

## David and Goliath – An Everlasting Choice by Leon Moss

It's Sunday! Ball Day! And I play for the Jerusalem Jokers, top of the league - for this season anyway.

I grab my goatskin cap and my staff and head for the door. "Dad I'm out there on the ball field!"

"Enjoy yourself!" he yells. "Don't slam the door..." Bangg!!

No sign of my mother. Probably down at the spring doing the week's washing.

At the field the guys are gathering. The coach is giving his lecture.

"Ah, David, we thought you may not be playing today."

*"What? Me? Miss a game? Never, coach!"*

I see the umpire walking over to his position behind the home plate and hear him shout, "Philistine Phunnies versus Jerusalem Jokers! Let's play ball!"

It's us to bat first. My half-brother Ozema walks to the home plate.

I love this place. A few years ago a few of us younger guys decided that we needed a decent place to play our games. A place we could call our own even though it belonged to everyone in the village of Jerusalem. So we got together, wandered around looking for a piece of level ground in this sloping every-which-way mountain village. Eventually we found a suitable site. Problem was it was covered with rocks and weeds. We set to work and slowly, inch by inch, we cleared it. We rolled the big rocks off to one side, we collected the smaller rocks and stones in baskets and lugged them away, we pulled out the weeds. We filled in all the potholes. It was a hard, sweaty job. Made worse by the girls who stood around jeering at us. It went on for months, into the winter with its rain and

snow. In the end it was done. These days we look after it and the moment we see a dip or hollow developing, we fill and level. We also marked boundary lines with a mixture of white chalk from crushed rocks and goat dung. It smells awful but it makes good, clear lines.

The pitcher sends the first ball and Ozema smacks it out of bounds. The second ball is a 'strike' and the third a 'ball'. Two more 'balls' and Ozema walks to first base. Next batter up is another half-brother of mine, Raddai. He strikes out with no score. I'm next. I walk up to the plate, lift the bat I'd sculpted out of a tree-branch, and wait for the pitcher. The first ball comes in at foot level. I manage to hop out of the way. The second ball almost takes my head off. I connect with the third ball and watch it fly with two guys chasing it. A home run! I run around the four bases mainly to show the audience who I am. My father is watching and he gives me a shout and a victory shake of my staff as I pass him.

The game goes on. We make a fair score and then it's the Philly's turn at bat. I am the tallest member in our team and also, if I say so myself, the strongest. I'm not the captain, but sometimes I behave as though I am, giving advice and worse, giving orders. So I'm not the most popular guy on the team. And I'm only 17, younger than many of the others. But I have a secret weapon on the baseball field. It's my curve-ball. I've learned to change my grip on the ball sending it high and at the last minute causing it to dive as it approaches the plate. It's a sure winner. The ball is formed from 2 pieces of goat stomach sown together and filled with mud. The mud dries and the ball is hard and heavy.

Half an hour later it's clear that we will win the game. So we remain at the top of the league! I hear a horrible roar and swing around to see what's happening. It's not a mountain lion; it's that giant Philistine called Goliath. He's walked onto the playing field and is standing bare-chested and

shaking a long metal spear in one hand and a metal club in the other. I can't make out what he's shouting but it doesn't sound good.

"David!" Father comes racing across the field to where I'm standing. "He's shouting for you to come out and face him. A fight to the death instead of replaying the game. He's calling you a chicken and a couple of other names!"

I gape at him. "What should I do father?"

"Go home, son. You can fight another day!"

"No father, I'll fight him today! Now, if he wants! I'll kill him!"

"Don't go, David! He's dangerous! Look at him now!"

"I can't take my eyes off him. I'm going out there, Father."

"If you must, son. Take your staff. It's shorter than his metal spear so you must use it well. And beware of that club he's shaking at you! Defend yourself with your staff!"

I gauge the distance. He is standing a little further from me than the length of a pitch. Come a bit closer, I think, and I'll pitch a ball your way. See if you can hit it with your club...

But he stands, tree-trunk legs apart, barrel chest heaving and a wicked grin on his huge face.

"Come and fight me, you," he shouts, shaking his spear and club.

"Come a little closer," I whisper, "That's it, another couple of foot-lengths."

Goliath obliges as though he had heard.

"Enough," I say softly. I drop the staff and hear my father groan, "No! No! No!" as I wind up to deliver a pitch to the batter.

I let the ball fly. It's my specialty, my curve-ball. I invented it. I know what it can do. I can put all my trust in it! The ball flies high. Goliath raises his head to follow the flight. And then his eyes widen as the ball changes direction and plunges straight down at him, hitting him on the forehead.

I stand paralyzed, watching. I heard the smack of the hard ball against bone. I see Goliath stagger and then stand stone-still for a moment. Then his knees fold and he slumps down to the ground. His legs twitch and then stop. A hoarse cry comes from his lips and then silence and stillness.

"Holy cow!" someone shouts, "He's dead! You killed him, David!"

I did it! I did it! My people will rejoice and so will his, I'm sure!

My father races to where I am standing and embraces me. "When you dropped your staff I started praying, David! That was a fantastic ball you delivered. It will go down in history!"

And it did. It's still there in the history books!

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