

The Seven Wonders of My World

by

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Contento de Semrik

We dedicate this book with love to our mother,
Gilla Kissos , who knew so well how to awaken the
wonders within us, and to our children in the hope that
they will be wise enough to connect to the wonders
within themselves.

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Chapter 1: Meeting Miss Ann and Mister Gel

“Shimmy, Shimmy, here he comes, old four-eyes! Let’s grab him and wipe that silly smile off his face!”

That’s all I managed to hear before I felt Shimmy’s elbow stab my ribs and his fist hit my right shoulder. That’s the shoulder that always gets the jabs, and I have a permanent blue mark there, like a tattoo.

That same morning I had gotten to school in a really good mood. I greeted the guard with a ringing “Good morning!” but the day turned sour and painful pretty quickly. The regular bullies were ready to ambush me with punches and nasty names like “nerd,” “crybaby,” and of course, “four-eyes.” After this reception I didn’t feel like much of a hero, like they expected, since my name was Ittai, like one of King David’s great warriors.

Should I tell you a secret? I’ve never felt like much of a hero, really not!

Actually, just the opposite — mostly I’ve felt weak and frightened, especially around the kids in the neighborhood and at school.

After I got away from the pack of ruffians, I ran with all my might to class where I hoped to find some peace and quiet. Instead, I got caught in a screaming war between the teacher and the students. I shut my ears and removed myself from the battle zone. I curled into myself like our poodle after my grandmother steps on him by mistake. I waited patiently for Miss Ruth, my teacher, to start the lesson. I actually like her a lot. She teaches us history, and in her lessons I can sail on the wings of my imagination to far-off places. Her fascinating stories swept me away and made me forget the morning’s painful incident.



The bell brought me back to reality. I motioned to Jonathan to hurry up so we could get a good spot in the yard, but before we were able to even close our notebooks, everyone burst into the yard. The older kids bounded forward like a pack of wild horses, and we smaller ones, holding on for dear life to the stair railings, were afraid of falling down the stairs.

When we finally got out to the yard, we found to our disappointment that all the fields were already taken. All we could do was look at the big kids, frustrated and powerless to do anything. Great heroes we weren't.

I was so glad this school day was over. During the last class of the day, I was pretty bored and all I really wanted was to get to my dojo to practice karate. At least there, the rules were fair and everyone was treated equally.

On my way home, I stopped with Jonathan at Nahum's grocery store to buy my favorite kind of ice pop. Before I could get my money out of my pocket, Shimmy, the bully, suddenly appeared. He grabbed my hand and demanded the money. This was just too much for one day. This time I'm not giving in, I promised myself. I held onto that money with all my strength as if my life depended on it.

To my surprise, my efforts paid off. Shimmy let go of me, but not before smacking me around till my glasses fell off, and then smashing them in the dirt. The blow really hurt, but the sight of my smashed glasses hurt even more.

Shimmy the thief's big effort to steal my money failed. Jonathan helped me gather up the pieces that once were my glasses. Even the ice pop didn't improve my mood; it wasn't as good as usual. I made my way home like a blind man. Everything looked blurry, partly because of my broken glasses and partly because of the unstoppable tears running down my cheeks.

The next day, I refused to go to school. I felt really bad. My head hurt and it was hard for me to breathe. My dad promised he'd deal with the bully, but that didn't make me feel any better. Even a kiss from my mom didn't help this time. I lay there in bed, daydreaming, imagining a world that was great for kids — a world with no yelling or scary things; no name-calling or insults or threats; no cursing, hitting, or getting your glasses broken.

In short, a world that was fun to live in. I dreamed about this wonderful world and was filled with despair, because my world was so different.



I closed my eyes and made a wish: “I wish I had some sort of special magic, some power to create a world like that.”

“You have the magic, and you have the power,” I heard someone suddenly say to me. I looked around the room but couldn’t see anyone.

“Who is that reading my mind?” I thought to myself, somewhat scared.

“It’s us,” I heard a soft, warm voice.

“Who’s us?” I asked.

“We are Miss Ann and Mister Gel, the two guardian angels who’ve been watching over you since you were born,” they answered.

“Excuse me? Watching over me? So where were you yesterday when Shimmy was all over me?” I asked in disbelief. “What kind of guardians are you?”

“Our job is not to hit Shimmy for you, not to fight your battles or to make you popular,” they explained.

“So, what can you do?” I asked disappointedly.

“We can help you discover the seven wonders hidden inside you, so you can then do whatever you want. We can also teach you to use these wonderful powers, maybe even create the amazing world you are dreaming about.”

“Wow, that’s great! That sounds amazing, but I’d be more convinced if I could see you. Can you do that?” I asked hopefully.

“We’re sorry to disappoint you,” they answered. “You can’t see us, but you can hear and feel us in your heart. And, more importantly, we can’t help you unless you ask. We appear only when we are summoned.”

“I’m inviting you, I’m inviting you!” I called to them excitedly.

“And that’s why we’re here. You summoned us this morning when you prayed for a better world.”

“One more little question for you: are these powers only in me?”

“Of course not,” they answered. “Every person has wonderful, friendly powers within him — even Shimmy the bully. But not everyone knows how to wake them up and harness them for their own good and for the good of others.”

“Okay, c’mon, stop wasting time! How can I find these seven wonders? How do I get them out? Can we do it now?” I asked, full of enthusiasm, jumping right out of my bed.

“We can do it, but not now,” they answered. “Go back to school and be patient.”

I waited a few more minutes just to be sure that Miss Ann and Mister Gel had finished everything they had to say. When I didn’t hear any more from them, I realized that they were gone. I had no choice but to wait patiently for their next message.

