

THE SWANK ADVENTURES

THE DOWNFALL OF KING SAUL



Introduction: The Trophy and the Warning

The humming tires of the Swank family adventure van rolled smoothly down the California highway, leaving the excitement of Del Mar behind as they headed home to Oceanside. Ten-year-old Cash sat in the middle row, his striking blue eyes fixed on the heavy, shiny gold medal resting in his hands. It was his first-ever jiu-jitsu tournament, and he had won a match in 13 seconds by applying the flawless takedowns and submissions his coaches and his dad had encouraged him to practice.

"You did an awesome job out there today, Cash," Mommy Swank said, turning around from the front passenger seat with a proud smile. "Your athletic framing and focus really showed on the mats."

"Yeah, Cash, you were a beast!" twelve-year-old Madison chimed in, her waist-length blonde hair tucked over her shoulder as she leaned across the van's bench seat, "That arm bar was amazing."

Cash grinned, tossing the medal up slightly and catching it. "I knew I could beat that last guy easily. Did you see his face when I locked in that move? He didn't stand a chance against me." From behind the steering wheel, Daddy Swank caught Cash's eye in the rearview mirror. His expression was warm, but his tone carried a steady weight of fatherly wisdom. "Winning feels great, son, and you earned that medal through hard work. But remember what we always talk about. A true martial artist stays a humble winner. Being humble in all circumstances—whether you win the gold or lose in the first round—is always best."

"But Dad, shouldn't I be confident if I'm winning?" Cash asked, shifting in his seat. "If you've got it, why not talk about it?"

"Confidence is good, but pride is a trap," Daddy Swank explained gently, adjusting his grip on the wheel. "Pride makes you think you did it all in your own strength, and it makes you look down on others. In the kingdom of God, real strength is found in humility and giving the credit to Him. When a leader or a warrior starts thinking they are untouchable because of how good they look or how successful they are, a crash is usually right around the corner."

Madison tapped the chin of her reflection in the window. "That sounds exactly like what happened to King Saul in the Bible, doesn't it, Dad? He started out looking like a massive champion, but his heart got twisted by his own success."

"He sure did, Maddy," Daddy Swank replied as he pulled the adventure van into their neighborhood. "According to the historical record, Saul was given a huge platform, but he chose self-will over submission to God. If you're curious, maybe you two should look into that old book when we get home."

The moment the van parked, Madison and Cash bolted out the doors and straight into the quiet darkness of the Oceanside, California garage. Madison ran to the tool shelf and grabbed the ancient, leather-bound volume.

The moment her fingers touched the cover, the book began to vibrate with a heavy, low-frequency hum that shook the handlebars of Cash's 125cc dirt bike parked by the workbench. In the dim light of the shop, the shifting gold lettering on the cover finally locked into place: 1 Samuel 9–31.

"Hold on tight, Maddy!" Cash yelled over the sudden, crackling roar of the engine as he kicked the starter. His striking blue eyes reflected the brilliant blue vortex tearing open the space right in front of the workbench. He pinned the throttle, shifting into gear.

Madison wrapped her arms tightly around her brother's waist, clutching the heavy book securely to her chest. "Go, Cash!"

With a blinding flash and a surge of temporal static, the garage vanished. The smooth concrete floor was instantly replaced by the rugged, rocky terrain of ancient Israel. The air was thick with the scent of campfires, dusty earth, and impending war.

Chapter 1: The Tallest Man in Israel

The dirt bike skidded to a halt behind a dense thicket of terebinth trees. Cash quickly killed the engine, minimizing the acoustic footprint of the 125cc motor in a time period that had never heard mechanical sounds.

"Look," Madison whispered, opening the book. The pages glowed faintly, illuminating their location. "The book says we're near Ramah. This is the beginning, Cash. Before the tragedy."

"Maddy, wait," Cash said, squinting through the dust at the massive stone walls of the nearby town. "Why did they even need a king in the first place? Didn't they have judges like Samson and Deborah?"

Madison tapped the glowing parchment of the old book, skimming the text to catch up.

"According to my old book, Israel didn't have a formal government or a central leader other than God. For years, the people were loosely ruled by judges who handled domestic arguments but weren't equipped to lead long-term in times of major war. The great prophet Samuel was their religious leader, but when he grew old, he made his sons judges. The problem was that his sons did not follow the Lord."

"So the people panicked about who would lead them next?" Cash asked.

"Exactly," Madison explained, pointing to the glowing page. "On top of that, the Israelites looked at the pagan lands around them and desperately wanted to be like 'all the other nations'. They wanted a human king to rule them, go out before them, and fight their battles. But my old book notes that this request was actually a major sin. By demanding a human king, they were rejecting God's unique way of leading them and throwing away their special, set-apart position as His people. They were rejecting God as their true King."

"Wow, so who picked the king if it was a bad idea?" Cash asked, his fingers gripping the dirt bike's handlebars.

"God told Samuel to listen to the people and give them a king, but not without a serious warning about how a human king would oppress them. God Himself ultimately chose the man to lead them, and that brings us right to this dusty trail."

Peeking through the branches, the siblings saw a striking young man walking down the trail. He was a full head taller than anyone else in the countryside, with broad shoulders and a look of anxious bewilderment. He was searching the hillsides, followed closely by a tired servant.

"That's Saul. His father is Kish, a very wealthy and powerful man from the tribe of Benjamin. The Bible doesn't name his mother here, but it says his family was very influential."

"Why was he picked?" Cash asked, using his hyper-focused observation skills to look over Saul's posture.