

Beyond The Hero's Chamber

**BY
IAN NEWTON**

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Dedications

Elizabeth -

Hand in hand, heart to heart, always by your side.

Gwynn -

For your limitless support and love and for being a zombie.

Connor, Brandon, and George -

Because you were there when I dreamt it and because I told you I would.

Lynn B. -

You're one of a kind and I'm a huge fan.

Neil, Geddy, and Alex -

If you read between the lines, you'll hear your songs.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the authors' imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Note from the Author

In the early morning hours of July 5th, 2006, I woke up from a dream. Since then, I've tried to write down what I experienced, to express what I saw, to tell the story of my dream.

The reason for my effort and the purpose of this book is to get the images, the story, the characters, and the emotions out of my head.

With my dream finally down on paper, I know I might never be able to put aside the unreasonably detailed visions that have danced through my head for years. After you read it, I hope you understand why I had to write it down.

Ian Newton

July 5th, 2016

Warning

This is **NOT** a stand-alone story. **Beyond The Hero's Chamber** is the continuation of **The Hero's Chamber**. If you didn't read **The Hero's Chamber**, just go online and do a quick search. It's free and it's a wonderful story that thousands of people have enjoyed for years. You'll find the eBook available in every downloadable format on smashwords.com.

If you've already read the **The Hero's Chamber**, welcome back! You're in for a real treat. However, before you read **Beyond The Hero's Chamber**, I have a couple of suggestions you may want to consider.

First, if it's been a while since you read **The Hero's Chamber** please consider going back and reading Chapter 18, *Promises Fulfilled* and Chapter 22, *Wisdom*. These chapters should quickly bring you back up to speed.

For those of you looking for a more extensive refresher, please read the synopsis on the following pages. This should help jog your memory and allow you to fully enjoy **Beyond The Hero's Chamber**.

Synopsis of The Hero's Chamber

Andrew Weaver and Connor Duncan were left at an orphanage while their fathers went off to save the world. Andrew's father never made it back and Connor's father was horribly wounded, but survived.

Years later, we meet seventeen year old Andrew and eighteen year old Connor wandering the countryside. They take a swim, and Connor loses his big toe to a giant snapping turtle. Just as he's about to bleed out, his father Jacob shows up to save the day.

Jacob Duncan (Connor's father) retains his alias of Jacob Miller, essentially lying to Connor and Andrew about his true identity. Jacob introduces the boys to a magical shield and book that he and Andrew's father found years ago when they traveled to the Kingdom.

With the help of the magical items, Jacob convinces Andrew and Connor that saving the world is possible, and now's the time.

They all head out together across an unforgiving desert landscape where they are eventually joined by an imposing figure known only as a Wanderer. With the help of the Wanderer, Jacob, Andrew and Connor are escorted to the Kingdom.

When they execute their plan, everything goes wrong. Connor is banished into the desert, Jacob is mortally wounded and Andrew is left to die outside the Hero's Chamber. Connor and Andrew also learn the truth about Jacob's identity, and needless to say it's a real shocker.

Due to a series of improbable events, our Wanderer is revealed to be a young woman named Kaya Elbe. Kaya becomes overly involved in the circumstances at play and takes an enormous leap of faith.

Andrew also takes a huge leap of faith and both he and Kaya restore the Kingdom and save Jacob's life. In the process, they free Kaya's village from an ageless burden, restore hope to a dying world and become unsuspecting pawns in a master plan that's been playing out for more than twenty thousand years.

As we leave our Heroes, Connor is hopelessly stranded in the desert wastelands, while Andrew, Kaya and Jacob are about to embark on an amazing journey with an extraordinary being.

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Synopsis of The Hero's Chamber

My Team of Hero's

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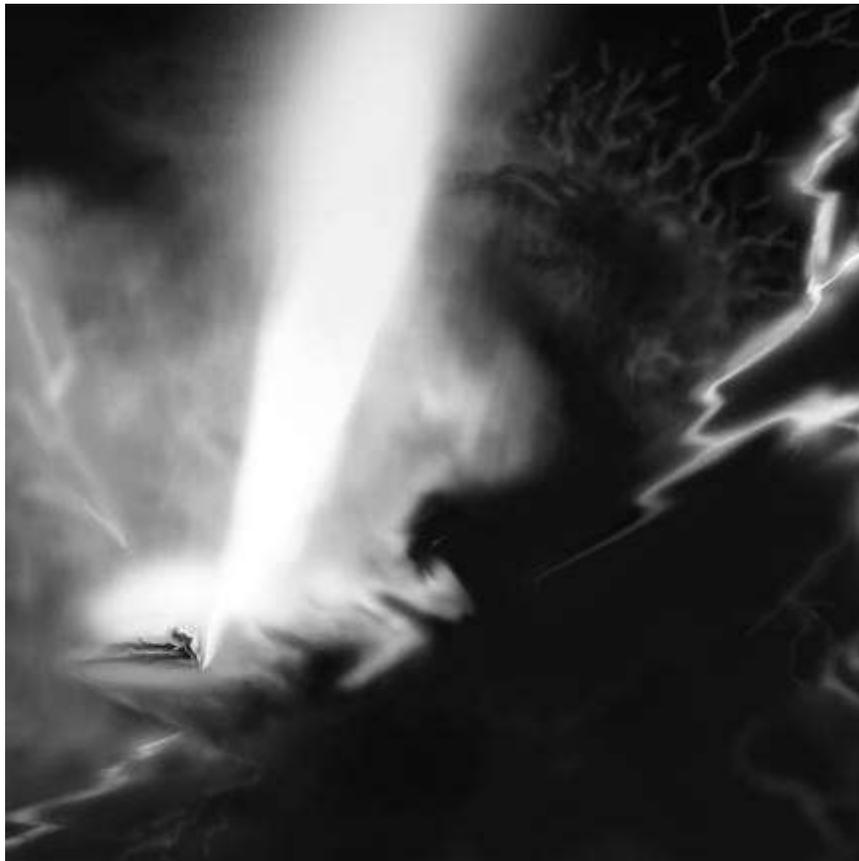
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Preface



Stalemate

In the fleeting moment linking the Defender with the Hero, Jacob came to know his son. It was miraculous to embrace the essence of the boy he always loved, but heartbreaking to feel the abandonment, shame, and anguish caused by so many years apart.

He reached out to soothe Connor's anger and bitterness, but the emotions recoiled, tightening into a knot of greed and pride. The dark, swirling mass overshadowed the boy Jacob once knew, and it began growing, making him feel small and unwelcome. Though the joining was brief, Jacob was not the only one learning.

At precisely the same time, Connor curiously probed the essence of the man defending him from far below. In a bewildering blur, the knowledge and skills of a Blacksmith and those of a Cooper transferred without words from father to son.

Connor watched Jacob Miller transform into Jacob Duncan, and he was electrified with emotions that spawned an unbelievable pain. His breath caught in his throat, his back arched in agony and with each beat of his heart he stiffened. He was unable to move and unable to look away from the visions in his head.

Lightning coursed through Connor as it flashed in the Chamber, transforming his view of the world. He witnessed and experienced a lifetime of people and places from Jacob's perspective.

When the thunder subsided, the two men pulled away from each other and time stopped. In their private, timeless void, ribbons of emotions became flesh and nowhere became the past.

Jacob stood at the bottom of the steps leading up to the orphanage while Connor looked down upon his father.

Connor glanced from side to side, almost turning completely around. He knew the tragedy this place had to offer, and it fanned the coals of hatred within him like the bellows to a forge.

"Do you remember this place?!" he demanded of Jacob.

Jacob nodded, knowing there was no right way to undo this wrong.

"I'm not sure how you could! You only spent enough time here to abandon me!"

"Connor I'm..."

"How could you lie to me this whole time?!"

Jacob began to answer, but Connor wasn't interested in answers.

"Why did you leave me here all alone?!" he screamed.

Anger, loathing and bitterness rose like the welts of a switch across the fabric of Connor's soul. He and Jacob separated and the orphanage dissolved.

Jacob watched helplessly while the Light ruthlessly harvested the strongest emotions from his son.

Connor writhed and screamed in pain as the very essence of his being was torn to pieces.

With the menacing goliath of evil towering over Jacob and bellowing with rage, he knew there was no escape. He had gambled and lost.

Minutes later, his life slipping away, Jacob wedged his hand between the glowing spire and his broken back.

"You cannot have my son!" he screamed at the towering creature.

As the massive fists came crashing down, Jacob whispered, "Stalemate."

Chapter 1



Alone

In what should have been his moment of glory, Connor Duncan cowered in terror on the floor of the Hero's Chamber. With his arms wrapped around his legs and his face buried in his knees, uncontrollable screams of terror poured from his quivering body.

With the sound of a "pop", Connor disappeared. Concealed within the emptiness of nowhere, his darker, evil side was stitched back into the frayed tapestry of his soul. With another "pop", he reappeared far beyond the borders of the Kingdom in a tuft of

tall dead grass. With his eyes shut tight and his knees clutched to his chest, he screamed in terror with every breath.

Long wisps of grass fluttered against his arms and legs as the dark silence of the moonless night slowly replaced the horrors of the Chamber.

Between sobs, he found tiny pieces of courage. When he had collected enough, he opened his eyes and peeked his head up above his knees. A little stem of grass flickered across his face, and he flinched, ducking his head back down to hide his face. With his eyes closed, the Chamber rushed back into his mind.

His heart raced, and his breath came in short, explosive bursts. He covered his ears, but it was no use. He couldn't hide from his father's disappointment or the creature inside the Chamber. The deafening screams echoed in his head, sending him adrift in a stormy sea of voices and images. He felt the liberation of madness, but forced his hands into fists, opened his eyes, and screamed, "Enough!"

Pushing himself up, he swatted at the visions dancing just beyond reach and lost his balance. With fear and frustration pounding in his head, he came down hard on his hands and knees.

The quietness of the desert landscape wrapped itself around his senses, soothing his troubled mind. Struggling back to his feet, an overwhelming need pulled him forward on unsteady legs.

Just ahead, a pair of half-buried wagon wheels stood out against the sand. They were twisted and broken with their wooden spokes sticking out at odd angles. He tripped over bits and pieces of wood and saw a half skeleton and a pile of bones.

Staring at Duke's remains, he hissed, "No! It can't be!"

Connor kicked at the bones launching the dismembered jaw from its sandy resting place. The old teeth scattered like pearls, lost in the dark of night.

Every muscle in his body went taut. "This isn't possible!" he growled through clenched teeth.

It had been weeks since they had come this way. And after countless steps and an unbelievable sacrifice, here he was, right back where he started. But this time, he was alone, humiliated, and betrayed!

"My father!" he seethed, with hatred in his heart.

"Everything is his fault," he yelled into the night sky, "EVERYTHING!"

So this is it?! This is my reward?! This was your fool-proof plan?! At least last time you abandoned me, it was at an orphanage!

You can keep your stupid Kingdom!" he screamed to the stars above, kicking at the tarp on the ground. It tangled around his foot, bringing him back to his knees.

He started picking up pieces of their old camping gear and throwing them into the distance, building his anger into rage. He kept on throwing things until he found a large, cast iron frying pan. His shoulder and arm ached from his pointless tantrum, and he suddenly felt exhausted and confused.

He dropped the pan, untangled the canvas tarp from his foot and curled up into a ball. Pulling the tarp over himself, he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

The next day, with the sun well past its zenith, Connor opened his eyes. "I need to go to the well," he mumbled, getting to his feet.

His arms hung lifelessly at his sides as he turned north and started walking into the distance. "I must drink from the well," he said flatly.

Clumps of dried grass became thicker, and the tendrils of long-dead creosote bushes pulled at his clothes. He walked around cactus and rocks, but never wavered from his course, never said a word and never took his eyes from the horizon.

With the sun in retreat and Connor mindlessly pushing on, the desert Wastelands slowly transitioned into a barren, endless collage of colorfully stacked sandstone.

As twilight obscured the scene, the first edge of the softly curving crescent moon took its place just above the horizon. Its presence went unnoticed as Connor moved ever closer to the insurmountable sandstone wall in the distance.

Just before reaching the cliff-face, he turned like a meandering river, adjusting his course to run parallel with the barrier. Walking ever onward, with the towering obstacle as his constant companion, he shuffled across timeworn stone that was as smooth as it was endless.

The subtle complexity of the barrier wall was wasted on him, just as it was on everyone who had been removed from the Kingdom. From any vantage point except that of a bird, it was impossible to see how the cliff face regularly indented, mile after mile.

Each time the cliff indented, it created the shape of a waxing crescent moon. Along the inner border of each crescent, twenty-one smaller crescents were pressed into the sandstone wall. Along the inner edge of each of these crescent shapes, fourteen fractures appear in the stone. Each of these fractures joined to form seven narrow crevasses, each one just wide enough for a single person to navigate. Along each crevasse, further bifurcation occurred, creating a staggering number of pathways.

Down the winding corridor of one singular crevasse, scattered amongst the endless possible choices within the barrier wall, rests a Sanctuary known only as the Oasis.

The Oasis is lost to all who have never entered the Kingdom, and those who cannot claim the right of Caretaker. It appears on no map and has never been found by the curious.

Connor was oblivious to these complexities. Even if someone had been there to question him, he would have been unable to explain why water from any other source would not quench his thirst.

Fortunately for Connor, none of this mattered. His senses were dulled, and his memory would fail should he try to recollect his journey.

As the night moved on, it carried Connor with it. Step after step and turn after turn, he deftly navigated his way, mile after mile. When the sky had finally awakened with the first light of a new day, he had already entered one of the enormous crescent shapes within the sandstone wall. Passing into one of the smaller inner crescents, he approached a narrow crevasse. He took no notice of the silty, brown stream of water running out of it.

The narrow pathway leading into the rock blocked the light and Connor pressed on into the dark, claustrophobic corridor. The water quickly rose to his ankles, burdening his every step.

Sloshing one foot in front of the other, he finally emerged into a spectacular clearing. The large area was completely encircled by a colorfully layered sandstone wall rising hundreds of feet into the sky. In the center of this circular Oasis, the ground rose to meet a simple well made of stacked stone. Standing near the well, watching the water pour out of it, were three men barely older than Connor.

Connor was only a few steps into the clearing when the ground began rumbling, reverberating the air with something too deep to hear. The vibration grew more intense as the force moved like a wave across the land.

Everyone watched as a ribbon of Light came ripping out of the base of the cliff wall. The energy wave came at them, traveling across the ground at an incredible speed. One man covered his ears while the other two desperately held onto the side of the well.

When the wave of Light passed under them, the man with his hands over his ears crumpled to the ground. The other two kept their grip and barely remained upright. Connor didn't even skip a step.

Before their looks of panic faded, before they even had time to help their friend from the ground, there was a "BOOM!!!" that rocked the world. It was so loud, none of them could hear anything except a sharp buzzing and no one except Connor was still standing.

Leaves fell en masse from the restless trees atop the cliff walls. Ancient rocks fell from permanent resting places, and the first rays of sunlight illuminated the top of the Oasis.

With their ears ringing, the leaves falling and all manner of rocks bouncing about, the men tried to help their friend to his feet, but he wouldn't take their hands. Instead, he started yelling, "Ross! Ross!! He's behind you! Look behind you!"

Another ribbon of Light rippled from the sandstone wall, lifting everything in its path. It traveled across the Oasis making the three men rise and fall like ships on the high sea. The accompanying "Boom!" was only slightly less intense than the first.

Oblivious to the mayhem unfolding around him, Connor continued walking toward the well. Ravi was flat on his back again, and Ross and Tarquin were on their knees.

Before the next wave hit, and it was clearly coming, Ravi looked at his friends. His eyes were open wide, and his arms were out, pointing at Connor.

Tarquin and Ross jerked around just in time to see Connor place his hands on the side of the well. Undisturbed by the newcomer, the water poured over his hands, covering his wrists as it continued down the ancient stones. Tarquin gasped, scooting away from the well until he bumped into Ravi.

Ross watched intently as Connor dipped his head down to the water. From high above, an acorn arrived with a little splash. Connor took a mouthful of the cold, sweet, mineral-laden water as the acorn bounded back above the surface. He swallowed, making his eyelids flutter and Ross captured every detail.

Another wave of Light rolled across the Oasis, but Ross stayed with Connor. It was incredible to see the awakening, the color returning to the man's face, the muddled eyes of an outcast returning to the present.

"BOOM!"

A heartbeat later, Ross and Connor rose and fell as a smaller wave went under them.

The well began vibrating against Ross' hands, sending bubbles to the surface.

"Boom!"

Connor stepped back from the frothing well, and Ross turned to watch the wave of Light pulse out of the cliff face. He relaxed, allowing himself to roll with it.

He smiled at Ravi and Tarquin, who were both on their hands and knees.

"BOOM!"

The stones surrounding the well were ripped away by a massive column of water shooting out of the ground.

When the geyser reached its apex, a downpour of fat water droplets began showering the Oasis with a thundering roar.

Tarquin got to his feet and stood with his hands up over his head as if he could keep himself dry. His eyebrows were knitted together, he was squinting, his mouth was open, and his hair was matted down.

Ravi stood up with his hands out to his sides, balancing himself against the next wave. Like everyone else, he was soaking wet, and his thick hair was plastered across his face, hiding one eye.

Ross held his hands out, cupping them together. Water was pouring down his face. It was such a heavy downpour, he had to open his mouth a little to breathe. Watching the water splashing out of his hands, he glanced up at the clear blue sky and started laughing harder than he had in a long time.

When the next wave of light passed under the well, the fountain grew. As the column of water rocketed to more than a hundred feet high, the rain paused.

Ross waited for it..., "Boom!" Then he started toward his friends. In the strangely quiet moment between the "Boom" and the absent rain, he gave his assessment of their situation and his orders.

"The Oasis is flooding. That man over there will not survive, and neither will we if we don't act quickly. Ravi, before the house is flooded, we need four blankets, all the money, and as much food as you can put into the old apple barrel."

The rain started again, but this time, there was much more of it. They watched a shimmering mist of water drops ripple above the next wave of Light as it zoomed toward them through the ankle deep water.

After the wave had passed, Ross put his arm around each of their heads, pulling them in with his mouth between their ears.

"BOOM!"

He yelled over the sound of the pouring rain, "Ravi, you'll need to put the lid on the barrel. We need our supplies to float out of here with us."

He could feel Ravi nod in agreement.

"Tarquin, gather every waterskin we have and all the rope you can carry. We've got less than ten minutes!"

Anticipating the arrival of the next wave, Ross stopped talking and released his friends. As soon as it passed, Ravi and Tarquin took off toward the house.

"Boom!"

The house was just like those in the village. It had been carved into the cliff face, exposing only the front door and several windows. Within the house, narrow shafts traveled up through the rock providing additional light and ventilation. There were ten rooms spread over three stories and several staircases.

Tarquin's longer legs got him to the door first. He opened it.

"BOOM!"

Ravi ran inside, and the sound of the falling water quieted to a whisper.

In the hallway, Ravi turned abruptly and put his hands out to stop Tarquin. Tarquin nearly ran him down, but Ravi's hands gripped him by the shoulders, and the two stood face to face.

He looked up at his friend, and asked, "This is it, isn't it? It's really happening?"

It took a few seconds for the concept to take form, then Tarquin smiled for the first time all day.

"Is that what's going on? Is it really time?"

Ravi nodded, and ran upstairs, yelling, "Hurry up! We've got to go!"

In the clearing of the Oasis, a wave of Light whizzed along the ground as Ross sloshed over to Connor. Connor glanced up, then went back to staring at the water gushing from the ground.

"You need to come over this way," Ross yelled, pointing toward the door, "over toward the house, all right?"

“BOOM!”

Connor didn't respond.

“I'm going to take you over to the house,” Ross shouted, putting his hand under Connor's arm and gently pulling him toward the house.

Another submerged wave of Light came at them, making the water dance. Ross seemed to have the hang of riding it out and Connor was still completely oblivious.

“Boom!”

Getting Connor to move through the deepening water reminded Ross of walking his Grandmother Elbe through the soft sand streets of the village. Each step was slow, slightly out of rhythm and unsteady to say the least.

By the time they made it to the house, they had survived another twelve large and small waves of Light. The deeper the water got, the less the Light waves affected their balance and the big and little “Boom's” had faded away. The only thing they could hear now was the deafening sound of the unnatural rain.

The water was creeping up to Ross' chest when Tarquin came wading out of the house. He had five lengths of rope around his neck, and a leather sack held over his head.

“Quickly, let me have some of the ropes,” Ross shouted, reaching over and taking two coils from around Tarquin's neck.

“Start filling the waterskins with air.”

“Air?!” Tarquin yelled back, his voice barely audible.

“Yes, air! Breathe into them and start handing them over.”

Ross looked over just in time to see Ravi's barrel coming out of the house, right at Tarquin's head.

“Watch out!” he yelled, shoving Tarquin to one side and stopping the barrel with his other hand.

The water was already up to Ravi's chin when he came out of the house. His progress was painfully slow, and his head bobbed up and down, just above the water.

Tarquin pulled an empty waterskin from the leather sack and started breathing into it as fast as he could.

Ross tied one of the ropes around the barrel and put the other one around his neck.

Ravi had finally moved next to Ross and was completely out of breath.

“Blankets please!” Ross yelled to Ravi.

“They weigh a ton, Ross!” he shouted back, pulling four wool blankets up to the surface of the water.

“Ravi, you got them all wet!” Ross laughed. “Did you get the top of the barrel on tight?”

“I did the best I could. By the time I got everything in it, it was bobbing around the kitchen!”

"I'm sure it will be fine," Ross shouted confidently, taking the blankets from Ravi and setting them onto the barrel. "Hold it steady for a second."

Ravi held the barrel while Ross secured the blankets with rope.

"All right, let go!"

The barrel flipped over with the weight of the blankets but kept floating. Ross took the last part of the rope and tied it around his waist.

Ross took two of the air filled waterskins from Tarquin and calmly lifted the rope off his neck. He wasn't hurried, nor did he give anyone the impression they were in any real danger. Tying the end of the line to the air bags, he yelled to Ravi, "Drop the money bag you silly man, unless you plan to drown with it."

Ravi ducked his head below the water and untied the gold from his belt. Tarquin handed Ross two more airbags, and he moved behind Connor. Ross slipped the rope under Connor's arm, positioning the airbags in front.

He put his mouth to Connor's ear, shouting, "This will make you float."

Ross measured the rope across Connor's back and finished tying on the other two airbags. With Connor's flotation device complete, all Ross had to do was finish putting it in place.

"Lift your arm please!"

Connor raised his arm, allowing Ross to push the last two airbags under it.

"All right, lower it!"

Again, Connor did as requested.

"Keep both of your arms down and these airbags will keep you afloat. Do you understand?"

Connor nodded.

Ross took the rest of Connor's rope and secured it around his waist, linking them together. Ravi was treading water to Ross' left. Tarquin was directly in front of him with water up to his chin while blowing furiously into the last waterskins.

Ross yelled to Tarquin, "Rope!"

Ross and Tarquin quickly assembled the remaining flotation devices while Ravi tied a long piece of rope to the bag of gold under the water. When all four men floated effortlessly, along with the bag of gold, Ross smiled at his friends and relaxed.

Ravi silently mouthed to Tarquin, "It's happening!"

Tarquin paddled closer to Ross, and shouted, "Is it really happening?!"

With the smile still on his face, Ross yelled over the sound of the falling water, "Have you ever heard a story about a City of Light?!"

Chapter 2



Practice Life

Andrew, Kaya, and Jacob watched as Marcia and her band of six stood in front of the outer archway, straining to read the words above it.

“Is it a warning?” Sakra asked.

“I don’t think so,” Marcia said reassuringly.

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