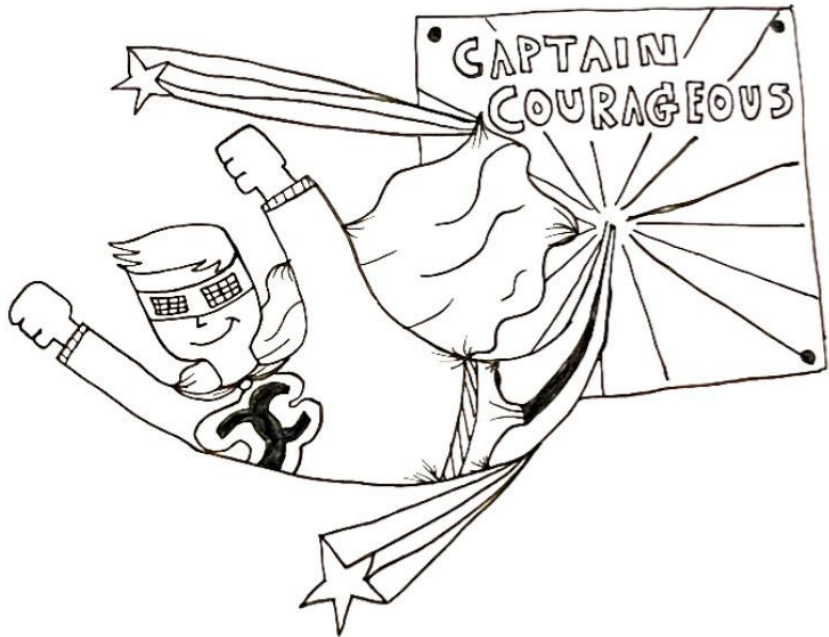
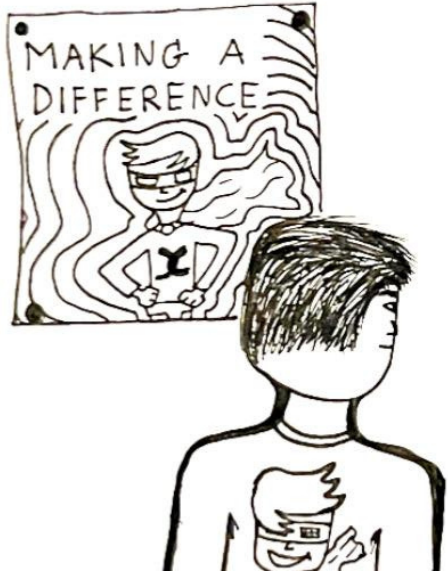


Tales of the Courageous

By Thanh Theerapasiri



Josh's throbbing feet sent groans across the hardwood floor as he sank into his scarlet striped bed sighing in defeat. Josh stared at the sizable Captain Courageous posters plastered along the baby blue walls as he recalled all the ways his hero had changed the world: stopping crime, assisting people...the list went on. Josh could never be like him. Whenever he tried to stand out, he was shoved aside without a second thought. Josh was hardly noticeable among his peers. He wasn't athletic nor was he particularly exceptional at anything. He wished Captain Courageous was there to guide him, to show him the ropes.

Suddenly, a spark shot out of one of the many Captain Courageous posters. Josh's head whipped around instinctively. His eyes widened as he watched more golden sparks rocket from the poster, illuminating his hero's chiseled features. He gaped, perplexed by the mesmerizing marigold stars exploding in front of him. Captain Courageous became increasingly vivid and then, with a nonchalant smile, he leaped right out of the poster.

"Hey Josh!" Captain Courageous chuckled, "You wanted me to help you?"

Josh stared, speechless.

"Oh! Um... yeah, but it's no use. I'm no hero. I can barely lift two chairs!" Josh pouted.

"Josh, being a hero doesn't mean stopping crime!"

"What do you mean?"

"I'll show you." Captain Courageous winked as they both vanished.

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The blistering heat pierced Josh's skin as he stumbled against winding cracks snaking through the parched ground. In the distance, Josh could make out a few people sprawled across the plain. Josh's vision magnified tenfold, revealing a horrific sight. Teary-eyed children with ragged clothes coughed vigorously, pleading futilely. As Josh watched helplessly, one of the children collapsed. Josh tried to scream but there was only an agonizing silence. His throat felt like sandpaper. His vision blurred.

Josh yelled as he gripped the velvety bed around him. "You know, that place you saw used to be a lake: Lake Chad," said Captain Courageous.

Josh blinked at the captain, who had a solemn look on his face. "That's...terrible. How can we fix it? Who is behind this?"



"Well...everyone." Noticing Josh's puzzled expression, he elaborated.

"Well, there's only three percent clean water left on Earth, mostly because of water waste. People have scant regard for how little water is left, or that water is indeed limited and rapidly disappearing. Plus, pollution from vehicles and factories are dissolving the atmosphere, resulting in less protection from the sun, making bodies of water slowly disappear."

"Wow- it's that bad? I swear I will never waste water or electricity again, and I'll bike to school!" "I love to hear that!" the captain said with enthusiasm. "Another thing: those children are starving and barely have necessities, so don't waste food and if you have any old clothes lying around, donate them to children who don't have anything to wear. You'd be saving a life!" "Me? Save a life?" Josh called out.

"Yes! And there's still more you can do." With a snap of his fingers, Captain Courageous and his trainee disappeared.

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Josh gasped as he reached for his throat only to find that his hands were miniscule fins. He was a silver barracuda, submerged in a seemingly endless reef, maneuvering his way around bunches of flamboyant corals. Seawater brushed his scales, rejuvenating his spirits and sending waves of adrenaline splashing down his spine. Enjoying these new sensations, Josh soon learned that sometimes good things come to an end. Ebony-black oil engulfed the glamorous corals, bleaching them into a chalky white. Josh flapped his fins vigorously as he frantically attempted to swim away, but it was futile. The oil was spreading like wildfire, crawling into Josh's lungs like deadly parasites on a mission. Josh was sinking helplessly into his inevitable demise.

After some time had passed, Josh looked up and realized he was flopping around violently on his bedroom floor. As he lay catching his breath, Captain Courageous stood over him. "Do you like to go scuba diving, Josh?"

"Yeah- I love it!" Josh panted.

"There's nothing wrong with that, just remember to wear reef-friendly sunscreen and don't leave anything in the water!"

"Cool, but, why where those corals turning white?"

"Coral bleaching is caused by global warming, making water warmer abruptly can cause corals to die, and cause floods and rising sea levels, which are also causing sharks to come closer to shore, resulting in some accidents."

Josh shuddered. "I can do it! I'll be a hero! I'll tell everyone at school too! I'll... I'll make you proud!" Captain Courageous grinned with pride. "Well, I guess this is goodbye, Josh."

"What? You're leaving?"

Captain Courageous gazed at Josh's teary eyes. "I believe in you Josh, more than anything else. Make me proud."

"I will! I promise," Josh replied shakily.

But Captain Courageous had already disappeared into his lifeless poster. Josh beamed, ready to save the world. And so can you.

About the Author/Artist

Thanh Theerapasiri is a quietly confident person who finds joy in writing and likes to spend time reading and making art.

Thanh loves adventures and extreme sports and has big dreams of becoming a successful writer someday.

