

The Prince of Dreamers

The wind inhaled birds, mailboxes, tricycles and anything that did not have the good fortune to move faster than backwards rushing air. And as quickly as all it was sucked in, it was exhaled with a bruising cough. Around the house you could hear small objects hitting the side of the Debro's modest home. Whistles and bang and then a thud just like the sound of a rotten watermelon that was dropped, only a hundred times the volume. Something big hit the front door. If Edna did not know better she would have thought it was the knock of the grim reaper, cause not only was she scared but she was in pain.

"This can't be happening now. It is too soon." The angry wind kicked the door harder this time, just as she felt the kick inside of her stomach. The pain dropped her to her knees as she tried to get to the foot of the stairs to call her husband. Outside trees were bending like Nadia Komanich doing her parallel bar routine. Branches snapped and the dead crunch of limbs falling only made Edna's pain worse. While Hurricane Michael battered the door of the brick house to get in, Edna's baby shifted and struggled to get out.

Hurricane Michael moved up the east coast like a football player. This storm was the thirteenth storm of the season. It was already more powerful than any storm in recent history. Winds were blowing in excess of three hundred miles per hour. Michael started near Dominican Republic crippling the entire island. It moved north to Cuba where after it was finished the sign from a house on the south end of the island was found over two hundred miles away embedded in the side of over turned sail boat. By the time the storm reached Miami the winds were already beyond what the meteorologist could read on their instruments. This was the worst hurricane in the history of the United States, and now the one eyed Cyclopes was looking for the Debro's house.

By the time Edna reached the stairs she wasn't sure if she could scream. She was afraid any exertion would cause her baby to move lower. Edna held her stomach and in a voice that sounded part wolf and part human she called her

husband. “James . . . Jaaaames hurry! Something’s wrong.” She was not sure if James heard her. He had gone upstairs because he heard a window break and wanted to see what damage had been done. A pine cone the size of bar of soap was pushed almost all the way into the wall. James kept low and away from the window as he eyed the room to access the damages. It was painted baby blue and decorated with little airplanes. Red ones blue ones and green ones. Each airplane was connected by a little chain of clouds that made the room look like it was moving. Just above the crib sticking half way out was the pinecone. All of the work that he and his wife had done on the room would have to be done over. The good thing about the situation was the baby was not in the crib. In fact he would not be there for almost another month.

This baby was a miracle. Edna was not supposed to be able to have children. After a few years of trying and listening to her family asking why they had not had children yet, she found out she was pregnant. The doctor said he did not know how but shrugged his shoulders and said she was pregnant. Like Grandma Clara would say, “God has the plan and all you have to do is follow it.” She told Edna not to listen to all of the others, cause she had a dream that Edna was kneeling next to a stream washing a calabash squash and when she put it back in her basket it turned into two squashes. No matter the doctor had told Edna that she was barrier. No matter what the test said. Grandma Clara said she saw the plan and if it took her last breath the plan would be followed.

The hole in the window groaned each time the wind blew. James thought the wind was teasing him, calling him to the window. “James! James! Hurry!” He could just barely make out his name being called with all the sounds darting around the little room. “James . . . James.” He heard it clearly this time. It was Edna his wife of seven years. He could tell something was wrong. He had only been upstairs for a few minutes. He hadn’t heard anything break like he had heard upstairs. Then the words “the baby” rang out over the sounds of freight trains, volcanoes and steam boats the shoved each other around the room like bullies.

In five easy steps James moved from the top of the stairs to where Edna lay curled on her side. She was holding her stomach and panting just like they had learned in Lamause classes. But, why was Edna breathing like that it wasn’t time. It couldn’t be time because Hurricane Michael was squeezing the little house tighter than Aunt Mae Bell’s “I haven’t seen you in years” type of hug. “I think the baby is here!” Edna told her husband. “I think it’s time!” James did not want to hear those words. He had checked the phone only fifteen minutes ago and there was crackling and hissing coming from the earpiece. There was no way to call for help. They would have to do it by themselves. They had practiced it in class but they had always expected to be at the hospital with doctors, not at home in the hallway. James remembered the book about how to deliver a baby. So he ran to the kitchen to get the book and the things he needed to help Edna.

By the time James returned to his wife's side the only thing he had to do was hold her hand and watch the miracle happen. As a matter of fact, it happened so quickly that Edna still had her eyes closed and was panting when James told her to look at the little squealing baby boy in front of her.

He was small but he was beautiful. They counted each tiny finger and toe. He had a fine dusting of black curly hair and little puffy eyes that already questioned the world. His nose was definitely from her side of the family. He was here and he was early. The Debro's miracle had arrived. He came during the worst part of the storm. Even though they had decided to name the baby something else they both knew that his name would be Michael. The hurricane dropped off its' gift in the middle of the night and moved off shore into the Atlantic Ocean. The next morning the storm was down graded to a tropical depression.

It wasn't until the next day they were able to get to a hospital and the doctor noticed the strange marks running down the center of Michael's back. They weren't bruises or scratches. It wasn't something that happened when he was being born. This was visible just under the skin. Very faint but you could see it without straining. There were three very fine squiggly lines running from the baby's shoulder blades to the small of his back. It looked like the work of a tattoo artist who had a little too much libation. Each line flowed continuously down his back in no real order or pattern. They were just there and the doctor said it was just an unusual birthmark and not to worry about it. He said it even might fade away with time.

Three days later James and Edna took their baby boy home. The pinecone was still holding court over the little crib when they lay Michael in it.

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Michael was a little smaller than the other twelve year olds that he knew. The doctor said he was smaller because he had been born almost a month early. He never really had any medical problems to speak of, maybe a cold or a cough and sometimes the "I don't want to go to school stomach ache", but nothing that would cause a mother to worry. Nothing ever bothered him. So, why now? Why was he starting to feel different? His dad joked about him becoming a man . . . "puberty". He explained the whole sex thing. Michael smiled inside a couple of times when his father was not sure just how to explain something and Michael would explain to his father for him.

This though, this was something else. Michael started feeling something on the inside. It wasn't pain and it did not hurt. It felt like stretching only it was not his arms or legs that were stretching it was more like his mind. He talked to his mother and she said maybe he was nervous because he a lot to do. Michael would be starting a new school next year and he was turning 13. Michael knew his mother could tell he was nervous about the new school, but that did not

explain his feeling. This feeling was like the last stretch when you are exhausted and you are about to fall asleep where ever your head lies down.

Mrs. Kron tapped on Michael's desk with her finger nail. It was her way of saying his next stop would be to the principal office. She tapped three more times. Each time testing the strength of her talon like nails.

On the third tap Michael opened his eyes just enough to see a four inch claw painted deep gold like the color of one the pharaoh's cats from a mummy's tomb. As his eyes opened wider he saw two great columns in black stockings. His eyes trailed upward to see Mrs. Kron's waist which was small but the rest of her was large . . . in fact Big. By the time he was fully awake he saw the expression on her face. It was pure concentration like a great cat stalking it's prey. He could have believed he was being stalked by a lion because Mrs. Kron's hair was fire red with streaks of blonde. She stood nearly 6'4 without shoes but she always wore high heels for the additional effect.

"Young Mr. Debro do you find English or me so boring that you have decided to sleep in my class?" Mrs. Kron purred with just enough emphasis to let Michael know that her next words would be the end of the stalking. Next would be the pounce for the kill. "I'm sorry Mrs. Kron, I tried to stay awake. I just can't help it". Michael lazily spoke. Michael knew he was in trouble because this was the forth time he had fallen asleep in Mrs. Kron's class this week. And, nothing was going to stop her from calling his parents this time. Michael's plea for mercy would have no impact. Mrs. Kron and Michael's parents had been friends since they were in high school. In fact Edna and Sherry Kron were best friends.

Edna was one of a few people who befriended Mrs. Kron when she moved to Jacksonville Florida. She was tall and spoke with an accent. Sherry Kron also had the gift of seeing into people. She could read spirits. When Sherry met Edna she knew they would be friends for life. So it was her duty to call and she did.

After Michael had fallen asleep during school several times and he could not explain his sudden tiredness Edna decided it was time to take Michael to see a doctor. "So Michael, tell me why your are here today?" the doctor quipped. "Your mother says you have been falling asleep in class. Is there anything you want to discuss?" Michael could tell the doctor was patronizing him. He could see on the physician face that he did not want to see Michael any more than Michael wanted to be there. "I get real tired while I am at school." Michael said in a defending tone. "I try to stay awake but nothing seems to help." The doctor cut Michael off mid-sentence. "What are you doing up so late? Are you watching television or playing games on your computer? That would cause you to fall asleep during class," said the doctor. Michael tried to explain that he did not have a computer or television in his room. Not because he did not try but because his parents did not believe kids should have all of those distractions in there personal spaces. It really did not matter because the doctor had already

made is diagnosis. Sneaky teenager syndrome. The symptoms are hanging out late, playing video games too late into the night, not studying and blaming it all on something else. The doctor told Mrs. Debro that none of the test should anything abnormal. He said Michael needed to find better ways of spending his nights. He also suggested the she monitor his time better. Mrs. Debro wanted to believe this was some childhood growing issue but she knew Michael. She knew that Michael was a good kid and that he loved school. Michael had been on the honor roll for most of his years in school. Edna thanked the doctor and told and made up in her mind that if this continued she would take him to see someone else. The next Monday he fell asleep in class again and Mrs. Kron made Michael go the restroom and splash water on his face. It did not make him feel better. He splashed water on his face and his neck like his father taught him to do when they were playing sports and it was hot outside. Not only did the water not help is seemed to make things worse. His started to feel dizzy and his back started to sting. It felt like an allergic reaction. By the time he was back at his desk he had just enough energy to tell Mrs. Kron how sleepy he was. Michael drifted off to sleep to the giggles of some of his class mates.

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Corbius . . . Corbius . . . great one! Come to us. It is time. A faint chanting sound of hidden inside the sound of calm rolling waves. The whispers exposed themselves with each bubble that burst on the shoreline. Michael open his eyes when he felt the cool water on his hands. He looked around and recognized the place. He was at the beach. He had been there many times fishing with his father. He sat in that very spot only three weeks ago. This beach was in a secluded area of Hannah park. It was a long walk from the parking area to get there, but it was worth the walk. To the left you could see the navy base. Large war ships and helicopters pepper the distant coastline. To the right Jacksonville beach pier danced on the horizon. Michael startled to his feet when he realized that surrounding him were a legion of crabs. The clicking sounds of their claws sounded threatening. Each claw clapped together in unison. Michael sensed the danger. If it were just one crab he could kick away from him, but there were too many of them. Sand crabs, ghost crabs and rock crabs all pushing together to form a column around him. Even the blue crab had left the sanctuary of the water to join in on the apparent feast. Michael was trapped. He had no where to run. He felt the first tiny claw pull at his ankle. He knew if he fell to the ground he would be eaten alive. So he started kicking. He kicked anything that looked like it was moving. He cried out when the pinch penetrated his pants legs. His leg smarted from the claw holding his skin. He shook his leg but the crab held on. Michael stumbled to the sand and was on one knee and one hand. The army of crabs all moved into position. The column rose to over six feet preparing to

drown him in the middle of tiny eyes and claws. Just as Michael was about to give up the sky above him blacken. Hundreds of seagulls and pelicans appeared overhead. They swoop in eating all of the crabs.

Mrs. Kron spoke softly. "Michael, wake up." She patted his shoulder gently. Michael eyes slowly focused on the classroom. He could see all of the other student staring at him. Wanda Griffin sat with a smirk on her face. She chimed in that he was in trouble for sleeping. She finished her pronouncement with a very sure nod of her head.

"Mr. Debro I think you need to go to the office and call your mother." Mrs. Kron was more sympathetic to him this time. She knew that after her warnings about sleeping in her class that even the most defiant student would try not to blink let alone sleep. Mrs. Kron knew something was wrong.