

Adam the Archer

A story based on Minecraft

Chapter 1: A walk in the forest

The sun was setting. The family of skeletons watched the sunset. They were happy because it meant they could take off the leather caps they had been wearing all day. Skeletons burn in sunlight and need to wear hats to protect themselves.

There were three skeletons in the family: Sam, Simon and Sally. Simon and Sally were Sam's parents.

"The sun is setting," Simon said, "Let's go for a walk. We've been hiding all day to make sure the players don't see us."

"Good idea," said Sally, "we need the exercise, otherwise our bones will fall apart. Come on, Sam! Let's go!"

"I'm tired," Sam groaned, "I want to go to bed."

"I knew it was a bad idea to let him stay up early," Sally said to Simon, "he's still a kid. He should sleep during the day and save his energy for night time."

"Come on, Sam," Simon said, "let's go for a walk."

Sally and Simon walked through the forest while Sam trudged along behind them.

"Look, it's a chicken!" Simon exclaimed. "Sam, you can practice your skills

with a bow and arrow!"

This cheered Sam up. He put an arrow in his bow, took aim and fired. The arrow went through the chicken and out the other side.

"Good job, son!" Sally called as Sam walked over to the chicken to retrieve his arrow.

Sam was happier now, and the family of skeletons walked through the forest together. Then they saw something on the ground in front of them.

Chapter 2: The baby player

"What's that?" Sam asked, pointing.

"I don't know," Sally replied, "let's take a closer look."

They moved closer and saw a baby lying on the ground. When it saw them, it started crying.

"It's a baby player," said Simon, "I hate players. Let's shoot it."

"No!" Sam shouted, "don't kill it! It's only a baby! If we don't do something, it will die in the forest. Why don't we take it with us and look after it?"

"That is the stupidest idea I have ever heard," Simon said, glaring at his son.

"There is a reason why skeletons are at war with players. Players are destroying the world. They cut down trees and build giant houses, destroying the habitat of lots of animals. If we take that baby with us, it will grow up into an evil player who will kill us all."

"But it will die!" Sam protested. "Mom, Dad! Please! We need to save this baby!"

"The answer is no," Simon said.

"Actually, it might be a good idea," said Sally, "Sam needs someone to play with. Besides, if we teach it not to destroy the environment, we could turn it into a good player."

"Are you serious?" Simon asked, glaring at Sally.

"I'm serious," Sally said, glaring back.

"Okay, fine. Whatever," Simon grumbled, "Take the baby. But don't blame me when we all die."

"YAY!" Sam shouted, jumping up and down. Sally picked up the baby.

"Don't jump so much," Sally said, "your bones will fall apart."

Chapter 3: Adam the Archer

The skeletons decided to call the baby Adam. Night after night, the skeletons gave Adam food and shelter. Until Sally said that players don't like the night and prefer to go out during the day. After that, the skeletons worked during daytime.

Adam grew. Soon he was as tall as Sam. Simon decided that since he was there, Simon might as well teach Adam to do something useful, like use a bow and arrow.

"If I'm going to be killed by a player, I would like them to be as skilled at archery as I am," said Simon, "I will teach Adam to be a great archer. Adam the Archer."

"For the last time, he's not going to kill you!" Sally exclaimed.

Simon took Adam and Sam out into the forest to practice archery. Adam and Sam took turns shooting at animals. Sam hit all of his animals, but Adam missed them all.

"Archery needs practice," Simon said, "you'll get there eventually."

So they kept practicing. Eventually, Adam managed to hit a pig. He was really

happy.

"I hit it!" He yelled excitedly.

"Congratulations!" Shouted Sam, "great work!"

"Why don't you pick up the meat it dropped?" Simon suggested, "humans need to eat food."

Adam picked up the meat and they kept hunting. After shooting the pig, he shot almost everything he was told to shoot. After they came back from hunting, Sally cooked the meat and Adam ate it. Sam sat next to him.

"What's it like being a skeleton?" Adam asked, "do you need to eat?"

"Being a skeleton isn't very fun," Sam replied, "you don't need to eat but you burn in sunlight unless you wear a cap or helmet. You get night vision but if you're not careful, your bones fall apart. If someone doesn't put you back together again in five minutes, you die."

"That sounds terrible," Adam said, "but at least you don't need to eat. Let's play Swordfight!"

Swordfight was a game Adam and Sam had invented. They would both hold sticks and pretend they were swords. Then they would have an imaginary sword fight.

They played Swordfight for the rest of the day.

Chapter 4: Zombie Encounter

The next day, Adam and Sam were playing tag when they came across a group of weird-looking creatures. They were wearing leather caps, just like Sam. They looked like players, but with green skin. They were making groaning sounds and smelled like horse poo.

"What are those?" Adam asked, pointing to them.

"They're zombies," Sam replied, "they're very smelly and not very smart, but they're friendly. Look, there's a baby zombie! Let's play tag with it!"

They walked towards the baby zombie.

"Hello," Sam said, "do you want to play tag with us?"

The zombie just stared at them. "What are you doing with that player?" It asked.

"Don't worry, he's my friend. He won't hurt you," Sam replied.

"Are you crazy?" The zombie asked, turning around to face the other zombies, "guys, you should see this. A skeleton has made friends with a player!"

The other zombies slowly turned around. One zombie was slightly taller than the others, and he stepped forwards. He looked important.

"Kill the human," he said, "humans are evil. They destroy the environment and kill all the animals. If you don't kill him, I will kill both of you."

Adam slowly backed away from the zombies.

"I'm not going to kill him," said Sam, "he's my friend."

"Do you know who I am?" The zombie shouted, "I am Larry, king of zombies! I command you to kill him!"

"Go away," Sam said, "you're smelly and ugly."

"WHAT DID YOU SAY???" Larry yelled. His face turned as red as a tomato.

"Sam, I think we should get out of here," Adam said.

"I said you were smelly and ugly," Sam said, turning around to face Adam.
"Okay, let's get out of here."

Adam and Sam ran away, laughing.

"GET THEM!!!" Larry shouted. The zombies chased the two friends, but they couldn't run. Zombies can only lurch.

"I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS! I'LL KILL YOUR WHOLE FAMILY!" Larry yelled, but Adam and Sam had already disappeared.

Chapter 5: Zombie attack

Adam and Sam ran home and told their parents what had happened.

"It was really funny," Sam said.

"Seriously? We could have been killed!" Adam exclaimed.

"Adam is right," Sally said, "you could have been killed. Even worse, you angered King Larry. He will want revenge. We have to stay alert."

For the rest of the day, Adam and Sam had to stay inside. That night, Simon and Sally took turns keeping watch while Adam and Sam slept.

"Adam, Sam! Quickly! Wake up!" Simon yelled. The two kids got up. It was still night time.

"What happened?" Adam asked.

"The zombies are back," Simon replied, "King Larry is here for revenge."

Adam and Sam quickly ran outside and climbed onto the roof of their house, where their parents were waiting. Zombies and many other monsters couldn't climb ladders, so there was a ladder to the roof of the skeletons' house just in case there was an emergency. The roof was a perfect place to shoot arrows from.

Most of the zombies were unarmed and had no armour apart from their leather caps, but some of them were wearing full leather armour, which they had made themselves, or full chain armour, which they must have stolen from NPC villages. Some of them were holding stone or iron swords or pickaxes. Some of them were holding stairs as well.

"They're going to use stairs to climb up and kill us!" Sam exclaimed.

"Everyone shoot!" Simon yelled. He fired an arrow, which hit an unarmed zombie in the eye. Sally shot an arrow, which hit the helmet of a zombie in full leather armour with a stone sword. Sam's arrow was blocked by a

zombie with an iron pickaxe. Adam's arrow hit a zombie with chain armour and bounced off again. The zombies with stairs started placing them and the zombies with pickaxes started destroying the house.

Adam and the skeletons shot some more arrows, aiming for the unarmed zombies. Soon, all of them were dead, but the zombies with armour were still alive. The stairs were now completed and zombies were coming up.

Chapter 6: Fighting Larry

Sam shot a zombie with full chain armour in the face and it fell backwards, sliding down the stairs and knocking all the zombies climbing up over. It hit its head at the bottom and died. Simon and Sally fired arrows at zombies at the top of the stairs. They were so close that the arrows pierced through their leather armour, and really accurate shots could get through the gaps in chain armour. Adam shot several arrows, but they all missed or bounced off the zombies' armour.

The dead zombies dropped their armour. Adam and the skeletons picked up the armour and put it on. Now they were all wearing full chain armour. Some of the zombies managed to attack the skeletons before they were shot, but they couldn't get through the armour. However, a zombie with an iron sword cut Adam's hand and it started bleeding.

Eventually, all the zombies were dead except for one. This zombie was wearing full diamond armour with a diamond sword. He was slightly taller than the other zombies. It was Larry.

"Do you like my armour?" Larry asked, "I stole it from a player when he was sleeping. Then I killed him."

"It's even uglier than you," Sam said.

Larry roared in anger and charged towards Sam. Simon jumped in front of Sam to protect him, and Larry's sword cut Simon's head off. He kicked the head and it flew over the forest, disappearing from view.

"No! Not Simon!" Sally yelled, firing an arrow. It bounced off Larry's armour. Larry kicked Sam and he fell off the roof. His head fell off and rolled a few blocks away from his body.

Larry looked at Sally, then at Adam. "I think I'll kill the player next," he said. He charged at Adam, who fired an arrow. It hit Larry in the eye. Larry kicked Adam, who fell off the roof and hit his head on a rock. He wasn't moving.

"You killed my family! You will pay for this!" Sally yelled, firing another arrow. It bounced off Larry's helmet.

"Don't worry, you will see them in the afterlife," Larry said, "if there is one for monster. Maybe we just despawn and don't exist anymore. You'll find out soon." He prepared to swing his sword.

Adam got up. He felt really weak. He picked up his bow and fired an arrow. His whole body was screaming at him. The arrow hit Larry in the back of the head. Larry turned around and Adam fired another arrow. Then his body gave out and he fell to the ground again. He blacked out.

Chapter 7: Moving out

Adam woke up. He was in his bed. Sally and Sam were sitting on the other side of the room. The zombies had destroyed one of the walls and it was raining. The rain poured into the room, soaking him.

"What happened?" He asked.

"You were unconscious," Sally said, "I thought you were dead. After you blacked out the second time, the arrow hit Larry in his other eye. He was completely blind. He decided he was too weak to keep fighting and said he would send more zombies in to kill me." He crawled down the stairs and into the forest. I tried to shoot him but all my arrows bounced off his armour. He got away."

"Where's Simon?" Adam asked.

"After Larry disappeared, I found Sam and Simon's bodies. Sam's head was still there and five minutes hadn't passed yet so he was still alive. I put his head back on. But Simon's head was missing. He's dead." She looked down. If she was a player, she would have cried, but skeletons can't cry. Outside, lightning flashed and thunder boomed.

"What are we going to do?" Adam asked, "are we going to repair the house?"

"No," Sally said, "the zombies know where this house is. If we stay here, they will attack us again. We need to move out."

"But I've been in this house for my whole life!" Adam complained.

"We have to go," Sally said, "otherwise we will all die."

Adam started crying. Simon was dead and their house was destroyed. All he had left was Sally and Sam. Everything else that he had lived for was gone

forever.

Chapter 8: Captured by Players

Sally, Sam and Adam stayed in the house for the rest of the night. They were tired from all the fighting and needed some sleep. The next day, they packed all their belongings (mostly bows and arrows) and set off. They walked far away from their old house, leaving the forest. For three weeks, they were always on the move and only made small camps at night to rest. Finally, they reached a jungle and created a treehouse.

"This treehouse is perfect," Sally said, "the tree is a perfect location to shoot arrows from. Zombies can't climb vines so we should be safe."

The family were tired after lots of building and they stayed in the house for the rest of the day.

Nothing major happened for a few days, but on the fifth night in their new house, Adam woke up. Loud sounds were coming from the living room.

"Adam! Wake up! Help us!" Sally yelled.

Adam got up and ran towards the living room. Sally was still yelling, but she sounded further away every time. When Adam got to the dining room, Sally wasn't there. He walked out of the house to see if he could find her. He looked down at the forest floor and saw Sam and Sally. Their bows had been taken away and a group of players was using leads to drag them away.

Adam had to save his skeleton friends. He climbed down the vines and followed the group of players, sneaking so he wouldn't be heard.

Chapter 9: The Punishment

Eventually, the group of players arrived at a village. They put the skeletons in a giant cage with a one block high gap on one side. It was too small for the skeletons to get out. Adam hid behind a tree and watched. A group of players gathered in front of the cage. One of the players climbed onto a stage and started speaking.

"Hello," he said, "my name is Dave. As you all know, I am the best swordsman in Minecraft. I have full diamond armour and a diamond sword."

"We know who you are!" Someone from the crowd shouted, "just tell us what's happening!"

"Today, I was in the rainforest with my friends when we saw a house on top of a tree," Dave continued, "it was really obvious. I decided to go and check it out. Some skeletons were living there and we captured two of them, who are in front of you now. There were three bedrooms though, so one skeleton must have ran away. What a coward!"

"So why did you bring the skeletons back here?" Another person in the crowd asked.

"Skeletons are evil monsters," Dave said, "they need to be punished. We need to set an example. Today, we will be giving people eggs so you can throw them at the skeletons. Tomorrow, we will take off their helmets and use leads to hang them off poles, so that they burn in the sun. Then we will put their heads on the poles to send a message to the skeletons. They will be so scared they will never attack us again!"

The crowd cheered. Dave and his friends started to hand out eggs. As Adam

watched in horror, everyone started throwing eggs at Sam and Sally. Eggs didn't do any damage but they split open. Their insides were sticky and hard to wipe off. He had to get down there and save them! But everyone was down there. He had to wait for the right time, otherwise this Dave would kill him immediately. He sat down behind the tree and waited.

Chapter 10: A duel to the death

That night, when everyone had gone away, Adam sneaked over to the cage.

"Sally! Sam! Are you all right?" Adam asked.

"No," Sam said, "you won't believe what these players have done to us."

"I do," Adam said, "I was watching them. I wanted to help you, but I knew there were too many people so I waited until night."

"You need to help us get out of here," Sally said.

"I know, but how?" Adam asked. He hadn't really thought this out. Sally and Sam had given him a bow and lots of arrows, but nothing else. He had also taken the chain armour from one of the zombies, but he needed a pickaxe to break the iron bars. He didn't have one.

"Hey you! Yes you! Get away from the skeletons!"

Adam jumped and turned around. Dave was there, in diamond armour. He was holding a diamond sword in his hand and his face was red. His eyes were narrowed and he held his sword threateningly.

"What are you doing? Trying to free the skeletons? They'll kill you!" Dave

shouted. His shouting was making people wake up, and soon there was a crowd surrounding them.

"I am Adam the Archer," Adam said, "I was raised by these skeletons. Skeletons are the best archers in Minecraft, and they taught me how to use a bow. They have been family to me, and now you are trying to kill them. I have to stop you. And just to let you know, the person who sleeps in the third bedroom in that house is me."

Dave laughed. "Skeletons and players have been at war since Minecraft was created. These skeletons may be acting friendly now, but they just want to kill you. Skeletons are uncivilised barbarians who stand under trees all day. Let us kill them and live with us. We will teach you how to be a real player."

"No," Adam said, "I have come here to free them."

"And how are you going to do that? You don't even have a pickaxe!" Dave exclaimed. "I know, if you beat me in a fight in our arena, you and the skeletons can go free. But if you lose, I will kill you all."

"A duel to the death," Adam said, "I accept the deal."

Chapter 11: The battle begins

Adam and Dave faced each other from opposite sides of the arena. Sam and Sally had been let out to watch. They were tied to a pole at the back of the crowd of players who had come to watch.

"Here are the rules," Dave said, "While fighting, you must stay in the arena, otherwise you lose. At any time, you can admit defeat. If you admit defeat, you will be killed somewhere where nobody else sees you die, but if you

don't give up, you will be killed in front of everyone. The match ends when either someone dies, they admit defeat or they lose due to cheating. The battle begins in three... Two... One... GO!"

"Go Dave!" Dave's friends called from the audience. Dave charged towards Adam, who fired an arrow. It bounced off Dave's chestplate. Dave brought his sword down and Adam dodged to the side, running to the other side of the arena and aiming his bow again. Dave's diamond armour was heavier than Adam's chain armour, which slowed him down.

"Come back here, you coward!" Dave yelled, "stop running away, scaredycat!"

"It's called strategy," Adam said, firing an arrow. It hit Dave's helmet, knocking it off. Dave charged at Adam again. Adam tried to dodge but wasn't fast enough. The sword hit the chains with full force. Adam wasn't cut but the sword was heavy and he staggered back. Dave swung again, and this time it pierced through the chain. Adam's arm started bleeding. He ran across the arena again, but he knew he would lose. Dave was too powerful. He was the best swordsman in Minecraft, and Adam was just a boy who had never been in a fight with another player before. He felt powerless now, unable to hurt Dave. Maybe he should just admit defeat. He would be killed, but at least he wouldn't be killed in front of all of these people. He would be saved from the embarrassment, at least.

"Adam! Keep fighting!" Sam yelled. Suddenly, Adam was filled with new strength. He had knocked Dave's helmet off. He still had a chance! Besides, Sally and Sam needed him. He had to win this! He fired another arrow, which missed. He dodged Dave's sword again, ran across the arena and fired a fourth arrow. It hit Dave in the forehead with enough force to knock him

backwards. Adam walked over to Dave and held his sword to his neck.

"Give up," he said, "you've lost."

"NEVER!" Dave yelled, kicking the sword out of Adam's hand. He got up and punched Adam in the face. His nose started bleeding and one of his eyes hurt. Adam pulled an arrow out of his pocket, but instead of putting it in the bow, he held it in his hand. He stabbed at Dave's face as if it was a dagger. He hit Dave's eye and he screamed.

"I give up!" Dave yelled, "I surrender! You win!"

Sally and Sam cheered. Adam felt proud. He had won! His whole body was screaming at him, but he didn't care. He had beaten Dave, the best swordsman in Minecraft, and saved his family.

Chapter 12: Goodbye, Adam

After defeating Dave, Adam was allowed to rest for a day in the village. He had a black eye and a deep cut on his arm. However, the players seemed to be avoiding him, and they walked away every time he tried to talk to them. He only got one player to talk to him. He were walking down the street and Adam stepped in their way. He sidestepped but Adam moved to block him again.

"Can I stay in this village?" Adam asked.

The player looked up slowly. He was frowning slightly. "You can't stay in this village," he said, "you have defeated Dave, which is amazing, but you have made friends with monsters. Monsters are our enemies. You must leave this village. Go and live with your monster friends."

"I guess I'll just have to live in the treehouse again," Adam sighed.

"No," the player replied, "you must not live anywhere near us. If we find you anywhere near us after sunset, we will kill you all. Human and skeletons. All of you."

Adam told Sam and Sally the bad news. They had been allowed to go anywhere they liked in the village, but they couldn't get their bows and arrows back until they left.

"I guess we'll just have to find another location to build a house," Sam said.

A few hours later, Adam was ready to go. The skeletons took their weapons from the players, who gave Adam iron armour as a reward for defeating Dave. The three of them walked to their treehouse to pack their possessions.

"Where are we going to go?" Adam asked.

"I think it's time for you to explore the world on your own," Sally said.

"What? Why?" Adam asked, "I'm still just a kid!"

"If we stick together, everyone will hunt us. Players and monsters don't mix. I'm sorry, Adam, but you need to leave. I'm doing this to keep you safe."

"I guess you're right," Adam sighed, "I'd do better on my own. Less people would attack me. See you later, Sam and Sally. You've been a good family to me, but it's time for me to go."

"No! Don't leave!" Sam cried, "What will I do without you?"

"Sorry Sam," Adam said, "I have to go. You know why."

Sam didn't respond. He just nodded sadly. Adam left the treehouse, and Sam watched him head off into the distance. He wanted to cry, but skeletons can't cry. All he could do was watch as his best friend left the family forever.

Chapter 13: Followed

Adam walked along quietly. He was sad that he was leaving the only family he knew behind, but he knew it was for his own good. He would have to find another player settlement and learn to live with other players.

Adam heard a sound from behind him. It sounded like bones clicking against each other. It sounded like a skeleton, but spiders sometimes make that sound too. If it was a spider, he was okay. Spiders only attack people at night. But if it was a skeleton, he would have to fight it. Simon had told him about the other skeletons, the ones who were hostile to all humans. They were really accurate with the bow and very dangerous to unexperienced players. Luckily, Adam had lots of experience with skeletons so he knew exactly what to do. He spun around and put an arrow in his bow, ready to shoot. He saw the skeleton on the path behind him. It was wearing a leather cap. He was about to shoot when the skeleton dropped its bow and put its hands up.

"It's me, Sam!" It exclaimed, "Don't shoot!"

Adam lowered the bow. "What on earth are you doing here?" He asked.

"I was following you," Sam said, "I couldn't bear to leave you alone."

"But you left poor Sally all alone!" Adam exclaimed, "imagine how she will feel when she realises that her son has run away!"

Sam hung his head. "I'm sorry," he said, "please let me come with you."

"You can't come," Adam said, "It's like Sally said, players and skeletons don't mix. If you come with me, we'll both be killed. If we stay apart, our chances of staying alive are higher."

"Please," Sam said, "I'll be really good."

"Okay then," Adam sighed, "but people will know you're a skeleton. You need a disguise." He looked around and spotted some cows, a tree and some pumpkins. He punched down the tree with his fist, one of the many amazing things you can do in Minecraft. He made a crafting table, picked up one of the pumpkins and shot the cows. He used the crafting table to make leather armour, apart from the cap. Pumpkins in Minecraft come with scary faces carved into them, so he didn't need to do anything with that.

"Put these on," he said, giving Sam the armour and pumpkin. "Hopefully, people will think you are a player."

Sam put on the armour and pumpkin, taking off his chain armour. Chain armour was no good for this because you can see through it. Then they kept walking together.

Chapter 14: Plainsoar City

Eventually, a few days later, Adam and Sam saw a village. It was a great relief because they had been travelling non-stop during the day and sleeping outside at night since they left Sally. Sam kept complaining that he hated having a pumpkin on his head. It made him itchy and irritated his bones.

"You need to wear it," Adam told him, "otherwise the players will know you're a skeleton. You should un-equip your bow, too."

It was a skeleton tradition to always have your bow equipped just in case there was an emergency, but players seemed to prefer walking around with an empty hand or holding a sword. Adam guessed they lived in larger groups so they wanted to look less threatening. If they looked too threatening, the other players would probably run away or kill them. Sam un-equipped his bow but didn't look happy.

When they reached the village, they realised it was surrounded by a massive wall. This was not a village like the one Adam had fought Dave in, this was a sprawling city. They found a gate with two guards standing in front of it. They had iron swords and armour.

"Who goes there?" One of them asked.

"We're players," Adam said, "we come from a village far away. We came here because the village does not have enough opportunities for us."

"That was a wise choice," the other guard said, "but why is your friend wearing a pumpkin?"

"I... I... Umm..." Sam said.

"Unfortunately, my friend was struck by lightning," Adam said, "he has trouble speaking and he looks really ugly after his accident. He wears the pumpkin and leather armour because he doesn't want people to see him."

"That was unlucky," the first guard said, "anyway, you may pass." He pulled a lever and the gates opened. Adam and Sam walked into the city. It was massive. Buildings were everywhere, with signs, banners and paintings on them. There was a hospital, a supermarket, lots of restaurants and a blacksmith's shop. Of course, neither Adam nor Sam knew what any of these were. However, Adam saw a building that had a sign which said FLETCHERY. Inside, he saw people holding arrows.

"Wait here," Adam said, "I'll go in there and see what it is."

Chapter 15: A job

Adam walked into the fletcherery.

"What do you want?" Asked a player behind a counter. His face was covered in wrinkles and his hair was a light grey.

"What is this place?" Adam asked.

"You're not from around here, are you?" The player said.

"No," Adam replied, "I'm from a village far away. I came here to get more opportunities, but I don't know what to do."

"Listen, are you any good at making arrows?" The player asked.

"I know how to use a bow," Adam said, "I haven't made an arrow before though. What does that have to do with anything though?"

"My fletchery needs more workers. We make arrows and sell them to people for gold. Gold is the currency in this city, used to buy things. You may not have made an arrow before, but if you've used a bow before, it should be easy to learn. I'm offering you a job."

"What's a job?" Adam asked.

"Basically, you make arrows for me to sell. Then I pay you one gold bar for each arrow you make. You can use the gold to buy things like food, weapons and armour. We'll also give you free accomodation upstairs."

"It's a deal," Adam said, "I accept the job."

"Nice to meet you," the player said, "I'm Frank by the way." Adam and Frank shook hands. Frank's hand was really rough, like sandpaper. (There is no sandpaper in Minecraft but that doesn't matter.)

"By the way, I have a friend who was struck by lightning. His house was destroyed. Can he stay with me?" Adam asked.

"Of course he can," Frank said, "but it will cause more trouble having two people in your room. You will only get a gold bar every two arrows you make, because I need to pay the cleaners more."

"That's okay," Adam said, "see you tomorrow."

Adam went outside and told Sam what had happened. Then Frank showed

them to their room.

Chapter 16: Making arrows

As soon as Adam shut the door, Sam took the pumpkin off.

"Why did you say I was ugly?" He asked, "that was a bit mean, you know."

"I couldn't think of any other excuses for you wearing a pumpkin," Adam said, "sorry. I told you you should have stayed behind. Even now, you will still have to stay inside. You'll have to stay in this room all day, because some players might not believe your excuse for wearing a pumpkin and demand to see your face."

"I probably won't enjoy that," Sam said, "but it's too late to turn back now. It's getting late now. We'd better go to bed. Goodnight!"

"Goodnight, Sam," Adam said, getting into bed.

The next day, Adam got up. Sam was still in bed so Adam sneaked out. He had been given ten gold bars to start him off and he bought some bread. He ate it and then went back to the fletcher's. Work started at Nine AM, apparently.

Frank was waiting at the counter.

"Welcome back, Adam," he said, "I need to show you around."

Frank gave Adam a tour of the fletcher's. There was a place at the back with bows and arrows so you could test your arrows by hitting targets made of wool. There was a large workshop where the arrows were made. And, of course, there was the counter, where Frank sold the finished product to

customers.

Making an arrow in Minecraft was easy: You just need a crafting table, flint, a stick and a feather. All of these are easy to obtain and the arrow is made simply by placing them on the crafting grid. Adam enjoyed his job and was happy when work finished at 5 PM. He had made 1052 arrows and collected 526 gold bars. Frank said Adam was his fastest worker yet.

Sam was not so happy, being confined to their apartment. Occasionally, Adam and Sam would go for a walk together in the evening, but everyone was giving Sam suspicious looks so they weren't very long. Adam bought some books for Sam to read, but they were mostly about players killing monsters and Sam didn't like them.

Adam and Sam lived in Plainsoar City for eleven years. By that time, they had both grown up and weren't kids anymore. Then, the creepers arrived.

Chapter 17: Creeper Chaos

It all started at 2 AM one morning. Adam and Sam were woken up by shouts from outside.

"Stay here," Adam said, running outside. He put on his iron armour and drew his bow. He had bought lots of arrows while he lived in Plainsoar City and was ready for a fight. He saw lots of strange, green things that stood upright but had four legs and no arms coming down the street.

"What are those?" Adam asked a player who was running away from them.

"They're creepers!" She exclaimed, "quick, run!"

As they ran, the player explained about creepers. "They're plants that can move," she said, "they're made of leaves. They charge towards players and then explode."

"Sounds dangerous," Adam said, "but I've got to help stop them." He fired an arrow and it hit a creeper, knocking it backwards. It fell over and was unable to get up so it exploded instead, creating a hole in the road and part of the fletcher. Some other archers and a few swordsmen had joined him. The swordsmen charged but the creepers blew them up almost immediately. The archers fired lots of arrows, which went through the creepers' leafy bodies and out the other side. They slumped over, dead. But more creepers were coming, and some were coming from the other direction too.

"How did they get in?" Adam asked.

"They blew up the wall and came in through the hole," one of the archers said, "we've never had a monster attack like this in years!"

The creepers were now surrounding the archers and survivors. The survivors stayed in a big group in the middle while the archers stood outside, protecting them. The first few rows of approaching creepers were shot by arrows, but the creepers were getting really close now. The other archers began to panic and kept missing, but Adam kept calm, like his skeleton family had taught him. He fired arrow after arrow, and they all hit their target.

Unfortunately, the creepers were now exploding all around him. All the other archers died in the explosion, but Adam dodged the explosions and started running. There was a gap in the wall of creepers.

"Everyone, come through here!" He called. The survivors followed him through the gap, but the street was destroyed by creeper explosions. Adam tripped over a cobblestone block and watched helplessly as a creeper stood over him. The creepers flashed three times before they exploded, and it had already flashed once. There was no hope for Adam...

Chapter 18: Sam, the hero

The creeper flashed a second time, then a third. It began to get bigger and prepared to explode. Adam heard a hissing noise as it prepared itself. He closed his eyes. But instead of the BOOM he was expecting, there was a TWANG. Adam opened his eyes. The creeper was lying on the ground with an arrow sticking out of its back. Adam was confused. All the other players who knew how to fight in the city were dead. So who fired the arrow?

Adam looked around and saw Sam wearing his chainmail armour.

"What are you doing here?" Adam asked.

"Saving you," Sam said, "but let's get out of here. There are more creepers coming."

The two friends ran down the street and looked back. Three more creepers were coming. Sam and Adam both fired. They both hit. But the final creeper was getting closer, and their next round of arrows completely missed it. It started flashing, then exploded. Sam and Adam jumped backwards just in time, but the force of the explosion knocked Sam's helmet off. He started burning in the sunlight.

"ARRGH!" He yelled, running around and waving his arms in the air. His whole body was on fire.

Frank walked down the street towards Adam. "Adam, are you okay?" Frank asked, "that was a massive attack!"

"Quick!" Adam shouted, "save the skeleton!"

"Are you crazy?" Frank asked, "have you got shell shock? I've heard that some people who hear to many explosions get shell shock and go crazy."

"Just do it!" Adam yelled.

"Okay," Frank said, pouring a bucket of water over Sam, "but you'd better have a very good reason for this."

Adam gave Sam his helmet. "This is Sam," Adam said, "he's my friend. I know that you're going to say that skeletons are evil and things like that, but don't even start. I was raised by skeletons and they aren't as evil as you think they are."

Frank stared at Adam for a long time without moving or speaking. Then, he said, in a quiet whisper, "you must leave."

Chapter 19: Angry Adam

It was the same as in the village where Sally and Sam had been imprisoned. The players had just told Sam and Adam to leave. Frank and Adam had become friends during the eleven years Adam was in Plainsoar City. Even Frank hated Adam now. It was as if the war between monsters and players was more important than friendships. It didn't make sense. Adam was very angry and didn't speak to Sam as they walked out of the city. The whole city was ruined and people were grumbling about how long it would take to

repair it. But Adam didn't care. He was angry at the people of the city, especially Frank.

"Adam, are you okay?" Sam asked as they walked out of the ruined city gate.

"No, I'm not okay!" Adam shouted, "Everyone in this city has let me down! They all turned me away! They have all made me an outcast! It isn't fair! And if you think you can cheer me up, you can't! Because those players have just ruined my whole life and my career as a fletcher!"

"Cheer up, Adam," Sam said, "I didn't like it in that city. You may have liked it, but I didn't. If we're going to stay together, we need to live somewhere where we both feel happy. The city wasn't the right place for us."

Adam thought of saying something back. He wanted to tell Sam to shut up. After all, it was Sam's fault that Adam was kicked out of the city. If Sam wasn't there, Adam would still be in there. He would be a hero! He was about to say all this, when reality struck. If Sam wasn't there, Adam would be dead. Blown up by that creeper. Sam had saved him, and he should be grateful. Adam really didn't know what to say, so he said nothing.

They walked away from the city for six weeks before seeing a building again. Luckily, Adam had bought lots of bread and meat before they were kicked out of the city, so he ate that. Gradually, Adam started to talk to Sam again. Sam was complaining about being on fire and how bad it was being a skeleton, but Adam reminded him that skeletons don't have to eat food. If they did, they would have run out of food by now and they'd be starving.

When they saw the building, they didn't know what to do.

"There could be players there," Sam said, "we should stay away from it."

"It could be deserted though," Adam said, "or there could be monsters there. Frank told me about zombie villages, where zombies who are smarter than normal live in houses made of mossy cobblestone."

"There is no moss on the cobblestone," Sam said, "so it can't be that."

"We'll never find out unless we check it out," Adam said, "let's go."

Chapter 20: The NPC Village

When Adam and Sam reached the village, they didn't see any players. However, they did see a giant, humanoid monster made of iron. It had red eyes and a long nose.

"Welcome to the village," it said, "you are welcome to stay here and trade with the villagers. But don't hurt them. You don't want to know what I do to monsters and players who hurt the villagers."

"Who are you? What is this place?" Adam asked.

"I am the Iron Golem," it said, "I defend this village from whoever wants to kill villagers, usually zombies. The zombies try to infect the villagers and turn them into zombie villagers. I am here to stop them."

"What's a villager?" Sam asked, "is it a player?"

"Go over there and find out for yourself," the iron golem said, pointing towards the centre of the village. Adam and Sam walked in the direction it was pointing and saw the villagers. They were not players, but they looked a

lot like players. However, they were all bald and had really long noses. Their clothes were in one colour.

"Hello," said one of the villagers, "I'm the village librarian. I can enchant your weapons, if you wish. But first, you should meet our leader, the priest."

The villager took them to a villager in a purple robe.

"I am the village priest," the purple-robed villager said, "I am also the leader of the village. As the iron golem and the other villagers may have already said, you are welcome to stay here and live with us for as long as you like and trade with us. But whatever you do, don't approach the cage on the far side of the village."

"Why not?" Adam asked.

"It's none of your business," the priest said quickly, "just don't go near it. Anyway, if you're planning to stay here, you can live in that house over there." He pointed at a large house near the centre of the village. It was made of wood and cobblestone. "Happy trading!"

Chapter 21: The cage

Adam and Sam spoke to the librarian. He said he could enchant their bows so they shot arrows that set opponents on fire. However, he wanted ten emeralds for it and they didn't have any, so they couldn't get the enchantment. As they walked away, Sam turned around to face Adam. "Let's go into our house," he said, "I have something I need to talk to you about."

"What is it?" Adam asked when they were safely inside the house.

"Ssh, be quiet," Sam hissed, "it's the cage. That priest changed the subject really quickly. The villagers are hiding something from us, and we need to find out what."

"Let's go," Adam whispered.

They sneaked around the houses and peeked around the corner. Sure enough, there was a cage there. The iron golem was guarding it.

"I thought so," Sam whispered, "They don't need a big iron golem just to hold off a few zombies. They need it to guard whatever's in that cage."

"We need to distract it," Adam whispered, "I have an idea." He put an arrow in his bow and fired. The arrow landed just behind a villager.

"Iron Golem, come here!" The villager yelled, "I almost got shot!"

"I'm coming!" The iron golem shouted, walking towards the villager.

"It won't be distracted for long," Adam whispered, "Quick, let's do this."

They walked towards the cage. It was made of iron bars and there was an iron pickaxe on the floor, just outside it. Inside the cage, there was a villager wearing a black robe.

"Help me," the villager whispered, "Quickly, before it returns."

"What are you doing here?" Sam asked.

"Be quiet," the villager said, "get me out of here. Use the iron pickaxe. I'll

explain later."

Adam picked up the iron pickaxe and started chipping away at the iron bars.

"Hurry up," Sam said, "the iron golem is coming back."

Adam worked faster, but he was still only halfway. He began to sweat, and every time he swung the pickaxe, it felt heavier than last time. The iron golem stepped out from behind a corner.

"Hey, you! Get away from that cage!" It yelled.

Adam was exhausted. He couldn't go on any longer. They would have to leave the villager. But then the villager raised his hands in the air and said something he couldn't understand. The words he was speaking rose into the air, glowing in different colours. Suddenly, four tiny ghosts appeared. They were holding tiny iron swords and worked together to cut through the rest of the iron bars.

"Run!" The villager yelled. They all ran. The iron golem chased them, and because its legs were longer, it was catching up. But it couldn't turn corners as fast so it didn't quite manage to catch them. They ran into one of the houses, where it couldn't get them. It was too big to fit through the door. It was quite a small hut, made completely out of wood. They lay on the floor, gasping for breath while the iron golem shouted at them from outside.

Chapter 22: The Evoker

"So, what was all that about?" Sam asked, "who are you?"

"I used to be a villager," the villager said, "in our village, we sell people

things we make for emeralds. We have to pay the iron golem thousands of emeralds every year so that he defends our village. The iron golem loves emeralds and can't get enough of them. He always wants more. But we need him to defend us from the zombies, who infect us and turn us into zombies, too. We don't want to be zombies. They're too smelly."

"I agree," Sam said, "I don't have a nose, but even I can smell them."

"Anyway," the villager said, "I decided it was time for villagers to learn to fight for themselves, without the iron golem. So I trained really hard and learned how to do magic. I can perform two spells. One of them summons four mini ghosts called Vexes that can poison opponents by attacking them with their iron swords. The other one creates a line of fangs that come out of the ground and bite opponents. They do a lot of damage and I can either summon them in a line going away from me or surrounding me."

"That sounds cool," Adam said, "so what happened next?"

"I told the priest," the villager said, "The villagers would never need the iron golem for protection again. But the problem is, it's traditional for villagers to use an iron golem. The priest always follows the traditions, so he had me locked up and got the iron golem to guard me. They only give me food once per day, and it's usually rotten flesh that zombies drop when they die. Even worse, they say I am not a villager anymore. They made me an outcast and created a new word just for me. They call me an Evoker."

"That's really mean," Adam said, "good job we saved you. By the way, what's your real name?"

"I don't have one," The evoker said, "villagers don't have names."

"You need a name," Sam said, "otherwise we'll just have to call you the evoker."

"What names are there to choose from?" The evoker asked.

"Well, there's Mark, Harry, Larry, Bob, Bill, Ben, Ethan and lots of others," Adam said, "just pick one."

"What about Ethan?" The evoker said, "I like the sound of that."

"Ethan it is than," Adam said, "now let's get out of this village."

"Umm... Guys?" Sam said, pointing at the back of the house. Some of the villagers were there, holding axes and pickaxes. They were creating a hole for the iron golem to come in.

"Run!" Ethan yelled. They all ran out of the front door. The iron golem ran after them. They kept running, but they got lost in the village and came to a dead end. The iron golem stood over them.

"Prepare to die," it said.

Chapter 23: The Iron Tank

Adam tried to run past the iron golem, but it blocked the way with its arm. Adam slammed into the metal arm at full speed. The whole front of his body hurt. He thought there must be one giant bruise covering his whole body.

Ethan waved his arms in the air and some Vexes appeared. They attacked the iron golem but they were all pretty weak. The iron golem swung its mighty

arm and they all fell out of the sky, dead. However, it was the perfect distraction for Adam, Sam and Ethan to escape from the corner. Adam and Sam fired an arrow each. They both hit their target, since it was so big, but they seemed to have no effect at all. The iron golem turned around and charged at them faster than they could run. It swung its arm around and Sam's bones snapped, causing him to fall in half. Ethan summoned a row of fangs, but their teeth barely scratched the iron. The iron golem grabbed Adam and Ethan, throwing them in the air. They landed on their backs, on the ground. Now Adam's whole body hurt, front and back. Adam was really angry and fired three arrows. Two of them hit the iron golem's body and one hit its eye. The iron golem howled in pain and pulled the arrow out. Its eye was bleeding.

"Its eye is a weak spot!" Adam exclaimed.

"My Vexes couldn't inject poison the first time because they were killed too soon," Ethan said, "if I get them to aim for the eyes, we might just beat it."

"It's worth a try," Adam said as the iron golem stomped towards them. Ethan summoned some Vexes, which stabbed repeatedly at the golem's eyes. It moved its arms wildly, knocking the Vexes out of the sky. But they had already done their work. The iron golem was poisoned.

Adam fired more arrows at the iron golem as it approached. With every step, it got slower. It managed to get to Adam and Ethan and tried to grab them, but it was a weak grip and they wriggled free.

"Poison can't kill," Ethan said, "you need to finish it off."

"Are you sure?" Adam asked, "the iron golem is the village's only defense.

Are you sure we should kill it?"

"Like I said, they need to learn to fend for themselves," Ethan said, "Besides, it was trying to kill us and it steals all of their emeralds."

"I guess so," Adam said, "the villagers won't be happy though." He still had the iron pickaxe he used to free Ethan in his inventory and he used it to chop the Iron Golem's head off.

Chapter 24: Outcasts, yet again

Adam quickly ran over to Sam and put him back together again. His helmet had fallen off and he was starting to burn, so Adam got a new chain helmet for him. He stole it from the village blacksmith.

It was five minutes before the iron golem stopped moving. It kept moving its fingers, desperate to hold on to life, even with its head disconnected. Eventually, it gave up. Villagers appeared and put poppies on it. Adam, Sam and Ethan watched them until one of them, the priest, turned around.

"Leave our village," he said with narrowed eyes, "now."

"Okay," Sam said, "we weren't planning to stay here anyway. You guys are horrible, imprisoning one of your own and feeding them rotten flesh."

"He isn't one of us," the priest said, "he is an Evoker."

"Don't you dare call me that!" Ethan yelled, "my name is Ethan now!"

"We will tell other players what you have done," the priest said, "we will offer them a reward if they kill you and bring us your heads. They will find

you, eventually. Be warned."

"Oh no," Sam said, "we're going to die."

"Don't worry," Adam said, "we'll survive somehow. We always do. Let's go."

Adam, Sam and Ethan, three outcasts with nowhere to go, walked out of the village. They had considered killing the villagers, but they were armed and there were too many of them. Attacking them would mean death, especially just after fighting the iron golem. They were all weak and tired. They needed to rest, but they knew they couldn't rest yet. Players all over the world would come to kill them soon. They needed somewhere to hide. But where?

Chapter 25: Into the nether

As the team walked away from the village, they saw something strange. There was a strange frame made of obsidian with a thin, purple, swirly thing in the middle.

"What's that?" Adam asked, pointing at it.

"It's a Nether Portal," Ethan said, "if you walk into it, it takes you to the Nether. The Nether is another dimension. It's very hot and filled with burning lava. Some people believe all monsters originally came from the Nether."

"That sounds cool," Sam said, "there could be other skeletons there!"

"Maybe," Ethan said, "maybe not. That's all I know about it."

"We're being hunted in this world," Sam said, "maybe we should go to the Nether."

"But it's so hot!" Adam exclaimed, "and what about the lava?"

"We have nowhere else to go," Sam said, "if we don't go to the nether, we will be killed. We have no choice."

"I guess so," Adam said, "let's go."

They stepped into the portal. For a few seconds, they could only see purple swirls and they felt dizzy. They gradually got more dizzy until they closed their eyes. Then they got less dizzy again. When they opened their eyes and stepped out of the portal, they were in the Nether.

Adam looked around. It was really dark and foggy. He couldn't see very far. There was lava everywhere, falling from above and pooling in large lava lakes and oceans. They provided the only light source in this dimly-lit world. The ground was red and dry, but when Adam bent down to touch it, Ethan stopped him.

"That's netherrack," he said, "I've heard about it. It's very flammable. Don't touch it, because it might catch on fire. Once it is set on fire, it never stops burning. But look up there!" He pointed up.

Adam looked up and realised there was no open sky above him. There was no sky at all. There was a roof made of the same material as the ground, far above them.

"Wow," Adam said. He was starting to sweat in the heat. This place was hotter than a desert, but at least they weren't hunted here.

"We'll have to destroy the nether portal so nobody can follow us," Sam said.

"Okay then," Adam said, picking up his iron pickaxe and starting to mine the obsidian.

Ethan shook his head and laughed. "You need a diamond pickaxe to mine obsidian," he said.

"I know," Adam said, "but you can still break it with an iron one, it just doesn't drop anything and takes a long time."

They mined and mined for several hours, taking turns to mine and rotating regularly. Eventually, they had completely destroyed the Nether Portal and were ready to start a new life in the Nether.

Chapter 26: The Ghast

"Where do we go now?" Adam asked.

"Look, there's a road!" Sam exclaimed, pointing at a row of what looked like purple bricks.

"Someone was here before us," Ethan said, "let's follow the path. They won't know about us being hunted, and hopefully they will let us live with them. Otherwise, we will have to build our own shelter, and there's nowhere to build it."

They all looked around and realised he was right. There were only tiny patches of land in this part of the Nether and the rest was lava, which was hard to build on. They needed to find a better spot to settle anyway. Why not follow the path and see where it goes?

The team followed the path through the nether. It was hot all day, if you could call it a day. There was no way of telling the time in the Nether. They had to make camp and sleep eventually. On the second day, they passed a group of strange creatures. They looked like pigs, but standing on two legs and with green bits. They were really smelly, like zombies, and were holding golden swords. They introduced themselves as zombie pigmen and said that they would let them pass as long as they didn't attack any zombie pigmen. The team passed through the group of zombie pigmen and made another camp. On the third day, nothing exciting happened, but on the fourth day, they saw the ghastr. They were walking along the path as usual when they saw a giant, white thing floating in mid-air.

"What's that?" Sam asked, "it looks sad."

The giant, white thing was looking at them. It looked like it had ben crying recently.

"Who are you?" Adam asked, "are you OK?"

"I am a ghastr," it said in a voice that suggested it was dying inside, "and I am not okay. Players who do bad things like killing other players turn into ghastrs. We are forced to attack and kill every creature we see, otherwise we get hurt, as if someone is whipping us. And now, I must kill you."

"No, wait!" Ethan exclaimed, "you don't have to kill us!"

"I'm afraid I do," the ghastr sighed, "here goes nothing."

It opened its mouth and a fireball came out, hitting Adam's chainmail. The

chainmail protected him from being burned but he still felt the heat against his chest. They would have to fight back.

Chapter 27: Fighting the Ghast

Adam and Sam fired an arrow each. They both hit the ghast because it was such a big target. Ethan couldn't use his fangs because the ghast was flying, but he could still use his Vexes. They flew in front of the ghast, dodging its bullets and stabbing it with their swords, poisoning it. It fought back, sending fireballs in every direction. The netherrack caught on fire and the team had to retreat to the safety of the path, which couldn't catch on fire. Sam wasn't quite fast enough and his leg was burned. The bones were starting to melt and he couldn't stand up. However, he could still use his bow while sitting down, and his arrows hit the ghast with just as much force. Ethan accidentally stepped in the fire and was set on fire. He managed to put it out, but not before it had burned him so much he could hardly be recognised. He was burnt all over, and he couldn't fight anymore.

Adam and Sam would have to finish off the ghast by themselves. They fired more arrows, until eventually the ghast fell out of the sky. It was hurt by the poison and all of the arrows. It fell into lava and burned to death.

"It used to be a player," Adam said, "I feel sorry for it. Maybe we shouldn't have killed it."

"If we didn't kill it, it would have killed us," Sam said, "besides, it's probably happy that we killed it. It had such a miserable life."

"I guess so," Adam said, "but I hope we don't meet any more ghastrs."

Since Sam and Ethan couldn't walk, they had to make camp. Ethan ate some

food. Luckily, in Minecraft, eating food can help you heal and it is easier to heal yourself than in real life. After a few hours, Ethan was cured. It didn't look like he'd been burned at all. However Sam couldn't eat food, so he was stuck the way he was. They would have to carry him.

The next morning, they set out again. At first, Adam had to carry Sam, but then Ethan realised he could get his vexes to do it. They travelled this way for a few days, and Sam was worried that he might have to stay this way permanently. But eventually, the path ended. There was a giant fortress in the distance, just visible in the fog of the nether, made of the same material as the path.

Chapter 28: The Nether Fortress

"It seems like we have found out what lies at the end of the path," Ethan said, "it looks like lots of creatures live here!"

"Let's go and see who they are," Adam said, "maybe they will let us in."

"Hopefully they can fix my leg," Sam said, "I don't want to spend the rest of my life like this!"

One of the vexes shrieked.

"The vexes are getting tired too," Ethan said, "I agree, it would be much better if they fixed your leg."

They approached the entrance. There was a bridge crossing a lava moat. Two creatures were standing on the bridge. They looked like skeletons, but taller, black and holding stone swords instead of bows.

Ethan approached the black skeletons. "We have travelled far across the nether," he said, "one of us is wounded and we have nowhere else to go. Can we come in?"

"No," one of the black skeletons said, "we don't let anyone into our nether fortress. Authorised access only. Go away."

Adam walked up next to Ethan. He was about to speak, but Sam beat him to it.

"Who are you?" He asked, "you look like skeletons, but you're black."

The two black skeletons looked at each other, then at Sam.

"We are wither skeletons," one of them said, "we are skeletons who live in the nether and work for King William, the wither boss."

"You are wounded," the other wither skeleton said, "come in and we will heal you. We weren't going to let you in before, but since you have a skeleton with you, you are friends of the Wither Kingdom. We will let you in."

"Thank you," Adam said. The team walked into the nether fortress, followed by one of the two wither skeletons.

"Follow me," the wither skeleton said, "I will show you to our king."

Chapter 29: King William

The wither skeleton took them through several rooms and passages. They passed other wither skeletons, who waved. Eventually, they came to a giant room with decorated walls, covered in black banners with various patterns

on them. In the centre of the room, a strange creature was hovering above the ground.

"King William, I let these three into the nether fortress," the wither skeleton said, "one of them is a skeleton and the others seem to be his friends."

"I see," said King William, "you may leave. Tell the wither skeleton who was on duty with you that your shift is over. Find two more skeletons to replace you."

The wither skeleton left the room. King William turned to face the three outcasts. He was completely black like the wither skeletons, but much bigger. He looked like a wither skeleton with no arms or legs and three heads. His eyes and mouth were white inside, and he was smiling. The white bits shined like the sun, and it was hard to look at his face for long. If you did, you would probably be blinded by the light. Adam looked at each head, unsure which one was going to speak. The one which had spoken to the wither skeleton was the middle one, so he eventually looked at it.

"Welcome to the Wither Kingdom," the king eventually said, "I am King William, the Wither Boss. And before you ask, the other heads don't talk. They're just for decoration. You probably have a lot of questions, but first, let's get the skeleton healed." The wither boss pushed a button on the far wall with his left head and a wither skeleton came into the room.

"What do you want, your majesty?" It asked.

"Bring a splash potion of harming for this skeleton," William replied.

The wither skeleton ran out of the room and came back with a red potion.

"Stand back," King William said, "this is a splash potion of harming. It heals undead monsters but hurts everyone else. You'll have to get out of the way."

Adam and Ethan moved back. Ethan waved his arms and the vexes put Sam on the floor and disappeared. The wither skeleton threw the splash potion, which hit Sam and shattered. Red smoke surrounded Sam. When it cleared, his leg was healed.

"Wow, that was amazing!" Sam exclaimed.

"Is there anything else you want, your majesty?" The wither skeleton asked.

"No," King William replied, "you may go now."

The wither skeleton left the room.

"So, who are you?" King William asked, turning around to face Adam, Sam and Ethan. "How did you get to the nether fortress? What is your story?"

Adam, Sam and Ethan told King William everything that had happened, since Sam found Adam in the woods. King William listened, nodding and making comments.

"So, you are outcasts?" King William asked, "it's lucky you found our nether fortress then. I will allow you to stay, But you have told me your story. Now it's time for me to tell you mine."

Chapter 30: The story of the king

"It all began in a small village of players," King William said, "players are

always trying to make things serve them. They tame wolves, ocelots, horses and other animals to do their dirty work. Of course, not all players are like that, but as you have found out for yourselves, most of them are. But humans also create creatures to serve them. First, they created the snow golem, which looks like a snowman with a pumpkin on its head. It fires snowballs at the enemies of humans, pushing them back and distracting them. Then, players created iron golems. You have seen iron golems already and know what they are like. But players somehow managed to create their own iron golems, which serve them instead of villagers. But the greedy players weren't satisfied. They wanted something even more powerful than an iron golem. So eventually, they made me."

"You were made by players?" Adam asked.

"Yes," King William said, "it sounds cool, but it wasn't. The players treated me like a slave, and forced me to kill their enemies. I learned that I was undead and had two attacks. The first one fires a black skull, which travels really fast and explodes on impact, poisoning whoever gets caught in the explosion. The second one fires a blue skull, which is the same as the black one except it does more damage to the terrarian, is slower and follows its target. The players taught me to use them, but they made a mistake. They made me too powerful and I turned against them. I blasted my way out of the cage they were keeping me in and flew away. The angry players chased me, but I saw a nether portal and went through, destroying it when I reached the other side."

"You destroyed the nether portal, just like we did," Ethan said.

"Yes," King William said, "and we were both being hunted. That's a big coincidence. Anyway, I flew through the nether until I found this nether

fortress. Apparently, there are lots of them in the nether, and all of them are occupied by wither skeletons and blazes, flying creatures made completely out of fire who shoot fireballs. The blazes used the wither skeletons as slaves. The wither skeletons wanted my help to kill the blazes, and since I had been a slave myself and knew what it was like, I did. I killed the blazes and the wither skeletons in this fortress made me their king. They called me the Wither Boss, king of all wither skeletons. I actually only rule over this nether fortress and the other nether fortresses are still ruled by blazes, but they don't seem to care. The other fortresses are so far away that no wither skeletons from this fortress have ever been to any others."

"You killed the blazes all by yourself?" Sam asked.

"Not all by myself," William said, "I killed some of them, but I was freeing the wither skeletons at the same time and they helped me fight. After I became the king of the wither skeletons, I decided that I would take in any skeletons or wither skeletons who were hunted by players or other monsters as long as they helped to defend the fortress. The blazes are still active and still want the fortress back. We are always at war with them, but we've held out so far. Anyway, if you wish, you can stay in this nether fortress under the same terms as the other wither skeletons. But Sam, you will have to turn into a wither skeleton if you want to stay."

Chapter 31: The new Sam

"Why do I have to turn into a wither skeleton if I want to stay?" Sam asked.

"As well as my other powers, if I fire a black wither skull at a skeleton, they will turn into a wither skeleton," King William said, "Since I discovered this, it has been traditional for all skeletons in the nether fortress to turn into wither skeletons. You become black and taller. You become immune to fire

and you don't burn in sunlight. Unfortunately, you have to carry a stone sword instead of your bow. But the stone sword is magical and can poison your opponents, and Adam is really good with the bow. You don't need two people who are good with bows in your team, one is enough."

"That sounds cool," Sam said, "I always wanted to be immune to fire! I have nearly died many times because I was on fire. It's a shame I will lose my bow, but the stone sword sounds cool. Let's do this!"

"So, it is decided," King William said, "Adam and Ethan, you might want to stand back. If you get caught in the blast, you will be poisoned."

Adam and Ethan moved back.

"Hang on a minute," Ethan said, "if you use a wither skull here, won't your room be destroyed?"

"Nothing will get broken," William said, "the whole nether fortress is made of extremely strong nether brick. It can resist a few explosions. Here we go!"

King William fired a black wither skull. BOOM! A giant cloud of black smoke rose into the air. Adam and Ethan coughed several times, but they were far enough away to avoid being poisoned. When the smoke cleared, Sam was a wither skeleton! The floor around him had not been damaged at all.

Sam looked at himself. "That's so cool!" He exclaimed.

"It's time to get some jobs for you now," the king said, "Sam, wither skeletons have the job of guarding the nether fortress. Go and find another wither skeleton, they will show you what to do. There are so many wither

skeletons that you're only on guard duty for half an hour. You can spend the rest of the time talking to the other wither skeletons. They all have amazing stories, similar to yours."

Sam left the room to find some other wither skeletons.

King William turned around to face Adam and Ethan.

"Now for you two," King William said, "we don't usually let creatures other than skeletons and wither skeletons into our fortress, and you won't be on guard duty, but there are other ways you can make yourself useful. Adam, you have an iron pickaxe. You should learn how to use it. In a moment, one of the wither skeletons will take you outside the nether fortress and teach you how to mine. Ethan, your Vexes will be very useful. You could use them as messengers to get messages around the nether fortress."

"My vexes can go through walls," Ethan said, "they would be very fast."

"Excellent," King William continued, "in a moment, another wither skeleton will take you away to show you a map of the nether fortress. You should memorize it, and then when I need to send a message around urgently, you can use your vexes to send it really quickly."

"Let's do this," Adam said, "Ethan, are you ready?"

"I'm ready," Ethan said, "time to see this map."

King William pressed a button on the wall with his right head. Two wither skeletons appeared and took Adam and Ethan in their separate directions.

Chapter 32: Nether Fortress Life

Adam, Ethan and Sam kept doing the jobs assigned to them for several months. They liked their jobs. It was hard work sometimes, but in return, King William was giving them the shelter of the fortresses and food for Adam and Ethan.

Adam was taught how to mine by his wither skeleton. He was taught how to use a pickaxe, not only for mining but also for fighting. He learned that the best things to mine in the nether were netherrack and magma blocks. Netherrack was easy to mine as long as you didn't accidentally set it on fire. It was smelted in furnaces to make nether bricks, and Adam learned to bring a stack of these with him at all times. Nether bricks were good building blocks, and would be useful if he ever fell in a pit and couldn't get out. Also, by jumping and placing a block at the same time, he could get to really high places. Magma blocks were harder to mine because they hurt you if you stepped on them. They were used to defend the nether fortress against players and monsters that didn't come from the nether. There were several rows of them surrounding the nether fortress at strategic locations. Adam soon became an expert miner.

Ethan found it hard to memorise the layout of the nether fortress, but he did it eventually and was soon able to send his vexes out with messages. Vexes can't talk and return to the place they were summoned from, wherever that is, after a few hours. However, they can carry books or pieces of paper with messages on them. Apparently, before he arrived, wither skeletons had to run around spreading messages. Now that Ethan was here, his vexes did the job ten times faster. Ethan soon became an expert at controlling his vexes, who were now messengers.

Sam was on guard duty, but like King William said, it only lasted for half an

hour and he could relax for the rest of the day. He shared stories with the other wither skeletons, who taught him how to spot opponents coming even when they are really far away, and how to fight with his new sword.

Adam, Ethan and Sam were really happy in their new home. For once, they had no secrets to hide. King William and his wither skeletons seemed to be good people, unlike the villagers, and didn't kill anyone just because they were a monster or a player, unlike the zombies and players the team had met earlier in their adventures. They lived happily in the nether fortress for a few years without anything major happening, but then the blazes attacked.

Chapter 33: Blaze Attack

It all started like this. Sam was standing outside the nether fortress, on guard duty. One of Ethan's vexes was hovering next to him, ready to spread the word if something happened.

"See you later, Sam," said Adam, appearing from behind him, "I'm going for another mining trip."

"Good luck!" Sam called as Adam walked away.

Nothing happened for the first twenty minutes, but then Sam saw a tiny moving dot in the distance. It was slowly getting larger and seemed to be hovering in the air. Soon, more dots appeared and they got larger too.

"I wonder what they are," Sam said. The vex opened its book and wrote I DON'T KNOW in it.

"I guess we'll find out," Sam said.

Eventually, the dots got big enough for Sam to make out what they were.

"They're blazes!" He exclaimed, "and there are hundreds of them! They must be coming to take the nether fortress back! Vex, you have to tell everyone!"

Another wither skeleton, one of the original ones who was set free by William, had told him about blazes. They were made completely out of fire with yellow heads and several rods in their bodies that rotated round and round like a ferris wheel.

The vex wrote something in its book and flew away. A little bit later, lots of wither skeletons poured out of the entrance. The blazes were really close to the base by then, and some of them were already shooting fireballs. They shot the fireballs three at a time, extremely fast. Then they stopped firing for a bit and recharged. They were very inaccurate, but a few of the fireballs still hit the wither skeletons. They weren't set on fire because they were immune to it, but the projectiles were fired so fast that they still hurt when they hit. A few of the wither skeletons' bones snapped and the ground underneath them was set on fire by the fireballs. Sam and the other wither skeletons couldn't reach the blazes with their stone swords, so they built a wall out of nether brick instead. They left one block gaps in the wall so that anyone with a ranged weapon could shoot out of it.

The blazes tried to shoot through the wall but they couldn't. They tried to get around and over the wall but the wither skeletons just build more walls, and eventually a roof. Many of them died in the process but they kept building. They also started putting out the many fires that had started on the ground around them. A few minutes later, William and Ethan appeared. William fired several black skulls and a few blue skulls out of the holes in the walls. Some of them hit the blazes, who didn't have enough health to survive the

explosions and died as soon as they touched them. Black skulls darted everywhere and blue skulls chased the blazes across the sky. Ethan summoned some vexes, who chased the blazes and attacked them with their iron swords. They nimbly dodged the blazes' bullets and stabbed their faces repeatedly. Some of them were set on fire by the blazes and fell out of the sky, screaming, but most of them were too fast for the blazes to hit.

The blazes tried to fight back, but none of the fireballs could get through the nether brick walls. It was a one-sided battle, and soon all of the blazes were either dead or had given up and gone away.

"Good work," King William said, "I've got to go now. Dismantle the temporary walls and work out who's on guard duty next."

The wither skeletons got to work. When they were in the middle of destroying the temporary nether brick walls, Adam arrived.

"I mined lots of netherrack and magma blocks," he said, "three whole stacks of each! By the way, what happened here?"

Sam told Adam what had happened.

"What a shame, I missed out on the fight," Adam said, "I'm glad you're all okay."

"I'm not on guard duty anymore," Sam said, "let's go inside."

Sam and Adam walked back into the nether fortress, after a long day of mining and fighting.

Chapter 34: The thief

Sam, Adam, Ethan and King William lived in the nether fortress for five more years without anything exciting happening. Then, one day, Sam, Adam and Ethan were in the dining room. Wither skeletons didn't need to sleep but Sam and Ethan would have to go to bed soon. They were eating their dinner when King William appeared.

"There's an intruder in the fortress!" The king exclaimed, "Ethan, send out your vexes to tell everyone! Everyone follow me!"

Ethan sent out his vexes and they all followed William.

"Where's the intruder?" Adam asked, gasping for breath.

"Heading for the treasure room," King William said.

As they ran, more wither skeletons joined them. They ran to the treasure room, where they saw a tall, creature that was completely black. It was really skinny with strange purple particles surrounding it. They slowly fell to the floor like feathers and disappeared, to be replaced by new ones. When it turned around, they saw that it had purple, otherworldly eyes that made you look uncomfortable if you looked at them for too long.

"Who are you?" King William asked.

"I am an enderman," the strange creature said, "I work for the Ender Dragon, the final boss of Minecraft and queen of the end. She sent me here to tell you that there can only be one boss in Minecraft. You must go to the end and fight her to see who is stronger. The loser dies."

"And why do you think I would risk my life to do that?" King William asked.

"Because if you don't, you're never getting these back," the enderman said, picking up a chest full of diamonds and disappearing.

"Where did it go?" Sam asked.

"It's over there!" Ethan shouted, pointing at the enderman. He summoned a row of fangs, but the enderman teleported out of the way. King William fired a few black skulls and one blue skull. The black skulls all missed but the blue skull kept chasing the enderman around. The wither skeletons charged at it, but it teleported away and they all hit the wall, falling over like dominoes. Adam fired an arrow, but the enderman blocked it with the chest.

"See you at the end!" It yelled, "I'm teleporting home!"

The blue skull had almost reached him and was about to explode when the enderman disappeared for the final time, taking the chest of diamonds with it.

Chapter 35: Going to the end

"What do we do?" Ethan asked, "the enderman has stolen our diamonds!"

"Don't worry about it," Adam said, "I'm sure we have more diamonds than that."

One of the wither skeletons shook their head. "Diamonds don't generate in the nether," it said, "we had to get them from the normal world and bring them all the way back here. Even in the normal world, diamonds are very rare. That chest contains all the diamonds in the nether fortress."

"There is only one thing to do," King William said, "I must go to the end and fight this stupid dragon."

"It could be a trap though," Sam said.

"And how do we get to the end anyway?" Adam asked.

"You need to find a stronghold," Ethan said, "they are located in the normal world and there are only two of them in the whole world."

Adam groaned. "I don't want to go back to the normal world," he said.

"You don't need to," said a voice from behind them. They all turned around, but there was nobody there.

"Who just spoke?" King William asked, "reveal yourself!"

"Look down," said the voice, "I'm an endermite. I'm quite small."

Everyone looked down. They saw a tiny, purple insect with one red eye.

"Endermites live in another dimension, far away," the endermite said, "we come from a place that is not the normal world, the nether or the end, but somewhere else. But every time an enderman teliports, there is a chance that one of us gets teliported to this world. Then the endermen usually kill us, and if they don't, we die in a few minutes anyway. The nether, the real world and even the end are all too hot for us. King William, I can teliport you and three others to the end before I die. But we must do it quickly, because time is running out."

"Let's go," King William said, "Adam, Sam and Ethan, you're coming with me. Everyone else, back to work!"

"Let's go," the endermite said, "my time is almost up. Make a circle around me and I will start teliporting."

William, Adam, Sam and Ethan made a circle around the endermite. It suddenly burst open in an explosion of purple rays, which surrounded the team of four. For what seemed like a century, they could only see purple with white spots in it and they could hear a roaring noise which nearly made them deaf. Strong winds pushed them from side to side, but then they died down again. The purple rays disappeared and the team looked around. They were in the end.

Chapter 36: The Ender Dragon

"That was amazing, endermite," William said. There was no reply.

"Endermite, are you there?" Sam asked. He looked down. "Oh," he said. The endermite's body was lying upside down on the ground. It was on fire and turning black. Soot lay around its body.

"Poor thing," Ethan sighed.

"Hey, look at the end!" Adam exclaimed, "it's amazing!"

They all looked around. Endermen were everywhere. They were on a small obsidian platform that had a wooden bridge connecting it to a giant, floating island. Above them, there was a sky. It was completely black with white spots which must be stars. There was no bedrock layer below their obsidian

platform, just a dark void that looked exactly the same as the sky. If you fell in, who knew where you would end up? Maybe it was a bottomless pit. The giant island itself was made of a strange, yellow stone with holes in it. There were giant obsidian pillars in the middle of the island, with strange, pink crystals floating on top of them. Some of the crystals were in the open and some of them were inside a cage of iron bars.

And then there was the dragon. It soared down towards them, landing on the island, next to the platform. A group of enderman stood behind it.

"Welcome to the end," said the ender dragon, "I see the wither boss is here. Are you ready to fight, wither boss?"

William looked at the ender dragon. It was a black dragon with the same purple eyes as the endermen. William was already twice as large as Adam, but the ender dragon was many times larger than William. It towered above them all and looked down at them.

"I'm ready," William said.

"This fight will be one versus one," the ender dragon said, "I see you have brought your friends with you. They can watch the fight, but they will sit in the audience with my endermen."

One of the enderman pointed to a row of chairs made out of the same strange stone as the island.

"The fight will take place inside the ring of obsidian pillars," the ender dragon said, "let's go!"

William and the ender dragon flew to the obsidian ring. Adam, Ethan, Sam and the endermen sat down on the seats and looked at them.

"The fight begins in three!" An enderman said, "Two! One! Zero!"

Chapter 37: Battle in the End

The ender dragon swooped down towards the wither boss, biting it, but its teeth hit solid bone and a few of them fell out. She flew away again and King William fired a blue skull, which chased her. The skull wasn't fast enough to catch the ender dragon though, and she soon came back, firing a purple gas out of her mouth. The purple gas hit King William, who didn't even flinch.

"What just happened?" The ender dragon asked, "I hit you with my dragon breath! It inflicts the same damage as a potion of harming!"

"I'm undead, you idiot," King William said, firing three black skulls. They hit the ender dragon, damaging her right wing and poisoning her. Suddenly, one of the crystals on an obsidian pillar shot a beam of light towards the ender dragon, healing her wounds.

"Hey, that's cheating!" King William exclaimed.

"I don't care," the ender dragon said, "do you really think I would put up a fair fight when my life was on the line? The answer is no. Now I will kill you and your friends. Endermen, kill his friends!"

The ender dragon flew away again, followed by the blue skull. The wither boss flew higher up and fired a black skull, destroying one of the crystals. But there were still nine more, and five of them were in iron bar cages.

Meanwhile, on the ground, the endermen got up. They surrounded Adam, Sam and Ethan, ready to attack.

"Stay close to me!" Ethan yelled, "I'll use my defensive fangs!"

An enderman rushed forwards and punched Adam. It was surprisingly powerful, pushing him backwards and knocking his breath away. Luckily, Sam caught him. Adam fired an arrow back, but the enderman teleported out of the way just in time. A group of endermen charged towards the trio, but Ethan created some defensive fangs and they had to teleport away from the trio to avoid getting hurt. Ethan was using all of his energy to keep the defensive fangs working.

"I can't keep this up much longer!" Ethan panted. Sweat poured down his face in little streams. His face was red with the effort and threatening to burst open.

Adam tried to fire arrows, but the endermen dodged too fast. Eventually, he resorted to using his pickaxe to fight and fought next to Sam, who was using his sword. They usually missed the endermen but they occasionally got a few hits in. The endermen that Sam hit were poisoned and were soon too poisoned to teleport, making them easy to kill. The endermen couldn't fight back because of the defensive fangs. But then the defensive fangs disappeared. Ethan had fainted; he was lying on the ground. The endermen surrounded Sam and Adam, punching them repeatedly. Sam's bones were threatening to snap and Adam was bruised all over. They could never beat the endermen. They had lost the fight already.

Meanwhile, King William destroyed the other four crystals that weren't protected, but the ender dragon bit him several times. His bones were

covered in tooth marks. Unlike wither skeletons, King William had blood. It was white, just like his eyes, and he was bleeding. A line of blinding light poured out of one of his bones and made a small puddle on the ground below one of the pillars. Now the king was blasting his way into one of the iron cages, but the ender dragon was still biting him and he was losing blood fast. He wouldn't destroy all of the crystals in time. He was going to die. That cheating dragon was going to win and he would never get his diamonds back.

Chapter 38: Second Wind

Just when Adam and Sam thought they were about to die, a group of vexes suddenly grabbed their heads and they were suddenly floating above the endermen. The endermen tried to teleport into the air to attack them, but they fell down before they had a chance to hit. Eventually, they stopped trying because they were getting hurt from the fall. They looked up at the team, shouting something Adam couldn't understand.

Looking around, Adam saw that Sam wasn't the only other one with vexes on his head. Ethan also had vexes on his head, and there were five more flying in front of them.

"That was a close one," Ethan said, "I fainted, but an enderman stepped on my head and woke me up. I came up with a plan, and it seems to be working."

"What do we do now?" Adam asked, "should I go to the crystals and destroy them?"

"No," Sam said, "you can't do that. The crystals explode when you destroy them. I saw King William destroying them, and they exploded."

"Are you sure it wasn't just the wither skulls blowing them up?" Adam asked.

"Maybe," Ethan said, "but it's too risky to attempt that. I have a better plan. Vexes, go!"

The five free vexes flew through the bars of the cages and attacked the crystals with their swords. Sure enough, they exploded, killing the vexes.

One of the vexes that was holding Ethan up screamed.

"I think the vexes are tired," Ethan said, "but if we land, the endermen will get us. What do we do?"

"Watch out!" Sam yelled. The ender dragon was flying straight towards them! It was going to bite all of the vexes in half, leaving them to fall to their death!

Thinking quickly, Adam fired an arrow, which hit the ender dragon in the eye. She roared at them and flew away, to finish off William, but not before sending a blast of dragon's breath in their direction. Sam was fine, but Adam and Ethan felt the pain. It started at the front of their bodies, and slowly spread through their bodies until it felt like their whole body was on fire. The vexes had been hurt by it as well, and they dropped Adam, Sam and Ethan in their pain.

"Oh no!" Ethan yelled, "we're going to die!"

Adam, Sam and Ethan closed their eyes, preparing to hit the ground. They hit something. But it wasn't the ground.

Meanwhile, William fired three black skulls at the ender dragon, who dodged them. She bit William twice and then flew away. William was close to fainting; there wasn't enough blood in his body to keep him conscious for much longer. He slowly closed his eyes and started to fall out of the sky.

Adam, Sam and Ethan opened their eyes. They were on blue wither skulls, which were hovering in the middle of the ring of obsidian pillars. The ender dragon was flying towards them again, and Adam fired another arrow. It hit the dragon's wing. Five of Ethan's vexes rushed over to William and caught him, while the others attacked the ender dragon and pushed their poisonous swords deep into her skin. Sam held his sword up, ready for a fight. They knew it was hopeless though. The ender dragon still looked perfectly healthy. They might as well give up now, but something made them keep fighting. They weren't ready to give up yet. They would keep fighting! They would fight on, to the death if necessary! And above all, all three of them felt like they must protect their king. King William had given them food and shelter for a very long time, and they had to repay him for it or die trying.

Chapter 39: A lucky shot

The ender dragon swooped, knocking Sam off his wither skull. Sam plunged his sword into the ender dragon's nose and his wither skull exploded, together dealing massive damage to the ender dragon. But the ender dragon kept fighting as if it was nothing, flying past Adam and Ethan and getting ready to swoop down a second time. How much health did she have?

Sam hit the stones below and his bones snapped. His head rolled a few metres away from his body, and his right foot hit an enderman's head and bounced off it. The ender dragon swooped again, with its mouth open. It caught all of the vexes in its mouth and swallowed them whole. It had

already been poisoned by them, the wither skull and Sam's sword, but it still kept fighting as if it was nothing.

Adam realised the dragon was heading towards him. He gripped his bow tight and put an arrow in it. This was his final shot before he died. He might as well make it a good one.

He concentrated on his target with deadly accuracy, using all the strategies that Simon had taught him many years ago. He took aim and fired. The arrow hit the ender dragon in the eye, making her scream and thrash about wildly. Adam's wither skull swerved out of the way just in time.

"What's wrong with her?" Ethan asked.

"I think she's blind," Adam said, "after all, I hit her eye."

The ender dragon flew about in small circles, slowly falling out of the sky. She hit the ground and lay still.

"Is she dead?" Ethan asked.

"Probably not," Adam said, "we'd better finish her off, just in case."

The blue wither skulls landed on the ground, as if they had heard him. Adam wondered how they were still moving. King William had fainted ages ago. But it didn't matter right now. The blue wither skulls collided with the ender dragon one after the other, creating small explosions on her back. Then Adam approached her with the pickaxe and used it to cut her head off.

Then the most amazing thing happened. The ender dragon's body rose into

the sky and beams of light shot out of it, lighting up the end's dark sky. Small explosions broke out all over her body, until it completely disappeared. Just before it disappeared, it shot a beam into the middle of the circle of pillars. A strange-looking thing that looked like a fountain appeared, with a black thing on top that looked a bit like an egg.

"We won!" Ethan exclaimed.

"But wait," Adam said, "what about Sam and William. And what about the endermen?"

One of the endermen stepped forwards. Adam and Ethan slowly backed away. They couldn't believe that after everything they had done, they would be killed by a simple enderman.

Chapter 40: Return to the fortress

The enderman didn't kill Adam and Ethan, as they had feared. Instead, it started talking to them.

"Thank you," the enderman said, "you have saved us. You may leave the end now, but if you ever need our help, you can come here again and we will help you."

"What?" Ethan said, "I thought you were loyal servants of the ender dragon!"

"Actually, we were slaves," the enderman said, "the ender dragon had us under a spell. She could control what we did and even what we said. Thank you for freeing us. By the way, here's your diamonds."

The enderman gave Adam the chest full of diamonds.

"Excuse me," Adam said, "but do you know what happened to our friends? The wither skeleton will die if we don't put him together again in five minutes, and the wither boss may already be dead. We really hope they are okay."

"Don't worry, we'll deal with them," the enderman said. He turned around to face the other endermen and spoke to them in a language Adam and Ethan couldn't understand. Then the endermen teleported everywhere, picking up King William and Sam's body parts. Sam was soon put together again, but King William was still unconscious and wasn't responding to the other three.

"We'd better get him home," Adam said, "but how do we get there?"

"Jump into the portal," an enderman said, "it's the thing that looks like a fountain. It will take you home."

The team jumped into the portal and experienced a journey similar to what they had felt when they were teleported by the endermite. When they opened their eyes, they were in the main room of the nether fortress, where King William usually stayed. Lots of wither skeletons rushed into the room, asking questions like "Did you defeat the dragon?" "What happened to the king?" and "Did you get the diamonds back?"

"Calm down, everyone!" Sam yelled, "we defeated the dragon and got the diamonds back! We will tell you what happened soon, but first we must heal our king! He has been hurt by the ender dragon and is unconscious and bleeding! We will need splash potions of harming! Lots of them!"

The wither skeletons ran out of the room to grab splash potions of harming. Adam and Ethan walked out of the room, which was soon full of the potions. They were flying everywhere, creating lots of red particles in the room, which rose from the floor to the ceiling and obscured their view. All they could do was hope that their king would be okay.

Chapter 41: The End (not the dimension)

Eventually, the red particles disappeared. King William was awake and looked like he had never been hurt.

"Yes, it's true, we beat the ender dragon," he said, "now, let me tell you what happened."

King William told the wither skeletons what had happened, with help from Adam, Ethan and Sam for the bits where he had been unconscious. The wither skeletons listened, cheering or gasping when various things happened. Eventually, the king finished the story and all the wither skeletons left the room.

"Sam, Ethan and Adam, come here," King William said.

Sam, Ethan and Adam walked over to the king.

"You three saved me," King William said, "I have saved lots of skeletons and wither skeletons in my life, but I have never been saved myself before. You did really well, and I think you deserve a reward. I am going to make you three deputy leaders of this nether fortress. If I die or can't lead the wither skeletons for some reason, you three will be in charge. I know that you are all awesome people with awesome powers and good hearts. I trust you with this job."

"It is an honour, your majesty," said Sam.

"And you don't have to call me your majesty anymore," said King William, "you don't even have to call me the king anymore. You are of a high enough rank that you just don't have to do that anymore. Call me William."

"Thank you, William," Adam, Sam and Ethan said, almost at the same time. Then they walked out of the room, extremely happy after another successful adventure and a promotion. They got back to work at their various jobs, happy to be back at the nether fortress. The heat of the nether had become almost comforting to them now, as they adjusted to their new home.

These four, Adam, Sam, Ethan and King William, would have several more adventures together. They became the best friends, and lived in the nether fortress happily ever after. Well, not really. They still had arguments every now and then, but you know what I mean.

The End (of the story, not the dimension.)