Jax woke to the smell of bacon. His mother was home and cooking breakfast for him. Normally, she would be working overtime at the factory, but today was his special day, his birthday. It was Saturday, his mom was cooking breakfast for his birthday and all his best friends were coming over to celebrate his special day. The Christmas holiday was nearing and soon School would be out for break. Jax was warm under the covers pondering the day ahead with a smile.

Jax was a fairly normal kid growing up in the city. He had good friends, was an average student in school and excellent at jumping ramps with his bike. He was small for his age, but his hands, feet and head were slightly large. Also, his arms seemed a bit long. Despite his awkward looking appearance, he was a good athlete. His school didn’t have any organized sports, but he could run faster than all, but one of his friends and he could do more chin ups than any of them. He wasn’t good at fighting. He had lost just as many fights as he had won. And despite living in a poor neighborhood, he was happy. Jax, had no idea he was poor. He thought he had everything.

Jax could hear a knock at the front door. Soon after he heard hurried footsteps coming down the hall. His best friend, Greg burst in and yelled, happy birthday! Greg lived across the alley from Jax and they had been best friends since jax’s parents divorced and Jax and his mother moved to the neighborhood six years earlier.

Greg was almost as excited as Jax about his birthday. “Well, what will we do to start the day” asked Greg. “My Mom told me we’re going on a drive later, but she wouldn’t say where.” Jax replied. He was sure it was going to be part of his birthday presents, but he really had no idea what it could be. “As for this morning, I think Najib is supposed to be over soon and the other guests will start to arrive around lunch time.” Najib, was another good friend who lived just down the alley. Jack met Najib after they got into a fight over religion. Najib lost the fight only because he split his knuckle on Jax’s crooked tooth and had to quit. The two had been close friends ever since.

The kids tended to play in the old alley ways behind the homes since there was hardly any traffic and the alley connected all their back yards. The alleys were very old, with broken concrete, uneven pavement and even holes where the cement had seemingly disappeared. All these imperfections in the alleyway provided many battle scars for the kids who played there. Jax had scars on his knees, elbows and even a couple on his noggin from being a dare devil on his bike. Jax and his friends would set up wooden ramps made from any board they could find and put them as far apart as they could and see who could jump their bike the farthest. One time they used the doors from the trailer of a semi-truck for ramps and stacked old tires under them. The ramps were set about twenty feet apart and six feet high at the top. Jax was the first to attempt the jump. He hit the first ramp full speed, but it leaned just slightly due to the tires under it not being stable. Jax was airborne when he realized he was going to miss the landing ramp and hit the pavement. His bike crashed just to the right of the landing ramp. Jax hit the cement hard, but was very fortunate he suffered no broken bones. He was plucking small stones out of his knees and elbows for a couple weeks after that accident.

Jax was brushing his teeth. Greg was throwing darts at a dart board hanging on the door when they heard the doorbell ring. Again, there were footsteps running in the hall then Najib, suddenly burst in saying, ” Happy Birthday!” .... with a smile, “Your mom said breakfast is ready and Greg and I can eat too.” A dart just missed Najib as he opened the door. The dart stuck in the door outside the room and across the hall. Greg, hurried to retrieve the dart before anyone else had noticed. Najib, just gave him a disapproving look and punched Greg in the arm. Jax’s older step brother, Kyle, yelled from his room across the hall, “shut up! Some people are trying to sleep!” The dart had hit Kyle’s door.

Kyle was seventeen years old. He was Jax’s brother, but Kyle was adopted at a time when Mrs. Tyson didn’t think she could have children. Jax, was a welcome surprise six years after Kyle was adopted. A welcome surprise to everyone, but Kyle. Kyle suddenly felt as though he were a mistake.

The three boys came into the kitchen to stacks of pancakes and piles of bacon. Jax, asked his mom about the drive they were supposed to go on later and if Greg and Najib could come along. “They are more than welcome. They just have to get permission from their parents.” She said. The boys were thoroughly enjoying their pancakes and bacon when Kyle walked in.

Jax’s mom, Judy Tyson, was an attractive woman. She was slim, but not skinny with black hair and green eyes. Unlike Jax, her skin was slightly tan and had a beautiful copper like color. Jax was very pale by comparison, just like his father. Jax had his mother’s eyes and hair, but his father’s complexion. Jax’s father, Johnny Tyson, was a very large man. Not only tall, but wide and powerfully built. Jax had heard many stories about his father, but didn’t remember him very well. Jax was hopeful that one day he would grow into his slightly large feet and hands and maybe get to be big like his dad.

After, breakfast the boys played catch in the back yard and climbed the pear tree that towered over Jax’s house. More of Jax’s friends showed up, as well as, some additional family. Aunt Twyla and Aunt Pearl. Aunt Twyla was very nice, but always sipping from a little metal container she kept in her purse. She said it was her medicine. Aunt Twila, was Jax’s grandmother’s sister on his father’s side. Aunt Pearl was awesome. Aunt Pearl had come to visit from up north. She was Jax’s mom’s sister. Aunt Pearl, always told Jax he was special. She told him he was Native. Jax always loved indian movies and thought it was very cool that he actually had Native American ancestry. Jax told all his friends and teachers at school that he was Native. One teacher actually called Jax’s mom and asked if Jax was telling the truth or making up a story about being Native. Jax’s Mom told the teacher that Jax had an avid imagination and was just making the story up. Upon hearing this, the teacher made jax stand in front of the class and and tell everyone he wasn’t Native. Jax’s mom told him he wasn’t Native and that he shouldn’t tell anyone he was. Jax’s Mom made him feel like he embarrassed her by telling people he was Native. This confused him, but he figured his Mom knew more than he did and he accepted it. Judy Tyson, had grown up in an age when many Native Americans were treated with extreme prejudice and the children of mixed relationships weren’t accepted by either race.

The party was dying down by midafternoon. The cake had been cut, the presents opened and Happy Birthday sang at least five times. Jax, even had a piñata because so many of his friends had this at their parties. Jax had been wondering about the drive his Mom told him they were going to take. When he asked his mom about it, she said, “We can do it tomorrow. “With a little bit of a smile at the corners of her mouth. “You said today. I thought it was part of my birthday present?” Jax said in a very shocked and excited tone. “Oh…ok” she said with a smile. “When the rest of your guests leave, except for Najib and Greg, we can go.” Soon the guests were all gone except for Najib and Greg. All three boys seemed to be equally excited about the drive, not realizing their close friendship would soon be in jeopardy.

They had been driving for about an hour when they could see a clock tower in the distance. As they got closer they could see the clock was part of a beautiful, ornate building.. Jax’s mother remained quiet as she drove past the building and the boys were looking at the sandstone tower and building. The building looked ancient, but beautiful. As the car drove past the building, the boys could suddenly see behind it and realized it was a school. There was a football field surrounded by four baseball fields and a beautiful track for running with lanes painted on it. There were tennis courts and even what looked like an indoor pool attached to the back of the building. The grass in and around the fields of the school were manicured and beautifully landscaped.

The boys were in aw looking at the school. Their own school was a very small building, painted grey with a fenced gravel field for a playground. They couldn’t imagine how lucky the kids who went to this school must feel. Jax’s mom listened to the boys and could hardly contain herself. She pulled the car into the parking lot of the school. “Why are we stopping here?” Jax asked. “This will be your school Jax…After the New Year.” None of the boys said a word. “I put a down payment on a home just down the street from here.” She said. Jax never thought he was missing out on anything and always felt like he had all he needed, but looking at this school, he suddenly felt special.

His mom pulled out of the parking lot and drove past the indoor pool. She turned left on the first street and only drove about one block when she turned into a driveway. A beautiful two story brick home. “This is going to be our new home” she told Jax. “Wow!” was all he said at first…the other boys had their noses pressed against the glass and looked on with astonishment. “I have the key right here” she said with a smile. “Would you like to see your room?”

She opened the door to the house and the three boys ran in ahead of her. Looking around at the tall ceilings and large windows they were still in awe. In their old neighborhood the ceilings were much lower and the rooms much smaller. They immediately ran up the stairs to the second level. “is my room going to be up here?” Jax yelled back to his Mom. “You can have whichever room you like. There are four to choose from.” She said. Jax found a very small room on the second floor that was directly over the front door. He knew this was going to be his room. He saw a little bookshelf built into the wall and the ceiling was slanted on both sides. It seemed to be made for a kid and especially for a small kid like himself. He had no idea how much his life was going to change.

The drive home was quieter than usual. Finally, Jax’s mom said, “you boys are awfully quiet…is everything ok?” Najib, was the first to speak, “Mrs Tyson… will we be able to visit Jax after you move?” At that moment Jax’s Mom realized her son would be making new friends and probably not see his old friends very often. “We will be back to visit Najib and you or any of Jax’s friends are welcome at our new home anytime.” She said these words with a reassuring smile, knowing inside that it would be difficult.

The holidays came and went. Jax and his mom were all moved into their new home and the first day at his new school was just around the corner. Woodrow Wilson Academy was the name of the new school. Jax’s mom had already registered him and was going through the list of school supplies he was required to have on the first day of class.

Each student is required to have all traditional school supplies such as loose leaf paper, pens, pencils, binders, erasers, as well as, a daily planner to help them keep track of assignments and test dates. In addition, students are required to have a swim suit, gym cloths(shorts, t-shirt and sweat pants) and a towel. Each article of clothing is required to have the students name sewn into it. Jax’s mom made sure he had everything the school required and anything else he wanted.

Jax went to school the first day feeling fairly confident. He had been somewhat popular in his old neighborhood and associated with the tougher kids in his class. He wasn’t timid about making friends. He would be entering this school in the middle of the year though and he would be the new kid to the sixth grade class.

The kids weren’t very nice to Jax. They saw his cloths were older and his hair was longer than theirs. In jax’s old neighborhood, he fit right in with his clothing and hair style. All his old friends had long hair. At the new school Jax noticed lots of differences. The kids called each other by their last names rather than using the first name. Using the first name was considered uncool. Most of the kids had a brush cut hair style, which would get a kid beat up in his old neighborhood. A lot of the boys wore sports jerseys for various college teams and professional sports. Jax didn’t know one team from another. None of his old friends played sports or watched them on TV. On the first day of school, after class, Jax was on his way home when he heard a voice behind him call his name. It was Ed Sirhan, a boy from his class. “hey Tyson, wait up” Sirhan yelled. Sirhan was followed by a couple other kids from the class. Sirhan was the largest boy in the class. He was easily twice the size of Jax. In the old neighborhood Jax never felt smaller than any of his friends, but here he seemed to be the smallest of his classmates. Sirhan walked up to Jax and without warning punched him in the stomach. Jax felt all the air leave his body and he couldn’t catch his breath. The other children were laughing. “I thought you were supposed to be tough being from the city?” Sirhan said while laughing with the other kids. Jax didn’t cry, but he wasn’t able to fight back. He just turned and walked toward home while the other kids went their own way. He could hear them laughing still as they got further away. He didn’t want to look at how far they were….he just wanted to get home.

Almost every day after school, Jax had someone wanting to beat him up at this new school. Even though Jax was small in stature, he was very brave with the way he spoke to bigger boys. To avoid getting beat up every day, Jax would go directly to the library after school and pretend to study for an hour before he went home. By the time Jax walked home, all the other kids were gone and he walked home alone.

The days at school didn’t get easier for Jax. He found himself being sent to the vice principal’s office often for misbehaving. He wasn’t trying to be a bad kid, but it’s difficult to be a good student when you just don’t seem to fit in. It got to a point where Jax started missing school because of the other kids picking on him. Jax’s grades were at the bottom of the class and he was in danger of not passing the grade if he didn’t improve drastically.

Jax’s Mom had been to the school as often as she could, but she worked at a factory that was an hour’s drive from home and making time was sometimes difficult. Mr. Marvik, the Vice Principal of the school, was a big burley guy, but a very kind person. He was also a former college classmate of Jax’s father. He assured Jax’s Mom, Mrs. Tyson that her son was just as smart as the other kids and he was only having difficulty adjusting to a new school. Mr. Marvik, told Mrs. Tyson that he believed her son might be much brighter than he is showing in the classroom.

As Jax’s first semester was winding down, it was apparent that his grades were not making it. Mr Marvik requested a meeting with Jax’s mother to discuss options. “Al, what can I do?” were the first words out of her mouth when she walked into his office. Mr. Marvik stood when she walked in and asked her to have a seat. “Judy, his grades are at a point where his options are limited. He has to be held back or he goes to summer school.” Jax wasn’t the only student in this situation. However, she knew it would devastate her son if he was held back. “Judy, do you talk to Johnny at all?” Mr. Marvik asked in reference to jax’s dad. “I haven’t Al. He hasn’t spoken to me since the divorce was finalized.” She knew her ex had resources and connections that would be helpful to her son. Mr Marvik sat down on his desk and took a deep breath before saying, “As you know Judy, Johnny and I were college classmates and belonged to the same fraternity and many of the same organizations. What you may not realize is, how Johnny and I met…We were both fortunate enough to attend a college prep school that’s been around for a very long time that specializes in gifted children.” He paused for a moment, as he looked at her and wondered if she understood what he was leading up to. “I think Jax, would be an excellent candidate for this school.” She looked at him in disbelief upon hearing this. She got a little angry and half laughed when she said, “How is Jax gifted, if he can’t keep his grades up?” Mr Marvik, looked at her and said, “ I have spent many hours talking to that boy. He’s intelligent, sensitive, caring, generous to a fault and certainly not dumb. He is also introspective and insightful when he is given time to think over a question.” She listened to his words and agreed with every one of them. Her son was beautiful in her eyes. “The school I’m referring to has a summer camp that our school will accept as a supplement to his transcript and will allow him to move on to the seventh grade, if he attends the camp.” She listened and said….”I have to discuss this with Jax and tell me, how far away is this school? Also, how can I afford to send him to a private school on my salary? Every penny I earn goes toward my house payment and supporting my boys” ….he hesitated and said, “It’s in northern mountains. It is very far. It’s an internationally recognized school and has children from all over the world attending. It is an opportunity of a lifetime for Jax.” Mr. Marvik left out one major detail when he described the school Jax’s mom. He knew he couldn’t tell her everything about the school or she would probably not allow Jax to attend.

She walked in the house, not really believing what she had heard. After saving her money and buying a house in a good neighborhood with a good school, her son might end up going away to school. Al, had told her there was no tuition at the school. The school was solely supported by contributions from alumni and students were only accepted by recommendation from two or more alumni. She wondered if Al had been in contact with her ex and who the other person was who would recommend her son. She was sitting on the sofa trying to think it through when jax came down the stairs. “How’d did the meeting go?” he asked…”not well” she said. “You have to go to summer school or you have to repeat the sixth grade” …she watched his eyes well up with tears as she told him this. “There is one other option according to Mr Marvik” she said with hesitation. “There’s a school for gifted children where you can go for the summer. Mr. Marvik, said the summer course would get you caught up and allow you to progress to the seventh grade … he told me you’re eligible for this program, if you are interested.” Jax, thought about all he had just heard. He had just talked to the wrestling coach and was interested in joining wrestling next year in hopes of learning to defend himself. The coach weighed him at 97 pounds and informed him he would be the smallest guy on the team if he weighed the same at the start of the season. “Mom, I can come back, right? You’re not sending me away for good?” at hearing this, *her* eyes welled up with tears too and she said, “Jax, you stay with me if you want. I don’t want to send you away, but I don’t want you to miss an opportunity either. This school sounds very nice according to what Mr Marvik described. He said there are students and professors from all over the world. He described it as a very fun and exciting place. He said that’s where he met your father when they were your age.”

Jax went to bed that night thinking about this new school and what kind of experience he would have if he had to adjust to more new friends at another new school. His mom said it might be easier since he would be starting with a class that was entirely new except for a few older students who stay the summer as guidance counselors. He wondered if the new school would have wrestling. He wondered if he would be able to keep up, if everyone is gifted. He felt so alone at Woodrow Wilson Academy that anything sounded better. His only friends were, Mr Marvik and one other boy down the street who wasn’t fairing much better than him and was probably going to get held back too.

Jax went to speak with Mr Marvik the next day at school. It was the last day of school. He knocked on Mr Marvik’s door and asked for permission to enter. “Come right in Mr Tyson” was the reply. Mr Marvik greeted him with a big smile. “Well Jax, your mother tells me this decision is yours to make. Have you decided?” Jax paused before answering, “Mr Marvik, I was really looking forward to learning to wrestle next year and I’m a little afraid I will have the same problems at a new school as I’ve had here. “ Mr Marvik, looked at Jax with a warm smile and said, “Jax, the students at the new school will be from all over the world. It will be new for most of them too. The summer session is all you would be required to attend. There is a regular, two semester based school year there too. You would be eligible to attend seventh grade there or here after you complete your summer requirements. The choice would be you and your mother’s.” Jax had butterflies in his stomach. Mr Marvik waited for his answer and pulled a large, brown envelope out of his desk. “Obviously, you can come home to visit your mom when you get vacation or holiday and I believe they have a Parents day there to when she would come to see you.” Jax listened to this and said, “I want to try it.” Mr Marvik, handed Jax the large envelope he had taken from his desk. “Jax, in this envelope, you will find your travel itinerary, airline tickets, and some forms for your mother to fill out. There is also a brief informational catalog on the school. Please give this to your mother when you get home tonight. She will need to fill out the forms and get them back to me as soon as possible. Your semester here is done. Go home and get ready.” Jax, listened and looked at Mr. Marvik as he spoke. Jax, thought Mr. Marvik seemed proud of him at that moment.

Jax, ran out the door of the school and was immediately greeted by some students who were just arriving to start their last day of school. “Going home already?” said Erin McDow, standing next to Ed Sirhan and Paul Potri. Several other students also arriving at school broke out laughing. Jax turned red and kept walking. “Have fun in summer school “said Erin as Jax headed home. As Jax walked home, he thought about what Mr. Marvik said. It sounded very exciting to him.

Jax got home and wasn’t sure what to do. He thought he should wait for his mom to get home before he opened the envelope, but he wasn’t sure what he was supposed to get ready. His mom wouldn’t be home several more hours. He couldn’t call his mom at work unless it was an emergency and he didn’t want to get her in trouble or worry her. The last time he called her at work, he had cut his finger really bad and she raced home at 80 miles per hour. He decided to mow the lawn and do some chores around the house to kill time until she got home. She pulled into the drive much earlier than her usual time. He was still working on the yard. She had left work early after receiving a call from Mr Marvik. Jax told her about his decision and his conversation with Mr Marvik. Then he remembered the envelope and ran inside to get it. She followed him in and he came running back down the stairs from his room skipping stairs with each step down and then skipping the last five stairs all together. “Here” he said. Handing her the envelope. “ Mr Marvik said you have to fill out some forms and there is information on how I will travel in there. She opened the envelope while thinking about the conversation she had had with Mr Marvik only a couple hours ago. He had called her at work to let her know that he sent Jax home early and to let her know about the forms he needed her to fill out. She looked at Jax and said, “You’re sure you want to do this?” Jax didn’t hesitate this time saying, “absolutely.”

She opened the envelope and saw a single airline ticket. Jax would be flying out at 9:00am eastern standard time, gate 34, next friday. The Itinerary stated Jax would be picked up buy a driver on Thursday of the following week, who would drive him to the airport and possibly pickup other passengers on the way who would also be students attending summer classes at the school. Jax was to have only one suit case containing a weeks’ worth of summer clothing. The school catalogue had picture of a grizzly bear on the cover and a Native American standing next to the bear. The catalogue described many activities and sporting events jax would be involved in, as well as, academic responsibilities. The picture on the cover of the catalogue was a silhouette of a person on a paddle board crossing in front of a beautiful sunset. Jax’s Mom thought the pic was very pretty, but not very academic looking. However, she thought that perhaps that was the point since it was a summer school and they would want it to appear fun. The catalogue listed several sports: equestrian, lacrosse, archery and water sports. There were pictures of students riding horses in some sort of competition. There was also a picture of the school lacrosse team taken after winning a trophy several years ago. The name of the school caught her off guard, Zeegwung Mekanayzn. She knew it was a native name. She had always been embarrassed by her ancestry because of prejudices she had experienced as a child. However, the more she talked to Jax about the school and his options, the more she realized this was what he really wanted and maybe needed. She thought it over and decided it was probably going to be the best thing for Jax given his situation.

Thursday came quickly for Mrs. Tyson, but not for Jax. He had been ready and anxiously waiting for two days. He waited, but wasn’t sure what time his ride was supposed to pick him up. He woke up at 4:00 am, lying in bed imagining what his summer would be like. At 6:00 am the doorbell rang. Jax leapt from his bed and grabbed his bag. His mother went to the door, but saw no one through the peep hole. She opened the door and looked out and still didn’t see anything or anyone. She closed the door and had no sooner walked away and the doorbell rang again. She walked back and opened the door again, still not seeing anything. She was about to close the door and a gruff voice said, “Madam, I am here.” She looked down and to her astonishment saw a very small old man looking up at her. He looked to be about three feet tall, was well dressed and holding a clip board. “I am here to pick up Mr. Jax Tyson.” Feeling horrible, Mrs. Tyson apologized and invited the gentleman in. “Please come in and have a cup of coffee. Jax is ready, but..” The old man interrupted her saying, “Thank you madam, but I have more passengers to pick up and really must be getting along. May I assist with any luggage?” Jax was already at the door and said, “I’ve got it.” His Mom suddenly panicked and said, “I forgot to pack a lunch for you.” To which the driver said, “We have lots of food in the coach Madam.” She heard him say, “coach “and looked up to see a beautiful black RV parked in front of the neighbor’s house. The RV was about forty feet long, gloss black with smoke tinted windows. She looked down at her son who was carrying his bag with both hands. “Be good, write me often and call if you need anything.”…Jax looked at her with a smile, gave her a kiss and said, “ I will Mom. I love you.” He then turned and walked toward the RV, struggling to carry his bag with both hands. The little, gruff driver turned to Mrs. Tyson and said, “He will be fine madam. Don’t worry.” The little man’s face didn’t reassure her though. There was something about him that made her worry. She wondered how such a small man could drive such a large vehicle or even reach the peddles…. She walked outside to wave goodbye to Jax, but couldn’t see through the smoked glass of the RV. She waved anyway, hoping he could see her.

As Jax walked up to the RV a door opened near the middle of the vehicle and three small stairs folded out. The driver walking behind Jax said, “That is your entrance sir.” Again the driver asked Jax if he needed any assistance with his bag and Jax said, “ he could manage, thank you .” Another door opened near the front of the RV and the driver entered through that door. Jax watched the way the driver walked. The driver was very stout and walked like a large man, but was very small and old. Also, when the driver stepped onto the RV Jax thought he noticed the vehicle lean, as though the weight of the driver caused it to sink down on one side. As soon as Jax entered the RV he heard the driver’s voice over a speaker, “Sir, you can put your bag in one of the lockers toward the rear of the coach. We will be picking up a few more passengers on the way to the airport. There is a refrigerator full of food and refreshments. If you need assistance don’t hesitate to ask. Just say my name, Jacob and the intercom will automatically turn on. Make yourself comfortable. We have a long ride ahead of us.” Jax, looked out the window and could see his mom waving… he waved back as the RV pulled away.

It was kind of scary to be in such a large vehicle all alone. Jacob was in the front driving, but Jax felt as though he was alone. At first he sat on the sofa and just looked around, but soon he was hungry and decided to look for the refrigerator. Jax found the refrigerator in the adjoining compartment along with an entire kitchen. There was no soda in the refrigerator, only juice and fruits. “Jacob?” Jax said, wondering if the intercom actually worked. “yes sir?” was the immediate response from Jacob. “How much is the food?” Jax asked. “It’s all included as part of your tuition, which is covered by the school in full.” Jax, looked at all the fruit in amazement. There were: pears, apples, plums, red grapes, black grapes, purple grapes and white grapes, melons, green apples, red apples, oranges, straw berries, blue berries, black berries, apricots, nectarines, peaches, mangos, papayas and many he didn’t recognize. Jax grabbed the big red apple which seemed to be tempting him and a bottle of water.

There were books and magazines on the table next to the sofa. Most of the magazines were about outdoor activities: Hunting and Fishing, Photography, Astronomy, Farming and Horses. Jax, also found some comic books among magazines and pulled out one of his favorites, Sailor Jack. Jax fell asleep reading the comic after he ate his snack.

Jax was still waking up when he thought he heard voices talking. He opened his eyes and there were other people in the room with him. “You snore” said a little auburn haired girl when she noticed Jax was waking up. She was smiling at Jax and he hoped she was only kidding him. Jax, sat up and straightened his shirt. There were four more kids on the bus than there were when he fell asleep. They all looked to be about his age. The girl who told him he was snoring was the first to introduce herself. “My name is Willow. What’s yours?” she asked. He looked at her and replied, “my name’s Jax”. Jax, looked at the others. One boy with long black hair and seemingly black eyes was seated directly across from him. The boy didn’t say anything, but Jax got a chill when he looked at him. The remaining two passengers appeared to be brother and sister. They both had blue eyes and light colored hair. The light haired boy said, “My name is William Scruggs, but you can call me, Billy” as he said this he stuck out his hand for jax to shake. Jax smiled and as he shook Billy’s hand and said, “hello”. Billy continued, “this is my sister, Sara”. Sara, smiled and nodded hello to Jax without saying anything. Billy also introduced the boy with the black eyes. “This is, Raven Blackwell. His parents introduced us when we picked him up a little while ago. They told us he doesn’t speak much. They also told us not to be frightened of his pet, but they didn’t say what the pet was”. Upon hearing this, Raven looked at Jax with a smile and a friendly wave. Jax was relieved to see the smile and said, “nice to meet you, Raven”.

Raven was sitting quietly eating grapes while Billy and Sara were talking to Jax about summer school. Sara was telling Jax about a girl she knows from Facebook who is supposed to be at the camp when Jax noticed Raven reach inside his jacket with a grape and then withdraw his hand without the grape. “Raven, are you saving your grapes for later? Why are you putting them in your pocket?” Jax asked. Raven, smiled big and said, “I have a pet fox, but he’s not fond of the light.” Jax, looked at Raven a little more closely and could see his jacket move a little.” In disbelief Billy said, “You have a fox under your coat?” Upon hearing this Sara ran into the kitchen area and piered around the door at the boys. Raven said, “he’s little. He’s only two pounds.” Feeling braver, Sara stepped out of the kitchen when she heard it was only two pounds. Raven, opened his jacket and introduced his pet. “This is, Sly…. My pet fox bat.” Inside Raven’s jacket, hung upside down, was a huge bat that looked like a fox with wings. Sara, screamed and ran into the kitchen. The bat made a squeak and Raven closed his jacket. Raven said, “you can meet Sly later when we are in a more comfortable room. He’s nervous.” Sara yelled from the kitchen, “he’s nervous? Don’t you have a cage you can put him in?” Raven said, “I do, but he gets lonely and doesn’t like the cage.” Raven added, “He only eats fruit and is very friendly.”

They felt the bus slow down and then come to a stop. Jacob’s voice came over the intercom, “ok kids, here’s a chance for you to get out and stretch your legs.” The rear door opened and the stairs folded out. They were stopped at a scenic overlook on the side of the road. For the first time jax realized they were far from home. They had been driving for about fifteen hours and were in a mountainous area, at a very high altitude. It was still daylight. The sun was still shining bright, but behind and adjacent mountain and within an hour of setting. They stepped out of the bus one at a time and stretched as they took a few steps. They walked over to the guard rail that was next to the road and looked down the side of the mountain. It was a steep drop down to what seemed like nothingness. The bottom was pitch black in darkness. Jacob, got off the bus with them and walked over to check on them.

“Are you kiddies enjoying the ride so far?” asked Jacob in a gruff voice. They all said, “yes sir” at the same time. Jacob, smiled a little at the nervousness he seemed to instil in the youngsters. “don’t get too close to that edge. It’s a long way down. They don’t call that valley, Hell’s Corridor for nothing.” Just then Jax thought he saw something in the distance, glowing in the dark, but it disappeared. Then he saw it again and it was moving, but it disappeared again. He asked Jacob about it. Jacob told them there are fireflies in the area and then instructed them to get back on the bus. Jax was the last of the kids to get back on the bus with Jacob standing behind him looking as though he was standing guard. As Jax was walking up the stairs to get on the bus, he took one last look in the direction of the glowing light. This time he saw two lights and they appeared much closer. He thought they looked like glowing eyes. The door closed behind Jax, with Jacob still outside.

As Jax and the others got into the bus, they all went the window to see if they could see the glowing lights. They couldn’t see much. The sun was setting and the tinted glass drastically limited what they could see outside. Raven seemed to be looking with special interest at the window. As though he could see something the others couldn’t. They felt the bus lean to one side and then heard Jacob’s voice over the intercom. “Ok kiddies, we are on our way again. No more stops until we get to the airport.” Raven, continued to stare out the window. “Raven, do you see something?” Jax asked. Raven suddenly looked terrified. Jax, turned around and saw a large shadow at the window. There was something big looking in the window. The eyes weren’t visible now, but Jax, Raven, Billy and Sara could all tell they were being watched though the glass. The shadow then moved toward the door. Jax ran to the door and turned the latch to lock it. They heard a growling sound and the sound of metal scratching. Sara screamed in a panic and just then, The bus lurched forward and was on the road again. Jacob, came over the intercom and said, “don’t worry kids. I think there are squirrel monkeys in this area. Sometimes they jump on the busses, but they are harmless.”

Jax looked at Raven and asked, “what do you think it was?” Raven looked at Jax and said, “I’m not sure, but it was no squirrel monkey.” Sara said, “the shadow was huge. How could that be a squirrel monkey?” Raven continued, “my father told me about a demon bear that has glowing eyes and only hunts at night. He always told me it was an old native myth.” They had only been on the road for a few minutes when Jacob came over the intercom and informed them they would be stopping shortly due to one of the rear tires having a slow leak.

Jacob pulled the bus to the side of the road in an area where he thought he would be able to safely change the tire. Jax and the others could tell when Jacob stepped off the bus because it rocked back and forth. As he walked past their door, he pounded on the door and said, “just relax in there. I’ll have us back on the road in a few minutes.”

They couldn’t see Jacob, but they could hear him working on the tire and see his flash light moving about in the darkness. They could feel the bus as it was lifted in the air by the heavy duty jack and then lowered after the tire was changed. They heard Jacob tightening the lugs on the new tire and then saw the flash light moving toward the front of the bus. They heard the driver’s door open and felt the bus leaned as Jacob stepped in. The bus started up and Jacob came on the intercom, “tire fixed and ready to roll.” They were very relieved the bus was moving down the road away from whatever it was that scared them.

Elly and Bean Blanock operated several sea planes in Cold Foot Bay. The name of their company was simply, Elly Bean Air Service. Their company was crucial to the area for delivery of people and supplies. Jacob radioed ahead to let the airport know he might be delayed thirty minutes due to the tire change. “Jacob, we’ve been running them in all day. Thirty minutes isn’t going to make a difference.” Said a sweet elderly sounding voice on the radio. Jacob said, “Elly, why are you answering the radio? Where is Bean?” The voice on the radio laughed and said, “He’s piloting one of the planes. We’ve had three flying back and forth all day. Jacob, there’s still six more busses behind you due to arrive tonight and early tomorrow “Jacob listened and felt bad the elderly couple was working so hard at their age. He suggested, “I could take a group of them over on the barge. That would save you at least a few trips.” Elly replied, “There’s no way the children are going on that barge in the middle of the night. We will get them there safe and sound. You just get them here.” Jacob, forgot he had turned the intercom on to talk to his passengers earlier.

Jax, Billy, Sara and Raven all listened intently to the conversation Jacob was having with Elly.

Arrival at airport. .rondevuez with other buses and children ….private jet to sea planes