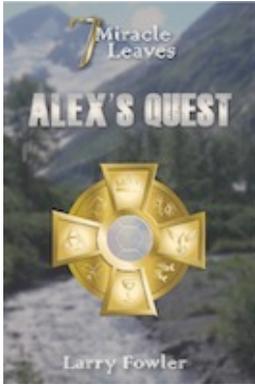


7 Miracle Leaves

ALEX'S QUEST



Larry Fowler



On the New Earth, Alex met Azriel, a heavenly being. Azriel gave Alex a Golden Cross with a center crystal containing 7 Miracle Leaves. The 7 Miracle Leaves have supernatural powers capable of healing all the nations of the world. Azriel sent Alex on a quest to deliver the Golden Cross to the Prophet Venatici. The quest involves Alex traveling halfway around the world; encountering various dangers including injuries, kidnapping, theft, and deception.

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Alex's Quest

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**7 Miracle Leaves:
Alex's Quest**

Larry Fowler

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First Edition

Chapter 5

“We are in no hurry today and we can stop anytime we want to,” said Dale.

“Alex, we’re ready for another one of your stories,” Tim announced.

“I’ll tell you a story that is both humorous and sickening. I played on the junior soccer team for my school. We traveled to different soccer fields and played teams from other schools. I normally played on the side of the field in the left full-back defender position. My task was to keep the soccer ball away from the keeper, prevent opposing attackers from passing or receiving, and blocking shots. I was in physically good shape and quick at anticipating the passes of the attacking players,” said Alex.

“For one of our games we traveled by school bus to play another team.” Alex continued. “After our arrival we were told to take to the field. When I took up my normal position as left full-back, there was an overwhelming stench passing over the soccer field. At first I held my nose but when the game started, I was at the mercy of the bad smell. After a while I didn’t care whether my team won or lost. I wanted the coach to take me out of the game. I had to get off the field and away from that horrid smell.”

Alex said, “During the half time break I asked the coach what that terrible odor was and he laughed and said I would just have to ignore the smell. However, the smell

was so awful that I told him I would never be able to ignore something that strong.”

“The coach laughed again and told me that there was a pickle factory next to the soccer field and that the bad smell was coming from the fermenting cucumbers in the large, open vats of salt brine.”

“I asked the coach if he was really telling me that a horrible odor like that was coming from cucumbers fermenting into pickles; and he said that it was.”

“When I asked the coach if birds were flying over the vats, dropping poop into them, and then we were eating the pickles from the same vats full of bird poop, he told me that I was right. He went on to say that the open vats allowed the sun to warm the liquid and kill mold that could grow on the surface of the salty water. So, the pickle factory would rather have the top of the vats open to the sun and kill the mold than to worry about the effect of bird poop in the pickles.”

Dale said, “After hearing your story I’m not sure that I can ever eat another pickle.” Alex, Dale, and Tim all laughed.

Next on their trip, the three guys traveled near Laramie, Wyoming and arrived at the snowy mountain range. They were passing a lake on the right-hand side of the road when Dale decided to pull over. Dale said, “This is a beautiful lake. Let’s try to catch some trout.”

Alex got his fishing pole and tackle box and followed Dale and Tim along the path to the lake. He noticed that the

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smell was like the smell after a spring rain. There was a mist rising from the lake and there was a sandy shore which ran all of the way around the lake. Alex could see trout rising all over the lake but could not see the trout in the water. He always had enjoyed catching trout when it was possible to see the trout take the fly. In fact, catching trout under any conditions was pretty much fun.

On the far side of the lake was a forest. The mist rising from the lake reminded Alex of the time that he and his father went bass fishing on a small lake near their home.

His Dad had an old V-shaped front fishing boat that he thought was the greatest fishing boat ever made. One morning Alex and his father were throwing fishing plugs toward the shore and slowly pulling them back to the boat. Alex had tied on a fairly large fishing plug. His father told him to cast his fishing plug near the shore where there was a large tree that had fallen into the lake. Alex did as his father instructed and tossed the fishing plug next to the fallen tree. Alex's Dad told him to count to 10 and then twitch his plug. So, Alex did as his father had instructed. Then he counted to 10 and twitched the plug. A 6 pound largemouth bass rose up out of the water and took the plug and flapped his tail on the water. Alex yelled for his Dad to get the net and then he quickly dipped the large bass.

On this day standing by the trout stream, Alex tried his system of fishing with a dry fly on his spinning reel. The bait consisted of a clear bubble bobber that Alex had filled half-full of water. A small stopper was used to keep the

water in the bubble. Alex tied the bubble bobber to his line and then tied a light leader to the bubble bobber. Alex tied on a dry fly and cast out where he had seen a trout rise and take an insect. Pretty soon, Alex had successfully caught a nice rainbow trout.

Dale and Tim were not as lucky catching trout. After Alex had caught several trout Dale asked, "Alex, how are you using your spinning reel to cast dry flies and catch trout?"

Alex responded, "Dale, you and Tim come over here and I will give you one of the little clear bubble bobbers. This system will allow you and Tim to dry fly fish using your spinning reels."

Then Alex, Dale, and Tim all caught trout on almost every cast. Alex enjoyed watching Dale fish. When Dale's bubble bobber would go under, Dale would lift his rod tip high into the air with one arm and fight the trout. Dale held his rod with one arm and lifted his rod high until the trout wore itself out. It was fun for Alex watching Dale use this method to catch the trout. They released all of the trout they caught that day.

"Would you guys like to put our tackle boxes and rods back in the camper and take a walk around the lake?" asked Alex.

Dale responded, "Yes, it's so beautiful here we would like to see some of the forest." So, Alex led them on a walk toward the forest on the other side of the lake. After a short distance, he noticed some huge mountain lion tracks

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in the sandy soil next to the lake. He stopped immediately to wait for Dale and Tim.

The other two guys walked up to see what Alex was looking at. They could tell that the tracks were heading in the direction of the forest. Alex mentioned that he had heard that despite their fearsome reputation, mountain lions were usually shy and seldom seen by hikers. However, the three of them agreed to end their hike and return to the camper. Meeting a mountain lion out in the wild just didn't seem like a lot of fun to any of them. Of course, on the way back to the camper they all three told how they would have handled the situation if they had actually seen the mountain lion.

It was late that night before they arrived at the campground in Salt Lake City. The next morning Dale asked, "Alex I have heard about a garden near here called Red Butte Garden. I understand that it is open year-round and changes constantly. Each time you visit the garden there is always some kind of different flowering plant to see. Would you like to go with me to visit the garden?"

Dale spoke with Tim and asked, "Would you like to go with Alex and me to see the garden? We'll take the truck camper and all three of us can go."

Tim responded, "No, you guys go ahead without me. I have some studying to do and I also want to take a look at the water hose on the truck camper since it has been leaking." Tim would be working toward his Master's Degree in Physics in the spring of the next year. He had

brought study books with him on the trip and read every chance he could.

In a short while Alex and Dale got on the scooter and headed out to visit the Red Butte Garden. It was located in a mountain range. While walking through the garden, Alex and Dale saw deer, squirrels, and lots of different types of birds. The deer weren't afraid of Alex and Dale and didn't try to run away when Alex and Dale walked up close to them. Dale said that they were probably so used to seeing visitors in the garden, they were friendly.

Ahead of them on the trail was a man sitting on a bench holding an apple in his hand. One of the deer walked over and gently took the apple. Then he stood in front of the man and ate it as a treat. However, there were signs in the garden warning visitors to maintain a safe distance from the wildlife. Alex thought maybe the man visited the gardens often or was one of the caretakers.

Dale and Alex wandered through the gardens and even explored the children's garden. Along the trail were spots to stop and look down over the Salt Lake Valley. The views were amazing. At the end of the trail was a food vendor with hot dogs and drinks. So, the guys bought some food and took their lunch to a nearby picnic table to enjoy. They also bought a packet of pictures for souvenirs.

Back at the campground, Tim had started working on the leak from the water hose in the truck camper. He wanted to repair it before they left for Baker City, Oregon the next morning. Tim was kneeling on the ground with a wrench in his hand, working on the pipe where the hose connects to

the truck camper. Suddenly, someone quietly sneaked up behind him. Then a huge arm grabbed his head, covering his entire face. Tim couldn't cry out and he could barely breathe. Then the man placed a knife up to Tim's back and told him to get up and come with him. He threatened to "stick" Tim if he failed to do what he was told.

The man took Tim to a fifth wheel camper parked a couple of spaces away. Once the guy put Tim into the fifth wheel camper, he bound Tim's hands behind his back. Then he bound Tim's feet and put duct tape across his mouth.

There were two men involved. The one that had grabbed him looked to be over 300 lbs. and very tall; maybe 6ft. 8 inches. Tim noticed that the man was missing three fingers on his left hand. Immediately, Tim thought that he would surely remember that and hoped that he lived to tell somebody. Tim was more frightened than he had ever been in his entire life.

The other man was shorter but muscular; about 5ft. 9 inches. He had a strange, evil kind of laugh that made Tim's blood run cold. He couldn't understand what these two creeps wanted with him. He began to try and think what made him a target for them to kidnap when they both came over to him and picked him up. Deciding not to fight back, Tim tried to relax as they carried him into the bathroom. The shorter guy kept laughing his evil laugh as though he was trying to frighten Tim. It was like being in a bad horror film.

Once they had him in the bathroom, the two men tossed Tim onto the floor, chained him to the toilet, and shut the

door behind them. Tim was glad to be alone and glad that he was still alive. He began to think of ways he could escape if the men should happen to leave the camper. He could hear them talking and began smelling cigarette smoke, which he hated....it always made him cough.

Tim worked his way toward the bathroom door and twisted his arm, but was unable to reach the door. The men had sat down at the kitchen table which was located on the right hand side of the camper just before the stairs to the bedroom and bathroom. Since there was about a 1 inch crack under the bathroom door, Tim could hear what the men were saying. They were talking in a normal voice tone. Evidently, they didn't realize or didn't care that Tim could hear them. They were talking about their plans and how they were glad they had stumbled onto this campground.

Tim gathered from their conversation that they were construction workers. They talked about Mr. Weston's Construction Company in Indianapolis. The smaller man had overheard Mr. Weston talking with his son about the bad luck they were having as a result of possessing a golden cross. The two men plotted to steal the golden cross from Mr. Weston; but before they could steal it, they overheard Mr. Weston say to his son that he had taken the cross to the cathedral in downtown Indianapolis. There was only one church downtown Indianapolis that was called a cathedral. The construction workers planned to go downtown Indianapolis, break into the cathedral, and steal the golden cross.

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The construction workers got a big break when Alex and Dale showed up at the construction site inquiring about a golden cross. Mr. Weston informed Alex and Dale that he had given the golden cross to the pastor of the cathedral downtown Indianapolis. So, Alex and Dale left the construction site to go downtown to the cathedral and get the cross. The workers followed them.

Once they reached the cathedral, the workers waited outside for Alex and Dale to come out. Just as they had started to approach Alex and Dale, a police officer came out of the building next door to the cathedral and the men were prevented from grabbing Alex and taking the cross. Alex and Dale left on the scooter and the construction workers decided that it would be difficult to follow the scooter through the downtown Indianapolis traffic.

The construction workers went into the cathedral and spoke with the Priest. They made up a story and told the Priest that Mr. Weston had sent them to get the cross back. Believing their story, the Priest told them that he had given the cross to Alex because Alex had a letter showing that he was transporting the golden cross for his father, a minister. The construction men told the Priest that the letter Alex had shown him was a fake. The Priest then told them that he overheard Dale say that they were camping close by and were heading to Alaska.

Next, the construction workers picked up their fifth wheel camper and found where Alex, Dale and Tim had camped. The construction workers were too late to catch up with the truck camper at that campground. So, they spoke with

the manager of the campground and found out where Alex, Dale, and Tim were planning to camp that night. Dale had no reason to hide his travel plans and had openly discussed his travel plans with the campground manager.

The construction workers had found Dale's truck camper and parked their fifth wheel camper a few spaces down from the truck camper. They had ransacked the truck camper looking for the golden cross but hadn't found it. They had decided that they didn't want to confront Alex, Dale, and Tim and would try to kidnap one of them when one person was by himself.

The previous night they had parked their fifth wheeler camper near the truck camper and waited and watched Alex, Dale, and Tim. When they saw Dale and Alex leave, they decided that they would kidnap Tim. They had planned to ransom Tim in exchange for the golden cross. Tim overheard them say that they wanted to make the exchange in a public place. They had considered having the exchange in the Mormon Temple but had decided against that and chose to make the exchange in the North Visitors' Center on Temple Square.

The construction men discussed how they would make their getaway. They said that didn't believe they should attempt to make their escape in their red pickup truck because their truck stood out from other vehicles, and they had Indiana license plates on both the fifth wheel camper and their truck. They thought that once they made the exchange, Alex would contact the police. The police would be looking for a red pickup truck with Indiana

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license plates. The larger construction worker left and went to a car rental dealer and rented a black SUV. The men decided that they didn't want to leave the rental car at the campground. The smaller construction worker said that they would have to take the rental car and leave it somewhere but it would be a mistake to leave Tim tied up in the fifth wheel camper.

They didn't believe that there was any way to tie Tim up and be certain that he could not escape. The men decided to take Tim with them and put him in the rear of the SUV. The big construction worker drove the red pickup truck and the smaller guy drove the black SUV and followed behind.

Every now and then, Tim would raise his head and get his bearings. He noticed that they were driving on Interstate 15 north. In about an hour the men decided to turn off of the interstate highway onto Route 108. The men noticed signs for the Antelope Island State Park Marina and decided to leave the rental car in front of the Marina. When the men got Tim out of the car, Tim noticed that they were parked in front of public restrooms located directly across from the Marina. At this time there were very few vehicles in the parking lot. The construction workers rental car was the only car parked near the public restrooms.

After returning to the fifth wheel camper the smaller of the men took the tape off of Tim's mouth and told Tim that they wanted Dale's cell phone number. Tim had no choice but to give them Dale's cell phone number. Tim

heard them say that Alex and Dale had returned from their outing. The men decided to wait a few hours before calling Dale's cell phone.

Alex and Dale returned to the campground and expected to see Tim working outside of the truck camper but Tim was not there. Alex checked inside the camper to find Tim but he wasn't in the camper. Alex decided to stay at the camper while Dale walked around the campground looking for Tim; but Dale didn't find Tim. Several hours later Tim still had not returned to the camper. Alex and Dale began to be concerned. Alex said, "It's not like Tim to leave and not tell us where he has gone."

Dale received a call on his cell phone. The call was from a telephone number that Dale did not recognize but he took the call hoping that it was from Tim. The person on the call asked to speak with Alex and Dale handed the cell phone to Alex.

"Hello", Alex said.

"Is this Alex?" the caller asked.

"Yes, this is Alex," Alex responded.

"We have your friend Tim and we know that you have a golden cross. We will exchange your friend Tim for the golden cross," the caller said.

Dale asked, "Alex, what's wrong?"

Alex realized that this was a ransom demand. After a few moments, Alex decided that he would have to turn over

the golden cross to this evil man in order to get Tim back safely. So Alex said, "Put Tim on the phone."

The caller handed the telephone to Tim. "Alex, I'm okay," Tim said, "but you will have to follow their instructions or they tell me that they will kill me."

Now Alex knew that there were two guys holding Tim. Alex said, "Tim put the guy back on the phone and I'll find out what he wants."

The caller said, "If you do exactly as you are instructed, you'll get your friend back safe."

Alex demanded, "Do not hurt Tim!"

"As I said, if you do as we ask, he will be unharmed," the caller responded. "We will meet you one hour from now at the North Visitor Center in Temple Square. The North Visitor Center is the one that is painted with clouds and stars. Meet us there in one hour and do not tell anyone or the police about this exchange or you will never see Tim again. We will be watching you."

At that time Alex had no idea that Tim was bound in a fifth wheel camper only a few camping spots away from the truck camper. Alex hung up and explained the ransom demands. Dale agreed with Alex to exchange the golden cross for Tim to ensure Tim's safe return. They agreed that it would be best not to inform the police. There was no way to explain to the local police the reason that Alex had a golden cross in his possession. Also, it would take more than one hour to talk to the police and still make the

exchange for Tim. So they left the campground and headed toward the meeting place.

When they arrived at Temple Square, Alex spoke with one of the sister missionaries to make certain that they were at the right place. When Alex and Dale entered the North Visitor Center, they saw Tim sitting on a bench in one corner of the visitors' center. Tim was flanked by two men. One of the men looked like a giant and the other man was short but looked to be very strong. Alex approached them and told them that he had the golden cross.

The smaller man said, "Give the cross to us now and we'll release your friend."

Alex asked, "How can I trust you to release Tim?"

The smaller guy replied, "Do you really think that we want a commotion in front of all these people?"

Alex handed them the golden cross and they immediately hurried out the door of the Visitor Center, leaving Tim. Dale ran over to Tim and Alex said, "Well, Tim, there goes the golden cross but I'm happy for your safe return."

Alex asked, "Tim, who are they and where did they come from?"

Tim responded, "They're construction workers who worked for Mr. Weston in Indianapolis. They overheard Mr. Weston talking to his son about the golden cross and taking it to the cathedral downtown Indiana. After you

and Dale showed up at the construction site and asked about the golden cross, the two construction workers followed you downtown to the cathedral. When you came out of the cathedral they could not take the cross away from you because there was a policeman there. After you left the cathedral they talked the Priest into telling them where you were staying.”

“They’re the ones who ransacked our camper looking for the golden cross. Dale didn’t realize the danger and he told the managers of the campground where we were heading and where we planned on camping. They have followed us all the way from Indianapolis,” Tim continued.

Then he grabbed Alex by the arm to get his attention and said, “Listen! You may still have a chance to get back your golden cross!”

Alex asked, “What are you talking about?”

Tim said, “When that big fellow grabbed me from behind I was working on our water hose for the truck camper. He put his huge arm across my face and I could hardly breathe. The whole time you were searching for me, I was tied up in their fifth wheel camper only two spaces away from our camper. They knew that their red truck with Indiana license plates would be easily found by the police. So, they rented a black SUV and parked it at the Antelope Island State Park Marina. I know this because they didn’t want to leave me in the fifth wheel camper by myself. They assumed that I would be able to escape before they returned.”

“The larger man drove the red pickup truck and the smaller man followed him in the black rental SUV,” Tim continued. “They parked the black SUV at the public restrooms across from the State Park Marina. It took about an hour to get to the State Park Marina. Every so often I would raise my head to find out where we were. We traveled up Interstate 15 and turned left on Route 108. The State Park Marina is a short distance after you turn off of Interstate 15. If you leave now you may be able to get to their rental car before they do. I have no idea how you will get the golden cross away from them but you must try. You better get going!”

Alex, Dale, and Tim ran over to one of the sister missionaries and asked her about the directions to Interstate 15. She told them that there were signs directing visitors to Interstate 15 at the end of the street. Fortunately, there were only two roads Alex and Dale had to be concerned about. Alex and Dale ran to the scooter and headed down the street to the corner where they saw the directional sign to Interstate 15. Winding their way through the city streets and around the traffic, they were certain that they had made up some time on the construction men traveling in the huge red pickup truck. When they got to Interstate 15 North, Dale maneuvered the scooter in behind an 18 wheeler and moved up close to the back bumper of the truck. The scooter was caught in the draft made by the 18 wheeler. By drafting behind the 18 wheeler the scooter reached speeds of over 60 miles per hour!

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After about 45 minutes, Dale maneuvered the scooter into the passing lane and backed off from the 18 wheeler. Alex noticed that the driver of the 18 wheeler was looking in his rearview mirror and was shocked to see them come out from behind his truck. Within about another 5 miles they should see the sign for Route 108.

After looking into his rearview mirror, Dale noticed an ambulance approaching from behind them. Immediately, behind the ambulance was a fire truck, and within minutes the ambulance and fire truck passed Dale and Alex. About 200 yards ahead the ambulance and fire truck pulled over to the left shoulder of the highway. Dale could see the accident in front of them and yelled back to Alex, "It's a bad accident!"

Dale and Alex could see that a red pickup truck had struck an 18 wheeler. The 18 wheeler had jackknifed in the middle of the highway. The red pickup truck had gone off the highway, crossed over the median, and had struck a barrier. The barrier was used to stop vehicles in an accident from reaching the south bound lane. They could see that the red truck had flipped upside down.

"That looks like it could be the pickup truck of the two construction men! Tim said it was red." yelled Alex.

The firefighters and paramedics were racing toward the overturned truck. Dale and Alex pulled off the highway and onto the left shoulder. Lying in the median was a man that looked like the smaller of the two construction guys. It appeared as though he had been thrown from the pickup truck after the truck hit the 18 wheeler. The

firefighters and paramedics were concentrating on the overturned truck and were not aware that someone had been thrown from the pickup truck and was lying in the median.

Alex and Dale ran over to the construction man, and Alex took his jacket off and covered the guy up to keep him from being cold. Alex knelt down and began praying for the injured man. The guy opened his eyes and stared at Alex.

“Can you see me?” Alex asked him. “I’m Alex, one of the guys you took the cross from today.”

The man spoke and said, “I’m so very sorry for what we have done. The golden cross is hanging around my neck. Please take it and go.” Then Alex took the golden cross from around the man’s neck and hung it around his own neck.

Alex said, “The Lord will forgive you for what you have done. I will not leave you. My buddy will run to get the paramedics and bring them back to help you. The Lord will heal your wounds.”

After the paramedics had loaded both men into the ambulance, Dale said, “Let’s go get Tim and the camper and get on the road. Tim does not have a cell phone and I have no way of getting in touch with him. He’ll be thrilled to find out that we recovered the cross.”

Dale and Alex went back to the campground, loaded up the scooter, and headed back downtown to the North

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Visitor Center on Temple Square. Tim was waiting in front of the visitors' center and waved to them when he saw them coming. Tim climbed into the truck camper and when he heard that Alex and Dale had recovered the golden cross, he started crying from joy and relief. Tim could no longer hold back his emotions from his ordeal of being snatched and held for ransom. His friends, Alex and Dale had saved him and also recovered the golden cross.

Chapter 15

After arriving back at the camper Bill said, "I live on the Kenai River in Soldonta. The Kenai River is about an hour and a half north of Homer and is on your way to Anchorage. At Soldonta the Sterling Highway passes over the Kenai River on the Soldonta Bridge. My driftboat is tied up to my boat dock on the Kenai River about five miles from Soldonta. Would you be interested in going fishing for King Salmon with me in my driftboat tomorrow morning on your way back to Anchorage?"

Josiah said, "Alex, I haven't heard from the refiner and this would be a fishing trip that you will never forget."

"I've nothing to do until the refiner calls and we have the results of the fire assay," responded Alex. "It would be great to fish one of the best rivers in the world for catching King Salmon. I would be thrilled to go King Salmon fishing on the Kenai."

Bill said that he would be returning to his camper with another friend in a few days and would ride to his home in Soldonta with Josiah in his SUV. The next morning Josiah, Alex, and Bill left for Bill's home on the Kenai River in Soldonta. On the way Bill talked about the King Salmon fishing that they would be doing.

"The Kenai River is famous for the King Salmon migration. Almost all of the trophy King Salmon fish have been caught in the Kenai River. My driftboat seats four anglers

comfortably and it has an outboard motor as well as oars. I'll man the oars and run the motor while you and Josiah fish," said Bill.

"Tell me about your driftboat. I've never finished from a drift boat." Alex said.

"My driftboat has a wide flat bottom, flared sides, and a narrow flat bow. The boat is easy to maneuver in rapids. The lower Kenai is the busiest section of the river. Most of the boats you see there will be powerboats or driftboats with outboard motors," said Bill.

"The method that I plan on using is called back trolling. I will point the nose of my boat upriver and give it just enough throttle so that my boat is barely moving backwards. Once we start slowly moving backwards, you will let line out until you feel the bottom. Then you will keep your weight just off the bottom and your lure will be working properly. In some areas we will move in and out toward the bank instead of just going in a straight line backwards. The weights that I use are called Slinkys. These weights are popular for drift fishing and bottom bouncing baits. I will attach the Slinky off of a three-way swivel on a dropper tied to the leader. Slinky weights are made of a flexible poly cord and are snag resistance against rocks and weeds. You'll be looking downstream toward the bait and keeping the bait just off of the bottom," explained Bill.

"Will the King Salmon be running while we are there?" asked Alex.

“We’re now in the July Kenai River King Salmon run,” answered Bill. “The fish will average between 35 and 80 pounds or more. We’re in the peak of the King Salmon run which runs through the end of the month. The late run averages about 40,000 fish. I use a 40 pound main line with an 80 pound leader. Wait until the rod bends over and double strike it as hard as you can. We’ll be fishing the lower Kenai which is influenced by the tides. Bait is allowed and you will be trolling large Quick Fish plugs wrapped with a fillet of sardine.”

“Here’s what happens,” Bill continued. “I’ll fillet a sardine, cut a slice down the center of the fillet, and fit the sardine fillet over the center treble hooks on the Quick Fish plug. I’ll use magic thread to wrap the sardine fillet and hold it on the plug. Then I will change the sardine wraps a couple times per hour. The Quick Fish plug will run about 8 to 12 feet deep and I like to use the green and silver plug. If the King Salmon stop hitting the plug, I’ll change to slinky weights and drift salmon eggs along the bottom.”

“You know, normally, I practice catch and release but I have some King Salmon fillets in my freezer that we can have for dinner,” Bill said.

Bill’s home was an A Frame log home with floor to ceiling windows providing an unobstructed view of the Kenai River. Bill’s drift boat was tied to his aluminum boat dock on the river. Using the outboard motor Bill ran the boat several miles upstream and then they would slowly drift back to Bill’s home.

During their trip Bill began back trolling and Alex and Josiah fished for about an hour without any success. It was like there were no King Salmon in the river. Neither Alex nor Josiah had a single strike on the Quick Fish plugs baited with sardines. They had passed other fishing boats and noticed that they were also not catching fish.

Bill decided to change fishing methods and went to salmon egg baits. He fitted the line with a sliding sinker setup and about a 24 inch leader. Bill held the boat against the current in the river while Alex faced downstream looking down the bow of the driftboat. Alex released his reel and slowly let out line until the sinker hit bottom. As soon as the bait hit bottom Alex clicked the reel over and lifted the weight a few inches off the bottom. Then he allowed the weight to return to the bottom and hesitated a few seconds.

As the boat slowly drifted down the river Alex repeated this process of lifting the weight, allowing the bait to return to the bottom, and hesitating a few seconds while keeping a tight line. On the first strike the King Salmon picked up the bait and began to run. Alex allowed the fish to move away and then pumped his rod a couple of times. He struck the fish by trying to pull the salmon out of the water and made a good solid hook set. Alex's first King Salmon put up a great fight and weighed in at about 40 pounds. Alex and Josiah each caught two King Salmon that weighed over 40 pounds each.

Once they arrived back at Bill's boat dock, Bill said, "We can continue fishing downstream. I'll run into the house

and get us some drinks and sandwiches.” Then Bill took his life jacket off and laid it in the bottom of the boat.

When Bill tried to step out of the boat onto the dock the boat moved and Bill slipped and fell into the river. He was wearing heavy clothes and boots and when he fell into the river, he began to struggle against the current. Bill was being pulled under by his wet heavy clothes and boots! Alex knew that in a matter of seconds, Bill would be washed down the river and he would drown.

Within seconds Bill was face down in the river. Without thinking Alex jumped to the side of the boat and reached down and grabbed Bill by his belt and the back of his collar. Alex hoisted Bill up over the side of the driftboat and into the bottom boat to safety.

“Alex, you saved my life!” Bill said as he shuttered from the cold water.

“How in the world did you lift Bill, with soaking wet clothes, out of the water and over the side of the driftboat?” Josiah asked Alex.

Alex began to tremble from the scare of Bill drowning and responded, “My adrenaline must have kicked in and it seemed like time slowed down. Physically, I shouldn’t have been able to lift Bill back into the boat; but it seemed easy for me while I was doing it.” Alex knew that the power from the golden cross had been instrumental in performing another miracle!

Over and over, Bill kept thanking Alex for saving his life. “I knew I was in trouble because of my clothes and boots being so heavy. I really thought I was going to drown and then I felt you grab my shirt collar, Alex. I’ll never be able to thank you enough for that!” Bill said.

Bill had to go to his house and get some dry clothes and shoes, so they left the river and went up the stairs into Bill’s home. Alex and Josiah stayed in the living room while Bill went to his bedroom to change. While they were waiting, Josiah received a call on his cell phone. After answering, Josiah handed his cell phone to Alex and said, “It’s Dale on the phone and he would like to speak with you.”

Alex took the phone and greeted Dale who said, “Tim and I finished work early today and when we came back to the campground and entered our truck camper, all of our things had been ransacked and trashed. Someone got into the truck camper and searched the camper for anything of value to steal. Tim knows for certain that he locked the truck camper when we left for work this morning. So, whoever it was got into the truck camper without breaking the lock on the door. It was like we were robbed by professionals. Tim and I didn’t want to carry all of our money on us and we had left about \$3,500.00 in cash in our suit cases.”

Alex asked, “Wow, that’s terrible, Dale! Is my silver flask missing?”

Dale responded, “I don’t know, your things were thrown all over the inside of the camper.”

7 Miracle Leaves: Alex's Quest

“Can you take a look and see if you and Tim can find my silver flask, please? It contains gold dust that I inherited from my cousin Eli.”

“Tim and I didn’t think that you could have panned all of your gold dust in Hatcher Pass. Now, we know where most of your gold dust came from. We will thoroughly search the camper and the surrounding area for your silver flask. I’ll call you back,” Dale answered.

In a short while Dale called back and said that he and Tim had been unable to find Alex’s silver flask. Alex’s face turned white and he was sickened by the news.

“Alex, are you feeling poorly? You look like you’re going to faint,” asked Josiah.

Then Alex told Josiah that someone had broken into Dale’s truck camper. He told him that the thieves had stolen about \$3,500.00 in cash from Tim and Dale and the remainder of his gold dust that he planned to sell next month.

Josiah felt really bad for Alex and, of course for Dale and Tim as well. He and Alex shared the news with Bill and told him that they needed to head back to Palmer. They thanked Bill for taking them fishing and for his hospitality during their stay in Homer. Going with Bill fishing in the driftboat and fishing for King Salmon had been a lot of fun for Alex and Josiah.

Josiah said, “We’ll not stop at the refiner’s place in Anchorage. I need to get you back to the campground in

Palmer as soon as possible. It's about a three and one half hour drive from here to Palmer."

The trip back to Palmer seemed long and when they arrived at the truck camper, there was a man and woman standing outside of the truck camper. They were talking with Dale and Tim. The woman was tall (about 5 ft. 10 in.) and thin, long blonde hair, and a weathered appearance. The man was shorter and stocky, with a dark complexion and black hair combed straight back.

After Dale welcomed Alex back, he introduced Alex to the couple and said, "This is Mr. and Mrs. Burns. They're staying in the travel trailer next door."

Alex greeted Mr. and Mrs. Burns and then introduced them to Josiah.

Mr. Burns said, "My name is Nate. Dale came over to our camper and told us that someone had broken into his camper while Dale and Tim were at work and you were on your fishing trip. He informed us that the thieves had stolen some money from him and Tim. We told Dale that we didn't see anyone around the camper or anyone entering the camper."

Dale told Alex that they had thoroughly searched everything inside and outside of the camper. However, they didn't find the silver flask. It had been taken by the intruders. Dale said, "Tim and I have been trying to determine who could have entered the camper without breaking in."

"It probably was someone staying in the campground," Alex suggested. "When they noticed that no one was in the camper, they took the opportunity to steal from us. They must have done this before and knew how to pick the lock on the camper door."

Just then, Josiah received a call on his cell phone. It was the refiner on the line telling Josiah that they had the results of the fire assay.

"Alex, I need to go to the refiner in Anchorage and sell my gold so that I have the cash to pay my crews," Josiah said. "Do you want me to pick up your fire assay and bring it back to you?"

"Yes, please take a look at my fire assay and see if you believe the results are reasonable. Then if they seem reasonable to you, go ahead and sell my gold for me."

"Alex, you know that you can trust me," Josiah said. "If the fire assay for your gold looks reasonable then I'll sell your gold for you."

"I have a little gold that I am interested in selling," Nate said. "Would you mind telling me which refiner you use?" Josiah told him about his refiner in Anchorage and said that they were trustworthy. Then Josiah left to go to the refiner in Anchorage.

Nate Burns and his wife Claire excused themselves and went back to the camper. Alex, Dale, and Tim continued to search the truck camper and the surrounding area for the

silver flask. They finally concluded that the intruders took it and that the silver flask was gone!

Dale used his cell phone to call the police and an officer arrived shortly afterwards. The police officer took down all of the details of the robbery but he didn't give the three of them much hope that their cash and gold dust would be recovered. He told them that unless someone had seen the robbers entering the truck camper, there was almost no way to recover the stolen cash and gold dust.

Alex, Dale, and Tim worked until late that evening repacking their clothes, putting the dishes back into the cupboard, and putting their other belongings back into the storage cabinets and closet.

"I wonder why it is taking Josiah such a long time to sell the gold and return to Palmer," Alex said.

"Possibly since it was so late, Josiah decided to get a motel room in Anchorage for the night," responded Dale.

"Yes, but it's not like Josiah to do that without calling me to let me know," said Alex.

That night Alex was awake more than he was asleep, thinking about Josiah and the gold dust. Early the next morning there was a knock on the camper door and Alex ran to the door. He was hoping that it was Josiah returning from Anchorage.

When Alex opened the door, there was a tall, muscular heavysset man standing on the step. The man said, "I'm Detective Sgt. Riley and I would like to speak with Alex."

"I'm Alex. Please come in."

"Alex, I have some news for you about a man named Josiah Taylor," said the Detective.

Alex invited the Detective to step inside as he continued to explain about Josiah.

"Last night after leaving the refiner in downtown Anchorage, Josiah Taylor was on his way to his SUV. Apparently, there had been no parking spots on the main street and so Josiah decided to park behind the refiner's offices. While he was walking down the alley, Josiah was attacked and badly beaten by a man with a handgun."

At this point, Alex was really nervous and he turned away to sit down on a chair. He told the officer to continue telling him about Josiah but he had to sit down to listen to the rest.

"Okay," the detective said, "Josiah told the police that he had just sold his gold and your gold when he was mugged and all of the money was stolen. He said that he was kicked in the face and robbed at gunpoint."

Alex discovered that Josiah had been attacked at about 9:00 PM the previous night. So, that was why he hadn't called Alex. The detective said that there had been a witness at the scene who had provided the police with a

general description of the attacker. However, the police hadn't located anyone fitting the description as of yet.

"How bad injured is Josiah? Will he completely recover from the mugging?" Alex asked.

"Josiah is badly beaten but he will have a full recovery. He may have a few scars on his face from where they suspect kicked him, however. He sustained several deep cuts on his face," Detective Sgt. Riley responded.

"That's terrible about his face, but I am happy that Josiah will be okay. You said that you are a detective. It seems unusual for you to come to tell me this instead of the police. Why are you involved in a mugging?" asked Alex.

"Well, Alex," Detective Sgt. Riley responded, "the description that Josiah gave us fits a con man who has been working the Anchorage area. The con man and his wife approached a lady who is an Anchorage resident and told her that they needed \$50,000 cash to buy gold mining equipment for a mining claim they own. They told her that if she would put up a \$50,000 grub stake, they would set up a corporation and she could be their partner."

"They assured the lady that the Mining claim would produce millions. They were so convincing that the lady took the money out of her savings and gave it to them. The con man used the lady's name as a reference and played the same con on three other people in the Anchorage area," Detective Sgt. Riley said.

“They never set up the Corporation and never purchased mining equipment with the cash that these poor people gave them. Also, they don’t own any gold mining claims. I wanted to tell you about Josiah and maybe find out whether or not you have seen a suspicious couple that might fit the description we have of them.”

Alex asked, “What is the description of the suspect that the witness gave to the police?”

“The suspect said the man was wearing a dark stocking cap with a face mask. The man was heavysset and about Josiah’s height,” answered the Detective.

Then questioning Alex, the Detective asked him if anyone other than him knew about Josiah going into Anchorage to visit the refiner and pick up the money for the gold dust. He said that someone had to know the time and place in order to have planned the attack on Josiah and steal the money.

“Well, when Josiah and I were discussing his trip we were here outside the camper. Dale and Tim were here with us and also Mr. and Mrs. Burns from the camper next door were here,” Alex answered.

Alex told the Detective about the break in at the camper and that the thieves had taken money and a silver flask containing gold dust. He informed him about Nate Burns and his wife being present with Dale and Tim when he and Josiah arrived back from their fishing trip. He also told the Detective that Mr. Burns would fit the description of the size of the man that the witness had seen.

Detective Sgt. Riley asked Alex what Mr. Burns' wife looked like and Alex told him, "Let's see, she was thin and tall, about 5 ft. 10 in. She had long blonde hair and her skin was tan and weathered looking."

The Detective asked Alex if he remembered her name and Alex answered, "Claire." Then Detective Sgt. Riley told Alex to stay in the truck camper and he would go next door and check on Nate Burns and his wife.

In a few minutes Sgt. Riley returned and said that no one was home at the camper next door and it appeared that they had packed their things and left.

"I'll wager that they are the ones that stole my silver flask with the gold dust and Dale's and Tim's \$3,500 in cash from our truck camper yesterday. The police told us that there wasn't much hope that we would recover our gold dust and cash. What do you think the chances are that you can recover the cash that was stolen from Josiah and me?" Alex asked.

"Actually," Alex, "I think that the chances are fairly good that we will catch up with the Burns couple. However, I don't know whether or not they will have all of your cash with them."

Then after Detective Sgt. Riley left, Dale received a call on his cell phone. After answering the phone Dale said, "It's Josiah," Alex, "and he would like to talk with you."

Alex took the phone and Josiah said, "Alex, I'm so very sorry that you had your money stolen. I will have to take

my own money and pay all of my men their wages for a full month. I'll be getting out of the hospital tomorrow and will drop by to see you on my way back North."

"I am just happy that you'll be okay. I was visited today by a Detective and he told me that we may have a good chance of recovering our money. I'll let you know as soon as I have heard back from the Detective," Alex told Josiah.

Later that day Detective Sgt. Riley called on Dale's cell phone and asked to speak with Alex. He told Alex that his department had determined that Nate and Claire Burns were the con man and his wife they had been looking for.

The Detective said that they had taken a flight out of Anchorage to Seattle immediately after Nate attacked and stole the money from Josiah. After the plane had landed, the couple had been traced to a motel on the west side of Seattle. They both had checked in under an alias.

"When the Seattle police squad arrived at the motel, they located the room and broke down the door finding that Nate was the only one there. So, Claire Burns is still on the on the run from authorities," Detective Sgt. Riley said.

"When they took Nate in for questioning, he told the police that he had the \$3,500 they had stolen from the truck camper and half of the cash from Josiah's package. Nate knew that it was Josiah's cash because the fire assay papers were included in the package. He said that he and Claire divided up their "loot" and Claire took your package of cash from the refiner. She also had the gold dust that

they stole from the truck camper and the other half of the cash from Josiah's package."

Alex asked the Detective where Nate Burns was now and he told Alex that they were going to bring Nate back to stand trial in Anchorage. The witness to Josiah's mugging and the three Anchorage residents that Nate and Claire bilked out of their money will all testify against them. He also told Alex that it wasn't necessary for him to remain in Alaska for the trial.

"Will you see to it that Josiah gets back the cash that Nate stole from him?" Alex asked Detective Sgt. Riley.

"Yes, I'll make certain that Josiah gets the cash back that was recovered from Nate and return the \$3,500 stolen from your friends Dale and Tim. I should be able to return their money in the next few days. If we catch up with Claire we may be able to recover your gold dust and cash."

Alex felt a lot better concerning Josiah now. He knew that Josiah was in need of that money to pay his workers. Also, it was a good feeling that Nate Burns was in police custody, even though Claire still wasn't.

Later that afternoon Dale received a call on his cell phone from Seattle. Dale said, "Alex, I think this is Claire Burns and she wants to talk to you." This gave Alex hope that maybe he might be able to recover his gold dust and cash.

Alex answered the phone and Claire said, "Hey, I need to talk to you. The detectives kicked in our motel room door

and arrested Nate. I don't want you to testify against Nate."

Alex responded, "I don't need to testify against Nate because the police have a witness who saw Nate attack Josiah and he will testify. Also, the three people in Anchorage that you and Nate conned out of their money will testify against him. You can help Nate by coming back to Anchorage and turning in the remainder of the stolen money."

Claire laughed and said, "Nice try, Alex. I have your money and your gold dust and you'll never see it again. Also, Nate knows it was you who told the cop about us, so when he gets out of jail he'll find you and beat you up like he did your friend Josiah."

"Nate will be in prison for a long time if you don't come back and help him," Alex told Claire.

Claire responded, "That's not happening. Nate's not really my husband and my last name isn't Burns. The authorities will never find me where I'm going."

When Alex got off the phone Dale asked, "What did she want?"

"Well, I have some good news and some bad news, Dale. The detective has recovered the \$3,500 in cash that was stolen from you and Tim and it should be returned to you within the next few days," Alex said.

“So, what’s the bad news?” Dale asked, “How about your gold dust and money?”

Alex responded, “Claire has my money and she says that the authorities will never find her where she is going. She’s not married to Nate Burns so she has no reason to come back and help him out.”

Alex had lost everything. He realized that there was no chance that he would recover his gold dust and money. Alex had failed in his mission to deliver the golden cross with the seven miracle leaves to the prophet Venatici because without the money for his travel, he wouldn’t be able to go overseas.

That night while Alex, Dale, and Tim were sitting around the campfire the Northern Lights put on a fantastic display. The Northern lights came in waves of wide bands across the sky with changing colors. This was the most magnificent display of the lights Alex had seen since he had arrived in Alaska. On the one hand, the lights coming in waves across the night sky were beautiful but they also gave Alex an eerie feeling.

Alex asked, “Tim, where do the Northern Lights come from?”

“The Northern Lights are referred to as the Aurora Borealis. The solar winds from our sun radiate charged particles and when the particles reach Earth, our magnetic field acts on the particles so we can see the lights. These particles reflect light from the sun and can only be seen

from someone close to the north and south poles," Tim answered.

Out of the darkness a hooded man came up to the campfire and Alex recognized him as Manaen, his Guardian Angel. Manaen was a comforting sight to Alex after all that had recently happened to Alex and his friends. Alex said, "I am so very happy to see you again, Manaen."

Manaen responded, "You have an unfathomable concern about completing your mission. I have come to comfort you."

"Everything you foretold about my future has happened. I have been on a long journey, had a run in with a huge moose, shot a halibut that weighed close to 150 pounds, chopped ice from a glacier to use in an ice chest, helped solve a crime, had all of my money and gold dust stolen, and have not accomplished my mission as I had planned," Alex told Manaen.

"Your journey is not complete," Manaen said. "You'll receive help to complete your mission from an unexpected source. You must be aware that the closer you come to completing your mission, the greater your own risk will become. There are powerful forces that will be fighting against you during the completion of your mission."

"Can you give me more details about my future and my mission?" Alex asked with a feeling of uncertainty.

Manaen responded, "I have provided you with all of the information that you will need. The reality that I am here will help relieve your anxiety. I will be with you always." Then Manaen said goodbye to him and walked away from Alex's presence.

After Manaen was gone Alex, Dale, and Tim discussed what Manaen had told Alex and they all tried to discern the meaning.

Alex said, "I think I will just have to be patient and take things a day at a time."

The next morning after Dale and Tim had gone to work, around 10:00 a.m. there was a knock on the camper door. It was Josiah and Alex invited him to come in. Josiah had a few deep cuts and some bruises on his face, but he was walking okay and didn't look to be too badly hurt.

After Alex questioned him on how he was feeling, Josiah said, "I'm really not bothered by the cuts and bruises on my face but Nate kicked me in the ribs and my ribs are sore. The doctors tell me that the soreness in my ribs should go away in a few days."

"That was a terrible beating that you took and being robbed is so degrading. I am so very sorry you have had to experience all of that. Also, I don't want you to be concerned about me or my financial position," Alex told Josiah.

"Detective Sgt. Riley informed me that I will recover enough cash to pay my men's wages for this past month

and I am very thankful for that news," Josiah said. "I am sorry that you lost your money and I hope things work out for you in the future." Then Josiah left and told Alex to keep in touch with him.

Later on that day a tow truck picked up Nate Burns' travel trailer from next door. That evening Alex, Dale, and Tim were eating dinner when Dale received a call on his phone. Dale told the caller that Alex had been robbed but was not hurt.

In a low voice Alex asked, "Who are you talking to?"

"It's Mr. Johnson calling from Evergreen, Colorado. He said he would like to speak with you," Dale answered. Then Alex took the phone from Dale.

Alex answered and greeted Mr. Johnson telling him how glad he was to hear his voice. Then Mr. Johnson requested that Alex tell him what had happened when he was robbed.

Alex related the story of how the con man and his wife ransacked through the trailer and stole Alex's gold dust. Alex told Mr. Johnson about Josiah and how Josiah had been mugged and beaten up in downtown Anchorage when he was leaving the refiner. He told him that a man named Nate Burns stole Josiah's and Alex's cash that they had received from selling their gold.

Mr. Johnson said, "Alex, I told you that if you ever needed anything that I would help you. So, tell me about this mission that you're on."

Alex explained his mission to Mr. Johnson and told him that it looked hopeless because his cash that he planned to use to complete his mission had been stolen.

“Each year I donate a considerable amount of money to various charities,” Mr. Johnson told Alex. “Since you are on a mission and your money to finance that mission has been stolen, I want to provide the money that you require to complete your mission.”

“I don’t know what to say to you, Mr. Johnson. I am so very grateful for your offer to help me and I will assure you that it will be used for me to further my mission. In fact, your contribution is absolutely necessary for me to complete my mission,” Alex said.

Mr. Johnson said, “I am happy to be able to assist you when you need help, Alex. In fact, the bank that I use has a branch in Anchorage so I can wire money to the Anchorage branch for you to pick up. I will give my bank Dale’s cell phone number and they will call you when the money is ready for you. You already have told me that that the person you’re to meet is located in Jakarta, Indonesia. I will order your airline tickets for the trip from Anchorage to Jakarta and you can pick those up at my bank at the same time that you pick up your money. I will have my travel agency provide you a complete itinerary for your trip to Jakarta. Dale has my personal cell phone number, so please feel free to call me at any time you need me.”

After thanking Mr. Johnson for his generous financial support and hanging up, Alex began shouting and waving

his arms. He ran outside with Dale and Tim following him.....they could tell how happy Alex was, but they had no idea why.

Excitedly Alex said, "Mr. Johnson is making a financial contribution to my mission. In spite of having my gold dust and money stolen, I still will be able to complete my mission with his help. Then they all began shouting with joy!

The next day Mr. Johnson's bank called Dale's cell phone and told him that Mr. Johnson had made provisions for airline tickets and money for Alex. Both could be picked up now at any time. That evening would be the last evening that Alex would spend in Alaska. The next day Dale and Tim took a day off from work and drove Alex to Mr. Johnson's bank. The bank gave Alex \$2,000 in cash and handed him his airline tickets.

Alex thanked the bank manager and as he stood to leave, the bank manager said, "That is not all that Mr. Johnson has provided for you, Alex. Here is a bank debit Master Card that you can use to draw on an account that is in your name. The account has a balance amount of \$10,000."

Alex was in shock when the bank manager told him about the extra account. He knew that he wouldn't have to be worried about finances when he left Alaska to go to Indonesia.

Then after leaving the bank Alex said, "I'm going to purchase a cell phone in the store next to the bank. I want to be able to make phone calls when I am overseas."

On the way to the airport in Anchorage Dale asked, "How do you plan on taking the golden cross with you?"

"I packed the golden cross in my suitcase. I don't believe that they would allow me to carry it on the plane. I will be concerned until I have my suitcase and the golden cross back in my possession when I reach Jakarta, Indonesia. Dale, I need to use your cell phone to call my parents. I want to let them know that I am well and that I am getting on a plane in Anchorage and leaving for Jakarta, Indonesia."

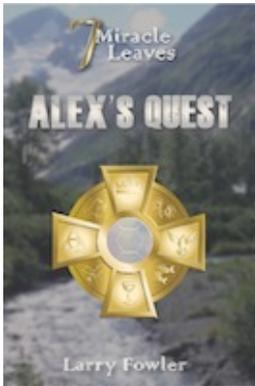
Dale gave Alex his phone and Alex called his parents to bring them up-to-date on his mission. Alex's father said, "We will pray for you, Alex. By the way, your brother Gary has some information for you."

Then Alex talked to Gary and he said, "I called to speak with someone at Venatici's church and they told me for you to go ahead and come to Jakarta and they would have someone meet you at the airport. The prophet Venatici is still in prison but they expect him to be released any day. When you reach Jakarta airport go to the baggage claim area, pick up your suitcase, and then go to the immigration area. There will be someone there to meet you."

So, Dale and Tim talked with Alex on the way to the airport. They all had good memories of their trip from

Maine to Alaska, and they had a few bad memories from which good things came out of. They had enjoyed being together and all three of them were a little sad to be parting company. Promising to keep in touch, they said their “goodbyes” at the Anchorage airport.

“Good luck on your hunting trip in Colorado,” Alex yelled back as he waved and walked away.



On the New Earth, Alex met Azriel, a heavenly being. Azriel gave Alex a Golden Cross with a center crystal containing 7 Miracle Leaves. The 7 Miracle Leaves have supernatural powers capable of healing all the nations of the world. Azriel sent Alex on a quest to deliver the Golden Cross to the Prophet Venatici. The quest involves Alex traveling halfway around the world; encountering various dangers including injuries, kidnapping, theft, and deception.

7 Miracle Leaves

Alex's Quest

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