

Adventures in
ODYSSEY

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

35

THE **IMAGINATION STATION**



Faith in the Flames

MARIANNE HERING & MARSHAL YOUNGER

OVER 1 MILLION SOLD IN SERIES



Faith in the Flames

BOOK 35

**MARIANNE HERING AND MARSHAL YOUNGER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGIO CARIELLO**

**FOCUS
ON
THE FAMILY.**

*A Focus on the Family resource
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To the first responders in the Los Angeles fires of 2025

Faith in the Flames

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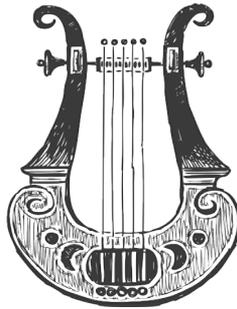


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The Move



“Can I have one more?” Patrick asked. He pushed his glass across the counter.

“Patrick, I think you’ve had enough,” Whit said. He picked up the empty glass and put it in a dirty dish bin. “You’re going to get sick if you have any more ice cream.”

Patrick didn’t care if he got sick. It would match his mood. He had been sitting on the same stool at Whit’s End for nearly two hours.

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He covered his eyes and leaned heavily with his elbows on the countertop. “We left the swing set behind,” Patrick said.

“I’m guessing you had to,” Whit said. “You couldn’t bring it with you to the apartment.” Patrick’s family had just moved from their house into a small two-bedroom apartment. His father had lost his job, and their house had had to be sold.

“I loved that swing set,” Patrick said. His hands still covered his eyes as he slid down and laid his head on the counter. Patrick could hear the faint sound of children playing upstairs.

“Did you even play on it anymore?” Whit asked. He slung a rag over his shoulder and leaned closer to Patrick’s face.

“No. But what if I wanted to one day?”

“Didn’t your parents say that the apartment was probably temporary?” Whit asked. “Until your dad got a new job?”

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“Yeah, but who knows when that’ll happen?” Patrick said. “We might be in that place forever. We don’t even have room for our pinball machine. We had to sell that, too.”

“I’m sorry about that.”

“I had to leave all my friends. I don’t know anybody at the new apartment. I even had to move farther away from Beth.”

Just then the bell above the door at Whit’s End rang out. Patrick’s cousin Beth stepped through the door. She walked directly toward the counter.

“Hello there, Beth,” Whit said.

Patrick didn’t move. He stayed hunched over the counter, ignoring his cousin.

“Hi, Mr. Whittaker,” she said. She nodded toward Patrick. “How many root beer floats did he have?”

“I cut him off after two,” Whit said.

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Beth sighed. She sat on a stool next to Patrick's.

She wore a light blue jumper. Her hair was pulled back in a clip.

Patrick felt her hand on his shoulder. He kept his head on the counter.

"Are you guys done moving in?" she asked.

"Almost," he said. "It's all just boxes now."

"I wish I would've known you were moving last weekend," Whit said. "I would've helped."

"My family came over," Beth said. "And some friends from his neighborhood helped. We had enough people."

"Good," Whit said. "I know you've got a lot of people thinking about your family, Patrick. And praying for you."

At this comment, Patrick's head popped up. "What are they praying for? Are they praying for my dad to get a job?"

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“Sure. But we’re praying for other things too. That you’ll feel God’s presence during this difficult time. That God will turn all this waiting into something good.”

“I guess I’m good with the first one. I know that God is there. I know He never leaves us.”

“That’s good,” Whit said.

“But I’m not seeing any *good* coming from any of the waiting. I don’t see how it could.”

“Why is that?”

“Because everything that’s happening is *hard*. I’ve been in that house my whole life. I’ve been friends with the kids in that cul-de-sac since preschool.”

Whit placed his hands on the counter in front of Patrick. “Patrick, it’s never the case that God is doing nothing. God is always working things out for good. But maybe not in

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the way you would expect or hope for. And it's usually not easy."

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe God is doing something different in your lives to make you grow in faith. Maybe that something also means your dad is going to be unemployed for a bit, or a long time."

Patrick flailed his hands around to make his point. "The apartment smells like dust. The people above us sound like they have a pet elephant. And I don't have a swing set option anymore. Is all that part of God's plan?"

"Maybe," Whit said with a glint in his eye.

Patrick didn't expect this answer. "What do you mean *maybe*?"

"Have you ever heard people say that God works in mysterious ways?"

Patrick sighed, leaned his head back down, and held it in his hands. "Yeah, Mom says

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that sometimes. But I don't get it. The only plan that makes any sense to me is for my dad to get a job. *Now.*"

"Hmm." Whit fiddled with his mustache. He seemed deep in thought. "You know what? I think you need your . . . imagination expanded then."

"What do you mean?"

Beth smiled. "Are we going to take an Imagination Station adventure?"

Whit smiled back. "How about we head downstairs?"



Beth watched Whit in the workshop.

The inventor stood outside the Imagination Station. She thought it looked a bit like the cockpit of a helicopter. Whit tapped away on some controls. Then he pressed a button on the side panel. The doors whooshed open.

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“Are you ready?” Whit asked.

Patrick raised his eyebrows in agreement.

Beth nodded quickly.

“Oh! Almost forgot,” Whit said. “One more thing before you go.” He scrambled over to a brown paper shopping bag and reached into it. He pulled out what looked like a thin, white tablecloth. It was folded into a rectangle. He handed it to Patrick.

“What is this?” Patrick asked. “Some kind of blanket?”

“Umm . . . kind of,” Whit said with a hint of a smile.

Whit always likes keeping us in the dark, Beth thought. She didn’t mind. The surprises along the way were half the fun of these adventures.

“What kind of blanket? Am I going to take a nap on this adventure?”

Whit chuckled. His mustache bounced up

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and down. “No, there won’t be an opportunity for naps. Too much will be happening on this trip.”

Beth and Patrick exchanged looks. That sounded exciting.

Patrick sniffed the blanket. Then he handed it to Beth for her sniff test. Beth scrunched her nose. The blanket had a chemical smell—almost like bathroom cleaner.

Whit reached back into the grocery bag. He pulled out a foil packet about two inches square.

He handed it to Beth. She read the packaging out loud: “Petroleum jelly?”

The cousins exchanged shrugs. Neither of them had any idea why they would need petroleum jelly.

“You’re not going to tell us what either of these is for?” Patrick asked.

“Of course not,” Whit said. “Have I ever?”

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“And you’re not going to tell us where we’re going either. Right?” Beth asked.

Whit smiled. “I’m sure you’d rather be adventuring than talking. Hop in.”

Patrick climbed in first with Beth right behind him. Patrick clutched his blanket. Beth held her foil packet.

“You know what to do,” Whit said as he carefully closed the door. All sounds from the workshop were cut off. The cousins were alone in the silence.

Patrick lifted his eyebrows toward Beth. He reached for the dashboard.

Beth nodded.

Patrick pressed the main red button in the center of the control panel.

The Imagination Station shuddered, then it shook. Then *whoosh!*

And just as always, everything went black.