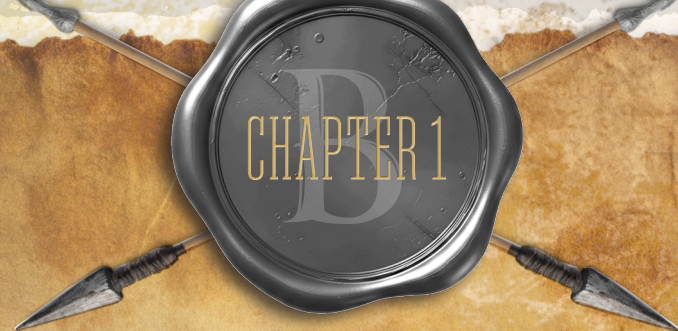




GIANT KILLER

A mammoth spear sliced through the air, a deadly blur hurtling toward Benaiah's chest. His heart thundered in his ears, drowning out the world. In the blink of an eye, he cleared his mind as his grandfather had taught him. *"In a fight,"* Grandfather said, *"a stray thought can be the difference between life and death."*

Time seemed to slow as Benaiah's eyes locked onto the fast-approaching spearhead,

mere inches from him. With a dancer's grace, he twisted his body sideways. Even so, the sharp spear raked along his chest, a thin slice through cloak and skin. Blood bloomed from the wound, but the spin had saved him. He had cheated death, for now.



Benaiah wasted no time. He leaped away, his body stretching into a backward somersault. He sprang to his feet, muscles taut, and turned to face his attacker. The sight that greeted him stole his breath. The Egyptian warrior was a behemoth, a descendant of the giants. He was easily eight feet tall with bulging muscles and a gnarly beard hanging halfway down his chest, framing a face that seemed carved from stone, a face that knew only fury.

“Hebrew scum!” the giant spat, venom in his voice. “Your people are a parasite to this land.”

Stupid! The thought pounded through Benaiah's head. *Why didn't you listen?* His thoughts weren't aimed at the Egyptian; he was upset with himself. Just a few days earlier,

his commander, David, had encouraged the men to always keep a weapon close at hand. His exact words had been, “Until we figure things out, I want you to eat and sleep with your weapons. Keep them with you even when you go out to relieve yourself.”

At the best of times Israel had enemies on every side, but now that King Saul and his army were pursuing them, nowhere was safe.

The problem was that David and his men didn’t have enough weapons. Most of Israel’s blacksmiths had stayed with King Saul, and the men who had fled with David hadn’t time to retrieve their weapons. For almost a month now, the only thing they’d been doing was running for their lives.



When Benaiah left the camp early this morning, rather than take one of the few weapons they had, he’d elected to leave them with the men. He was always careful and only planned to be gone for an hour or so. Out of all David’s men, Benaiah was the most skilled at fighting with his hands and feet. *So, I should be fine*, he’d thought.

He left before sunrise to try and catch some fish down by the river. A little more protein in the men’s diet would go a long way.

No sooner had he cast his net than the Egyptian giant lunged from the shadows of the tree line, brandishing a monstrous ten-foot spear with lethal grace. Now here he was, weaponless and facing a giant. *So stupid!*



Benaiah's gaze darted across the ground, searching for anything to use as a weapon. His eyes locked onto a thick stick lying a few paces away. *That'll have to do.*

"Hebrew dog!" the giant bellowed. "After I kill you, I will feed you to the wild beasts!"

"You may be big," Benaiah offered a wry smile, "but let's see how fast you are!" He charged toward the stick, dove, and snatched it up with the precision of a hawk. The giant was faster than he had expected. As Benaiah regained his footing, the spear was already speeding toward him.

Gripping the stick with both hands, Benaiah deflected the deadly blow and closed the distance between them.



With a fierce battle cry, he swung the makeshift club, striking the giant's midriff and then darted upward to crack it against the back of the Egyptian's head. The stick shattered upon impact, but it had served its purpose. For one fleeting instant, the colossal man wavered, dazed. The spear slipped from his grasp, clattering onto the rocky terrain below.

Without a moment's hesitation, Benaiah drew back his fist and slammed it against the giant's chest. The impact sent a jolt of pain coursing through his hand as if he had struck the side of a mountain. Gritting his teeth, he struck again with his other fist, only to be met with a similar agony. "You've got to be kidding

me!" he gasped, incredulous. "What are you giants made of?"

The Egyptian merely grunted, his eyes ablaze with rage. With a deafening roar, he lunged forward and trapped Benaiah in a vice-like bear hug.

"This isn't good," Benaiah wheezed, his lungs straining for air as the giant's grip tightened. His feet left the ground, and he felt his ribs cracking and his lungs closing under such immense pressure.

He pounded his fists into the giant's chest, but he might as well have been pounding against a brick wall. The pain was unbearable. Benaiah was pretty sure he'd pass out before he was squeezed to death, but he



knew either way, this didn't end well. *Please, God! Help me!* The prayer flitted through his mind about the same time an idea occurred to him.

Leaning in close, Benaiah used the only weapon available to him. He bit down on the giant's ear. The giant yelped in surprise and hurled Benaiah away like a rag doll. He crashed to the ground, tumbling and landing in a crumpled heap. For a moment, he didn't move. He couldn't move. Gasping, he struggled to fill his lungs. *This is no time to take a nap. Move, Benaiah. Move!*

It took every bit of strength he had to push himself to his feet. He grimaced as he tasted blood in his mouth.



The giant stood a few paces away, one hand pressed to the side of his head. Benaiah took an involuntary step back. The huge man was a sight straight from a nightmare. And he was angry.

"After I kill you, I will dance on your grave," the giant growled, stooping to retrieve his immense spear.

“Why do you Egyptians always talk like that?” Benaiah gasped.

A confused look passed over the giant’s face.

“I mean, you would first have to dig a hole, then put my body in it, bury me, and then, you’re gonna dance? It just seems a little . . . over the top.” Benaiah mustered a weak smile, hoping to buy time. Quick-witted as he was, he knew his only weapon now was his words. His body ached, his ribs were cracked, and his mind raced for a solution, a weapon, an escape, anything.

If Yahweh was with him, he might have enough strength for one last, desperate assault. But he couldn’t let the giant see how broken he truly was.



“What about just killing your enemy and then . . . you know, going home to hug your giant wife and giant kids and eat your giant dinner? And then, maybe that’s when you can dance a little.” As Benaiah spoke, he searched for any opening, any weakness he could exploit. The battle was far from over.

The realization that the little man was taunting him slowly crept across the huge man’s face. Rage deepened in his eyes as he bellowed, “Die, you Hebrew dog!” With shocking speed, the colossal Egyptian raised the spear and launched it straight at Benaiah’s chest.

Yahweh, be with me. The prayer flitted across Benaiah’s mind as he braced himself, leaning



back on his heels and stretching his arms out fully in front of him. In that breathless instant, he snatched the spear from mid-air and pivoted on his heels. Channeling the momentum from the giant's powerful throw, he executed a fluid one-hundred-and-eighty-degree spin and released the weapon.

The giant's eyes bulged in disbelief as the spear slammed into him with the crushing force of an avalanche. As the enormous Egyptian was hurled backward, Benaiah crumpled onto his back. He was battered and bruised, but he had survived. "Thank you," he whispered his prayer, his eyes fluttering shut in sheer exhaustion.

