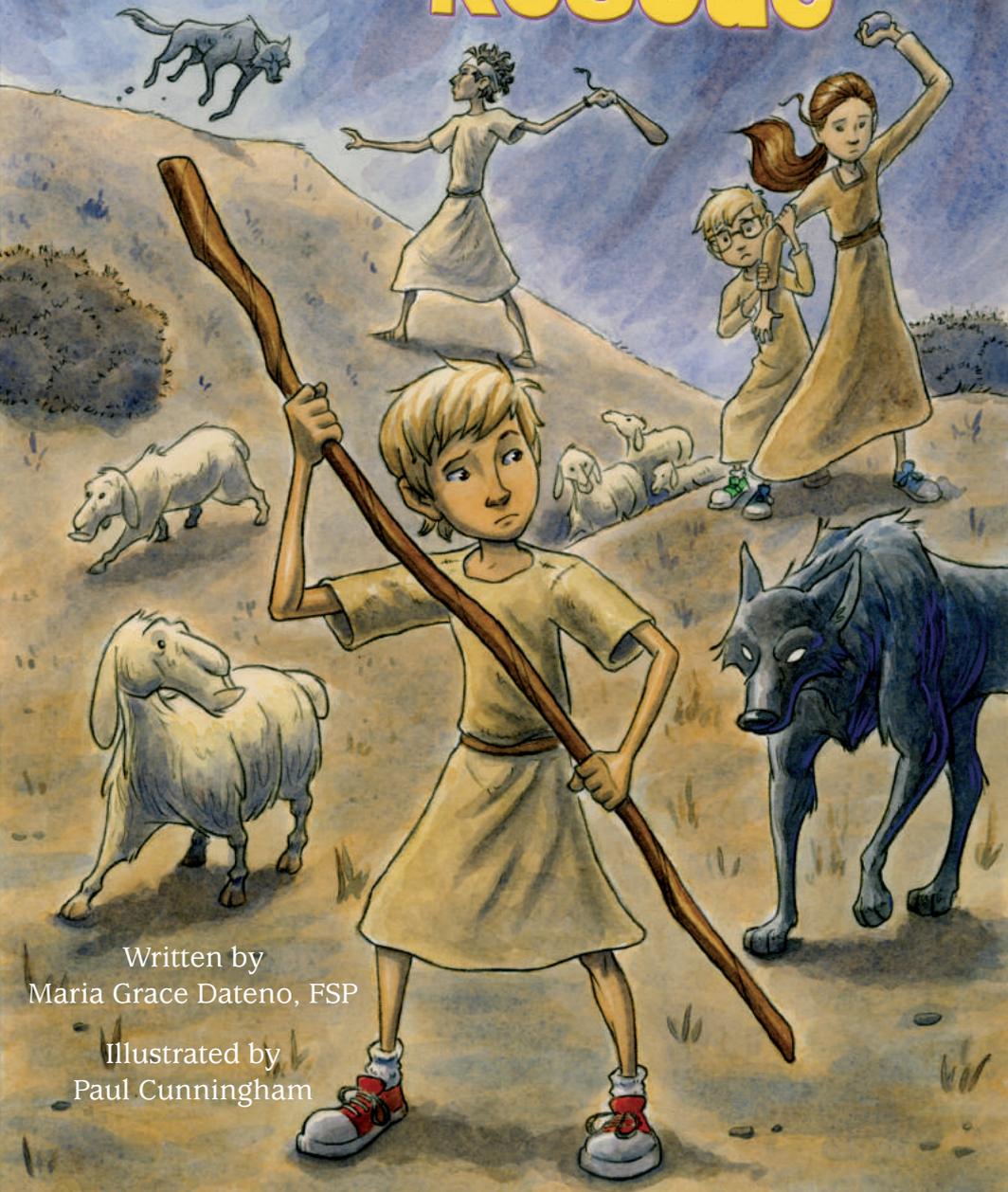


Shepherds to the Rescue



Written by
Maria Grace Dateno, FSP

Illustrated by
Paul Cunningham



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*To Jennie,
my sister and writing buddy,
who helpfully pestered me
until I finished writing this series.*

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Chapter One



Out for a Ride

Our adventure started on a regular Tuesday afternoon. My older sister, Hannah, my little brother, Noah, and I finished our schoolwork and decided to go biking.

Hannah grabbed her bike and was off before Noah had his sneakers on.

“Come on, Noah! Hurry up!” I yelled as I got my bike and put a leg over the seat.

“Wait, Caleb!” called Noah, still tying his laces. He’s only six, so he is always asking me to wait for him. I didn’t want to wait because Hannah had already reached the road. I didn’t

want her to get too far ahead, but I slowed down a little bit for Noah.

I picked up speed once I hit the road. I pedaled standing up, trying to catch up to Hannah before she got to the top of the hill. That's where we usually go whenever we go biking. We're allowed to ride our bikes on the road because there's never any traffic. It only goes to our house and the Brownings' farm.

The trees in the woods on one side gave shade to most of the road, and I smelled the wonderful scent of honeysuckle. On the opposite side of the road was an overgrown field.

"Wait! Please wait for me!" I heard Noah yell from behind me.

Usually, whoever was the first to reach the top of the hill immediately went down the other side. It was great to coast down with the wind blowing in your face. Hannah was almost always first. So I was surprised to see her stop at the top of the hill and put a foot down. I pumped harder, meaning to whiz by her.

"Guys! Wait!" I heard Noah call again.

I pulled up next to Hannah and stopped too, waiting for Noah. We looked back and saw

our little brother struggling up the hill.

Half a minute later, Noah pulled up beside us. “Okay, let’s go!” he said with a big smile on his face.

All together, the three of us pedaled hard for a few feet, then, picking up speed, we sailed down the hill.

Okay, now here’s where it gets weird.

Halfway down, something happened. When we talked about it afterward, we couldn’t agree about what it felt like. To me, it was like we suddenly slowed down because the air got thick.

Hannah said, “No, it was like the air turned into water.”

“But we didn’t get wet,” said Noah. “We just started moving in slow motion.”

Anyway, what happened was this: we slowed down, then our bikes disappeared, and then we were running (in slow motion) down the hill, instead of riding our bikes! By the time we reached the bottom of the hill, we were in a different time and place.

But we didn’t realize that yet.



Chapter Two



Where in the World?

“Look at us!” cried Hannah, which was completely unnecessary, because we were already staring at each other. The clothes we had been wearing had changed into very different clothes.

“What is this?” I asked, pulling on the tan-colored robe I was wearing. It had long sleeves and a rope tied like a belt around the waist. Noah’s was the same. “It looks like a nightgown—a *girl’s* nightgown.”

“No it doesn’t,” said Hannah. “Don’t look so disgusted.”

I looked at what Hannah was wearing. Hers was the same color, but had decoration around the neck. Mine and Noah's didn't, so I felt a little better.

"What is it, then?" I asked.

"Well, it looks like—" Hannah started.

"Hey, what happened to the trees?" asked Noah, looking around.

"Good question," I said. "And the field there seems different."

"And where are our bikes?" asked Noah, turning around in a circle with a panicked look on his face.

We all turned and ran back up the hill, expecting to see our bikes lying by the side of the road or something. There was no sign of them. There was nothing but hills, dirt, and small bushes as far as we could see.

"Something happened to the road, too," said Noah.

It was true. There was no pavement. It was just hardened dirt.

We stood at the top of the hill, looking at each other.

“I wonder how this happened,” I said. “I’ve never heard of anything like it.”

“Never mind *how* it happened! We need to undo it,” said Hannah. “We need to figure out how to find our house.”

I could tell she was worried. Hannah is almost eleven and acts like she’s responsible for us—which means she thinks she gets to decide what we do.

“Are we lost?” asked Noah.

“We can’t be,” I said. “It’s impossible to get lost so quickly. Hannah, we don’t have to be home until dinnertime. Let’s walk further down the road and see what’s going on.”

“Yeah,” said Noah.

“No, guys, we need to go home and tell Mom and Dad what happened,” said Hannah.

Noah and I rolled our eyes at each other, but we followed Hannah back the way we had just come, minus our bikes.

We walked and walked. Soon there wasn’t even a road to follow. The land was rocky, with some small bushes and grass and weeds that were pretty dried out. After I got used to the

robe-thing I was wearing, I kind of liked it. It hung down to about my knees, but it was very loose, so it was easy to walk in it.

“Okay, Hannah, let’s stop for a minute,” I said, after we had been walking for what seemed like an hour. “We should have been there by now.”

“And I’m thirsty,” said Noah.

“Well, we didn’t bring anything to drink,” said Hannah.

“I’m hungry, too,” said Noah.

“I had a bag of trail mix in my pocket,” I said, “but . . .”

We all felt the sides of our robes—there were no pockets.

“I think we just have to keep going,” said Hannah. “We have to come to our house eventually.”

We walked some more and then Hannah gave in. As we sat down to rest, Noah opened his mouth to complain again. But suddenly he looked up and tilted his head to one side.

“Hey, guys, can you hear that?” he asked, smiling.

“What?” I asked. “I don’t hear anything.”

We all stopped and listened. Soon we could all hear what Noah heard—it was music, coming from somewhere nearby.