

Ungifted

By Gordan Korman

I must have passed the statue of Atlas a thousand times going back and forth on the campus of the Hardcastle Public Schools. Yet somehow it was like I'd never seen it before.

It was not the titan's broad powerful shoulders supporting the bronze globe of the world and heavens that seemed so different. But since when did Atlas have such a big butt? Seriously, I knew he was a titan; but I didn't know that the most titanic thing about him was his caboose. He looked like a reject from *The Biggest Loser*.

Suddenly, I was striding toward the statue, in an almost trancelike state. I picked up a fallen tree branch and made my approach.

I cocked back the branch, and unloaded a home run swing. The impact vibrated up through my arms to my brain stem, and into every cell of my body.

The branch shattered in my hands.

I have to say that this was always the best part of it for a guy like me- the split second the tomato hits the car; the very brief flight as I drop from the edge of the roof to the pool; the instant that the balloon lifts the toupee and the sun's rays glint off that shiny bald head.

Or, in this case, the *go-o-ong!* sound from the statue's bronze behind. The payoff. It was usually downhill from there. Sometimes literally.

Atlas shivered as the vibration traveled through his metal body. The celestial sphere shivered too, rocking dizzily on his muscular shoulders. At that point, I noticed for the first time that the sculpture wasn't a single piece of metal, but two, bolted together at the nape of the titan's neck.

Corrosion is a terrible thing. It was all in slow motion, but there was nothing you could do to stop it. With a crack, the bolt snapped, pieces whizzing out of sight. The ball of the world and heavens toppled and hit the ground with a *whump!*

I was still wrapped up in The Deed, lost in The Moment. It took the twin gasps from the Daniels to break the trance. And by that time, the heavy ball was already rolling.

Oh, no . . .

The big bronze globe careened down the hill toward the gym, picking up speed as it went. I ran after it, although what I thought I could do to stop it, I have no idea.