

With his King James Bible in his right pocket and his gavel always held tightly in his left hand, he was the one judge in the territory every criminal and horse thief prayed out loud would be the one handing out justice if they ever were to get themselves caught.

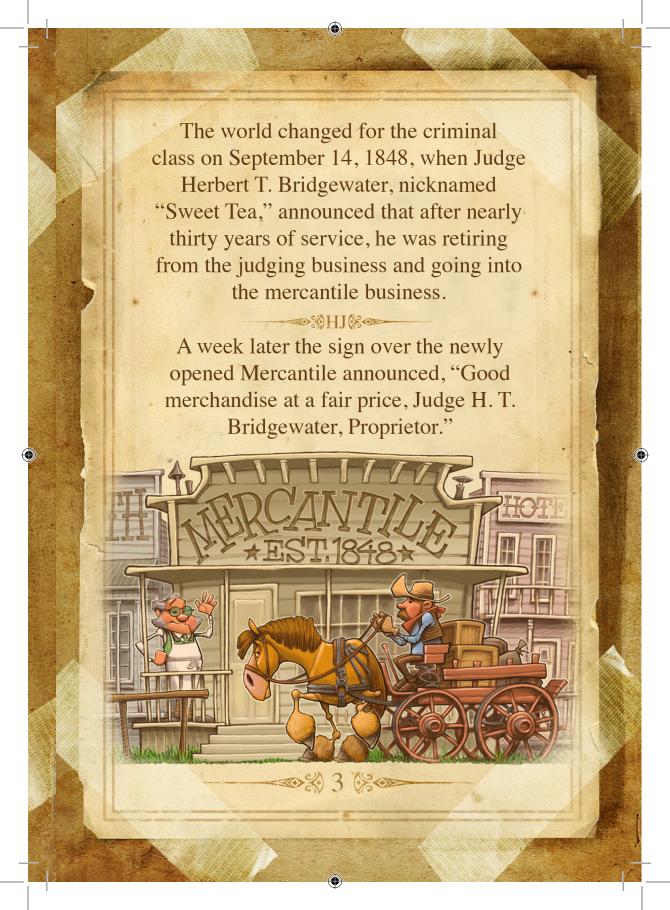
Of course, the criminal class in the untamed Missouri territory was only positive about one thing: that they would never be cornered, shackled and brought to justice.

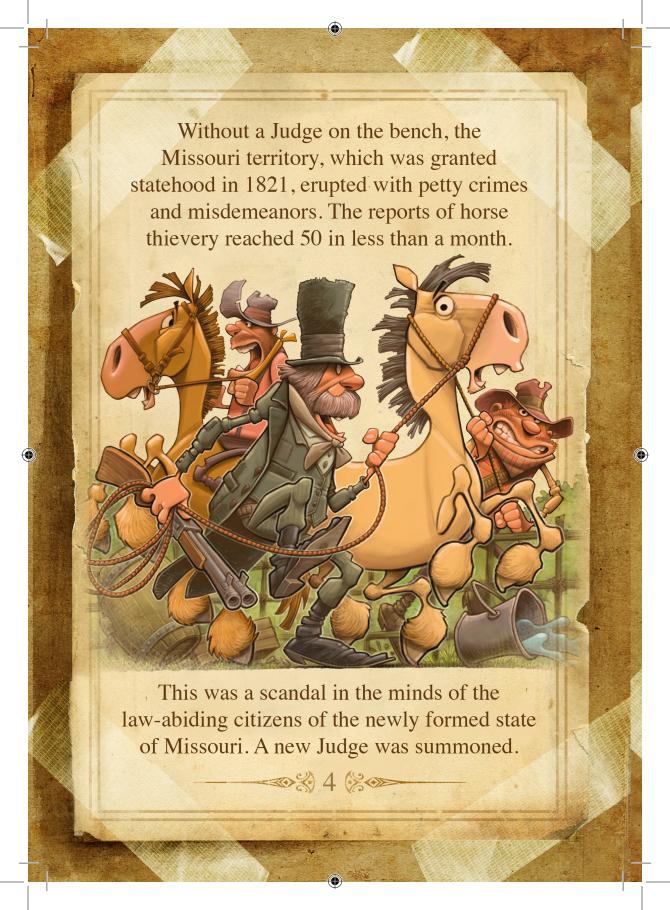
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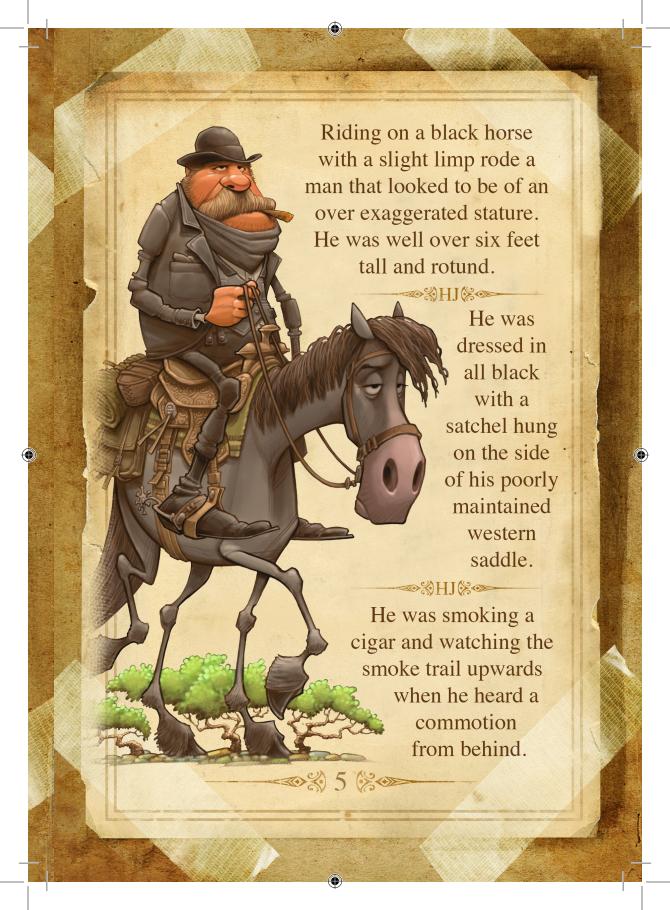
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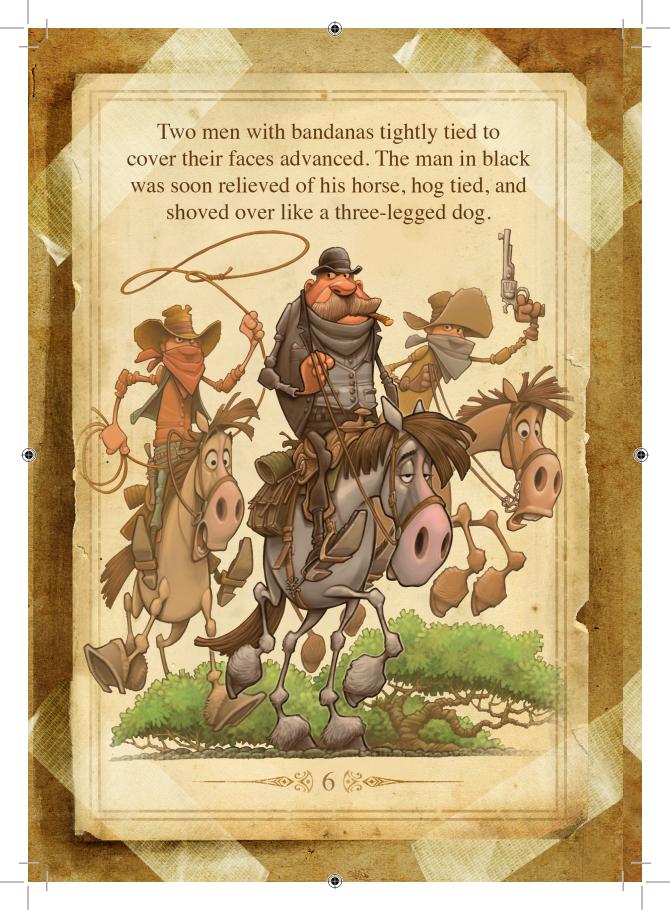
But if they ever were, they figured they had an ace in the hole, Judge H. T. Bridgewater.

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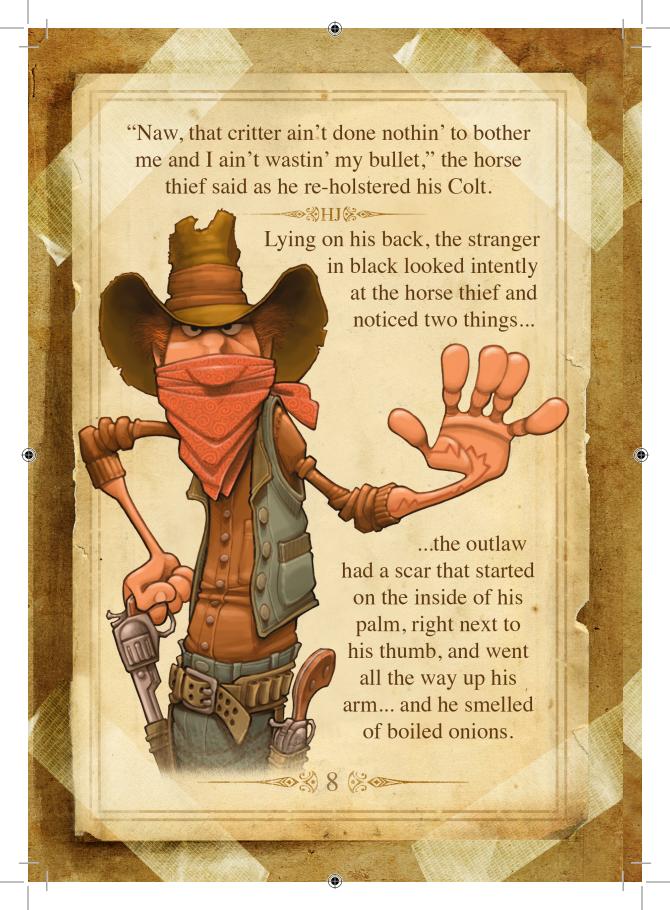






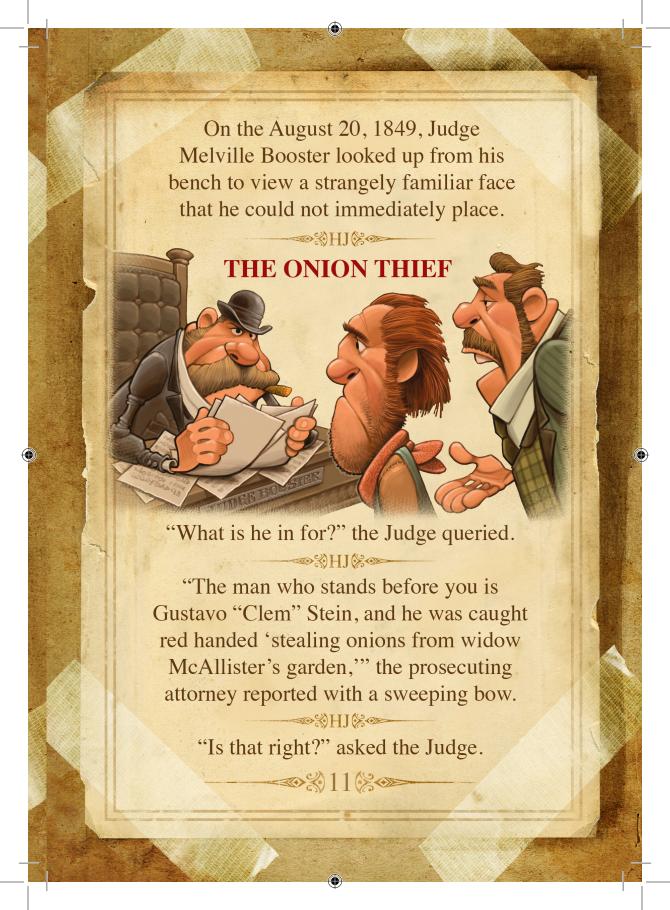


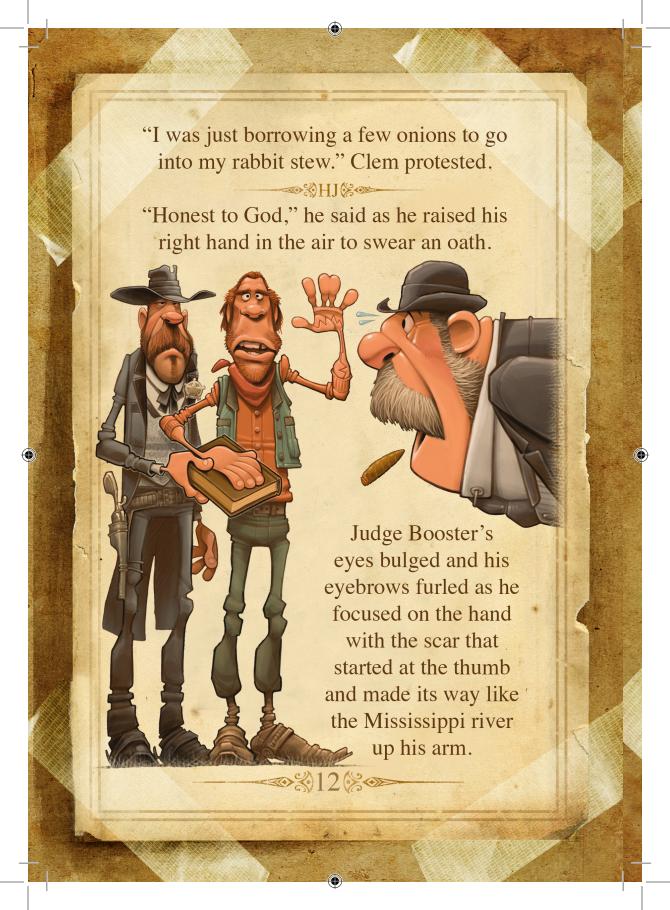


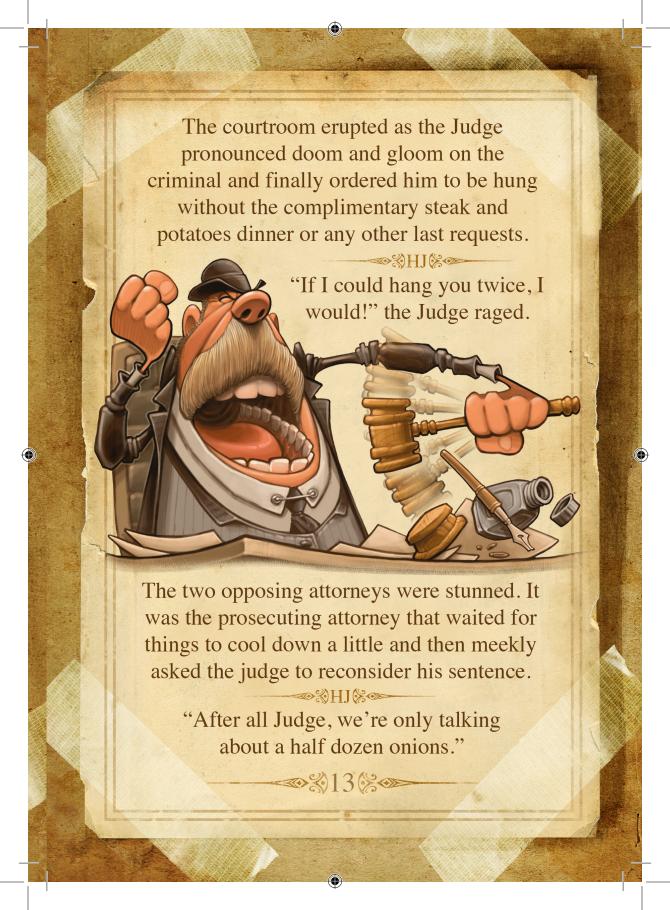


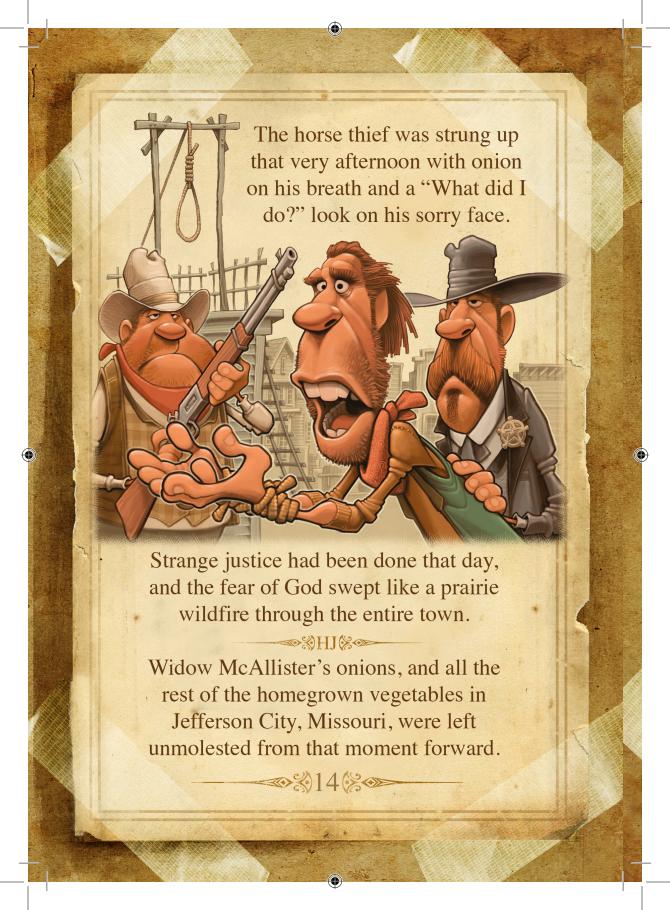








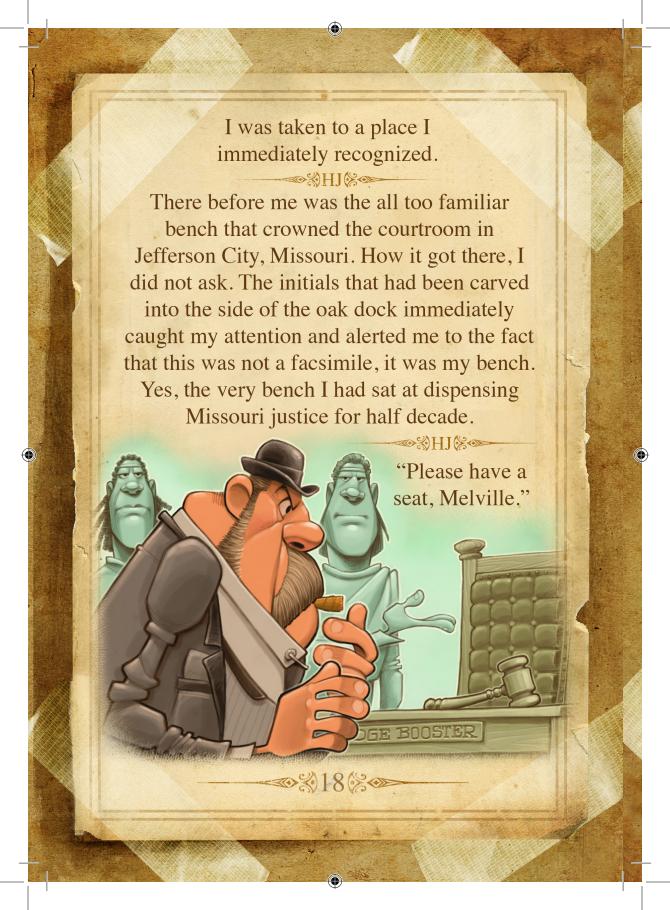


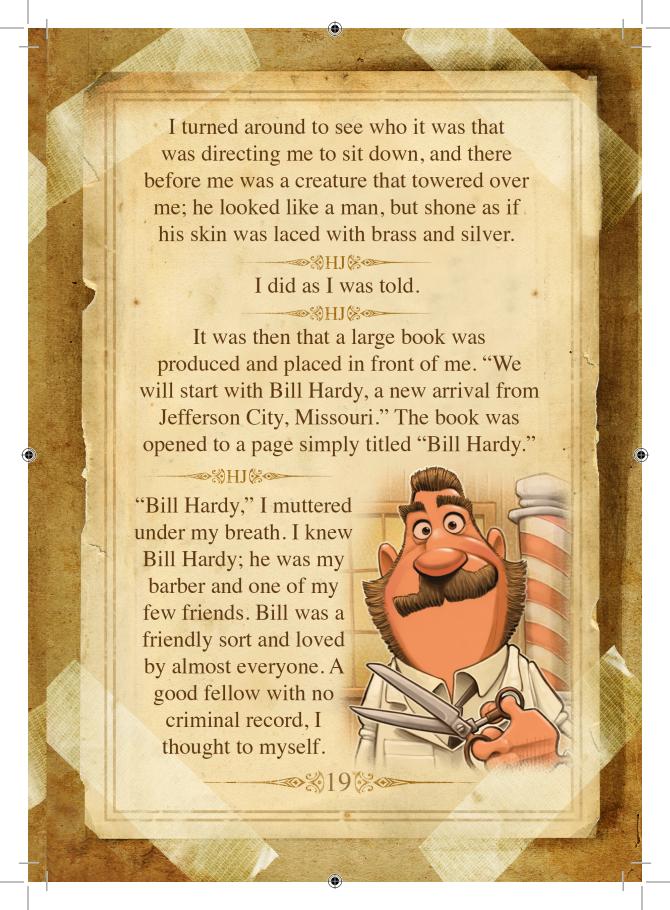












I looked up with amazement and consternation and asked, "Where am I?"

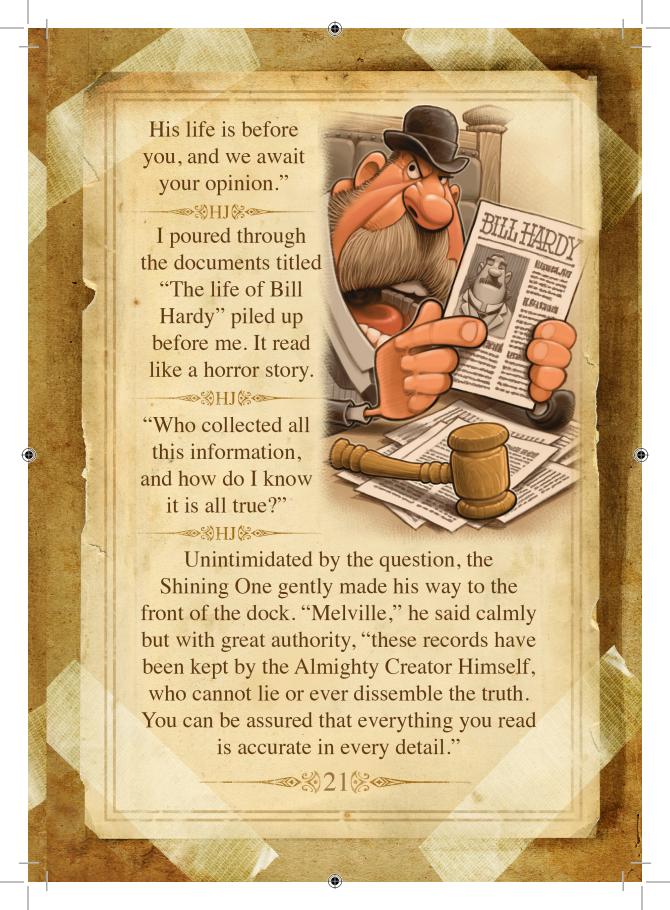
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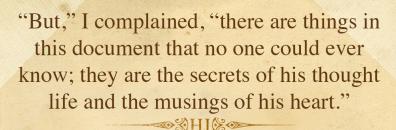
One of the angels who had escorted me, the one at my left elbow, leaned down to whisper into my ear, "You're in the hallway that leads to Hell, the place where the inmates are escorted to their final destination."

The angel on my right elbow leaned down and whispered in my ear, "We have summoned you here for reasons you will discover in the future."

"We want you to view the lives of twelve souls who have lived and just recently died in your lifetime and in your territory, and give us your legal opinion about the disposition of each one. The first case is a friend of yours who has just passed from earth to this dreadful place.

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"How very perceptive of you, Judge Booster" said the Shining One. "You're used to only judging the actions of a man, the Almighty judges the actions, the heart, and the mind of a man. Nothing is hidden; all is revealed."



With that
explanation, I
poured through
the papers that
chronicled the sinful,
rebellious life of
"good ole"
Bill Hardy.

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Every evil thought that entered into his mind, every secret slander, malicious wish that hid behind a silent smile and every carnal indulgence that settled into his withered soul was recounted as if it had been acted out on a large stage.

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I soon realized that these charges were true and could not be overlooked by the Almighty any more than I could overlook the scar that marked the criminal hand of Clem Stein.

"I have read enough," I complained.

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"Begging your pardon," said the angel on my right side, "you must read all the charges against the accused."

For what seemed like an eternity, I read through stacks of documents, all reporting on the lives and times of 12 souls that had lived and died in Jefferson City, Missouri. It was all too much for me in the end. I was a man who thought I had insight into the worst criminal minds that roamed the earth, but by the time I was finished reading all the documentary evidence, I was convinced that I could scarcely conceive of the depravity that afflicted my fellow citizens of Jefferson City, Missouri.

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After what seemed like days of research, I was convinced that if this was the standard of judgment, then all men were guilty of gross crimes and rebellion... including me.

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Who could ever survive this level of scrutiny? And yet, I had to admit, that in the interest of justice, there must be a penalty.

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When the last page was read, the books were removed, and a piece of parchment with an ink pen was placed before me, the one they call Judge Melville "Hang 'em High" Booster.

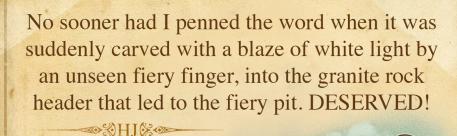
"We have one last duty for you to perform before we leave this place," said the Shining One. "You are required to write down your verdict in one word."

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I thought for a moment and the first word that came into my head was guilty.

I pondered that response, and then finally took the pen in hand and carefully wrote the word "DESERVED."

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I was immediately transported out of the dreary hallways that led to the pit of Hell and into the heights of Heaven. It was from this vantage point that I could see a pleasant land beneath my feet.

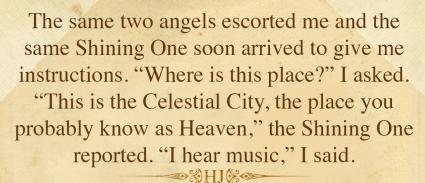
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outside the gates that opened to a gleaming city so beautiful words could not describe it. **∞%HJ%**

As I gazed in wonder at the aspect of this wondrous place, I immediately found myself sitting at the same bench that had greeted me on my visit to the hallways to Hell.

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"It is a City that never sleeps, and where no darkness ever casts a shadow, and where songs never cease," the Shining One said.

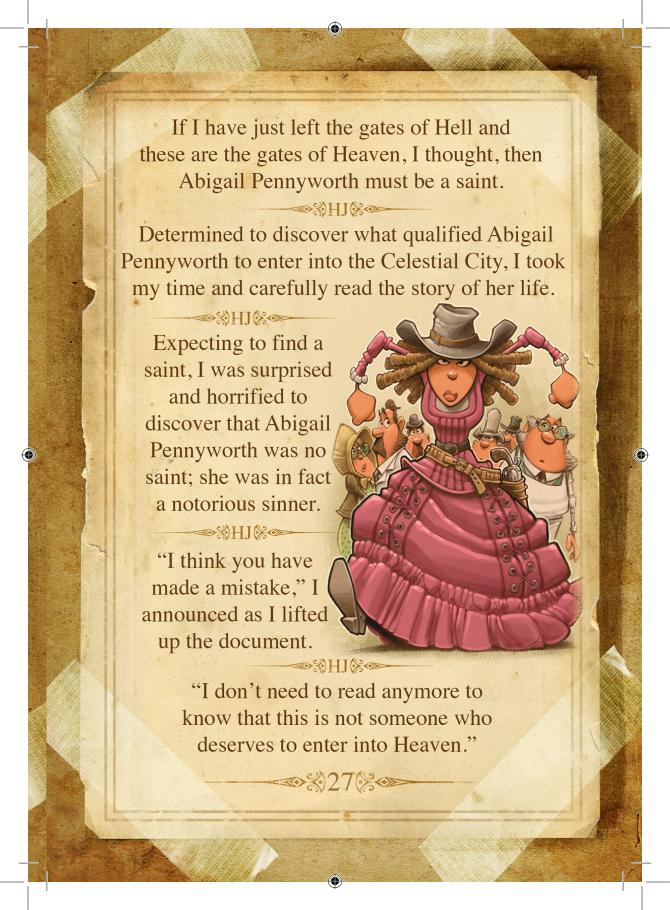


Just then, a stack of documents was put in front of me. I didn't need to ask what they were. I opened the folder and read the name out loud. "Abigail Pennyworth."

"Only one document to read?" I asked.

"Only one resident of Jefferson City, Missouri will be taking up residence in the Celestial City today." The Shining One said.

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"Remember, Melville, you are to read the entire life story before you pronounce your opinion." I kept reading, but the story did not get any better.

Abigail Pennyworth was a malicious liar, an unfaithful wife, and a thief. She was cruel to both man and beast, and was continually a vexation to everyone around her.

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The story of her sordid life was every bit as bad or worse than any of the life stories I had read in the halls of hell. I could not find one good thing written in the ledger about Abigail Pennyworth.

As I was just about finished reading the document, I came to a page that was boldly stamped with a title that read "BORN AGAIN."

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I wondered what this was all about.

I continued to read the life story of Abigail Pennyworth with great interest.

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The rest of the story of Abigail
Pennyworth changed abruptly. It was a life
stained by tears of sorrow and graced with
kindness and selfless living.

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But it was not a perfect life by any means; flaws in her character still crept out, and it seemed to me that she was a woman in a desperate struggle against evil. A struggle in which she did not always prevail.

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On the whole, I could see that the last chapters of her life were absent of the evil malevolence that dripped off the pages of the former chapters.

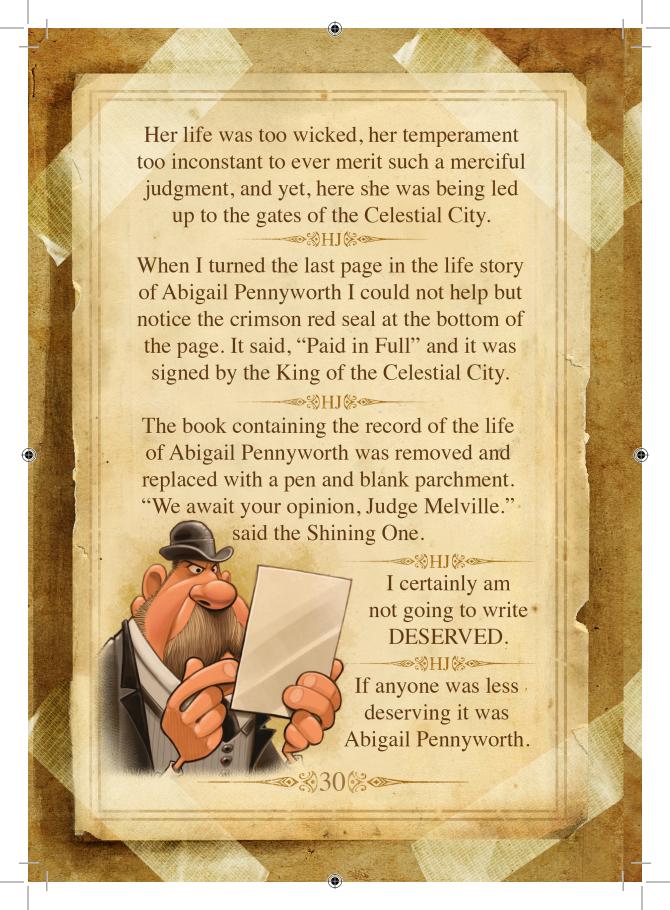
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Something had happened to her that changed her for the better, but not to the point of perfection.

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I was willing to admit that there had been a marked difference in her thought life, the treasury of her heart and her actions, but I could not be persuaded to consider her a Saint, worthy of the Celestial City.

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She did nothing worthy of an acquittal,
I thought to myself. There was nothing
meritorious about her life. I thought about
writing UNDESERVED on the parchment,
but as I watched Abigail Pennyworth
enter into the splendid Celestial City,
I thought of a better response.

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I did not think what I was about to write on the parchment was going to please my three hosts.

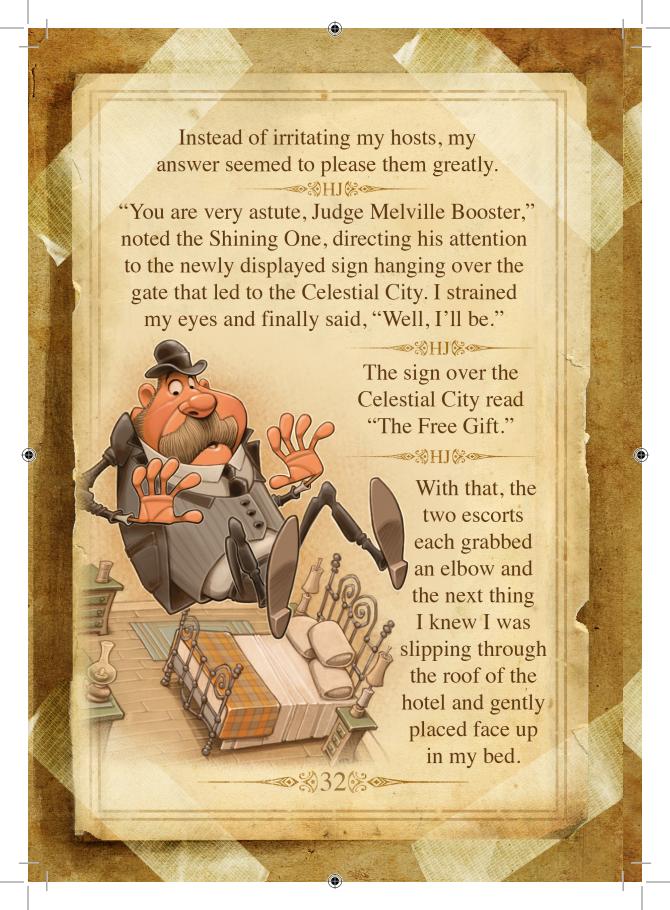
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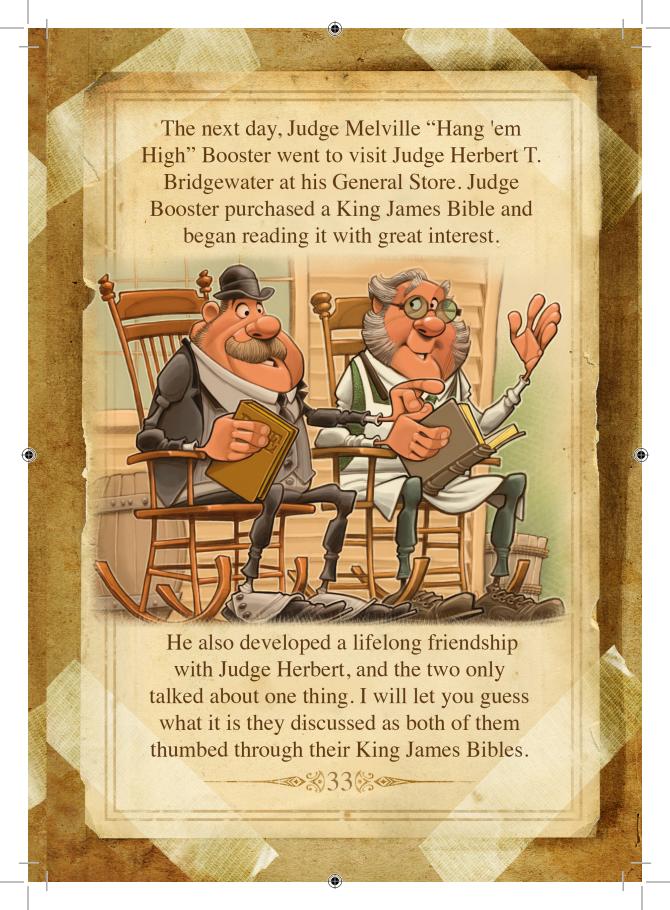
They had told me to limit my comment to one word, and I was going to write two words.

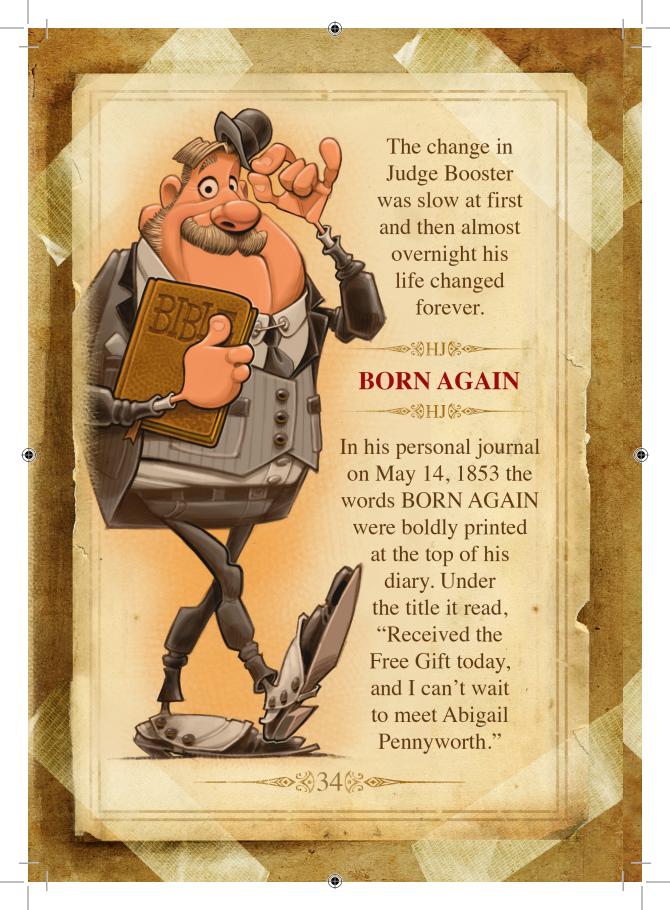
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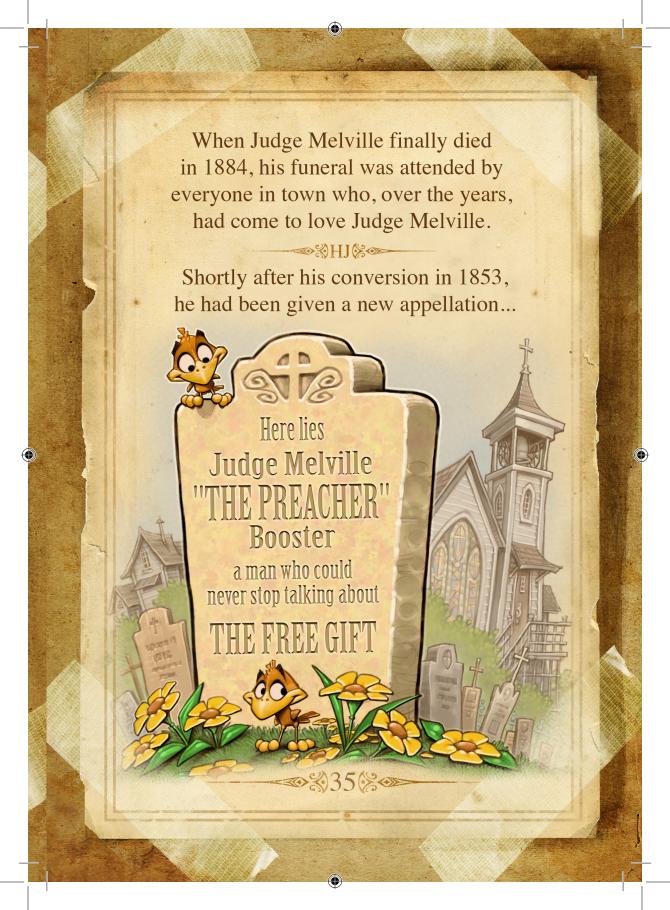
Incensed by the apparent lack of rhyme or reason to the whole qualification process which sent people to Hell that were not nearly as mean and ornery as Abigail Pennyworth, I finally stretched out my hand, grabbed hold of the ink pen, and wrote the following in big bold letters: FREE GIFT.

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Although there may be many steps or few that lead a sinner to the cross of Christ, personal salvation is not a process that takes place over time.

Although we must not forget that the Cross event has an eternal time-frame from God's perspective. This truth was revealed in the Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible that records the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself. Read what it says:

REVELATION 13:8

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

For us who are living on the earth, salvation is an instantaneous supernatural event that hap-



pens the moment we come to Christ in faith believing in His death, burial and resurrection. Saving faith is non-meritorious, unconditional and brimming over with gratitude as we receive the free gift of Christ's atonement personally.

Salvation by grace through faith is, however, a time-stamped offer that had a beginning nearly 2000 years ago, and will one day soon come to an end. For now, we can say with certainty that the offer has not expired. The day of salvation has not come to an end. We should rejoice in that simple fact. Today is the day of salvation.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

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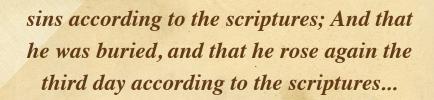
To be clear you must believe three fundamental facts about Jesus in order to be saved. (1) Jesus lived a perfect life, something none of us can do, (2) Jesus died on a wooden cross and was buried, and finally (3) Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after He was placed in the tomb.

The Apostle Paul made these simple historical facts crystal clear and tied them to the Gospel for all time and eternity.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our

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This is the bedrock truth upon which the Good News about Jesus is indisputably founded. Without acknowledging these historical facts there is no sense going any further in your quest for truth. Without these three cornerstones firmly in place God cannot and will not save you. And to be clear, these are facts that Jesus Himself declared in advance to be both true and the touchstone for anyone who believed in Him.

JOHN 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The gift of salvation is based on something



you had nothing to do with. It is based on the blood sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God, the only redemptive event that extinguishes God's righteous wrath.

Working this all out in order that you might be reconciled to God was not easy or cheap; it cost God a price that the entire sum total of all the wealth of all the nations over all generations of time could never pay.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:20

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Think about it. He sacrificed His only son, who willingly, and we are told joyfully, went to the cross, gave up His life (no one took it from Him) in order to pay the gross

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sin debt that we owed so that we might eternally and miraculously beyond reason dwell with Him forever and ever.

HEBREWS 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

If this was a debt you could pay with your own good works or good intentions, don't you think God would be happy to receive you based on your merits?

Of course, He would! He is merciful and He is also just.

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The problem is that you and I, and every other living soul have hearts that, according to God, and borne out by both human history as a whole, and your history in particular, are desperately WICKED and constantly sinning in both thought and deed!

There are two kinds of people who don't dispute the historical record regarding Jesus but will never receive the free gift He offers.

The first kind is the person who thinks God weighs man's life in the balance and examines their deeds done during this brief space of time on this earth. If the good outweighs the bad then it would be unreasonable not to permit them into Heaven. Or so the logic goes.

Others believe God grades on the bell curve. The thinking goes like this: *I am not that bad. I have a good heart and cannot imagine that God would*

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reject me. Those that are great sinners, yes, they might need special assistance. But I am basically good and deserving of God's approval.

Since we are not the judge, and God is, perhaps we should see what He thinks. Fortunately, we do not have to guess what God thinks about all this, we have a written record of the Almighty's thoughts on this matter.

First, look at what God thinks as reported by the prophet Isaiah. And please notice God is not talking about our sin but our righteous acts, the very ones we think tip the scales in our favor.

ISAIAH 64:6

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away...

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Now here are just few samples of what God declares about our sin problem.

ROMANS 3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...

1 JOHN 1:10

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

ROMANS 5:12

Wherefore, as by one-man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...

In other words, if you believe in Relative Righteousness—if you think that God is

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judging on the bell curve—you need to readjust your dangerously mistaken preconceptions and bring them in line with the revealed mind of God on the matter of sin.

In a nutshell, God says that the soul that sins will die. That includes you and me!

The other kind of person who does not dispute the recorded history about the life of Jesus but will never receive the free gift He offers is the person who thinks that God would never forgive their sins because their sins are too gross, too great and too many.

God has an argument with this person also. The crux of it is as follows. Looking at it from God's point of view it really is a compelling argument.

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If you think you're too great a sinner to ever be forgiven you need to answer the following questions:

- 1. Do you really think so little of the precious blood of Jesus and the promises of God?
- 2. Where does the opinion about the inadequacy of the Cross of Christ come from?

 Not from Heaven that is for sure. Perhaps the other place?
- 3. Is your sin greater than God's GRACE?

Before we answer these questions let's take a look at an event that on its face argues against this low opinion of God's redemptive power and plan as fulfilled in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.



And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thouart in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Yet even with all the evidence God has laid before us to the contrary, many are invested in the fabricated notion that they are too great a sinner.

First let's look at what God reveals about the power of His Son's sacrifice.

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But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:20

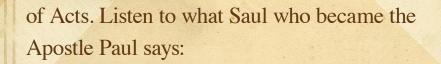
Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound...

EPHESIANS 2:1

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...

We could provide over 100 citations but let's just make the point with the testimony of one man. His name was Saul of Tarsus and he murdered and tormented Christians. Jesus saved him. You can read about this in the book

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1 TIMOTHY 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

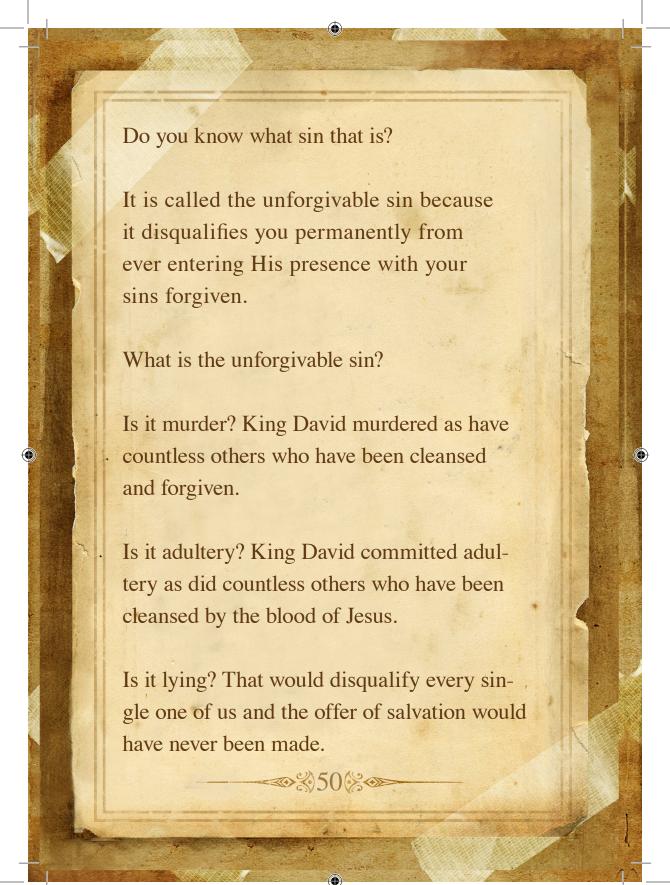
If you fall into either of these groups, if you think you are so good you don't need a savior or so bad. He would never stoop to save you...think again!

You are invited to come empty handed to the Cross of Jesus Christ and with open eyes of faith, look up and see your savior.

It is really that simple for you.

Yes, it is true that there is one sin God will never forgive.

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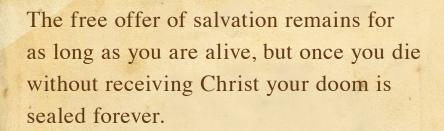
So, what is the unforgivable sin that we are told is a sin against the Holy Spirit? A sin so terrible that it disqualifies us from Heaven.

Is it blasphemy? Apparently not since the Apostle Paul was before his conversion the chief among the blasphemers of Christ.

The unforgivable Sin against the Holy Spirit of God is **Rejecting the free offer of Salvation** made possible by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Remember that He died for all, but all will not receive the free gift. To reject God's plan to redeem mankind—a plan motivated by grace and mercy alone—is the ultimate slap in the face of God and the one act of pride and arrogance on the part of man that cannot be, and will not be forgiven.

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1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

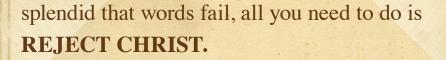
For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

HEBREW 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...

If you want to guarantee that you will **NEVER** be reconciled to God, **NEVER** have your sins forgiven, and **NEVER** dwell with Him forever in a place so glorious and

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It is the purpose of this little book to persuade you to receive the free gift of salvation before it is too late.

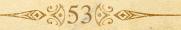
Now is the day of Salvation!

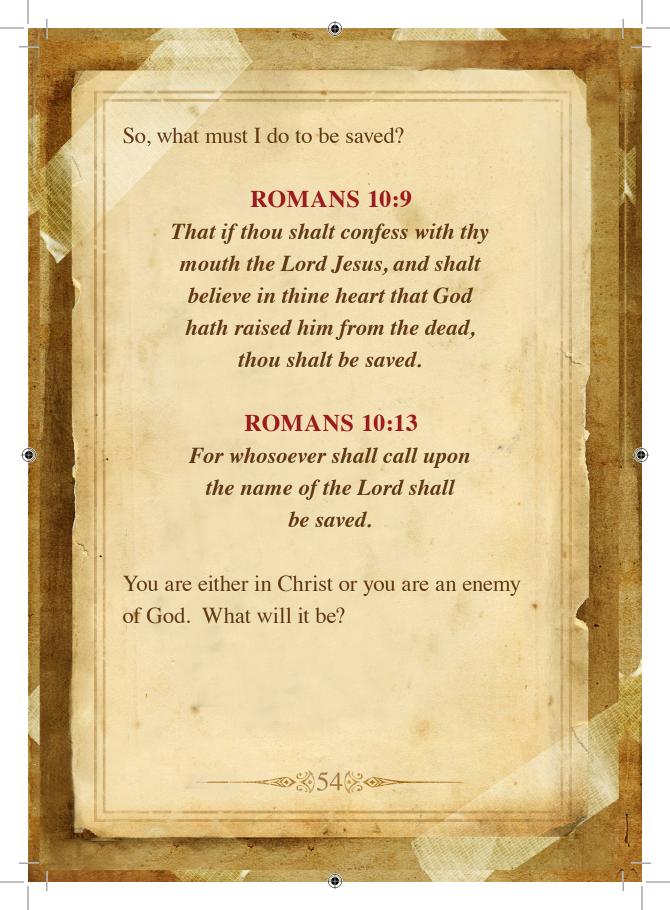
EPHESIANS 2:8-9

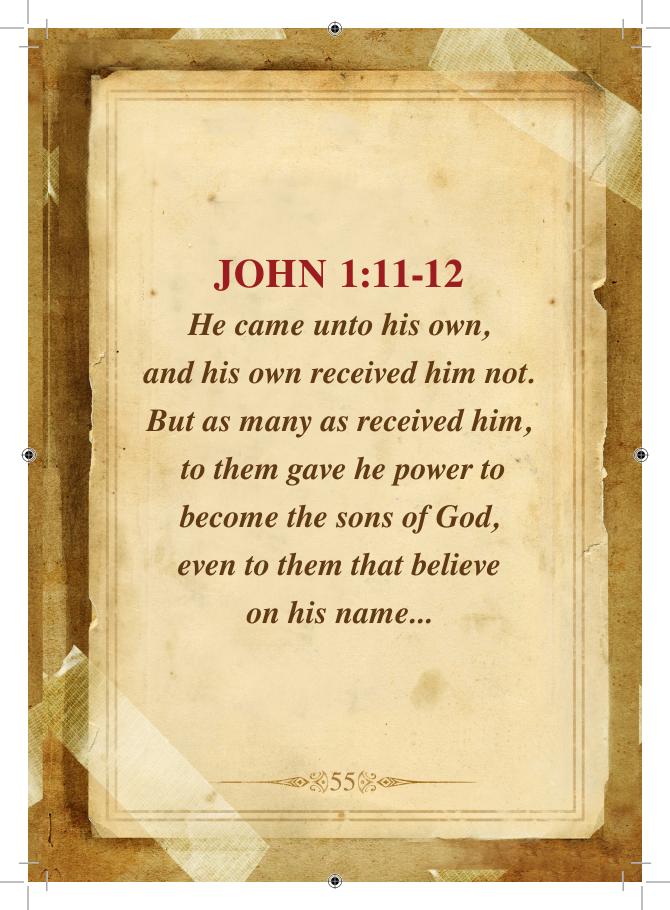
For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

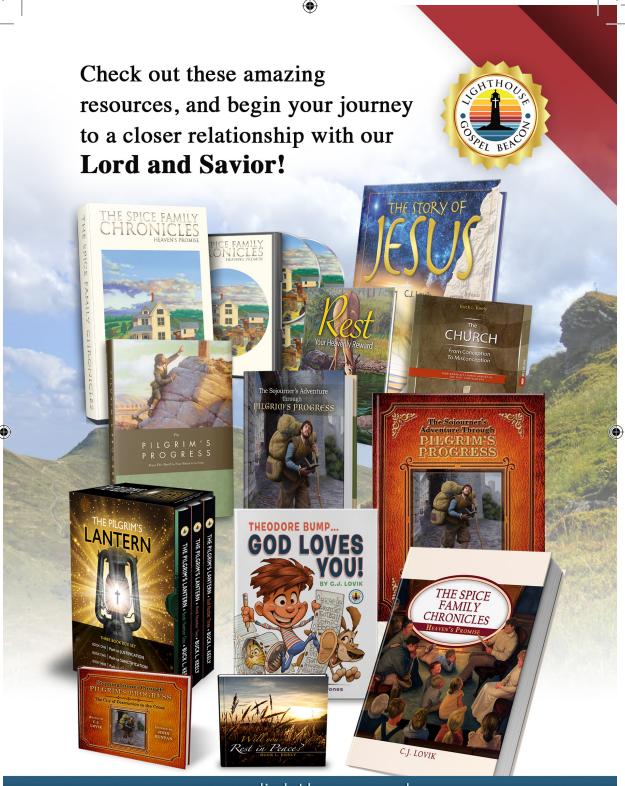
You may not have a tomorrow but even if you do, one day your life will be over and what will happen after that?

It is up to you to answer that question.









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