



The  
Minions  
of Time

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*The Wormling IV: The Minions of Time*

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*For Jeremy*

“You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt;  
as young as your self confidence, as old as your fear;  
as young as your hope, as old as your despair.”

GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR



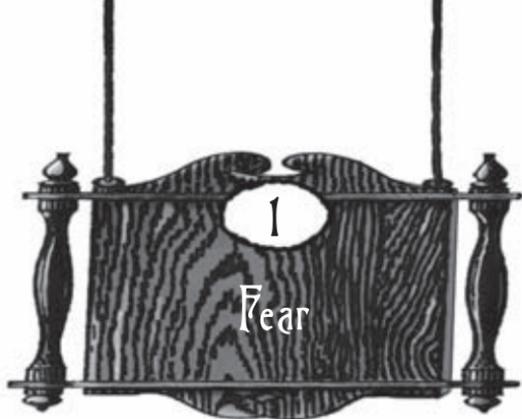
“To hope is to risk despair,  
to try is to risk failure.  
But risks must be taken because the greatest  
hazard in life is to risk nothing. . . .  
Only a person who risks is free.”

WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD



“It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations,  
if you live near him.”

J. R. R. TOLKIEN



The greatest fear of the human heart is not a monster under your bed or losing all your money or being left stranded in a foreign country or being eaten by snakes or drowning.

Do not misunderstand—those are all dreadful predicaments. But be sure of this: the greatest fear of the human heart runs much deeper than these. Our greatest fear concerns who we really are. In that search for truth about our souls, we are most afraid of discovering not that we are nothing but that there is something wonderful and glorious about us. Something regal and noble and majestic. Something amazing.

If we are nothing, if we simply crawled upon the shore of human existence and stretched our fins until fingers appeared, no expectation of goodness rests upon us. We can simply live as we please, make decisions based upon the wants of our stomachs or our minds. We live and we die with no purpose other than to satisfy our cravings.

However—and let us pause here to mention what a wonderful word *however* is—if we were instead placed here, our lives have purpose and meaning. We do not have to make that up, for it is given to us by the someone who placed us here.

By chance, we are nothing. By design, our lives connect to each other and to the one who made us.

It was to these thoughts that our hero, Owen Reeder, put his mind. Small Owen—of low estate, the son of a bookstore owner, once perusing pages daily—has been thrust into a search for royalty and found it in himself. In reading *The Book of the King*, Owen discovered that he had been chosen to be a Wormling, entrusted with not only the book but also a special worm named Mucker, who was the transport between the Highlands (earth) and the Lowlands—a place Owen did not even know existed.

It is above these Lowlands that Owen currently flies, locked in a cage borne by a winged beast who smells vile and seems to have unending stamina. Other flyers are far ahead, Owen's group taking up the rear of the prisoner train.

And it is in this cage that Owen ponders his own station: namely, that he is the King's Son, the very one he had been searching for since first he arrived.

To say this frightened him would be the same as saying that falling a thousand feet onto concrete would hurt. Owen was terrified. He couldn't comprehend all this. What would it mean for his family, his mission, his destiny?

*The Book of the King* said the Son would lead forces to battle the Dragon. He would help unite the two worlds—the Highlands and Lowlands. But chief among Owen's concerns was that he was also prophesied to wed the princess Onora. He had never held a girl's hand, let alone kissed one—not that he hadn't thought about it.

Owen had learned that along with great fear comes a certain comfort. If all he had discovered was really true, he had a history. He had a family. Not just a father but also a mother who loved him. A sister who had been taken captive. And a bride waiting.

Not comforting was the prospect of the Dragon's talons sinking into his chest, not to mention the beast's thousands upon thousands of followers who would comprise a gigantic force against him.

Such is curious about despair: each time comfort seeped into Owen's soul, the thought of the enemy and the task soon overwhelmed him. He had seen the Dragon up close, but that

was as the Wormling, a seeker, an ant scurrying from the footsteps of giants. Now Owen knew he was this beast's mortal enemy.

All this thinking was, of course, moot—pointless. Owen was high above the ground, smushed into the corner of a cage with people from the Castle on the Moor, including the king of the west. Most of these were servants trying in vain to keep their soiled garments from touching the king and queen. The people treated Owen as less than human, sneering and jeering at him for speaking to some unseen visitor. They thought he had been talking to himself, studying the underside of the great flying beast.

A child yelled, getting everyone's attention and pointing to water over the horizon, waves against the shore, and beyond that, an island.

Owen sat thinking of his friends Watcher and Humphrey. He'd told them to meet him in a secret place, and he imagined them waiting, pacing, wondering.

Owen suddenly sat up. The island looked familiar. There was more than one. Yes, it was true. The islands of Mirantha. He had been here before—he had met Mordecai, a man still on the island as far as Owen knew. He picked up a pebble and threw it as hard as he could at the flying animal, trying to get it to change direction and fly toward the island.

“What are you doing?” a young boy said. “He can’t even feel that.”

Another prisoner yelled, “There’s someone on that rock!”

They were flying along the path Owen and Watcher had taken to Erol’s clan. Huge rock formations loomed, and as the creature passed close to them, a lone figure stood on a precipice eyeing them.

*Erol!* Owen stood and shouted and waved.

“What do you think he’s going to do?” an older woman said. “Rescue you? From down there? You’re crazy.”

Owen kept yelling. As they drew nearer, several others from Erol’s group climbed out on top of the rocks.

“Are these friends of yours?” a man wearing the king’s coat of arms said.

“Very good friends,” Owen said.

“Then you might want to call off their archers. They’re amassing on the ledge. If they bring this beast down, we’ll all be killed.”

A dozen of Erol’s men had bows drawn and at the ready. The beast seemed not to notice and flew straight for the rock.

“Erol! It’s me! The Wormling! Lower your weapons! Don’t shoot!”

But the leader raised an arm and dropped it. Arrows flew.

“Get down!” Coat of Arms yelled. “Everybody on the floor!”

The arrows overflowed the cage, and some lodged in the

animal's neck. One hit him in the mouth and stuck through a lip. The rest pierced his wings and passed through. The beast swerved toward the rocks, scattering Erol and his men.

"Hang on!" Coat of Arms hollered.

The cage smacked the top of a rock, sending people flying around inside. Owen grabbed the bars and held on as the flyer listed left, then right. Blood trickled from a wound in the animal's neck.

Erol gave the fire signal again.

"No!" Owen shouted, but arrows whistled through the air and pierced the leathery skin with a *pfft*.

The flyer dipped toward a large rock, and at the last second Owen grabbed the young boy who had alerted them and pulled him close as the cage crashed again. The group pitched like toys in a box, banging the front of the cage as the flyer recovered and haltingly changed direction.

"Erol!" Owen screamed. "Help us!"

The archers grew tiny in the distance as the beast continued. Owen could tell it was laboring, its breathing erratic. Blood coursed from the wounds.

As they slowly descended, Coat of Arms rose from the floor and hobbled to the front, inspecting the bars. He pulled, but they were too strong. "There's room enough for the young ones to crawl through," he said.

"They'll die from the fall," a woman shrieked.

“It’s their only chance!”

Several rushed to the front, and Owen gasped. No one else saw what lay ahead of them, and he could only hope the flyer had enough energy left not to crash.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Jerry B. Jenkins* ([jerryjenkins.com](http://jerryjenkins.com)) is the writer of the *Left Behind* series. He owns the Jerry B. Jenkins Christian Writers Guild, an organization dedicated to mentoring aspiring authors. Former vice president for publishing for the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, he also served many years as editor of *Moody* magazine and now serves on Moody's board of trustees.

His writing has appeared in publications as varied as *Time* magazine, *Reader's Digest*, *Parade*, *Guideposts*, in-flight magazines, and dozens of other periodicals. Jenkins's biographies include books with Billy Graham, Hank Aaron, Bill Gaither, Luis Palau, Walter Payton, Orel Hershiser, and Nolan Ryan, among many others. His books appear regularly on the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* best-seller lists.

Jerry is also the writer of the nationally syndicated sports-story comic strip *Gil Thorp*, distributed to newspapers across the United States by Tribune Media Services.

Jerry and his wife, Dianna, live in Colorado and have three grown sons and four grandchildren.



*Chris Fabry* is a writer and broadcaster who lives in Colorado. He has written more than 50 books, including the RPM series and collaboration on the *Left Behind: The Kids* and *Red Rock Mysteries* series.

You may have heard his voice on *Focus on the Family*, *Moody Broadcasting*, or *Love Worth Finding*. He has also written for *Adventures in Odyssey* and *Radio Theatre*.

Chris is a graduate of the W. Page Pitt School of Journalism at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. He and his wife, Andrea, have nine children, two dogs, and a large car-insurance bill.