***Chapter 7: Walking High Above the World***

***excerpt from Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick***

You ever notice how the smell of gunpowder makes you thirsty? Because after the fireworks I’m aiming us from where the food carts are parked along the street, thinking about an ice-cold lemonade, how *clean* it will taste, and for a moment I almost forget that Freak is riding on my shoulders. “Amazing perspective up here,” he’s saying. “This is what you see all the time.”

“I’m not *that* big, “ I say. “This way you’re like two feet taller than me.” “Cool,” he says. “I love it.” We’re working our way through the crowd and we’re almost to the food carts when Freak tugs on my hair. “Cretin at two o’clock,” he says, real urgent. “Two more at three o’clock.” I go, “Huh? What?” “The Blade and his gang,” Freak hisses. “They’ve locked on to us. Their trajectory is converging. Go to the left,” he says. “Make it quick, if you want to live.”

Too bad I’m a little confused about rights and lefts. If I don’t think about it I know, but if I have to think about it quickly my mind goes blank, Right? Left? What does it all *mean*? “Left!” Freak says, and he kicks me with his little foot, like he’s digging into a horse and it clicks in my head. Go that way! Follow the feet! “Faster,” Freak is saying, and he kicks me with his little foot, like he’s digging into a horse and it clicks in my head. Go that way! Follow the feet! “Faster,” Freak is saying, and he’s urging me on, it’s lucky for me the little dude doesn’t have any spurts, but I don’t care, I just want to get clear of Blade. “Warp factor nine!” Freak is shouting. “More speed, o mighty beast!” Now I’m running at a full gallop, weaving through the crowd, and I don’t even need to look back, all I have to do is follow the way Freak is kicking his feet, steering me. I’m pretty sure we’re getting away until this punk comes out of nowhere, he’s one of Blade’s gang and he’s got this big ugly grin.

“Over here! Tony! Got ‘em cornered!” “What do I do?” I say to Freak. He goes, “I’m thinking, I’m thinking!” I can hear Blad before I can see him. Hear his wicked laugh, so mean and dirty it makes my stomach freeze up and my knees feel squishy. “You! The freak! You and that giant retard, I’ll cut you down to size. Dice and slice, baby! Freak show time!” And now I can see him, see that pointed white grin and his eyes so dark and cruel, and he’s swaggering through the crowd, he’s got us surrounded with punks, everywhere I turn there’s another mean face trying to look as tough as Tony D. In a small voice I say, “Tell me what to do,” and Freak pats me on the shoulder and says, “Just give me a nanosecond to process the alternatives.”

“Slice and dice!” That’s Blade, and he’s reaching into his back pocket. “Make it quick,” I hiss, and then Freak is kicking my right shoulder and I turn that way and he’s saying “Go! Go!” and I run right over this punk, he’s so surprised he loses his bubble gum and he tries to grab my leg but I kick free and I’m running blind and just letting Freak decide which way we should go because he must have a plan, a dude as smart as that. Which I’m right about, he does have a plan. Only the plan is to run out into the smelly mill pond and drown us both. “Go on!” he’s shouting from up above my head. “Trust me, we’ll be okay!” Blade is shouting, too, and I can hear his feet pitter-pattering behind me. Catching up.

“Warp speed!” Freak is shouting, and he’s kicking with both feet now, which means go straight. “Head for the H20!” The pond is right in front ahead of me, and I’m sort of running along the edge, crunching over the bottles and cans and candy wrappers, and then I hear this zingy sound and I just know that Blade is swinging a knife, cutting the air right behind us, and there’s nowhere to go but into the pond, like Freak wants me to.

I almost lose it right there, taking that first step, because it’s a gunky pond and the mud is really oozy and deep and it sucks right up to my knees. But I’m so scared of getting cut by Tony D., so scared he might bite me with those wicked teeth, I just keep going. There’s this great ugly sucking sound as my feet come back up out of the mud and I stretch out as far as my legs will goa nd I take another step and I just keep going.

I’m going so fast that the water is up to my chest before Freak gets my attention, he’s tugging at my hair with both hands. “Whoa!” he’s saying, “slow up, we did it.” The mud is up around my knees and it’s real hard to turn around. Finally I get so I’m facing back at the shore and there’s Blade, just his head above the water, and he looks all white and scared. “Help!” he’s blubbering, choking on that dirty water, and then his punksters are splashing in to rescue him. Man, they can hardly get him loose, the way he’s stuck deep in that mud, and before they drag him shore they’re all covered with slime and mud. They’re gasping like fish, almost too tired to cuss us out, but that doesn’t last. Blade is covered with mud right up to his neck, which on him looks natural. His gang, who looks as slimy as he does. “”Get some rocks, it’s target practice time!”

“What do we do now?” I ask, because the mud is still sucking me down. It’s over my knees now, and the water is right up under my arms and even Freak’s feet are getting wet. “Wait,” Freak says. “The cavalry is coming, can’t you hear that bugle?” II’m listening, but I can’t hear anything except for Blade and his gang, and how they’re scrambling around trying to find some rocks to heave at us. I can see Blade rearing back to throw, and the first one misses us. “Can you move?” Freak says. “I don’t think so.” It’s true. The mud is up over my knees, and I’m locked in place. I can’t even fall down, that’s how stiff it is. I’m like a big fence post, and everybody knows a fence post makes a good target. More splashes as the rocks fall short. At first they’re throwing stuff that’s too heavy. Pretty soon they smarten up, and Blade says, “Smaller rocks! Get me smaller rocks!” and I know in my heart we’re doomed.

Them up above me there’s this really loud, high-pitched screech. Freak has his fingers in his mouth and he’s whistling. Real shrill and shivery and so loud it almost hurts my ears. And then I see what Freak has been seeing all along, a cop car cruising real slow along the road around the pond, which is what they always do after the fireworks. Freak is whistling and the cop car spoltight comes beaming around the pond until it settles on us. I’m blinking because the light is so bright, and Freak is making a fuss and waving his arms and we hear the metal megaphone sound of a cop voice ordering us not to move. Like we could even if we wanted!

It’s hard to see in the glare of the spotlight, but Freak tells me that Blade and his punks are running away. Like snakes on sneakers, Freak says. “Officers!” Freak is shouting into the white light. “We request assistance!” They finally have to use ropes to pull me out of there. Freak won’t let go, he stays right where is on top of my shoulders even when this cop in a boat tries to lift him off, and then we’re up on the bank of the pond and everybody is being real nice and giving us blankets and Cokes and saying they know all about Tony D., they’ll keep an eye on him, don’t you worry….

**Directions: Using this chapter, change the point of view from Max’s perspective to a new narrator (Kevin or Tony D) Be sure to include the entire scene and use correct use of pronouns.**

Example: (Tony D’s perspective)

The fireworks had just ended and my boys were anxious to head back to the house to set off some firecrackers we had lifted off some little kid. I had other plans in mind though and it had to do with the little freak and the giant. The dwarf had called me a cretin. Whatever that means. NO BODY who messes with me lives to tell about it so I knew I had to make an example of them. I began scanning the crowd and quickly spotting the freak and the giant. I told the boys and we began our assault……..

Example: (Kevin’s perspective)

The grand finale was quite exquisite if I do say so myself but the situation that followed afterwards really ended with a “bang.” I was enjoying my view from Maxwell’s shoulders, taking in all the sights and sounds of the celebration when I spotted the Cretin...and his gang….quickly approaching. “Cretin at two o’clock,” I said. “Two more at three o’clock.” Maxwell did not seem to understand so I had to simplify it in terms he could comprehend. “The Blade and his gang,” I hissed. “They’ve locked on to us. Their trajectory is converging. Go to the left,” I said, “Make it quick it you want to live!”.....