

# The Amazing Adventures of Z

*Harry Strachan September 16, 2007*

## **Z's Special Powers**

Once upon a time there was a boy who on the outside looked very normal but had three special powers. He had a special name but in this story I'm just going to call him "Z" because he had a red cape with a big "Z" on it which he sometimes wore on his adventures.

On the outside he looked like many other boys. Perhaps his hair was a bit curlier than usual and people sometimes had trouble figuring out the color of his hair. Some people thought it was blond, others red, and others weren't quite sure. He had freckles on his nose and when he smiled, his whole face brightened. His eyes had a special light that made everyone around him happy.

**Special Power #1** One day shortly after he and his family had moved into a new house in a new suburb of the city in which he lived, he and his Mother and his younger brother were out exploring. They had walked down a block or two, then turned left gone a few more blocks, then taken another left and gone walked on a circular path, cut across a park, then turned left again. Suddenly his Mother said, "Oh no! I just remembered that I left the stove on. Oh my! Oh my! We have to go right back."

She started to turn around, ready to retrace her steps through all the turns and twists they had taken on their walk. Z however used his special power and sent his eyes up into the air over the trees and visualized where his house was.

Remembering that they had taken a number of left turns, instead of looking back to where they had last walked he looked over to the left and sure enough, just one block over was his new home. "Wait, Mother," he said, "I know a short cut", and he quickly led her in just a few minutes to the front door of their new house.

His mother was amazed. "How in the world did you know to come this way? You must have a special spatial sense, Z"

Z didn't know what "spatial" meant until his Mother explained that it was like having a map inside your head so that you could tell where things were.

**Special Power #2.** One day in one of his play groups, Z noticed that one of his friends, Roger, seemed different. He seemed tense and distracted. During the day

Roger got into a pushing match with another boy Carl. He seemed on the edge of tears.

After watching him carefully for a while, Z came up to Roger, patted him gently on his back and said quietly, "Tell me about the fight you had with your parents this morning." Roger was totally surprised and started to cry.

"They yelled at me when I spilled my milk on the table and my Dad slapped me and said I was dumb. It isn't fair!"

Z patted him again and said, "Don't worry, Roger, they love you a lot; it's just that adults sometimes get frustrated and angry."

Roger suddenly asked, "How did you know?" "I'm not sure" answered Z, "I guess I could tell when you came to school today you were hurt and angry so I figured something had happened at home."

Another mother at the playgroup who had been watching turned to Z's mother and said, "I think Z has unusual powers of empathy!"

In the car later, Z asked his Mother what "empathy" meant and she it is a special ability to go inside of someone else and feel what they are feeling, to understand what's going on inside of them.

**Special Power #3.** At school one day three of Z's friends who normally got along very well got into a big conflict. The teacher had pulled out a box with a lot of toys and asked each to pick one or two and make up a story about them. Roger grabbed a big yellow truck and then a monkey that Carl already had in his hand. Carl wouldn't let go of the monkey and instead grabbed a big key that Susie had in her hand. Susie wouldn't let go of the key and tried to take a shovel that Z had in his hand.

Everyone started yelling and pushing and the teacher got upset and yelled, "Stop being so selfish, everyone, you're ruining the game" which made everyone feel badly and get even more stubborn about the toys they wanted.

Z had an idea. He quickly gave Susie his shovel and went over to a desk in the corner and drew something with crayons and a big piece of construction paper. Coming back to where everyone was fighting, he dramatically made an announcement.

Everyone went quiet when he said, holding up the paper, "Look, I've found a Treasure Map! Who wants to help me find the treasure? Roger, Carl and Susie at the same time said, "I do!"

“Okay” said Z, “This map says we have to take a road on a long journey. Does anyone have something we can ride in?”

“I have a truck” said Roger.

“Will you let the rest of us ride with you following the directions of the map?”

“Sure, hop on board!” said Roger. So Carl, Susie, and Z pretended to get in the truck and then Z gave directions which took them out of the room, down the hall, and out into the backyard of the school.

“The map says we have to climb up this big tree, walk out on highest limb, until it comes to a fork and then drop this little stone through the fork so that where it falls we can dig for the treasure. Does anyone have any ideas how we are going to climb out on such a flimsy limb that is so high in the air?”

Carl answered, “I have a monkey that can climb trees and that I’ve trained.”

“Great!” said Z, and Carl and his monkey pretended to climb the tree and dropped the stone which landed near the back of the yard on a patch of the lawn.

“Now we need a shovel. Who has a shovel?” asked Z.

Susie said that she had the shovel which Z had given her and so all four took turns pretending to shovel a big hole in the back of the yard.

Suddenly Z made a big plunk sound. “Oh I think we’ve hit a chest” he said. “Let’s lift it out.” Together they all pretended to pull it out of the hole. “Oh what are we going to do, it’s locked. Does anyone have a magic key that will open this chest?”

“I do” said Susie and she pretended to open the chest. Just as the chest was being opened up the teacher came out with a tray. “Before you divide up the treasure that’s in that chest, I have some sandwiches to help replenish all the energy you’ve spent.”

“Hurrah,” said Z and the others joined him “Hurrah for the sandwiches and hurrah for us and the treasure we’ve found.” And the four of them huddled in a circle, put their hands in a stack one on top of each other and together said “Hurrah! Hurrah!”

When Z’s Mother picked him up the teacher told her the story, “Your son is a creative problem solver. I think he will make a wonderful detective some day.” Z’s mother in the car driving home asked him, “Do you know what a detective is?”

Z answer, “Yes, that is someone who solves crimes that other people can’t figure out.”

### **The Case of the Missing Pie**

Next door to Z’s family in a big house there lived a family that had two children. There was a boy about two years older than Z and a girl about his own age. When Z’s mother invited them over to get acquainted Z found out that their names were the Porters, Mr and Mrs Porter, the boy was called Lawrence and the girl Rebecca but their parents called them Larry and Becky.

Shortly after Z’s family moved into the neighborhood Z’s mother invited the Porters over to get acquainted and they all had tea and cookies. When they left, Z noticed that Mrs. Porter said, “Oh where have I left my purse and jacket. Did I put them on the couch or take them into the kitchen. Oh, I am so scatterbrained! As my husband says ‘If my head wasn’t attached I’d lose it.’”

The house the Porters lived in had a big kitchen on the back of the first floor with a door that led out of the side of the house into the back yard. The back yard had a very large tree. Mr. Porter had built a tree house for Larry. There was a rope ladder that you had to climb to get into the tree house.

Shortly after they got to know their new neighbors, Z and his mother and his younger brother heard a big wail from next door as if someone was getting killed.

They rushed over to investigate what was happening and found Mrs. Porter, Larry and Becky in the kitchen. Mrs. Porter was screaming “Someone stole the apple pie I had baked for Becky and her friends’ play group this afternoon. I left it on the counter. Oh, I am going to kill whoever stole this pie.”

Behind Mrs. Porter both Becky and Larry were standing. Becky was close to tears, wringing her hands. Larry was silent and looked scared. He kept looking out the back window at the tree house. Z also noticed that he had some mud on his shoes and remembered that he’d seen on the steps of the back door a muddy footprint entering the house.

“Where did you leave the pie?” asked Z’s mother.

“Right here on the counter next to the bread box,” answer Mrs. Porter. “Oh when I find out who did this they are going to be sorry – I’m going to make them wish they’d never been born!”

At that point Z said, “Mrs. Porter if you will go up to your room and freshen up your makeup and give me 5 minutes alone I think I can find your pie but you have to leave the rest of us alone to work in peace. Will you do that?”

“I don’t know how you can solve this mystery but I’ve heard you have special powers Z so I’ll give you a chance” she said, then left and climbed the stairs to her bedroom.

Z looked at Larry, “I know you took the pie, Larry, and hid it in your tree house. If you’ll get it right now and bring it back, none of us will tell your Mother but you have to do it immediately.”

Larry looked like he was going to protest his innocence, but then ran out the back door and within a minute was back with the pie. While he was gone, Z opened the breadbox which was empty. He took the pie and put it in the break box and closed it. He then called up to Mrs. Porter. “You can come down! The mystery is solved.”

When she came into the room, with a flourish he waved his cape with the Z on it over the bread box as if he was a magician and then opened the box. There was the pie. “As you often say, Mrs. Porter, you’re so scatterbrained that you sometimes can’t remember what you’ve done. I suspect that you wanted to protect the pie while it cooled so you put it in the breadbox. No need to kill anyone and get yourself put in jail!” he added and everyone laughed in relief.

“I have no memory of doing that,” said Mrs. Porter, “but perhaps you’re right. Well thank you all so much. It’s such a big pie I suggest we all have a piece with a glass of milk. Would you like a bite?”

“Yes thank you,” said Z’s mother, Z, and Z’s younger brother and Larry and Becky all at the same time! And they thoroughly enjoyed the tasty pie.

When they got home, Z’s mother asked him, “How did you know Larry had stolen the pie?”

“Well,” said Z, “I didn’t think anyone from the outside had been in the kitchen so it was probably one of the three of them. Becky was close to tears and it was her play group so I didn’t think she was the one. Larry looked guilty and kept looking at the tree house. He also had mud on his shoes and there was a footprint suggesting he’d just come in.

Solving it wasn’t so hard it was figuring out how to keep Mrs. Porter from killing him that took some time!”

His mother gave Z's blond, red hair a pat and said, "My smart little detective!" and Z felt very good.