

THE KINGDOM OF AZERECK PT. 3

Crowned Prince

Based on a story by Chrisvin Jabamani



As time went by, King Walter and Queen Azul began to want a family. It would be important for King Walter to have an heir to the throne. The years went by and still no child. The people of Azereck were concerned that they would not have a king who was ready to take the throne if King Walter were to die.

Some of the people in the kingdom began to discuss the idea of a competition to pick one of the young men to become the prince. The idea began to spread throughout the towns and villages until the idea finally reached the king.

The king and queen heard about what the people were saying. They talked about it between themselves and thought that it might be a good idea. They began to consider the possibility of having a competition to select an heir to the throne. If they didn't have an heir when King Walter died, it would be good to select a prince and bring him to the castle to become king. That way he would have the training he needed in all of the duties of a king, and when the time came, he would be ready for the throne.

The king called his counselors and asked them what they thought about the idea. They agreed that it would be a good way to select a prince. A competition would be a great test to find a proper prince.

King Walter selected several of his most trusted advisors to help plan and organize the event. For several weeks the organizers selected the different contests they would use and also planned the festival that would surround the big days.

The competition would have to test the courage, strength and intelligence of the

winner. The winner of the contest would then become the crown prince of Azereck.

After the plans were finalized, word went out to the entire region. Messengers hung banners from every lamppost and from every tree advertising the event.

As the people heard about the affair, there was excitement throughout the kingdom. By this process they would find an heir to the throne. All of the young men from far and wide came to the castle to see if they could endure the test.

The first event was a complex maze set up in the corn fields next to the castle. The young men who completed the task would continue and those who did not would go home.

The maze was very difficult. The first part of the maze had many mirrors pointing in different directions. If the contestant went the wrong way, he would end up outside of the maze, and therefore excluded.

The second part of the maze included several paths that went to the right and to the left. Again, if they chose the wrong path, the challenger would end up outside of the maze, and likewise out of the competition.

The third part of the maze would give them an even harder task to complete. In this stage the maze became a series of tunnels. If the contender chose the correct tunnels the competitor would arrive at the throne of the king; otherwise he would end up out of the maze and out of the contest.

The young men lined up at the entrance to the maze. One by one they entered the maze separated by a one minute interval.

It took three hours for all of the contestants to enter the maze. At the end of the day only twenty succeeded in completing the first task. They stood before the king ready for the next part of the test.

The next stage of the contest was to go on a quest to find a silver chalice that was hidden somewhere in the kingdom.

They received a paper with a clue.

It said: "The prize lies within yet it is without. If you don't find it, it may find you.

Under yet over, the prize will surprise you. Return to the castle with the challis. Your next task will await you.”

They would have three days to find a challis and return to the castle.

They blindfolded them, took them to different places in the kingdom, and then released them to find the treasure.

Two days passed and none of the young men had yet returned. While they were gone, the festival in the town was fun and festive. There was food, entertainment and music for all.

On the third day, around noon, the first of the young men returned. He had given up. He couldn't find the challis. Soon others followed; none of them had a challis.

As the sun was going down, the last of the competitors walked through the gates. Four of them were carrying a challis. Four of the young men had been successful in their quest!

They were brought to the king's throne room.

“What are your names?” the king asked.

“I am Jonas Bartles,” the first answered.

“I am Rom Freedland,” the second replied.

“I am Minzo Hardess,” the third responded.

“And I am Grommell Raltson,” the last one gave the final answer.

“How did you find the challis?” King Walter asked.

Grommell answered, “The clue you gave to me told me where to find it. It had to be under something for the challis to be above. I found it under the bridge leading to the city. Once I found it, it was easy to see.”

The others said the same thing. There were only four left to compete for the right to become the prince of the Kingdom of Azereck.

The next day the four remaining candidates met the king again.

“We have a test of your endurance. You must complete all of the parts of this challenge to move forward. At the end of each station you will be given a colored ribbon

to tie around your waist. When you return you will need to give me all of your ribbons. Then you will move on to the next stage,” the king explained to the four remaining hopefuls.

Although the young men were tired, they were ready. They went to the gate of the city and with the drop of a flag they began their journey on the road out of the castle.

The first event was walking through deep mud in the bog along the river. It was very difficult to move through the deep mud. It was about a kilometer to get to the other side. At the end of the bog there was a soldier waiting to give them their ribbon. All four of the young men completed this task and received a red ribbon; although some were faster. Grommell was first, Rom, was second, Minzo was third, while far behind was Jonas.

The next test required that they climb a tree and then use a rope to transfer to the next tree by going hand over hand. They had to do this four times.

Grommell fell and hurt his ankle. He tried to continue, but the pain was too strong. The others were able to complete the task; Jonas was still far behind. They each had two ribbons so far.

Now they had to go through an obstacle course. First they had to go under several logs that were so low to the ground they had to crawl like snakes to get through to the other side.

On the next obstacle they had to climb up a very steep cliff with a rope and then run down the other side between rocks and trees. The last part was swinging from one tree to the next on hanging ropes.

From there they had to run almost five kilometers back to the castle.

Rom was the first to arrive. He fell to the ground exhausted but smiling. Minzo was not far behind. Jonas dropped out of the race after the obstacle course. He was too tired to continue.

After resting, Rom and Minzo were taken to the king.

“I’m amazed and in awe of your stamina. There is one more group of tests you will

need to pass tomorrow. The winner of this will be the new crowned prince of Azereck,” the king announced. “Come back here tomorrow and your last challenge will be explained to you.”

Rom and Minzo returned to their homes. They were so tired, they didn't eat dinner. They went to bed where their mother's rubbed a balm on their sore muscles to relieve the pains and aches. They were so sore, and yet they were excited about the next day, that neither of them slept well that night.

The next day Rom and Minzo stood before the king ready for the next test.

“Today we will see your ability in using weapons. You will compete in swordsmanship, horse riding, and archery. The winner of today's events will join us in the castle and will be trained to become the next king of Azereck. The first to win two of the three events will be our champion!” the king explained.

At the end of the king's speech, the people in the square gave out a loud cheer. It was the most exciting day of the competition. One of these two young men would be the new prince.

The first event was swordsmanship.

The two competitors were dressed in armor. They were given a large sword. When they left the armory, they saw an area in the courtyard with a rope around it. They entered the ring and took positions in opposite corners.

They were given instructions on how to proceed. The first one to give five blows to the body of the other would win.

The boys adjusted the armor and then moved to the center of the ring. Clang, clang, the swords hit each other. The people around the ring cheered and yelled. Each person had a favorite.

The boys circled each other and then came again to the middle of the ring. Clang, clang, thud! Rom scored a hit on Minzo. Minzo fell back and as he did, Rom attacked and hit him two more times before he could recover.

Minzo pushed Rom away and began a flurry of hits to his waist and his chest.

Now the score was four to three in favor of Minzo. One more hit and Minzo would win.

Minzo raised his arms over his head to deliver the final blow, but as he did Rom ran straight at him. Minzo moved to the side so Rom missed. Minzo landed the final blow. Minzo was the winner of the first match.

Rom was visibly disappointed, but he knew he still had a chance. He would have to win the next two events.

Next was the horse race. The course went from the castle, through the town, across the bridge to the old oak tree on the road to the Kingdom of Nod. They would go around the tree and come back.

The helpers took the boys to a corral so they could look at the horses. They were told to choose the horse they wanted to ride.

Minzo chose a gray horse. The horse was not big, but looked strong. Rom chose a red horse that looked big and fast.

After preparing the horses for the race, the boys climbed on. Rom's horse was much bigger than Minzo's. Everyone was betting on Rom and his big horse.

The boys were sitting on their horses standing side-by-side waiting for the signal to begin.

The flag dropped and the boys were off. Rom took a big lead as they passed through the town. The people were cheering and yelling as they went past. Rom had a big smile on his face. Minzo looked determined.

They crossed over the bridge and headed for the big oak tree. Dust was flying behind Rom's horse making it difficult for Minzo to see. His little horse was running as fast as it could.

As Rom came around the tree, he saw Minzo was behind him. He smiled at Minzo as they passed each other.

When Minzo went around the tree, he bent forward and started to kick his horse. The little horse responded and picked up speed. By the time Rom got to the bridge Minzo

was right behind him. As they passed through the town, Minzo's horse began to pass Rom. Rom tried to get his horse to go faster, but it was tired and had nothing left. The townspeople were screaming and cheering the two riders. As they crossed the finish line Rom won by the nose of his horse. Another meter and he would have lost.

The event was now tied with archery as the last event. Five targets spread across the lawn like trees in a forest. The targets had a red circle in the middle. The targets were numbered from one to five, and they were placed at different distances to make it more difficult. The shooters had two attempts at each target. The closest to the center won the target.

The two competitors stood next to each other. They each had ten arrows. Minzo was first. Minzo took an arrow out of his quiver and looked at its shape. He placed it on the string, pulled his bow back and released the first arrow. It sailed over the target missing it terribly. Minzo was surprised.

Rom then took his turn. He aimed carefully at the target. It hit the target, but far from the center.

Minzo took his second shot and then the same thing happened to him. The arrow went too high. Rom won the first target with only one arrow. Rom led the contest one target to zero.

Minzo turned around and said something to a soldier who was standing behind him. The soldier went through the crowd and disappeared.

Rom went first for the second target. His shot hit the target to the right.

Minzo took careful aim, but completely missed the target again. Rom's second shot was a little better. On Minzo's second attempt, he hit the side of the target, but it wasn't better than Rom's. Rom led by two targets.

Just then the soldier returned with a bow in his hand, and he gave it to Minzo. Minzo pulled the string and flexed the bow. It was very different from the bow he had been using.

Minzo pulled out an arrow from his quiver. He set it on the string and drew the

bow back very slowly. He dropped the point of the arrow down and then released. The arrow hit very close to the center of the target.

Rom's eyebrows went up. He looked over at Minzo and his bow. He turned to the king.

"He's cheating! He isn't using the bow you gave him," Rom complained.

"As far as I know, there is no rule that you must use a certain bow," the king replied. "Do you have a bow you would like to use?"

"No sir, this one will do for me," Rom answered.

He turned back toward the target, drew his arrow back and hit the target, but it was not close to the middle. He took his second shot, but again it wasn't better than Minzo's first shot. Minzo won the third target so now it was two targets for Rom and one target for Minzo.

On the fourth target Rom got a very good shot. He smiled as he looked at Minzo.

Minzo drew an arrow looked at it from end to end and then placed it on the string. He pulled back slowly, took careful aim, and then let it fly. It beat Rom's shot. Now Rom had to use another arrow. He took his time and released his second arrow at the target, but it was not as good as his first arrow. At this point it was now tied. Each had won two targets.

On the last target, Minzo went first. He pulled his bow back and let his arrow go. Something happened and the arrow missed the target. Minzo looked at his bow in disbelief. He shook his head as he watched Rom take out an arrow, smiling at his good fortune.

Rom pulled the arrow to his cheek and it was one of his best shots of the day; just missing the center of the target. Rom smiled and said, "Let's see you do better than that!"

Minzo knew he had to be perfect. He took out an arrow. He looked at it, ran his fingers down the shaft, and then threw it onto the ground. He had only one shot left. He took out a second arrow and again examined it carefully. He took his time as he put his eyes on the target farthest from the line. He set the arrow on the string and pulled it back

slowly and carefully. He released the arrow and it ended up just inside of Rom's, but still wasn't in the center.

Rom looked at the target. He was now very serious.

He took out an arrow from his quiver. It had to be perfect. He looked at it very closely. He ran his fingers across it to feel if there were any bad spots. He then put the arrow onto the string. This would be his final shot. He pulled back slowly and took careful aim. He released the arrow. It landed between Minzo's arrow and his own. Rom's head dropped in disbelief. He had missed by so little. Minzo became the champion.

The people in the crowd exploded in cheers. They picked up Minzo, put him onto their shoulders and carried him to the castle. Minzo was to be the new crowned prince of Azereck!

VOCABULARY (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. heir _____ | a. web, labyrinth |
| 2. counselors _____ | b. holder of arrows |
| 3. contestant _____ | c. competitor, participant |
| 4. maze _____ | d. doubt, mistrust |
| 5. challis _____ | e. try, make an effort |
| 6. armory _____ | f. successor, inheritor |
| 7. quiver _____ | g. advisors, consultants |
| 8. flurry _____ | h. arsenal, place for weapons |
| 9. attempt _____ | i. silver cup |
| 10. disbelief _____ | j. burst, quick |

TRUE OR FALSE

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Walter and Azul had a son. | T / F |
| 2. All of the young men came to compete. | T / F |
| 3. The first competition was the maze. | T / F |
| 4. Thirty finished the maze successfully. | T / F |
| 5. Rom, Grommel, Minzo, and Jonas finished the race. | T / F |
| 6. Grommel and Minzo shot arrows. | T / F |
| 7. Rom won the horse race. | T / F |
| 8. Rom won the swordsmanship. | T / F |
| 9. Minzo asked for a different bow. | T / F |
| 10. Minzo became the new heir to the Kingdom of War. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. Why did they decide to have a competition? _____
 - a) to find an heir to the throne
 - b) for the annual festival
 - c) to find the best athlete in the kingdom
 - d) to give a special award

2. How many finished the maze? _____
 - a) 30
 - b) 20
 - c) 37
 - d) 12

3. Who won the obstacle course? _____
 - a) Rom
 - b) Grommel
 - c) Jonas
 - d) Minzo

4. What did the riders go around in the horse race? _____
 - a) the town
 - b) the castle
 - c) the bridge
 - d) the old oak tree

COMPREHENSION: (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Who started the idea of the competition?

2. Why did the Kingdom of Azereck have a contest?

3. Where were the banners hung?

4. What was the first stage of the obstacle course?

5. Who was injured on the obstacle course?

6. Who won the swordsmanship?

7. How many arrows did Minzo use for the archery?

8. What did the townspeople do when the horse race entered the town?

9. What did Minzo ask for during the archery contest?

10. Who was the winner of the contest?
