



Enchanta – Sample Chapter

By Jay Dubya

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Chapter I

“Superstitious Rock”

“Let’s take the shortcut through the woods,” David yelled back to his younger sister. “We’ll make it home five minutes sooner.”

“Wait for me!” Barbara panted. “My bike is slower than yours and I can’t pedal as fast as you can.”

The fourteen-year-old brother and twelve-year-old sister were returning from a grocery store. They had been on an errand to buy a loaf of bread for their mother. Sally and Bill Morgan would be waiting for them at home. A family barbecue picnic was to be served on the back patio in half an hour.

Barbara and David lived in Hammonds Grove, a quiet New Jersey community of fifteen thousand people. The town is ideally situated between the hustle and bustle of Philadelphia and the Jersey shore’s popular white, sandy beaches.

The blond-hair, blue-eyed brother slowed down to allow Barbara time to catch up. Soon they steered their bikes into a well-worn trail. Bramble bushes and thorny shrubs dotted both sides of the dirt path. The brown-hair girl wished that her brother would show more caution riding through extending tree branches and past stumps sticking up from the ground.

“David, please slow down!” Barbara begged. “I am losing my breath and also my patience.”

“It’s a good thing you’re not a doctor,” David shouted back. “A doctor needs all of the *patients* he can get,” the brother laughed. He was riding with his right hand

on the handlebar as he used his left hand to hold the loaf of bread inside the tray attached to the bike's front steering column.

"Sometimes you're the only one who thinks you're funny," his blue-eyed sister criticized. "I wish you'd learn to be more sensitive!"

"Okay, I guess you deserve a rest," David replied. "I do feel somewhat responsible for your safety," he added.

The pair stopped and then parked their bikes in a shaded area where tall ferns grew between stately trees that bordered the dirt trail. It was a beautiful late April afternoon. Spring buds had already appeared on many of the tree limbs. A serenade of chirping birds echoed throughout the wood as the sun's rays pierced through a thin low layer of clouds.

"It's getting chilly," Barbara observed. "We better not stay too long or soon it'll be too dark to even see the trail through these woods."

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David heard a chain saw buzzing off in the distance. "We still have time to climb up on Superstitious Rock," he suggested. "Maybe we can see who's cutting down a tree."

Barbara walked from her bike, which she had leaned against a tall oak. "I don't think that's a wise thing to do," the girl answered. "There's a lot of strange stories about that giant boulder over there being enchanted," the sister insisted. "Many years ago a witch was hung near it."

David had also heard the tales that were connected with the giant rock's history, but he never put much belief in those stories. "I know all about the leprechauns and the trolls that have been seen around the rock," David asserted, "but I also know that people like to invent stories and that other folks have wild imaginations."

The two approached Superstitious Rock. Barbara showed greater caution than her more adventurous brother did. David felt that he had to show off his bravery and daring to his more fearful younger sister.

“Skip Butler told me at school that he once saw a lot of goblins holding hands and dancing around the boulder,” Barbara reported.

“He didn’t tell you that it was Halloween, and that the ghosts were really kids dressed up for trick or treat,” the brother scoffed. “Skip wants to write fantasy stories for a living when he grows up!” David informed.

“Grandpop Hank once told me a scary story about Superstitious Rock,” Barbara stated.

“You gotta’ be kidding,” David replied. “Grandpa Hank loves stories about the Jersey Devil and the monsters and creatures of Greek mythology.”

“Don’t listen to me,” Barbara argued, “and see if I care. But I think you should show more respect for what others think and say.”

“Okay,” the brother agreed as they reached the base of the giant rock. “I’ll listen to you out of courtesy for Grandpa Hank. But I know what you are going to say. He told you that whoever climbs up on the rock will escape the present time and enter another dimension.”

“How do you know that?” Barbara asked. “Do you read tarot cards too?”

“Grandpop told me the exact same story,” David admitted. “He also believes in UFOs, ghosts and the *Wizard of Oz*. And he loves to tell tall tales more than anybody else in Hammonds Grove.”

Barbara insisted that her brother show more consideration for local legends, but David thought that magic and witchcraft were silly leftovers from the Middle Ages. “Look Barbara, we live in the age of computers, the *Internet*, stereo sound and E-mail. Legends and myths belong with medieval knights and ancient Greeks. Superstitious Rock is about as magical as a holographic baseball card!”

Barbara defended Superstitious Rock, but then her brother again challenged her. “Of course, if you’re too chicken to climb the rock and stand on top, then I’ll do it without you!” he proclaimed. “This boulder is no different than any other boulder in the whole world, and that includes Siberia and Antarctica!”

Superstitious Rock had long fascinated Hammonds Grove citizens. Several years before the town’s mayor had hired the state university’s geology department to study the massive rock’s composition. The scholarly investigative team conducted its research and came up with a very baffling discovery. Hammonds Grove is situated on the Atlantic Coastal Plain. The earth in and around the town consists mostly of rich sandy soil and some deposits of “Jersey sandstone.” Boulders similar to Superstitious Rock are located forty miles west in Pennsylvania’s Piedmont region. The *Rutgers University* geologists reported that the huge rock was somehow located on the wrong side of the Delaware River. The scientists could not provide a logical explanation for the peculiar geographic mystery.

Barbara did not want her brother to think that she was afraid to climb the rock. “Oh David,” she said, “I was just trying to scare you. You know I don’t believe that Superstitious Rock has any magic or strange powers. Do I look like a wimp?”

“Do I have to answer that?” David asked.

The pair began ascending the giant twelve-foot-high boulder. The brother helped his sister in her clamber up the massive rock’s smooth right side. Barbara imagined that it would be fun to brag to her school friends exactly how easy the legendary rock was to conquer.

“I’ll bet Larry and Janet would never try this,” Barbara claimed.

“Our cousins aren’t quite as brave as we are,” David Morgan boasted. “They’re afraid of their own shadows.”

After finally reaching the top, the two felt as if they had really accomplished something special. The woods smelled fresh and clean. Barbara said that she heard

several rabbits scampering through distant thickets. David imagined that he was standing at the summit of *Mt. Everest* on his latest Himalayan expedition.

“I almost forgot,” Barbara noted. “We have to deliver that loaf of bread for supper or else Mom and Dad will worry about what’s keeping us so long to get back from the grocery store.”

“I suppose you’re right,” David acknowledged. “I’d like to stay up here longer. Maybe tomorrow we can come back with Larry and Janet to show them how easy it is to climb this rock.”

Just as the two were about to descend, David and Barbara heard a tramping sound. They looked to the right toward an opening between several dense tree clusters. The thrashing grew louder as its source moved closer to Superstitious Rock. A neighing sound was followed by a short gallop. The children stared at each other with bewildered expressions on their faces.

“Look!” Barbara cried in astonishment. “It’s a wild white stallion!”

“It must be wild!” David agreed. “It has no bridle or saddle!”

The magnificent horse pranced toward Superstitious Rock, and it was then that the children saw that the handsome steed was no ordinary animal. It had powerful wings dangling from its broad shoulders.

“Holy cow!” Barbara shouted. “This must be some kind of mirage! This rock must really be haunted!”

“I must be dreaming!” David yelled. “Flying horses went out of style with Egyptian chariots and ancient Greek monsters!”

The splendid creature trotted forward and positioned itself parallel to Superstitious Rock. It nodded its head several times and then said, “Jump on my back! I’ll take you on an adventure you’ll never forget!”

“We’re sorry!” Barbara stammered. “We’d better be leaving now. I need to go home and rest on my bed to recover from this shock!”

“This is too much for my brain to absorb!” David marveled. “I wasn’t at all prepared for this!”

“Do as I command,” the winged white horse declared. “Someone in danger needs your help right now!”