The Little Guy

A true story by Stephen-Logan Sarina - 13 years old

When I got home, Mum was waiting for me in the kitchen. She was holding a piece of paper. I knew what it was before she said anything. "They said no." Three words. That was all it took. I stood in the doorway, still wearing my school uniform, my backpack hanging from one shoulder. I looked at the piece of paper in Mum's hands. It was only a piece of paper, but somehow, it felt enormous.

For weeks, I had imagined what it would feel like to finally be told I could stay home and homeschool, and this was because I was struggling with anxiety that made me so sick I could not smile. I had imagined waking up without an alarm, not having to rush, and learning at my own pace—taking the time I needed and having some choice in where and how I studied. I had imagined what it would feel like to have a little bit of control over something that mattered so much to me. Now it was gone.

"Are you sure?" I asked. Mum nodded. I walked over to the table and looked at the paper. It was strange how something so small could feel so big. A few words on a page had suddenly become the difference between the future I had imagined and the future I thought I was being forced to accept. I sat down. For a moment, I didn't say anything. Neither did Mum. The kitchen seemed strangely quiet. I looked at the paper again. They had made a decision. They had decided what was best, and I hadn't been the one making the decision. That was the part that hurt.

I didn't want to stop learning. I wanted to learn; I just wanted to learn in a way that worked for me. I wanted to wake up and know what my day would look like, to learn at my own pace, and to be able to breathe without feeling like I was constantly racing against something. I wanted a chance, and now someone else had decided that I couldn't have it. I looked at Mum. She wasn't angry, and she wasn't fighting. She was just there, sitting with me in the disappointment, and somehow, that made the room feel even quieter.

I looked down at the paper again. Maybe this was where I was supposed to give up, to accept that some things were simply too big to change. Maybe I was supposed to say, "Okay," and accept that adults knew better.

But I couldn't. Instead, I thought about David and Goliath. I had heard the story before: David was small, and Goliath was huge. Goliath had everything David didn't have—strength, size, and equipment. And yet David stood there anyway. He didn't look at Goliath and decide that because he was smaller, there was no point trying. He faced him.

I looked around the kitchen. The adults weren't monsters, and they weren't trying to hurt me. They probably believed they were doing the right thing. But they had the decision, and I didn't. That was my Goliath. It wasn't just one person; it was the school, the rules, the system, and the adults who thought they knew what was best for me. The meetings, the paperwork, and the decisions—everything seemed bigger than me and impossible to change. I suddenly understood why Goliath was such a powerful story, because sometimes your Goliath isn't a person, but a situation or a wall that seems so high you can't even imagine getting over it.

When you're standing at the bottom of that wall, you feel very small. I felt small, disappointed, angry, and, if I'm honest, scared, because I had wanted this so badly. I had imagined it and hoped for it, and now I had been told no. I stared at the paper. Maybe “no” was the end, or maybe it wasn't. I began to understand that I had been thinking about battles the wrong way. I had always thought you battled **for victory**, fighting because you wanted to win the prize at the end. But maybe there was another way: maybe you could learn to battle **from victory**, not just for it.

I didn't completely understand what that meant—maybe I still don't. Only God knows what victory is supposed to look like in the end. Maybe victory isn't always getting exactly what you ask for; maybe sometimes it is discovering that you're stronger than you thought, finding courage when you had none, or refusing to let someone else's decision define who you are. Maybe victory is simply getting back up. I realised that David's victory wasn't about pretending the giant didn't exist. Goliath was real, the giant was bigger, and the odds looked terrible. It was about refusing to believe that being smaller meant being powerless.

That mattered to me because I was the little guy. I couldn't change everything, control the rules, or make the adults change their minds. I couldn't magically make the wall disappear, but I could choose what I did next. I could keep asking questions, keep learning, and keep looking for another way. I could keep believing that one decision

didn't get to decide my whole future. So I decided to battle, not because I knew I would win, but because I knew I couldn't give up. Mum had taught me that she can't teach me to be a man, but she can teach me how to be a warrior, a soldier. Maybe that is what faith is sometimes: taking the next step when you can't see the whole staircase, believing there is a way through the wall, and trusting the story isn't finished just because one page says no.

I picked up the piece of paper and read it again. The words and the decision hadn't changed, but something inside me had. I had been looking at the problem as an unbeatable giant, but what if it was just a wall? A wall can look enormous and block your view, making you believe there is nowhere else to go, but a wall doesn't chase you or decide who you are. If there is a wall, there might be a way over, through, or around it. You might fall or get frustrated, but a wall doesn't mean the journey is over; it just means you've reached something you have to overcome.

So I kept going, hoping and asking. Then something happened that I never expected—something that would have sounded impossible not long before. I received an offer to do school from home. For a moment, I almost couldn't believe it. The thing I had been told couldn't happen was happening. Relief—huge, overwhelming relief—washed over me. It was the kind that makes you want to breathe in as deeply as you can because you realise you finally can. I thought about that piece of paper and almost smiled, because the little guy had won.

The little guy won not because I had more power or because the wall hadn't been real. The battle and the fear were real, but so was the victory. I had learned that winning isn't always about being the strongest; sometimes it's simply refusing to stop, taking one more step, and believing when you don't have all the answers. I don't know exactly what my future will look like, and only God knows the final victory, but I know this: a “no” doesn't always mean the end. Sometimes it means finding another way over the wall.

I used to think courage meant not being afraid, but now I think it means being afraid and climbing anyway. I used to think victory meant defeating something, but now I think it means becoming someone who refuses to be defeated. I was the little guy who didn't have all the answers, but I tried, and the impossible became possible. I was given the chance to do school from home, a way forward, and the ability to breathe. Ah, relief.

I looked back at the wall and realised it hadn't disappeared; I had simply learned it wasn't as powerful as I thought. Maybe that's what David knew, and what faith teaches us: you don't have to be the biggest or have the most power to believe the giant doesn't get to decide who you become. So I stood there, little guy and all, and smiled. Because sometimes the impossible really does happen; God opens a door you couldn't see, and the battle teaches you the most important thing of all: how to keep going. I am not afraid of walls anymore, because walls can be climbed.

Not the END - a new beginning 🙂