled her bow more carefully than if it were a pot of gold, or a

cuddly guinea pig. Her eyes as big as moons, she whispered, “Thank you, Mr. Gold.”

“You are very welcome,” he answered.

“Yes, thank you very much,” said Jacob, with Henry murmuring at the same time, “That’s really nice of you.”

After presenting each of his guests with a plastic-wrapped gingerbread-man cookie, Mr. Gold led them to the front door. As they passed the end table containing the snowglobe, Henry happened to notice that the scene inside had once again changed, to that of two skiers winding their way down a snowy, pine-tree-covered slope. This left Henry speechless again as Mr. Gold, Alexis, and Jacob all said polite goodbyes.

Henry was quiet on the walk back to Jacob’s house. Alexis was going on about the Christmas village and train, and about how Mr. Gold uses the ham radio to keep in touch with the other elves and Santa. Jacob was arguing with her. “He’s not a real elf, Alex. He just likes Christmas a lot.”

Henry was glad for the distraction because he didn't want to talk; he wanted to think. In his thoughts, he decided that he did not want to tell anyone about the visit to the North Pole, if it really happened. And at this point, in the bright summer sunshine, he started to believe that he probably just got caught up in the Christmas atmosphere and imagined the whole thing.

"He is too real," said Alexis, with a pout.

"Okay, so let's say he's a real elf," said Jacob. "That means you have to be good all of the time because I now know who to tell if you're bad. Then, Mr. Gold will tell Santa."

"That goes both ways," Alexis told her brother. "You have to be good all of the time too, or I'll tell on you."

"It's a deal," said Jacob.

"Shake on it," said Alexis, and the two proceeded to lick their thumbs and press them together.

"Yuck," said Henry.

Having made up in their usual manner, Jacob and Alexis were now friendly to one another again.

After dropping his friends off at their house, Henry slowly made his way home, still thinking about the unusual events of the afternoon.

At home that evening, Henry made a batch of chocolate chip cookies. He often baked things. According to his mom, “Boys should learn their way around the kitchen.” Plus, the visit to Mr. Gold’s house, and especially the home-baked cookies, had inspired him.

When the cookies were cool enough, he took half of the batch over to Mrs. Cory, who thanked him kindly. However, she seemed very tired and in need of rest, so Henry didn’t stay for a visit. Instead, after a couple of short remarks about the weather and his family’s upcoming vacation plans, he simply said goodnight and went home.

Chapter Four

Coral Castle

In early July, Henry and his parents set out on their usual two-week summer vacation, which was to Florida this year to visit family and see the sights. They stayed in a rental house on the beach very near the home of Henry's Uncle Jeff, Aunt Christine, and Cousin Kara, who was only three months younger than Henry.

The first week was filled with sightseeing, beachcombing, and visits to theme parks. On Monday of the second week, Kara and Henry were dropped off at a water park so the grownups could spend the day shopping. When an unexpected thunderstorm hit, everyone had to get out of the water and take shelter under the

large park pavilion that housed the refreshment stand, gift shop, showers, and restrooms.

While Kara was getting baskets of French fries for them, Henry, flipping through a tourist magazine, came across a very interesting article about the Coral Castle.

Returning from the snack bar, Kara noticed her cousin's interest in the article. "We've been there," she said. "It's not really made out of coral," she added, "but the limestone rocks have a lot of fossil shells in them, so people think it looks like coral. Plus, all the different sculptures look a lot like stuff in fairy tales, so Coral Castle is a good name for it."

Henry munched fries as Kara went on. "Nobody knows how that man moved all of those heavy stones, by himself. No one ever saw him building any of it. He must have worked only at midnight, and they say he had magical powers. He was only about five feet tall, and he didn't have a forklift or a crane."

"So he knew some secret of how to lift heavy things," said Henry.

“Yeah,” said Kara. “It’s definitely a mystery.”

“Leverage, of some sort,” said Henry, trying to be scientific.

Kara shook her head. “He did everything by himself. Even using leverage tricks, he would have needed help. One person alone couldn’t have done it.”

Henry had to agree. He also thought it was almost too much of a coincidence that he just happened to come across an article involving a mystery of lifting heavy things at this particular time. However, he didn’t feel comfortable telling Kara about Mrs. Cory’s heavy heart, especially since the progress of his research project so far had involved Santa’s sack and magic bows, so he simply said, “I’m kind of interested in things like this right now; you know, like how the pyramids were built and what Stonehenge was for.”

“Coral Castle is only about an hour from here,” Kara told him. “Maybe we can go.”

Back at the beach house, the rest of the family was excited to see Coral Castle too, so they planned the trip for the next day.

Piling into the car directly after breakfast, they set off. As they admired the scenery and talked about their summer fun so far, the subject of how the pyramids were built came up.

“I thought they figured that out,” said Kara. “They used some kind of rollers to move the stones.”

“That’s just one of the theories,” Henry answered. “I don’t think anyone will ever figure it out for sure.”

“People still don’t know exactly what the pyramids were used for, either,” said Uncle Jeff, “other than as tombs.”

“That’s true,” agreed Henry’s mother. “I think it was probably something astrological.”

“But you can’t really compare Coral Castle to the Great Pyramids,” said Aunt Christine. “One person built Coral Castle, and it took thousands to build the pyramids.”

When they arrived, Henry immediately felt something mysterious in the air around them.

This definitely wasn't like a normal tourist attraction, even though it was bustling with summer tourists.

A traditional square castle turret was situated very near the entrance. But that was about the only thing that resembled a traditional castle. Inside, the structure was filled with gigantic coral sculptures that included an obelisk, a variety of chairs, several staircases, a table shaped like Florida, and a number of moons.

Breathless, and nearly giddy, Kara soon began mooning over how Mr. Leedskalnin had built the whole Coral Castle out of love for a girl who jilted him. Henry wanted to focus on the rocks themselves, and not on some romantic notion of them, so he turned away from his cousin, rolling his eyes. Kara was starting remind him of an older version of Alexis, and he was afraid she might be about to start spouting stories involving princesses and unicorns. However, Kara seemed more content with looking, rather than talking, and after only a couple of comments on the subject, she wandered away, leaving Henry to his thoughts.

Standing amongst the gigantic coral structures, Henry suddenly felt very small. The air around him was very still and quiet, and he began to wonder if something magical might be about to happen to him like it did at Mr. Gold's house. However, the feeling quickly passed when another tourist accidentally bumped into Henry.

Kara had brought her camera, and she took pictures of everything. The heart-shaped table and gigantic rocking chair were her favorite sculptures, and she took several shots of each from different angles. After about twenty minutes of picture taking, she caught up with Henry and told him, "I'll email some of these to you."

"Thanks," he replied. Shaking his head, he added, "I still can't believe no one ever saw him carve or build any of this."

"He evidently liked to work at night," Kara said. "He also moved the whole thing from one town to another when he moved," she added, referring to a pamphlet she had picked up in the

gift shop. “No one saw how he rebuilt it, either.”

“That’s just amazing,” Henry said.

When they finished their tour, the family piled back into the car and sought out a local diner in which to have lunch.

Munching a hamburger, as he marveled over the mystery of the Coral Castle, Henry still couldn’t believe it fit so well with what he had been puzzling over this summer. *It’s just too much of a coincidence*, he thought. *Maybe fate led me here*. However, even after a good deal of puzzling, Henry still didn’t know how the Coral Castle might help him find an answer to the question of how to lift a heavy heart.

As they were having cherry pie for dessert, Henry suddenly thought of something. “Maybe Mr. Leedskalnin used the moon somehow,” he said. “The moon can move whole oceans, so maybe he found out some moon secret for moving heavy things.”

“And that’s why there are so many carved moons at Coral Castle,” offered Kara. “He

might have intended them to be clues to help people figure out how he did it.”

The waitress happened to be refilling their tea glasses, and she said, “A local man once told me a story about the Coral Castle. I didn’t believe him at first, but he showed me something that changed my mind.” Smiling, she added, “Mr. Harper is our most colorful local storyteller. He runs the t-shirt stand down the block, next to the hardware store. If you really want to know the secret of Coral Castle, you should ask him.”

When the waitress left, Henry looked sideways at Kara as he asked his parents, “Can we visit the t-shirt stand?”

“*May* we visit the t-shirt stand?” his mother stressed. Before Henry could reword, she smiled and said, “Yes, you may.”

Henry’s father was nodding. “I know the ladies were hoping to visit that antique store down the street.” As he paid the check, he added, “We’ll meet you two back here, out front, in an hour.”

Kara and Henry agreed and hurried out of the diner.

Chapter Five

The Storyteller

As they walked down the block, Henry finally decided to tell his cousin about his summer research project.

Kara didn't poke fun at him, as he thought she might; in fact, she seemed impressed. "Wow," she said, admiringly. "Most guys wouldn't care so much about an elderly neighbor."

When they reached the t-shirt stand, a white-haired gentleman by himself behind the counter said hello to them.

"Are you Mr. Harper?" Henry asked.

"Yes," the man replied, eyeing Kara and Henry quizzically.

“The waitress at the diner said we should talk to you,” Henry said. Since there were no other people currently within earshot, Henry thought it would be good to come straight to the point. “We just saw the Coral Castle, and we want to know how Mr. Leedskalnin moved all those heavy stones.”

“Some things are supposed to remain as mysteries,” said Mr. Harper.

Looking pleadingly at the man, Kara told him, “It’s just that knowing the secret might help someone who needs help.”

When Mr. Harper didn’t answer, Henry took a deep breath, and said, “We’re trying to find something that can lead to the answer of how to lift a heavy heart.”

“That’s a serious subject,” replied Mr. Harper. After a long pause, during which he sized up the visitors with squinted eyes, he added, “Mr. Leedskalnin’s heart was probably heavy too, from his lost love.”

Henry and Kara nodded, but didn’t say anything.

Mr. Harper took his time before going on, and it looked like he was struggling with something as he continued to size them up. After thinking for awhile, he finally said, “I don’t usually tell people the secret because they never believe me.”

When Mr. Harper took another long pause, which seemed more like it was for dramatic effect than for wrestling with an internal struggle, Kara said, “So, do you know the secret of how he moved all those heavy rocks?”

Mr. Harper smiled as he slowly answered, “He used mermaid tears.”

Kara and Henry were speechless.

After nearly two full minutes of silence, Mr. Harper added, “It’s not just that I don’t like telling folks something they probably won’t believe; if people believed it, they might start hunting mermaids for their magical tears, and that would not be a good thing.”

Upon getting over their initial surprise at Mr. Harper’s announcement, Henry and Kara smiled at one another. It seemed the waitress at the diner had been playing a joke on them. But she

sounded so serious when she said that Mr. Harper had showed her something that made her believe his story.

“I can tell you don’t believe me,” Mr. Harper said.

Henry wanted to be polite, so he said, “We want to believe you, but it sounds a little far-fetched.”

“I can prove it,” said Mr. Harper, with a sly look.

Hanging a *Back in Ten* sign on his t-shirt stand, the man beckoned to them, saying, “Come over to the park, and I’ll show you.”

Mr. Harper led them across the street to a small city park. Directly behind the gazebo, several large boulders lined a winding path through the dense trees. “Try to move this one,” he said, pointing to one of the enormous rocks.

Henry humored the man by bending over and pushing very hard on the stone for several seconds, while grunting. Kara smiled at her cousin’s enthusiastic efforts. The rock didn’t move, of course.

Pulling a small glass vial full of pale pink liquid out of his pocket, Mr. Harper removed the vial's rubber stopper and dribbled several drops of the liquid onto the boulder. "Stand back," he said, as he carefully closed the vial and returned it to his pocket. Mr. Harper then proceeded to bend over and push on the heavy stone, which moved nearly a foot with his efforts.

Again, Kara and Henry were speechless, this time, with marvel.

"You try it," Mr. Harper instructed. "But hurry, before the magic wears off. It only works for a couple of minutes."

Both Henry and Kara quickly bent to push on the stone, which moved about another foot and seemed way too light for its size.

Rising back up, their mouths open in astonishment, they watched as Mr. Harper pushed the boulder back into its original position. Smiling broadly at them, he said, "See, mermaid tears. That's how he did it."

Still speechless, Kara and Henry followed the man back to his t-shirt stand. As they walked, Mr. Harper told them, "I think Mr. Leedskalnin

befriended a mermaid who felt sorry for him and wanted to help him because of his lost love. She must have given him a great quantity of her tears in order for him to have moved that much stone.

“But don’t even bother to ask,” Mr. Harper seriously warned, “because I won’t tell you where I got my supply.” As he removed his *Back in Ten* sign, he thoughtfully added, “However, I don’t think learning the Coral Castle secret is going to help you figure out the answer to your problem because a heavy heart is much heavier than tons of coral.”

After thanking Mr. Harper, and buying two t-shirts, Henry and Kara walked slowly back to the diner to meet their parents. They were a few minutes early and their parents weren’t there yet, so they sat on a bench to wait.

Henry was now skeptical again, and he said, “It was probably a trick, like a powerful magnet under the rock, or something else.”

Kara had to agree, and after thinking for a few moments, she said, “Mr. Harper is probably an illusionist, and illusionists are very clever.”

However, in the back of their minds, they wanted to believe that mermaid tears were the answer. Henry, especially, wanted to believe it because that might mean there was some sort of magical solution to his problem too.

As they were heading back to the beach house, Uncle Jeff asked, “So, did you find out the answer to the mystery?”

Henry smiled as he answered. “The waitress was right. Mr. Harper is a very colorful character.”

Kara looked sideways at her cousin as she told her father, “He told us a story about mermaids.”

Chapter Six

Two More Stories

The last two days of their summer vacation were relatively quiet. Henry and Kara went swimming and beachcombing a couple of times. Other than finding several unique seashells, nothing much exciting happened. However, Henry's mind was filled with magical thoughts because he wanted to believe that everything that had happened so far this summer was true. And he was hopeful that he might find something like *Jollity Dust* or mermaid tears that would help him figure out how to lift Mrs. Cory's heavy heart.

On Friday, after hugging family goodbye, Henry and his parents loaded up the car and headed for home.

Flipping through an atlas as he watched the miles of scenery fly by, Henry discovered a drawing of the real Atlas in the back of the book. Henry smiled at the depiction of the muscular god holding up all of the heavens in a sphere upon his shoulders. When he fell asleep in the back seat a little while later, Henry had a strange dream in which he was standing in front of Atlas.

“Well?” demanded Atlas impatiently. “I’m pretty busy here. What is your question?”

Thinking quickly, Henry said, “It’s obvious that you are very strong, but is there anything helping your muscles in holding up the heavens.”

Atlas shifted his burden slightly as he replied, “Hera felt sorry for me because she thought Zeus’s punishment was too harsh, so she created a magical moonbeam that lifts half of the load for me.”

As the figure of Atlas began to fade before his eyes, Henry called to the god. “Thank you!”

“Thank you, for what?” Henry’s father asked from the front seat.

Though his brain was somewhat foggy, again thinking quickly, Henry answered, “For the fun vacation.”

The atlas was open in Henry’s lap. Looking down at the picture of Atlas, Henry was surprised to see a moonbeam shining down upon the heavenly sphere perched on the god’s shoulders. He could have sworn the moonbeam wasn’t in the drawing before. This made Henry wonder if perhaps the atlas was a magical object, like the snowglobe, and if it had somehow magically transported him away to consult with the real Atlas. However, a little while later, Henry’s skepticism returned and he chided himself for his overactive imagination. *I’ve just been spending way too much time around girls like Alexis and Kara*, he thought.

Jacob was anxious to talk to Henry as soon as he arrived home. Helping his friend to unpack, Jacob, a little sheepishly, said, “You

know, I think the magic bow thing might be real.” With Henry looking at him questioningly, Jacob added, “I made a wish on mine, and it came true.”

Henry knew Jacob wasn’t joking because Jacob had never been able to keep a straight face when joking around; and at this moment, his face was about a hundred percent straight, and serious.

The boys sat down together on Henry’s bed, and neither said anything for nearly a minute. “I know it sounds unbelievable,” Jacob finally said.

“Details,” Henry insisted.

Jacob was nodding. “Okay. I got my allowance and I bought a pack of baseball cards, but I didn’t open it ‘til I was in my room. They had an article in the paper about that kid in Virginia who found the signed Isaac Clarkson card. There’re only five signed cards in all the packs. Mom made me clean my closet the night before, and I found the bow and put it on my nightstand. So I was looking at the bow, and I wished I could find one of the signed cards in my pack.” (By this time, Henry was holding his

breath in anticipation.) “I opened it up, and I found the signed Rob Marstairs card!”

Henry couldn’t believe it. This was amazing!

Jacob was again nodding. “I know!” he said emphatically. “Unbelievable.”

“Jeez,” breathed Henry.

“Coach already offered me fifteen hundred bucks for it,” said Jacob, “but Mom and Dad think I should hang onto it.”

“I think you should too,” said Henry.

“But you know...” Jacob said with a sigh a few moments later, “I can’t help thinking that I should have used my wish better than that, like for something that could have helped a bunch of people.”

Henry shrugged. “It was your wish,” he said, “and the card is something that makes you happy.”

“Yeah,” agreed Jacob, “but it still made me think about things.”

At this point, Henry glanced over at his dresser. He could barely see the green bow hiding amongst the clutter.

As Jacob was leaving, he jokingly told Henry, “If you feel like donating your wish to me, I promise I’ll use it for something better than finding a baseball card.”

Henry smiled. However, after Jacob left, he started thinking very hard about how he might put his wish to good use, if the magic bow thing was real.

Chapter Seven

Camp Gilmore

Henry wasn't going to have as much time as he would have liked to think about the best possible wish to make on a magic bow because he and Jacob were leaving for camp early the next morning, and he needed to get his laundry done and repacked all in one afternoon. However, just in case the magic bow was real, Henry stashed it as far back as possible in his sock drawer, to keep it safe.

Late in the day, when Henry went outside in search of his baseball glove, he saw Mrs. Cory sitting in her front porch swing. If possible, she looked even thinner than she had before. She

fluttered a frail hand at Henry as he waved to her, but she didn't smile.

A chartered bus picked the boys and their duffel bags up in front of Henry's house before sunup the next morning. Jacob's mom had dropped him off about ten minutes before the bus arrived, after making a crying fuss over losing her son for two weeks.

Henry and Jacob had gone to Camp Gilmore every summer for the last three years, and they were really looking forward to their trip as they boarded the bus and waved goodbye to Henry's parents.

After a tiring four-hour bus ride, they arrived at the camp and were assigned their cabins. Their cabin mates, Marlon and Brandon, who were brothers, were quiet and seemed to like to keep to themselves. But that was okay because Henry and Jacob had plenty of other camp friends to hang out with.

After unpacking and having lunch, Henry and Jacob joined a pack of boys in heading for the camp slides. In addition to several tree forts with tall lookout towers, two long slides situated

on the slope leading from the cabin area to the lakeshore were a favorite and popular camp feature. Henry and Jacob had to wait behind about ten others for their turns.

The curved inner sides of the metal slides had been recently polished, and the winding trip down to the lakefront was exhilaratingly fast. Out of breath as he reached the bottom, Henry joined Jacob in racing several other boys to a diving platform on one of the docks. Jacob and Henry came in second and third in the climb to the top of the platform. Laughing, they congratulated Mark Wilson on his *King of the Platform Today* victory.

The boys couldn't jump or dive because none of the camp staff was there to supervise, and that was one of the rules; so instead, they climbed back down and took a walk along the lakeshore. They couldn't take out any of the canoes either, because they needed permission for that; but there would be plenty of time later for diving and canoeing. Instead, they explored the woods along the lakeside path and got reacquainted with friends from previous years.

Early-to-rise was the policy at Camp Gilmore. When the bugles sounded at six-thirty the next morning, Henry and Jacob rolled out of bed and joined a mass of other groaning boys in washing up and heading for the mess hall for a hearty breakfast.

After waking up properly, Jacob and Henry made their choice from the day's activities and spent the morning canoeing. In the afternoon, they had a swim and took a beginning First Aid class.

During the first week, they filled their days at camp with nature hikes, diving lessons, archery practice, fort climbing, canoe races, crafts, and training for the Obstacle Course Challenge set for the next week. Their evenings were equally busy with bingo, movie, and game nights.

When he found some time alone with Jacob, Henry told his friend about the Coral Castle and about his Atlas dream. He also finally told Jacob about the trip to the North Pole. Jacob didn't laugh at his friend, but he also didn't have any good ideas as to how those things might help in figuring out a way to help Mrs. Cory.

Jacob agreed with Henry that the mermaid tears were probably some sort of trick, and that Henry had likely only dreamed the visit to Atlas; however, Jacob did jokingly say, “You could always set Mrs. Cory out in the moonlight to see if it lifts her heart.”

On the weekend, the boys attended a barbeque and dance at a nearby girl’s camp, which was both uncomfortable and fun at the same time. Henry was pleased that a girl he remembered, and sort of liked, from the previous year’s dance gave him her email address.

Chapter Eight

The Real Paul Bunyan

The second week at camp began as busily as the first. Henry and Jacob won a canoe race, but neither did well in the Obstacle Course Challenge, mainly because they were competing mostly against boys a year or two older in the age category of Ten to Twelve. The boys also made wallets and took a CPR class, along with advanced First Aid.

On the next-to-the-last day of camp, Jacob and Henry decided to forgo any further crafts or classes and sign out a canoe for the day. Directly after breakfast, they picked up sack lunches and water canteens from the mess hall before grabbing paddles and life vests from the

equipment shed. They walked down to the lake because the paddles and life vests were too awkward to carry on the slides. Selecting a red canoe, they put on their vests and headed out on the lake.

As they passed the boundaries of the camp, they noticed a bulldozer and crane parked at a new construction site, and Jacob told Henry, “Brandon said they’re building a resort hotel.”

The sight of the equipment got Henry thinking again about machines people had invented to lift heavy things. But he still couldn’t come up with any clever ideas as to how Mrs. Cory’s heart could be lifted. In fact, he was starting to think that his research project was probably going to end up as a lost cause. And the more he thought about it, the more silly it seemed to try to find an answer to something so abstract. *I just need to find a way to stuff Mrs. Cory full of fudge and fried chicken when I get home,* Henry thought. *Then she’ll gain some weight and get back to normal.*

About two hours later, as they were gliding past a small lakeside cabin, Henry and Jacob

witnessed something incredible. A man was carrying a heavy log about the size of a telephone pole on one shoulder. Neither of the boys had ever seen anything like this before. Quickly pulling up to the shore, they scrambled to tie the canoe to a tree branch. Shedding their life vests, they ran back to the cabin they had just passed. The man had already set the log down and was heading for a clearing on one side of his home that was filled with trees that had recently been felled. He stopped to say hello to the visitors as they rushed up to him.

Breathless, Henry told the man, “You were carrying a giant log! You must be like Paul Bunyan!”

The man was serious as he answered, “I don’t know what you think you saw, but the sun must have been in your eyes.”

“I saw it too,” insisted Jacob.

The man sighed, but his only response was “Excuse me; I’m very busy right now.” With this, he entered the clearing and proceeded to drag several cut branches away from the trunk of a large tree.

Deciding to try what had worked on the t-shirt vendor in Florida, Henry said, “It’s just that if I can figure out how to lift heavy things, I might be able to help someone.”

The man paused in his labors and looked questioningly at Henry, who then proceeded to share most of the details of his research project so far.

When Henry finished, the man looked both amused and impressed. “Well, I doubt you could have just made up all that stuff on the spot, so it must be true. I’m Steve Collins, by the way,” he said. “Come up to the porch so we can talk.”

Henry and Jacob both introduced themselves as they walked toward the man’s cabin.

After they were all seated, in three shabby lawn chairs, Mr. Collins told his guests, “I’ll tell you my secret, but I doubt you’ll believe me.”

“It can’t be any more far-fetched than *Jollity Dust* and magic moonbeams,” Jacob said, with Henry adding, “Try us.”

“But I’ll only tell you,” Mr. Collins smiled as he went on, “if you promise not to tell anyone

else. At least, don't use my name, if you do tell someone.”

“Agreed,” replied Henry, with Jacob nodding.

Before Mr. Collins began, Jacob couldn't resist saying, “Were you using mermaid tears?”

Mr. Collins laughed as he answered, “No, but you might think my story just as strange.” After taking a pause, and a deep breath, he told them, “I once helped an eagle that was caught in a fishing line by a dock about a mile down shore from here. It was an odd experience. I didn't have any gloves with me, and I was wearing short sleeves, but I decided to try to get him loose anyway. It's like he knew I was trying to help him. He didn't scratch or peck me; he just lay perfectly still while I worked the line loose from him. Then he gave me a long stare before he took off from the dock.”

The boys listened carefully as Mr. Collins went on with his story. “About two years after that, I found an eagle talon on my own dock.” At this point, Mr. Collins adjusted the collar of his shirt to fish out a necklace with an enormous

talon hanging from the silver chain. Raising the chain over his head, he passed the necklace to Henry to examine, who shortly handed it over to Jacob.

“I think this talon might contain the spirit of the eagle I helped. When I am wearing it, I can lift really heavy things; but when I’m not, I can’t. And it only works for me because I tried an experiment.” Mr. Collins smiled, as he added, “I let my girlfriend wear it once, and she couldn’t even lift that small hammer over there.”

Since they needed to be getting back to camp, Henry and Jacob couldn’t stay longer for more discussion, or for a demonstration. With a lot to think about, they said goodbye to Mr. Collins and headed for shore to again don their life vests and set off.

They were quiet as they paddled back to camp, with Henry racking his brains in trying to figure out if the spirit of an eagle might somehow be able to lift Mrs. Cory’s heavy heart. Unfortunately, again, even with more magical information added to his research, Henry could come up with no answer to his problem.

Chapter Nine

Mr. Beresford's Wall

Shortly after the boys returned home, Henry decided to visit Mr. Beresford, to tell him about the exciting events of his summer so far. Henry was hoping that Mr. Beresford might have some good ideas as to how *Jollity Dust*, mermaid tears, a magical moonbeam, and the spirit of an eagle might be applied to the issue of lifting Mrs. Cory's heavy heart.

After telling his mom where he was going, Henry headed down the block to visit his neighbor. Mr. Beresford did a lot of gardening in his back yard, and that's usually where he could be found most mornings before the day heated up too much. For the last month or so, he

had been building a large retaining wall along one side of his garden that was steeply sloped. Mr. Beresford was nearly finished with the project; however, a patch of rainy weather had slowed his progress some in the last few days.

When Mr. Beresford didn't answer his doorbell, Henry followed the flagstone path around the side of the house to look for the man in his garden. Mr. Beresford never minded having visitors in his garden because he loved to show people his prize flowers and vegetables.

The sight that greeted Henry as he opened the gate was terrible. A large section of the new retaining wall, weakened from the recent heavy rains, had collapsed; and an unconscious Mr. Beresford was lying beneath the pile of heavy stones.

Henry had never moved so quickly in all his life. Backing out through the gate, he fairly flew across Mr. Beresford's side yard to the nearest window of the house next door.

Henry desperately hoped Mrs. Shore was at home. She usually was because she had two young children and didn't work at another job.

Banging on the window, Henry shouted, “Help! Mrs. Shore, help!”

The surprised face of Mrs. Shore appeared in the glass barely three seconds later, and Henry yelled, “Mr. Beresford is hurt in his garden! Call an ambulance!”

As she quickly nodded to him, Henry turned from the window and raced back to Mr. Beresford.

By the time Mrs. Shore had called 911 and made it to the scene of the accident, Henry had managed to move over half of the rocks burying Mr. Beresford. With Mrs. Shore’s help, the rest of the stones were moved in less than two minutes.

Mr. Beresford was still unconscious. “Don’t move him,” Henry warned. “He might have hurt his back.”

Mrs. Shore nodded as she knelt beside her neighbor to move one of the fallen stones farther away from his head.

Mr. Beresford had a bad gash on his leg where a sharp edge of a stone had cut him, and blood flowed generously from the wound.

Thinking quickly, Henry pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and quickly pressed it hard into the gash.

“I’ll get a towel!” exclaimed Mrs. Shore, rising to dash back to her house. She returned quickly and took over putting pressure on the wound. The towel worked much better than the small handkerchief, and the flow of blood seemed to slow.

As they waited for help, Henry noticed that Mrs. Shore’s two children were watching from one of the back windows of their house. They looked really scared. Henry was scared too, but he tried to stay calm. He was very thankful Mrs. Shore had been at home.

When the ambulance arrived about five minutes later, Henry and Mrs. Shore moved out of the way so the EMTs could take over. After briefly examining the injured man, and bracing his neck, they carefully lifted Mr. Beresford onto a stretcher to carry him around to the ambulance in front of the house.

By this time, several other neighbors had arrived on the scene. Mrs. Shore needed to be

getting back to her children; but before heading into her house, she squeezed Henry's shoulder and said, "Don't worry; he'll be okay."

Mrs. Bell, from farther down the street, whom Henry didn't know very well, walked with him to his house, which was a good thing because Henry was in somewhat of a daze and didn't know what to say or how to react when his mother took one look at him and shrieked in panic at the blood covering her son's arms and jeans. Mrs. Bell quickly calmed Mrs. Goodwin down with "He's not hurt. Mr. Beresford got hurt; it's his blood."

Leading Henry to the couch to sit, his mother looked him over good, to reassure herself that he wasn't hurt.

After briefly describing what she knew about the accident to Mrs. Goodwin, Mrs. Bell left, telling them, "I need to find out if anyone has called Mr. Beresford's son and daughter-in-law."

Henry's mother sat close to him on the couch, rubbing his back and occasionally giving him hugs. Her nearness helped, and Henry

started to come out of his daze. After a few minutes, Henry was finally able to speak; but he felt sick to his stomach as he told his mother what had happened. He also felt like he might cry at any moment.

When he finished his story, his mother led him to the bathroom, saying, "Let's get you cleaned up; you'll feel better."

Mrs. Shore telephoned about an hour later with the good news that Mr. Beresford was conscious and was going to be okay. Henry was in his room resting when his mother brought him the news. "Thanks to you," she said, "he's going to be fine."

When Henry's father arrived home in the evening and heard the story, he said, "You're a hero, son."

His mother agreed. "It's good that you went to visit," she said. "Mr. Beresford's back yard so secluded, and the bushes are so high, who knows how long it might have been before Mrs. Shore looked out just the right window and noticed. He might have died. This is exactly

why we check on our neighbors. I'm so proud of my little hero," she added, hugging Henry.

Henry didn't feel like a hero; in fact, at that moment, he felt sick to his stomach again. And he was just really glad that Mrs. Shore had been at home because he didn't know what he would have done otherwise.

Chapter Ten

The Mix Up

A couple of days later, Henry again started thinking about the Christmas bow; however, when he went to look for it in his sock drawer, he couldn't find it.

Trying to stay calm, he looked for his mother and found her in the kitchen washing vegetables. "Did you by any chance take a Christmas bow out of my sock drawer?" he asked her.

"Yes," she said, turning to look at him. "I found it when I was putting away your laundry, so I put it in the bow bin with the others." Surprised by the strained and worried look that had suddenly come over her son's face, Mrs.

Goodwin added, “Were you saving it for something?”

“No,” said Henry, who quickly replaced his worried expression with what he hoped was a nonchalant one, so as not to illicit a bunch of questions from his mother. “It’s just that someone gave it to me, and I wanted to keep it separate.”

Turning back to her task at the sink, his mother replied, “Well, if you want it, it’s in the bin.”

Leaving the kitchen, Henry quickly headed for the storage closet under the hall stairs where the Christmas decorations were kept. In the large plastic bin that his mother used to store ribbons and bows, Henry found eight green stick-on bows that looked nearly identical. Any one of them could have been the bow Mr. Gold gave him.

Even though he felt panicky, Henry tried to calm his brain and think. They all looked the same, so how could he tell them apart?

Mr. Gold would know, Henry suddenly realized.

Quickly trotting out to the garage, Henry got a plastic grocery sack from the recycle bin. Returning to the storage closet, he carefully placed all eight green bows into the bag.

Henry ran, instead of walking, to Mr. Gold's house; but he did pause to catch his breath before ringing the doorbell.

When Mr. Gold answered, Henry said, "I have a problem and I need to talk to you."

Quickly wiping his feet on the poinsettia doormat, Henry followed Mr. Gold inside to take a seat on the sofa. Declining the offer of a freshly-baked coconut snowman cookie, Henry showed Mr. Gold the sack of bows and pleadingly asked, "Can you tell me which one is the bow you gave me?"

Mr. Gold slowly shook his head. "I can't tell anymore," he answered. "It belongs to you now. You should be able to tell which one it is."

His shoulders slumping, as he expelled a long breath, Henry said, "Okay." A few moments later, he added (more to himself), "So what should I do?"

Mr. Gold slowly shook his head again as he said, "I don't know, but I'd be careful if I were you. Magic bows can get very jealous. You shouldn't let it catch you making a wish on another bow."

Henry couldn't believe Mr. Gold was joking at a time like this. Or...was he? The man's face was completely serious. A few seconds later, Mr. Gold said, "These things are all about fate, so this was probably meant to happen."

"But I finally figured out what to do with it," Henry said, "and I can't afford to make a mistake."

"Then don't," Mr. Gold replied. "Trust in fate, and you won't make a mistake."

Walking home, Henry felt so frustrated that he threw the snowman cookie Mr. Gold had given him into a trash bin parked on the street. Mr. Gold hadn't helped at all; it was a wasted trip. All that talk about fate, and there was still no way to tell one bow in the bag from another. *Which one was it?*

However, back in his room, as Henry's mind calmed itself somewhat, he thought, *Maybe Mr.*

Gold was trying to tell me something. Believing in a magic bow was bordering on being really silly. However, Henry did believe in the magic bow. Jacob's wish had been granted, and several other unexplainable things that were probably magical had happened to Henry over the summer.

Sitting on his bed, Henry took a deep breath as he pulled the bag of bows into his lap. *This is fate*, he thought. Then, taking another deep breath, he reached into the bag and took out the first bow he touched. "This is it," he said aloud, actually feeling good about what he had just done.

Carefully placing the correct bow on his dresser, Henry returned the others to the bin in the storage closet under the hall stairs.

Passing his mother in the living room on his way to the kitchen, Henry said, "Mom, I'm going to make fudge."

"Sounds good," she replied, without glancing up from her magazine.

When the fudge was done, and cooled, Henry packed half of the batch into a tin with wax

paper to take over to Mrs. Cory. His mother prepared a plate of leftover ham, green beans, and stuffing for him to take along with the fudge. “I know she gets the Meals on Wheels service,” his mother said, “but a little extra food can’t hurt.”

Before heading over to Mrs. Cory’s house, Henry stopped by his room where he carefully affixed the magic bow to the top of the tin using clear tape. (He was afraid to peel the paper from the sticky bottom because he thought it might somehow mess up the magic.)

Mrs. Cory invited him in, and Henry took a seat in an armchair in her parlor while she went to the kitchen to put the ham plate into the refrigerator. When she returned to take a seat in another armchair, Henry said, “I have something important to tell you.” Indicating the tin of fudge he had just placed on her coffee table, he added, “Earlier in the summer, a man gave me a magic bow, this bow, and he said it could grant one wish.”

Henry paused at this point because he expected Mrs. Cory to be skeptical and maybe

even laugh at him. However, she looked completely serious, as though she believed what he was saying, so Henry went on. “I never used the wish, and I want you to have it. Maybe it can help you.”

At this point, Mrs. Cory did smile, a very small smile, as she said, “It’s pretty special that you can give this up. I imagine there are things that you would want to wish for.”

“Not right now,” Henry replied. “I don’t need anything right this minute.”

They didn’t talk anymore about the bow after that, but more about things like how Mr. Beresford was doing, how the roses outside the parlor window were still blooming, and about how Henry was going to try for shortstop on the baseball team this year.

After about a twenty-minute chat, as Henry was leaving, Mrs. Cory gave him a hug and softly said, “Thank you for the fudge, and the bow.”

Henry smiled as he walked home, and he felt very good.

Chapter Eleven

Another Funeral

Mrs. Cory died in her sleep that very night.

Henry was so frustrated. *She didn't make the wish in time*, he thought. *Either that, or I gave her the wrong bow.*

Three days after Mrs. Cory's death, Henry went to the funeral with his parents. This was also frustrating because he felt that going to two funerals in one year was definitely two too many for a ten-year-old.

School started three days after the funeral, and Henry was glad to be busy and fill his mind with other things.

A couple of weeks later, on a Saturday morning, Henry went to visit Mr. Beresford,

who was still somewhat stiff from his accident, but was healing up well.

“My hip is still sore,” he told Henry, as he shifted uncomfortably in the porch glider, “but I’m getting along okay.” In good spirits, Mr. Beresford added, “I don’t plan to take up building retaining walls as a career.”

Smiling, Henry replied, “That’s a good thing.”

After showing Henry a picture of his new grandson, Mr. Beresford said, “It’s kind of quiet on your end of the block now, with Mrs. Cory gone.”

Nodding, Henry said, “They haven’t put the house up for sale yet. Mom said it went to a nephew, but he doesn’t live around here, so it might be awhile before he sells it.”

Henry was glad that the talk had turned to Mrs. Cory because he wanted to tell Mr. Beresford about what had happened over the summer, and he hadn’t yet had the chance to. “Do you remember what we talked about earlier in the summer?” Henry began.

“I do,” said Mr. Beresford, “Mrs. Cory’s heavy heart.”

Henry tried to go on, but he suddenly felt that he might cry, and his throat choked up. Then his nose started to run, so he fished his handkerchief out of his pocket. Henry was glad none of his friends was around to see him like this. He hadn’t talked to Jacob lately about Mrs. Cory for this very reason, because every time he thought of her, he felt upset and sad, as though he might cry.

Mr. Beresford waited patiently for Henry to collect himself and go on. As Henry was wiping his nose, Mr. Beresford rose from the glider and said, “I’ll get some sodas for us; be right back.”

After limping off with the help of a walking stick, Mr. Beresford hobbled back about three minutes later carrying two cans of lemon-lime soda in his free hand. Settling himself back into the glider and handing Henry one of the cans, he said, “So, did you find anything out, about how to lift heavy things?”

Henry nodded as he popped the can’s top. After a couple of sips of soda, he no longer felt

like he might cry, so he launched into the whole story of everything that had happened over the summer.

Mr. Beresford listened intently as Henry described his visit to the North Pole, Mr. Gold's gift of the magic bow, the mermaid tears on the boulder, the dream of Atlas, and his meeting with the real Paul Bunyan at camp.

It felt good to tell someone all of this. By the time the soda can was empty, Henry had made it all the way to the part of the story where the magic bow got mixed up with all of the others. "Since I didn't know which one to put on the fudge tin," he said, "I just kind of let fate decide."

After a long pause, Henry added, "But I either picked the wrong one, or she didn't make her wish in time."

Mr. Beresford didn't say anything right away, and he looked as though he was thinking very hard about something, so Henry didn't say anything either. After a very long time of thinking, Mr. Beresford finally said, "You picked the right bow." He said this very

decidedly and nodded his head firmly, as if to reinforce that he was very sure.

Henry didn't understand how Mr. Beresford could know that he had given Mrs. Cory the right bow, so he just sat in the glider and stared at Mr. Beresford without responding.

Noting the confusion on his young friend's face, Mr. Beresford tried again, this time speaking very slowly. "I think Mrs. Cory made her wish, and it was granted."

When it finally dawned on Henry what Mr. Beresford was telling him, and the meaning sank fully in, Henry actually did cry. He couldn't believe that he had given Mrs. Cory a way to end her life, with a magical wish. He had wanted to help her, but hadn't wanted to help her die, even if that's what she might have wanted.

This time, collecting himself took longer. Mr. Beresford didn't speak. Rocking in the glider, he let Henry cry himself out before telling him, "You did everything you could do, and I think you did everything right."

Henry didn't reply because he didn't particularly agree with Mr. Beresford; in fact, he

felt he had completely failed in his attempt to help Mrs. Cory. In his mind, he had really let her down. She never got healthy and happy again, so how could he have done everything right? He should have done something different, or nothing at all, at least she'd be alive.

With his own heart feeling terribly heavy, Henry didn't even say goodbye to Mr. Beresford. Instead, giving the man a stricken look, Henry simply rose from the glider to make his way down the porch steps and front walk, to the sidewalk, where he slowly wandered home.

Years later, when Henry was all grown up, he went to visit Mrs. Cory's grave. The headstone was a large double one because Mrs. Cory had been buried alongside her husband.

Standing in the shady cemetery, he couldn't help but cry as he remembered that strange summer, long ago, which oddly enough seemed both distant and as though it might have happened only yesterday. As he bent over to place a bouquet of tulips on the grave, Henry's tears fell onto the headstone.

When he rose, he noticed that the grave marker was rather crooked, and there were tire tracks in the grass next to the stone that led to a freshly dug grave a few rows behind the Cory's plot. *They must have sideswiped it with the digger when they drove through*, Henry thought. Shaking his head, he said aloud, "They should be more careful; these are people's graves." He then bent down and pushed the headstone back into its proper place.

Having lunch at a diner later that afternoon, Henry suddenly realized that the heavy gravestone had been surprisingly easy to move; but he smiled a few moments later when he also realized that he actually wasn't surprised at all.

About the Author

J.H. Sweet is the author of *The Fairy Chronicles*, *Foo and Friends*, *The Time Entity Trilogy*, *Juan Noel's Crystal Airship*, *Cassie Kingston Mysteries*, and *The Heaviest Things*. She lives in South Texas and has a degree in English from Texas State University.

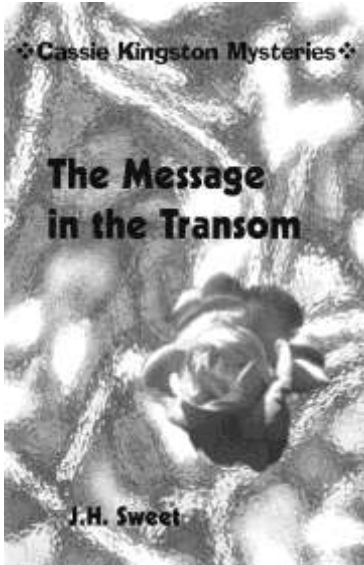
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Also by J.H. Sweet

Cassie Kingston Mysteries

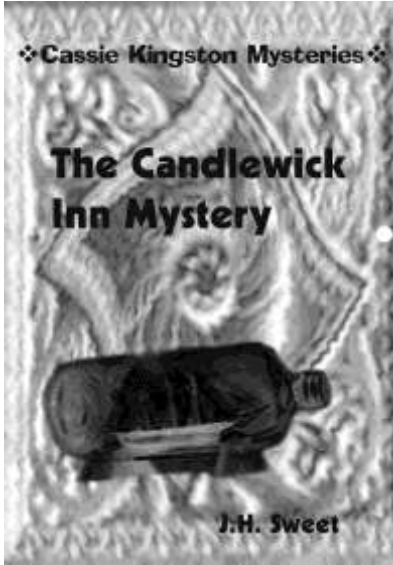
Mysteries seem to be seeking out Cassie Kingston and her best friend, Enilsa Santos. Their adventures begin unexpectedly, and the pair end up solving four mysteries during one summer break. With help from several friends, Cassie and Enilsa outwit a clever forger, find real treasure, solve a mystery involving a bronze statue, save a house from being demolished, and uncover the truth about a strange painting of an island. *Chapter Books Ages 8+*

The Message in the Transom



While helping to transplant rosebushes, Cassie and Enilsa, along with two of their friends, begin to uncover secrets involving an old house. Following a series of clues that begins with a strange message in a stained-glass transom, the friends work to save the house from demolition. With both diligence and ingenuity, the new sleuths end up finding something so valuable, it can only be described as *A Treasure Beyond Measure*.

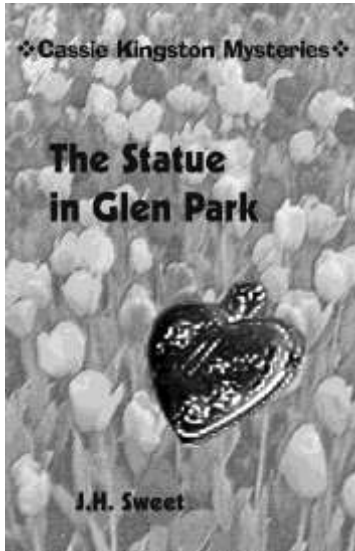
The Candlewick Inn Mystery



Surely, it can't be possible to find two treasures in one summer. But that's exactly what Cassie and Enilsa are trying to do. While spending two weeks helping out at the Candlewick Inn, a property Cassie's cousin will soon

inherit from their late Great-Aunt Sybil, the girls find several clues relating to something valuable hidden at the inn. While investigating, they receive messages from a psychic, and even a note from Great-Aunt Sybil herself, which help them solve *The Candlewick Inn Mystery*.

The Statue in Glen Park



Upon returning from Glen Park, and looking at photographs from the outing, Cassie and Enilsa are shocked to discover that a serious crime was apparently committed right under their unsuspecting noses. But could this possibly be a classic case where the camera lens sees something very different than the human eye? However, as their investigation unfolds, an unexpected turn of events leads the girls to believe that a fanciful bronze statue may hold the real answer to the mystery.

The Painting of Swan Cove Island



During a three-week vacation to visit Enilsa's grandmother on Swan Cove Island, Cassie and Enilsa discover an unusual painting that leads them on a pirate treasure hunt. However, they soon discover that appearances can be very deceiving and that real treasure is often found in the most unlikely

places.

Foo and Friends

What are your lawn and garden ornaments up to when no one is looking? If they hold magical spirits like most gnomes, angels, gargoyles, and foo dogs, you can bet it's something pretty important. Join Foo and his Friends on some of their important adventures as they help keep our neighborhoods safe and in tip-top shape. *For read aloud and early chapter readers ages 6+*



The Wishing Well

Magical foo dogs generally work in pairs to protect us from evil spirits. Unfortunately, Foo no longer has his partner because Foo-Too was taken away to the Resting Place of Retired Foos. Having to make it on his own is bad enough, but Foo also has to get used to living in a brand new neighborhood. Thank goodness he is meeting plenty of other magical lawn and garden ornaments who can help him figure things out.



The Garage Sale

Bad news has fallen on the neighborhood: Some of the Friends are going to be sold in a big garage sale. Foo Magic doesn't really work to solve problems like this, so a midnight meeting is definitely called for. But as the Friends work on a plan to save Henrietta (the plastic owl), will they also have time to save a turtle sandbox named Ruben? More panic erupts when Gilbert, the wire reindeer, also gets added to the list of For-Sale items. Can it be stopped, or is it meant to be? And will the neighborhood ever be the same again?



The Fake Foo

Foo dogs, gargoyles, garden angels, and gnomes all have the ability to protect people from harm, which is why Foo is so puzzled as to why his new neighbors would place useless, for-decoration-only statues outside their home. However, when several evil spirits invade the neighborhood, Foo must figure out a way to help the Fake Foo protect their house and the people inside.



The Porch Swing Ghost

As if having to drive away a persistent ghost over and over again isn't bad enough, Foo must also battle a Foo Cold during the Annual Fix-Up-the-Playground Project. Things go from bad to worse when a rash of burglaries, by a very crafty burglar, hits the neighborhood. With so much going on, will Foo be able to take care of business as usual? And will anyone be able to find out who is playing doorbell tricks?



Juan Noel's Crystal Airship
The Story of a
Christmas Eve Legend

On a magical six-hour Christmas Eve journey aboard the Crystal Airship, managed by Juan Noel, four children and various other passengers hopscotch the countries and continents of the world, making important deliveries to help keep hopes and dreams alive. *For all ages.*

