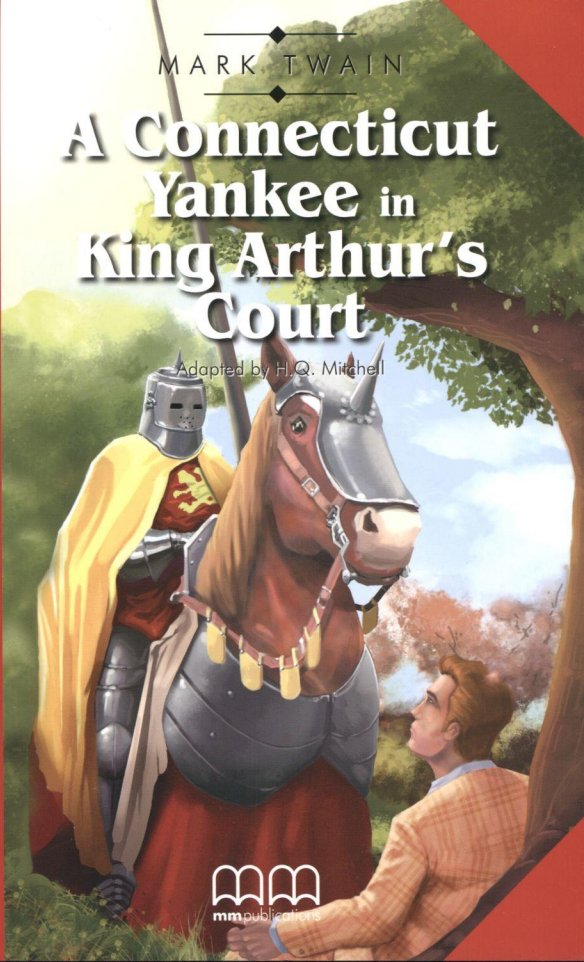


MARK TWAIN

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

Adapted by H.Q. Mitchell



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Introduction

Mark Twain (1835-1910) was born in Florida, Missouri, in a family of seven children. At the age of four, his family moved to Hannibal, a town on the Mississippi River, which later very much influenced his work. Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. He was an enormously popular author who is now considered to be 'the father of American literature.' He wrote numerous books, many of which tell stories of his life on the Mississippi, where he worked as a steamboat pilot. In 1871, Mark Twain went to live in Connecticut with his family. During that time, he wrote his most successful books: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *Roughing It* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court is an early example of time travel in literature. It is the story of an American from Connecticut, Hank Morgan, who wakes up in Medieval England of AD 528 after an accident. The country is ruled by the legendary King Arthur and Hank has various adventures with knights, monsters and evil magicians before he is transported back to his time. The book is a satire of the ideas of chivalry, the Middle Ages and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, which Twain particularly disliked.

There have been many adaptations of the book for the theatre, cinema and television and it has even been made into a musical. The earliest version was a silent film in 1921. Walt Disney Studios made the film *A Kid in King Arthur's Court* in 1995, and in 1998, the famous actress Whoopi Goldberg starred in *A Knight in Camelot*; both are variations of the original story.

CHAPTER 1

HANK MORGAN LIVED IN HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT, IN THE year 1879. He worked in a large factory that made guns, cannons, engines, and other machines. Hank was a hard-working man, but he used to get upset easily and he got into fights quite often. One day, he got into a fight with a big, strong worker named Hercules. Hercules hit him very hard on the head with an iron crowbar, and Hank fainted.

When he woke up, Hank was sitting under an oak tree in a very beautiful forest. A strange man on a horse was standing in front of him. Both the man and the horse were wearing iron armour from head to toe.

‘This must be some sort of strange circus,’ Hank thought.

‘Sir, who are you and what are you doing here?’ the strange man asked in a funny accent.

‘None of your business,’ Hank replied. ‘Now get back to your circus, before I get upset!’

Before Hank had time to do anything, the strange man pulled him onto his horse and rode off.

‘Help!’ shouted Hank. ‘Let me go!’ But the strange man didn’t stop. They rode through the countryside, and Hank thought, ‘This is not a circus - it must be a dream.’ He saw people dressed in rags working in the fields, and in the distance, a huge castle.

‘Is this Hartford, Connecticut?’ Hank asked the man.

‘No, it is Camelot, the kingdom of King Arthur. Now, be quiet!’ the man answered angrily.

When they arrived at the castle, the strange man took Hank to a huge hall full of knights and ladies, all dressed in brightly coloured clothes and hats. The hall had big, colourful tapestries with horses and knights, and there was a huge fireplace in the corner. King Arthur was sitting in the centre of a round table, surrounded by his knights. Musicians were playing music and the nobles were eating and drinking and telling stories for the



King's pleasure.

"Ah, Sir Kay," the King said, when he saw the knight with Hank. "What have you brought us?"

"King Arthur," answered the man, "I have captured this strangely dressed man in a faraway land. He is my prisoner and I want him sentenced to death for speaking to me in a very rude way."

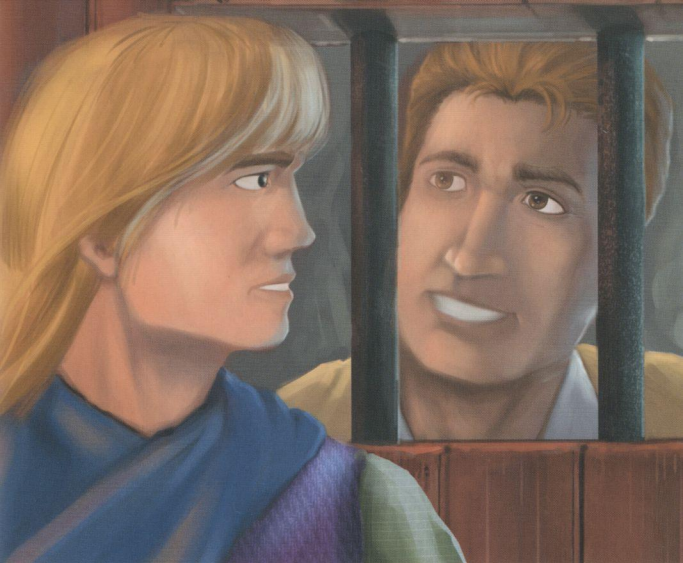
The court and the King decided that they should burn Hank at the stake the next day on June 21st, in the year 528, at exactly 12 o'clock pm. Then, two guards carried him away and a young servant boy named Clarence led him to a dark dungeon. Clarence seemed like a very nice boy.

"Please Clarence," Hank said. "You must help me get out of here! I don't belong here! This is all a mistake!"

"I wish I could help you, sir," Clarence answered. "But it is the will of the King, and I cannot go against his wishes. However, I will come back later to check on you."

'At the stake!' Hank thought. 'What a horrible death! This can't be true! I must find a way to get out of here. But wait... this is the year 528... there will be an eclipse tomorrow at exactly 12 o'clock!' Hank knew all the eclipse dates from school. "I have an idea!" he shouted. "I must talk to Clarence!"





CHAPTER 2

HANK WAITED IN THE DARK DUNGEON FOR HOURS. Suddenly, he heard footsteps and saw a man with a torch. It was Clarence!

“Hello, my strange friend,” said Clarence. “I came to see how you are doing and brought you something to eat.”

“Ah, Clarence, I’m so happy you are here! Now, listen, you must help me - you must go and tell the King this: he must let me go at once, or I will blot out the sun in the entire kingdom!” said Hank.

Clarence was shaking with fear, but he agreed to deliver the message and ran quickly out of the dark dungeon.

The next morning, some soldiers came and grabbed

Hank out of his cell.

"The stake is ready," they said. "Follow us."

Hank walked out into the courtyard and saw that it was full of people. King Arthur and his wife, Guinevere, were sitting in the centre. The soldiers brought Hank to the centre of the courtyard and tied him to the stake. As they were preparing to light the fire, Hank thought, 'Please let this be the day and time of the eclipse! I don't want to die!' He turned to the king and said, "You are making a mistake, your Majesty. You must let me go, or I will make the sun disappear."

Everyone looked up at the sky. It was getting dark, and the sun was slowly disappearing.

"Stop at once!" the King shouted to the soldiers. "Do not light the fire! Fair sir, I did not believe the message I heard yesterday. But it is true! You must be a very powerful magician. Please, please bring back the sun, and I will give you anything you want!"

The sky was completely dark. Everyone was scared and begging Hank to save them. Hank could not believe it. 'I'm actually in the year 528! I was right about the eclipse! I must take advantage of the situation,' he thought. He waited a few seconds, and then answered.

"I will bring back the sun, good King, but you must do something for me. You must let me work for you. I can help this kingdom in many ways. That is all that I ask," Hank said.

"Set him free at once!" the King shouted. "He is now second, only to me! Dress him and treat him like a prince!"

Hank was free at last. He looked up at the sky and saw that the eclipse was nearly over.

"Thank you fair King," he said. "Now, let this spell pass and let the sun shine again!" Hank shouted as he lifted up his hands towards the sky.

The sun slowly came out again, and everyone started clapping and cheering. Only one man was silent. He was Merlin, King Arthur's magician. Merlin did not like Hank, but Hank did not notice this. He was too busy feeling proud and very, very powerful.



CHAPTER 3

THE NEWS OF HANK'S MIRACLE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE country. Thousands of people came to King Arthur's castle to see this new and very powerful magician, and this made Hank a little nervous.

'I must make another miracle happen, otherwise, these people will not believe that I am a magician,' Hank thought. But he could not think of anything new to do.

A couple of days passed and the people were already shouting for a new miracle.

Merlin took advantage of that. "He is not a real magician," he said. "He cannot produce another miracle. He has fooled us all."

Hank heard this and became very upset with Merlin. He immediately went out onto his balcony and shouted to the people.

"Listen everyone! Merlin says things about me, but they are not true. I am a great magician and Merlin will see that very soon. I will blow up Merlin's stone tower with fires from heaven! Just wait a little and you will see the greatest miracle of all time!"

With the help of Clarence, Hank began to prepare for his new miracle. They filled Merlin's tower with bags of dynamite, and attached a large metal rod to the top of the tower. Then, they waited for a thunder storm.

Two weeks went by and nothing happened. The people were tired of waiting. But then one day the rain came and lightning filled the sky. Hank announced this as the day of the miracle.

"Behold!" Hank shouted to the people, "I will now prove that I am a magician of great power! You will never doubt me again!"

Suddenly, lightning hit the large rod on the tower and there was a strong light. The tower blew up into a thousand pieces. The people began shouting and bowing to Hank. Afterwards, they all returned to their homes satisfied.

King Arthur was amazed by Hank's powers once again. He wanted to send Merlin away from his kingdom, but Hank convinced him to let Merlin stay. Hank even rebuilt Merlin's



tower because he felt bad for him. Merlin, however, never said thank you - in fact, he did not talk much after the miracle.



CHAPTER 4

NOW NO ONE DOUBTED HANK'S POWER AND HANK DECIDED to use it in a good way.

'I must do something for this kingdom, as long as I am here,' Hank thought.

He decided to share his knowledge of the 19th century with the people living in the year 528. But he had to do this slowly, otherwise it would scare everyone.

So, Hank was very careful to keep all his projects secret. As his first project, he decided to start various iron, steel, and soap factories throughout the kingdom. Then, he selected the smartest young people and created several small, private schools. He even set up underground wires and created a private telephone line. Everything was going well, and slowly he became known as 'The Boss'.

All the while, Clarence followed Hank everywhere and helped him with everything.

"My dear boy," Hank told Clarence one day, "I will make you my main assistant. You are very smart and learn quickly. Perhaps you can be in charge of creating our first private newspaper."

"Sir, this is a great honour for me, but I do not know much about newspapers," Clarence replied.

"Don't worry, I will teach you," Hank said.

When he was not busy with his projects, Hank tried to participate in the daily life of the court. One of the main attractions of the time was jousting tournaments. Knights from different kingdoms competed against each other to the death.

"Sir, why don't you compete in a jousting tournament?" Clarence asked Hank.

"No, Clarence. Trying to kill someone with a long, sharp pole while riding a horse just doesn't interest me," Hank replied.

Hank did not like this bloody sport, as he did not like many things around him. The King, the nobles, and the knights were the only people with rights in the country. Everyone else was either a slave, or a farmer. Most of the people could not read or

write, and were very, very poor. This made Hank very upset; he wanted to change things and make life for these people better.

One day, King Arthur came to talk to Hank.

“Hank, my friend, you are very busy and you take your new position seriously,” the King said. “But you do not participate in the tournaments, or go out on adventures, like the other knights and nobles. This is not right. As a person of power, you must do what everyone else does.”

So, Hank decided to put his work aside for a while and tried to do something to please the King.





CHAPTER 5

ONE DAY, A YOUNG LADY CAME TO KING ARTHUR'S COURT asking for help. "My mistress is a prisoner in a castle along with forty four other princesses," she said. "Three brothers, each with four arms and one eye, hold the princesses captive. You must do something to save them, your Majesty."

All of the knights begged King Arthur to let them go and save the princesses, but the King had other thoughts. "This is just the job for Hank," he said. "What do you think, Hank?"

"Yes, your Majesty," answered Hank. However, since he was a logical person, he wanted to ask the lady a few questions.

“Fair lady, may I first ask your name?” Hank said.

“My name is Alisande la Carteloise, my lord,” the lady answered.

“Very well, Alisande, now tell me... how far is this castle?”

“Oh, fair sir, the castle lies in a faraway place. But I do not know exactly how far,” Alisande answered.

“Never mind,” Hank said. “Do you know in what direction the castle is?”

“Well, the road is very long, and has many turns. Sometimes you think you are going east, but then the road will turn suddenly, and you find yourself going west. It is quite difficult...”

Hank then talked to Clarence secretly.

“Clarence, my boy, how on earth am I supposed to find this castle? The girl has no idea where it is!” Hank said in a frustrated voice.

“Well, sir, the lady will go with you, of course,” Clarence answered. “She will show you the way.”

Hank did not want to be alone with a strange lady, but Clarence was right: this was the only way to find the castle. He prepared for his journey, and all the knights were very helpful. They gave him tips about monsters and various charms to protect him against spells.

‘This is very silly,’ thought Hank. He did not believe in monsters, but he didn’t say anything to the knights. After all, they only wanted to help him.

When the day arrived for Hank and Alisande to leave, the knights helped Hank dress in full armour. It took over an hour to get all of the armour on, and afterwards, Hank could barely move. The armour was very heavy and very uncomfortable. Hank could not move on his own and two of his servants had to help him get on his horse.

Alisande got on the horse behind Hank, and they began to ride away from Camelot. As everyone waved goodbye and wished them good luck, Hank wondered. ‘What will this new adventure be like?’





CHAPTER 6

AFTER A COUPLE OF HOURS, HANK BEGAN TO SWEAT VERY badly in his armour. He was feeling dizzy, and decided to stop for a while.

“Fair sir, what’s wrong?” Alisande asked.

“My dear lady, this armour is horrible. I am very hot and I am sweating. I must stop and rest a little bit,” Hank said.

Alisande felt bad for Hank. She took off his helmet and went to a little stream nearby. She filled the helmet with water and poured the water on Hank’s head and into his armour. Hank immediately felt better but suddenly, Alisande got up and began to shout. “Sir, here come some knights! They are riding towards us!”

Hank saw the knights coming and had an idea. He took out his tobacco pipe. Smoking was one of his pleasures, and since there were no pipes and no tobacco in King Arthur’s time, Hank made his own pipe and his own tobacco from tree bark. He lit his pipe, and started blowing smoke out from his mouth. The knights saw the smoke and rode off terrified.



“Oh, sir, you truly are a magician. Thank you for saving us!” Alisande said.

Hank smiled, and they continued their journey. They travelled for many days. Finally, they reached their destination.

“Look, sir! This is where the castle is!” Alisande exclaimed.

Hank looked around him. He could see no castle - just a bunch of sheep surrounded by a fence.

“Oh, no!” Alisande cried. “My mistress! The princesses! They have all turned into sheep. The ogres have probably put a spell on them and left!”

Hank thought, ‘This girl is crazy, but I will help her anyway.’

Alisande was busy petting and kissing the sheep, calling them names such as ‘Princess Angela’, and ‘Princess Elaine.’

“What do you want me to do with them, Alisande?” asked Hank.

“Sir, we must take each of the princesses back to where they belong, or, if we cannot, then we must leave them in a safe place, and their friends will come and find them,” Alisande finally answered.

Hank did not want to say no to her. He liked Alisande, and he wanted to make her feel better. So, he gathered the sheep together.

“Very well,” he said. “We will leave the sheep - I’m sorry, the princesses - with a nearby farmer. He will take care of them until their friends find them,” Hank answered.

“Oh, thank you good sir! I will follow you back home and stay by your side, for you have been very kind to me!” Alisande said, and gave Hank a big hug.



CHAPTER 7

WHEN HANK FINALLY ARRIVED BACK IN CAMELOT, HE HAD an idea. He wanted to learn more about the daily lives of the peasants, so he decided to travel in disguise as a peasant throughout the country. He announced his decision to the King. King Arthur loved adventures and thought it was a magnificent idea, so he decided to go along.

Before they set off on their adventure, Hank had a lot of work to do. His most important task was to make the King talk and act like a peasant.

“Now, sir,” Hank said. “You must remember to keep your head down and to slouch when you walk. Now, let me see you walk.”

The King walked with his head high and his back straight.

“No, no, no sir! You are walking like a king!” Hank said. “Now, try again, but keep your chin low. Also, don’t look up when you walk, look at the ground.”

The King practised for hours and finally he got it right.

“Good job, my King,” Hank said. “Now, pretend we are at the door of a peasant’s house, what would you say?”

“Peasant! Bring me a chair and serve me whatever food you have!” the King said in a loud voice.

“Oh, no, sir! You must not talk like that. You should not call your fellow man peasant. You must call him brother. Now, try again,” Hank said.

“What! You want me to call dirt like that ‘brother’!” shouted the King. “I can’t do that! I am the King of England!”

“Sir, remember, we are pretending to be ‘dirt’ like that,” Hank reminded the King. “No one must know who you are.”

“Very well,” the King said. “So, I will say: Brother, bring me a seat and whatever else you have to offer.”

“That was better, my Lord,” Hank said. “But remember to ask for a seat for me too. We must act as equals, as friends.”

The King listened to Hank and was a fast learner. After some days of practice, they were finally ready to begin their journey.



They both cut their hair short and wore long woollen robes. They packed some bread and cheese and set off on foot, for peasants could not afford horses.

Along the way, they stopped at peasants' homes and always the people welcomed and fed them. Every time, the King was shocked by the miserable conditions these people lived in.

“All this has to change,” he kept saying. And they walked on.





CHAPTER 8

ONE DAY, AS THEY WERE WALKING, THEY SAW A NOBLEMAN ON his horse. The nobleman stopped in front of them. “Peasants!” he said. “Where are you going?”

“Nowhere, my lord,” Hank answered. “We are simply walking and looking for some food and shelter.”

“Well,” the nobleman said. “Come with me. I can help you.”

The King and Hank decided to go along. The King was happy because he thought he could finally eat and sleep well. However, when they arrived at his castle, the nobleman chained them together and threw them into a cell.

“You are my slaves now. I will sell you tomorrow for a good price,” the nobleman said.

“No, you don’t understand!” the King began to say.

“Shhhh!” Hank whispered to the King. “You are King Arthur and I am The Boss, but he will never believe that. Just look at the way we look! So keep quiet, my lord, and I will find a way to get us out of here. I promise.”

During the night, Hank took a toothpick out of his pocket. Fortunately, he always carried one with him. He slowly undid his lock with the toothpick, and then freed the King as well. Then, they both walked out of the cell and slowly walked down the dark corridor to find the exit. Suddenly, they saw a light coming towards them. It was the night watchman with a torch!

“Stop at once!” the watchman shouted and they froze.

“You will pay for this!” the watchman said as he took the King and Hank and put them back in the cell. “The nobleman will hang you tomorrow!”

The King and Hank didn't sleep that night. They were both very scared, and Hank felt very guilty for putting the King in such a terrible situation. In the morning, a man came and brought them out to the courtyard. The whole town was there waiting to see the hanging.

The King could not hold himself any longer. “Stop at once!” he shouted. “I am King Arthur of Camelot, and this is Sir Boss!”

The crowd began to laugh at the man in rags calling himself King Arthur. The King felt humiliated. He sat down in a corner and stopped talking. Hank looked around for a solution. He recognised a knight near him. He used to be a student at one of Hank's schools.

“Good knight, look at me... I am indeed Hank and this is King Arthur,” Hank told the knight. “Please call Clarence at once and tell him we are in danger!”

The knight recognised Hank and ran quickly. After what seemed like an eternity for Hank, Sir Lancelot and the Knights of the Round Table appeared in the distance.

“Stop at once!” Sir Lancelot shouted. “This is King Arthur and his assistant, Sir Boss! Set them free at once!”

Now the entire crowd bowed to the King and Hank. The nobleman apologised and begged the King to spare his life. However, the King took him prisoner and hung him instead. King Arthur could not forgive him for the way he treated him and Hank.





CHAPTER 9

TIME PASSED QUICKLY IN CAMELOT, AND BEFORE HANK knew it, three years went by. In those three years, a lot of things changed thanks to Hank's work. There were schools everywhere as well as several colleges, and even a number of newspapers. King Arthur decided to stop slavery thanks to the horrible slave experience he shared with Hank. The telegraph, the telephone, the sewing machine and the typewriter were everyday things for people in England and life was much easier for them now. There were even steamboats on the Thames River - and also a railroad system!

Hank was married to Alisande, or Sandy, as he liked to call her, and they were very happy together. They even had a baby together. Sandy named the baby 'Hello-Central', as she often heard Hank answering the telephone this way.

However, one day, Hello-Central fell sick.



“Dear, we need to do something... the baby’s getting worse!” Sandy told Hank.

Hank immediately called a doctor to examine the baby.

“The only thing that can help the baby is some fresh sea air. You should take the child on a small trip,” the doctor announced, after examining the baby.

Hank decided to take the doctor’s advice immediately. He took Sandy and the baby and headed for the French coast. The three of them set up their house in an old castle.

At the end of one month, Hank sent a ship back to England for some fresh supplies. However, the ship never returned.

“Sandy, something isn’t right. I must go to England myself and see... Don’t worry, I will be back soon,” Hank told Sandy. He kissed her and Hello-Central good-bye, and set off.

When Hank arrived in England, he did not recognise the country. Even in London, the streets were empty. Men did not talk or laugh, or go in groups and everybody looked sad. Hank

searched for the train to take to Camelot, but all the stations were empty so he decided to walk.

When he finally arrived in Camelot, he found Clarence sitting alone in his study.

“Clarence! My dear boy! What happened?” Hank asked.

Clarence lifted his head and looked very sad. “You don’t know anything? My lord, it is horrible! A group of knights have taken control of the kingdom and destroyed all of your inventions. They did not like the changes you made. Their leader, Sir Mordred, killed King Arthur and now they are after you! You know, it was actually the knights who sent you away. They paid the doctor to tell you to go away when Hello-Central was sick. I found that out, but I could not tell you. But do not worry, sir, I have gathered 50 young men, the smartest in the land, and we are prepared to fight!”

“And what do you suggest we do?” Hank asked.

“Well, I have surrounded all of our factories and workshops with dynamite, so we can blow them up whenever we want to. Also, I have set up a nice camp in Merlin’s cave. I have surrounded the cave with an electric fence. It will kill them all when the knights decide to attack,” Clarence explained.

“Good job, Clarence!” Hank said. “Now, let’s fight and may the best man win!”



CHAPTER 10

THE KNIGHTS DID NOT WASTE ANY TIME. BY DAWN ABOUT 30,000 of them were moving towards the cave. Hank pressed a button and there was a huge explosion. All of the factories and workshops went up in smoke. Then, he pressed a second button, and half of the army disappeared. All that was left were some helmets scattered here and there.

But Hank knew the knights would attack again. He simply sat and waited patiently. Early in the morning, Hank heard the sound of metal coming from far away. It was the rest of the knights. Hank pressed four buttons, one after the other. There was a huge cloud of smoke, and when the cloud cleared, there were thousands of dead bodies around the cave.

Hank felt bad and decided to go and see if anyone was still alive. Suddenly, he heard a voice. "Here! Over here! I need help!" a knight said in a weak voice.

As Hank bent over to help him, the knight stabbed Hank and then he died. Later, Clarence found Hank and carried him back into the cave. An old peasant woman was there.

"I can help you," she said. "I will cook for you all and take care of Sir Boss. Please allow me to stay," the old woman begged and Clarence decided to let her stay.

One night, however, Clarence woke up and saw the old woman standing over Hank. She was chanting and making strange noises.

"Stop at once!" shouted Clarence. "What are you doing?"

The old woman turned to Clarence. "You will all die in this place, everyone, except him!" she said, pointing to Hank. "He is sleeping now, and will sleep for thirteen centuries, but then he will wake up. I know, because I am Merlin!"

Merlin took off his disguise and started laughing and running away. But suddenly, when he was near the fence, he touched the electric fence by mistake. The electricity killed him immediately and he stood there frozen with a huge smile on his face.

Hank woke up with a huge headache. He looked around him.




HIGH
VOLTAGE³³

He was in Connecticut, outside the factory. He could not believe his eyes.

“I was dreaming!” he said to himself. But then he thought of Sandy, Hello-Central and Clarence, and they all came alive in his mind.

“Or was it all real?” he said out loud.



