

The Illustrated Bearmas Primary Reader: Ralph's Ordeals

by dhtreichler

Illustrated by Grant Boerner



Ralph at the Supreme Bear Council

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Introduction

This work is intended to provide a resource to children and their families, to help better understand the nature of adversity and the role that family, friends and professionals in every community play to make it easier to cope with their own life ordeals.

I also hope it will inspire parents and children to tell their own stories of overcoming challenging circumstances and becoming worthy.

Stories of Ralph the Bear can help children and adults as they work through their own ordeals. Such stories capture the imagination. They increase understanding of the nature of adversity. They inspire and provide something to look forward to during one's often protracted struggles.

This reader is an illustrated version to help children visualize the stories. I sincerely hope it serves to comfort and inspire. To endure as Ralph the Bear endured to prove himself worthy.



Ralph the Bear

The Story of Bearmas

Bearmas is the celebration of the birth of a bear. Did you know that when little girls and boys are sick or alone and frightened that somewhere in the world a bear is born who is destined to be theirs and theirs alone?

Now that bear has to prove to its parents and the Supreme Bear Council that it is a worthy bear, worthy of being the one special bear for that little boy or girl. The bear has to undergo a series of ordeals where, if it succeeds, it becomes worthy.

But if the bear fails even one of the ordeals, the bear must join the salmon hunters, the group of Redeeming bears. These bears must fish the most remote rivers of Alaska for a year. They feed all of the northern bear tribes. At the end of that year that bear must then join the baklava bakers. She or he gather nuts and honey and makes baklava for all of the northern bear tribes.

After a year making baklava the bear has redeemed him or herself and becomes eligible to again challenge the ordeals for their chosen boy or girl. But this is the bear's last chance.

If the Redeemed bear successfully makes it through the ordeals, he or she comes to live with their chosen boy or girl. But if the bear fails at even one ordeal, it is cast out of the bear tribes and must wander the wilderness of the most far northern reaches of Alaska.

And that's why sometimes boys and girls get small bears. They're the ones who are successful with the ordeals the first time through. If a much larger bear arrives, then you know that bear did not make it through the first time, but is a Redeemed bear. Redeemed bears have many more stories to tell. They are also good salmon fishermen and baklava bakers. And that's why when we celebrate Bearmas, we always eat salmon and baklava in remembrance of the Redeeming bears.

Bearmas is the celebration of the bear's birthday and the completion of the ordeals that bring the bear to a little girl or boy.

The Burning Bridge



Ralph at the Burning Bridge

A bear named Ralph is selected to undergo his ordeals by the Supreme Bear Council. He comes to the ancient clearing deep in the heart of the forest known as the Supreme Bear Council Chambers. The five bears that comprise the council enter from different directions all at the same time. They take their seats behind stumps serving as their desks. The grizzly, who is the chairman of the Council, tells Ralph:

“You must overcome many Ordeals before you join your child at Bearmas. This is the first. Today we will see what you are made of.”

The Polar Bear, who is the Master of Ordeals, pulls a ball from the Great Ordeals Mixer. The Master of Ordeals opens the ball and reads from the slip of paper to Ralph: “Cross the Bridge of Fire.” Every bear fears for Ralph’s return.

Ralph looks to his father who responds, “Believe in yourself and use your imagination.”

The Master of Ordeals gives Ralph directions. Ralph the Bear starts down that road with only the fur on his back and a smile on his face.

Ralph follows the path to the dreaded Bridge of Fire. Along the way he comes across a farmer putting shingles on his barn. He decides to help the farmer. So he stays for three days carrying up and nailing shingles onto the roof.

The farmer asks Ralph how he might repay his kindness. Ralph tells him he must cross the Bridge of Fire to become worthy of his waiting child.

The farmer thinks for a minute and says, “I know a way. Let me help you.” So the farmer goes to his barn and builds a wheel, a big wheel all made of wood.

The farmer helps Ralph roll the wheel to the dreaded Bridge of Fire. Ralph opens the door, climbs in and starts walking the wheel towards the bridge. The farmer sees that he goes too slowly. He yells to the bear, “Faster! Faster!”

Ralph hears the farmer's calls. He begins to run inside the circle. He runs faster and faster. Faster even than he has run in his whole life. And when the wheel hits the dreaded Bridge of Fire, he runs so fast that the flames can't burn the wood. Soon he feels the temperature drop, feels the wheel slowing even with extra effort. He decides he has started up the hill on the other side of the river.

Ralph realizes he is now on the wrong side. He must walk for many days to get home. He has not properly thanked the farmer. So do you know what that silly little bear does? He starts running backwards, so the wheel will cross back over the bridge, going in the opposite direction.

The farmer shouts to him. "It's much too dangerous."

But Ralph can only think about completing this ordeal. He wishes to see his child sooner. So he runs as hard and fast as he can, backwards. But if you've ever run backwards, you know you're slower than when you're going forwards. So do you know what that bear does?

He stops the wheel in the middle of the bridge. He turns around inside it. And then runs again. This time he runs forward as fast as he can. As he reaches the other side, the farmer tosses a pail of water on the burning wood. The farmer quickly opens the door so Ralph the Bear can hop out. Ralph is saved with only singed fur around his ankles.

"We must celebrate," says the farmer, so he and the bear prepare a picnic. The picnic is a big success. Ralph has more fun than he's ever had.



The Farmer's Celebration

The Medallion of the Cyclops



Ralph Holds the Medallion

After a good night's sleep Ralph returns to the Supreme Bear Council with his parents. He watches the Master of Ordeals select another ball from the Great Ordeals Mixer. The Master of Ordeals opens the ball and reads: "Bring back the Medallion of the Cyclops." The other bears shake their heads, for no bear has returned from the cave of the Cyclops.

Ralph looks to his father who says, "Your mother and I believe in you."

Ralph the Bear starts out in search of this one-eyed beast that wears a medallion around his neck.

Ralph arrives deep in the woods and thinks he can feel hot breath upon the back of his neck. He spins around and comes face-to-face with an ugly and smelly old troll.

Trolls are generally nasty characters. You would know that if you ever met one. Ralph extends his paw to shake as he responds, "I'm Ralph. I must return the Cyclop's medallion to the Master of Ordeals."

The smelly and ugly old troll looks around. "Where is your army?"

Ralph responds, "I have no army." Ralph takes a step closer to the smelly and ugly old troll, but is driven back by the overwhelming smell. He continues, "Come with me. I am sure you will help me avoid the Bat Legions and the silent but deadly arrows from the Pretentious Guard."

The troll takes all the weapons he can carry. He walks off toward the setting sun with Ralph happily following.

They walk through the night. It has been a long time since Ralph last ate. Tummies wait for no bear. He wanders into the woods, follows the buzz of a bee to a hollow tree. Ralph reaches in and his paw becomes covered with honey and a few very upset bees. He rejoins Garth and together head for the cave of the Cyclops.

About midnight the Troll stops walking and motions for Ralph to be quiet. He hands Ralph a shield. "Quickly ... get under this." The two drop to the ground, hold the shields

above them. The Bat Legions fall from the sky like a thunderous hail storm. The bats bounce off the shields. The storm continues for what seems hours. Then Garth crawls out looking at the sea of stunned bats. “It’s over mister bear.”

Just before dawn Ralph and Garth arrive at a mountain of bones. The troll and bear finish climbing over the last of bones when the first arrows of the Pretentious Guard begin to rain down behind them.

Soon Ralph and Garth come to the mouth of a huge cavern. The cavern is dark, but candles light the way. Suddenly they enter a huge chamber. Ralph and Garth discover a bed in the middle of the cave. A massive figure with its back to the room lies in the bed. Together they silently approach the giant. They find a chain around his neck.

Garth undoes the chain clasp and hands the prize to Ralph. The Cyclops stirs, rolls over revealing his singular eye, which suddenly is wide open staring at them both.

The Cyclops roars. “What are you doing in my lair?”

Ralph holds up the medallion and responds. “The Supreme Bear Council requires me to return with your medallion so I may prove I am worthy of a child. With my friend the troll, we have overcome your obstacles.”

The Cyclops begins to smile. “You prepare for battle even though you cannot win. The bear refers to you as a friend. But I have never heard anyone refer to a troll as a friend. Indeed there must be magic between you. Leave my lair, never to return. I give you the medallion to present to the Master of Ordeals. But you must always remember that ordeals are shared experiences. One can only survive them when you work together.”

Ralph, carrying the medallion, follows the troll back to the mouth of the cavern. “I don’t know how you did that, but we are fortunate to escape with our lives,” the troll exclaims amazed.

As they part company, Ralph takes a deep breath not to smell the troll as he gives his friend a bear hug. The troll has never experienced such a sign of affection. He is speechless.

Ralph waves from the trail and notices a tear streak the troll's face.



Ending the Fairy Wars



Tatania, Commander of the Fairyland Raiders

Ralph waits a week before returning to the Supreme Bear Council with his parents. The Master of Ordeals select another ball from the Great Ordeals Mixer.

The Master of Ordeals reads the slip of paper that says only, “End the Fairy Wars.” Every bear covers his or her head, for no bear ever ended a war.

Ralph looks to his father who says, “Your mother and I believe you will find a way to end this needless war and come back to us.”

The Master of Ordeals gives Ralph directions to find the fairies.

Ralph soon comes to a beautiful pool of water deep in the heart of the dark and creepy forest. He sees a reflection of someone behind him. He finds his friend ...Garth the King of the Trolls. "Garth."

The troll hears something and signals for Ralph to be quiet. In a moment a beautiful tiny fairy floats in on rapidly beating wings. "Thunderclap divided his troops."

Garth understands. "Your Brilliance. It is best to attack the flanking forces."

Ralph interrupts, "You make this sound like a game. It's not. Fairies will die."

Tatania responds. "Good. More fairy dust for us."

Ralph shakes his head. "You can always find more fairy dust, but you can never replace a fallen fairy."

Garth responds. "The war is about who has fairy dust. Without it they can't gather the pollen they eat. They can't fly or perform magic."

Ralph sits down to think. "There must be alternatives to fairy dust."

Tatania's fairy dust is running low. She lands on Garth's shoulder. "Fairy dust alternatives are just another fairy tale."

Ralph does not look at Tatania. "We must live together in peace and harmony and share the world's resources."

Tatania looks at Garth. "Is he one of those new age guys?"

Garth looks at Ralph. "It must be a disease, Tatania. We can quarantine him."

Tatania shakes her head. "I say we just kill him."

Ralph has a heavy heart that reason and logic seems to have no effect.

But just then, Tatania opens the sack of fairy dust she carries attached to her sash. "Oh, no. I'm out." She exclaims. "I'll have to wait for the others to resupply."

Garth and Ralph wait for other fairies to arrive until it is time for bed.

Ralph wakes up several times, listens for the sound of a million fairy wings descending to carry him to his fate. But no such sound greets him.

When the morning light arrives Ralph hears a rustling in the forest that he does not recognize. It is both distant and close, hushed, but unmistakable.

And then, Fairies. Hundreds, no thousands of fairies fill the clearing.

And still Tatania and Garth sleep on. Ralph asks the fairy closest to him, “What’s happened?”

The fairy looks up at Ralph. “We are out of fairy dust. We cannot defend ourselves. We must be ready to surrender.”

Tatania awakens. She rises and calls out to her troops. “Friends, Fairylanders and countrymen, lend me your dust, for I have no more with which to carry on the fight.”

With this call to arms, none of the fairies will look at Tatania. She instantly senses the mood of her troops. “What’s wrong? Why do you turn away?”

The fairy closest to Ralph seems to be a lieutenant and stands to address her commander. “Your brilliance. We do not have fairy dust to share.”



The Fairyland Raider Lieutenant

Tatania waves this away. "Surely for your commander and comrade-in-arms ... you could find..." Tatania sees no one will return her gaze. "What is it?"

The lieutenant finishes her original thought. "We have exhausted our supplies fighting the war. So too have the heathen."

Tatania looks about, realizing the situation. "The war is over."

Garth presents a copy of the declaration ending the war to Ralph. The bear tucks this document into his belt. His good-bye to Garth ends in a bear hug they will both long remember. Ralph finally understands just how important it is having a friend to support you in reaching your goals.

The King of the Jungle



Ralph at the Supreme Bear Council

Ralph the Bear and his parents arrive at the Supreme Bear Council. He waits as the Master of Ordeals selects the fourth ordeal from the Great Ordeals Mixer. When he takes the ball from the machine, the Master of Ordeals opens it and reads aloud. "The King of the Jungle Ordeal." The other bears shake their head.

Ralph looks to his father who says, "You have a child waiting for you to prove yourself worthy."

The Master of Ordeals hands Ralph an airline ticket. A sleepy Ralph flies all night, then rides a train all day. He finally gets off in the deepest and darkest part of the African jungle.

Ralph sits down... unknowingly on an ant hill. Ralph the Bear goes running to the nearest lake to wash off the ants that bite him.

A Zebra wanders by, gives Ralph a surprised look as Ralph washes himself in the lake.

Ralph says to him, "I'm looking for the King of the Jungle."

The Zebra replies, "He is very fearsome. He has sharp claws and teeth. He roars loud and scares all of the other animals."

"I must prove myself worthy of a child. What could I suggest to the King of the Jungle?" Ralph asks still thinking about the teeth and claws.

The Zebra replies, "You could convince the Lions not to hunt us Zebras."

Ralph agrees. He starts out and soon comes to the den of the King of the Lions. He knocks on the door. Misses Lion invites him in. He sees the lion cubs playing. Ralph joins in their play, since he is a very playful fellow. Misses Lion watches as he plays with the cubs. Low and behold, the King of the Lions comes home and is surprised to find a bear waiting for him. Ralph asks the King of the Lions why he hunts the Zebra.

The King replies "Lions hunt the animals that eat all of the plants. If the Zebra eat all of the plants, then all the other animals would suffer and die of starvation."

Ralph asks, "If for some reason there were too many Lions, killing too many Zebra, would it not make sense for some animal to come and kill the Lions to put the jungle back into harmony?"

The Lion responds "Men do that. Only they do it too well. There are no longer enough Lions to thin the herds."

Ralph thinks only a moment, “Oh mighty King, does it not make sense that if there are not enough Lions to thin all of the herds that the Lions should choose fewer herds to thin? Maybe you should leave the Zebras for man to thin their herds?”

The King of the Lions listens to this argument. He agrees to try Ralph’s suggestion and to a treaty with the Zebras.

Ralph goes back to the lake. He tells the Zebra that the King of the Lions has agreed not to hunt Zebras. The Zebra is happy and gives Ralph a letter to take to the Master of Ordeals. The letter says that Ralph the Bear has negotiated a treaty between the Lions and the Zebras.

So when Ralph the Bear finally arrives home his parents greet him with hugs and kisses, proud their son has negotiated a treaty that will spare the Zebras. Ralph is not so much happy about his feat as he is tired after his long trip home. After a light supper with his mother and father Ralph goes to sleep.



The Jungle

The Medusa in the Clouds



Ralph and the Medusa in the Cave

Ralph returns to the Supreme Bear Council with his parents. Together they watch the Master of Ordeals select another ball from the Great Ordeals Mixer.

The Master of Ordeals reads the slip of paper that says only, "Bring back the jewel of the sun god, Ra." The other bears are fearful.

Ralph looks to his father who says, "Use your imagination to solve this problem."

The Master of Ordeals tells Ralph, "Her jewel was stolen by the thirteen headed Medusa a thousand years ago. You must find the Medusa."

Ralph leaves the Council Chambers. Four long necked geese harnessed to a jewel covered chair await. Ralph climbs in and says, "Take me to the Medusa in the Clouds."

As they fly away, Ralph notices the jewels before him hide the handle of a magnificent sword. He withdraws the sword and discovers the largest dark red ruby he has ever seen on the end of the handle.

Looking further he finds a gold shield beneath his feet. In the middle of the shield is a large smoky-grey, but transparent stone. Turning about he sees what looks to be a carved helmet with a large red plume coming out of the top behind him.

The geese arrive at the lair of the Medusa. They fly into the mouth of the cave.

As they land, Ralph steps from the jewel covered chair, holds the shield up, looks through the smoky gray stone in the middle and walks into the lair of the Medusa.

Ralph noiselessly creeps forward. The first sight of the thirteen heads of the Medusa is more horrible than Ralph ever considered. Half of the heads rise up. They open their eyes to see who enters. And as they do, a strong rush of flame passes over Ralph's head. Ralph touches the helmet and finds the fine red feather has vanished.

Ralph scrunches down below the shield as one head bellows, "And who sent you to disturb our peaceful sleep? No one has dared enter our lair in over a century"

"I, Ralph the Bear, have come to reclaim the lost jewel of the sun god Ra."

The Medusa answers, "It is well hidden, but in plain sight." Two immense golden eyes slowly open and focus on Ralph. The bear looks through the gray jewel. He feels the temperature of the cave drop. The shield becomes encased in ice. Ralph watches until the eyes close. He lifts the shield and rushes forward with the sword held high.

The Medusa looks at the sword and says, "You hold in your hand the sword of Ra. The jewel you seek is the ruby on the handle."

A surprised Ralph turns the sword up-side-down. A bright light fills the dark cavern. The light passes through the bright red ruby turning into pure red light which bathes the Medusa. Before his eyes, the ugly Medusa slowly transforms... into a beautiful young... female bear... with light brown fur and a red bow around her neck.



Medusa Transforming into Sadie

“The female bear looks down at herself and then at Ralph. “I am Sadie. The sun god Ra changed me into the Medusa more than a thousand years ago.”

Ralph looks sadly at Sadie. “You have endured a thousand year ordeal. Come back with me to the Supreme Bear Council. Maybe they will help you find a child you can be worthy of. Then you will have a family.”

The four geese deliver Ralph and Sadie to the Great Council Chambers of the Supreme Bear Council. “This is Sadie.” Ralph begins, “She is far more worthy of a little boy or girl than I. She has endured a thousand-year ordeal.”

“And what was that ordeal, Ralph the Bear?” asks the Master of Ordeals.

“Ten centuries as a thirteen-headed Medusa is an ordeal that should make her worthy without enduring further trials.” Ralph responds as he presents the jewel covered sword to the Master of Ordeals.

The Master of Ordeals listens. “You speak eloquently, Ralph. The Supreme Bear Council shall consider your request.”

The Lotus Eaters



Lorelei in the deep dark woods

Ralph lay awake thinking of Sadie. When the morning arrives he and his parents return to the Supreme Bear Council. He watches the Master of Ordeals select another ball from the Great Ordeals Mixer.

The Master of Ordeals reads the slip of paper that says only, ‘Convince the King of the Lotus Eaters to help others.’

Ralph looks to his father who says, “Your mother and I raised you to do what is right and what is important.”

Soon, as Ralph walks along, he suddenly realizes he doesn't know where he is. Nor does he know if anyone is about. He calls out, "Hello, I'd like to talk with you."

At first he doesn't see her as she dresses entirely in black. She finally steps from the shadows of the forest onto the road. "I am Lorelei."

"I'm looking for the King of the Lotus Eaters. Would you happen to know where I might find him?"

"And what is your quest brave bear?"

"The Supreme Bear Council sent me to ask the King of the Lotus Eaters to help us with a matter that I can only discuss with the King."

Lorelei responds, "I can take you to our Grand Counselor. She will know what to do." A dozen floating faces gradually appear all around him.

Lorelei nods to the faces in the forest. One-by-one they wink out like stars in the early morning sky. Lorelei takes his paw and leads him into the dark forest. Without warning, Lorelei moves faster, dodging trees and other obstacles. Lorelei moves so fast that Ralph's feet don't always touch down as she pulls him along like a rag doll.

After a long while Lorelei begins to slow. Soon Ralph is merely running along like any other bear pulled along by a fast moving human.

As they walk into the light of a fire, Lorelei releases Ralph's paws. He stumbles and falls facing the flames. Lorelei backs away and melts into the shadows.

A red-haired woman enters the circle of the fire, "Who are you?"

Ralph does his best imitation of a gracious bow. "Ralph the Bear at your service. I was sent by the Supreme Bear Council to ask your help."

"What is the help you seek from the Lotus Eaters?"

"Bears comfort sick children." Ralph begins.

"We are aware of that."

Ralph relaxes. "But many times the sick children experience severe pain or emotional distress which are very difficult to calm."

The red-haired woman nods in understanding. "The fruits of the Lotus blossom eases the pain for our children."

Ralph decides to just ask the question. "The Supreme Bear Council would like you to donate your Lotus blossoms to poor and needy sick children."

The red-haired woman instantly rises. "Out of the question. You must find someone else to help your children in pain. We will not help you."

At this Lorelei raises her head. And looks at the red-haired woman. "We are a sisterhood. A sisterhood is caring. We care about each other as women. We care about each other as mothers. We care about each other's children as an extended family. How can we turn our backs on children in pain?"

Now the red-haired woman becomes afraid. "Who among you would destroy all we have built? Who amongst you besides Lorelei?" she asks.

The others emerge from the shadows. Slowly all of the hands come up, one at a time to indicate agreement.

Lorelei ascends the throne as the red-haired former Grand Counselor steps aside. "Sisters. We have spoken. From the bottom of my heart I thank you for the courage to do what is right."

Lorelei picks up Ralph and raises him onto her shoulders. He wraps her hair around his paws and leans down on her head as she moves into the dark and mysterious woods.

Ralph soon cannot see. It seems as if Lorelei travels faster and faster. She leans left and right. Ralph hears the wind in his ears and the sounds of trees whooshing by and other impediments in their path.



Lorelei and Ralph Traversing the Dark Woods.

Soon the darkness begins to lift. Lorelei slows. In only a moment she walks into the clearing as if she had been strolling through the trees.

They say good-bye and Ralph begins the long walk home with a whistle and a smile.

A Visit to the Underground



Ralph the Army Bear

The next day Ralph is summonsed to the Council Chambers. The Master of Ordeals spins the Great Ordeal Mixer twice to make sure he gets an especially hard ordeal. Soon, a larger than usual ball drops out.

The Master of Ordeals reads, “Visit the Underground.”

Ralph’s father says, “Your child waits for you to prove yourself worthy.”

The Master of Ordeals says “There are many ways to the underground. Most involve making bad decisions, others involve making noble choices.

Ralph leaves the Supreme Bear Council Chambers and soon sees a man wearing a uniform coming his way. The uniform is green and he has medals on his chest.

“Could you help me find the underground? I need to endure one more ordeal. Then I’ll have a Bearmas and a little girl or boy of my very own.” Ralph asks the man who Ralph sees has stripes on his sleeves.

“Mister Bear my friends and I endure more ordeals than you can imagine.”

Ralph follows the man in the uniform back to his office.

Ralph enlists. He goes through basic training where he loses twenty-five pounds and learns to shoot a gun. His platoon is sent overseas almost immediately to a war zone where his team patrols a rural village. On his first day in the village his team patrols a flooded fast running river. They hear a scream, a splash and a call for help.

Ralph is the first one to react to the sound. In the rapids a little girl, not more than five years old, is carried along bobbing under and back to the surface. Her mother calls to her baby from the bridge. Ralph dives into the water and swims as fast as he can against a fast running current. He reaches the little girl and brings her to a large boulder in the middle of the stream. He is too tired to swim back carrying her. So he calls for his team.

They come out on the bridge and build a rope chair for the little girl. He swims with the little girl on his back, using all of his strength to where the rope chair hangs under the bridge. Even though he is exhausted, he helps her into the rope chair and signals his team mates pull her up.

His team is able to pull the little girl to safety and reunite her with her mother. But Ralph is exhausted. He smashes head on into a large boulder, passes out ... and drowns.



The Child is Saved

Ralph wakes up in the underground where he meets Peter the gate keeper. The Great Black Bear that is Peter the Great says to Ralph, "Why did you save the little girl at the expense of your own life?"

Ralph replies, "I came to the underground to prove myself worthy of a child. But if I did not save the little girl in the river, I would not be a worthy bear. So I had no choice. Even if that meant I might never have a little girl or boy of my own."

Peter the Great has never met a bear as humble as Ralph. He decides to write a letter to the Master of the Ordeals saying that Ralph is worthy. For the first time a bear that reached the underground is being returned to the world above. Therefore, he recommends Ralph be recognized as completing the ordeal, and be deemed worthy.

The next thing Ralph knows he is back home. His mother and father hug and kiss him. He has been to the underground and returned to them. He hands the letter from Peter the Great to the Polar Bear who is the Master of the Ordeals. The Master reads the letter to the Supreme Bear Council. They say “Hallelujah”, for Ralph has demonstrated his worthiness by sacrificing himself for a little girl. And since he is the only bear ever to have returned from the underground, he is declared worthy. A Bearmas is authorized.

Bearmas



Ralph

Ralph arrives just in time to hear a young man tells the story of Bearmas.

“Bearmas is the celebration of the birth of a bear. Did you know that when little girls and boys are sick or alone and frightened somewhere in the world a bear is born?”

“Now that bear has to prove to its parents and the Supreme Bear Council that it is a worthy bear. It is worthy of being the one special bear for that little boy or girl. The bear has to undergo a series of ordeals where, if it succeeds, it becomes worthy. But if the bear fails even one of the ordeals, the bear must join the salmon hunters, the group of Redeeming bears.”

“Redeeming bears must fish the most remote rivers of Alaska for a year, feeding all of the northern bear tribes. At the end of that year that bear must then join the baklava bakers. There she or he gathers nuts and honey and makes baklava for all of the northern bear tribes. After a year making baklava the bear has redeemed him or herself. He or she becomes eligible to again challenge the ordeals for their chosen boy or girl. But this is the bear’s last chance. If the Redeemed bear successfully makes it through the ordeals, he or she comes to live with their chosen boy or girl.”

“And that’s why when we celebrate Bearmas, we always eat salmon and baklava in remembrance of the Redeeming bears. Bearmas is not the bear’s birthday, but the celebration of the bear’s birthday and the completion of the bear’s ordeals.”

“Merry Bearmas.” Rings out in the room as Ralph is introduced to the one who has been waiting for his arrival while attempting to deal with challenges and ordeals that are very different, but no less important to endure.

About the Author



dhtreichler toured the global garden spots as a defense contractor executive for fifteen years. His assignments covered intelligence, simulation, and battlefield systems integrating state of the art technology to keep Americans safe. During this time he authored nine novels exploring the role of increasingly sophisticated technology in transforming our lives and how men and women establish relationships in a mediated world.

ILLUSTRATIONS are by Grant Boerner, a talented illustrator, artist and writer working in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles, California.

Keep up with all of dhtreichler's latest work and essays at www.dhtreichler.com and www.bearmas.com;

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Life After

The Tragic Flaw

Lucifer

Rik's

The End Game

I Believe in You

Succession

The First Bearmas

Novellas:

My Life as a Frog