



The angel stood on the edge of a desert. He had been talking with other angels, and now they had left him. He was thinking about a little boy, Hugh, whom he had loved in the world. For the angel loved little children, and now he had many friends among the children in Heaven.

He hadn't thought of Hugh for a long time, but he thought of him now. And even as he thought, he saw a young boy standing near him. He spoke to the boy and looked into his face. Then he realized it was Hugh.

"Why Hugh! Where are you going?" asked the angel.

"I do not know, Sir," answered Hugh, who did not recognize the angel. "I have been wandering about alone, wishing I could find my home, and I came to this strange desert."

"Come with me then," said the angel. "I will take you to my home. There are children in the Beautiful Valley."

"I have heard of the Beautiful Valley," said Hugh. "I am glad we can go there."

"But we must first cross the desert," the angel said.

So they began their journey with their faces toward the East. They had not gone far when they saw a man running toward them. He was dressed in blue, with a dark blue turban on his head. When he came nearer to them he made signs with his hands. But they did not understand what he meant by his signs.

Then he called to them, "The robbers! The robbers! Flee from the robbers!"

Hugh was frightened and wanted to run away. He glanced at the angel and decided not to run. He thought, "This man is brave, he knows what to do." The angel looked as though he would be indifferent to a thousand robbers.

He said to the man in blue, "These robbers cannot harm you."

"They will! They are cruel and murderous!" cried the man in blue. "Let us hurry."

"Are you from the Earth?" asked the angel.

"The Earth?" questioned the man in blue. "I do not know the Earth; I know only the City." But in a moment he added, as though he were ashamed, "In our City there is a saying that the Earth is the Lord's, but that the City is ours. So we do not like to mention the Earth. But I must make haste; farewell." And he hurried away as fast as he could go.

"That man seems to be a coward," Hugh said, forgetting his own impulse to run away.

"It is because he does not believe in the Lord," the angel said. "If he really believed in the Lord he would not be afraid, and nothing could harm him."

They moved on as he spoke, but they had gone only a few paces when they saw, in the distance, a black cloud rolling on the ground. It was coming in their direction. And in a moment they could see several men in the cloud.

The men were black from head to foot, and their faces were horrible to behold. They had wide distended jaws, with teeth like the fangs of a wolf. They were the robbers.

One of them was holding two ferocious dogs on a leash. They barked when they came near to Hugh and the angel. The robber spoke to the dogs. His voice was gruff, like the voice of a giant.

Then he said to the angel, "We do not wish to harm you, or to take anything from you."

And while he was saying this, all the robbers tried to make their faces look pleasant—they only looked uglier than before.

The ugliest one of them all put out his hand and felt in the angel's purse, but he could not take anything. This made them all angry, and they tried to harm the angel. They wanted to chop him in pieces, but they could do nothing—a thousand devils cannot harm an angel of God.

They paid no attention to Hugh, for they knew they would be punished if they tried to harm a child. But they were so hideous that Hugh trembled and clung to the angel's hand.

He said the Lord's words to himself, "Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to protect thee."

The angel grew impatient. He stamped his foot on the ground, and said in a terrible voice, "Enough! Begone!"

The robbers wavered, and slowly slunk away. They disappeared in a black cloud, blown by the wind.

Then Hugh and the angel passed over the border into the Beautiful Valley. But Hugh was still trembling. The angel took him up in his arms and spoke to him in a gentle voice.

"Do not tremble," he said. "We have passed over the border; they cannot follow us now."

Then Hugh looked into the angel's face, and knew him at last.

"Father!" he said, "I have found you!"

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