

Captain Zoog

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Leslie rode the candy magic boat ride for hours, or what she thought were hours, but had really been a twenty minute sleep before the doctor asked her to wake up. The doctor told her to stay up this time and not to fall asleep. She even gave her the remote control so she could watch her favorite animations. The time was three in the afternoon, so the television stations where two dimensional movements.

At home Leslie's station was channel five. The succession of cartoons which ran from two to five in the afternoon was her favorites. Her time was consumed by the different characters in the different shows, along with their unpredictable situations, which had become very predictable. She saw many re-runs, so much so she knew every cartoon episode verbatim; word for word her actions were activated, she was them and they now included her.

That morning she was very tired and just wanted to go to sleep, but every time she dozed off she was awakened, if not by the doctor then by her mother, and if not by her mother then by her older sister. All they kept saying was, 'Stay awake. As much as you feel you need to sleep, you need to stay awake.'

To the left of where she laid were three dinosaurs and to the right three worms climbing one tree. The room was wide and she was the only one in it. Her bed was center and the murals had been painted to give whatever patient occupied the room an escape. This was the children's ward.

As she looked away from the television her eyes paced across the walls and focused on the smallest dinosaur. It was tiny, an infant and those that surrounded it must have been its family. At this moment, as she lay, she found the walls more interesting. Though it was three thirty—the high time for her toon adventures—she couldn't find the animations she liked; her channel five was nowhere to be found. The dinosaurs looked more animated then what was on television, and as she looked and grazed the mural with her imagination she could not wait to fall asleep; she wanted to join their world.

When she'd try to raise her neck she was told to relax. She wanted to see more of what was in and around the room. From where she was laying she could not even see the wall in front of her. Where there more dinosaurs roaming a fantastic adventure, or even more worms packing tree trunks with their multiple legs, or possibly other creatures all together? She could not see and she was told not to try.

She wasn't frustrated, she new quite well something was wrong. The way she felt yesterday was the worse she'd ever felt. She had to cry out a yell, a scream, a panic sound because she was in so much pain. After that scream she found herself asleep and woke up this morning by slow tempered calls of Dr. Dunken.

The night before, when she had finally fallen asleep after all the pain she had gone through, she was tranquil and serene. She had dreamt of Captain Zoog, which was her favorite superhero in her channel five afternoon animations. Captain Zoog was an amazing captain she thought. He could not fly like other superheroes, but he could bounce. He could bounce so high that he actually simulated flight. Whenever he wanted to get somewhere fast he just ate a chocolate bar and it sent his bouncing knees into hyper zoom. All he had to do was point his head towards the direction of the *Help* call and bounce into action. He was amazing.

Last night Leslie was with Captain Zoog when they heard a call for help. They were having a conversation about chocolate flavors when a scream, the *Help* scream, made its way towards them. Though she was completely ready to step aside and let Captain Zoog do his heroics, she was stunned when he asked her to join. He looked at her with those big white eyes and reached out his hand, and in it there was a chocolate bar. With his big shoulders and broad back he handed her the bar. He grabbed another one, ripped the wrapper and swallowed the chocolate squares whole. His body started jittering and his knees began to swell. A big smile came over his face and he turned it towards Leslie. Leslie got the message and tore into her brown candy wrap. Unlike Captain Zoog, she was not able to take it all-in in one bite, but she managed it in two. At first she was skeptical, but then the jitters hit her too, and soon she was feeling the energy reaching the outer extensions of her body. He told her to point her head to his direction, the direction of the call, and soon off they were. But just before reaching the distressed call, Leslie was woken up. This wasn't the first ride she had gone on, but it was the first with the *Captain* and she could not wait to get back to him. She could not wait for another *Help* call.

Leslie noticed, through the vague in her mind, her older sister coming and going from the room. Her sister looked to be preoccupied and never really looked into her eyes when she'd approach her. At one point, just after Leslie dozed off for the third time in less than an hour, Leslie noticed her sister's eyes fill with tears. This confused Leslie. It had been a while since she had seen her sister cry. If anything she was usually frustrated. She had been in this situation many times before; this whole hospital run and hospital wait. Leslie recalled the last time she was here and the way her sister looked at her with discontentment and irritation. She had been pulled from one of her favorite routines, her basketball practices. Their mother literally rushed her from the court of play so she may accompany her and her sister to the hospital. It's not like the older sister didn't care; only that its frequency was becoming an annoyance and she didn't like such continued pauses in her daily life; Leslie was becoming a chore.

Things were different now. Her sister by now would have been back to her daily life; after all, it looked just like another hospital run, though she could not understand why she was not being allowed to sleep, and why her sister was not mad—in her usual way—for being here? Leslie continued thinking, *Why is my sister actually crying and why am I in a room by my self, when before there had always been another bed with another kid?*

She finally decided to let herself go, she was tired. She figured it would only be for a moment. There would be no fault in meeting Mr. Zoog for a few minutes, a candy run would be the best thing right now, and the ability to bounce endless leaps would strip the confusion she was in. The family and the doctor wouldn't get that mad if she slept for a few minutes.

Leslie waited for her mother to go on her thinking thoughts, walking a slow wonder which placed her outside the room in the beige covered hallways. This left her sister as watch dog, but her sister was looking out the window with a sorrow Leslie had never seen. For Leslie this was the moment of escape. She could doze off right now and give entry to the tiredness which overtook her mind. She had been really tired lately.

She looked around and the room's multiple colors faded in with each other. This created a blurring rainbow with no separations of hues; she saw only the accumulating shades. The dinosaurs, clearly distinct earlier, now fused into a heard of morphing lizards. In the middle of them the adjacent worms joined in the confusion, creating an elongated mass of metamorphosis. She found it interesting and weird. She could no longer see her sister by the window, there were no windows providing light, soon no walls and no doors; only a mud filled landscape and morphing characters in the distance. It only took one twist of the neck and there he was again, Captain Zoog. Behind him was a bright colorful landscape filled with erected sculptures of chocolate milk cities. His bounce was incredibly high and whenever he touched land to rebound, marshmallow balls surfaced like white cotton clouds, creating an upside down heaven.

The citizens of this approaching city were the toons she had favored on her five o'clock animation runs. They were all there, each as an edible figure, of which each if eaten hurriedly would make her leaps stronger and higher; she wanted to match her superhero.

Leslie tried to walk towards the Captain but felt chained to her bed; she knew leaving would anger her mother. Though she tried to release this thought and fully immerse her self in her fantasy, she could not, and she soon found her frustration limiting her escape. She felt only the leaping power of the chocolate bars running through her knees, could break this chain. She felt that her mother in time would understand her need to escape. But how would she achieve it? She'd have to call on the man of Power. She thought best to hand signal him towards her—for any sound right now may bring her mother's attention, or even her sister's—but soon felt it wouldn't be smart. The captain was high above traveling in his long bounces, and she very low below; he would not be able to see her. A scream, a shout was the only way to get his attention. Right then Leslie was hit by a small glee. It brightened her up to think that she would soon be calling the Captain, that she would finally have the chance to utter the infamous word, *Help*. But Leslie's recent jubilation was interrupted by what looked to be a hand reaching towards her, coming from that desolate morphing landscape she distanced herself from; those of giant lizards and multi-ped creatures. She quickly recognized the hands as her mother's, but Leslie did not want to be awakened, and so her words needed to ring out clear and loud. She needed to call the Captain fast.

With the might of a last hope, and the vision of a reunion, she screamed the word and screamed it with all her might. As she let out the last letter she felt her mother's hand grabbing her. Leslie tugged forcibly for release, and as she got loose, she saw Captain Zoog's candy bar fall from the sky and on to her chest. She quickly opened it, but this time she swallowed it whole with one swoop.

*Leslie passed away on her hospital bed that afternoon. The last word heard from her was **Help**, of which two short breaths after, her life took flight never to return. She died from complications of the heart, for at the time of her death she weighed three hundred and fifty two pounds.*