

# Church-Walk-on-the-Beach

By

*Diane Dowsing Robison*



*Two children and their grandparents take a  
long walk along the ocean's shore.*

*. . . where discoveries unfold  
that will stay with them forever.*



*Church-Walk-on-the-Beach*

### *A True Family Story*

Ridgely (10) and her brother, Griffin (8), and their grandparents take a walk along the shore of the ever-changing sea during an adventurous weekend together — and effortlessly, the door opens to spiritual communication.

Surrounded by the forces of nature and the miracles of the ocean, it's a wondrous journey where discoveries unfold.

Slowly they realize that lessons in front of them reveal the simple keys for connecting with an incredible power — a power that resides within each of them every day.

# Church-Walk-on-the-Beach

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## *Dedication*

*Sharing the world with you two  
has been a stupendously fabulous adventure!*

*The light within each of you shines bright  
my dearest ones . . . now onward!*

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Griffin @ 9

Ridgely @ 11



## CHAPTER 1

### They're Here!

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Oh, happy day! Grandmama and Granddaddy were going to be here soon, and Ridgely and Griffin were even more excited than usual. Even though it was Friday morning, they both were allowed to stay home from school just to get an early start on their “mini-vacation” with two of their favorite people!

They were going to spend the whole weekend while Mommy & Daddy went away — and fun times were definitely in their future! Grandmama had promised on the phone that it was going to be a very special weekend, filled with laughter and treats and walks, and maybe even a movie.

The day was hot, so after they all said good-bye to their parents, they headed for the neighborhood pool.

Oh, how Grandmama loved to swim — especially underwater! And Granddaddy would throw Ridgely and Griffin high in the air, just not quite as high as when they were younger. Even though Ridgely was 10, and Griffin 8, Granddaddy could still make them fly through the air just above the water!

Grandmama told them that when she was a little girl, she and her very best cousin, Steve, would dive way down underwater and swim through a wonderful castle the two of them had imagined together. Up and down they would go — they would spend hours building rooms and corridors only they could see.

Learning to swim in this family was as natural as walking. Ridgely and Griffin's father and aunt were both in the water before they could walk. By 18 months, they could go underwater by themselves and come back up, and then dog paddle the short distance to the side of the pool. Then, just in case they ever accidentally fell in, each one actually got a chance to jump in with their clothes on! That way, it wouldn't panic them if it happened when they weren't expecting it.

A few years later, they were really pretty good swimmers — and had great respect for the water. Now, their children are equally captivated with the sheer joy of being in the water and the magic of swimming!

Ridgely and Griffin and their cousins were also taught to swim early in several wonderful pools, even when traveling! Since the whole family loved the beach, everyone shared in teaching all the kids how to

swim in the ocean — and how to master safely diving over and under the ever-changing waves. Now every summer, they all go out and spend hours building memories in the ocean together!

When they were all lying together on the couch that night and sharing a tasty bowl of fruit, Grandmama said that Sunday morning, they were going to church. A very special church.

“How does that sound, kids?”

Griffin replies, “We don't go to church very often ... do we have to sit and listen to people?”

Grandmama laughs softly, “Well, listening to people is how we learn, and it certainly opens up our world to thoughts greater than ourselves. But in this church, we'll be listening in a different way.”

“I don't understand ...”

“You will” – she smiles and winks at Granddaddy.

Granddaddy rubs Griffin's head and says, “What ... you've never been to Church-Walk-on-the-Beach? You're going to love it, Griffin!”

Ridgely was snuggled into Grandmama's arms. “Well ... can't we just stay home and have Granddaddy's famous pancakes?”

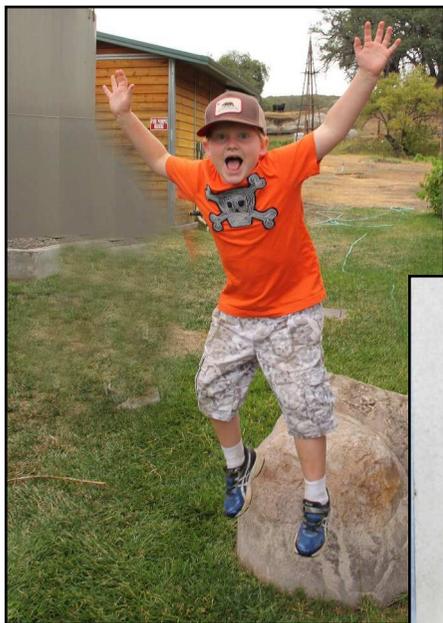
“Oh ... we're definitely going to have Granddaddy's famous pancakes ... but Church-Walk-on-the-Beach is waiting for us, and trust me; you're really going to like it.”

“Okay ...” Ridgely surrenders half-heartedly.

“But right now, you two can teach us that special video game your Daddy lets you play. After that, it’ll be one good-night story and then off to dreamland. We have a most unusual place we’re going to first thing in the morning.”

“Where, where!?!” — they both say together.

Granddaddy answers (sounding a bit like a funny grizzly bear himself), “We are going to the land of . . . **Lions, Tigers & Bears!**”





## CHAPTER 2

### An Adventure with Wild Beasts



On the edge of a vast national forest is a sanctuary for abandoned and exotic animals called **LIONS, TIGERS & BEARS.**

It's a refuge for animals that people once mistakenly believed they could make into domestic house pets — or for animals that were once kept in captivity somewhere in the world. It's also a safe haven for animals that — for many reasons — cannot survive in their natural wilderness any longer.

They were all brought to this most lovely rescue compound that covers miles and miles, where there is a hospital and feed center and a great group of people attending to every animal's needs.

This fascinating collection of animals includes lions, tigers, black

bears, bobcats, a mountain lion, a leopard, Himalayan black bears, grizzly bears, llamas, horses, goats, sheep, chickens, a miniature horse, a miniature donkey, peacocks — and a macaw! And now, they all get to live out their lives in peace and with dignity.

Each has a large compound in which to roam, with various places to hide and play — and even swim if they like. The compounds are several stories high and broader than many houses, with a cage fence on each side that also extends over the habitat like a massive open-air roof so that the animals can see everything.

Some of the cats even have large rope hammocks to sleep in — and they love it! In fact, Ridgely, Griffin, Granddaddy, and Grandmama are standing in front of the enormous bobcat compound when they are told a funny story by the volunteer who is their guide.

The bobcat area is between a large friendly bear's area and a rather stand-offish lion's domain — with many feet between each cage. It seems that when the bobcat moved in, he became great friends with the big bear. But when he saw the lion, he decided not to socialize.

You see, even though they are both “cats” ... the bobcat had never, ever seen a lion (being from different parts of the world), and so the lion scared him! No matter how long they were neighbors, he just couldn't warm up to that strange looking cat.

An hour later, at the end of the tour, they wrapped up by seeing the last of the mighty bears, along with a really awesome leopard, most

handsome jaguar, and then another very content lion. It was then that our happy adventurers went to the petting farm.

They are told that the old pot-bellied pig rarely responds to anyone, but when Griffin kneels down, the pig opens his eyes and gives a friendly grunt at him. With that, Griffin reaches over and scratches the old fellow lovingly. The pig responds with more low grunts, and Griffin happily keeps scratching. When Griffin gets up, the pig gives him one last grunt, and moves his head slightly, as if to say good-bye. To everyone around, it appears that Griffin and his new friend have formed a special bond.

As they move through the petting farm, it's great fun for Ridgely and Griffin to mix and talk with all sorts of interesting animals. Of course, many they had seen or knew of, but there are several they'd never had the opportunity to be with them "up close & personal." What a treat.

The goat really loves Ridgely, and the older llamas appeared to be quite fascinated with Griffin. In fact, one llama actually looks like he is smiling at him as they leave.

By the end of their outing, there's no doubt that Griffin has quite a special way about him with his four-legged friends.

As the four of them walk to their car awhile later, everyone wholeheartedly agrees that the petting farm is an absolutely terrific way to end their adventure!



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **A Dark Cloud**



They returned home by late afternoon, and none of them could stop talking about all the animals.

Everything was really cool — except for those “certain few minutes” when Ridgely decided to test whether she or her grandparents were in control.

It was now late Saturday afternoon, and Ridgely was feeling like she wanted to let the world know how mad she was getting at her younger brother ... so she did.

One thing led to another, and pretty soon, she couldn't control herself. She had worked herself up into a real emotional storm. Just as she

was really "revving up" — and showing no signs of controlling herself — Grandmama made her sit on the stairs (and worse, she was told to stop crying!). Ridgely said that she wanted to go to her room and be alone since this was where her parents sent her when she acted out.

Grandmama said no – because that would be too much fun for her granddaughter.

“We’re in this together, Ridgely. You’re going to learn that when you get angry and scream because you don’t get your way, everyone suffers. Now you have to watch how much we’re suffering and what we’re going to do about it. So, the only thing you’ll get to do is sit here on the stair and learn to be very quiet.”

Shocked, Ridgely cried even more. Finally, Granddaddy stood next to her and told her in a very, very strong voice that no one screams and yells in “our” family. He then said that if she cried or yelled anymore, she would continue to spend a very long time sitting right there.

Ridgely just stared at her grandfather.

“Ridgely! We raised your Daddy, your Aunt, and your older cousin. We have a lot more patience and a lot more strength than you do. We can wait all day. You’re not going anywhere, and you’re not doing anything until you become a part of the family again. You are not in control, and you cannot communicate this way.”

Ridgely was down to a quiet whimper now. Grandmama was sitting on the step next to her.

“If you don’t like us, Ridgely, that’s sad. But what would be even sadder is if you couldn’t deal with the real world. You need to understand how to be someone people want to listen to. You can have your own special way of communicating without getting angry. Trust me; the world is not going to bend to your whim — and definitely not to your screaming because that’s just ugly.”

Granddaddy and Grandmama and Griffin left her and went into the family room, where they started to play one of Griffin’s favorite board games.

Slowly, it dawned on Ridgely that she wasn’t going to get her way. And that she wasn’t going to be allowed to yell just because she felt like it. Then to add insult to injury, she wasn’t even allowed to go to her room where she could entertain herself.

This was definitely no fun. She was beginning to feel very powerless and very left out. And for the life of her, the more she thought about it (having nothing else to do), no matter how much she tried, she couldn’t blame this mess on anyone but herself.

In a while, Grandmama came to check on Ridgely. And her beautiful, “now calm,” red-headed granddaughter had finally returned. Grandmama sat next to Ridgely on the step and put her arm around her.

Ridgely quietly spoke. “I suppose I don’t get to go to Church-Walk-on-the-Beach because I was so awful.”

“Well, you were pretty awful. I know you know that’s not the way

to behave. Understand this ... your family, as much as we love you, will never allow any of our members to be so rude.”

Ridgely put her head on her grandmother's shoulder, as Grandmama continues.

“You are a good, and kind, and happy person, sweetheart ... who is learning to be part of a very big world. I think that Church-Walk-on-the-Beach is just what you need — in fact, we all need it now more than ever.”

Ridgely looked at Grandmama strangely, realizing that she was actually going to go. “Well, what is so special about this church?”

“It’s a church where you will once again realize that you are very unique, very special ... and that you are part of a larger world that you must also appreciate. You have a responsibility to look around and see how wondrous it is to be here, no matter how difficult the day — and to do something to give back. What we find at this church will help guide us.”

“How?”

“You will discover that there is a warm, divine power that is speaking to you and surrounding you. But, you have to be ready to listen and to look. And that's what we're going to learn how to do.”

“Is this power only at Church-Walk-on-the-Beach?”

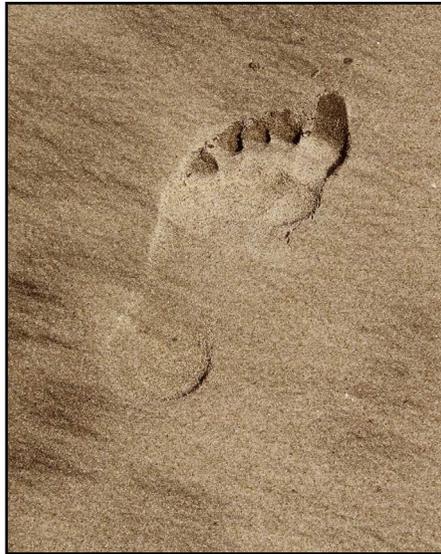
"Oh no, it’s wherever you are! If you want to, you can feel it in the city ... or in the country’s night sky ... or on top of a snowy mountain ... or out at sea ... or in the dawn of the desert morning."

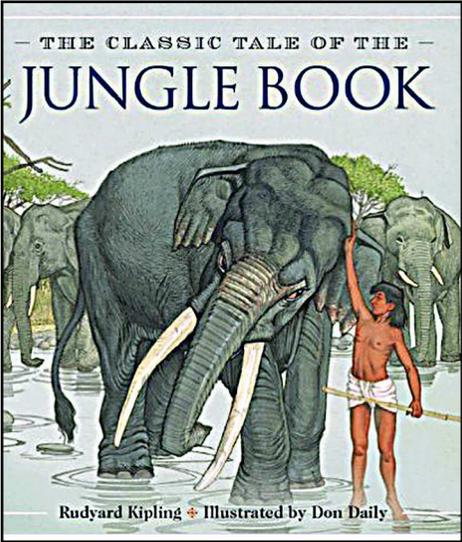
"So why tomorrow ... at this church?"

"Because by going to Church-Walk-on-the-Beach, we can see living proof of that power in a most spectacular way. And we're very lucky because it's close by."

"Alright, Grandmama ... I think I'm ready."

Grandmama laughs. "Okay, Ridgely, tomorrow morning, we shall go and find out what Church-Walk-on-the-Beach holds for each of us! But right now, I think Granddaddy has a great idea for this afternoon."





## CHAPTER 4

### The Day Moves Forward (Happily!)

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When Grandmama suggested that it seemed like a perfect time to catch an early movie — Granddaddy came up with the brilliant idea of going to see *The Jungle Book!*

After being so close to exotic animals this morning, and then to be able to see them on the big screen — in their real habitat and in a famous story — seemed just perfect.

There is definitely something magical about being in a dark theater, with a whole new world coming alive in front of you — especially when it's topped off by a big box of popcorn! (Grandmama's absolute favorite food.)

After the movie, they went into a bookstore where Grandmama bought a book while Granddaddy and the kids were looking in another

section. When they got home and finished dinner, Grandmama brought out the book for their bedtime story. Excitedly, the four snuggled down to read the original story by Rudyard Kipling of — *The Jungle Book!*

Everyone had a turn to read, but Grandmama started off with the first page that told about the author and when the book was written:

*“When Rudyard Kipling wrote The Jungle Book nearly 120 years ago, he used his imagination and experiences in the Indian forest to create a majestic domain where animals formed their own societies. The stories of these jungle dwellers teach morals, self-discovery, loyalty, and friendship — important values for every one of us today. All this is told through exciting adventures where both animals and people risk their lives to survive and learn the incredible lessons of life.”*

Wow. What-a-day!!! And tomorrow, a brand new adventure!



## CHAPTER 5

### *At Last! Church-Walk-on-the-Beach!*

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"What on the Earth can Church-Walk-on-the-Beach be?" Griffin asks his sister as they raced downstairs for Granddaddy's famous pancakes.

"I have no idea," replies Ridgely. "Just as long as it's not boring."

The kids are coming around the corner as Ridgely makes this comment. So as Granddaddy flips the last pancake high in the air, he replies, "Come on Ridgely, nothing is boring if you don't want it to be. There's always something new to learn, even if we have to dig for it."

"Sure, sure, Granddaddy," she responds as she winks at her brother. And with the first rays of sunlight dancing through the kitchen, the four of them sit down to a scrumptious meal of eggs and pancakes.

It is a sparkling morning when they arrive at Church Walk-on-the-

Beach. Still too cold to go in the water, but perfect for ... walking on the beach.

As they pull into the parking lot, Griffin announces, “Wow ... okay ... so we’re going to the beach! I get it! This is so cool. This is my favorite place!”

“Mine too, Griffin!” Grandmama exclaims as she helps Ridgely out of the back seat.

“But this isn’t a church, Grandmama,” Ridgely adds as she heads for the sand after her brother.

“Oh, it most definitely is my cute granddaughter,” Granddaddy says as he swoops Ridgely up and swings her around. “You’ll see!”

By now, Griffin has made it down to the water and picked up two sticks. “These are my drumsticks,” he shouts. “And I’m beating them to the sound to the breaking waves!” A nearby bird starts cawing before he dives in to catch a fish — and his voice becomes part of the band too!

When Ridgely gets down to the water, she drops to her knees to feel the sand. “I love the feel of the sand in my fingers and toes,” she says — really more to herself than her family.

“And I love that I can write a message to the Universe in the sand ... even my most private thoughts,” she whispers against the soft wind.

“True,” says her Grandmama. “The water washes away the words, but the message has been sent.”

“It really is a rather wonderful feeling to be here so early,” Ridgely

comments as she gets up to walk with her family.

As they walk along the surf line, Griffin looks down to see a tiny sand crab wiggling out of the sand after the water has flowed in.

“This sand crab is so small,” Griffin says as he kneels down to watch the little fellow.

“But what a fighter!” Granddaddy adds. “The water took his home away, but he’s digging deep to build another one.”

“I think he should have his own video game!” Griffin says, beaming.

Granddaddy laughs as he leans over to watch the crab disappear beneath the wet sand. “You know, a warrior is a warrior Griffin. Even being that small, he has all the tools to survive.”

“Right on, Granddaddy!” Then as Griffin runs ahead, he exclaims, “Look at my shadow ... it’s following me ... I’m Peter Pan!”

“I don't think you're going to get rid of him, grandson.”

As Griffin is now desperately trying to outsmart his shadow, he darts around on the hard sand.

“He's with you whether you can see him or not, Griffin!” Granddaddy adds, chuckling.

Then Griffin follows Grandmama into the surf. “Can we go in?” Her grandson asks. “Sorry, Griffin, but this water is just a little too cold,” Grandmama replies.

“I can take it, Grandmama!”

"Actually, it's more that the air is going to chill us when we get out. And unfortunately, we have nothing to change into."

"Come on, Grandmama, don't be a sissy! Let's dive in!!!"

"I would love to, but it's just the wrong season, my grandson."

Then she laughs. "This reminds me of your Daddy and Aunt when they were very young. When we were visiting my parents, we'd always go walking on the beach during the early summer evenings."

"What happened?"

"Well, a couple of times, the water and the air were close to the same temperature. And after a while, the water would feel so good that either your Aunt or Daddy would finally say, 'Can we just dive in Mama?' And so ... shorts, tops and all, we'd all dive in. Then my Mama — your great-grandmother, Griffin — would just laugh. I can still see her now, just shaking her head."

"Why? Didn't she want you to go in?"

"Oh, she thought it was wonderful. It's just that she always warned us to take our suits — and for some reason, I never did."

"Hmmm ... should have listened to your mother, Grandmama. I'll bet she'd love to see me go in right now!"

"I'll bet you're right." Griffin looks at her excitedly as Grandmama finishes, "But no."

With that, Griffin and his faithful shadow turn towards the sea and look at the vast horizon.

“Someday,” he says, “I’m going to swim every ocean and walk on every beach on this planet!”

Granddaddy has just walked up, and remarks, “Wow, that’s a huge ambition grandson. It’s a really big planet. Do you think you can get to all of the beaches and swim in all of the oceans?”

"I can do it, Granddaddy! I just feel it! I'm going to swim in every one of them!"

“Yes,” Granddaddy replies with a gentle smile, “I believe you will.”

Just then, Ridgely calls out. “Look, look what I have! I found a marvelous tool! I can use it as a walking stick — helping me down the mountain.”

She quickly jumps off the hill and runs a few feet to the hard sand.

“Or, I can draw with it in the sand. It gives me inspiration!" Ridgely giggles with great abandonment as she draws large letters in the cool sand.

“Yep. It’s a great tool Ridgely,” Granddaddy replies. “Use it any way you wish — it's up to you, sweetheart.”

Granddaddy turns to Grandmama,

“Your favorite philosopher ... what was it he said?”

Grandmama smiles, “Ahhhh ... Albert Einstein.”

Ridgely chirps up. "I know that name! We just studied about him. He was a great scientist."

"True," Grandmama replies. "And a great believer in seeking God through science."

"How Grandmama?" her granddaughter asks.

"He understood that you had to believe in that which you could not see — in order to see beyond the obvious."

"And what was that quote from Einstein," Granddaddy adds, "the one you had on the refrigerator door while the kids were growing up?"

"He said that no matter how smart you are ...

*'Imagination is greater than knowledge.'*"



## CHAPTER 6

### Onward!

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As they are heading back across the sand towards the car, Griffin says, “I like this church! Let’s come here again!”

“Anytime you like,” Granddaddy replies.

“But now you understand that you can go to church wherever you are,” Grandmama says, putting her arm around his shoulder.

“Gee, I hate to leave,” Griffin answers.

“Well, we really don’t have to ...” Grandmama replies as she looks at Granddaddy.

“Good!” Ridgely responds as she does another cartwheel.

Granddaddy chirps in, “And I’m in! So right now, I think we deserve to discover new territory!”

“Where?” Ridgely says, looking around.

Granddaddy points, “See the cliffs way down there ... let’s go that direction. We’ve never really explored it because we usually stay around here to swim.”

“Sounds like a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious plan!” Griffin responds as he starts to run that way. Ridgely takes out after him.

“Kepler — another scientist with a great sense of humor,” Grandmama comments as the kids' runoff.

“Ah, come-on,” Granddaddy looks at her with surprise, “are you telling me that Disney didn’t make up that word for Mary Poppins!?!”

“Nope. And wouldn't he be surprised to find out how popular it's become? He actually made up that word to describe the joy he felt in discovering the precise measurements of stars' movements.” Grandmama laughs.

“Well ... you just never know!”

“Isn't it amazing that life is full of things we don’t know ... or mis-know,” she winks and puts her hand in his.

“I’m shocked!” he laughs as they start to run after their grandchildren.





## CHAPTER 7

### Exploring South — to the Cliffs!

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As their grandparents catch up to them, they grab them and swing them around.

Ridgely then says, “Okay, I like this church too ... and especially because no one is talking to us.”

Granddaddy laughs gently, “Ah, my little one . . . God is talking to us.”

“All weekend,” Grandmama says.

“Absolutely!” said Granddaddy. And we were listening to God wherever we were,” He looks around and then adds, “And look at all the hidden treasures He placed on our path, just for us.”

Griffin pipes up, “Like when the animals were communicating with

us?"

"Yes. Especially that pig," says Granddaddy.

"You see, it's God's nature to communicate. He constantly speaks — although not always with words," Grandmama says as she starts kicking at the surf dancing around her feet.

Granddaddy looks at her. "Why don't you tell them the poem you memorized."

"What poem, Grandmama?" Griffin asks.

"It's a poem — almost like a prayer — I was taught when I was a very little girl. I think of it often when I'm here."

"How does it go?" Griffin said.

Grandmama stops and turns toward her family, as the small waves lick at her feet.

*"I fling glorious sunsets across the sky, day after day. I speak in the faces and voices of loved ones. I caress you with a gentle breeze that refreshes and delights you. And always, I speak softly in the depths of your spirit, where I have taken up residence."*

Ridgely is almost mesmerized. Then she speaks. "That is lovely. I'd like to memorize that too."

"Of course, sweetie, I'd love to teach it to both of you."

Ridgely thinks and then continues. "But the colors of the waves, and the sky, and even the smell of the ocean ... can be all explained with science, Grandmama."

“On one level, it certainly can. Science helps us to discover the elements of what’s in front of us. But, seeing it put together is often unexplainable. Poets and writers have been trying for centuries.”

“It’s downright captivating and miraculous!” Granddaddy chimes in as he again picks up his granddaughter and gives her a twirl, almost throwing her in the surf! Putting Ridgely down, he asks, “Do you remember what I told you when you were little, and we would walk in the forest by your old house?”

"Yes, Granddaddy," Ridgely giggles as he grabs her hands and swings her over one last gentle wave. "Nature is God’s finger-painting!”

“Just like Grandmama’s garden on the roof!” Griffin chirps, joining his grandmother as she’s jumping over the waves at her feet.

"How true, you brilliant child!" Grandmama says as she takes his hand for the last jump.

“And what did you hear this morning, Griffin?” Granddaddy says after he places Ridgely back on the wet sand.

Griffin jumps in, “I heard the waves. And when I picked up my drumsticks, the orchestra really got going. Oh — and then the birds joined in to make music!!!”

Granddaddy ruffles his grandson’s thick hair, “Yep, all those things were there for you to be a part of.”

“So ... God was including us in his painting?”

“You are spot on grandson!”

“And when I picked up my walking stick,” Ridgely adds, “you said it was a tool Granddaddy.”

“Sure,” Granddaddy answers. “But what inspired you to pick up a stick? Remember, until that very moment, that piece of wood had a totally different use and place in this world.”

“I don’t know; something just said ‘go after it, Ridgely!’ So ... God is a part of that?”

“Bingo. You found the tool. Maybe it was placed in your path for a reason, but you made an effort to pick it up. Then you were inspired to use it in different ways. You added your own imagination when you wrote in the sand. I’d say that’s a perfect combination of God working through you.”

“But, how can God be in us and around us at the same time?” Ridgely responds.

“Good question, my sweet,” Grandmama says. “Each person ... and every culture ... and every one of the many, many religions ... has a somewhat different answer. But the main thought, or maybe I should say the foundation, is the same.”

“But how do you see it, Grandmama? God, I mean,” her granddaughter inquires.

“Well ... I’ve always thought of God as a large flowing river. And when we’re born into this life, we’re a little stream off that incredible river.”

Ridgely thinks and then says, “So, you have everything the river has.”

“Right. But in my vision, as we grow — and our stream becomes a

larger and stronger river — the main river continues to flow through us; nourishing us, always filling us rapidly.”

“Okay ... in us, and around us ... I like your river Grandmama,” Ridgely decides as she gives a small nod of approval.

Granddaddy can't help but add his own observation. "But Grandmama's river has a lot of waves in it ... she loves waves." He winks at his wife.

“But how was God with Ridgely when she was so nasty?” Griffin now speaks up.

“Leave it alone, Griffin!” Ridgely snarls at him.

Grandmama grabs her before she can lunge at her brother. “No, that’s a fair question, Ridgely. You acted out because of emotion.”

As Griffin quickly moves to the far side of Granddaddy, “Boy ... did she!” Granddaddy gives Griffin a small thump with his fingers on his grandson's forehead. Griffin knows exactly why.

Still looking at her granddaughter Grandmama continues, "It was an emotion that was misused Ridgely ... which was completely your choice. But more importantly, what did you learn?"

“That I didn’t like sitting by myself with nothing to do. Especially when you guys went off to have fun. It hurt.”

“Fair enough. It was supposed to make an impression — and it needed to hurt so you'd remember. But when it was over, and we talked, what happened then?”



“Well, I apologized ... to you and Granddaddy ...”

“And to me!” Griffin says behind the protection of Granddaddy.

“... and my brother ... and then I ... we ... oh, we went to a movie!”

Grandmama puts her arm around Ridgely’s shoulder. “Right. We left the anger and sadness behind us and got on with the important thing in life — being together.”

Ridgely slides her arm around Grandmama’s waist as they continue walking.

“But we couldn’t have done that until you decided to take a different road in your attitude Ridgely.”

“I know, Grandmama.”

She bends down to look into her granddaughter's eyes. "You're ten

now, and I want you to understand this very clearly. Every choice we make is a lesson we learn from — both the good choices and the bad ones. And every choice has consequences. Those are things we have to face because we can never run away from them."

"I'll remember Grandmama ... I'll really try." Grandmama gives her a quick hug, and they continue walking.

"But did you ever feel like we didn't love you?" Granddaddy asks.

"Well ... no ... I always knew you did. Although I really wanted my way at first ... I knew I had to sit there because I had done something wrong. I acted out, and you made it very clear, Granddaddy, that I wasn't going to get to have fun with the family until I learned my lesson."

She stops and gives a half-smile to her grandfather and quickly adds, "And changed my attitude."

"Bingo!" Granddaddy claps. "So, how did we make you feel, once you came to your senses?"

Ridgely looks up at her grandfather. "Well, that nobody wants to be around someone who's screaming. That I wasn't going to get my way doing that."

"And," her grandmother adds.

"No matter what we face, we're loved?" Ridgely looks at both of them.

Granddaddy answers. "Always. But if we don't face our mistakes right away – or keep making the same mistake over again — the lesson

itself gets much harder.”

Griffin, in a loud whisper, “And then, not even the cat wants to listen to you.”

Ignoring her brother, Ridgely responds, “So, love has nothing to do with lessons.”

Grandmama smiles, “No ... but it has a lot to do with growth. If we didn’t love you, we wouldn’t help you to grow up.” She looks at her grandson, “Either of you. That’s how you learn to tackle this world on your own, when we’re no longer here.”

Granddaddy adds, “And maybe someday you’ll help little human beings become terrific big human beings!”

Griffin stops walking and looks at his grandmother, and then at his grandfather.

“Whoaaa ... wait ... no longer here! You’re going to stay until I’m old, aren’t you???”

“Well ... that would be great.” Granddaddy smiles. “And I’ll do my best. But someday I’ll have to go on to the next place — where I’m going to learn more, and grow. Somewhere beyond here.”

“I don’t know, this sounds an awful lot like school — and I’m having trouble getting out of 1st grade.” Griffin kicks the sand. “Beyond this world ... how will I find you, Granddaddy?” A small tear starts to form in Griffin’s eye.

“Yes, beyond. But you’ll 'feel' me when you need to. I promise.

Sometimes just through our memories together."

"What kind of feeling Granddaddy? How will I know?? Cuz, I have lots of feelings all day long!!!"

Granddaddy stops Griffin and takes his hand. "The feeling I'm talking about is like ... like knowing that something is absolutely true and right."

Granddaddy picks up a stick and starts drawing in the wet sand. Griffin and Ridgely are listening intently.

"It's like ... well, let me see. You know that the sun is shining all the time and that the night comes wherever you are — because the Earth is rotating away from the sun at that time of day?"

"Oh, I know that!" said Ridgely.

"Me too!." Griffin adds. "The sun and the planets are hanging in my room."

Granddaddy continues. "Okay ... well then, we know that when we go to bed at night that the sun is actually still shining. We have no doubt, even if we can't see it because it's night."

"Right!" Both kids say.

"It's that kind of absolute faith. It is that strong of a feeling, without question — and definitely without a doubt. When you have it, you know it's right."

Granddaddy stands up from his drawing in the sand. "That's how you'll know I'm thinking of you too. And don't let anyone tell you

otherwise.”

"HMMMMM." Griffin is still looking at Granddaddy's drawing on the beach. He looks up at his grandfather. "Is that like that feeling I had when I looked out at the horizon — and just knew that I was going to visit all the beaches and all the oceans in the world?"

With a very big smile on his face, he winks at Griffin, “You got it, grandson. You have definitely got it.”



## CHAPTER 8

### New Territory to Explore!



As they walk on for a while, they enjoy just listening to the waves and watching the gulls in the sky. Then, Ridgely asks another question.

“So, we don’t have to go to a formal church every week?”

Grandmama responds first. “No, God isn't taking roll-call. But it's certainly a lovely thing to do. It's our way of paying respect to the spiritual community we belong to.”

Then Granddaddy speaks up, "It's also a Matter of really taking the time to show thanks for our time here on Earth ... for our blessings and guidance.”

“I’ve found that it actually brings a sense of peace and calm, and specialness, to a busy week.” Grandmama reflects. “It can also help in giving us the feeling of belonging to something special. And, we all need that every once in a while.”

As they walk along through the surf, the tide is coming up farther.

Grandmama continues. “And of course, being part of a spiritual community helps in deciding what’s important, but joining one is really up to each person. None of us ever know until we try. and sometimes it just takes a while to find the right one.”

Granddaddy takes his granddaughter's hand. “You see, Ridgely, going to a formal church is very reassuring. It’s quite a special place of learning and reflecting. But seeking God every day is our responsibility — no matter where we are.”

“It’s not a once a week journey,” Grandmama adds.

Griffin speaks up, “And it doesn't depend on how old we are? He winks at his grandmother. "Even really old like you, Grandmama?”

Grandmama gently pushes her grandson. “Definitely. And as I got older, and my life got more complicated, I had even more heart-to-heart talks with God. Some of them were real doozies. But I was never disappointed. A little surprised, but not disappointed.”

“In fact, the journey finding God can be an easy one, if we let it,” Granddaddy continues. "Even when we’re lonely or lost.”

“How about when we're happy and want to celebrate?” Griffin contributes. "Do we look for God then too?”

“Equally important!” Granddaddy responds enthusiastically. “So, no matter what's happening in our life, we can find our own special “Church-Walk-on-the-Beach” ... whenever, and wherever, we are.”

“Even if we’re sitting still someplace?” Griffin asks. Then whispers

low, "Someplace really boring?"

"Even then." Granddaddy laughs. "It's super easy to do, and there's no right or wrong way. We just have to turn towards God and start talking, even silently. Then, of course, we have to try to listen."

"But, my friend Madison said that they're not a religious family. Does that mean they don't believe in God?" Ridgely asks.

"No ... not necessarily," Grandmama says. "That's what many parents say when they don't have a particular church or temple. Or an actual place to go to worship God. And, they usually don't know how to go about finding one."

"Or," Granddaddy adds, "they might believe in something, but they don't like any of the religions they know of. Even though there are many religions and millions of people who practice their traditions each day."

"How come?" asks Ridgely.

"Well, it's sometimes a way of saying that they don't like the words, or the particular way of thinking of a formal religion," Grandmama replies. "And that's certainly their choice if they've investigated. There are many other ways to learn about the history of our spiritual world. It just takes a little effort."

"I understand that finding a formal religion can be intimidating," Granddaddy interjects. "But, to me, that's like saying that you want to learn about something, so you decide to go to a large college that can teach you a lot. But, there are some things you've heard of that you don't like about that

particular school. Or, perhaps you met a professor once that teaches there, and you didn't like him. So, instead of going to that college, and finding out for yourself if it's interesting, you just don't go at all."

"Well, that's just silly," Griffin announces as he pretends to kick sand at a seagull, who is watching him from a safe distance.

"But why would they stop believing in God?" Ridgely continues.

"Good question, honey. Some people just take it too far. That tends to be our nature," Grandmama responds. "Meaning, that since they assume that they don't care for a formal religion, they decide that it's just easier not to believe. Sometimes they're scared of the unknown, or maybe it just seems simpler to throw the baby out with the bathwater."

"Grandmama! Why would you ever throw out a baby!!!" Ridgely stops, shocked, and looks at her.

Grandmama tries not to laugh. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart! That's an old expression. One that is way older than I am."

"Oh! That's called an idiom, I believe. I just studied that in school." Ridgely says, happy to show some new-found knowledge.

"Sure. Sort of. The saying is an idiom, but the story behind it is true.

This expression comes from the old-West, where water had to be brought into the house and heated over the fire. They only bathed once a week, and the whole family used the same big tub. They put the tub in the middle of the room, near the fireplace where they boiled water, and the

oldest bathed first. By the time they got to the baby, the water was pretty brown. Jokingly they always said, ‘Let’s not throw out the baby with the bathwater.’”

Griffin scrunches his face. “Yuck. I guess I can be thankful for nightly baths. And not being thrown out with the dirty water!”

“Count your blessings, Griffin. With the way dirt attaches itself to you, your Dad almost threw you out once!” Granddaddy is laughing.

“Not funny, Granddaddy!”

Ridgely, feeling very grown-up, “Ignore them, Grandmama, what were you saying?”

“Thank you, dear.” Grandmama curtsies in the sand. “Here on Earth, life is run by human beings — who are actually quite incredible for the most part. We're given more gifts, and talents, and abilities than any other species.”

“Right,” Granddaddy adds, again with much enthusiasm. “Look what they have accomplished in art ... and science ... and technology ... and human understanding ... and engineering ... and literature ...”

“And in discovering God, Granddaddy!” Griffin is happy to add his knowledge.

“Right again!” Granddaddy does a “high-five” with his grandson.

Grandmama turns to Ridgely and continues. “But, because we are human beings – with complete free will — we sometimes say or do the wrong things. It's then that people decide that since the humans, or their

traditions, aren't what they want — or aren't perfect — they just won't believe in God at all.”

Ridgely exclaims. “OHHHHH so the baby is God, and the bathwater is a formal religion!” Almost to herself, “And that’s a metaphor!”

“My, you are a smart girl,” Granddaddy continues. “Also remember, it’s not always 'easy' to go to a house of worship on a regular basis because it can take time away from something else. And then, there are times people find it tiresome — which it can be, especially for the young ones.” Granddaddy stops and quite dramatically raises his arms. “But, I've found that there are always reasons for not doing something.”

“Yeah,” Griffin adds, “but you said that we can still learn, Granddaddy. Even when we want to be someplace else.”

“That I did — that I did. You've got to give it a try. And believe me, you'll be absolutely amazed at what 'surprises' await you — especially when you don't expect them.” Another high-five between the two of them. “Isn't it great. I certainly have two very 'astute' grandchildren ... must take after their grandfather.” He starts humming pleasantly to himself.

Excitedly Griffin points out to the surf. “Look, look! All the seals are on that drum together. I wonder if they’re going to church.”

“I'll bet they could be.” Granddaddy responds as he taps Griffin on the back.

They all walk on. They are fascinated by the rocks that appear before them as the cliffs get higher. Then Ridgely turns to her Grandmama.

“Then, God doesn’t really care where you go to church?”

Grandmama replies, “I don’t believe so, sweetie. It just doesn’t seem like one of His top priorities. The important thing is that you need to start early and explore different places of worship — to help you decide what your beliefs and values will be based on as you get older.”

She and Ridgely stop to examine a particularly fascinating rock, jutting out from the cliff next to them.

"My parents helped me investigate many churches," Grandmama continues. "Eventually, I felt comfortable going into any place that’s thought of as a formal place of worship. Hopefully, someday you'll have the opportunity to feel that way too. And of course, we always respect the rules of that particular ‘house.’"

“Like going over to Sarah and Tan’s home, and taking off our shoes at the door?” Ridgely inquires.

"Exactly," Grandmama answers. "Didn't you say that, Sarah is Jewish, and that her half-brother, Tan, is Buddhist?"

“Yes, but their nanny is from India, so she’s the one who told us to take off our shoes.”

Granddaddy smiles broadly. “I just love this world!”







## CHAPTER 9

### Half-Way to the Cliffs!



They have now walked about half-way around to the end of the cliffs. And, Griffin has a question.

“My best friend, Johnny, says that there’s no God.”

Granddaddy gently replies. “Ask him to prove it.”

Griffin, “Huh?”

Granddaddy continues. “We know for a fact that billions of humans have recorded their experiences with God for over 6000 years ... and you and I also now know that we see God in everything we do each

day ...”

Griffin looks at Granddaddy. “Un-huh.”

Grandmama then adds, “What your Granddaddy is saying is that the burden of proof is on your friend when he challenges your personal belief. But in reality, it doesn’t matter what he believes — I’m sure he’s a good person. However, it’s what you seek that Matters. That’s true for each of us.”

“So, God loves each of us? No Matter what we believe?” Ridgely questions.

“Or whoever’s house we’re in!” Griffin pops in.

"Correct on both counts, my most delightful grandchildren, That I can promise you," Granddaddy responds. “And you can take that from someone who’s lived a long time. I've been given a lot of blessings — even though I've made a ton of mistakes!"

Grandmama spontaneously gives him a quick kiss, right there on the beach. “But you always kept moving forward, my love ... giving it your very best. You never gave up! Just like that little crab-warrior Griffin found in the wet sand.”

"Well, it took me a while to realize that God loves me unconditionally, as long as I keep trying," he replies, giving his wife a big hug. "And for you, I didn't ever want to give up," he whispers in her ear.

Grandmama then turns and takes the hand of each child. “And I had to learn from the things I did wrong too – whether or not I knew they were

wrong at the time.”

“Well, that is not fair,” replies Griffin.

"That's maturity — growing up, and taking responsibility." But look at it this way Griffin, by growing up I also got to decide what I was going to do with my life. I received rewards for doing the right things in my life. And I even got to decide what time I was going to bed!"

“And I'll bet nobody tells you when to brush your teeth,” he replies.

Grandmama just smiles. Granddaddy comes up to the three of them and takes Ridgely's free hand, and they all walk in a line together.

Grandmama is gently swinging each grandchild's hand.

“Ridgely ... and this is for you too, Griffin. You will both face hard lessons ahead. That's part of real growth. In this life, there are times when we are going to be lonely. And there are challenges that will push us farther than we think we can go. But you're not alone, and you have the strength to get through the learning process."

Granddaddy continues, "But most of all, when you find a way to share with God every day, you will have a much greater understanding than before you and God started chatting."

He takes a deep breath and smiles. "Trust me. This produces a greater calm, even in the middle of a storm. I've been there. Only then does happiness has a chance of getting through, no matter what the circumstances."



"How does that work!?" His granddaughter demands to know, stopping, and looking at her grandfather.

"As you share with God, you get stronger. With that strength, you come to see everything you've gone through from a different perspective."

Griffin is fascinated. "Wow. That's a big job for God. Does he have any helpers?"

"Oh, sure. Lots and lots, showing up in many, many different forms — and making many unexpected visits."

Griffin squeezes Granddaddy's hand. "Like Guardian Angels — or Leprechauns!"

Granddaddy stops and thinks. "Absolutely."

"Cool — really cool," Griffin says as they continue to walk.

Grandmama then adds, "They're part of a force you will always have

around you — guiding you if you let it. They're there all the time, whether we think we need them or not."

They continue to walk. Granddaddy picks up a piece of driftwood that has come up in the surf. He reaches inside and finds a new shell — an abandoned home of some little urchin.

"And what do you know ..." he reflects, looking at the shell in wonderment. "If you keep your eyes open, they help you to find treasures every day ... many in unexpected places!"

"Like we did today? When my piece of wood became a cane to help me or a drawing wand?" says his granddaughter.

"Just like today."

"Well ... we all know Ridgely needs a lot of guidance! She's a real Bad Ass." Griffin just couldn't help himself. But for safety, he heads towards the surf as he speaks.

Granddaddy and Grandmama stop and exclaim together: "Griffin!!!"

At that very same moment, Griffin trips on a rock partially buried in the sand and falls on his face.

"I suppose God makes me stumble," Griffin comments as he's spitting some sand out of his mouth.

"I don't know if God encouraged you to stumble ... you seemed to have brought that on yourself. However, I would say there's a lesson in there," Granddaddy chuckles lightly.

Griffin just looks at him, not a happy camper.

“Just saying,” Granddaddy smiles and helps him up.

Ridgely giggles and does a cartwheel.

“It’s okay, Griffin; I still love you. But boy, did you get a lesson!”

“What did I say wrong??? I hear that expression all the time. Why can’t I say it?”

“Mainly,” Grandmama answers, “because you haven’t earned the right to say anything like that yet.”

“Why not? I’m eight.”

Grandmama replies quickly — and strongly, “Because Griffin ... you don’t have the experience to know when NOT to say it.”

“And that’s quite obvious,” his sister says with a smirk on her face as she skips by in the sand.

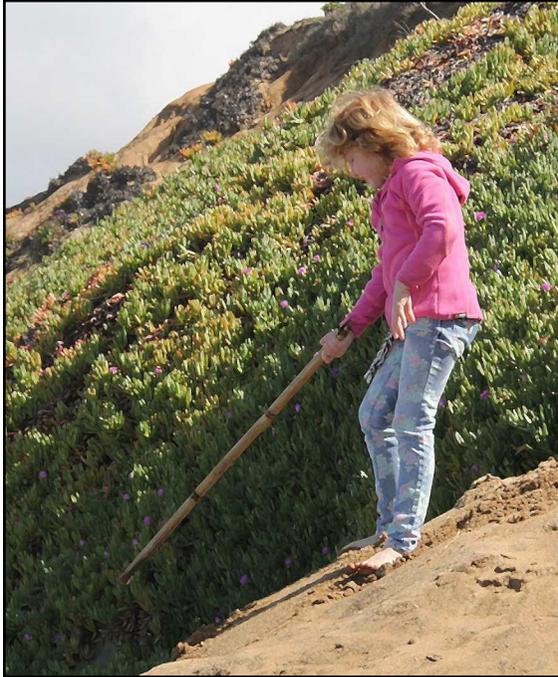
Granddaddy takes Griffin’s hand and starts walking again, forcing Griffin to ignore his sister.

“Look, Griffin ... language is a wonderful tool. It’s filled with hundreds of words for expression and the right expression for the right moment. A really super imaginative person learns lots of words in which to express himself.”

Griffin perks up. “You mean me? I have a great imagination!”

“Yes, most certainly. So why limit yourself to words that are offensive?”

“If words are tools,” Grandmama adds, “what would an artist’s tools be???”



"Colors!" Ridgely enthusiastically offers.

"Exactly!" Granddaddy says. "And how unimaginative it would be if an artist expressed with only one or two colors."

"How boring everything would be," responds Ridgely.

"Yeah, definitely not cool," adds her brother as he tosses a pebble into the water.

"Definitely not," his grandfather agrees. He then follows Griffin's lead by skipping a smooth stone across the tidewater.

Granddaddy continues as they walk again. "But the most important thing for all of us to understand is that God gives us these wonderful tools ... with which we can do whatever we like ... if we put the effort in."

Ridgely jumps in, "Just like my walking stick, that became

something I could write with in the sand!"

"That's right, sweetheart. And you will discover that with every new tool we find in life, new roads appear for us to explore."

Grandmama reaches out for her husband's hand. Looking at him, she adds, "Sometimes those roads take us on the most amazing journeys."

Ridgely is looking out at the sea, and then asks, "You mean like when we learn something new — is that a journey you're talking about?"

"Yep," Granddaddy confirms, "that's another tool in your box."

"What box?" Griffin looks at his grandfather.

"Meaning, it's something that's more to ... to ..." Granddaddy ponders.

"Expand the flow of our river!" Ridgely proudly interrupts.

"Right!" Granddaddy agrees. "My goodness, you are growing up, princess."

Ridgely is beaming.

He continues, "A new sport ... a new skill ... a new color combination to design with ... or a new way of expressing ourselves. They're all tools that expand 'our river.'"

"Whew — sounds like a lot of journeys," Griffin responds. "No wonder grown-ups get tired."

"True Griffin, life is made up of a lot of journeys," Granddaddy answers. "But often, what makes people tired is that they stop learning. They just do the same thing over, and over, and over again."

"We can't be afraid to try new things at any age," Grandmama says with a flare in her voice and a wave of her hand. "Life does favor the bold!"

"Yeah, well, I was bold with my language tool ... and look where that got me," Griffin interjects.

"Well, grandson," Granddaddy responds, "that's how we learn to use our tools. It's called maturity. It has to do with gaining 'wisdom.' And, you displayed very little of that, Griffin."

He looks at his grandfather and decides to ignore that comment. "So, I'll be able to find other tools, like I found my drumsticks on the beach?"

"If," Granddaddy says, "you keep yourself open to new possibilities, Griffin — you'll find more tools than you can count."

"In fact," Grandmama adds, "acquiring these tools in life is one of your main jobs, my little man."

"And, sometimes there are tools you can't even see. But they become very, very valuable," Granddaddy says as he put his arm around Griffin's shoulder.

Griffin looks up at his grandfather, "Yeah, like 'wisdom.'" He winks at Granddaddy, who is surprised at his grandson's insight.

Ridgely giggles. "You want your little stream to become a strong and mighty river, Griffin," his sister smiles. As she skips away, she adds, "And you're going to need all the tools you can get!"

“Can God make her stop teasing me, Granddaddy?” Griffin asks as Granddaddy stops him from chasing her.

"No, Griffin, God gave us free will. And free will is the most important gift if we're going to make anything our own. God can't make us do anything — or even make us be happy."

Ridgely comes back from running through the water that has now come close to them on the shore.

Grandmama grabs her granddaughter's hand. “But God can 'suggest' pretty hard.”

Griffin surrenders, “I know, I know. That’s about listening to God again!"

"But not just listening through our ears," Grandmama laughs gently.

"So how does God talk to those who really can't hear — or see Grandmama?" Ridgely questions.

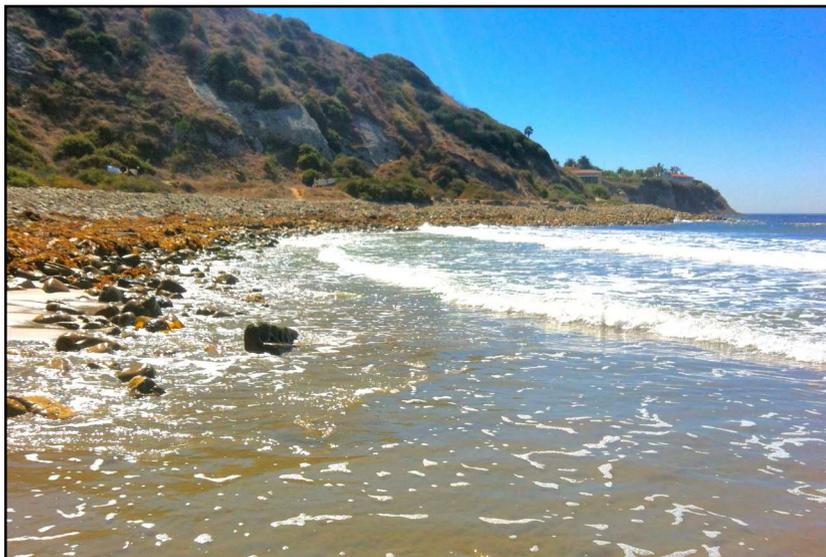
Grandmama swings her arm around Ridgely.

“They feel by Faith. That’s not just a nice little saying, sweetie. In fact ... several times in your short life, you've demonstrated that already."

“What??? When?” Her granddaughter stops and looks at her.

At that very moment, they're interrupted by Granddaddy's excitement.

"Wow ... we're here, kids!" Granddaddy exclaims. "The path has finally ended, up here just a few yards." He quickly leads the way as they all follow.



## CHAPTER 10

### Our New Destination!



They've now reached the farthest point of walking. From here, the cliffs turn a sharp corner — jutting out into the ocean. Everything after that is underwater, even at low tide. Although there are a few spaces with wet, hard sand in front of them, most of the narrow beach is covered with large rocks.

Standing on big boulders right next to the massive cliff walls, our warriors look all the way back — from where they've come — giving each other a high-five for how far they've traveled.

Ridgely then turns to her grandmother. "I want to know when I demonstrated the power of faith, Grandmama. And why didn't I know it?"

“Well, Ridgely ... last time you swam in the ocean, you 'felt by

faith.' It was the first time that I can recall where you faced a lot of really big waves. They were bigger than I've seen in a long time, and we were out where waves were coming at us quite fast. But I watched you closely, and you were in rhythm with the waves. You knew what to do even before you saw or heard anything."

"Oh yes ..." she ponders. "I remember that I could just 'feel' something. All my senses ... they just told me what to do."

"Exactly!"

"But Grandmama, what if I couldn't actually see ... or hear ...??"

"Okay ... well, those who can't see or hear have developed stronger senses. And extra senses that give them all the information they need."

They all walk down to the water's edge, where the sand is smooth.

"Actually, their other powers are often even greater than ours," Granddaddy adds, "so they can be more in tune with the rhythm of the Universe than we are."

Griffin speaks excitedly, "Like 'The Flash' — who can't see, but feels the vibration of someone around him! "

Griffin starts kicking at the air. "Wow ... I want to be like THE FLASH!!"

With that, he kicks sand up with his foot as he swings his leg high in the air. Unfortunately, he hasn't quite developed this technique, so he falls onto the sand on his bottom.

"Good going, Flash," his sister comments as she walks by him.

“That’s the order of things in ‘Star Wars,’ too!” Griffin happily takes her hand.

Granddaddy continues. “Look, guys ... man has realized ... again and again and AGAIN ... from sources around him ... and beyond him ... through hundreds of centuries ... that he truly possesses gifts like all of the special teachers you’ve just mentioned.”

“I’m a MAGIC PERSON!! I-AM-A-MAGIC-PERSON!!!” Griffin chants as he does his most happy dance.

Looking at Griffin dancing, Granddaddy replies, “Yes, you are! But you have to put a lot of study into it, Griffin. And a LOT of responsibility comes from these gifts. These gifts are the tools you use to guide your life every day — for the rest of your life.”

Griffin stops dancing. “A ... how much study?”

“Well, you can’t just expect to do nothing with your life Griffin, you have to work at it,” Ridgely chimes in.

Surprised at her comment, Grandmama says, “Wisely said little one. Everyone’s special tools need to be nourished. Your brain ... your body ....



“Actually, your thought was in the right place Griffin,” Granddaddy replies as he gives Griffin a hand-up. “But I believe that we’re given so many senses, and so many powers, that we spend a lifetime developing them.”

“And then sometimes, even longer learning to rely on them,” Grandmama comments, almost to herself.

“Like a mystic?” Ridgely happily asks.

“Like Harry Potter?” Again, Griffin spins around, trying to look like a wizard, and goes down.

“Like Jesus Christ — or, Saint Francis?” Ridgely asks thoughtfully.

“Like Merlin — or Yoda!!!” Griffin is waving his arms so violently he spins — and goes down.

“Or Buddha — or Mother Teresa.” Ridgely is trying to be serious.

“Or, Mickey!” Griffin eagerly says as he’s once again getting up from the sand.

Ridgely has almost had it and responds to her brother, “Mickey Mouse!!! ‘The Sorcerer's Apprentice’ is a cartoon movie – it’s pretend you numb skull. Mickey’s a made-up mouse, in a made-up story — and not real!”

“True,” Granddaddy comments, “but an incredible spark of man’s imagination created that mouse and put him in that story. That alone is an amazing power. Just might be something in there.”



Ridgely just glares at her Granddaddy for giving her annoying brother an “out.”

“Just saying ...” Granddaddy smiles. And then he leans into Ridgely, “And don’t call your brother a numb skull ... you’d hate it if someone older than you at school said that to you.”

Griffin is standing straight with his shoulders back, and slightly “puffed” up. “Not that Mickey ... the other one ... the one God talked to on the mountain and gave all those rules to.” He almost stomps his foot out of frustration.

“Ohh ... Moses.” Grandmama says. She and Granddaddy just smile quietly at each other.

“Yeah, Moses ... (to his sister) See, I know a mystic when I meet one!”

Grandmama reaches out for his hand. “Yes ... and some mystics have more to teach than others ... in fact, there are still a few interesting masters you have yet to learn about.” She winks at her grandson.

and your spirit — all must be taken care of the very best you can, every single day.”

"Through thick or thin. Rain or shine," Granddaddy chants.

Griffin looks at him. "Huh? What's thick or thin?"

"It's an expression grandson ... basically meaning 'no Matter what.'

Look, you owe it to God, and to all who love you — and to yourself — to not just take up space."

"But I'm going to be big someday like you, Granddaddy. Of course, I'm going to take up space," he says with a bit of a worried look on his face.

"No, no grandson," Granddaddy chuckles. "'Taking up space' is a figure of speech. Another expression. It means that we all have to contribute to this world — somehow."

"Oh. Got it. You adults use a lot of expressions."

"True, very true. But what I'm trying to say is that each one of us has a duty to take care of ourselves. You must learn to respect yourself. And,



reach out to others when possible.”

"And learn as much as you can!" Griffin interjects.

"And," Granddaddy responds quickly, "smile as much as you can — through thick or thin!"

With that, he knocks Griffin down gently on the sand and starts to tickle him.

As he's tickling his grandson, he shouts over the laughs, "Go forth and lead a life worth living grandson — a life well-realized as the poets say!"

Never one to pass up a good rough-housing, Ridgely jumps on Granddaddy's back and tries to tickle him. They're like a strange pyramid — that Grandmama can't resist pushing over. And they all fall so easily.

Grandmama helps them untangle themselves. As they stand and brush the sand off their clothes, she says, "Come on, family ... we're almost to the very end of the cliffs. The afternoon is marching on, and we'll want to start back soon."

"Why?" Ridgely inquires, "I thought Granddaddy said that we didn't have any appointment at the bottom of the hill?"

"What hill??? What bottom? Are we climbing up those huge cliffs?!" Griffin quickly turns his attention to his family.

"It's a skiing expression I told Ridgely about. Granddaddy's used it ever since we taught your Daddy and Aunt to ski when they were your ages."

"Oh," Griffin says, brushing himself off. "Another expression — got it."

"It just means that he didn't want to race down the hill. Translation ... 'we're on vacation, and we have no reason to hurry.'"

Griffin turns to Granddaddy, "Well, that's just silly. No wonder I almost beat you down the hill, Granddaddy."

"I'm up for a re-match next ski season Griffin." Granddaddy looks way across the bay where a structure is jutting out into the ocean, "But for now, I think Grandmama has someplace special she wants to go for a late afternoon dinner."

Ridgely and Griffin together, "Where!"

"The pier ... and it's quite a walk in the other direction from where the car is parked," Grandmama smiles as both children jump.

"And the car is way back there ..." Granddaddy points to just about halfway across the bay via the shoreline.

"But I think we have plenty of time for all the walking and the pier," Grandmama adds, "since your parents won't be home until late tonight."

"That's terrific!!" Griffin starts his dance again. "Maybe with my magic powers, I can run faster than the speed of light!!!"

"Oh, for crying out loud, you're such a ..."

"Don't say it, Ridgely ... words can be forgiven, but they can't be taken back," Grandmama just looks at her.

"...dork. I was just going to say 'a strange, cute, dork.'" Ridgely

grins.

Grandmama just shakes her head and turns away before she can smile.

Griffin speaks up, "I don't think I'm supposed to like that, am I?"

"You're supposed to ignore it, Griffin," Granddaddy said. "You can't control the world, but you can decide where to pick your battles, my little friend."

Then he leans down into Griffin and lowers his voice, "And — this one wasn't even worth the effort."

Granddaddy then tousles Ridgely's red hair as he grabs Griffin's hand. "Ignore your sister; you have a lifetime with her ... if you're very lucky."







From the cliffs, the gang now walks north toward the parking lot — and then continues on to the pier!

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **Back to the Start to Go Forward!**



Since so much exploring was done on the way to the cliffs, it was much faster getting back to where they started ... as it often is in the case of life's events.

Of course, several games of tag, and “I’ll race you to that rock,” certainly helped with the speed of getting back. Before they knew it, they were back to the beach just in front of where they parked their car. More people had come to enjoy the beauty of the day as new towels and umbrellas dot the sand. Up in the parking lot, their white convertible was still there waiting for them. But it would have to wait quite a while longer

— since another adventure was ahead for this merry group! Oh, what a day this was turning out to be!

After a quick bathroom stop and lots of water from a fountain, they headed north this time. A new place to explore was just up the beach about one-half a mile — the pier!

To be completely accurate, they had all been to the pier together before, but since this was a brand new day — they all agreed that it was definitely a new adventure.

The pier had always been great fun, and an absolutely terrific place to people watch. It is an old pier, but there are small stores and lots of vendors selling everything you could imagine — with an abundance of trinkets, shells, and cotton candy! There is a large beautifully painted Merry-Go-Round and a huge magnificent Ferris wheel from which you can see forever when you are at the very top. At the end of the pier, where everyone likes to fish, is their favorite restaurant — which is a good thing, because they are really building up an appetite. But first, they still had another walk to tackle; only this time, they will be walking north near the water's edge.

Just after they start out, Granddaddy picks up a shell, washes it off, shows it to Grandmama and the kids, and then puts it in his pocket.

“Will you put that in the big, round glass vase on your fireplace, Granddaddy?” Ridgely asks.

“Absolutely!” I’ve been collecting special shells for your

Grandmama from every beach we've walked on — all over the world.”

“Every single time you walked on any beach?” Griffin asks.

“Every time — if I find a shell that calls to me,” Granddaddy smiles.

“Wow, no wonder that vase is so full!”

Grandmama chimes in, “Every time I look at those shells, I ‘see’ moments of my life ... and how protected I was on every new adventure. Every time my eye catches a glimpse of all the shells in the glass, it makes me happy.”

“Even when you're depressed, Grandmama?”

“Especially then, grandson.”

Granddaddy takes Griffin's hand as they walk in the water that's trying to tickle their feet. “Griffin, there are treasures all along our path every day, if we really want to see them. I think of them as clues to the important things in my life. Blessings in a way.”

“Like your shells ... are they treasures?”

Ridgely jumps in, realizing that her brother is once again clueless. “No, Griffin, the shells are ‘symbols!’ Look at the waves, and the sun, and discovering sticks you can make music with ... and ...”

Grandmama laughs as she puts her hand on her granddaughter's shoulder. “Good start, sweet one, and the shells are truly magnificent in their own way. But actually, you two are major blessings in each other's lives.

Both children crunch up their faces at the thought of the other being a “blessing.”

Granddaddy adds. "As are your parents ... and the joy of accomplishments ... and people who will eventually become lifelong friends ..." Granddaddy stops and ponders. "And conquering lessons that we never thought we'd understand."

The two children just stare at their grandfather, blankly. Grandmama smiles as she decides to try a few different examples.

"Okay ... the feel of the sand, and the colors of a sunset that seem to go through your body. The taste of ice cream on a hot day — or the anticipation of a gift you know might come. The warmth of a hug — and the excitement of sharing a secret you know is really, really special."

"Oh yeah! Those are blessings." Griffin almost shouted over the nearby waves.

"Ohhhhh, yes ... I do love good secrets," Ridgely adds.

"Well, they're all gifts Divine Creation has placed on our path each day. Blessings that often come in the form of treasures surrounding us." Grandmama responds happily, as they all start to walk again. "The shells remind me of special places I was fortunate to be a part of throughout the world. But most important, each shell is a treasure that reminds me of the blessing of your grandfather. What a gift that's been!"

"Even when he snored ... or was angry, Grandmama?" Griffin asks.

"Even then ... the gift doesn't go away just because the moment is difficult."

Griffin shakes Granddaddy's hand to get his attention. "What if I'm

angry, or don't understand why something has happened, do I still get my gifts."

"Of course," Granddaddy responds. "But you've got to remember Griffin that when you get angry, you're usually going to get the opposite results you actually wanted from the people around you.

"Huh?" Griffin looks lost and stops for a second.

"Boy is that true," Ridgely almost whispers while she keeps walking.

Granddaddy smiles and continues, "Look, let's say that you want people to like you or do something for you. But you act out — you're unpleasant and angry. So people get very upset at you, and won't give you any positive attention. That's when the very results you don't want — become the very reaction you're creating. Think of it this way, Griffin, basically you're in control of how you want people to treat you."

"Gee, but sometimes it just feels good to get mad," Griffin reflects.



"Okay ... then you live with the results. It a simple process — but sadly, I've known healthy but depressed adults who still haven't figured that one out," Granddaddy responds.

"Uh, oh. So, no gifts ... no treasures?" Griffin stops and looks at Granddaddy.

"No, silly. God is incredibly strong. He can handle it. He can handle you being angry because you're hurt or confused. But you personally won't find any comfort until you take a deep breath and turn back towards God. Then you'll have a much better way of looking at things."

Grandmama adds, "It's then Griffin, that you're able to see the treasures on your path. And often, they're right there in front of you. Those treasures are yours — but you have to make an effort to look for them."

"How?" Her grandson inquires.

"By deepening your relationship with God ... spending more time with Him."

"Like you would with a wise and comforting friend!" Granddaddy injects.

"Right ..." Grandmama continues, "Because He is. He wants only the best for you. He wants you to prosper and grow."

"That sounds like my parents," Griffin adds.

"Exactly!" Grandmama high-fives Griffin. "Spending time with God is the best way to develop your deeper senses. The goal is to be aware of the things you can't see with your physical eyes — even as you live out your life

in the physical world."

Now Ridgely speaks up. "So, turning back towards God ... talking to God ... what does it do?"

"It's like turning on a light in a poorly lit room."

Grandmama then looks around at the bright sunny day before them. "Or letting the sun flood in through the window when you open the shutters. God is waiting for you to start the conversation. Once we do start that conversation, it's like we can 'see' and understand things we missed on our own."

"Well," Ridgely ponders, "that's gotta make you feel better. I never feel alone when Daddy turns on a night light for me."

Granddaddy picks up his granddaughter. "Bingo Ridgely. We see things a whole lot different when we share with God. Trust me; I've been there. Sharing gives us a big tool in our toolbox. And then, we're more prepared to attack life — instead of being pounded by it."

"Then, why would anyone not believe?" She replies.

"Yeah," her brother echoes, "I think I'm stick'en with God."

"As you follow your path in life, kids, 'sticking with God' is something you're going to have to remind yourself of many times. And that's okay," Granddaddy adds.

"Why will we have to remind ourselves?" she asks as Granddaddy puts her down to walk in the wet sand.

"Yeah," Griffin adds quickly, "won't God 'nudge' us?"

“Well,” Granddaddy responds to the two inquisitive faces looking back at him intently, “because as we face life and try to conquer it, we come to realize that there are things we don’t know. Maybe we’re not supposed to know them yet. And since we’re here to learn, ‘not learning’ can be really hard to digest.”

“Not making sense, Granddaddy,” Griffin chimes in again.

Grandmama is looking at Granddaddy, wondering how he's going to explain himself. He catches her, smirking at him.

Then he gets an idea.

“Let’s just say that some things are hidden from us because we’re not ready to understand them yet.”

“Like learning division before we can multiply ... I hate division,” Ridgely reveals.

“Do you know how to multiply Ridgely,” Grandmama asks.

“Well, sort of ... Daddy says, that I just have to practice more.”

“Then yes, Ridgely. It’s just like that,” Granddaddy smiles ... happy that Ridgely delivered such a fine example. “So sometimes we have to first do our best — and then test our ‘faith’ muscle.”

“But isn't that just like 'hoping' or 'wishing?'” Ridgely asks.

“No,” her grandmother answers. “True faith is believing without a doubt in something we can't yet see, or even completely understand. And that takes practice and real trust.”

“Okay, but how do we get there ... how do we practice?” Ridgely



responds, getting a little impatient.

"That brings us back to sharing with God — and listening. Sometimes listening means being aware of signs that tell us that God is still talking to us as we move through our day."

Griffin jumps into the conversation. "Signs? Like treasures that come into our lives, Grandmama?!"

"Oh, yes, sweetheart. And signs also come through other people and unexpected events. God is actually talking to us all the time. He absolutely loves watching over us. That's why he gives us so many powers, my mighty little Yoda."

"Can I feel when he's talking to me Grandmama," Griffin inquires, "just in case I'm doing something else?"

"Un-huh ... you'll feel it once you're tuned in," she smiles at her grandson.

Ridgely then responds, "We make an effort to listen, and to see the signs He leaves for us — so we know he's talking to us. Then, we know that God's taking care of everything."

"Right," her grandmother agrees.

"And, that process is 'Faith?'"

"Yes ... absolutely. That's how we build our 'Faith Muscle.'"

"Another muscle!!! Mom and Dad keep telling me to exercise my muscles!" Griffin calls out.

"True, true, Griffin!" Granddaddy says enthusiastically. "And as that muscle gets stronger, we can eventually understand even the most difficult things."

Grandmama leans over to pick up a long sturdy stick. "Faith is knowing that whatever you're working on — a goal, a dream, a skill, meeting a new friend — is going to work out. You can go on with your life happier — and that puts you in a position to see new opportunities."

"Like going through a new door that wasn't there before," Granddaddy adds as he looks to see what Grandmama is doing.

"Ahhh, but we have to be on the look-out for those doors ..."

Grandmama interjects. She has stopped to draw a very large door around a shell in the wet sand.



“Just like we’re looking for the treasures!” Griffin adds as he watches Grandmama draw in the wet sand.

“Yes, sweetheart.”

“Doors and treasures ... wow, that’s a lot to look for.”

“Don’t worry ... God gives you all the tools you need.”

“Tools!!! Now I have to find tools too!?! Where? And what do they look like? Like a shovel? I like shovels!”

"Well," she laughs gently, "I was thinking more in line with tools like your talents, and your personality traits."

Everyone is now gathered around her drawing.

"But for now ... let’s just say that this shell I found on the beach called to me to draw something in the damp sand. And what you said inspired me, Griffin. So, I drew a door with the shell as the door-knob."

“But you picked up the shell, Grandmama — how was that God working through you?” Ridgely said.

"True, I picked up the shell. But when I awoke this morning, I didn’t know I was going to do this today, " pointing to the drawing, "... use that shell in a new way. I was led to it by the tools around me. At the same time, I was listening to what was being said — and I could 'feel' myself being guided. It was like a 'spark' inside me."

Grandmama starts to draw a big happy face right in the middle of the door.

"All I had to do was pick up the shell and start drawing." She turns

and looks at her grandchildren. "So you see, my tool was my imagination and looking at things around me in a new way. I was being guided, and God provided everything I needed to draw my sand painting!"

She hands the stick to Ridgely as she puts her arm around Griffin. "And that, my dear grandchildren, is the powerful secret I carry with me every day of my life."

"Which part is the secret, Grandmama?" Ridgely asks as she slowly twirls the drawing stick.

"All of it, sweetheart. Really everything we've talked about. I know it's a lot, but the magic secret is pretty simple."

"Okay, Grandmama, I'm ready to hear it!" Griffin jumps into the middle of her sand painting, sits down cross-legged, and looks up at her. "Lay it on me!"

"With pleasure, my little Yoda. It's three simple facts." Grandmama takes the drawing stick from Ridgely and draws a number "1" in the hard sand.

"Well, first. God — Divine Creation — is in us and around us. And is to be called on, always."

"Second," she draws a number "2" in the sand. "With that assurance, we know that wherever we go, we'll have the power to find every tool we need to live life ... without worry."

She then draws a number "3" in the sand. "And, third — we'll be protected while searching!"

"Wow, that's a pretty good secret," Griffin exclaims as he stands up. "I sure hope I can remember it."

Granddaddy playfully trips his Grandson into a sitting position back onto the sand. "Oh, you will ... you'll have lots of help remembering along the way."

Grandmama helps Griffin up and brushes him off.

"And that's the special secret that you will carry with you everywhere ... for as long as you walk this Earth!"

"Ouuuuu, I like secrets!" Ridgely exclaims as she starts to draw in the sand. She draws a simple, 'I <3 U' — a note she often leaves her Grandmama when Ridgely heads back home with her parents. Drawing it here in the sand today makes her feel very close to something special.

"Well, my secret is your special secret as well." Grandmama bends down and kisses the top of Ridgely's head.

"What ... what??? What good is a secret if it belongs to everyone!" Griffin asks.

"The best kind." Granddaddy says as he takes Griffin's hand again to start walking. "The more people that know it, the better we all are together. God has promised — over and over and over again to everyone, of all religions — that he would always be with us."

Grandmama is walking next to Griffin. "If we let him, Divine Creation can lift worries and fear off of us ... and give us a sense of peace in everything we tackle."

“He does all the work?” Ridgely inquires as she slips her hand into her grandmother’s.

“Well, a lot of it,” Grandmama smiles. “But it’s definitely a team effort. He takes care of the big stuff and in organizing each of our own priorities — which leaves us free to use all those special powers God created in us.”

"Our work," Granddaddy continues, "is in refreshing our friendship with God every day ... and being thankful ... and in believing."

"Ah, ha! That’s ‘faith’ again!" Griffin chuckles.

"Yep, just like we discussed Griffin ... relax ... talk to God and listen in return — then take that to build your faith. You'll have a super-strong muscle in no time."

“What if we forget to talk to God each day?” Griffin looks worried.

“Would you forget to talk to a family member each day when you’re living together?" Granddaddy asks.

“I wish he would,” Ridgely says.

“Dry up, Ridgely,” Griffin tries to ignore her. “No, Granddaddy, we all talk together every day and night.”

Again, Ridgely speaks, “And my brother talks, and talks, and talks, and ...”

Granddaddy keeps Griffin from reaching out for his sister. Ridgely grins impishly at her brother as she walks away.



## CHAPTER 12

### The Walk North!



They all start walking again in the tidewater. Since the water is much warmer in the early afternoon sun, they just enjoy moving through the surf silently for a while. This gives everyone a chance to really look at the magnificent world around them — the different birds, the sand crabs, even the seaweed coming in with the waves.

Suddenly Granddaddy shouts for them to look as he points to where the waves are breaking only a few yards from them. At that moment, a group of dolphins is traveling parallel to the beach, jumping high out of the water, over and over! What a thrill to be watching them.

Our merry group has walked a good distance, and now they are over halfway to the pier. They can see all the activity taking place on the busy

boardwalk — although everyone still looks very small next to the big Ferris wheel.

They watch the dolphins until they disappear from sight, and then start walking in the surf again. Grandmama can tell that Ridgely has been thinking a lot by just the way she's walking in and out of the surf. Finally, Ridgely takes her hand. This lets Grandmama know that her granddaughter is about ready to explore something new she's been thinking about.

“Grandmama, what happens if we don’t listen to God?”

“Well, you have free will, so listening is your choice,” Grandmama responds, “but if it’s really, really important, God will tap you on the shoulder ... just to remind you that you’re not alone.”

“Oh ... hmmm,” Ridgely says, as she watches the wet sand come over her feet.

“Tap me on the shoulder! I don’t get it,” Griffin horns in.

“Oh, you will ... you definitely will, my Grandson!” Granddaddy chuckles.

“You’re a lot like me ... and God has had to tap me on the shoulders many times over my many years!”

"Is it like when Mom reminds me that I have to brush my teeth?"

"Again, with the brushing. He really hates doing that," Ridgely snickers as she kicks the sand.

"Well, let's see Griffin," Grandmama ponders, "that depends. Do you have to be reminded to brush so often because you really forget? Or is

it because you decide that you don't want to brush your teeth?" Griffin doesn't answer. "Be honest here. " She looks at her grandson.

Griffin hesitates but then answers.

"Well ... usually ... I just don't want to take the time to do it."

Grandmama smiles and continues walking. "That's a fair answer."

Griffin smiles.

She continues. "Then yes, it's exactly like that, Griffin. God, the Universe, and all our Guardian Angels have a wonderful way of reminding us to tune in and listen. And, like your Mom reminding you, it's always for our better good."

Granddaddy sees Griffin's smile disappear. "But Griffin, being reminded to listen to our inner voice of God is not just about things we don't want to do. We're being guided through everything."

"The thick and the thin?" Griffin chuckles slightly, pleased that he can use one of Granddaddy's expressions.

"Yep, through the really good experiences, and the difficult challenges. God is going to keep on tapping until the day we die. Tap, tap, tap!"

"Is he done tapping on your shoulder, Granddaddy? I mean, you're not ready to leave yet?" Griffin's eyebrows are crinkled as he looks at a man he loves very much.

"Oh, I'm so far from done, Griffin!" Griffin is still looking intently at his grandfather.



“I have so much more to live for Griffin. I plan to stand proudly at your college graduation.”

Griffin smiles. "Good. That's forever away."

Granddaddy continues. "But, no matter what ... I'm not worried. We will always have each other.”

“But ...” Griffin says as his expression turns down again, "I don't like it when adults say 'no matter what.'"

“No, no, my grandson, don't frown. Things always change. Change is actually one of the few things you can guarantee in life! In fact, my mom would always say, ‘You might as well embrace change, because it's a constant part of our journey.’

Granddaddy squats down on his legs to look at Griffin in the eye. "But hold tight onto the fact that what's really important never leaves ... the love we share and what we mean to each other.”

“Okay, Granddaddy, I trust you,” Griffin responds as he grasps his hand even harder. Granddaddy gives him a kiss on the forehead and stands back up.

Grandmama steps close and cradles her grandson's face in her hands.

“That gets us back to our secret, Griffin. The gift of God’s presence — and continued guidance. He makes sure we never really lose someone we love.”

“We should be really happy; we have people to love Griffin!”

Ridgely jumps in ... trying not to show that she's reassuring her brother.

"And sharing happiness with God is important too, right, Grandmama?"

“Oh, definitely Ridgely. That’s a way of showing appreciation — which is most important!” Grandmama smiles and takes Ridgely’s hand again. "We share with God when we’re super happy ... even if there is no one else is around to share it with. It's like saying ... 'thanks!'"

“And that makes God happy?” Griffin brightens up.

"Well ... aren't I happy when you share something special with me?"

Granddaddy asks.

“Oh, yes!!!”

"Then let us know that God's even happier than that! In fact ... he loves to hear us laugh! He delights in it!!!"

Granddaddy breaks into his silly happy-dance again, taking a few steps closer to the ocean and kicking the water that’s now around his ankles.

“Granddaddy is sure happy today,” Ridgely whispers as she giggles with her Grandmama.

Granddaddy ends his dance with a slight bow to his family.

"And talking to God makes you a happier person ... like Granddaddy?" Ridgely asks. She and Grandmama step closer to Granddaddy and Griffin so that the water covers their feet.

“Oh, yes. I promise. You may not want to do a happy dance every day, but you will find yourself happier, and more giving." Grandmama does a little twirl in the water. "And, you'll be amazed by how much more you'll be able to accomplish.”

Griffin hangs his head slightly as he wiggles his toes in the water. "Just by being happy? Even in soccer? I stink at soccer. I don't know why I still love it.”

Granddaddy steps closer to his grandson and puts his arm around his shoulders.

“Yep, by being happier, Griffin — you'll be able to accomplish more, especially in soccer. In fact: Let's think of life as a sport!"

"A sport?"

"Absolutely! Let's call it, 'The game of life!' There are wins and losses — and lessons from both. But attitude, and learning, trying hard, and participating, all contribute to this incredible game."

“So what's God ... my secret weapon?"

“How right you are, Merlin!" Granddaddy beams.

Griffin whips his head around surprised, and quite pleased that he's given the right answer.

"When you continue to find God, you become fuller and better within yourself," Granddaddy reflects. "Then, that's demonstrated in everything you do in life. So, like in sports, you're constantly in 'training.' That continual training gives you the confidence to face the ultimate game

— your journey in this world.”

“And on that journey,” Grandmama continues, "you will have something that can 'hold you up' when you feel ... well, as you do right now about soccer."

"Really???"

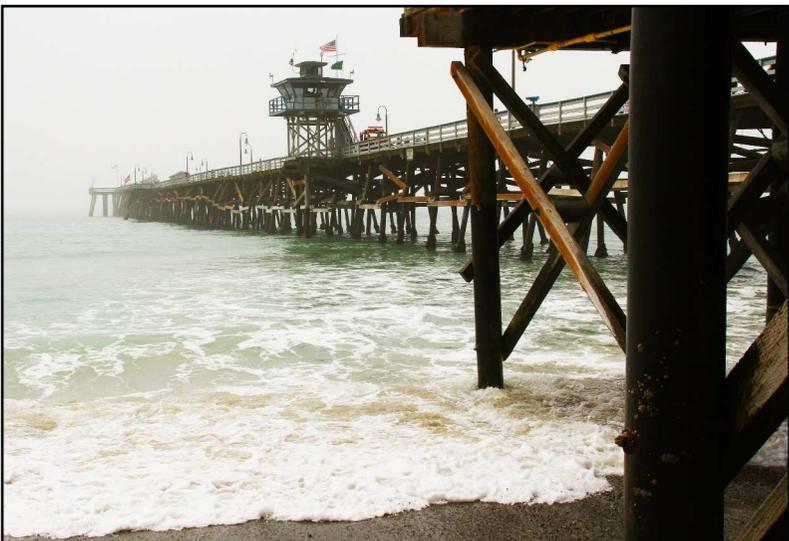
"Honest. Turning to God is a way to find answers when you don't know where else to turn.” She leaves the water and moves towards the sand. “And there will be lots of times like that.”

The rest join her as they leave the shallow surf.

Grandmama leans down and brushes the sand from Griffin's legs.

“And there's a wonderful bonus grandson. When you are happier overall, others will certainly want to be around you."

Standing up, she quickly messes Griffin's thick hair with her dry hand. "You can actually become a ray of light to others."



Griffin beams.

“But, I want to be a light too,” Ridgely says as Granddaddy finishes brushing off her sandy legs.

He answers her, “You can be — both of you. It’s up to you.”

Granddaddy looks all-around — at the waves, the sky, and the sand.

“You see Ridgely and Griffin; you are a great part of all this creation. This is your birthright ... this is all of our birthrights. So, the power of this creation is both with you — and works through you — wherever you are.”

“Like being a special mystic!” Griffin jumped at the thought of his own uniqueness.

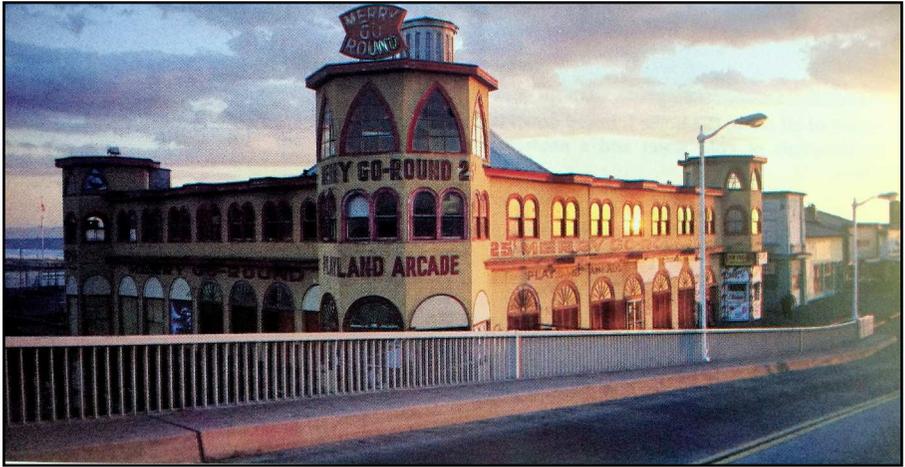
“Just like that,” Granddaddy agrees. He then pulls his grandson close to him, wrapping a big arm around Griffin’s shoulders.

For the first time in a while, Grandmama looks out in the distance and says, “Wow ... we’re almost at the pier!”

“And look at our beautiful Merry-Go-Round,” Ridgely observes as she looks in awe at the pier before her.

“Just perfect for a family of mystics to ride,” Grandmama adds as she takes Ridgely’s hand.

“How fitting!” Granddaddy comments as he links hands with Ridgely and then Griffin, as all four of them excitedly head for the nearby boardwalk.



## CHAPTER 13

### The Pier!

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The excitement of the pier has always been magical. The pier has stood valiantly through millions of people — young and old — walking over its heavy wood planks. That, and a series of pounding storms, has tested its strength. And still, it stands strong.

Generations of families have come to the pier. Memories of long ago continue to linger and mix with the distinctive ocean air. The famous Merry-go-Round with its hand-painted horses welcomes the young and the old to ride — while dreams and hopes for the future continue to be captured in the energy of the boardwalk.

Inside the grand old building where the glorious Merry-Go-Round is housed are lots of other fun things to do as well. Ridgely loves the



bungee swing that lets her do somersaults in the air. And Griffin completely adores the long rubber slide that looks like a small mountain, leaving his stomach feeling like it was in his chest by the time he gets off.

And then, of course, there are video games — some of the games as old as their parents! Granddaddy has gotten lots of quarters, which never seem to last long enough to outwit the machines. But they all keep cheering each other along.

Everyone in the group plays for the longest time, and laughter becomes the secret code for the day. In fact, it's hard not to see a smiling face among the crowds of people. The pier just has that effect on everyone.

Two hours later, they have pretty much-conquered everything there is to do, so they enjoy a leisurely walk to the very end of the pier. As Griffin jumps up on the guard rail that keeps people from falling into the ocean, Ridgely decides that she needs to correct him; for his own good, of course.

“You're going to fall in ...” Ridgely exclaimed when her brother had just hoisted himself up on his elbows at the edge of the thick pier railing.

“I'm just trying to get a better look at the water below. Leave me

alone – I’m fine. Grandmama said I could anyway.”

“You’re clumsy, Griffin. I just know you’re going to fall. I see it happening, Griffin. You’ll be in such trouble with Dad and Mom.”

“You’re clumsier than I am! You trip all the time!!!” Griffin retorts.

“I’m only clumsy because I’m bad at sports ... you’re clumsy because you are mean!”

"Whoooa. Stop this!" Grandmama says. "We’ve had a lovely day," lifting Griffin down. "And even though you’re both tired, church is still going on inside you."

With that, Granddaddy takes Ridgely’s hand, and they start to walk. "And, you’re not showing us much respect for being here with you."

Grandmama and Griffin fall in line after them.

"Nor are you two being particularly enjoyable," Grandmama continues. "the way you two are acting makes me feel like I want to be somewhere else, with people who are fun and interesting."

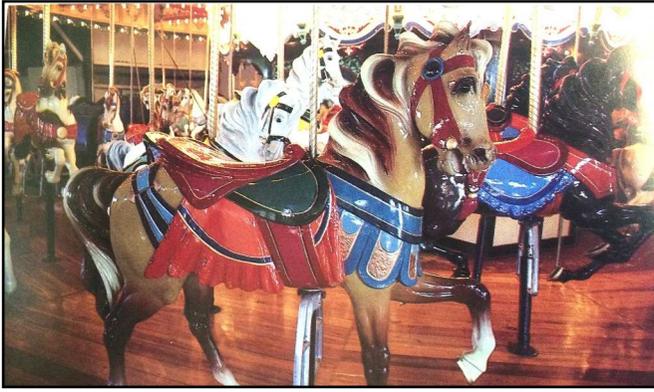
"No!!!" Both grandchildren say in unison.

"Okay. Calm down," Grandmama responds. "It’s obviously time to eat. Then after dinner, we’ll discuss how you turn your 'words into wands' every day."

Griffin speaks up. "I want to know about wands!"

"And so you shall learn, right after dinner ... but only if you can pull yourselves together."

Granddaddy quickly adds, "I’m giving you both the benefit of being



hungry. Better shape up and don't disappoint me.”

They all walk in silence until they reach the very end of the pier, where they enter their favorite restaurant. Quietly, Ridgely and Griffin give each other one last scowl before they go through the door.

By the time they finish eating, it's late afternoon, but still lovely out. The sun is not as warm, and most of the crowds on the pier have thinned out.

So, the now “happier” clan, finds a comfortable seating area on the pier just outside the restaurant. The view is magnificent. In one direction, they can see clearly out to sea, all the way to the horizon — and in the other direction, the activity of the pier.

There just happens to be four empty director chairs arranged around a copper fire pit that has a small crackling fire burning. This seems to be just the right atmosphere for a good family chat.

As soon as they sit down and get comfortable, Griffin anxiously opens the conversation. “What about this wand you were going to tell us about Grandmama.”

## CHAPTER 14

### Your Words . . . are Definitely Your Wands!

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The small flickering fire is just enough to make everything seem cozy, especially now that a soft breeze is kissing the pier in the late afternoon sun.

Grandmama hands everyone a special after-dinner treat — four huge cookies she bought from a vendor on the pier earlier when everyone was playing games. There were smiles all around as she gives each family member a big, gooey, beautifully baked treat.

“Okay, Griffin, let’s get into how you use these special wands every day — and every night,” Grandmama says as she sits back with her cookie and carefully places her feet on the edge of the fire pit.

“First, we know that our body — and our life force within our body — is one big energy field ... right?”

“Oh yes ... I learned that in science this year.”

“I thought you had, Ridgely. Do you understand what that means, Griffin?”

“Sure. Dad said that everything is energy — even a rock. But every time I look at a rock, it looks real still to me. Maybe they’re just lazy.”

“I think they just vibrate at a really low, low level.” Granddaddy smiles.

“Well ... I can’t see any of this vibration from a lot of things,” Griffin replies.

“Ah, that’s why you have to accept the unseen!” Ridgely chimed in, sitting up a little straighter.

“Correct you are!” Granddaddy reaches over and congratulates her with a hearty handshake.

Grandmama is finishing the first chewy bite of her tasty cookie when she continues.

“That energy in us can be directed to do amazing things. In fact, we are constantly creating mental pictures – which are a powerful form of energy. These pictures — our ‘thoughts’ as we call them — come about through the words we say, or the mental images we produce.”

“Oh, I have a lot of thoughts ... in fact, Mom says that my mind never seems to rest.”

“And she is so very right, Griffin. You have a particularly active mind ...”

“And a really big ...,” Ridgely started.

“Ridgely ...” Granddaddy raises his eyebrow at his granddaughter, and nobody messes with Granddaddy when he raises his eyebrow.

“... big ... imagination. A really awfully big imagination.” Ridgely finishes and then smiles cleverly at her Grandfather.

Grandmama winks at Granddaddy and quickly continues to make sure the conversation stays on the right track.

“Well, all these images and words are constantly being stored in a very special room in our mind. We view these pictures over and over again. Often they are pieces of the dreams we have for ourselves. — and the most important images of how we see ourselves. They are also things we privately ‘tell’ ourselves about who we are and what we can or cannot accomplish.”

Granddaddy now continues. Grandmama views this as a perfect opportunity to take another bite of her cookie.

"We can also store our fears in that special room. And, most of the





time we don't even know we're doing it."

"You mean fears like when something scares us on TV?" Ridgely questions.

"Well, that usually concerns our physical being. And, as fun, as it is to be entertained that way — most of the time, it doesn't have a whole lot of lasting effect. But the worse kind of fears are the ones you never see but always think about."

"Like what?" Griffin adds. "What could be worse than scary monsters?"

"Constantly seeing ourselves fail at an activity, we want to be good at — and often, before we even try. Or, thinking that we're not worthy of a person's friendship. Or, worrying that someone you care about is never going to be happy, or safe. Basically, it's concentrating on the failure instead of seeing and believing in the success of something you're concerned about."

At that point, Granddaddy picks up a small piece of firewood stacked nearby and places it on the fire. The energy of the new wood sends the

flames, smoke, and sparks quickly up into the air. He continues.

"Then we send these images — the really good and the not-so-good images — out through our energy into the energy of the Universe."

Grandmama continues, "And eventually, what we imagined appears physically in our lives. We've drawn it to us."

"Okay, Grandmama, I'm lost," Ridgely announces. "And since I'm 10 ... getting lost is very hard for me to do."

She points at Griffin, who is enjoying the last few bites of his cookie, "Imagine how my poor brother feels."

"Huh ... how can she know how I feel? I don't know how I feel?" Griffin retorts.

"I think she was trying to be gracious, Griffin. It's what we call a 'left-handed compliment.'" Granddaddy adds.

"Hmmm ... I don't think it felt like a compliment." Griffin states as he finishes his cookie.

"Exactly. Now you know why it's called 'left-handed.'" Granddaddy says as he pops the last bite of his cookie in his mouth.

Grandmama is also finishing her cookie and realizes that everyone is now looking at her.

"Okay, Ridgely. I think I can explain this better."

"Oh, you're going to draw a better 'picture' for us, Grandmama?" Ridgely can hardly contain herself with her cleverness.

"Actually, my clever one, that's exactly what I'm going to attempt."

Grandmama grins, somewhat deflating Ridgely's moment.

"When we're young ... we're not even aware that by our words and our thoughts — said out loud or silently — we're actually planting these images deep in our mind. Where we plant them is in our special room that is called our Subconscious."

Ridgely jumps in ... "Oh, planting ... like a garden."

"Somewhat ... yes, that's a good way to think of it, Ridgely," Granddaddy reflects as he licks his sticky fingers. "Visualizing something over and over and storing it in our special room, is a lot like tending a garden."

"Now our Subconscious rests in a very important part of the amazing mechanism we call our brain," Grandmama continues as she hands Granddaddy a small damp paper towel for his fingers. "And most of the time we're not even aware that we're storing the images there. But we are, all day and all night."

"And t-h-e-n," Granddaddy says with great suspense.

"Then ... we send those images out into the world through our powerful energy. It's an energy that's always vibrating; always sending and always receiving. That's just the function of our energy field."

"Is that how the animals 'talked' to me at the LIONS, TIGERS & BEARS — vibrating their thoughts to me?"

"Exactly Griffin ... That's how we all can communicate if we work on it."

"Boy ... another power!!!" Wow." Griffin says.

"Is that what's call SSP Granddaddy?" Ridgely inquires softly.

"SSP ... SSP?" Granddaddy is obviously in a quandary.

"Our cousins were saying something about it last week ... a different form of communication, but I don't think they knew what they were talking about." Ridgely observes.

"You only say that because the twins are two years older than you ... and you don't like that they're smarter than you," her brother teases.

A light bulb has gone off in Granddaddy's head. "Ohhhhh ... Was it, E-S-P Ridgely? Does that sound like what the twins were trying to explain?"

"That was it, Granddaddy!" Ridgely has wisely chosen to ignore her brother.

"Yes, sweetheart," Grandmama answers, "that's another important sense that we're born with. Within our energy field, we have the ability to see, hear, touch, feel, smell — and transmit thoughts without physically talking. That sense is called 'Extra Sensory Perception.' That's what Kaitlyn and Courtney were trying to describe to you. But, I think we'd better save that for another discussion."

"You mean there's more!" Griffin speaks up.

"Oh ... there's so so so much more my grandson," Granddaddy laughs. "But for now ... let's just concentrate on where we were coming from. Our special room — the Subconscious — and how our energy field sends our innermost thoughts and images out into the world."

"Yeah ... and how my 'big imagination' gets me in trouble." Griffin darts a look at his sister. "I can't help it if I have a large storehouse."

"That's what you want, Griffin. The more you learn, and the more you observe, the more tools your imagination has to work with. But you want the right kind of tools. Thoughts and images in your special room that don't tear you down."

Grandmama adds with a big smile, "That's why it's so important to play make-believe when we're young. We imagine — actually visualize — the most wonderful things for ourselves over and over. Those images are stored — or planted in your case, Ridgely — in our Subconscious."

"Thus, we have to be careful to store in there only that which we want to draw into our lives — or what we want for others." Granddaddy looks at Griffin.

"Got it!" Griffin gives a thumb-up to his grandfather. "So, if I want it to snow ... I see snow — and skiing down the most fun hill there is!"

Griffin starts to get carried away with his new-found "power."

"And I think about the dog I want ... or ... maybe the grades I want ... or maybe, maybe ..."

"I think you've got it," Granddaddy jumps in. "But you won't get the grades without the work. So see yourself working and being surprised at how much you're learning."

"Hmmm ... okay, so I still have to work at it, Granddaddy. Roger that."



“But basically, you're on the right track Griffin” Grandmama reaches over and tugs on Griffin's elbow to sit him back down.

"But there's no actual set time — no specific day or hour – in which your images will be delivered to you. When these images materialized in the physical world is really up to the Universe."

"God has a lot of coordinating to do," Ridgely tells her brother with a rather superior voice.

"How true!" Granddaddy said. "Wheels are turning, and things are happening to make it all possible. We might not see the results of it at the time we think we should."

"Oh boy ... are we going to talk about 'Faith' again?" Griffin inquires. "That's beginning to look like a bigger task than I thought."

"That's why they call it 'Faith.' But practice makes the task easier," Granddaddy winks at his grandson.

Grandmama lets Ridgely move into her lap, as she continues.

"Right now ... the most important thing to remember is that we

impress huge amounts upon our Subconscious every day — with thoughts about ourselves, others, our friends, our family, our community. Absolutely everything! Therefore, we want to be selective about what we impress deep in the storehouse. That’s why, when you say something over and over again — good or bad — you are creating a powerful image with many layers.”

Granddaddy excitedly continues, “And then, since we are a mighty energy field — a much bigger and stronger energy field than we ever imagined — we send a picture of our images out into the world ... into the Universe.”

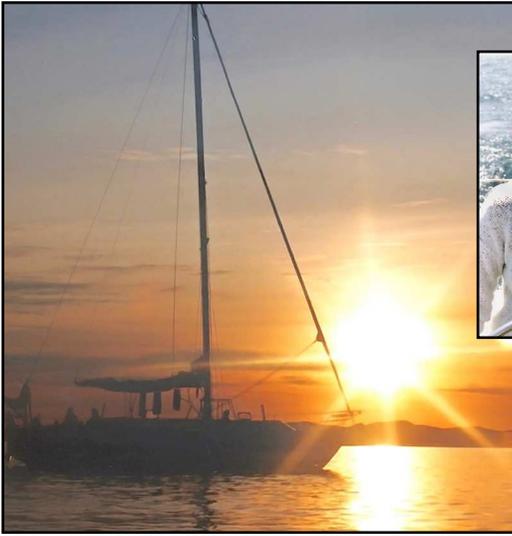
“And that’s the biggest energy field of all,” Grandmama exclaims. “Those powerful images become physical ... and their energy is what we drawback to us.”

“Like a magnet!” Granddaddy stands up. “The Universe sends back, in a physical form, exactly what we pictured or thought about over and over again!”

The curious faces of both grandchildren are looking from one grandparent to the other. They’re fascinated, but not completely sold on this conversation.

Ridgely turns on Grandmama's lap and looks directly at her, “Better paint another picture, Grandmama. One with a story.”

“Yeah ... tell us about how it boomerangs back on you!” Griffin now crosses his legs in his chair, anticipating a good story.



*Grandmama's  
Dream Fulfilled*

## CHAPTER 15

### The Boomerang!

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The late afternoon sun is mild, and the activity on the pier has slowed way down with the anticipation of twilight in a few short hours.

Grandmama is thinking of all her many experiences and is trying to come up with the one that would provide the perfect example for Ridgely and Griffin's request. A specific image that was 'planted' many, many times in her special room — her Subconscious — and then materialized later for her in the physical world.

“Well, okay, but there are so many ... big and small ... you see something over and over again in your mind's eye without realizing, and ...” Her voice trails off.

She looks at them, watching, waiting. Suddenly, she gets a really

good flash — and knows just the story to tell them. Ridgely has moved back onto her own chair to see Grandmama better, and now Grandmama snuggles back into her chair to get comfortable and starts.

“When I was a young girl living on a big hill that jettied out into the ocean, I would drive down the winding streets overlooking the bay. I would see all the sailboats out there. Each time, I would think ... ‘someday, that’s where I’m going to be!’

“Many years later, Granddaddy and I learned to sail, and we sailed a boat from a harbor far up the coast from where I grew up. It was early morning, and your Daddy and Aunt were still asleep, snuggled under blankets on the deck next to where I was at the helm. Just as Granddaddy was coming up from below with a hot cup of coffee for me — he heard me give out a small 'gasp.'

“I was just rounding the coastline, coming into the very bay I had seen throughout my young life. It had been a long time since I had thought about the image of those sailboats way down below me when I was young — or my declaration of ‘someday!’ But now, that picture of the boats in the bay below me came racing back.

“Only now, here I was, part of all those many sailboats, in that bay, looking up at the very mountain I used to drive down. Time stood still ... and I was on the other side of the picture, looking back at me. The image I placed in my Subconscious – hundreds of times – was sent out into the world, and then it was manifested in my life — and in a way and time I

never suspected.”

“Wow ... that’s power.” Ridgely looks from her Grandmama into the dancing flames.

“That ... my beautiful granddaughter is a specific 'Law of the Universe' that everyone can use.” Grandmama smiles.

Ridgely looks back to her Grandmama and sits up straight again. She thinks, takes a deep breath, and then starts.

“Let me get this straight. Repeated thoughts are planted in our Subconscious. Then our Subconscious sends those pictures – those forms of energy — out into the world.”

Everyone is listening intently. Ridgely is concentrating on Grandmama, who is nodding her head 'yes,' as Ridgely finishes her thought.

“Where those images are kind of like a blueprint that the Universe then makes real?”

“Right!” Grandmama responds. “Those images — materialize. They are given life.”

“And then ... that is what we draw right back to us? Like a magnet?”  
Ridgely finishes.

“Well-said Ridgely! I think she’s got it!” Granddaddy beams.

“I think that’s ‘a power,’” Griffin joins in.

“Okay. Power it is.” Grandmama laughs.

Granddaddy leans in on his chair. “It’s also called visualization. When I was little and got sick, I used to see little men go inside my throat

and dig out all the bad hurting stuff — and throw it far away from me, where it would just disappear. When I would awake in the morning, I wouldn't hurt anymore. I never doubted that it worked.”

“Wow!” Griffin exclaims. “Little tiny men in your throat! Merlin’s invisible elves!!!”

Ridgely then asks, “But how do you get a bad idea or image out of your mind.”

“Oh — glad you asked,” Grandmama replies. “That’s where the Super-Conscious comes in.”

“Huh?”

“Well, we have the Conscious mind ... all those things in this physical world that we see and work with every day. It’s a storage place for all of those bits and pieces.

“Then we have the Subconscious... basically, a place where we store everything that makes up who we are, and what we want to be — along with thousands of memories —also, our impressions of others and what we see as their place in our lives.

“Then there’s the Super-Conscious. It is deeply believed that it is where Divine Spirit — God — resides within you from the moment you're



born to the moment you die. This is where all perfect ideas, and all perfect pictures, and all perfect answers are for you. It is from here you draw your powers."

"Boy ... I like that. Nice to know that God has a place to reside!" Griffin chimes in, with a new burst of energy.

Grandmama winks at her Grandson and continues. "You work with the Super-Conscious to create new images. You have to do the work, but it's easy when you have the Super-Conscious working with you; at your side, step-by-step."

"Is that what some people call meditation?" Ridgely asks.

"Or prayer?" Griffin says.

"It is ... on both counts." Granddaddy responds.

The sun is quite a bit lower in the sky — even now, the small dancing flames before him light Granddaddy with a glow that wasn't seen before.

Griffin sheepishly asks another question. "Can I keep Johnny from bullying me ... by seeing him trip on the ground?"

"No," Granddaddy responds. "Absolutely not. You can only ask for good, never harm."

"Why not? Aren't I fighting something that's harmful??" Griffin questions.

"Oh yes ... you are definitely fighting something, or someone, that's harmful. But, you have to go about it the right way."

"How???"

"You ask for a good outcome ... and the right and good path will open for you ... you will automatically draw it to you."

"You see, Griffin," Grandmama adds, "When you're working with God, no evil is accepted. You may fight evil — and that means you may have to do some difficult things — but you cannot be evil. The doors are closed on that subject. And, you don't want to be on the other side of that door. Believe me; it takes quite some effort to get back in."

Disappointment is written all over Griffin's face.

Grandmama softly adds, "You can only get Johnny to change by seeing him leave you alone, and asking for the courage to stand up to his bad behavior."

Griffin looks doubtful.

"See yourself facing him. Then know that working through you is a power that will take care of the confrontation. And be firm."

Granddaddy reaches for Griffin's hand. "And I know you don't understand this one yet, Griffin ... but honestly visualize Johnny as being a good person. Just do it ... it makes you better, and it will probably help Johnny."

Grandmama smiles. "At the very least ... he'll soon have mixed emotions about his own behavior, and that might set him on the right road."

Griffin quickly stands up and holds an invisible wand. "Yeah, he won't know what hit him when I wave my magic wand over his nasty

image!”

He sits down again. “But, I’m going to ask for strength to stand up to him ... just in case he’s a tough subject.”

Granddaddy responds. “He might be ... and you might never actually see him come to grips with his behavior. But that’s not your worry. You must stand up to him with strength and courage, and with the right attitude. And be firm in what you say. That’s a very powerful combination.”

“So, I wish the best for him ... but I don’t stand for his bullying?”

“Exactly.”

“Wow, that’s a tall order.”

“It is. But it works. You’ll see.”

Grandmama sees Griffin’s mind whirling. “Practice it, Griffin ... whenever you can ... and then we’ll have something more to discuss later — I promise.”

“Okay, but I’m going to be sure to check back in on this one.”

“We’re always here for you, Griffin,” Granddaddy laughs. “I can’t wait to hear what you discover.”

“So, how do you get rid of a bad image, Grandmama?” Ridgely inquires as she stands up to warm herself by turning her back to the flickering fire.

“Well, I work with my Super-Conscious, and then I’m able to visualize something that completely destroys the bad image or thought.”

Ridgely quietly slips back into Grandmama’s lap.

“Then, I surround the person, or event, or whatever good image I have formed, in a bath of warm light. When it feels comfortable — and I know the good image is strong — I just let that image float off where God will take care of it.”

Grandmama squeezes her granddaughter and winks at her grandson. “Takes practice, but it has worked every time ... for as long as I can remember.”

Ridgely turns and looks closely at her grandmother. Grandmama suddenly tickles her granddaughter.

“In fact, often, that’s how I protect you!”

“But what destroys your bad image, Grandmama?” Griffin now questions.

“I’ve always lit a bomb under it.”

The kids laugh.

“Or, sometimes I set it on fire ... and I see the pieces floating away like cinders until the cinders just go ‘poof.’”

Grandmama lets Ridgely off her lap again. “Look, kids, I’m not asking you to completely understand it right now ... just think about it. As you live your life — and as you treat your words and your thoughts as your magic wand — you’ll begin to see what we mean.”

“Kind of like what Granddaddy said,” Griffin starts ... “that we didn’t have to understand the computer’s working to know how to use it?”

“Ah, you remembered ... what a smart fellow!” Granddaddy beams.

“You got it, Griffin. Your words are your wands, whether you really know how they work or not.”

Griffin starts dancing around the fire pit.

“Wow ... I’ve got a wand ... I’ve got LOTS of magic wands!!!

“Oh, brother ... he's going to get obnoxious and rude.” Ridgely rolls her eyes as her brother keeps dancing.

“Excuse me,” Granddaddy quietly asks, “What was that negative label you just projected for him, Ridgely? ?Hmmm?”

“Okay ... hmmm ... Griffin, if you keep saying that ... out loud ... past this day ... it will be irritating to everyone. So don’t ... please.”

“V-e-r-y goooooood.” Granddaddy smiles.

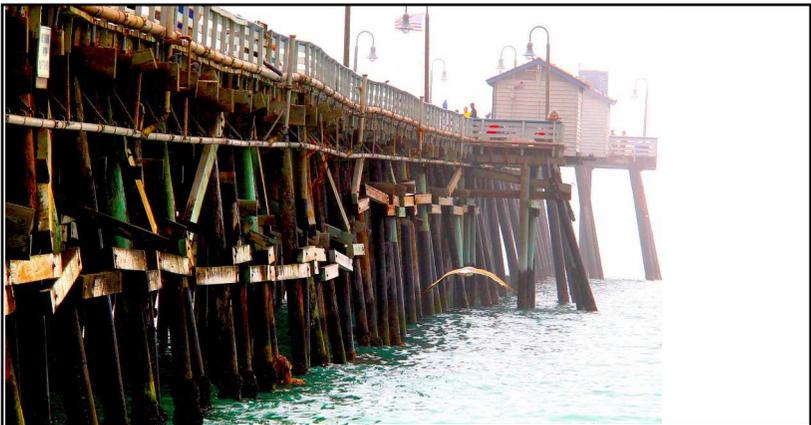
Griffin stops, surprised by his sister’s words.

“Well ... okay, sis. After today, I'll only say it to myself.”

“Thank you,” his sister sighs.

“But for now ... I’VE GOT A WAND ... wand, wand, wands ... I am all-powerful!!!”

And the dance continues.





## CHAPTER 16

### Return to the Beginning!



Our happy clan leaves the boardwalk and steps down onto the sand. Walking in the water's edge, the most fun place to walk, they'll head back south towards the car. It's quite a walk, but they're up for it.

As they move across the sand and towards the water, they can now see under the massive pier. Suddenly, a strange man appears whose clothes are very, very old. He's wearing a large straw sun hat that's coming apart at the edges, and he's carrying what looks like a cloth bag over his shoulder. He's a bit sandy and very weather-beaten.

He starts calling to the seagulls that are nearby. He's telling them to go away, and then he runs towards them so they'll take flight. He suddenly looks up at the pier and the fishermen who are hanging over the edge with their lines dangling in the water. The old man shakes his free fist and tells them all to go home, as though they're disturbing him. Then almost instantly ... the strange behaving man starts gently laughing while going

around and around in a small circle. He's not really hurting anyone, so everyone pretty much ignores him. Less than a minute after they first saw him — and as quickly as he appeared — he dashes off towards the sidewalk above the beach and is gone.

During this time, Grandmama and Granddaddy have been slowly and steadily guiding Ridgely and Griffin towards the water and away from the pier, making sure they were between this unique man and their grandchildren.

“Wow ... that man was really, really strange,” Griffin observes as they reach the water's edge.

“But he seemed harmless,” Ridgely responds.

“Yes, he did ... everyone seemed to feel that way,” Granddaddy replies.

"So, why did you want us to stay away from him, Granddaddy?"

“Well, sweetheart ... there was really nothing we could do to help him on his journey, so it was wisest just to keep our distance.”

"He seemed a little lost," Grandmama adds. "But since we don't know what causes him to behave that way, sometimes it's just smart to be careful.”

“Yeah, especially when you have little kids with you!” Griffin exclaims. “If he starts to chase us like he did the seagulls, I could be in trouble!”

“How true, Griffin,” Granddaddy replies. “This way, he's protected,

and we're protected."

"But, doesn't he know the secret – and how to talk to God?" inquired Griffin.

"Oh, I'm sure he does," Grandmama replies. "Sometimes, the way each of us talks to God is very different, and it's hard for another person to understand. But, if he can't communicate with God real well, God is still protecting him; somehow, someway."

"Ohhhh," Ridgely says as she walked next to her Grandfather, intently thinking about this. "But, what can we do to help, Grandmama?"

"Well, what I just did was surround him with a prayer ... like an invisible bond around him and sent him on his way in God's care. Prayer ... however, you say or visualize it, gives strength and extra protection wherever you direct it."

Griffin takes his grandmother's hand. "But what if he's not talking to God, even if he can? What if he just doesn't want to talk?"

"God protects him — that never stops, although we don't always understand the process. But if he doesn't actually want to talk, or listen to



God, his journey just might take a little longer — with a few more bumps in the road.”

“Why?” Ridgely inquires.

“Because he probably keeps making the same mistake over and over again ... instead of seeing what the mistake was actually trying to teach him. Talking with God really helps with that.”

“Definitely takes a lot of time off the search.” Granddaddy adds.

The sun is almost setting on the horizon. They all walk in silence for a few minutes, looking at the pelicans dive into the ocean for a late afternoon snack of tasty fish.

Ridgely has been particularly quiet. Then she speaks softly.

“Why are there bad things in this world?”

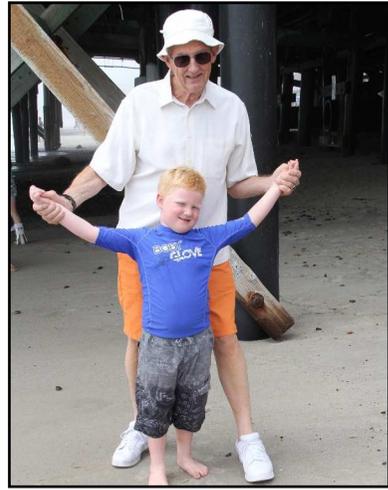
“You mean more than just man’s free-will going nuts?” Granddaddy asks. “Like things that we can’t control?”

“Yes.” his granddaughter responds.

“That’s a question we all ask — throughout our lives, And, I’m not going to go there, Ridgely ...”

She stops before he can finish and looks at him. He touches her rosy face, smiles, and continues.

“Meaning ... I don’t have a great answer, because I don’t completely understand at this point. Some experiences I can’t deal with on this side — here on Earth — because I can’t always see ‘beyond’ what seems so obvious to my human eyes. And human eyes are actually very limited.”



"Our physical being is limited?" Griffin questions.

"Sure. Which is why we talk to God. And ... I'm still searching for the truth of it all."

"Gosh, then what chance does a little kid like me have to figure things out?" Griffin says, only half-jokingly.

Granddaddy again rubs a tuft of his thick hair and continues.

"What I do know is that I can deal with the 'right here,' and the 'right now' Griffin. I use those powers within me; with that, I have learned to change my part of the world."

Grandmama adds. "I have found that the world is rarely 'fair' from where we view it as humans — that is, a spiritual being occupying a mortal body."

Grandmama stands facing the ocean, and in a burst of energy, she throws her arms wide open. "But — ultimately the Universe is definitely

‘just.’”

She turns with a big smile and looks at her grandchildren, who are just staring at her.

“Huh???” Griffin responds.

Laughing, she grabs Griffin’s hand and continues walking.

“Meaning ... that there is a higher justice that exists and is constantly happening, even if we can’t see it.”

Grandmama thinks for a moment and then continues.

"For example, you see things one-way, Griffin, but when your parents explain it to you ... you get a greater understanding."

“Oh yeah, like ‘seeing the big picture!’” Griffin smiles at his cleverness.

“Exactly! Ultimately we have to trust that the Universe is Divinely planned and good – and there’s more going on than we see.”

Granddaddy adds, “It’s always panned out for me. Things I thought I’d never understand became much clearer as I continued on in my journey.”

Ridgely has now taken Grandmama’s other hand.

“And the answers are not always easy to understand ... from where we see it? Is that what you mean, Grandmama?”

“I do!” She responds. “And not understanding can make you very sad sometimes.”

"Like seeing someone hurt? Or being hurt?" Ridgely inquires.

Griffin pops in, "Or seeing a whole town overcome with horrible

zombies — or being washed away by a monster storm!"

Grandmama stops for a second and looks at her grandson. "Well, yes, you both paint vivid pictures of difficult things to understand."

She continues walking, holding both their hands.

"And if you're sad by what you experience ... no matter how tragic ... you'll discover that when you share with God, you'll be able to get through whatever it is that's hurting you so much. Eventually, you'll find a sense of peace you just can't find anywhere else.

Granddaddy takes his granddaughter's other hand.

"And, with that, you'll realize that you're stronger than you thought Ridgely ... and that there really is hope. You'll discover that you will have the power to be able to get through a difficult time, and be happy again."

Grandmama is gently swinging both grandchildren's arms as they all walk in a line together.

"And each time you turn to God, it gets easier and easier to 'trust.' As you see the results in your life, you no longer doubt that believing in God is a great part of who you are."

"Back to our secret?! If we talk to God and learn to listen, we'll get answers!" Griffin chirps in.

"Yep, Grandson ... our secret ..." Granddaddy responds as he swings Ridgely's other arm. "Seeking God leads us to answers we have an incredibly difficult time finding on our own."

All four are moving as one now as they walk slowly in the surf.

"And just think," Granddaddy adds, "God's presence within us, and around us is the gift we are given when we came into this life."

"So, no one else can take away that gift, even God?" Griffin looks at his grandfather.

"No Matter what we do with that gift, it will always be there for us." Granddaddy squeezed his grandson's hand. "God promised thousands of years ago — and with everything man has gone through, God hasn't backed out yet."

"Well," Griffin responds, I guess that's long enough for a test."

Granddaddy chuckles. "Sure is. It's the gift that just keeps on giving. Just think, we're supported and applauded when we are happy — and we're comforted and guided when we are sad, confused, or lost."

Granddaddy makes a circle with all four of them by grabbing Griffin's free hand. Grandmama is now facing Granddaddy in the circle, and she leans in and gives him a quick kiss. Ridgely and Griffin giggle as their grandparents swoop down. Granddaddy and Grandmama each put an arm around each child's waist — and then slowly turn like a carnival ride with the kid's feet floating out behind them.

As they carefully put their kids down, they release hands as Granddaddy grabs his grandson, and pulls him close to him. "And without that gift, Griffin, I honestly wouldn't know any other way to move forward on this incredible journey.



## CHAPTER 17

### Our day is Almost Done



They can now see the parking lot in the distance, and everyone knows that the day is drawing to a close. It's dinner time as both seagulls and pelicans dive-bomb into the ocean over and over again. Their tenacity pays off as each successful bird flies away with a wiggling fish in its beak.

Ridgely and Griffin each find a special shell to add to their grandparents' collection. Then Granddaddy initiates a quick game of tag by chasing his grandchildren with a huge piece of seaweed. Finally, they all resume walking — each knowing the inevitable. They are bringing Church-Walk-on-the-Beach to a close.

Ridgely is quiet, but her Grandmama can tell once again that something is on her mind.

"What are you thinking about, sweetie?"

"What if we think it won't work to seek God?" Ridgely questions.

"That passes through everyone's thoughts Ridgely," Grandmama says gently. She smiles at Granddaddy, who is holding her hand as they walk. "Especially when we're unsure of where we are or where we're going."

Grandmama stops and looks at her granddaughter. "But what is our choice, really? How else do we get out of ourselves, and come to grips with the world? How do we rise to happiness, and to hope — again??"

Grandmama now looks out at the ocean, thinking about something far away.

"Honestly, what other choice do we have ... other than to wallow in sadness and confusion, or worse anger?"

She watches a seagull fly nearby.

"Is there another proven alternative to getting over a great loss when we are heartbroken???"

She then turns back to Ridgely and Griffin, who are looking intently at her. She gives them a big smile as she continues.

"Or when you're excited or thrilled ... and have no one to share it with at that moment? Where else do you go if you don't seek God's company? And, he's right there with you!"

Griffin looks at his grandmother, then to the ocean, then to Granddaddy.

“Yep. I’m definitely sticking with God.”

“Okay,” Ridgely hesitantly responds. “But it sounds like I have to spend my whole life looking for answers!” she exclaims, as she puts her fists on her little hips. “I thought once I grew up, I’d know everything!”

Grandmama and Granddaddy just smile at each other, as Grandmama gently pulls a few strands of Ridgely’s red hair away from her face.

“I wish I had all the answers my precious one ... because there are things that are confusing ... and they always will be in life.”

Ridgely's fists are still securely on her hips. Grandmama gives Ridgely a kiss on the top of her head and continues.

“This journey can get messy. It can also be a lot of fun. But there is no 'all grown up' — just more wisdom as we get older.”

Grandmama takes Ridgely's fists off her hips. “And frankly, no matter what’s going on, a lot of times, it’s just up to you if you’re having fun or not.”

“Like going to church by walking on the beach!” Griffin beams.

Thumbs up between Granddaddy and Griffin.

Granddaddy continues, “Maybe that’s why we’re here ... to learn and find more answers.” He puts his arm around Grandmama. “And hopefully my incredible grandchildren ... you’ll find more answers than we did, and then you'll share them with those you love!”

Ridgely thinks, and slowly smiles as she looks around. “So, this is



where we start ... here at Church-Walk-on-the-Beach?”

Grandmama gazes at the ocean, the beach, the cliffs way in the distance, and then back at her granddaughter.

“It’s a great place to start ... but you can start anyplace, anytime, any day.”

Grandmama takes Ridgely’s hand again as they all resume walking.

“Man will always seek God wherever he is. We all know deep inside that we are part of something greater than ourselves — and want to learn about it. And when we seek, we find.”

“So, it doesn’t matter where you start Ridgely.” Granddaddy adds. “Seeking God is part of our DNA, and it has been since the day man first walked this Earth. It’s been written about, and talked about, and recorded in every culture for almost that long.”

Griffin comes to an abrupt stop.

“Whooooa ... what is this DNA!! Is that another secret power we have??”

“Oh, for heaven's sake Griffin," his sister scoffs, "don't you ever listen in school.”

“I'm only 8 ... I don't know about DNA.”

Ridgely crosses her arms like a very determined teacher and easily recites what she's recently learned.

“DNA is the basic genetic building block of every individual. And each person's DNA is different.”

Granddaddy looks at the somewhat lost expression on his grandson's face.

“And Griffin," he quickly adds, “the word ‘genetic’ means all the elements inside us when we're first born that help determines who we might be. Who we are physically, and mentally — and as Grandmama said — even spiritually.”

Grandmama unfolds Ridgely's arms from across her little chest and takes Ridgely's hand to continue walking.

"Well said, Ridgely ... I'm pleased you're listening so well in school. But also contained in that DNA are certain elements everyone has."



Ridgely appears confused as she looked at her grandmother.

"What I mean is," Grandmama continues, "that within each person — as different as we are — we are all born with the desire to find the higher power. That has been recorded millions of times for thousands of years."

"You said our Subconscious holds everything about us," Ridgely responds. "Does that come in when we're born too?"

Grandmama stops for a second, as she gathers her thoughts.

"I actually believe that we take the subconscious with us when we leave our bodies. That's our soul's storehouse for its growth."

Grandmama looks into Ridgely's eyes.

"So yes, I believe it comes in again with our soul's new body. Everything I've experienced from my earliest age has pointed me in that direction."

"Maybe that's why we hunger to find God." Ridgely looks up at her grandmother as they continue to walk. "We remember."

Grandmama catches her breath, overwhelmed by her young granddaughter's observation. She smiles gently, and leans in again to kiss her lovely granddaughter.

"Yes, I believe you're right, sweetheart."

Granddaddy smiles at his family and grabs Griffin's hand, encouraging him to keep walking.

"So now we know we are a spiritual, a mental, and a physical being — and each part needs our attention. This is why, every day we're alive, we

need to attend to all three in every possible way. It's our responsibility."

"Wow ... that's a big job." Griffin comments to no one in particular.

Granddaddy chuckles. "Yep ... but it's the least we can do."

Granddaddy takes a deep breath and looks all around with a broad grin.

"So ... Man seeks God ... no matter what we call it. It's part of who we are."

Grandmama picks up a small shell. "And, we all feel it — whether we say we believe in a higher power or not."

"Even those who say they don't believe ... do they search for something to believe in?" Ridgely inquires.

"They do," Grandmama answers. "And often in many different ways."

"Hmmm. Strange." Griffin thinks out loud as he continues walking.

Granddaddy joins in. "Throughout our lives, each one of us has been moved by a power greater than ourselves. Every human being has been inspired in one way or another by something other than his own brain. In my many years, I've never met anyone who has ever denied this."

Ridgely takes the shell her grandmother hands her.

"So people really want to believe. Is that why there are so many religions?"

"That's right," her grandmother answers. "And hopefully, you'll become acquainted with all of them through the people on your life's path."

“Gosh, how many religions are there?” Griffin inquires.

“Well, the largest religions today are Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam ... but there are really hundreds more, although not as well known. And they all believe in a Universal Creation that we call God.”

Griffin shakes his head. “Wow ... no wonder our parents have to help us pick one when we’re little.”

Granddaddy picks up another shell and puts it in his pocket.

“True ... you need something to compare with as you become an adult — when you're faced with deciding the direction of your spiritual life for yourself.”

Granddaddy bends down again as a new and particularly interesting shell washes up in front of him.

“However, no matter what religion we’re part of — a religious community can be a great source of comfort to each of us. But then, being Spiritual doesn’t only mean going to a church or a temple — or even belonging to a formal group.”

Grandmama continues as she puts her arm around Griffin’s shoulder, “And remember, Divine Creation loved us so much, He gave us free-will ... even free to choose to love Him or not.”

“And the rules!” Griffin chimed in. “God was sneaky — don’t forget about all those rules that we got along with free-will. What did you call them Granddaddy, ‘Rules of the Universe?’”

“I did. Just like in a family, Griffin — or any society — there are rules. You break the rules, and eventually, there are consequences. It’s nothing personal.”

“Well, my free-will doesn’t like some of them,” Griffin responds as they approach a small circle of seagulls near the water’s edge.

“Oh boy, I certainly understand that!” Granddaddy laughs. “I don’t always like stopping at a stop sign ... but if I don’t ... the odds are that I’m not putting myself in a very good position to survive.”

Suddenly ... Griffin turns and chases a seagull. This time, he picks the wrong one. This old fellow comes dive-bombing back on Griffin — and doesn't stop chasing him until Griffin is way into the water.





## CHAPTER 18

### Finally. Back Again to the Start. Again!



The laughter finally calms down after the old seagull flies away — obviously confident that he has taught this little human a lesson.

Griffin walks up to his family, wet from the waist down.

Granddaddy shakes his head. “Boy, it’s a good thing we’re almost back to where the car is parked. That is going to be one cold little fellow.”

“Man-o-man Griffin,” his sister gleams with a triumphant smile. “I definitely think God was talking to you through that old gull! How cool was that to watch.”

Griffin just looks at her, then to his Granddaddy. “I know, rule number one ... don’t pick on something smaller than you.”

“And definitely not if he’s smarter than you.” Ridgely chuckles.

“I know it’s hard to believe Griffin, but someday, you may actually

appreciate those rules.” Granddaddy says, ignoring his granddaughter.

“Never. Some of them frighten me.”

“What could possibly frighten you?” Granddaddy inquires. “Unless you keep breaking the same rule over and over again, Griffin, — and get tired of being punished?? And frankly, grandson, that doesn’t sound like you.”

“No ... what I don’t like is the ‘law of survival’ and all those rules, where something big could eat something smaller. Like me.”

“Oh,” Grandmama interjects. “I think you’re getting this confused. For now, I think the best way to put this particular worry to rest Griffin, is to tell you ‘not to borrow trouble.’”

“Whatttt???”

Once again, Granddaddy attempts to brush some of the sand off of his grandson as he continues.

“Look, Griffin, there’s a lot to be afraid of in this world. But your best bet is to decide what you really want to do — and then face everything that comes with it. Find out what you’re yearning to do, no matter what — and go after it.”

“Then, fear and worry,” Grandmama adds, “are a lot less important.”

“What could be more important than being eaten by something bigger???” Her grandson exclaims.

“Yes. Don’t concentrate on what’s wrong all the time. What are the odds of that happening to you in the middle of this sprawling city — even



going into the ocean every day?”

His sister can't help herself. “I can tell you, simpleton — the actual odds of you being really hurt are a zillion to one Or something around there.”

“Well, close Ridgely,” Grandmama responds as she gently wraps her arm through her granddaughter’s arm. She then leans in real close. “And I’m not going to tell you one-more-time not to call your brother names. And trust me, that’s a rule with me you don’t want to break.”

Ridgely agrees by quietly shaking her head. Grandmama smiles and turns to Griffin.

“But what she’s trying to say is that you can’t be worrying about something in the future — especially if there’s a really good chance it might not happen.”

She takes Ridgely’s hand as Granddaddy takes Griffin’s, and they

all start walking again.

Grandmama continues. "You ask God for protection every day, and you are wise about the chances you take. But you must take chances in order to grow in this world."

Grandmama squeezes Griffin's hand. "You don't indulge in unhealthy fear Griffin ... because if you're looking for it, you can find fear everywhere. And, believe me, most of it is imaginary."

Granddaddy picks up the conversation. "Basically, Griffin, you're too young to be counting how many things you don't like. Try concentrating on what you do like. Then you've got a chance of living life to the fullest."

"Count what things? ... must I remind everyone that I'm only eight."

"Are you kidding!!" Granddaddy exclaims. "Who was that skiing down that big hill with me last winter!" With his hand in the air, Granddaddy motions a fast slide down an invisible hill.

"And do you remember how far out you went with Daddy and me in the ocean?" Ridgely states firmly. "You're an awesome swimmer, and you were fearless ... if I do say so myself."

His sister is proud of her compliment and then smiles at her Grandmother — just to make sure she gets credit for being so nice.

"Now, that wasn't hard, was it Ridgely?" Grandmama whispers.

"Yes, it was. But I guess it was worth it to see him smile."

Grandmama then looks at Griffin. “And you studied for that math test the other night. You didn’t want to, but you studied, and it was hard. And you got a B!”

“Yeah. That felt good. I think I even understood it.”

“And didn’t you place in the top four of your Tae Kwon Do competition last month?” Granddaddy inquires.

“Oh yeah ... I really didn’t do well when I first started last year. I guess because I didn’t want to get hurt.”

“That’s for sure,” Granddaddy reflects. “I remember after last year’s competition you cried because you did poorly. But you didn’t give up, and you learned how to protect yourself, Griffin. You improved. And the fear vanished because you gained confidence.”

“You’re right ... I got better! In fact, Master Joiner said I was getting really good!”

Griffin starts a little happy dance.

“Now, that’s called a healthy and well-earned pride,” Granddaddy chuckles to Grandmama and Ridgely.

“Go for it, Grandson.” Granddaddy joins Griffin in the happy dance. “LIFE FAVORS THE BOLD!!!”

Griffin starts singing. “It’s magic ... I’m protected!!! I will tackle the world — and the waves — and the mountains! I am Yoda — or Merlin!”

Ridgely leaned into her Grandmother. “What did it say in that book the other night about creating a monster, Grandmama?”

They both shared a good laugh. Then Grandmama calls out to ‘the boys.’

“Come on, guys. The sun’s almost beneath the horizon, and it’s time to head home.”

With that, all four of our weary travelers start to cross the sand to the parking lot.



## CHAPTER 19

### To Be Forever Green in Our Garden of Memories!



They're in the parking lot, overlooking the beach and the vast ocean beyond.

From here, they can see the far away. They can see the cliffs on the left — and then all the way around to see the pier on the right. As twilight takes over from the sunset's last vibrant rays, the pier is aglow with lights but looks very small from here.

Everyone is all brushed off and sitting in the white convertible. It's a magical evening — perfect for keeping the top down. Granddaddy and Grandmama are in the front seats. Until Granddaddy starts the car, Ridgely and Griffin are allowed to stand on the back-seats, leaning against the backrests. They are getting one last view of their Church-Walk-on-the-Beach.

"Look, everyone!" Ridgely suddenly exclaims, looking out to her left. "There's a lighthouse on the very end of the cliffs. I never noticed it before."

"Wow ... God's waving at us," her brother adds, almost awe-struck.

"It's for the ships, Griffin," Ridgely responds quietly.

"I know that ... but it reminds me of God. And he's waving."

Granddaddy turns and looks at his young grandson. "That is so awesome. What a great thought, Griffin. A beacon of light!"

"Yep. Just like the light, He puts in us ..."

Griffin senses that he's on a roll. He starts a chant in his best rapper-voice:

"A beam so strong, even the bad times, can't make it go out!"

Granddaddy and Grandmama just look at each other.

"I'll join you with that one grandson!" Granddaddy picks up the chant.

"A radiant light — lighting all of me."

Grandmama's next ... "To help me to see things I couldn't see — or hear things I couldn't hear."

Ridgely jumps in ... "A light that shines strong when I'm confused or unhappy."

Granddaddy looks at his grandchildren, adding ...

"It pushes me forward — but warns me to stop."

Ridgely then raises her arms and loudly says ...

"Then, it tells me when to fly!"

Griffin then raises his arms up high to the night sky.

"I am light; I am magic; I am the all-powerful Merlin!!!"

The whole family starts laughing — giggles abound.

Granddaddy finally speaks, “Definitely a car full of wizards! Slide down and buckle up kids. Time this magic carpet gets us home.”

“Gee ... everything looks a little different now.” Ridgely observes as they turn out of the parking lot.

“How?” Granddaddy asks.

“I don’t know. The colors are brighter, even at twilight.”

“All day, in one way or the other, we were seeing God everywhere,” her grandfather responds. “We opened ourselves up freely — and it gave God a chance to ‘rush in’ even more.”

“I like the feeling Granddaddy,” Ridgely happily adds.

As the car moves into the traffic, Ridgely slowly lets her arms wave against the gentle air rushing by.

“God really rushed into me today,” Griffin says. “And he brought in a lot of sand too. My clothes are really scratchy.”

Ridgely reaches over to help her brother brush off some of the extra sand that is stuck-hard to his neck. They both look up to see Grandmama watching them.

“What’s wrong, Grandmama ... are you mad because there’s sand in the car?” Ridgely asks.

“Of course not, sweetie. What would a day at the beach be without sand in the car?” Grandmama answers very contently. “I was just taking a very special picture of you two together.”



“But ... you don’t have a camera Grandmama. Or is it magic too?”

Griffin seriously inquires.

“No ... well maybe. I’m taking a picture with my mind’s eye — one I’ll never forget.” Grandmama answers her grandson. "And as my grandfather use to say, ‘It will be forever green in my garden of memories.’”

“Oh, I like that Grandmama!” Griffin exclaims. “Forever green in my garden of memories!”

“Okay, let me guess!” his sister interjects as she looks at her brother. “Now, you have a magic camera!!”

They both start laughing. Granddaddy and Grandmama can’t help but join in the fun.

Then Granddaddy speaks up — quite loudly because of the wind

that is whirling around with the top down.

“I have a big favor to ask of you two.”

“What Granddaddy?” They speak as one.

“Remember this moment!” They look at their grandfather, blankly.

He continues. "Remember this moment, just like you remember how excited you are for Christmas."

The children look at each other — and then back at their grandfather. Christmas definitely gets their attention.

"Remember how great it is to believe in something so marvelous as this day — and how you feel right now." Granddaddy continues. "Never, ever, lose this excitement ... no matter what. No matter how grown-up you become ... or how much responsibility you take on ... or how much the world around you changes."

The kids look at each other again. Ridgely speaks first. “Okay ... sure, Granddaddy.”



Griffin joins in.

"Absolutely! Easy favor, Granddaddy. Christmas is awesome!"

Still watching the road, and in a voice a little louder than usual, Granddaddy adds, "Good! Because I don't want you two to become completely 'Earthbound!'"

"Huh?" Ridgely speaks first again.

"Whaaatt?" Griffin says right after her.

Grandmama is smiling to herself, as she reaches over and gives her husband a little squeeze on his leg.

Granddaddy looks over at his wife and gives her a loving wink.

To his grandchildren, he says, "Next time — we'll talk about that ... when we return to Church-Walk-on-the-Beach!"

Griffin then cups his hand, to be sure everyone can hear, as he shouts, "It better be it soon, cuz there's a lot I have to ask!"

*The End*



*Next . . .*

— joins as the companion book to —

*Church Walk-on-the-Beach*

*The Twins & the Magic Closet!*



*The adventures with their grandparents continue with  
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## *The Twins & the Magic Closet*

Grandmama and Granddaddy have a continuing adventure with their 13-year-old twin granddaughters, Kaitlyn and Courtney ... affectionately known as Kaite & Coco.

The girls have hidden and played in their Grandparents' walk-in closet all their lives ... where something truly magical always happened. Now, embarking upon the world of high school, Kaite and Coco are also faced with leaving behind their wonderful "magic closet" as their grandparents move to a new home.

However . . . it's during a long weekend with their grandparents in a new environment, that they rediscover the magic they themselves have always possess — powerful knowledge for young adults facing a challenging world for the first time.







*Diane Dowsing  
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. . . is a professional producer and writer, and lives in Los Angeles with her incredible husband — truly "the wind beneath her wings."

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