



A Wonderful Day for a Quest

Book I of "A Wonderful Week for a Quest"

Michael D. Young

YOUR FIRST QUEST STARTS HERE

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Book One by Michael D. Young



The prophecy is missing a piece. Destiny has two candidates.

A gallant knight and a sub-assistant goatherd may both be the kingdom's only hope. Before a diminutive dark lord ruins the magic-bean harvest, they must decipher the Riddle of Ages with help from a washed-up wizard, an un-distressed damsel, and one rejected evil sidekick.

THIS SAMPLE INCLUDES

Chapter One The Uppercase Prophecy

Clean, comedic fantasy for middle-grade readers, teens, adults, families, and anyone who believes footnotes should occasionally argue with the story.

TURN THE PAGE. JACKDAW IS ALREADY NARRATING.

Chapter One
THE UPPERCASE PROPHECY

Once upon a time, in a verdant valley where the sun showed the resplendent sunrises over every blushing bud of morning...

Hey, you! Yes, you with the drooping eyes. I saw you yawn. Those droopy eyelids. What's with that? Don't you like idyllic pastoral scenes? Sunrises? They put you to sleep? I did not take you to be a nocturnal creature, though it is the only conclusion I can reach if a sunrise puts you to sleep.

Say, just what year did you say it was? You don't say... well, that explains a lot. You see, I haven't done time travel in a while and have to adjust the story a bit for my audience. First off, let me commend you in this age of movies, television, and all things computers, for actually picking up a book. For those of you reading this on your phone or on some other electronic doodad, I suppose you still get points for your heart being in the right place.

However you are reading this, chances are, you paid good money for it, especially if it is a hardback...if those still exist. I say such tomes are a bargain...reading material, step stool, lethal weapon and doorstop all rolled into one. Try doing all of that with your fancy reading tablet. And do pay attention.

So, where was I? I should probably insert some explosions or a chariot chase or something. But guess what? I'm not going to. I'm narrating this story and I'll do so in

my own way. I promise, no more sunrises or idyllic pastures, just a trio of country bumpkins with the best kind of adventure in store.

As we pan over this magnificent landscape (which you're just going to have to describe in your own imagination), you'll notice a solitary running figure who looks like he hasn't shaved any time in the last decade. Well, that's me—Jackdaw the Wizard, third cousin to the illustrious Merlin.

You might notice that I'm having a hard time running across the land with that beard of Rapunzelic proportions, and you might ask why I don't just cut it.

I don't ask you to cut your right arm off, do I? Yes, it is that important to me. We'll leave it at that.

"Wake up!" I cried. "Wake up, everyone!"

See those three sleepyheads stumbling out? That oaf of a fellow with the black hair is Farmer Mordic, the too-beautiful-to-be-true maiden next to him is his niece Bellissimo, and that scrawny blonde specimen bringing up the rear is Roddy Squires, the Sub-Assistant Goat Herder. It's not as glamorous a title as it seems.

Oh, did you notice that I didn't mention the dashing knight-like figure galloping in on his snow-white steed, his hair blowing like a pennant? That would be Sir Roderick. You might think he's the hero of this story, but you would only be partially right.

"Wake up, you shiftless layabouts. I've got big news. Really big news!"

Mordeck belched and scratched something it wasn't polite to scratch in mixed company. "For real this time, old man? Last time you had big news, it was that your beard broke the kingdom's length record. Personally, I couldn't give a bean¹."

Now, most people would think it odd that of all the things he 'couldn't give a...' he would have chosen a bean. It makes considerably more sense when you learn that magic beans are the principal crop of the kingdom. See, saved you so much confusion. You would probably have been wondering that all the way up to Chapter Five if I hadn't spotted you one there.

"Ah, that was just 'big' news," I said. "This is 'really big' news. You'll be the first to know, you lucky, little

bumpkins.”

Belissimo made the universal facial expression for “whatever²”. “Just spit it out before you burst into flame.”

“Very well, though that would be nothing new. I have successfully deciphered...the Prophecy!”

If you aren’t listening to this as an audio book of some sort, insert

1 Other such common colloquial expressions include “Everything just beany”, “Hello, old friend, it’s bean too long”, and “I’d give my best bean for that”.

2 This has been found to be true across races as well. So far, elves, dwarves, ogres, giants, orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, and dragons have all had confirmed sightings.

your own dramatic music here, maybe even some thunderclaps...what- ever lends the proper gravity to the moment.

Everyone gasped, their eyes as big and round as luna beans³. “You’re certain?” Mordeck said.

“How did you manage it?”

I cracked my knuckles, letting out tiny magical sparks with each crack. Can’t let too much magic built up in the joints. I’m not really sure while non-wizards do this. “It was really quite simple,” I told them. “I have known for a long time that it was written in the language of the Ancients in which I am fluent. However, there was something about it, a dialect, I supposed, that kept me from understanding it completely.”

Belissimo blew a strand of hair out of her face. “Let me guess, you were holding it upside down.”

“No, no, nothing like that. It was the pigs!”

Now their eyes were wide enough to put even luna beans to shame. I could tell that everyone wanted to say something, but only one person worked up the nerve.

“Pigs?” Belissimo asked. “Like the kind you turn into bacon?”

I threw up my hands and tried to reflect my wounded professional pride on my face. There are, in fact, three different kinds of pigs in the realm, only two of which are suitable to be turned into bacon. The third kind are fliers and really not worth the effort. In fact, they taste a lot more like chicken. She’d didn’t need to know that. “What other kind? Actu- ally, it would be more accurate to say ‘pig’s speech’ was the key.”

“You mean like Pig Latin?” Mordeck asked.

“Exactly. Except, whoever wrote the Prophecy⁴ thought they were

3 A round, white bean that grows only on moonlight. They taste terrible but make excellent board game pieces.

4 There are some prophecies that deserve to be written with a capital P and some which only warrant a lowercase letter. When considering the case of the letter, the speaker or writer should take into account the reputation and track record of the prophet, prophetess, clairvoyant, witch doctor or soothsayer in question, the ancientness of the language in which the prophecy is written and the general crypticness of the prophecy itself. Ten points if the prophecy includes a Chosen One, and an additional if it mentioned a Dark Lord. Add an extra point for each capitalized noun, not at the beginning of a sentence. If you cannot provide sound evidence for high marks in at least two of the three preceding criteria, then you are dealing with a lowercase prophecy.

clever to speak ‘Pig Ancient’ or whatever they called it. It’s really quite clever once you’ve figured it out.”

Belissimo cleared her throat. “How do you say ‘get to the good part’?”

“Well, that would be “Keega ette teljo...” I spouted the answer off without realizing that this girl had a limited list of interests and ancient languages wasn’t one of them. “Oh, right,” I muttered, pulling out a scroll. “I wrote out a translation. In the latter times, a great evil shall rise such as the lands had never known. He shall make worthless the land’s greatest treasure, and all shall fill into a night of unending darkness. This shall all come to pass unless the great Hero of Legend shall rise and vanquish this evil though his courage, cunning, and undeniable good looks. This Hero shall rise from the valley and his name shall be Rod...”

I trailed off, leaving only the bean bugs’ chirping to fill in the silence. “Isn’t there more?” asked Mordeck, leaning in a bit closer.

“No, not anymore. There used to be, but there the scroll containing the prophecy trails off in mid-sentence, much like I have just done. I was simply preserving the character of the piece.”

Just then, Mr. Dumb-As-a-Stump Roddy Squires jumped up on a stump and called out, a little too loudly. “Did you hear that, neighbors? It says the hero’s name will be ‘Rod-something’. Does that ring any bells?”

Belissimo barely held in a snort. “Roddy Squires, the sub-assistant goat herder, and somehow hero of all the land? Doesn’t seem like much of a prospect.”

The knight atop the blindingly white horse⁵ cleared his throat and struck a heroic pose.

“What about Sir Roderick the Really, Really, Really

Great?” Not even the bean bugs stirred. “That’s me, by the way.”

Mordeck scratched his bald head, studying the knight as though he might be something one of his dogs had dragged in. “Are you seriously called that? It’s a bit of a mouthful.”

Sir Roderick the Really, Really, Really⁶ Great’s posture did not fal- ter. “Yes, though I usually shorten it to Sir Roderick 3RG to make it easier for peasants. You can use that if you like.”

5 Sir Roderick fought allegations of horse bleaching all his life, though nothing has been proven or disproven as of this writing.

6 Sir Roderick’s great-grandfather was the originally Sir Roderick, and a new “Really” was added to each successive generation. Thus, Rod- erick’s firstborn son would be 4RG and so forth.

“Wouldn’t the prophecy mention the rest of your name if you’re supposed to be the hero?” Belissimo asked, merrily chirping birds flutter- ing around her head. “What good are prophecies if they’re not accurate?” Sir Roderick 3RG shifted heroic positions on his horse. “It’s incom- plete, peasant girl. I’ve always thought destiny favored me. Now I know. I shall ride forth and conquer this great evil. I mean, who else around has the courage, the cunning, the, uh...”

“Good looks?” finished Belissimo, her cheeks turning rosebud red. “Yes! Most of all, those! Wish me luck. I’m off to do great things!”

At this point, Roderick and Belissimo burst into song, with Roderick anticipating his great deeds and Belissimo plotting an amorous quest of her own. If you ask me, they should have just gone home and written in their journals about it, but that’s just how things are here. I should have known that a land famous for its beans would be a musical one.

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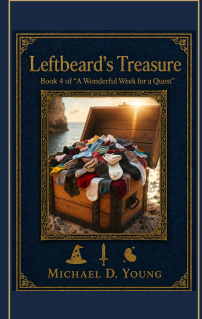
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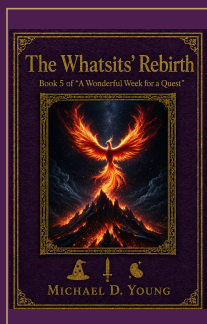
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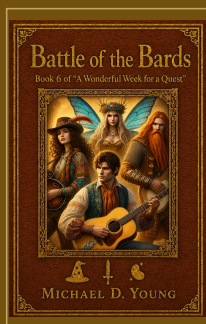
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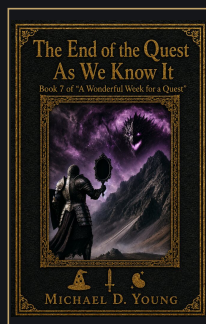
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