

# *The Adventures of Guy*

*Written by a guy*

*(probably)*

*By*

*Norm Cowie*

Includes a bonus short story!

**The Adventures of Guy was originally published in 2006, and  
thanks to the miracles of today's publishing...**

**...it's back.**

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This is a work of fiction. Nothing is real. I made up everything in here, mostly, except for the odd fact I researched on Google. But it's mostly stuff straight out of my brain. And yes, I know you can't get Donkey Kong on PlayStation, so relax.

You know you want to read its award winning sequel  
The Next Adventures of Guy .. more wackiness.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# THE ADVENTURES OF GUY

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my daughter, Lauren  
(my personal editor and idea-bounce-offer).

Norm's other books:

*The Next Adventures of Guy .. more wackiness.*

*Fang Face*

*The Guy'd Book, why we leave the seat up... and other stuff*

*Conundrum (coming)*

*Hell's Angel (coming)*

And stories in the anthologies:

*The Heat of the Moment*

*Missing*

(I'm also working on a third Adventures of Guy and *A Caveman Story ... Bonk and Hedz*. So stay tuned)

[www.normcowie.com](http://www.normcowie.com)

***Thanks, gracias and all that to all of the readers, librarians and booksellers who have supported my books, and to reviewers for all of the awesome reviews.***

***I also owe a debt of gratitude to attorneys and telemarketers, whose antics and reputations gave such excellent fodder for this work. If you're an attorney, and take offense at anything in here ... too bad ... I mean, please don't sue me.***

***Thank you, too, to those who read and enjoy my business/humor articles. Your support and encouragement helped give me the impetus to write this.***

***Last, but not least, a shout out to Draumr Publishing, who published it the first time around, for their support, edits, and humor throughout our relationship; and to Echelon***

***Press Publishing for publishing the short story at  
the end in The Heat of the Moment.***

## ***Prologue***

*Some years ago, the Federal Trade Commission issued an amendment to the Telemarketing Sales Rule (TSR) mandating a Federal “Do-Not-Call list.” Millions enthusiastically signed up, happy that they might recapture the sanctity and serenity of their dinner times, and the freedom to answer their phones without having to worry about fending off some jerk, whose thinly veiled purpose is to convince you to take your money, and put it in his pocket.*

*Unfortunately, though, not everybody paid attention to what their government had done for them (quite likely because most people are not used to this kind of help by our elected officials).*

“Ring.....”

“Ring.....”

“Ring.....?”

“Ring!!!”

“Ring.....ring .... ring.....”

The answering machine didn't kick in.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Mostly because we don't have an answering machine.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Which doesn't matter, because we won't answer the phone anyway....

“Ring....ring....ring....”

...because of telemarketers.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Telemarketers don't seem to mind that we don't answer the phone.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

They keep calling.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Over and over.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Patience and stamina ... telemarketer virtues.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

That is, well, if you feel like you can put 'telemarketer' and 'virtues' in the same sentence.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

We didn't know that the attorneys had waged successful war against the telemarketers, giving us certain rights against their invasion of our privacy.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

As a result of the litigation, the telemarketing firms had to cut back on employees.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Nearly wiping out their whole industry almost overnight.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

But not everybody knows about the Opt-out laws.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

There are still some clueless people out there.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Like us.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

For all I know, there's only one telemarketer left in the world.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

And he has our number.

# Chapter 1



It all started when the phone rang at the house one day...

“Ring...ring....ring....”

The phone kept ringing.

And I kept ignoring it.

Actually, it wasn't that I ignored it. Since it's always ringing, we just tune it out, so now it's part of the background noise of our apartment, like Dave Matthews, Monday Night Football and DVD's that usually have a woman's name in the title. Nobody important ever calls us anyway. They know better. Even Mom gave up trying to call, and when she wants to reach me, she simply sends a messenger-kid to me, like my little brother Seth.

Seth's over right now, in fact, playing Donkey-Kong on the PlayStation. After his message from Mom was delivered, he was released from further

responsibility, regardless of my response, or lack of response.

“Ring ....ring....ring....”

Outside, I could hear one of my roommates, Tim, shooting hoops on the neighbor’s driveway. The neighbor doesn’t know Tim plays on his driveway while he’s at work. Tim figures that what he doesn’t know, won’t hurt him. After all, why let a perfectly good hoop go to waste all day? He’s got similar thoughts about their refrigerator.

“Ring....ring....ring....”

Tim works nights at a lab, and...

...wait. I can’t keep calling him Tim, because that’s not what we call him. We call him Knob. I couldn’t tell you why, though. We were pretty drunk when we came up with the nickname, and later we couldn’t figure out where it came from. Still, the nickname stuck.

Me? My name’s Guy.

And... get this.... I’m a guy.

“Ring...ring....ring....”

That’s when it happened.

At first, I didn’t notice it, because all of a sudden it was silent in the house. Even Dave Matthews was between songs.

Then a great echoey feeling took shape in my head as a thought successfully passed completely through without bonking into ringing and music.

The thought was, “What is that?”

The ‘that’ that I was trying to identify was something we had not heard in the three years of rooming together.

Silence.

Not only silence, but a huge silence. One of those silences so huge that it had its own echo. I was hearing silence, and then its echo. Silence squared.

A shiver went down my back.

Then it came back up my back.

It took a turn or two around my chest, and my nipples hardened from fear, anxiety, surprise and some unexplained emotion I'd rather not explore.

The ringing had stopped.

All of a sudden, Dave Matthews started in on his next song, splintering the silence into little shards of chords and notes and coolness.

But I was frozen, because of the strange sound that I didn't hear.

It was like the time a tornado had hit our neighborhood, wiping out Madame Nirvana's little house down the road. It hadn't destroyed anything else, except for her house and a little sign advertising that Madame Nirvana would read your palm and tell you whether your future would include huge clumps of ear hair.

So wouldn't you think Madame Nirvana would have noticed something like a tornado in her own future?

Her little house had been found a mile away, wrapped around a telephone pole. It knocked out our phone lines for thirty-seven minutes, wiping out pizza delivery profits on a crucial Friday evening.

That's what I was reminded of now.

"Seth?"

My words sounded freakishly loud.

"Knob?"

The silence overwhelmed me with its silence.

Silence, quiet, stillness, calm, and other words that evoke the image of absence of noise. Not even the twitter of a bird.

Well, there was a Dave Matthews song going on, but that doesn't count. Because other than that, there was nothing.

"What?" a voice said quietly behind me.

"SHIT," I screamed, whirling around.

It was Knob, his mouth stuffed with a Cardiac Arrest, a monster sandwich stuffed with whatever's in the kitchen at the time of creation. Ingredients can vary from French fries, Sour Patch Kids, hot pepper, jalapeno peppers, entire slices of cold pizza, green beans, conch fritters, cow tongue, ice cream, and whatever else one can find.

Dagwood would swoon with envy.

The caloric count alone could support the entire world's population of people on the Atkins diet for a week. And I won't even get into the overabundance of bad carbohydrates, which shouldn't be confused with good carbohydrates, which I guess do their chores and wash their hands after going to the bathroom.

Somehow though, Knob's metabolism takes it all in, and everything runs pretty smoothly. Well, except maybe for his brain. There's definitely something not getting through there. Still though, he's lanky and friendly, and a good friend to hang around with.

A fly buzzed through the room.

Our eyes followed it as it zigged through the room.

We followed it as it zagged through the room.

Something registered on its sensors, and it veered for the sandwich in Knob's hand.

Knob, who while he has nothing against mosquitoes, at least female ones (we'll get into that later), hates flies, so he tried to whap it, swinging the Cardiac Arrest like a racquetball racquet.

The sandwich missed the fly by about a foot, but, strangely, the fly stopped in mid-air, and fluttered to the ground.

We watched until it fell out of sight. Yeah, out of sight. We aren't very good at housecleaning. The fly disappeared somewhere into the clutter that makes up our floor. Bits of paper with music notes scribbled on it, cardboard pizza containers, puzzles and games, stuff like that. Essential stuff. The stuff that makes our home, ah..., well, uh, .... a mess. Hey, I admitted it. It's a mess. I told you we aren't very good at housecleaning.

Something nibbled at my brain, reminding me that there had actually been an earlier thought that hadn't been brought to satisfactory conclusion.

Oh, yeah.

The silence.

Dave Matthews was taking another break, so the quiet was even more oppressive.

"What's that?" Knob asked, looking around. He crammed more sandwich into his mouth in hopes it would reduce inertia in his brain.

"I don't know."

"It's weird, like maybe church or something." Bits of sandwich flew through the air like errant meteors.

"Yeah."

"Remember that time with the tornado?"

"Yeah."

“Yeah, it’s like that,” he mumbled, cramming more into his mouth. Something that looked like an albino worm dangled from the corner of his mouth, before his tongue snaked out and swiped it away. Spaghetti, whew.

“Weird.”

“Yeah.”

Then it registered.

“What?” Knob asked.

“Do you hear that?”

“No, what?”

“Donkey Kong,” I said.

“No, I don’t hear any Donkey Kong,” he asserted.

“That’s just it, we should hear Donkey Kong.”

I ran out into the living room, my eyes searching out my little brother.

“Seth?” I skidded to a stop.

He wasn’t at the computer.

“Maybe he answered the phone,” Knob said.

“Why would he do something like that?”

“I dunno,” he shrugged.

“Okay, so where’s the phone?”

We looked at each other. We had no idea where it was. We never use the phone, not even for the pizza delivery guy. We didn’t need to, because our other roommate Thurman brings home free pizzas often enough to keep our marinara sauce levels from getting too low.

“I’ll check the bedrooms,” Knob volunteered.

I split off to go check out the basement.

Our house is located in what’s known as the college slums. A hundred year-old part of town that went to seed when all the old people died off. All the

houses were thin and deep, with steep driveways and old brick. People in this neighborhood were born and lived here until they died. Then they watched their sons and daughters move away and never come back. After the old people died, college kids moved in, renting entire houses, four to eight or more per house.

So we had an entire house to ourselves, for just two hundred bucks a month per person. Pretty slick, especially with the graveyard in the backyard. How can you get any cooler than that?

But the basement. That's another story. Dark, damp, scary, and home to our other roommate. In fact, that's what Thurman likes about it. He's into Goth. Secretly, I think it's just so that he can wear black. The girls dig him in black, and he knows it.

He's working the early shift, delivering pizzas between college classes, so I have to go down into the pit, and see if maybe the phone's down there.

Whap! Whap! Whap!

"Bastard!"

Something upstairs. I bolted back up, and ran into the front bedroom.

"What's the matter?!"

Knob was at the window, his shoe off, a disgusted look on his face.

The smell hit. "Ah, man, put that shoe back on."

"I was after a mosquito," he apologized.

"Well, don't do that," I told him angrily. My brother's missing, and Knob's out squishing mosquitoes and fostering foot odor.

"C'mon, we have to find Seth."

I promised I'd tell you about Knob and mosquitoes. He once read that only female mosquitoes

bite, because they need the blood for egg-laying. And when he learned that a male mosquito is about a bazillion times bigger than the female, Knob, with a heart as soft as his head, concluded that the big hairy male jumps on the female and has his way with her. Afterwards, he merrily buzzes off to play miniature golf with his buddies, leaving the female stuck with whole egg process. Knob didn't think this was fair at all. So ever since, he eradicates any male mosquitoes that he can find, and wouldn't harm a female if she was sucking corpuscles out of his nose.

"It was a *Culex Pipiens*," he said defensively.

"Huh?"

"A *Culex*," he said, slanting a look at me like I was a nit.

"C'mon, you weirdo," I said angrily.

As part of his campaign to help the female mosquito, he'd done considerable research. This research is conducted with liberal amounts of beer, so his facts sometimes got a little scattered.

We headed back to the basement, after having concluded the upstairs was Seth-free.

"Did you know that the *Culex* doesn't usually prefer humans?" he asked as we strode through the kitchen towards the basement stairs.

I ignored him.

"And it's known as the common house mosquito?"

I ignored him harder, and started down the stairs.

"In fact, what they actually prefer are birds."

"Shhh!" I hissed. There was something in the dark.

He lowered his voice, “And, did you know that mosquitoes actually don’t eat blood? They eat stuff like nectar and ...” His voice trailed off as he saw what I was looking at.

“What’s he doing?” he asked.

“Shhh!”

It was Seth.

Then again, it wasn’t.

## Chapter 2



My brother was sitting at Thurman’s desk, the phone receiver at his ear. But he wasn’t listening to it. He wasn’t listening to anything. He had a blank look on his face, his mouth open, eyes glassy.

“Seth?” I stage-whispered at him. “Are you alright?”

He didn’t respond. He just sat, like a zombie or a typical geometry student when given a surprise quiz.

“What’s wrong with him?” Knob asked, mosquitoes momentarily forgotten.

“I don’t know,” I managed over my pounding heart.

This was my brother, a fourteen year-old kid with borderline Attention-Deficit Disorder. It was eerie to see him when he wasn’t a blur. The hair on my neck was raised, and I could feel goose pimples.

Now I could just pick up a weird sound, coming from the phone receiver in Seth’s stone hands.

Now I had ostrich pimples, and my stomach felt like a frozen grape popsicle.

“Call an ambulance,” I whispered back to Knob.

“With what?” he asked.

“The, er...”

The phone that was in Seth’s hands? The same phone that may have been some kind of instrument of horror?

“Uh, go to a neighbor’s or something,” I said, walking warily towards Seth. He ignored me. This was a bad sign, because it was usually the other way around.

“Which one?”

“Huh?”

“Which neighbor?” Knob asked maddeningly.

I gritted my teeth, “Either one.”

“Okay, I’ll go see the chicks across the street.”

“Fine! Get out of here!”

“You don’t have to get rude, dude.”

The stairs shook as he thumped upstairs.

“Seth? You okay?”

He showed no signs of comprehension, no recognition, nothing.

Up close, I recognized the sound coming from the phone receiver. It was the sound that you get when the call is terminated, but you don’t hang up. A nasty, rude, beeping sound.

I pried the phone receiver out of his hands. They were cold and lifeless. The hands, not the phone. The phone had more like a plasticky kind of feel. You’re probably familiar with it. Not me, though. I told you that I don’t use phones.

I gently shook his shoulders, marveling at how his thin his frame felt under the shirt. It occurred to me that we don’t usually exchange any kind of physical exchanges anymore. A feeling of sadness washed through me. The last time I gave him a big hug, he still had that toddler softness to him. Now, he’s more of an

angular teen. I was so busy ignoring him, I hadn't even noticed.

A clatter on the steps jolted me out of my reverie.

"They're coming," Knob whisper-shouted in my ear.

I gently slapped Seth's face, "Wake up, buddy. C'mon, wake up."

It was like slapping a rubber statue.

Knob stared wonderingly at Seth, "I know what this is, Dude."

"Huh?"

"They got him."

"They? What are you talking about?"

"Those guys who've been stalking us all this time. That's why you're never supposed to answer the phone."

"What?!? We don't answer because of telemarketers."

"That's who I'm talking about. They got him."

"Who?! Telemarketers?! You're crazy!" I shouted.

Seth ignored the whole exchange.

"Yeah, telemarketers. They call and suck your brains out right through the receiver. That's why you have to hang up on them. They call during dinner, while you're mentally at your weakest."

"You're nuts! Telemarketers are just people, like you and me."

"Oh, yeah? Then how come they can keep arguing with you, even when you tell them no way?"

"They're persistent. That doesn't make them monsters."

“Then why do they keep calling, even after you slam the phone on them?”

“I don’t know. Maybe it doesn’t bug them so much.”

“Who doesn’t get bugged when someone hangs up the phone on them? If someone hung up on you, wouldn’t you want to call them back and tell them what for?”

“Well, ...”

“And you know they don’t eat dinner, because they are always on the phone then.”

“Um...”

“That’s because they don’t eat regular food. They hibernate all day, and come out at dusk and dinnertime, and suck people’s brains out through the phone.”

“Uh..”

“They’re like, you know, big brain-sucking mosquitoes or something.”

“Mosquitoes..?”

“Look at him!” He pointed at Seth, who was still ignoring the whole exchange. “Tell me they don’t have his brain! It’s gone. His head is empty.”

The black pot pointing at the kettle.

A second person galumphed down the stairs, shaking the foundations of the old house.

“What’s up, guys?”

Thurman had a pizza box in his arms, the aroma of pineapple and pepperoni wafting towards me. My stomach was still in clench mode, but relaxed just a bit to grumble out a greeting to its Italian friend.

Thurman stopped when he noticed Seth, “Whoa, I’ve felt like that before.”

“The telemarketers got him,” Knob said knowingly.

“Telemarketers aren’t monsters,” I said, a little angry that Knob had almost sucked me into his conspiracy theory.

“That’s why you can’t answer the phone,” Knob added.

“Telemarketers. Yeah, I’ve heard stuff about them,” Thurman said thoughtfully.

“We have to get him back ourselves,” Knob said. “So I didn’t really call an ambulance.”

“You mean, go into the telemarketer’s Lair of Evil?” Thurman’s eyes were big.

“What are you guys talking about?! We have to get him to the hospital!”

“No way, a hospital can’t help him.”

“He’s right,” Thurman agreed. “A hospital can’t help him. They’ll just send him to a nuthouse.”

“Yeah, that’s what happens. Pills and stuff don’t help all those people in nuthouses. Their brains have been sucked up by telemarketers. The medical profession just doesn’t understand the truth.”

“We have to go and get him ourselves!” Thurman exclaimed.

“A Quest!” Knob said, his eyes shining with excitement.

“Yes, a Quest!” Thurman agreed.

“Are you guys crazy?! We’re not going on any Quest!” I shouted.

“We have to,” Knob said.

“Yeah, don’t you want your brother back?”

Before I could answer, a buzzing sound cut through the discussion, and we all stopped as a big, fat,

black fly flew between us, low and slow like a Warthog fighter plane.

We watched, mesmerized, as it swooped down low and cut a pattern around the room, and buzzed back upstairs before Knob could recover and try to kill it.

Thurman had a narrowed look in his eyes, "I've got a theory about flies, you know."

"Of course you do, Knob and his mosquitoes, you and flies."

"We gotta hurry and pack," Knob exclaimed.

"Yeah, this could take awhile."

"Going to the gates of Hell."

"This is going to be awesome!"

"Yeah, Dungeons and Dragons stuff."

"Forget it," I interjected, "we're not going on any nutso Quest."

"Look, Man," Knob said, "would it hurt to try it our way? For awhile, at least?"

"Yeah," Thurman added, "he's not going anywhere." He gestured at the statue of my brother.

"And if we don't get anywhere, we'll take him in like you want," Knob said.

"Where they'll just shut him up in a cage, and pump him full of noxious chemicals, and stuff."

"And he'll just rot away."

"Because the doctors have no real clue as to what's really going on."

"Enough!" I shouted. "Okay, okay, we'll do it your way. Anything it takes to shut you up."

"All right! The Quest is on!" Knob gushed.

"Hey, we'll need a warrior," Thurman said knowingly.

"Yeah, a warrior is essential."

"Let's get our stuff."

“My dice, I need my dice.”

They clattered upstairs, leaving me with the husk of my brother. I could hear excited thumps upstairs.

## ***Chapter 3***



I looked at my little brother, my only sibling. Except for my older sister. But she didn't count. Because sisters never count, especially older sisters. Except when they have their friends over. Then you notice them. The friends, not your sister. Especially at pajama parties.

But with a brother, there's a special bond, no matter that he's a little pain in the butt who always gets in my way, and eats up all the cookies and good munchie stuff before I get to have my share, which is more than half, because I'm the big brother, and I should get more than half, because I'm bigger and

because I was born first, and he should know this and stop telling Mom and Dad on me.

Mom! What am I going to tell Mom?

I pictured her face, and what she would say when she saw her little Zombie-son. “Guy, you know you’re supposed to protect your little brother,” she would accuse me.

“But, Mom. I couldn’t do anything. The telemarketers got his brain!”

“That doesn’t matter. You’re his big brother.”

“But, Mom...”

“I said,” she interrupted, “you’re his big brother, and you have to watch out for him.”

I decided not to tell Mom... for now, at least.

Thurman thumped back down the stairs, “I forgot, all my stuff’s down here.”

He dove into his closet and started rummaging around, his black-jean clad butt sticking out.

I took my brother by the hand and he followed me blankly upstairs.

## Chapter 4



Later on, we were sitting at the dining room table. I chewed mechanically at a slice of pizza as Knob and Thurman discussed travel plans. Seth sat across from me, oblivious to their excited chatter. A fly kept bumping up against the kitchen screen, trying frantically to get in.

“Where are we going to start?” Knob wondered.

“Well, they use the phone to get around, so I think we have to start with the phone company,” Thurman offered.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” Knob agreed.

“We could go to the place where we make payments,” Thurman said.

Since we’re almost always running on a very tight budget, we usually pay in person at a local office, usually just before the deadline where our phone gets turned off. Sometimes I wonder that we even bother, since we never use the phone anyway. Maybe some harbinger of responsibility to come, from when we mature and take on responsibilities like kids and mortgages and 401k’s and stuff like that.

“Who do we get as a warrior?” Thurman asked.

“I know just the person,” Knob said.

I wasn’t participating in the conversation.

Neither was Seth.

“So, first we pick up the warrior, and then we go to the phone company?”

The fly stopped bouncing against the screen, and settled down to listen.

“Okay, that sounds like a plan. How do we get there?”

“The Hog’s gassed up, and ready to rumble,” Knob said, referring to the old Dodge Caravan he’d picked up for five hundred bucks, payable at thirty percent interest, so that by the time he was done paying for it, he will have paid three times the price of the van.

With a parting buzz, the fly flew off. That’s what they do, after all. Sometimes I wonder who named them ‘flies.’ And why didn’t the same person call a centipede a ‘walk’? Worms should have been called ‘squirms,’ by the same logic.

A stupid joke went through my mind, “What do you call a microwave wok?”

“A run,” another part of my brain answered.

Jokes at a time like this. I’m starting to lose it. I no it. No, I know it.

My roommates were still making plans.

“Okay, every Quest has to have a warrior, and a sorcerer...”

“Yeah, and a dwarf and an elf.”

“Yeah, you have to have those,” Knob said, bobbing his head in agreement.

“What are you guys talking about?”

Knob looked at me pityingly, “Every Quest has to have the right people. You need to have a warrior, an elf, a wizard...”

“...and a dwarf and a magic sword...” Thurman added.

“...and an evil presence..” Knob continued.

“...and the possibility of sequels...”

“...and movie rights...”

“...special effects...”

“Shut up,” I screamed, holding my head. A painful thudding had begun, keeping time with my heart.

THWUMP!!!

A sound wave rattled the cabinets, and the ground shook underneath us.

“What the...!” Thurman yelled.

“Whoa!!!” Knob yelled.

“Aaaahhhh!” I yelled.

“.....” Seth yelled.

Okay, Seth didn’t really add anything to the dialogue. But, I’m sure he would have if he hadn’t been a zombie. The entire house had been shaken like a rattle in the hands of a hyperactive baby.

We rushed to the front door, and threw it open.

It was winter....

.... in Alaska.

Not here, though. Here it was summer, and a blast of heat blasted by us, blasting us with its passing blast. Beyond it, the sky was blue, the grass was green, and traffic was uncongested. Everything looked peaceful. White clouds floated gracefully in the sky. Birds twittered and pooped on cars.

There was no sign of what had caused the great sound that we had heard.

Except, where Knob’s Caravan was, or rather, wasn’t.

There was a shadow where the van had stood in the driveway, but the van was gone. Or, as we saw as we carefully approached the spot where the van should

be, there was something where the van had been, five minutes before. It was in the shape of the van. Kind of . On the driveway, where there had once been a five and a half-foot high pride of Lee Iaccoca Chrysler family of family automobiles, was a one-inch high version of the same vehicle.

Knob's van had been squashed completely flat.

"Wha....???"

"Hunh....???"

"Uh...???"

We looked at each other, stunned.

I looked around. No one was around who could explain what had happened to the two thousand-pound vehicle.

Knob squatted down, and sort of patted the van, as if to reassure himself that it wasn't an illusion. Then he looked up at us. "They're on to us."

His words woke me out of my shock, "What are you talking about?"

"The telemarketers. Somehow they learned that we know about them."

The look on Thurman's face shifted from shock to fear.

"Let's go, there's no time to lose," Knob wheeled, and sprinted back into the house.

Thurman and I looked at each other. Then we looked at what used to be a mini-van. Then we followed Knob back into the house.

Inside, Knob was quickly stuffing his knapsack. We got there just as he was cramming a stack of moist towelettes into the sack.

"What are those for?" I asked.

"You gotta have towelettes," he said.

"What? To keep your hands clean?"

Knob sighed. Sometimes he had trouble explaining things to lesser intellects, like myself. Or me. Or I. Or, whatever it is that signifies me...or I ...or myself.

“Didn’t you read the Hitchhiker?” he asked, a pained look of put-upon patience plastered to his puss.

“Huh?”

“Doug Adams.”

“Huh?”

“I know what he’s talking about,” Thurman said excitedly, “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy.”

Knob beamed at him, the bright pupil. Then he turned severe eyes back on me, the dunce, “Yeah, the Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy. The bible for world travelers.”

“That’s fiction,” I fired at him.

He ignored that. “Anybody knows if you’re going to travel, you have to bring a towel.”

“Yeah,” Thurman agreed, “It’s got nutrients, and you can wrap it around your head to keep from burning yourself.” He was growing a bald spot, and was very concerned about burning his head.

“Those are towelettes, you goof,” I said.

“Right, they are the only things available that have both the cleaning ability and nutritional requirements.”

“Nutritional requirements..?”

“Yeah, they’re like concentrated water, hermetically sealed. If you’re out in a desert....”

“We’re in Chicago!”

He ignored that, too, “... and you lose your canteen, you can suck on one of these towelettes.”

“We’re not bringing canteens!”

“And these,” he held one out to me, “are the best, because they’re lemon-flavored.”

“There are drinking fountains all over the city!”

“Who’s the head of our Quest?” Thurman changed the topic.

“I am,” Knob announced.

“You????!!!” I said, an amazed look on my face.

I didn’t know for a fact that I had an amazed look on my face, since I couldn’t see it. But I’m pretty sure there was, because I was amazed.

“You chew your own toenails! How can you be a leader?”

“Yeah, me,” he said, narrowing his eyes, “Why, you want the job?”

“He can’t be,” said Thurman, “he’s the Unbeliever, like Thomas Covenant.”

“But the Unbeliever was the leader, in a way,” Knob mused.

“Hmm...maybe,” Thurman agreed thoughtfully.

“Look, we have to get out of here, before whatever crunched the Hog comes back for us,” Knob said, taking his role of maybe-leader by the horns. Even though his horn, fan belt, and everything else, was squashed to a half-inch little pile.

“How do we get there?”

“Where?”

“To pick up our warrior, of course,” Thurman said.

“Warrior?” I said.

“Yeah, told you I know where we can get one,” Knob reassured me. “Let’s get Seth and go.”

“We’re not bringing Seth.”

He gave me a serious look, “We’re bringing Seth. We don’t have a choice.” Then he gestured to

the van that looked like it could fit in one of Thurman's delivery boxes, "And we can't leave him here. It's not safe."

I couldn't argue with that logic, because, after all, something strange was going on.

"Besides, we need something to put his brain in when we get it back."

"We're also bringing Weezel," Thurman declared, shooting eye darts at us.

"No way!" Knob groaned.

"I said, we're bringing him," Thurman's posture was ramrod straight.

"Oh, shit, don't worry about him," I said. "It's not like he takes up much room."

Weezel is Thurman's dog, vintage maybe twenty years ago, maybe fifty. A ghost dog, if you can believe it. Thurman discovered him one night when we were messing around with an Ouiji Board. He'd asked the board whether his childhood dog was in dog heaven, and the board surprised him by revealing that another dog was presently in the room with them, and wanted Thurman for a master. Another of our normal freaky nights.

Ever since, Thurman swore he could sense the dog, which somehow shifted breeds, manifesting itself as a dachshund, sometimes a collie, once in awhile Irish wolfhound. He'd take it for walks, and ignore when we suggested he could maybe take his imaginary dog on imaginary walks instead, and just hang with us. Once in awhile, when the jokes got too barbed, he'd snap back, "He's not imaginary, he's invisible!"

He'd also get up in the middle of a television show, to let Weezel out. Why Weezel didn't simply go

through the door like any other ghost, Thurman wouldn't say.

WHOMPH!

Another explosion shook the room.

"It's back," Knob shouted.

"We have to get out of here!" Thurman screamed.

WHOMPH! SMACK! CRASH!

"Oh, man, I think that was my car," Thurman moaned.

We jumped up, and Thurman and Knob grabbed their knapsacks. I snatched Seth by the wrist, and we bolted away from the sound. Problem was, there was nothing but a window on that side of the house. We scrambled through the window, Seth allowing himself to be led.

We ran around the side of the house, and Thurman glanced around the corner. He pulled his head back, "It got my car, too," he said, his face pasty.

"Did you see what did it?" Knob breathed breathlessly.

"No, whatever it was, I didn't see anything. But my car is flat as a pizza," said the pizza delivery boy, who would be in the position to know if something was as flat as a pizza.

"Let's run for it," Knob said.

"Where?" I asked him.

"To get our warrior," he said, with a look that told me what he thought of my stupid questions.

"How do we get there?" I said.

"Wow, he really is the Unbeliever," Thurman said, looking at me with wondering eyes.

"We run!" Knob said, "She's only a few doors down."

“She?”

“A lady warrior?” An excited look flitted across Thurman’s face. Then it flitted the other way before settling in to stay for awhile, as he most likely considered the idea of half-naked, big-breasted Amazonian warriors. “All right, let’s go!”

Knob ran towards the garage, keeping low to the ground. Thurman ran crouched after. I followed, dragging my little brother, who ran upright like Frankenstein in pursuit of a sewing kit.

We flattened against the garage, and sneaked a peek towards our demolished vehicles.

“Let’s go,” Knob ran around the garage, and sprinted up the hill towards the graveyard.

“Is this a smart idea?” Thurman managed, looking at the tombstones with some trepidation.

“Yeah, I don’t think these have anything to do with the telemarketers,” Knob assured him, leading a winding path around the graves.

There was another thumping sound behind us.

“Faster!” I yelled.

“C’mon, Weezel,” Thurman managed, urging his ghost dog, who no doubt was stopping to check out some ghost pee on one of the gravestones.

We sprinted through the older part of the graveyard, heading for a house about fifty yards away. There was another thumping sound behind us, accompanied by the sound of splintering wood and shattering CD’s.

“It got the house,” Thurman moaned.

“Faster!” I yelled, again.

“C’mon!” Knob urged us. He was the fastest of us, and he pulled ahead, knees flying.

I risked a glance behind us. The house was gone. Just an empty space, sitting between our neighbors' houses, the garage still standing with a fateful look, as if somehow knowing that its turn was next.

I couldn't see what was causing all the devastation. It was a beautiful, sunny day, with big fluffy, non-threatening cumulous clouds floating in a sea of blue sky.

"Maybe it's invisible," Thurman said shakily, puffing from the run.

"Don't worry about it," Knob yelled, "Quick, get in."

He was at the back door of the house, gesturing frantically at us.

We shot inside, finding ourselves in the kitchen. Thurman leaned on a counter, panting heavily. Dressed all in black, with heavy jeans, he'd been pounded mercilessly by the sun's rays all the way across the field.

The rest of us were wearing garb more suited for a mid-nineties day.

"Where are we?" I gasped.

"The Warrior, Man," Knob said heavily.

"We...shouldn't ....just.....have ....busted .....in," Thurman said, still puffing.

"It was an emergency, I don't think she'd mind."

"What are you doing here?" a voice asked.

We all jumped, except for Seth. Seth was standing placidly, not perspiring or even breathing hard.

In front of us was a brown-headed urchin.

"Who are you?"

We wheeled about to see another little kid, just like the first.

“Huh?” Thurman grunted.

“Twins,” Knob said, giving them a welcoming smile.

“Where’s your Mommy?” he asked, folding down to look one of them in the eyes.

“I’ll get her.” The kid bolted down the hallway.

I looked at the other one. It was six or seven years old, sex indeterminate. Don’t misunderstand, I’m sure there was a sex. And I’m sure it was not androgynous, because it wouldn’t matter if it was a little boy or a little girl. Either way, he/she was as cute as hell. Big, lively brown eyes, nut brown skin, longish brown hair sun-streaked from day-long expeditions in the outdoors.

“What’s your name?” I asked, leaning to eye level.

“Shawn”

There you go, a girl’s name.

“You’re a pretty little girl,” I exclaimed.

“Uh, dude,…” Knob began.

“I’m not a girl, I’m a boy,” the child proclaimed hotly.

“S – E – A – N,” Knob observed, too late.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” I said, my face turning hot.

I was rescued as the other kid came running in, “She’ll be here in a minute.”

“Thanks, Chris,” Knob said.

“Hi, Chris,” I offered, trying to save face, at least once. “How are you, little man?”

“Uh, dude, …” Knob began, once again too late to save me.

“I’m not a boy,” that child yelled at me.

“K – R – I – S,” Knob added helpfully.

I shut up, my face burning.

“Hi, Knob,” a new voice said, entering the room. “What’s up?”

I slid my gaze sideways, trying to avoid another face-coloring event, to behold the Warrior.

And, I did that.

Yes, I did.

I beheld the Warrior.