

KAI RIVERS— STAYING ALIVE

TAMARA SHAW



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This book is dedicated to my son, Leopold.

When he moved to France at the age of 4, he didn't speak French. As children sometimes can be cruel, he was subject to bullying. He suffered from nightmares and was sick often because the kids were calling him names and picking on him.

Immersed in the French culture, Leopold began to lose his interest in speaking English, afterall, it was a subject of ridicule amongst his peers. But on the weekends, he and I would spend time creating in English. The hours we spent together on this story helped him resolve some of the bullying issues and made him feel better about being different, bilingual. At the same time, we enjoyed quality time together talking about dinosaurs, fossils and science in English. Eventually, the story took on a life of its own.

This book is also dedicated to all of you who feel like no one knows who you are. May you have courage.

Special thanks to all of the explorers and scientists in the world changing history.

Special thanks to Franck, Barney, Sue, Alyssa, Steve, Sophie, Ninine, Kimberley, my family, and all the people that helped to make this book happen.

CHAPTER I

Kai Rivers told himself that even though he was going into a mall filled with a million back-to-school shoppers in search of the *latest and greatest*, that he would just hide in a book store and be completely happy while his sister shopped for the entire school year. Shopping has never been his thing, *ever*. Nor reading books about genetic discoveries either... He takes one off the shelf.

“How do cells think? *Unlocking the Genetic Code*,” by Dr. Rubin Sterling, leading palaeontologist and genetic scientist. His current findings are changing the world as we know it. Kai gets a little hopeful and opens the book, maybe this will give him some answers to his problem, something more than colorful illustrations of dinosaurs. He looks up.

Suddenly, he can't block the overwhelming sensation that he is being watched. He searches the crowd. There doesn't seem to be anyone, or anything unusual around. He shuffles through the pages of the book. Then stops again. The hair on his arms are standing up on end now. Yep, he is definitely being watched and it is not by someone with good intentions.

Kai focuses now on a spot in the air, half way between him and the book he is no longer reading. “Where are they?” he softens his focus until he can see the space in the air, gold string-like flashes of light swirling about. They move slowly at first then the sparks of gold speed up, spinning randomly, as if dancing in the air. Suddenly,

amidst the tendrils Kai watches a flash of red move in from the right, sending the gold flecks swarming to the left. “There it is.”

Kai nonchalantly scratches his head and eyes the direction of the aggressive energy. Outside the store, Axel Lightwood and his team of goons gesture toward him. This should be interesting.

Axel is a head shorter than his buddies and the reason that Kai is changing schools, *again*. In fact he has changed schools eight times since he was three years old, because there always seemed to be one that had to provoke him. One bad ass that has to prove something territorial. UuuGGGGHHHHH! What is his problem?! Kai tries to blow it off and walks toward the cashier, maybe they’ll forget about him. How is it in the middle of all this mall madness, they found me? I mean what are the odds...? And, why does Axel care?

Kai has never understood why people are taught to always take the path of least resistance. It seems contrary to every cell in his body to walk away and “*be the bigger man...*” You don’t see this in nature. When an animal is threatened it defends itself until it accepts its death. And that is why Kai has changed schools so many times.

You would have thought that Axel would have had enough last year. But with Kai’s sister’s good cover up story, Axel still has something to prove. Axel doesn’t realize that it was Kai that gave him the broken arm and 15 stitches last year. According to Axel, he was about to “take care of” Kai, when a creature appeared out of nowhere and attacked him. Nowhere in nature does the carnivore, the stronger beast, hide to avoid hurting another. Kai smirks, why should he?

Axel and his muscle gang round the new Mustang display in the center of the mall. ‘Like a herd of hyenas,’ Kai thinks to himself, as the group of five elbow each other and laugh anxiously, anticipating what they are going to do to their prey. He quickly pays for the book, zips it into his backpack and walks out the store in stealth mode. It’s time to make himself invisible. The invisible man... It would be awesome to have that super power about now. The pack tries to gain on him, but they are hindered by the crowd.

The *thrill* is what adrenalin junkies talk about in extreme sports. It is the fun of doing something dangerous. But there is no mistaking that the ‘thrill,’ simply put, is just plain old fear. It is the same fear that carnivores and prey both feel as they race at top speeds, zig-zagging over dangerous, unknown terrain. This same feeling is what this pack of hyenas behind Kai are emitting, they have their eyes on their target and are not going to let him go. He has to get away from them.

Wild, uncontrollable adrenalin courses through every cell of Kai’s body. Starting to tremble, he bends over and reminds himself to breathe. After all, he can’t let himself change here in the middle of a mall filled with thousands of people. The last thing he wants to do is to hurt anyone. He searches for an exit, any escape route. Suddenly, he doubles over in pain... He has to get away from all of these people!

Across the aisle, his sister, Bea, sees him and waves for him to come and join her. She is oblivious to his near state of attack. Figures, she is in Fossil World... the title says it all. Most girls would have bought the mall, she hasn’t started shopping.

Kai backtracks past the Mustang display, dodging pedestrians and Axel’s crew, who are unaware of the potential danger surrounding them. He knocks over a toddler. She yelps, but Kai catches her quickly before she falls to the ground, and gently places her on her feet. His reflexes are notable. The child’s mother is speechless. He pushes past the others blocking his path until he finally makes his way into the store and stops at Bea’s side. He looks around and breathes a sigh of relief when he finds the gang is no longer in sight.

“Hey, check this jaw out...!” Bea says, she’s her usual cheery self. She hands Kai a fossil to look at. “The clerk says it’s the jaw bone of a prehistoric dog, but it can’t be. It has the same self-sharpening tooth system, but, I swear it can’t be the dog. Check it out... What do you think it is?”

Kai puts it back on the shelf and says, “Definitely carnivore.” Then, “Seriously, we gotta go, Bea.”

“What’s the hurry?” But her smile quickly fades when she sees what has gotten Kai riled up. Axel comes up from behind and shoves Kai forward and to the floor. Bea stops herself from jumping in.

“Hey weirdo. Whatcha doin’...? Playing Barney with your big sis again?” Axel smirks. His buddies add to the joke, “No... no... not Barney... Dino Train.” The thugs laugh anxiously and continue, “No... Dino Dan!” Their laughter is uncontrollable as they begin to double over, turn red, cry... “How ’bout – Dinoc--” Axel punches his buddy painfully in his shoulder before he can finish the sentence. The bullies put on their grim faces.

Bea can’t take it any longer and steps right up to Axel, “If I remember correctly, it was you who was playing with ‘dinosaurs’ not so long ago. You remember... when the GIANT nano t-rex came out of nowhere and attacked you. Well, that *is* what you told the entire school, right?” Bea has not learned to take the path of least resistance. She actually enjoys prodding Axel.

Axel remembers the painfully embarrassing moment that haunts him since last school year. He had told everyone the truth, a dinosaur had attacked him but everyone broke into hysterical laughter. He hadn’t picked himself up off the floor before he was surrounded by the entire school pointing at him, the crazy lunatic. While others pressed their way through to get a closer look at the freak who had seen a dinosaur, he had tried to find an escape route. It was the most humiliating moment in this bully’s life. And it was Kai’s fault. If Kai hadn’t been there none of it would have happened.

Axel pushes Bea out of the way. She stumbles into the fossil display and the ‘hyenas’ laugh. Axel looks past Bea but he can’t find Kai... “Where’s the loser...?”

CRASH! A rock display in the back corner has just been destroyed. He looks at his buddies and gives the signal, “We have ourselves a chicken-run.” They spread out and head toward the back corner.

In the back corner, Kai falls to the floor shattering glass shelving. A young sales clerk rushes to his aide. He cries out in agony as his

bones pop and crack changing shape. The clerk steps back terrified and then runs off screaming, slamming into Axel and his crew.

Axel shoves her out from in front of him, “Move out of my way!” Then, he turns and walks full speed into the stomach of a 12 foot prehistoric Cave Bear. Axel backs up and wipes his face, spitting fur out of his mouth, “Ugh, disgusting.” Then he looks up. The bear opens his mouth displaying all of its sharp fangs and roars. The color drains from Axels face, he’s paralyzed with fear. The others take off running. Who has lead feet now?!

The sound of the roar echoes throughout the mall. Outside Fossil World the crowd stops and looks around nervously... Is there something cool going on there that they should go and check out? Or is it best to just keep moving. People are stalemated... The hyenas bolt out of the store, running for their lives.

Suddenly, Axel crashes through the window, landing in the middle of the mustang display. The cave bear leaps through the window effortlessly, following his prey. It lands on top of the little bully, pinning him down with his large front claws. The cave bear roars again, his massive head is ten times bigger than the boy’s, who struggles to breathe beneath the pressure. Just when he would tear out Axel’s throat...

Bea pulls her hoodie over her head and races out of what is left of the door to Fossil World. She places herself right in front of the enormous beast. Her eyes widen in shock, “Wow... Impressive!” Then, mustering as much courage as possible, she holds up her hands and screams with all her might, “STOOOOOOOOOPPPPP!”

Her cry is heart-stopping and the crowd grows silent.

Bea runs. The cave bear leaves his meal, preferring the chase and takes on the bigger challenge. He bounds after Bea. As the cave bear advances toward her, menacingly, she backs up on top of the hood of the Mustang. Terrified, she stands as tall as she can and forces herself to not budge an inch. The cave bear jumps on the car, his claws slip and slide on the metal. He swipes at Bea, uncontrollably, and its claw tears her hoodie.

Bea examines the damage and loses all patience. As the beast claws tear into the new metal searching for stability, she turns and with all of her might, punches him, the cave bear, square in the jaw. The giant prehistoric creature wobbles and slips and then grabs hold of Bea as it falls over the rail pulling Bea with him.

The crowd cheers excitedly and races to the rail to not miss the end of the performance. They find, Bea, struggling to keep her balance, now astride the cave bear's back. It's the safest place to be, she thinks. The crowd cheers and Bea, never missing an opportunity to entertain, bows her head at the crowd and then kicks the bear in the diaphragm, confident that the bear will move forward like a horse. But the cave bear roars and stretches, its arms and claws flailing trying to get Bea off his back. She screams when one of its claws knicks her shoulder. The bear standing on its hind quarters is tall enough now to swipe at the crowd on the floor above. The crowd steps back, apprehensively. Bea, holds on to the cave bear with all of her might.

The cave bear growls, menacingly. Then it leans forward on all fours and runs. People shriek and fall out of the way of the careening beast.

As the pounding of the creatures paws echoes throughout the mall, security guards swoop in and follow the large animal. Close, but not too close, *tentatively in pursuit*. One trigger happy guard stops and aims. The captain stops him, "You could hurt the girl. Put it away soldier!"

Bea leans in closer to the cave bear's ear and talks as calmly as she can.... "Kai, it's okay now. You're okay. Come on, now. It's okay..." Just then, the cave bear leaps over a man bending to look through his shopping bags. Bea is knocked up against the ceiling. The force makes her lose her balance and her grip. Her screams echo throughout the mall, as she dangles precariously from the cave bears neck. The cave bear stumbles, skidding to a halt on its shoulder. Struggling to get on its feet, the cave bear rolls over Bea. The weight of the enormous animal knocks the air out of her. Her wide eyes

tear up, and are filled with fear. She struggles to speak, “Ma--...” The burning in her lungs makes it impossible.

The fierce creature stands now on his hind legs and lets out a terrifying roar. Bea’s limp body swings from his neck. The bear swipes at Bea as if she is an annoying fly that keeps hovering around it’s head. Gathering all of her strength now, as the bear descends on all four feet, she swings herself into a more secure position on its back. The bear takes off at full speed.

Bea is used to speed, however, and this doesn’t scare her. Having spent the last three months on a motorcross team, this is nothing in comparison. She focuses and gently rubs the back of the animal’s head. She speaks as calmly as possible. “Easy boy, easy. Kai, it’s okay. Kai. Come on...”

Something starts to register within the cave bear. His pace becomes more even, rhythmic, less panicky. Bea continues, “It’s okay, Kai. They’re not going to bother you anymore. You are safe.” The beast half turns to look in Bea’s eyes. “You’re okay, Kai.” this moment is crucial to him changing back. She reassures him. “Go there...” She points at double doors indicating the employee exit.

Kai is tired now and his eyes are becoming more human-like. His pace begins to slow. Bea tries to cover her new-found worry, “You can’t change back here, Kai. Go quickly!” It would be impossible for her to cover up the fact that her brother has a hulk-sized problem. But the difference between Kai and a superhero is that he is unpredictable and actually *alive*, not a comic book creation. He can’t control when he changes and the creature he changes into. And, if he is captured... just thinking about it makes her shudder. All of her childhood she has been protecting him, she won’t stop now. She would never forgive herself. She kicks him hard in the diaphragm... He yelps in pain and with new-found courage he charges through employee exit doors.

The dark corridor illumines when they enter. The cave bear falls immediately to the floor, unconscious. Bea races to move a large display in front of the monster, hiding it from view. She quickly

turns her hoodie inside out from black to bright green... the benefits of the latest fashions... She is an expert at covering up loose ends. However, the tear isn't any less noticeable in bright green. Horrified that her hood is ruined, her bottom lip begins to quiver, she could cry, "Jerk!"

But there is no time to lose. Bea looks around, taking in her surroundings. She is in a hallway filled with lockers. Behind her is an employee staff room and to the right a large corridor that leads to employee parking. But before she can make her next move, mall security slams through the double doors, swarming the corridor.

The six mall cops are frantic. They are not police nor *animal control*... What are they supposed to do with a 12 foot *bear*...? Half want to shoot it, after all, their job in this situation is to protect the public from harm and then they would finally get the chance to really shoot their firearm. The other half look like they could vomit, they didn't sign on for violence.

They see Bea. Thinking on her feet, Bea raises a shaking finger and acts as if she is so terrified that she can't speak. She points them toward the employee garage. The guards race off. One of the guards takes this opportunity to rest behind, no doubt, where it is safe. "Are you alright, miss?"

Bea reacts almost too confidently, "I'm fine." Then she softens, "Go ahead, the other's *need* you."

When the coast is clear, Bea rummages through lockers. She finds a pair of jeans, a sweatshirt; she tosses them over the sign, to the cave bear.

"Uhhhhh," Kai groans. His head is splitting and pounding with every heart beat. He struggles to sit up. He sees the clothes then realizes what has happened. He moans again for a different reason. It all comes back to him. Axel... Not again. He pulls the clothes on. Just when he would feel sorry for himself, a pair of army boots fly over the sign at a swift pace and clock him in the head. "Owwww!"

"Hurry up, Kai! Bea looks at her watch. "We're late! Mom is going to kill us!"

CHAPTER 2

“Where have you two been?!” Kai dives onto the back seat of the modest sedan and Bea slams the door quickly then hops in the front seat.

“I have a hundred things to do before you guys leave tomorrow, the least you could do is be on---,” but her sentence is interrupted by sirens. The sound is deafening, as three fire trucks, four police cars, and one animal control van race past them. Realizing now the reason why they are late, Kai’s mother looks incriminatingly at Kai and Bea, she breathes in expecting the worst... ‘What happened now?’

Bea responds first... ‘I slugged a cave bear,’ she looks at her Mom’s shocked expression - adds, “Minor injuries to civilians.” Then she pours on a sugary smile and adds. “*Did you finish your shopping?*”

“Don’t try to change the subject!”

Bea takes another approach. “Axel *schmaxel* and his gang of goons attacked Kai. Then there was a cave bear, the goons ran, Axel flew, I fought the cave bear. And then I rode on the back of the cave bear into the employee exit - *very cool, but a bit bumpy* - stole some clothes...” Remembering, “Mom, look...,” indicating the tear in her sweatshirt, whining, “The cave bear tore my favorite hoodie!”

Mom takes a good look now at Kai who is clearly upset. His mother studies what he is wearing. “We’ll return them anonymously, easy enough...” She tosses a shopping bag back to him... “Good thing I picked up a few more things for you.” Kai opens the bag to find a

handful of black t-shirts and jeans, two pairs of converse, and black socks.

Bea reminds her mother, insistently, “Did I mention he tore my favorite hoodie!”

Her mother shakes her finger, “Non-n-no. Nope. It’s not going to work this time... You have more than enough clothes.”

“But, it was my favourite!” She frowns. “He destroys his clothes, gets two new pairs. He destroys mine...?” She throws a look of hatred at Kai. “And, I didn’t get a chance to shop because of him!”

Kai who has been sitting in the back listening to what he would consider non-important babble, suddenly can’t take it any longer. “Clothes?! Are you kidding me?!” “What is wrong with you?! I could have killed someone! I am getting worse! It has been only two months since I last changed. And all you are worrying about is replacing *clothes*?!”

“My interchangeable hoodie saved your ass. You owe me.”

Their mother raises her hand, like she has done a 100 times before. “No swearing.”

“I owe you nothing. I told you we needed to leave, but you wouldn’t listen. You always have to be in the center of everything.”

“Really?! All you do is mope and run away. Sarcastically, Bea mocks him, “*Boo hooo hooo. I’m not normal...* You’re a coward!”

The argument is escalating rapidly as Kai’s voice raises, “You provoked him. You wanted a fight.”

“What?!... He... You... That’s it, FREAK!” She unbuckles her seatbelt and starts to jump into the back seat.

His mother pulls over the car, slams on her breaks and pushes Bea back into her seat. “Let’s get something clear right now, Kai. Your sister and I are very worried about you.” She looks at Bea, warningly.

Bea pipes in, “I’m not.” Her mother shushes her. Bea grumbles. Her mother leans in closer to Kai.

“Yes, your ‘episodes’ are becoming more frequent. But it is not the end of the world. Tomorrow, you are going to meet Dr. Sterling

and begin to get some answers. “I know that he will be able to figure everything out. He’s a genius.” She looks at Bea, “You have more than enough clothes, pick up a sewing needle and fix it.” She exhales, then continues, “Tomorrow, you are going to the best science school in the country, with Dr. Sterling and his team of the world’s most renowned paleontologists and geneticists.

Kai and Bea correct her, “Geneticists.”

“Genetic scientists, you know what I mean – And that is the only reason why we are able make light of anything, *mon grande*. Because we have confidence you will find out what you need to know and get answers. I know it. She knows it. Now it is your job to believe it and make it a reality.” Their mother is a one of a kind gem, beautiful, can speak five languages, confident, and honest. She takes both of their hands in hers, “It’s going to be fine.”

There is a long moment before anyone moves or speaks. Kai focuses on a piece of dust floating through the sunlight around his mother’s head. She’s right, he knows it.

His mother adds, “ZEN.”

Bea and Kai both say it, “ZEN.”

Bea pipes in, searching for the positive, “I know that I mentioned that I got to ride on a cave bear. You did hear that, right? I mean, way cool!”

CHAPTER 3

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP

“Look it’s a dinosaur!”

Kai wakes up in a panic, his arms flaying, fighting something in the air. He sits up suddenly, bumping his head on the window of the bus. He opens his eyes and as if he is still dreaming, he sees giant prehistoric raptors taking flight in a forest. It can’t be... Kai rubs his eyes and looks again. The raptors are actually a small flock of birds flying away from the bus.

“Ha! Made you look,” Bea laughs out loud, then continues, “You should have seen your face!”

Kai socks his sister’s arm. She rubs it off, and then tells him the real reason that she woke him, “At the rate this bus is moving, we should be there *‘in a jiffy’*” her sapphire eyes dance wildly, lighting up her face. Her long, sun-bleached brown hair she refers to as muddy brown, floats around her shoulders as she laughs. She is beautiful but not a princess, she is completely obsessed about realizing her dreams – to become a reknowned paleontologist, and to Kai, she can be the most annoying person on the planet.

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP

The sound is louder now and more insistent. “Your backpack is still beeping,” she glances at the army green sack at his feet.

Kai looks at Bea concerned now, then opens the sack. He pulls out an electrometer, an instrument that measures among many

things, electrical currents and magnetic waves. Bea looks at it in disbelief, “Geez-Louise! The energetic readings are off the chart!” She snatches it from Kai, “90%, Kai...! We’ve never seen 90% before...” She hands it back to him, her worried look can’t hide her excitement.

Next to the digital time that reads 7:32, the red power light is at 90%. Kai shakes the machine, maybe the batteries are going. Nothing. No change... He turns down the volume. What does it mean? It means that he is going into a potentially extremely dangerous situation. Every time he turns it gets harder and harder to come back. He becomes an uncontrollable monster... And the truth is, he is beginning to prefer being the monster, wild and free, than worrying all the time about the possibilities of hurting people.

Kai looks down at the book perched in his lap ‘How do cells think?’ There are so many questions that need answering. Kai sighs, unlike Bea, he doesn’t see why everyone is so in love with dinosaurs... Each new discovery just proves to him how dinosaurs were extremely dangerous and it is best that they don’t exist in this world. Ever since he started having episodes, he knows he is right. The book cover picture makes a T-Rex look like a sweet house pet. Kai smirks, this is exactly what he means... If people truly were faced with the virile, savage creatures... one-on-one with a feral beast, they would stop wishing. Kai’s thoughts are interrupted by a sharp elbow to his ribs as Bea opens a poster-sized paper. “Ayyy... What’s that?” he asks.

“Bea World! It is my vision board,” she giggles, proudly.

Kai takes the bait, “What is a ‘Bea Wo-- *vision board*’?”

“It’s easy to explain. Basically, it works on the law of attraction, you know, ‘what you think of you attract.’ All I have to do is look at it and imagine that I already live this life... Feel gratitude for already having it... like deep in my soul gratitude. Then fold it up and trust it will happen. Then it will come true.” She closes her eyes and breathes in pointedly, focusing on her dreams.

Kai interrupts her bliss... “Okay... I get it...” He points to various pictures on her vision board as he talks. “Here are all your new, super cool friends that love you. Here is the latest scientific technology

you want to work with. All ‘A-s’ ... that’s a given! He points to a digitally manipulated picture of Dr. Sterling with his arm around her. “*Teacher’s pet*–”

“-Yep, you know it. I know exactly what I am going to say when I see him, too.” Her voice changes and she begins her exultation: “Dr. Sterling, It is my great pleasure to meet you but in no way is it a coincidence. When I was two years old, I decided I was going to be the best that I could be, and to be the best, you have to learn from the best... So it is no coincidence that I am here, because you, Dr. Sterling are the best!”

There is an awkward moment. Kai searches for his words carefully...

No time wasted, Bea, stops him short... “I know that it is a bit corny...” Kai nods, affirmatively... She continues, “and a bit heavy handed... But it reflects my true feelings and I am going to stick with it.”

Kai looks back at the vision board. He points to another picture. “But who is this sweaty, shirtless guy with the hair gel?”

“I don’t know his name yet.” She turns, suddenly realizing Kai is mocking her and takes ‘Bea World’ away from him. “You can make fun of me if you want... I am thankful that my new world is being created. It will be light, peaceful, and Zen. Without you in it! What are you thankful for?”

Kai doesn’t respond. He is thankful for many things that he would never tell her. She’s a pain, but he is thankful that she is still alive. He is hopeful that Dr. Sterling will be able to shed some light on what is wrong with him. Since Dr. Sterling is leading the greatest research team ever on genetics, manipulating genes, turning them on and off to create a dinosaur – he might be the one person who can explain the changes that happen to Kai when he gets stressed. If it is the stress that provokes the change, or not. But since living a life stress free is not as easy as it sounds, he doesn’t dare get even a bit hopeful. But he is thankful that there is the possibility, a little hope, of being cured.

Suddenly, the bus lurches to the left, two-wheeling a curve. All the people in the bus search for something to hold on to. All except the daredevil bus driver who focuses on the road with ‘formula one’ intensity.

Bea braces her legs against the seat in front of her as she very carefully closes her vision board. She shouts out, “Dude, what’s the rush?!” But the bus driver doesn’t reply, instead he takes on another sharp curve. The tires and passengers shriek. Bea starts to panic. She touches Kai’s arm. “Code Zen, z-eAAH-en, pleASE... the objective of this move is Z – e – n !” Bea squeezes his arm.

Kai, used to living on the edge, responds, “Ha! I thought the objective was to survive!” From his calm exterior, and focused intensity, it is a bit surprising to find him *white knuckling* the armrest. The well-inhabited bus lurches to the left and Kai’s book catapults across the cab in the opposite direction. He catches it almost too easily before it crosses the aisle – his reflexes are notable to the kid sitting across from them. “ZEN doesn’t have to mean beautiful bamboo gardens... Zen is an art of balancing adventure!”

Bea adds her two sense, “Yeah, yeah, easy for you to say. You’re not the one sitting next to the unbalanced adventurer!”

The GPS on the bus sounds out, “100 meters to your destination.” The bus slows now, but not quick enough. It rattles and trembles as it races over speed bumps.

“Next stop, Dinosaur World, Dinosaur Hotel, Sterling School of Science, Dinosaur Lake, Dinosaur Zoo, Dinosaur Sub...” The bus driver sighs, “You get it... Dinosaurs.”

The passengers are awestruck... “Wow!”

“AWESOME!”

“This is... *school?*”

“There’s the zoo!”

Kai takes his first glance at the vegas-style, ostentatious site. He tries to comfort Bea, “It’s going to work, Bea. We’re going to get some answers.” He searches for a response. “Zen, right?”

After a moment, Bea nods, “You - Zen. You better not ruin it for me.”

Placed inside a mountain quarry, the DINOSAUR RESORT holds prehistoric caves, a hospital, a prestigious school of science, a zoo, an attraction park, swimming pools, conference halls, an observatory, you name it. With the mountain towering behind and imitation dinosaurs climbing over the hotel’s 300 foot facade, the passengers are left speechless. Bea interrupts the open-mouthed silence, “I feel at home already!”

CHAPTER 4

The bus rolls to a stop at the entrance. Kai and Bea descend the steps tentatively and look up at the sharp tooth-filled smile of a life-like model Spinosaurus. Written on the entrance 1920's-style marquis, next to the head of the carnivore is, 'WELCOME TO THE DINOSAUR HOTEL!' Suddenly, the eyes of the monster flash red and the dinosaur ROARS as a roller coaster car filled with screaming tourists descends the demon drop of the famous DINO SHREDDER, one of the hotel's amusement park attractions and flies into the mouth of the dinosaur.

Bea says to herself, in disbelief, "It is hard to believe the world's greatest paleontologist lives... *here!*"

Bea looks to Kai for a response, but he isn't listening. He is focused on the wheels of a roller coaster car as it dips and turns just above his head. The wheels spark fire as the track lights up like a chain of genetic DNA code of different colors. The thundering car of terrified tourists flies over the DNA code. A spark becomes a flash and the Spinosaurus roars a monstrous call and suddenly Kai's reality shifts...

A real spinosaurus head moves toward Kai through a magical mirror-like wall. First, its nose, then the eyes, inching closer and closer to Kai. He doesn't dare move, doesn't dare breathe. He is close enough to see the perspiration on the monsters skin. Saliva drips

out of its mouth. The hunter and the prey. After a long, penetrating stare, Kai's hallucination is interrupted by a very irritated sister.

"Kai! Kai!!!"

Bea gives Kai another push. He turns defensively, arms posed, ready to strike.

"Whoa... Whoa..." She's scared but she covers, "Don't look so nervous... I've seen worse!" She says kiddingly, but it is easy to remember how many times she has been terrified by the creatures Kai has become. Michael Jackson's thriller is nothing in comparison. She smirks.

Kai exhales, "This is a bad idea."

Still irritated, "It's just a roller coaster, freak!" Bea looks at him very seriously and says under her breath, "I swear, if you--" She stops mid-sentence, it's not worth saying and she is going to keep focused on the positive. "It is going to be great. This is your chance to be normal. Just have fun! And, let me have a normal life." She straightens the last bits of evidence from the long trip from her sun top and skirt. Puts on her game face... She has been ready for this day since the day she was born.

Kai swings his backpack on his shoulder, and watches as the roller coaster twists and turns away in the distance. It's just a roller coaster... and it's now or never. They gather their reserve and one-by-one, walk willingly into the mouth of the dinosaur, and the enormous rotating doors, move them into...

The center of a multi-story prehistoric universe, otherwise known as *The Core*.

Complete with museum expectations: a towering tyrannosaurus-rex skeleton stands in one corner surrounded by a group of young tourists and parents taking photos; tropical shrubs and trees hosting colorful bird-dinos in various stages of flight; prehistoric sketches on the wall tell the stories of what has passed and what might come your way as you walk through the resort; and the most magnificent 12 foot crystal waterfall.

At this moment, the lobby is buzzing with excitement as dinosaur lovers from all over the world arrive to take part in this fantasy world. Disney World has nothing on this place. A group of teen-aged greeters, ‘Student Hosts,’ with matching lab coat uniforms, wait excitedly to welcome the crowd. As people enter the doors, they are shuffled like a deck of cards to each host.

Kai is quickly met by Etienne Le Roy. “Welcome to the Dinosaur Hotel, Prehistoric World and SSS. How may I help you?”

Kai quickly answers, “School transfer.”

Etienne who hasn’t taken his eyes off of his tablet, finally looks up and surveys his potential competition, “Your name, Sir?”

“Kai Rivers.”

The host pushes keys and more keys. Kai waits, feeling the stress of the commotion around him, the noise is overwhelming.

Then, through the noise Kai hears a growl. He shrugs it off, trying to keep his cool. *I must be imagining things!* But not a second later, Kai hears it again. He can’t be imagining this. He looks around suspiciously, is he the only one who heard it? Kai looks for Bea – she is nowhere in sight. Etienne still has his head in his computer and is typing at a feverish pace, there is no way he heard it.

Suddenly, Kai is shoved by a life-size robotic ALLOSAUR, and when Kai turns he is met with a deafening ROAR. Survival instincts kick in and with his quick reflexes, Kai clocks the dinosaur – fist to jaw. The dinosaur robot stumbles back and then moves in for round two.

Etienne puts a hand on Kai’s shoulder, and says, mockingly to the dinosaur, “At ease, Fluffy. This one believes you’re real.”

Nearby patrons smirk, others openly laugh, and some don’t pay any attention. Kai’s olive complexion hides his embarrassment, and his hair standing on end could be blamed on the air conditioning. He laughs it off and looks around.

Bea is talking with her student host. Incredible! Her host could very well be an exact replica of the picture on her vision board. How does she do that?!

The host is drooling over Bea. And, as if he has practiced in front of a mirror a half a million times, he sweeps his long bangs across his forehead to reveal one eye. “Ah... yes... Right... I’m Mark. What’s your name?”

Bea smiles at him – he’s chocolate fudge cake with a dollop of vanilla. After a long awkward pause, he asks again... “And you are?”

“Bea...” She studies Mark as he checks his tablet for her name. “Bea, Bea...”

Bea corrects him, “Oh, sorry... Beatrice Rivers.”

“Here you are...” He finds her name on the roster then looks up at her, fitting the name to the face, “Beatrice...”

As if he has just dropped the freezing, vanilla ice scream down her shirt, she stops him with an irritated gesture, “Bea... just *Bea*.” Then she pours on the sweet syrup-py smile again.

“Follow me, ... *Bea*.” He smiles, dumb-foundedly, at her. She is going to like it here!

Kai catches Bea’s eyes, she lets him know she is okay by gesturing with her fingers - ‘Zen’. Mark puts his hand on her back and leads her away.

Kai returns his attention back to *Fluffy, the Allosaurus*... it is an amazingly life-like robot. Fluffy mirrors Kai’s movements. The dinosaur gets more aggressive... Moves in and growls... So close...

Inside the dinosaur costume is Penelope Gray. She directs a very nice high-end camera. She whispers to herself, “black, brown...” She is filming Kai and is focused on his dark brown eyes. She pushes on him again and zooms in. And, to her shock, Kai’s brown eyes have turned red and the pupils are now reptilian. Fluffy’s breath stops in her throat and she whispers a little louder now, “Wow... Hunka Daddy-o! What’s this?” Fluffy zooms in even closer but Kai’s eyes have returned to dark brown.

Kai interrupts her filming when he speaks, “Hunka-daddy-o--, what?” Surprised that Kai could hear her, she steps back.

However, Etienne who hasn’t heard anything except Kai’s last remark, interrupts, “What?”

Could this day get any worse for Kai? He quickly recovers to protect his downward momentum with an analytical approach, ‘Hunk of nice feet... The dinosaur has nice feet.’

Etienne shakes his head, “Whatever, dude.”

Fluffy, the dinosaur screams suddenly then jumps and turns, her long tail knocking over a sign with the words: SSS TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY GALA TOMORROW 10 A.M. Why the sudden change of attention? A four year old has just bit her leg and is now hanging on for dear life as Fluffy twists and turns.

Etienne, rolls his eyes, “At ease, Fluffy!” He detangles the little boy off the dinosaur and hands him back to his very apologetic mother. The noise and excitement of the next arriving crowd entering the lobby is distracting.

Etienne gestures for Kai to follow him, “This way, Kai.”

“The second portal on the left is for students.” As they move past the crystal waterfall, Etienne motions at the various doorways and gives the welcome speech. “We call this the Core. From here you can go anywhere... Portal 1, Shopping, with everything you need from milk to hair products.” He studies Kai’s hair, realizes unlike him, Kai doesn’t use them and shrugs. “Portal 3, Sports Hall, gym, stadium if you like that type of thing. Portal 4, amusement Park, Portal 5, Zoo... And our zoology program. 6, Hospital... Known for its genetic research, 7, staff only, and 8, security with our very own MIBs. And word of advice, I’d use the back entrances, there are too many tourists on the mountain and they seem to never leave. See that guy over there, in the hat?” Kai nods. “He practically lives here!”

The man in the hat, OJ, short for Outback Joe, is decked out completely in aussie outback hunting garb. The woman behind the desk offers to take his bags for him, he refuses a bit too aggressively and then looks around suspiciously. His squinty eyes fall on Kai and Etienne. They turn away quickly.

“He’s some ex-scientist who blathers on about having seen real dinosaurs.” Etienne smirks, as if that is possible!

“Real living dinosaurs?” Kai joins in, smirks.

Etienne points to a trophy case, "Portal 2, basically tells you everything you need to know. It's our hall of fame." He straightens himself up taller. "I lead the champion research team on cellular reconstruction with Dr. Sterling. We won." Touching the glass case, he remembers his success as if it was yesterday, "Great day." Suddenly, Etienne looks at his watch, rushing now, he grabs Kai's bags and puts them on a passing chariot. Before Kai can get a word in edgewise, Etienne cuts him off, "--Don't want to be late for the game. Follow me." He gives a quick check to his hair, and then pulls Kai with him. Man this guy loves himself.

"Game? What Game?" Kai asks, surprised.

"Laser tag against the profs."

"Man, I'm not really into that today... you know long journey and all..." Kai shakes his head.

Etienne nods him off, 'It's mandatory!' and then adds, 'Besides, it's awesome. The effects are otherworldly. You'll love it.'

Kai watches Etienne as he types in a code, places his hand on a keypad. The portal door shines green, a glimmering visual effect hides the 'James Bond-type' of security. The floor jolts forward into the green light. A little over kill. Kai raises his eyebrow, "Nice touch."

A bit humourless and patronizing, Etienne starts sharing his wealth of knowledge, "This facility was actually designed by Haldermen Enterprises and the worlds' most famous architect himself, Allan Haldermen. Which you may be lucky enough to meet some day. The security system was created by the same group that created the world famous 'Pentagon', you know the one in Washington D.C.?"

There is an awkward pause... how should he respond to this big talker? He decides on, "Why such high security for a school?"

Etienne rolls his eyes, "This is not just any school, Kai. Look up at the camera." At that moment, a camera flashes and blinds Kai... But reveals his skeleton as a bit of orange and green tint.

Etienne looks at Kai inquisitively, “Interesting, there must be a glitch.” He blows it off, after all he can’t know everything... Can he? Kai looks at his body for what is so interesting. So far, not having any fun... Kai needs to keep his focus. What is the objective? Find Dr. Sterling. He breathes in deeply then apprehensively enters the door. “Will Dr. Sterling be playing?” But no one is there with him, Etienne has left him stranded in the entrance of Jurassic LaserTag.

CHAPTER 5

Dr. Joe Levy is aware that the students at HSS make fun of him and call him ‘OJ,’ but that is not what interests him. He has spent his entire life studying prehistoric creatures and if it wasn’t for that day, twenty years ago, that changed his life forever, he would still be the most renowned paleontologist in the world. That day, if he had just had a bit more information before he had blurted his mouth off, he wouldn’t be a joke to his peers.

In 2009, Dr. Levy and his team had just discovered eight clusters of ammonite eggs in the Lower and Upper Kimmeridge Clay of the Dorset Coast in England. The best preserved specimens of such known to science at the time, he might add. They were on route to the hotel when his electrometer had sounded. The other ‘experts,’ his friends Steve Sanazaro, Jane Thomas, and John Sterling were tired and wanted to rest. He remembers it as if it were yesterday, they joked, “The good thing about our job is that fossils don’t move as fast as people, they will be there in the morning! Anyway, it is probably just a tin can!”

But he was an adventurer, he couldn’t wait to find out what his little machine had picked up. So he jumped out of the car and raced off in the rain back in the direction they had come from. It was dusk, that eerie time of the day that the native americans call the ‘tween time.’ The time of the day when they could communicate with

spirits and their ancestors. OJ loved this time of the day, because it was calm.

His electronometer had led him to the base of a rocky cliff. He started up the slippery cliff with the meter in his left hand and using his right to pull him over edges. All was going great until his foot slipped and his knee was gorged by a protruding knife like rock. The pain was excruciating and he had screamed out in agony. Clutching his leg with his eyes closed, the world turned white. Refusing to pass out, he began focusing on his breathing. As the pain subsided, the beating of his handy machine was encouraging, so he kept moving. Besides as far as he could tell the wound was clean and being rinsed by the rain that was coming down quite heavily now.

This is when he started to have the sensation that he was being watched. He looked over his shoulder, up and around. Nothing. He looked down, and realized that he had climbed a lot higher than he had anticipated. He stopped moving and listened... the sensation was overwhelming. He called out to his friend Steve, because he new John and Jane were already in each others arms at the hotel so it couldn't be them. They try to keep it a secret, but as strongly as he could feel the presence of someone watching him, he knew they were a couple. So by process of elimination he deducted it must be his friend Steve playing a trick on him... He called out, "Steve, I know you're there. Come on out from hiding and help me find this thing!" But there was no response. He can't be sure how long he waited, surveying the coast and the rocks below. It was getting dark now, and cold. He had already broken one rule... don't climb alone... He didn't want to add another... don't climb at night... But he surmised that after he got up over the top edge there would be an easier way down.

Man, his spider senses were tingling! As he got closer to the top, a few stones fell. Ah-ha... he thought to himself Steve *is* waiting for him at the top, "Ha, I'll show him!" And he picked up his pace. As he closed in on the last few feet, he stopped moving and crouched down, making himself as small as possible – not daring to make a

sound. Then, suddenly, he heard movement, and like a spring toy, he shot up and let out a monstrous cry,

“AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.” But he hadn’t anticipated the response... In fact, no one in their right mind could have predicted this. He had had his eyes closed because, he doesn’t know why, it was just like that... Maybe he thought he was going to be slugged by his friend Steve. But what he heard was a larger echo of what he had presented from *not Steve*, but a much larger animal.

“SSSSCCCCCEEEEEEEEEEEEECCCCCHHHHHHHH”

OJ opened his eyes to find himself face-to-face with a real, 12 foot, pteradactyl. His wings shot out 20 feet and the giant bird attacked him, dug his claws into his shoulders and lifted him in the air. OJ screamed differently now, terrified. The bird jerked him this way and that and then threw him onto the rocky beach. Again, with the wind knocked out of him, eyes shut, there was another flash of light and he fought passing out. He opened his eyes one last time to see the giant creature literally vanish from the sky. And, then unable to fight it, he fell unconscious.

When he opened his eyes, he was in a hospital, surrounded by his friends. He told them what had happened and they didn’t believe a word he said. They said that it was the fall that made him have dinosaurs on the brain. And that he had been crazy to have tried to climb a wet cliff at night. What was he thinking?

When he left the hospital with a couple broken ribs and sutured shoulder, OJ raced back to the site and found... nothing... no evidence of any such creature. He began to think that he had dreamed it all while in an unconscious state. However, things didn’t add up... He had been found east of the cliff and he had found his electrometer on the opposite, west side of the cliff... with the same pierced indentations on it as his shoulders. The pteradactyl had had his electrometer in his claws as well.

Trying to prove this, however, was impossible. He compared the claw marks on his shoulder to his electrometer and the marks were

exactly the same. Perhaps there was a large bird... but a dinosaur? People said he was going too far and trying to create publicity. So he went from being a reknowned, credible paleontologist, to the laughing stock of all of the world...

Now, today, he goes wherever his electronometer leads him. And despite his hatred for his old colleague and ex-best friend John Sterling.. He is not going to let up on his story and is, someday, going to get real proof that dinosaurs exist. Gandhi believed in fighting with passive resistance. That's just what he is going to do. John has no idea that his precious school and research center is hoisted on top of magnetite. Let them laugh and make jokes. He will just hang around until the moment presents itself and he can tranquilize a great beast. That way, it won't vanish into thin air! Afterall, he *is* an adventurer and today, his electrometer is reading off the charts!

Dr. Joe Levy, otherwise known as Outback Joe (O.J.), attaches his electrometer and compass to his belt, hides his tranquillizer gun in his jacket and heads out of his room.

CHAPTER 6

Kai is the last student to be shuffled into the large laser tag foyer. If he has to be here, it won't be for long, he starts eye-ing the exits. There is one behind him and one in the far left corner. It's not going to be as easy to escape as he had thought. The nervous anticipation of the students is suffocating. There is no way he can stay in this confined space with all of these people. He has to get out of there.

Desperate now, he pushes against the crowd toward the nearest door, but it's impossible. His head spins and he begins to panic. He focuses on his breathing and searches for the specks of gold that normally swirl around the room but this time what he sees is a rainbow of colors ricocheting off everything. The chaotic pattern is breathtaking and gently soothing. But then, like a wave or a gust of wind, a strong surge of golden energy rolls through the air. Kai turns toward the stadium to find the source of the wave of energy: Noa Lancien.

She steps up to the microphone. Her introduction as school president goes unheard as the crowd begins to quiet. Wow, decked out in laser-tag garb, she is a not a petite girl but a combination Lara Croft meets Katniss Everdeen. With every movement she makes, Kai sees a trail of energy that swirls around her, golden, the sparks float through the crowd. As the energy moves past him again, he breathes in. He can smell her from 50 feet away. Noa swings her large beautiful auburn-haired braided pony tail off her shoulder

and speaks into the microphone, she is mesmerizing and she has the crowd's attention.

“Welcome everybody! New friends and old, and of course, our laser enemies.” She points her laser gun at the adults in the corner to her left and continues, “— SSS staff and teachers!” She grimaces in distaste.

The new students look around apprehensively, not sure how to respond. They don't want to get on the bad side of their teachers on their first day of school. The returning students, still dressed in lab coats cheer as the teachers boo and hiss at them. Some of the new students whisper amongst themselves wondering if Dr Sterling will show. One of the teachers sports a t-shirt with the words, ‘I may be prehistoric but I'm not extinct. Not yet, anyway.’ The professor, Professor Thomas, dances a short sort-of chicken dance and then returns to her colleagues. Noa continues.

“Okay, Professor Thomas, save your moves for the talent show Friday night. So here's how it works. Returning students pick a first time student as a partner, pick up your gear, and head toward the entrance. Remember students our goal is to shoot the dinosaur teachers... I mean the dinosaurs and the teachers... before they get us. Let's do it!” Everyone cheers.

Bea, who is working on her upward momentum has already partnered up with a ‘Noa groupie.’ Noa vanishes into the crowd. Kai realizes now is the time to make a break for it and pushes through the crowd toward the exit. He is nearly there when Noa tugs at his arm... “Will you be my partner?” Up close she is a big girl and even more radiant. She is really pouring on the charm...

Kai responds a little too quickly, opposingly, “Do I have a choice?”

Surprised by his response, she gives him a devilish pout, “You don't want to be my partner?” He responds quickly to this carnivore, “I didn't say that... I just don't want to play. I have things to--” She interrupts him, “It's an obligatory school ritual. Come on, let's go.”

Kai watches as the gold sparks float off her and surround him, tickling his aura. Oy-vey, who is this girl?! He doesn't stand a chance!

Kai instinctively senses a new presence in the hall and looks away from Noa to the entrance. A girl enters and looks around nervously. The crowd is overwhelming for her and she searches for a quiet place to retreat unnoticed by the others, but there is nowhere to hide. The place is packed. She nervously pushes her horned-rim glasses up on her nose and waits. The energy around the girl floats softly around her short wavy blond hair. The colors swirl pink to green and back to pink again as she fidgets nervously. Definitely *prey*.

Noa interrupts his stare, "Late as usual... figures."

Someone whispers loud enough for everyone to hear... "Here comes the mute freak."

Kai, distracted, responds to the last words he heard, "She's a mute?"

Noa is quick and corrects them, "She is *not* a mute." Then she continues, "She just hasn't talked since she was 7. She can, but just doesn't, it's by choice. Her name is Penelope Tupps. If she wasn't a genius at robotics, she wouldn't even be here. Anyway..." She hands Kai his gear, number 52, "You cover my back, I'll cover yours 52!" Kai catches the gear before it falls. He looks one more time at the girl and then follows Noa.

CHAPTER 7

70 Million years ago

In the heat of the night, the carnivores race swiftly through the humid forest. Their graceful movements are careful not to break the silence; the blanket of protection for the sleeping. The tiniest error, a crack of a branch, will decide who lives and who dies. It is hunting at its perfection.

One of the predator's stops. It's female and a velociraptor. Her nostrils expand as she breathes in the night air. She waits. Then, her primordial instincts take over as she anticipates the taste of warm flesh, her eyes narrow. The second predator follows close behind. It, too, has also caught the scent of their next meal. Eye-to-eye now, they know what to do. The warriors cry out and charge forward.

Suddenly, the forest awakes in terror. The predator's feet move faster now – tap, tap, crick... They are close now. Their feet barely touch the ground. SWIiiiiiiiiisssSSH... a slight blur of a beast crashing through the brush.

Smaller prey retreat into the brush, praying that they are not the ones who have created all of the excitement. But no, there is larger, more interesting prey nearby.

The night watchman of a herd of protoceratops senses danger. His majestic crowned head searches the darkness. He sends out a warning to the herd, then he turns to flee. The others rise distracted,

hearts beating frantically, but for only a second. They are experts too of the chase.

CRAAACCKKK ! Wood splinters and branches fly as the mountain forest cries out in agony as the veloceraptors break through the edge of the forest and into the opening of a field.

The earth trembles, as the stampede moves away creating a storm cloud of dirt. Like a train blasting a warning, the crowned king cries out for his troupe to move faster...

The streamlined predators race full speed ahead next to the large tornado of dust the stampede has created. There is no time to waste now, the female predator opens its mouth, revealing her carnivorous teeth and alerts her mate, *don't let them get away*. She tilts her red-crested head slightly, her reptilian eyes focus precisely on her objective, then she vanishes into the storm cloud.

The male cries out, a deeper guttural cry, panicking now, having been left alone his actions become random. Less focused, he jumps blindly into the cloud of dust, feathers outstretched in search of his mate.

Inside the tornado, the female hunter is undaunted and easily keeps up with the beasts. All is going according to plan. She searches and then finds what she is looking for... a glimpse of an herbivore leg. She angles in closer.

The prey realizes it is the chosen one and turns its head, tusks aimed menacingly at the carnivore as he keeps running forward. The crowned beast, casts out a warning to the predator. He shakes his head majestically, confidently – *bring it on!*

Suddenly, the second velociraptor finds them. He nudges his girl possessively on her neck. She snaps at him – not now! Then with the focus of an eagle, the pair hone in on the pursuit.

Realizing that there are two carnivorous beasts pursuing it, the triceratops changes its combative tactics to evasive maneuvers. Between heavy breaths, it searches for the security of its herd. It is in grave danger and calls out to the others, but the herd has already moved away. It's safety in numbers and every man for

himself. Without a moment to spare, the female makes her move and with feathers outstretched and claws primed she flies onto the triceratop's neck. We've seen this attack before and normally the second veloceraptor would follow suit. But he stops in his tracks, and screeches out an ear piercing warning.

Just in front of the careening veloceraptor and her prey is a three dimensional, other worldly luminescent glow. Too close to the ground to be the moon, and yet it is just as mesmerizing. Its gentle low pitched hum would normally be detected if it wasn't for the thundering stampede.

The male sounds out another call, but his warnings go unnoticed as the female veloceraptor's right arm wedges into the plant-eater's jaws, and its sharp lower talons curl into the proticeratops' throat. The proticeratops strikes back and bites the foot of the attacker with his sharp beak. The predator is undaunted and as she would sink her teeth into the throat of the herbivore, the two animals fall, disappearing into the vortex of light. The sound of the magnetic waves hums louder now.

The ground thunders as the entangled dinosaurs slam out of the vortex, hitting the ground with a tremendous force. Stunned... The proticeratops is the first to move and struggles to stand. Just when he would run, the veloceraptor attacks, again. The carnivore gains a more dominating position and sinks her claws into its neck.

Suddenly, a man's voice is heard over a loud speaker, "Wow, the earthquake effects are fantastic, Eddie."

The veloceraptor stops moving, breathing, and looks around her, sensing another presence. She takes in her surroundings... She has landed in a present-day, neon tropical forest. Black lights highlight fluorescent shades of blue, green, and yellow in this neon imitation prehistoric world. Concerned she calls to her mate for help. Her sharp teeth glow in the darkness. The imitation forest recordings echo a quick response.

Inside a small glass sound room that overlooks this prehistoric laser tag facility, DJ, 26, the genius behind the game, and a

perfectionist, makes the last touches to the sound board. He moves a lever a half a centimeter and then leans into a microphone, "Eddie, lower the earth trembles a notch. The students are gonna dig this."

On the other side of the neon Jurassic jungle, Eddie, fiddles with electric circuits. He touches his hand to his head set and says, "You're tellin' me! It's going to take me a few minutes, but it'll be done before the students get in."

The veloceraptor raises her head high, and screeches out triumphantly. The difference between the real dinosaur sounds and the man-made digital sounds go unnoticed by DJ. He pushes the microphone up and grabs his keys and heads for the maintenance door.

The shadow of a computerized airborne dinosaur passes over the head of the real veloceraptor. The feral beast hovers over her meal ready to take on the enemy. The proticeratops beneath her moves, hopelessly. The veloceraptor tightens her grip and her teeth tear into her prey. As blood splatters on the neon tropical forest and the veloceraptor's beautiful feathers flare out from her sides, we hear:

CHAPTER 8

The sounds of awe and wonder can be heard as the students walk into 'Jurassic Laser World.' It takes a moment for Kai's eyes to adjust to the change in colors. Then, he is taken aback at how truly amazing it is. The tropical neon forest is virtually alive. Kai doesn't realize that his mouth is hanging open. Noa, not missing a beat adds, "Nice teeth dude!" He closes his mouth then realizes that Noa's teeth are florescent blue... They laugh.

Having just made the last of the final touches, DJ pushes against the current, trying to make his way out. He runs into Noa, "You're gonna be blown away!"

Noa shouts above the crowd, "Three cheers for DJ, the man responsible for this creation!" The students and teachers shout at the top of their lungs, "DJ, DJ, DJ!"

On the other side of the neon forest, the female velociraptor stops feeding on the proticeratops under the neon tree. With the sound of the cheering, the hunter tilts her head curiously.

The siren wails and the players disperse in all directions. Kai follows Noa, watching her back. They shoot at a teacher and then the two duck down behind shrubbery. As Noa moves off, adrenaline coursing through Kai's veins, he reminds himself, "This is supposed to be fun... This is fun..."

Suddenly, a virtual allosaurus peers at them over a large tree. Kai dives on Noa and shoots at the dino at the same time. As they roll

away, Kai's eyes flash red. *Dangerous*, but fun... Noa pushes him off of her playfully, and they both shoot at a flying dinosaur and laugh. Another roar, they shoot. He's getting the hang of this. She calls out, "The next one is mine!"

They hide behind a tropical shrub, waiting for a nano t-rex to get close, they both shoot at it at the same time. But Noa wins, "Told ya, mine! You're too slow Kaiooohhh... » A teacher shoots at the both of them, without success. They laugh and run 'for their lives.'

At another area of the neon jungle, Bea ducks down and makes sure all of her equipment is in order. Suddenly, she senses movement next to her. Branches move just slightly. Like, 'Where's Waldo,' Bea squints and focuses in on the greenery. Then she says in disbelief, "Dr. Sterling...?" He lifts up a finger to his lips and then points to a t-rex approaching. But, Bea can't control herself. She stands in the clearing and her voice changes, "Dr. Sterling, it a great pleasure to meet you, but in no way is it a coincidence. When I was two years old, I decided I was going to be the best that I could be, and to be the best you have to learn from the best... So it is no coincidence that I am here," she looks around at where she is, "In this... laser tag facility... because you, Dr. Sterling are the best!"

And without any long pauses, or a blink of an eye, Dr. Sterling aims and shoots her. Her vest blinks red, she's been hit.

On her look of disbelief, Dr. Sterling runs off.

Kai sees Penelope hiding next to a cave, there is something really interesting about her, that moment costs him. Suddenly, a virtual velociraptor approaches and attacks Kai... virtually... His vest lights up. Noa laughs, "You're meat!" She races away.

The place is enormous and dark enough that it is difficult to really see anything clearly, which is a good thing because Kai's stress level, with the attack of the virtual dinosaur has just spiked.

Penelope, waves to Kai to follow her. She points at the velociraptor. Kai whispers, "Wow, they were not kidding, the graphics are amazing." Penelope shakes her head 'no' and puts her finger to her lips to be quiet and then points again at the real

velociraptor not 20 feet from them. At this moment, the velociraptor lets out an ear-piercing roar that shakes the room.

Kai realizes this creature is not virtual but a real, living and breathing velociraptor. It cries out again. The sound pierces through every neuron in Kai's body. It's as if every cell in his body has been electrified. Kai screams out in pain, losing all control, he falls behind a set wall. Kai's human skeleton flashes and his body contorts, bones snap and he twists in agony.

Penelope can hear him screaming and tries to get over to help him. But as soon as she gets to the wall, the set crashes down on top of her. Dino-Kai, now a living breathing velociraptor, stands over her on what is left of the set wall.

Noa, who is now on the other side of the jungle, says to Bea, "Wow, the class. DJ has out done himself!" Concerned for other reasons, Bea asks, "This isn't normal?"

"No, DJ, the engineer made some upgrades over the summer."

Bea yells, "Hide."

But Noa has no intention of losing, "You wish! You hide! I'm going to be the high scorer!" And off she goes, leaving Bea to her own devices. Bea groans, she knew her freedom from her psycho brother wouldn't last long. She heads in the direction of the screaming dinosaur and trouble.

Penelope moans and tries to pull herself out from under the fallen set. She struggles to push the wall off of her, but it is too heavy. She's pinned.

Suddenly, something goopy hits her shoulder and she stops moving. What the... She looks up to find the source of the goop, a velociraptor (Dino-Kai) studying her, his red eyes focused on his newfound prey. He lets out a blood curling screech, Penelope struggles feverishly with new found strength to break free.

In another area of the laser tag arena, Bea stops and listens to the cry, "Oh, no. He's hunting!"

The velociraptor moves a foot preparing his attack. As he strikes with his knifelike teeth at Penelope, she sausage rolls out from under

the wall and behind a fake bush. Terrified beyond belief, she is afraid to breathe. The velociraptor approaches her menacingly.

Professor Thomas suddenly jumps out like a super hero, chest proud and gun pointed, she screams, "Big bully, die!" And she points her laser gun at the real dinosaur intending to 'take him out.' She shoots three times nervously and then quickly turns on her heels, does her little chicken/nana-nana-poo-poo-you-can't-catch-me dance, and runs off screaming like a little girl, in a whirl of giggles.

Penelope watches as Dino-Kai raises his head and smells the air. She decides this is an opportune moment and she takes off running. Dino-Kai quickly charges after her. With every pounding footstep, the room shakes. He knocks a tree to the ground and Penelope falls, too. She cowers now, crying. Dino-Kai bounds toward her whimpering form, and just as he would rip her to pieces...

Bea jumps in and screams... "Noooooooooooo!!!! Stop this now!!!!!" Bea pushes Penelope out of the way. The force of the push knocks Penelope unconscious and Bea stumbles to the ground.

However, Bea realizes she is being watched by Dr. Thomas and a small group of students and pretends to shoot at the attacking velociraptor with her laser gun. A dangerous move because the real danger isn't her upward moving mobility, but the life threatening creature in front of her. The crowd runs off laughing. She tosses her laser pistol aside and tries to get away. But Dino-Kai's claw pierces through Bea's laser armor, nailing her to the ground. She is trapped. He leans over her, ready for the kill.

Bea pleads for her life shakily, "Code zen... code zen... please!" A tear rolls down her cheek as Dino-Kai moves in closer. Blood begins to ooze from beneath her laser tag armor. Bea has stopped breathing. She knows well enough that the slightest movement from anywhere and the velociraptor will attack her. He is inches from her face now. He breathes in her scent and suddenly pulls back. Something flickers in his eyes. Then he raises his head, there is a new scent in the air. There is an animal cry in the distance. He turns suddenly and heads off in pursuit.

Students shoot him with their laser pistols, but they have no success, Etienne, the brainiac, shakes his laser pistol, “Broken already!”

Bea breathes a sigh of relief and rushes to Penelope. She drags Penelope through the fluorescent jungle and they hide behind a boulder. Penelope moans, she is regaining consciousness. Bea covers her mouth. Penelope’s first instinct when she wakes is to run. Bea holds her down and gestures. Penelope’s terrified eyes follow. Not twenty feet away is a velociraptor hovering over a dead corpse. Dino-Kai licks the bones of the corpse and then turns, his tail sweeps past the girls. He lets out an ear piercing call. Penelope’s eyes widen and then she passes out, again. Bea lays her down gently and then races toward Dino-Kai, screams furiously, “What have you done?!”

Suddenly, amidst the sounds of manufactured prehistoric creatures, the sound of a real gun firing cracks through the air. Dino-Kai falls to the ground unconscious. Jurassic world falls around him, covering the corpse of the triceratops.

OJ, the crazy scientist, stands up slowly, with a look of satisfaction on his face. Now, he has his proof!

Students scream, “He’s got a real gun,” and run for the door. Panic takes over. Sirens sound, flashing lights spin, and a voice recording – please move toward the emergency exits begins to repeat...

OJ, elated, cries out in utter joy, “I got him! I got him!”

Bea screams and turns toward OJ and charges him. Arms flaring, he covers his head and other vital spots as best he can. “You killed my brother. You killed my brother! You big loser coward, what did he ever do to you?! You will never live to see a day out of prison you big...” She searches for the best word, “Loser!” Suddenly, Bea turns, realizing, hysterical now.

She races to Kai, who has now transformed back into his true self. She pulls clothes out of her back pack... Black t-shirt, black jeans... Dresses him quickly as OJ runs around the laser tag facility calling everyone, anyone to come and look at his catch.

“He’s alive! CALL AN AMBULANCE!” Bea holds his head in her arms, “He’s alive.” She can’t believe it. Then after a moment, she looks around at what was once Jurassic Laser Tag and says matter of factly, “I’m gonna kill him!” Then she leaves him and runs off before anyone can find her.

The MIB’s pour in and quickly assess the situation.

OJ, still elated, let’s them all know the truth. “I shot a dinosaur! It’s right over there behind what’s left of that tree.” He leads them back to Kai, who, now dressed, lays unconscious with a tranquillizer dart in his arm.

MIB 1 cuffs OJ, “Of course you did, its dinosaur laser tag.”

OJ struggles against the officer “What are you doing? I saved these kids’ lives!”

MIB, 1, “Sure you did.”

“Really, look...!” OJ breaks free from the restraints and runs toward the dinosaur... there is no dinosaur, just MIB 2 taking care of Kai. MIB 2 talks into his ear piece, “Doc, we have a student down.”

“How can this be...I know I shot a dinosaur.” OJ thinks a moment... “The girl... There was a girl, she saw everything...” MIB 1 grabs OJ and forces him toward the exit.

Just then, Penelope walks semi-conscious and moaning toward the MIBs and another MIB catches her before she falls.

MIB 1, “The girl!”

OJ continues, “No, it wasn’t her! Something is not right here...” He’s confused now, “I know I shot a dinosaur!”

MIB 2, talks into his ear piece, “Make that two students down.”

Not far away, Professor Thomas escapes through the maintenance exit... She struggles to close the door, but it’s trapped on a piece of fallen set. The real veliciraptor charges the door. Ms. Thomas can’t hold it any longer, she isn’t strong enough. She turns and runs for her life. She closes herself in a closet. Instantly, the veloceraptor crashes through the maintenance door in pursuit of its prey, it screeches, and the sound echoes in the exit corridor. The sound is deafening and Dr. Thomas covers her ears.

Kai hears the female and struggles to wake, to go to her, but the effort to open his eyes is too difficult and he quickly returns to unconsciousness.

MIB 2 comforts him, “Rest, son.”

CHAPTER 9

“A rhinoceros!”

Dr. Sterling, shrieks, shocked, “How on earth did a rhinoceros find its way into the laser tag facility. It must be one of DJ’s props!” Surrounded by MIB’s, he takes off his magnifying eye goggles and turns toward MIB 1 for his response.

MIB 1, “No sir, I don’t think it’s possible. It’s a fresh kill.”

Thinking out loud, Dr. Sterling continues, “It can’t be... How did...” Then, “This isn’t a rhinoceros. This is a triceratops! We have no time to lose. Get Dr. Thomas on the autopsy right away!”

MIB 1 looks at the floor struggling to find a way to gently deliver more bad news... Dr. Sterling takes the bait, “What else MIB?”

“Dr. Thomas is missing. She was last reported seen at the laser tag event, you know, *dancing the dinosaur chicken*.” The very serious MIB does a sort of chicken dance, mimicking Dr. Thomas as best he can.

“Well, fine then. She’s probably still mad at me. I can’t believe she takes things so personally. She is probably at the spa... or with her therapist. Check there. I’m sure you will find her somewhere complaining about me.” The MIB smiles, knowingly, the two doctors have differences of opinions often. Just before he is out the door Dr. Sterling adds, “Grab the security camera footage.” MIB 1 nods and closes the door behind him.



In the blackness where all senses are alert, a heart beats wildly. A glimmer, then a small fleck of light appears and slowly, rhythmically, becomes a flood of colors, like a kaleidoscope turning weaving in and out of each other. The chaotic heartbeats beat with the swirling colors and the sound become more pronounced. A child is humming. The sweet sound draws nearer and nearer as the explosion of colors transform into a flower, a beautiful red and yellow rose floating timelessly in the air. Then the rose becomes just one of many on a toddler's sundress in a flower garden.

The three year old kneels in the soft green grass humming the remnants of Mary Had a Little Lamb. Her long wavy brown hair held up high by a satin ribbon. The way the light shines around her gives the impression that she is glowing.

She plays and sings, "... little lamb, little lamb. Mary had a..." Her toy dinosaurs pound the rocks keeping the beat. Suddenly, she stops and growls. This is not an ordinary growl that a young girl might make, but a guttural, ferocious sound and it echos all around her. Suddenly, the child shrieks in pain and falls to the ground, her toy dinosaurs flailing in her hands next to her. Her screams are louder now, as if she is in agony.

"Aaaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!" Kai wakes up from this nightmare screaming. Beads of sweat cover his forehead. He covers his head as the bright white hospital lights burn his eyes. He sits up, slowly and takes in his surroundings. He is in the SSS hospital. It is the same as all medical centers, Kai thinks to himself. He rubs his eyes and then he hears it, a scratching noise.

Kai looks toward the source of the irritating sound and finds Penelope, head bandaged writing feverishly on a tablet, then she erases it, then she writes something else, then erases it,...He tries to put two and two together, '*Who is she and what is she doing here?*'

Penelope realizes that Kai has awakened and backs up frightened. She turns her clipboard for him to see:

"What are you?"

She begins writing again. “You’re....” Kai remembers now. She’s the girl that doesn’t talk. Kai struggles as memories begin to flood back, panicking, “Oh no, what have I done?”

She turns the whiteboard, anticipating his thoughts... “Veloceraaptor... male...”

He groans as he moves his legs and arms. Just then there is a knock on the door. Penelope jumps behind a desk as Bea enters and slams the door behind her. She takes a quick cursory tour of the room to make sure they are alone, missing Penelope, and then makes a bee-line for him.

She gets in his face and whispers violently, “You did it now!” And, she punches him right in the jaw.

Ayyy! He puts up his arm to block her as she continues to wail on him. “What exactly did I do?” Kai whispers back, talking in hushed voices is a good plan especially since miss curiosity, all-ears is hiding not five feet away.

“Don’t play innocent with me... *You ate a rhinoceros!*”

Kai touches his stomach and looks as though he might vomit. The problem is he is still hungry. He couldn’t have done it, or he wouldn’t be hungry. Then he remembers, “There was another-”

She yells in a hushed voice again into Kai’s splitting headache, “Oh, grow up!” She mimics him as if he is a baby, “It wasn’t me... It’s not my fault... I didn’t do it... Still trying to please *Santa?*” She rolls her eyes, then sarcastically, “What happened this time, Kai, there was a virtual dinosaur that *scared* you?” Feigning scared, “Ooooooh.... he almost ate you! I can’t control myself!” She is unable to control her emotions any longer and starts to tear up, “We had a pact and I ha-ave a...a... vision board. And you, all you do is mope about being afraid of turning and that’s all you do. You create it!” She breathes in and snorts from all of the emotions bottling up, “ZEN remember! I can’t believe you ruined everything on our first day!” She cries uncontrollably.

“I can’t control it!” He tries to console her, but she turns away.

She takes a deep breath and then between sniffles, “Typical. I want nothing else to do with you. You--”, she points at him and then continues, “You are no longer my brother.”

She starts out the door. He yells out, “Was anyone hurt?”

She responds matter-of-factly, “Me ! And the mute girl but she won’t tell anyone. From what I understand, no one would believe her anyway... she’s looney!” She closes the door quickly behind her.

Kai starts to shake, he puts his head in his hands, the thought of killing something or hurting someone is unbearable. He struggles to put his socks and shoes on as quickly as possible. Bea is right. It was his fault. He has to get out of there, leave tonight, before it happens again. It doesn’t matter if he finds out why it is happening. He can’t control the change.

Penelope can’t believe what she has overheard. She races to Kai, all the time writing,

How do you do it?

Kai waves at her to leave him alone, “Stay away from me!”

But she continues, her scientific inquisitiveness has gotten the best of her, she writes:

What? How? Why?

He holds her shoulders and looks deeply into her eyes. “Stay away from me for your own good!” Then he pushes her away. “I am a monster.” He finds his backpack, checks to make sure everything is there, then pulls out his room key.

Penelope, looks distraught, she doesn’t want him to go. Different doesn’t bother her, in fact, he is the most exciting thing she has ever encountered. She blocks the door and holds up her board and continues to write on her tablet.

Please don’t go!

He starts to walk past her, she eyes the security cameras in the room pointedly. Kai’s eyes follow hers. She turns the tablet toward him again.

I have the security footage.

Kai is cornered and he knows it, if she has the footage, she could tell... she could tell the world. He would end up a science experiment for the government and so would his family. He whispers, "I don't know anything, yet. I can't control it."

I can help.

Kai shakes his head, "Nope, too risky!" He moves for the door.

There were 3

She looks at him with open reassuring eyes. She's quick with her hands and in an instant she has changed screens on her tablet and shows the security footage of the laser tag game. On the screen you see Kai racing toward Penelope, she points to herself. Then Kai falls behind the set, she changes to another camera. We see Kai contorting and twisting and screaming as he changes into the velociraptor. She points to Kai... Then she changes security cameras and there is another. There were two! And not far from her is the rhino...

Kai speaks out loud, "The rhino?"

Penelope shakes her head no... and writes:

Tricerotops

"Tricerotops!" Kai is blown away, "What?... How?... Why?..." He stumbles back against the door. Penelope stabilizes him. "This is the first time there has been another, let alone two, and usually it is just me *the freak* that's there." He paces a moment, continuing, "This is why I came here, Penelope, to get answers. I never anticipated that there might be others like me. Where is the other veloceraptor? Do you know who changed into it? Maybe they have answers!"

Penelope shrugs, she doesn't know.

"Dr. Sterling... Does he...?" Kai questions.

Penelope shakes her head no.

"We've got to talk to him. Maybe he can help."

Penelope shakes her head determinedly, NO.

"But, I came here to get his help." Kai is getting stressed.

Penelope places her hand on his arm and looks into his eyes. There is something very trustworthy about her. She writes:

OJ

“OJ, the crazy guy that *shot me?*” He shakes his head no.

Penelope nods and smiles, yep him!

“He will kill me and put my head on his wall!” Kai panicks.

Perhaps, she nods then she holds up her hand to calm Kai and writes carefully now:

How did he know there would be live dinosaurs at the laser tag?

True. How did he know that there would be dinosaurs? He thinks to himself that this might be the best solution. Everyone already thinks OJ is crazy. No one would ever believe that a student turned into a dinosaur. And he might be able to get actual answers because in the past OJ claims to have seen a dinosaur. And like Penelope says, he knew that there was going to be a dinosaur there. Why else would he have shown up in full hunters gear?

“You’re right. He knows something.” Kai agrees.

Good thinking. Tentatively now... He whispers closer to her now, afraid to be hopeful, “Was the triceratop a *student?*”

She shakes her head slowly, worriedly. No.

She rewinds the camera footage of the velociraptor to not long before the laser tag event began. Kai leans in to make sure he doesn’t miss anything. There is a flash of light and then the security cameras shake. Then suddenly, there is a velociraptor and a triceratops. The velociraptor rolls back to its feet and then attacks the triceratops....

What?! Kai can’t believe what he is seeing. He ushers for her to rewind it. “Where did it come from?” He watches the footage again. “It came out of a flash of light?!” Penelope nods then writes, “We have a living, breathing velociraptor on the mountain.”

Kai sits now, taking it all in, his head is whirling.

Just then a PA announcement comes over the loud speakers. “All students must return to their rooms for attendance.”

Penelope scribbles quickly:

18h laser tag

Before Kai can object, she has left the room and vanished into the corridor, with all of the footage. Kai grabs his key to his room and follows suit.

CHAPTER 10

Kai exits the elevator on the 27th floor, room key in hand. He runs his options over now in his head... Leave now or meet Penelope at six? She's smart, not crazy, because at six everyone will be in the dining hall. Great, they'll be serving dinner, and she'll probably end up being my dinner. Seriously, what if he changes and hurts her for real this time? Should he tell Bea? No, like she said, she wants nothing to do with him.

He looks around at the decor in the corridor. Not your average dorm by any means. The 360 degree mural is currently of an evening sky 65,000,000 years ago in the what now is considered to be Death Valley. Kai stops and just takes it in. It's breathtaking. Tomorrow morning it may be morning in Mongolia 200,000,000 years back. He repeats the school motto out loud, "At SSS, the Sterling School of Science, we learn by TIS, total immersion into science!" Another romantic ideal, of course, because in their minds dinosaurs were just misunderstood creatures, not heartless predators.

Humans are civilized. That should say everything, but it doesn't. No words can explain the true power and freedom he feels when he changes. The irrational, spontaneous wildness is intoxicating, and not civilized by any means. There is no guilt. He would never admit it out loud, but he is beginning to like changing. It is the only time he doesn't have to worry about not fitting in or the horrors he could create for everyone else. But there is always the opposite fear that

maybe someday he wouldn't be able to return to his human form. Kai smirks. Truthfully, why would this be so terrible? He could be free from all guilt and just live naturally, die naturally. Maybe that is what he is meant to do and that is the only reason he changes... To be free.

It is crazy for him to go seeking the veloceraptor, especially with Penelope. If history proves anything, the tiniest threat to his life will absolutely make him change. Without Bea, will he be able to regain control? He sighs. There is another problem. His changing is random. He has no control over the prehistoric creature he turns into. If he turned into a T-Rex, sure, he could take on the velociraptor, but if he turned into a herbivore... The results would be disastrous for everyone. No, the only solution is to get out of there, now, before someone else is hurt. He's got to leave. If he needs to do so, he will contact OJ later. And with this resolve, he slips the key into the door lock, and hears:

“OOOOAAAh oooah oooahou oooooah oooooah oooahou”

Kai closes the door and walks tentatively toward the sound. He doesn't stop to hang his coat or hang his key in the keys holder... The sound grows louder,

“OOOOAAAh oooah oooahou oooooah oooooah oooahou...”

Then Kai's chin hits the floor, figuratively speaking, he's in shock. Amidst the large room with its cathedral ceiling are two enormous Dinosaur heads. Not like you would see at Baby's-R-U's, but authentic-like museum quality heads of a spinosaurus and an allosaurus and the head of the beds are within their mouths. This doesn't really shock Kai, but the guy belly flopping and flipping from bed-to-bed with a pterodactyl toy held tight between his feet, *does*.

Upside down, the guy bounces from one bed into a handstand and then falls on the other and bounces off of his *stomach*. Suddenly, he flips from his hands to his feet and sends the pterodactyl flying straight at Kai. He finishes his song by taking his ending pose on one knee and yelling at the top of his lungs, “Ooooahhou, CARN-A-VORE!” Kai lets go of his backpack and catches both the toy and

his backpack before they hit the ground. The guy stands quickly to his feet, without any feeling of embarrassment.

“You’re “reflex man” from the bus!” Marvin Rogers, major athlete, Kai’s new roomie takes his hand and shakes it, almost breaking it. “I’m Marvin. What’s yours?”

Kai is tongue tied. *What?! Is this for real?*

“Never mind, I already looked at the name on your luggage... You’re Kai, right? You are also the guy who took on the lethal dose of animal tranquilizers and stands before me yet not two hours later to tell about it! Man, you are an athlete, man!”

Kai still cannot find the words to respond. He looks past Marvin at the beds’ heads. The idea of sleeping in the actual mouth of a dinosaur has no real appeal for Kai, but the idea of getting away from this situation... is the only solution.

Marvin sees Kai eyeing the beds and says, “I took Allie... You get Spinie...” He points to the names over the beds. Allosaurus aka Allie, and spinosaurus aka Spinie. Marvin flops into his bed and starts pushing buttons inside the mouth. “Look, the eyes light up and there is a built in alarm clock. You can choose the sound.” He presses a couple different options and each time a different “Jurassic park” dinosaur screeches. “Cool, huh?”

Marvin jumps off his bed and quickly removes his other dinosaur toys from Kai’s bed, apologetically, “I thought you would be in the hospital all night, man.” He shrugs, then shares with Kai his latest creations. He holds up different dinosaur models and explains his creation, “This is for tomorrow’s Gala. You promise to keep a secret?”

Kai speaks for the first time, “Uh, yeah,...*man.*”

“Okay, so everyone thinks of dinosaurs as cute little cuddly dinosaurs, right?... Like Barney...” Kai nods... “Well, I don’t believe they were cute and cuddly, like people aren’t all cute and cuddly.” Kai’s interest is peaked. But dinosaurs weren’t that different from you or me. I’ll explain... Sure you have your brainiacs... the nerds... and the not-so-brainiacs...” He shows examples with photographs of people, then “But all dinosaurs have in common that *is* different

from people is that they were *all* athletes. So I created a line of dinosaur sport figures, kind of super heroes. Take Stegoman... He was the size of a bus, and carried seventeen 2 foot by 2 foot plates on his back. He's like the Hulk on four legs, the center on a football team. For each of the dinosaur figures you can find a sport, an athlete that matches their strengths. For instance, you are a like prehistoric lizard!

Kai looks at him, questioningly. Where is he going with this?

Marvin doesn't skip a beat. He continues, "Your reflexes are like the tongue of a prehistoric lizard that flies out in less than a blink of an eye, capturing insects, big and small and eating them whole! Cool, huh?" He doesn't wait for a response from Kai, but continues, "You're Chameleon man! No. No. 'Chamo-man.'"

Kai can take it no more, "That's really cool." Marvin lights up with the praise and then Kai continues, "I hope you don't mind, but I have to get some rest. Today wiped me out."

Marvin backs up and rotates his hands backwards, a basketball coaching move, at the same time, "That's cool, man. I can get with it. You rest. We have plenty of time to get to know each other. Matter of fact, I am going to catch up on a little shut eye, too. That way we can stay up all night telling our life histories."

Kai's head is whirling from the day's events. He lays on top of his bare mattress with his backpack under his head, eyeing the buttons above him. He presses a yellow button that reads sleep and Spinie's mouth closes, not all the way, but enough to block out the light and distractions. He has to think clearly now.

There is another real, living feral beast present on this mountain...

How did it get here? It came through a flash of light! He shouldn't say that out loud for anyone to hear. As if he isn't odd enough! He chuckles to himself. Seriously, what was it? Some kind of time portal from a science fiction movie?"

Was this the first time this has happened or have there always been dinosaurs living amongst people? Or perhaps there are others like him?

Why now? And, why here? What caused the “time portal” to open? And the time sensitive and important question is, Where is the beast, *now*?

One thing is for certain, it will show itself soon enough. A creature like that can't go hidden for long and with all of the people on this mountain, someone is going to get hurt. It's math. And, when that happens it is best that he isn't anywhere near to be seen.

It is all coming back to him now. Kai remembers how he almost killed his sister, the moment when he first realized there was another dinosaur nearby... He was drawn to it... It was as if he longed to be near the creature. That was the only thing that saved him from hurting, or not *killing* Bea.

Kai feels this longing again. He admits there's a need in him to find this creature because something about it made him feel incredible. But the idea is totally crazy seeing that it is extremely dangerous for everyone involved. And, what is he going to do? Just walk up and ask it where it came from? He *has* to think *clearly*!

The reality is that as long as Kai is here, present on this mountain, everyone is in danger. And now, a real life velociraptor is also on the mountain. The balance of life has changed.

He thinks of Bea's vision board and wishes his life was simple as just making *wishes*. He reaches into his backpack, past the standard black shirts and black jeans his mother gave him and grabs his journal. He opens it and reads:

My objective:

1. ZEN
2. Find a way to control it
3. Find out why I change

Kai makes a change to the journal... He scribbles out numbers two and three and writes: LEAVE

He snaps the book shut a little too forcefully and puts it back in his backpack, then leans back in his bed. As soon as his roommate is sleeping, he's going to pack.

CHAPTER II

Kai closes the door quietly so as not to wake Marvin. He shrugs his large, heavy backpacking backpack up on his shoulders. It is not much considering that it holds all of his earthly possessions. He looks around, nervously. The coast is clear. He pauses at the elevator and decides there is less chance of being seen if he takes the stairs.

As he descends the 28 flights he reminds himself that leaving is the best decision. No longer will he hurt others or worry about hurting someone. He is going to find a quiet, secluded place to live. A place where he can't be found. Good weather is mandatory. Even though he has a good appreciation of snow, he prefers warmer weather. Some place close to civilization so he can work a bit, but still live without any ties. The idea is exciting. Finally, he is going to be free... He thinks of the Hulk, or Wolverine... He hopes that he's like wolverine... Kai laughs to himself, it's ironic that he could transform himself and his situation from being a monster into a superhero. To be a hero in this story, he has to leave. That is the only way to save the day, like Hulk and Wolverine.

A shadow flies across the wall behind him. Preoccupied with his thoughts he is unaware of another presence. Suddenly, a dinosaur takes a bite out of Kai's backpack and yanks him into a closet. He lifts up his arms to strike his assailant, but the light goes on and he sees...

Penelope. She takes off the head of her robot dinosaur costume and holds her finger to his mouth. Then writes on her tablet:

You're early!

Penelope looks at Kai and his large backpack stuffed to the brim. He knows that she knows he was making a break for it. She writes:

I didn't peg you for self absorbed.

"I... People could die."

Penelope's not buying it.

"You don't understand. No one understands..."

She gives him a "try me" look.

"I am unable to control it. Something else takes over and it is--"

Incredible?

He looks at her now, can he trust her? Kai looks her directly in the eyes, not afraid to hide the truth, now. She knows his response.

"I am free."

He continues to watch her eyes as she processes the depth of what he has said. She gets it. It seems like an eternity before she responds. She shows him her tablet and points adamantly:

The Goal: Find the velo and where it came from. Trap it. Then you can be free.

Kai adds, "I can't control what I turn into... It's too dangerous for me to be there. You should find someone else."

She writes and then turns the slate. *There isn't anyone on the mountain that would understand the velociraptor better. I need you.*

She's right, and he knows it. There is a dangerous creature running around and she needs his help. "It's danger--"

She pulls out a key, then swipes her tablet:

This master opens all doors.

She swipes the tablet and reveals the words:

To lure and trap it in a secure location.

At the same time she hands him an enormous package.

Kai opens it tentatively... it's a dinosaur *costume*. Specifically a veloceraptor costume. She points to it and then points to him. She wants him to put this thing on!

Kai groans, “You gotta be kidding me.” Then he simply says, “No.”

She nods - Yes.

He says, “No!”

She nods even more affirmatively - Yes! And then Penelope points to the note.

For safety.

Safety?! Are you kidding me? Kai tries an intellectual approach, “How are we going to be safe in giant, cumbering suits?”

She seems a bit insulted but insists, writes:

You will see. Try it on.

He shakes his head, no, “It’s too danger--”

It is psychological, it helps you feel distance from the situation and safe.

Kai begins another protest but she pushes him again with the costume, and insists.

“No! I can’t do it! I won’t!”

Penelope taps her forehead two times then gestures to him, he is hard headed. There is a long stare down. Kai looks around, there’s no way he’s giving in. Her aura flashes around her like giant red flames. It’s a bit intimidating.

No!

CHAPTER 12

The school bell sounds, and students' voices can be heard filling the corridors. A few seconds later, Kai clumsily stumbles out of the closet dressed as a velociraptor.

The costumes are incredibly life like, with real lizard skin that moves as if it is a living breathing animal. They are magnificent. Inside each costume there are computer tablets and digital camcorders and he can see and hear everything. Kai turns his on and the familiar macintosh music plays. He is amazed. There is an actual replica of a vocal chamber from a real velociraptor. He tests it out. Penelope writes on the screen in her costume:

Shhhhh... We don't want to draw her here...

Then she writes:

Talk into the headset...

Kai adjusts the full cranial cap to make sure it is secure on his head and then he talks into the headset. As he talks the words appear in the right hand corner of his screen:

"This is so much better than the one you wore in the Core. Did you create this?"

The velociraptor nods, and in the left hand corner of his screen the words appear:

My hobby.

Quoting the school motto, she writes:

"We learn by TIS, total immersion into science!"

He reads the screen and finishes the sentence out loud, at the same time the final words appear on his screen, "--Immersion into science!" He continues, "This is really cool! If this wasn't so cool, I'd still feel ridiculous. It's like I am in my own little world. I see why you like it."

Prehistoric Laser Tag has a sign posted. Closed temporarily. Penelope uses the master key to open the door.

Inside she flips on the lights and they walk toward the police caution tape. Penelope writes:

Where would she go?

"Hard to tell." His heart is racing now. The thought of what could happen, the destruction he could cause, he has to get control of himself. "Relax. Zen. Breathe." And that is when it hits him, he can feel the creature's presence. "Follow me," Kai ushers for her to follow him.

They slip past the police barrier. Kai uses the camera zoom and studies the floor. There are claw marks in the carpet. Marks that could be mistaken as general wear and tear. Then he sees the maintenance door camouflaged as part of the jungle. There are more scratch marks. He opens the door.

The corridor lights flicker on and off rapidly when Kai enters, but then he stops suddenly causing Penelope to bang into him. Penelope would protest but then she sees why he has stopped her. There is blood everywhere, splattered on the walls, the doors, the ceiling... It's a scene from a horror film.

Penelope shrieks and turns to run.

Words appear on Kai's screen in a loop: I can't! I can't! I can't! Kai, the velociraptor touches her. "No. Don't move." Then Penelope hears it.

Knocking. A steady, rhythmic, gentle continuous thud.

"It's in here." Kai, slowly turns the handle of to Costume Room 1 and opens the door. As the flickering light from the corridor illumines the large closet, Kai is met by a Cave Bear that flies from the shadows. He headbutts it and yells out. His voice is transformed into

a velociraptor cry. Inside the room now, the knocking stops. There is a faint whimpering sound.

Contrary to Kai's wishes, Penelope passes him, her dinosaur movements are so lifelike she moves tentatively forward and deeper into the dark room. He follows behind.

Like a room filled with marionettes, this room is filled with monstrous remakes of prehistoric creatures. Everything from every prehistoric period since the beginning of creation. As they move forward into the creepy room, the costumes sway lifelike, and it is as if they have a 1000 pairs of penetrating eyes following their every move.

There is movement in the back. Somebody crawls quickly across the floor, then hides in a pile of costumes. Kai and Penelope move forward more quickly, now, realizing that there is a person in danger.

Both of them use their dinosaur mouths to move the costumes out from over the person trying to hide only to be met with a blood-curdling scream. They look closer to find Dr. Thomas crawling, scrambling backwards, hysterical. Her hands tremble as she points her laser gun at the intruding "velociraptors." Penelope moves forward then realizes Dr. Thomas thinks she's real so she unzips her costume and shows herself. Dr. Thomas starts crying, "I don't want to die."

Penelope takes the head off and removes her tablet from the costume and writes:

Change of plans.

Kai whispers into his mic, "Let's get her out of here. I'll make sure the coast is clear. Then you follow." Dr. Thomas' eyes widen.

Suddenly, the real velociraptor is centimeters from Kai, smelling him. She moves closer, eye-to-eye now. Her reptilian eyes focus, and Kai's do the same, turning red. He can see their auras, their energies mixing like tendrils on an octopus. She nudges him, her aura changes colors.

Kai can feel everything this animal wants, sees her aura and her beauty. It's intoxicating. She is amazing. He can hear every impulse, like an electrical current moving through every cell in his body. She

is sweet and playful. Not the viral creature he was planning to meet. And she is taking over. They turn around in the room, the hanging costumes go flying.

Penelope holds her breath, her eyes wide with fear, as she watches how Kai reacts to the dinosaur. Her fear quickly turns to awe as she realizes that Kai is communicating with the velociraptor.

Kai nudges the velo back and moves his head, caressing her. All of his senses have been consumed by wanting to please the most beautiful creature on the planet. The velo head butts him and then rubs her shoulder against his. For some strange reason, and for the first time, Kai doesn't feel fear. He doesn't feel the need to change. He feels wild and free. And the velociraptor believes he is real because she communicates through feeling. And right now, the velociraptor's emotional state is frantic and pushy as if she has some place to be.

Penelope sends a message...

Lead her to the right.

Kai and the female instinctively put their noses in the air. He smells nothing, but he can see a new current, like a wave pushing against the female's aura. He takes the lead and the two leave the storage room. Kai has no intention to do anything Penelope wants. He is blown away.

Suddenly, a high pitched scream cuts through the air and the wave vibrates faster. The colors flashing, swirling, from orange to red to black... Then the wave hits him like a bolt of electricity – terror. His body reacts as if it has just been injected with pure adrenalin. The beating of his heart echoes loudly throughout his body. The sound is deafening. Kai realizes that the sound is not only his heart but the sound of the veloceraptor's. They are like one entity. They look at each other and are thinking the same thing. Hunt!

At the entrance to the large corridor, Marvin falls to the ground underneath what is left of Eddie, the sound man from the laser tag, who has just fallen out of door 2. He screams again the high pitched girl-like shriek as he struggles to get the bloody parts off of him.

The female velo pushes past Kai and rushes towards Marvin. Man, she is pushy, and he likes it. She wants to be first. Kai is overwhelmed by the sense of fun... Kind of like playing tag with your friends on the playground when you're five. She wants to play tag. He's it! This is amazing! Kai races after the velo in pursuit.

Marvin sees the velociraptors and without hesitation he springs to his feet and races toward the entrance, but an electric cord gets caught around his foot and he trips and falls.

From within his suit, Kai starts to tremble, he is beginning to change. Oh, it is so powerful. It's natural. He wants it. He wants her. His passion is interrupted by a loud beeping and then flashing on his screen are the words:

STOP HER! STOP! STOP!

The distraction interrupts Kai's transformation just long enough that he realizes what is going on. Marvin followed them and he is inches from danger.

GO RIGHT!

Kai uses the vocal instrument in his disguise and screeches. She stops. Did it work? He heads for the other end of the corridor. The female's not sure why she should let this fun go. Kai calls her again and then opens the door to outside.

The female lifts her nose again and then hops toward Kai. Kai lifts his head smelling the new current of air that is swarming in from outside. Larger animals. He watches as her aura changes into a multitude of colors, she is soooo happy. Kai is taken back by how magnificently beautiful she is. And, like he anticipated, she races past him and out the door. She has to be first. He admires her spirit... She is fun. He races toward the door.

Penelope watches and takes in her breath quickly. Is Kai going to follow the beast?

Kai groans, and without hesitation, Kai slams the door. The velociraptor screeches from the other side of the door. He screeches back, hoping he is letting her know that all is well. He locks the door so she can't enter.

Then as fast as he can, he runs back through the hallway, grabs Marvin, bangs on the wall of the closet that Penelope is in, and rushes out the door. Not taking any chances.

Professor Thomas trembles with all of the knocking. Penelope has been watching Kai's video feed. The coast is clear. She ushers the doctor out of the corridor. She explains that it was just a rehearsal for tomorrow's GALA. That's all. Dr. Thomas is not convinced, she looks over her shoulder, worriedly as the female calls out to her mate.

CHAPTER 13

Back in Kai's room, Kai has taken off the top half of his costume.

"What the hell were you doing there Marvin! Why were you following me? Us?"

"You're my new roommate. I wanted to make sure you weren't weird." He looks at him cautiously. He stutters, "What were you doing breaking into a crime scene? And why?" He points to the costume Kai is wearing. Then continues, "Was that a real velociraptor?"

Kai and Penelope exchange glances and then nod.

Suddenly, Marvin goes pale and he races out of the room with an overwhelming urge to vomit.

Penelope writes...

He's not as tough as he looks... :)

Kai smiles, then adds, "I didn't change!"

Penelope:

She thought the costume was real!

Kai continues, excitedly, "It was more than that. It was like we were connected. I could understand everything she did, every thought she had, her every desire..."

Like friends... You looked like friends...

"Yes, but it was more than that. I was in control and I was communicating with every cell in my body without talking. They have proven that cells can think. Well, I was the alpha male and I sensed everything she felt, she smelled, every movement on a cellular

level... There was a moment she looked into my eyes... Her eyes penetrated my soul.”

Penelope laughs out loud... Writes...

Sounds like a romance novel!

“She knew me in an instant. The connection was thrilling.” Kai raises an eyebrow, realizing now what Penelope wrote.

She laughs again, it’s hysterical to her. She breaks into uncontrollable laughter, deep in the soul, crying out loud laughter.

He thinks about how she has a beautiful laugh, her entire face lights up. Kai looks around her and sees that her aura has filled the entire room, dancing around and flirting in every corner of the room. It’s amazing. He wonders why she stopped talking. Kai writes,

“I like your laugh.”

Penelope calms herself and tries to be serious. As if she can read his mind, she writes:

Words lost meaning. Why speak when no one listens. I want to feel. I want to know people by the feeling I get when I am with them. Feelings are the most natural gift we have, and the most important. I will talk again, but only when I feel in every inch of my being it is important. Until then, I choose my words carefully.

She laughs again and continues to write,

Because there isn’t a lot of space on the tablet!

This time Kai, laughs with her now. The laughter takes hold of Kai, and it doesn’t take much for Penelope to fall back into her hysterical fit of laughter. There is a synergy between them that is nice that Marvin sees when he comes back in from the bathroom.

“Sounds like a party’s going on in room 2752. I could hear you guys all the way down the hall. The pheromones are popping.” Marvin pops his pecks, his pectoral muscles bounce up and down... “What did I miss?”

Kai points at Marvin, as if it is not possible that he just ‘popped his pecks’ and said the word pheromone. Kai falls back on the bed in a hysterical fit, his dinosaur costume legs flailing in the air. This leads them all into a fit of all out crying laughter.

Kai spits out between breaths, “Help... I’m stuck!”

Aaahhhaahahahahahahahah!

Suddenly, Penelope’s tablet lights up and an electronic form of the Darth Vader music from Star Wars pipes in and she grabs her tablet.

Marvin takes this moment to incorporate one of his gymnastic moves finishing with a one arm swish that sends Kai back to his feet. Kai and Marvin shake hands for real this time.

Penelope ushers frantically for the guys to come closer. Kai and Marvin surround Penelope to find out what is so interesting. Marvin states the obvious... “That’s Dr. Thomas and Dr. Sterling. They are in the lab.” Then it dawns on him that, “Hey, this is live footage from Dr. Sterling’s lab! It’s *illegal!*”

Penelope looks up sheepishly. Then puts her finger to her mouth - shhhhshhhh!

“But you could seriously get expelled for invasion of privacy, or something like that... man-oh-man!”

This time Kai and Penelope both *shhhhhh!* Marvin. Penelope turns up the volume.

On the screen Dr. Thomas races in the door and throws her arms around Dr. Sterling for protection. “They’re real! Oh God, they’re real! We have to evacuate!”

Dr. Sterling holds his sterilized gloved hands up in the air and tries to shake her lose. “Jane, have you lost your mind. I’m in the middle of a series. Let me go!”

Dr. Thomas moves back apologetically, then she gathers up her energy and pushes him as hard as she can. “Wake up you sack of obsessed potatoes, this is a life or death situation.”

Dr. Sterling gets angry because he has just spoiled his clean glove. “Look what you made me do! The test is wasted!”

“John, you hard-headed mule, you are not hearing me. There is a live velociraptor on school premises.”

“And, a proticeratops, or at least there was one... Its tissue is deteriorating rapidly. Thus the urgency of the tests!” Dr. Sterling puts his eye back to the microscope and the series he is running.

She sits down, trying to make sense of everything.

Dr. Sterling continues, “We don’t have the video footage. It seems that there was a surge of electricity and it wiped clean. However we did find a proticeratops corpse that was killed by a carnivore, rapture in origin. So it all makes perfect sense.”

Sarcastically now Professor Thomas interrupts, “We have at least one dead if you need more “proof.” I would have been next on the beast’s list if I hadn’t been rescued by dino robo girl...”

Dr. Sterling corrects her, “Penelope.”

Penelope takes this in, raises an eyebrow, that’s me. She giggles:
Dino robo girl

“How did she... What are you talking about?”

Professor Thomas cuts him off, “--She was looking for something for her costume and found me in the closet. She knows everything.”

Penelope writes quickly on the tablet:

Ha! Dino Robo Girl knows everything!

“The big question is how did the creatures get here? Where did they come from?” Dr. Sterling turns back to the dead creature on his exam table and his microscopes.

Dr. Thomas touches his shoulder and he turns back to her. “That means that OJ shot at a real, living breathing creature. So the real question is, how did OJ know it was there?”

Dr. Sterling is excited now by all of the possibilities. “If he knows something, that means we might be able to actually predict when another live animal will arrive. We will learn everything possible about all of the prehistoric creatures, write books and win the Nobel. Perhaps we will learn why prehistoric creatures truly went extinct. Or perhaps how to save their species... The possibilities are endless!” He kisses her passionately. “Jane, we are going to be legends.”

“John, that’s terrific, but you are missing the big point here. There is a live flesh-eating velociraptor roaming around on campus... It killed someone.” She looks worried.

“Oh yeah, we need to capture it, ALIVE! Get its DNA...”

She shouts at him now, “NO!!!”

“What do you mean, No!? If you aren’t with me, you are against me.”

“All I am saying is, John, it is extremely dangerous. I was being hunted and...” She begins to tremble... “It ate Eddie!”

“Who is Eddie?”

“The sound master of the sch-- O-M-G Sterling! Get your head out of your ass... We need to protect the students. Close the school. Get everyone out... and then you can go *hunting*.”

“If we do that, Jane, the government will come in and hide everything. You know like what they did with the aliens they found in the desert. We need to take advantage of this opportunity. We might not have another one like it.” On her shocked expression he continues, “This test will take 15 minutes, then we will go together to talk with OJ. Find out how that crazy man anticipated everything.” Dr. Thompson nods, “But I’m not going anywhere!”

Back in Kai’s room, Kai stands, “We have fifteen minutes.”

CHAPTER 14

Standing in the school police station, Kai watches his new roommate talk with one of the MIBs. A science school with an undercover police force still seems strange to Kai. But the Sterling School of Science is not an ordinary school. Kai sighs. What is going to come of all this? Whatever it may be, Kai is impatient to get on with it. Marvin waves for he and Penelope to follow. Kai and Penelope look at each other, there's nothing to say, she's optimistic, he's less, and for good reason.

Marvin and his MIB friend Roger, walk them into the small hallway of cells. "Thanks, Rogersaurusman. See you at 10 tomorrow." Marvin and Roger do a high five, low five, check fist right, check fist left, low right and yell, "GO TEAM!" As Roger closes the door behind them, Kai pushes past them to OJ's cell.

When OJ sees him he jumps out of his seat and races toward the bars pointing at Kai. "You! How'd you do it?! One minute you're a saliva dripping, man-eating beast and the next a student!" OJ reaches to take off his hat, but he doesn't have one. His hand trembles as he runs his hand through his hair. "You're a strange one, aren't you?"

Marvin whispers, "Takes one to know one." Penelope elbows Marvin. OJ turns his back on them and begins pacing. Marvin shrugs, 'what'd I say..?!' "It's true."

Penelope gestures to Marvin to 'zip it.'

“You’re not hallucinating. There was a real velociraptor there,” Kai looks at Penelope then continues, “And, we can prove it.”

OJ sits up a little taller, but he’s not a taker yet. “I don’t need you to prove that I am not crazy, you know. This mountain is sittin’ on magnetite. There will be others. There will be others alright. I have a 1 out of 5 chance of catching one. It’s just a matter of time. Just sayin...”

Marvin shrinks, “Others...?”

Kai repeats, “Magnetite?”

“I said too much already. Go on, leave me be. Go back to dino class. And anyway, I work alone.” OJ returns to his cot in the corner.

Kai takes a moment, “OJ, we believe you and like I said, we have proof.”

OJ, doubtful, “Yeah. What kind of proof?”

Kai, “We have video footage.”

Angry now, OJ turns and moves toward Kai aggressively. “Footage doesn’t prove *anything!* We need a live animal. Something tangible or they’ll say that I created a story again”

Kai holds his own, “Well, we can give you just that. We have video footage that there is a living breathing velociraptor running free on campus at this very moment.”

OJ steps back, his eyes whirling excitedly, thinks out loud, “I knew it! Makes perfect sense, protons attract and with a high enough current, a combination of electrical and magnetic currents, dimensional lines could be bent allowing other timelines to enter ours.”

Kai continues, “Drs. Sterling and Thomas are on their way here right now to get information out of you. They are going to use you to make the discovery, and take credit for everything. We also have the footage of that conversation. In case you don’t believe us.”

“I’ll never help them. They didn’t believe me when I told them about magnetic attraction and protons attracting and dimensions crossing. They ruined my life and turned me into the laughing stock that I am now. I want nothing to do with them. I’d rather die than

give them anything. Do you understand me? Six feet under!” Then he eyes them suspiciously, “Did they send you?”

Kai watches the energy flying around OJ, red, green swirls of anger and jealousy catapulting in every direction. “No, of course not.” Kai steps forward, “I’ll drop all charges if you come with us right now. We need your help. And we will help you get her, *if* you will help us *return* her.”

“Return her?! No. I want proof.” OJ shakes his head, adamantly.

“You can take samples. We learn about her and then *we send her back*. Or no deal.” Kai is also adamant.

“It’s a female?” They all nod. “How do you know?” Shakes his head, “Not important.” Then, “Hold on. We don’t have the same atmosphere so the corpses deteriorate rapidly.” He thinks to himself, “But it’s living, not a corpse. What time did she arrive?”

Penelope writes:

7h39 am

Kai says, “The same time my electrometer went berserk.”

OJ adds, “Mine, too. It’s exactly as I presumed. But is the portal causing the surge, or is it the surge causing the portal.”

“Portal? You mean like a sci-fi time portal?” Marvin’s voice rings with doubt. “Star Trek to Star Fleet. Beam me up a dinosaur.” He laughs nervously, kind of hoping it is real and kind of hoping it isn’t.

OJ grabs a handful of dirt from the floor and with great zest starts to explain his theory by drawing on the wall with the dust. “For years I have been trying to figure out how the Pterodactyl came into our world and then vanished in an instant. You all have heard of the string theory?”

They all nod. Kai adds, “But people haven’t been able to bend time. It is unlikely that a prehistoric creature could bend time.”

OJ gets more and more animated as he draws a design on the wall. Strings circling and swirling around each other. “The resent technology at CERN has proven many things... 1. Super conductivity leads way to high luminosity, which means what?”

Penelope writes:

More collisions.

OJ continues to write, “2. With super conducting magnetic energy, and radio frequency to direct where beams collide, plus a high power super-conductive electrical current, protons attract protons. It all makes perfect sense.”

All three of them look at him dumbfounded.

“Well for one, this entire facility is located on predominantly magnetite, the most highly magnetic rock on the planet, magnifying all electrical currents.”

Penelope writes:

But, where is the radio frequency to direct the current?

“Yeah,” Kai agrees, “How are the energies directed?”

OJ scratches his head again, “I suspect it is in the new highfalutin electron microscope Sterling has in his lab.” Sarcasically, he continues, “A donation for all his contributions to science. But I can’t get in to prove it.”

Penelope writes...

That we can help with.

OJ suddenly becomes emotional, almost childlike. “Oh... If there was a way to preserve one, to show the world, restore my reputation. To capture one alive... The ultimate!”

Marvin, feeling left out, finally gets the nerve to speak up, “Uh, I don’t get it.”

“In basic terms, the electrical current from the microscope is magnified because we are on magnetite. And the current is strong enough to open a portal to other dimensions.” Kai explains.

Marvin understands, kind of. “Ohhhh, yeah.”

“OJ, we need to get you out of here. Are, you coming with us?” Kai asks, urgently now.

“Can we go hunting for it?” OJ pleads.

“Only if you point your gun away from me this time.” Kai adds.

“We don’t have much time, then.” OJ waits at the door to his cell. Marvin, “He can hide out with us.”

OJ eyes them all skeptically, “No. We’ll go to my place.” He gestures toward Kai, “What’s in it for you?”

On the spot now, Kai keeps his cool, “Me, I...” He looks at his newfound friends, and sputters out, “We, we liii-kkke dinosaurs.” He smiles.

OJ’s look of skepticism provokes Kai to continue, “We want to learn-”

Marvin interrupts with the obvious, “This is the most exciting thing that has ever happened to us!”

Makes sense, OJ looks at Marvin now.

Marvin, “Plus, you have guns.” He smiles.

OJ’s found a new friend. He turns to Penelope. She writes:

Students are in danger. We don’t have time to keep talking about it.

OJ nods his head adamantly, he’s in. “I’ll get to be a hero, make discoveries about velociraptors, *and* time travel.” He shoves his hand through the bars, and they all shake on it.

A P.A. announcement sounds through the speakers:

The Core will be open until 9 o’clock this evening. However, no student may leave the indoor campus. All activities exterior to the SSS CORE and dorms are closed. All students must return to their rooms by 10 o’clock tonight. This curfew is in effect until tomorrow morning. All questions will be addressed tomorrow morning in The CORE.

Marvin yells to the guard, “Roger! We gotta get a move on.”

CHAPTER 15

Was it really just yesterday that Kai terrorized a mall full of people as a cave bear? What is happening to him? Never has he changed twice within a 24 hour period. The unstable magnetic energy is too dangerous for him. He should have never come. Is it possible that what OJ is saying is true? That because of this microscope and magnetite, creatures have been showing up on campus regularly? If that is the case, they need to get rid of the microscope after the creatures have been returned. On this topic, his newfound teammates aren't in agreement. Kai sighs. One step at a time. It's time to hunt a dinosaur, then, he'll be on his way.

Kai looks around him at his new group of friends, OJ, Marvin and Penelope, the plan they've created could work. They have to try. The severity of what they are about to do is finally dawning on all of them. As they march down the long corridor, his thoughts continue.

This morning they woke up with fears about normal things, going to school, vision boards, telling jokes, making friends. Well they have succeeded at making friends. He thinks of the fun he's had with Penelope. As if on cue, she turns and looks at him. It's uncanny how she gets him. But now, their mission is survival. The tension in the air could be cut with a knife. The world has changed as they knew it.

Kai wishes that they could go back to leading normal lives and forget what has happened today. Every step he makes in this corridor

echoes in his brain. He could never forgive himself if something happened to them. He longs to feel free. Free from the stress and guilt of daily living. He longs for peace, to be responsible for just himself.

Geared up now, moving toward potential death, the four of them stop. There is an awkward pause.

Penelope gives Kai a long look, she knows his struggles. Suddenly, unexpectedly she throws her arms around him and gives him an impulsive hug. She turns, fast, covering her emotions, zips up her costume and heads into a door with the words *The Core*. Marvin nods his respect to Kai and follows Penelope. OJ and Kai head into the restricted area of Portal 5, the Zoo.

Inside, OJ smirks and can't help himself, "Ready to be Barney bait?"

"Ready as ever."

OJ shakes Kai's hand they head off in two different directions.

CHAPTER 16

“She really falls for this?” OJ speaks into his headset while watching Kai through night vision goggles from a tree. He continues, “Velos are supposed to have been extremely intelligent.”

Back in disguise now, Kai receives a text from Penelope.

I don't have a good feeling about this.

OJ's voice pipes through, “Too late to back out now. Everyone stay focused. Like we've planned it. You lead her to the Sahara exit, I'll tranq her. Penelope you survey the Docs and the activity in the Core, and Marvin, set up everything for the depart. We'll bring her to my lair, run some tests, blast the scope and she gets to go home in the morning.”

Marvin is the only one to respond with, “10-4 good buddy!”

Tree branches move and with that Kai launches himself out of the bushes and into the open field of the Safari exhibit at the SSS Zoo. He mimics being a real dinosaur smelling the ground, then smelling the air. He feels really stupid. Thankfully it's dark out. On a normal day or night, the place would be flooded with tourists on high-tech trains and zip lines flying across the manmade safari park. Tonight, no one, thankfully they closed the park. But he still feels really *really* stupid.

“Where is the little critter?” OJ searches his computer screen.

Penelope, in costume and surrounded by people in the CORE, is watching Kai.

You don't look natural. Where's the romance? She giggles.

Kai wrings his hands, nervously, then shakes his arms. From outside the costume, it looks like the dinosaur is doing a dance.

My friend Barney had a band, e-i-e-i-o...♪

Kai, "Very funny!"

She continues:

Come on, feel for her...

Feel for her. If he finds her it could be catastrophic for everyone. He tells himself to shake it off. He didn't change last time, why would he change now? He is not ready for OJ to know the truth and become his lab rat.

OJ pipes in, "Get your act together son or you're going to be dead meat. She's coming in from the south."

Kai closes his eyes and breathes in deeply, calming his racing heart. He begins to panic. Zen. He listens. Nothing. He's got nothing. He sighs, then tries to see the energy in the air, without light it is impossible. Kai closes his eyes, and tries to feel how he felt when he was in her presence. Then he thinks about how they are going to hurt her and he loses the feeling again. Instinctively, Penelope writes:

Tranqing is for her own good. You were tranquilized and you survived.

It's not right! Still, if all goes according to plan they need to tranquilize her. But in Kai's experience, it is best to expect the unexpected. Expect the unexpected could be his motto. But if he doesn't try and succeed, the outcome will be worse. He closes his eyes, breathes deeply, and remembers how he felt to be wild. To be able to just react from instinct. He remembers the aura of the female surrounding him and her playful nature. The gold tentacles of energy floating freely around them. He groans as the sense of freedom takes over him. Every cell in his body is on fire.

Kai opens his reptilian eyes, he's got her. He runs in her direction, faster and faster. The sense of freedom elevates him, it's as if his feet are no longer touching the ground. He could fly, his heart is filled with pure joy, pure rapture. He sees her now, only, she is *not okay*.

The female's energy is determined, frantic and dangerous. What's got her worked up? She races to him. As she gets nearer, he turns, circling her. She double backs, taking the lead. He follows, willingly. Then, he whispers to everyone. "There's something wrong. She's scared."

Lead her toward the entrance.

Suddenly, he is overwhelmed by the feeling of danger. "We are not alone!"

OJ searches, "What do you mean you're not alone?"

The female stops suddenly and changes directions, nearly running over Kai. Kai turns on his heels and follows. For some reason he feels safer with her than with anything else that might be out there.

Penelope scans the cameras in the area. She finds the source of the problem, writes:

Sterling and a group of MIBs camouflaged 20 meters north.

OJ sees them now, "They're hanging back in the brush."

When the velociraptors turn, Sterling and the MIBs follow in pursuit. She sends another message:

Plan B - Go to Rhino exhibit

Kai struggles to keep up with the female. Panting now, "She's too fast."

He fumbles with the voice device in the costume and blows into it, calling for her to follow him. She turns him a slight glance and sees him running in another direction. She's frustrated. Why can't he just listen! Kai feels her anger and is suddenly relieved that they are going to tranquilize her. "Anytime OJ!" He can't keep up this pace much longer.

Just then, OJ flies toward the raging velociraptor on a zip line. Closing in... 20 feet...15 feet...10 feet... Aiming his gun now, he shoots and the tranquilizer hits her right shoulder. She jumps up into the air, her feathers open aggressively. She is close enough now to do OJ damage. She looks him right in the eyes.

Time stands still for OJ. He does his best to avoid her attack, but he is travelling straight toward her. Her jaws snap shut and trap his ankle. He shrieks and tries to shake the creature off. She loses her grip.

Kai feels sick to his stomach as she falls tumbling to the ground. She gets back on her feet and follows Kai. They are almost at the door to the Rhino Exhibit when another gun fires and suddenly, Kai rolls. Hit in the leg. “Not again!” He rolls back up and limps now toward the hidden Rhino exit. He opens the door and the female charges in before him.

Inside the cavern, Kai locks the door behind him. The room begins to spin, he slides to the floor unconscious and vulnerable. The velociraptor hops over to her companion and cocks her head to one side. Something isn’t right.

She leans in and nudges Kai’s head, his costume moves. Then she squints her eyes, as if focusing now on something that isn’t visible to the human eye. She moves forward slowly and sniffs Kai. Then, angrily, she growls, and swipes at his costume. Tearing it open. Blood begins to ooze slowly out of Kai’s chest. Hunger takes over as the monster’s eyes change menacingly. She begins to totter. She opens her mouth and as she would rip Kai to shreds, she collapses on top of him. The tranquilizer has finally taken her down.

Meanwhile, in the Rhino Park, OJ cheers, “I got her!” He loads his tranquilizer gun again and then looks through the scope at Dr. Sterling and the MIBs. Why not?! Coming up unnoticed from behind, he lets the three men have a dose. They fall to the ground in pain. He flies over Sterling, and gives him another shot, just because, “Sucker!” Then, he continues toward his goal. Just before crashing into a tree, he detaches himself, rolling combat style in the tall grass. He runs off limping toward the caverns. He’s got a velociraptor to round up.

CHAPTER 17

The t-rex skeleton towers over Penelope's allosaurus costume in the Core of SSS. Inside the costume, Penelope is panicking. She has to get to Kai. She looks around for Marvin, where is he? At first glance, the Core could be Grand Central Station in New York City, but it's not, it's a typical day at SSS. Students rush in and out, circulating around giant digital boards that now hang above the crystal waterfall. Each board holds valuable information about current activities and the week to come as well as the schedules of classes for the semester.

In the far corner, Noa and Etienne use a megaphone to remind students that they have only two hours to sign in with their exhibits. On the tableau above their heads is a map with flashing lights of various areas of the school that are still available for students to host their activities. It is utter organized chaos, if such a thing actually exists. On the other side of the large hall is a list of classes with room changes, cancellations, absent professors, etc. Dr. Sterling's classes have been replaced by an extra cellular biology class on the sixth level with Dr. Havenworth. And all Zoology classes have been post-poned until further notice.

Finally, she finds Marvin. He uses a football move and shoves his way through the crowd and up to the exhibit desk. Noa eyes him skeptically, not too fond of bullies, she scolls "Name of Exhibit?"

Marvin responds confidently, “Rex vs. Titans, May the Games Begin.”

“Not bad, not bad for a first year.” Noa continues, “Where would you like to put this?”

“In the coliseum of course.” Noa is confused... “Okay, okay, the sports stadium.” Marvin clarifies things. “Oh, and here is a letter from my roommate with the information about his exhibit.”

Noa holds up her hand apologetically, “I can only accept in-person inscriptions. You understand.”

Marvin anticipated this response and tries to look desperate. “My roommate is Kai Rivers, you remember the guy who got tranq-ed yesterday. He is still not able to walk well so he asked me to bring you this note. It’s just bad luck that he can’t bring it himself. If you want you can call him.” Marvin opens his cellphone.

Noa shakes her head, then opens the note. She rolls her eyes and writes, “Attack of the Dinosaur.” Then sarcastically she adds, “That oughtta be a crowd stopper!” Where’s it going to be held?”

Marvin doesn’t know. He starts to get nervous then spurts out, “Oh, ah, a, a little bit everywhere.”

Noa leans in toward Marvin, threatening, “If he doesn’t show...” She leans in closer, “It will be on your head.”

Man, when she is serious she can be one scary gem. Marvin backs up. “Not a chance. Like I said... He’s in his bed and feeling better every minute.”

Marvin turns, as he walks away, he gives two discreet thumbs up to Dino Robo Girl standing close by. Penelope ushers, urgently, for him to follow. Marvin struggles to keep up with her pace. He yells for her to wait up, but with the noise, maybe she didn’t hear him. Then she vanishes. “She didn’t wait.” To himself, “Don’t take it personally, man. Something must be up.” He puts on his game face. This time he hunkers down and uses his best twisting and ducking football moves to break through the relentless crowd in pursuit of an allosaurus.

CHAPTER 18

It is so peaceful here. Kai thinks to himself. The trees sway softly, rhythmically with the fresh sweet breeze. Birds flutter and swirl, from branch to branch, singing, happy to be alive. The sound of a waterfall nearby, it's heaven.

Suddenly, the birds take flight, vanishing into the sky, and the tree branches shake violently. Then, silence. Undaunted, Kai turns slowly, scanning the colorful forest for the slightest movements. What caused such a whirlwind? He stops moving and focuses on the foliage next to him. On closer examination, he finds that amidst the leaves there is an eye. He waits a moment, not moving an inch. The eye blinks. As the carnivore's mouth opens wide then snaps shut in front of him, Kai wakes to:

The female velociraptor's wide toothy grin centimeters from his face. Kai jumps up and off of the makeshift camping bed, recoiling fast then winces with pain. He looks down at the bandages on his chest. How did this happen? Taped to the bandages is a note from OJ:

Be back in 11 minutes, but he didn't write the time that he left. Eleven minutes from when?

Kai runs his fingers through his hair as he looks around. He's in a very impressive high-tech lab, must be OJ's place. He holds his head now, remembering, then touches his leg. He, too, was hit with a tranquilizer.

Kai begins to tremble. “Don’t freak out. Zen.” He tries to breathe slowly and deeply, but it is getting harder and harder, and the drugs aren’t helping. “Zen, damn it!” The creature crashes against the steel bars, amplifying the stress. He searches for something, anything to help him get out of there. Then he finds it.

She won’t hurt him if he is in the suit. As fast as he can, he takes it off the hook and starts to put it on, only to find that it’s *shredded*. He touches his chest, knowingly now. Where is everyone? On second thought it’s better that he’s alone, no one will get hurt.

How much time has passed? He looks around the room again. A centrifuge spins wildly on a counter. In another part of the lab, a computer records pictures and processes data from the electron microscope. Kai surmises that he has been out long enough for OJ to start running tests. Behind him the clock reads 10:23. In the morning?! The Gala has already begun.

The creature throws herself against the cage, then turns back and nudges something gently. Then he sees it. In the far corner of the large cage are *eggs*. Oh, no, this complicates things. Eggs! How is he going to get the creature and all of its eggs to safety? He can’t leave eggs for OJ to mutilate. The mother looks now at her nest and then back to Kai. She is a proud mama, thrilled and tired and *hungry*.

The velociraptor charges more forcefully now. The tension on the bars pulls at the ceiling joints. She’s not going to break the bars, but the whole cage is going to come down. He has to get her and the eggs out of here before OJ returns.

Kai fumbles with the costume as he puts what is left of it over his head. He speaks into the microphone. “What’s up guys?” Nothing. The computer is off.

Just then the starving velociraptor breaks through the bars and bounds out of the cage toward Kai. Kai slips and slides as he runs toward a door marked ‘Proof,’ knocking vials and test tubes to the floor on the way. He slams against the door, fumbles with the knob and then opens it. He dives into the room and locks the door behind him. The automatic lights come on.

Kai is in the middle of a storage room filled with nitrogen tanks. What is OJ doing with nitrogen tanks? The beast crashes into the door. The metal is more supple and it will take no time for the animal to break through. He hides behind a nitrogen storage tank.

Kai starts the computer inside his suit, "Come on... Come on..."

The door bursts off its hinges and the female crashes into the room. She raises her nose and smells. Kai realizes what she is doing, after all he was hunting with her not long ago, she's trying to feel his fear. He steadies his breathing and focuses on the spirals floating in the air. He can feel her and how she is desperately hungry. In his calm state now, she is having a hard time finding him. It's as if he is camouflaged, like in his dreams. She passes in front of him. He freezes not moving a muscle and slows his breathing even more. She hops forward, inches from him and lets out an intimidating screech. Her distress is overwhelming, but he keeps his cool. She continues further into the large room of tanks. In slow motion, Kai moves toward the door.

Suddenly, the dead calm is broken with a computerized beeping as his computer and the macintosh song plays. The beast turns toward the sound. Kai makes no hesitation and in one grand movement he sends the nitrogen tanks tumbling and rolling toward the animal. She slips and slams into the ground, unable to keep her balance, rolling, sliding, in pursuit of Kai. She falls again giving Kai a second to look at his computer screen for the first time and the words

15 minutes at the portal.

Kai's heart races wildly. He has to think. How is he going to lead this angry, hungry carnivore anywhere without being eaten. His heart races, he can't breathe. The pain in his chest is agonizing, he doubles over. Then he cries out as his joints twist and he falls to the ground. "NOOooo. Zen." He lets out a tortured breath, "I am zen. Noooohhh!" The bones in his shoulders crack and he screams in horrible pain. His eyes change color.

“I am, zen,” he shouts out this time, as if to convince himself, falling to his knees. “I am ZEN! Control it!” He looks up to see the eggs in the corner. He screams to the others, “*Eggs.*”

As the dinosaur continues to struggle to her feet, Kai rolls on the floor. The cool tiles against his face shock his senses, shocking enough to stop his transition. He focuses back on his breathing and thinks zen and the eggs. He has to get the eggs out of there. Determined, he sits up, tears off his tail and makes a sac out of it. He puts all of the eggs inside.

As the velociraptor steadies herself on her feet, Kai runs out of OJ’s secret hideout with the eggs.

CHAPTER 19

Kai leans against the door to OJ's place, only it isn't just a door, it is a door camouflaged as a boulder that blends into its surrounding environment. It's pitch black, he has no idea where to turn. Catching his breath he asks, "Uhhh, guys? Where am I?"

Follow the Dino Shredder to the door.

"What, the roller coaster? I can't see a thing!"

He hears it now, the rattling of train tracks. And then the tracks light up. He sees a door in the distance, but then he realizes that he will have to climb a half a dozen boulders to get there. He makes a run for it, but his gait quickly turns into a sort of leg swinging shuffle.

Run, Kai. She's almost through the door!

As she breaks out of the lab, the roller coaster car with the head of a spinosaurus turns and swings past her. She jumps and snaps her gnarly jaws at the passengers. They squeal with delight, all but one, *Bea*.

Bea holds a megaphone and has been reciting a dictation, part of her presentation for the Gala. A lump rises in her throat, "Kai!" Believing that the real dinosaur is Kai and the costumed, a student, she assumes the worse: Kai is going to kill the student in the costume. She pulls on the emergency break, stopping the train. She tells everyone to stay put and begins to climb out of the coaster.

Over the megaphone Bea screams, “No, Kai, don’t kill him!” Then the lights go out. But not before the velociraptor has seen Kai climbing up the rocks.

Penelope writes.

Faster Kai. She’s gaining on you.

Between breaths, “You didn’t perhaps put a jet pack in this suit?” Kai slips and then catches one of the eggs that begins to slide out of the bag. He pulls himself over the top of the ledge and then lunges forward. Again in total blackness. He feels for the door. He finds it and tries the handle, he pulls the handle. But the door won’t open. “It’s locked!”

What do you mean?

“The door won’t open.”

Pull harder!

Kai uses all of his force, but the door won’t budge. Suddenly, the velociraptor is behind him, he can’t see her, but he knows she is there. Kai turns, calmly. For some reason, he’s not afraid any more. His heart isn’t racing, he isn’t trembling. Is this how it feels right before we know we are going to die? Is it just animal instincts taking over, like antelopes before being eaten by lions in the Sahara? They just stop struggling.

Bea has begun to scale the rocky cliff, all the while believing that Kai is the one attacking.

Kai remembers that the dinosaur was so charming and persuasive in the beginning. He tries to feel how she is feeling now but instead he feels her breath against his hurt shoulder. She nudges him, then, she finds it, the makeshift sack. She has found the eggs.

The Dino-Shredder tracks light up again as if provoking her, as it rushes out of the cavern. She turns and screeches at the noise violently. The angry creature turns back to finish her business with Kai.

Suddenly, Kai rolls backwards as the door behind him opens *into* the hallway. In his fear, he had been pulling on the door when

all he had to do was push it open. OJ helps him to his feet all the while assessing the situation.

The animal charges toward the door.

OJ slams the door shut but strains, pushing against the door as the velociraptor's claws scratch and tear into it. Kai joins in. The creature screeches in pain as the door pinches its claws. She pulls away. The door slams shut and Kai locks the door. But the door isn't going to hold her. The velociraptor slams the door again.

OJ yells, "Penelope are you ready?" But there is no response. There is no other option, "Run for it, Kai! I will hold her off as long as I can." Kai tries to protest, but OJ won't hear of it, "When the portal shows up, you finish it!"

Kai doesn't move, is this man truly willing to sacrifice his life to save his?

OJ continues, "What are you waiting for? I said get out of here!"

But Kai has another plan. He reaches into the sack of eggs and holds out an egg to OJ, then, "For your own protection."

OJ looks as if he has just been given the golden key to the kingdom.

Kai shakes his head, protesting, "Just until we see the vortex."

OJ stutters, "But...?"

Kai shoots him life-threatening glance, "No!" Then turning back to the door, "On three, then I'll go right and you and you go left." The two of them begin counting together, "One, two, three."

OJ holds the door a little longer, giving Kai a head start.

Kai runs toward the arena door limping. This time he pushes the doors into the arena.

OJ lets go of the door and sprints off in the opposite direction, but the monster is right behind him. He races through the door and then turns left and steps back against the wall as the velociraptor storms into the stadium behind him.

A guttural screech pierces the arena filled with people.

The crowd in the arena, which has been focused on Marvin's 'Rex vs Titans, May the Game Begin,' stands and cheers at the

newfound character of the production, “Yeeaaahhhhh!” They stomp their feet in excitement.

The sound agitates the velociraptor even more, starving, and desperate she finds OJ racing across the arena with her egg. Her protective instincts take over and she charges in his direction.

The dino-athlete alter-egos, the players, pause for a moment as they realize there are additional players on the field. Marvin, having expected this surprise, circles his arm over his head and the players scatter in all directions. The game goes on and the crowd continues to go crazy!

OJ runs for his life. Kai yells into his headset, “OJ, pass the egg.”

“No! It’s mine! I want to keep it.”

“No, it’s hers. You have to give it back.”

“Do you realize what this could do for science?”

“Pass the egg, or you won’t be alive to see it!”

As the creature is about to jump on OJ, he throws his precious egg into the air and then rolls. He doesn’t blink, he watches the egg just until it is caught by Marvin.

The beast spreads her wings and jump-flies over OJ in pursuit of her egg, losing interest temporarily in OJ.

Marvin catches the egg and then heads in the opposite direction. Both teams of players play football now, dodging the real dinosaur and tossing the precious egg.

Kai calls out to Penelope, “Where is the portal? We need the portal. Did Dr. Thomas help?”

Penelope is in Dr. Sterling’s lab. The MIBs and Dr. Sterling are lying passed out on cots.

Dr. Thomas, is a little out of it.

As if on cue, Dr. Thomas turns in her chair. Her animal print pillow falls to the ground. She reaches for it. “Mon doudou.”

Penelope who has been working frantically on the microscope, leans down quickly to help Dr. Thomas before she falls to the ground.

Dr. Thomas, “Thanks sugar.”

Suddenly, the microscope beeps. Penelope asks her again, impatiently, “What do I do next, Dr. Thomas? Which button...!”

Dr Thomas points, “Green. I like the color green.” Then she cuddles with her pillow and falls spontaneously to sleep.

Penelope presses the green button. Suddenly, there is a humming sound. She turns to look at her computer screen and the stadium.

In the stadium, a portal begins to glow near the far end of the field. The crowd shrieks excitedly. The players are wide-eyed, and Kai yells out, “Give me the egg!” He races toward the vortex now, zig-zagging, Marvin tosses the egg over the velociraptor’s head. Kai catches it, easily, and places it gently in the bag, all the while running for his life.

The female is close behind now. There is no mistaking her intentions. There is one thing for certain, where ever the eggs go, she’ll follow. Kai picks up his pace, inches away from the portal he winds his arm back to toss the sack into the shimmering light, but suddenly, there is a large earth shaking rumble coming from the vortex. The earth trembles and Kai loses his balance.

An enormous flash of light and then, unexpectedly, another velociraptor rolls out. This larger creature rebounds to his large clawed feet and releases a heart-wrenching, ear-piercing, angry cry for anyone to hear. The female responds with an equally passionate response. It’s the father.

The stakes have changed and not for Kai who stops dangerously in the middle of the two menacing creatures. You could hear a pin drop as everyone in the stadium waits for the next move.

CHAPTER 20

Adrenalin pumping, Kai quickly takes in his options. The moment hangs in the air, seeming to last forever. Finally, the male and female begin circling him, dangerously. There growls echo throughout the large arena as they communicate with each other. Kai is frozen with fear, realizing there's a crowd and there will be no happy ending for him.

The male jumps toward Kai, snapping his jaws, threateningly. His teeth tear through Kai's costume, piercing his shoulder. Kai screams out in pain and drops vulnerably to all fours. The female jumps between Kai and the male, protectively. Well, that's what it looks like, but Kai knows the difference. It's the eggs she is protecting. Kai pulls them close.

Suddenly, the male lets out an angry shrill and pushes her out of the way, barrelling toward Kai. He stops, head-to-head now, his teeth centimeters from Kai's face.

The world seems to spin as the pain searing through Kai becomes unbearable, like thin nails being driven into every joint. His eyes change, his joints pop. He continues to fight the change, he can't do it in front of all of these people. He cries out again as the male carnivore's teeth seize hold of Kai's costume and tosses him through the air like a ragdoll, then storms after Kai. As Kai hits the ground, the animal punches him with his snout savagely, sending Kai rolling across the indoor turf. The bag of eggs slips out of Kai's grasp. The male screeches, ferociously. He hits Kai again. Then he

sees the eggs. He races toward the eggs, sniffs each of them, as if he is taking count.

Unexpectedly, he turns and races back to the female. The two monsters circle each other affectionally as long lost lovers, communicating all. Kai rolls to his side, he struggles to pull himself toward the eggs and the vortex.

Penelope writes on the screen.

Get out of there, Kai!

Kai struggles to breathe, "I have to get them home."

This production has become very real. The crowd shrieks, horrified, as the two predators stampede back toward Kai. The male jumps on Kai's legs, pinning him with his sharp claws to the ground.

Kai strains against the constraints.

The female circles toward Kai's head, and snarls. Her exhale moves through Kai's hair. His eyes closed now, Kai prepares for the worst. She opens her mouth ready to rip Kai's head off.

From the other side of the arena, OJ jumps up and down, making as much noise as possible, creating a distraction. He calls out for the carnivores to come and get him.

The female hits the male with her muzzle and then looks toward OJ. The male follows her gaze. She's hungry and OJ is unfinished business! They jump away from Kai, after all, with his injuries he can't go far. They charge full speed ahead toward OJ.

Kai, inhales and winces, the pain in his skull is unbearable. He tries to move closer to the eggs. He struggles to move onto all four limbs, but the injuries to his legs are preventing him. He tries dragging himself with just his arms, but the injury to his shoulder leaves him screaming out in pain. There is nothing he can do.

The screams of the players as they dodge the velociraptors and the crowd cheering sends a jolt of fear through Kai. After everything they have been through, it can't end like this. Kai makes a choice.

His bones snap, and crack, "Aaaahhhh!" He writhes in agony as his body twists and pops, and contorts, letting go of resistance and making the change.

On the other side of the arena, OJ has no time to consider what is happening to Kai, but instead questions his own judgement as he turns and runs for his life. The two carnivores are heading his way and he has no protection, he is cornered now.

Suddenly, the football team flies into action, each taking turns distracting the two dinosaurs. Marvin, catches a football easily and then aims for one of the dinosaurs. The bullet ball jets through the air and just when it would collide with one of the velociraptors, the velociraptor moves and OJ takes the blow to the head. He falls to the ground unconscious as the two hungry, angry raptors move in quickly.

On the otherside of the field, Kai flips, contorts, rolls and sheds the remaining unwanted fabric and stretches out giant, pterydactyl wings. The crowd goes crazy with excitement. The pterosaur hops forward and snatches sack of eggs then begins to rhymerically flap his wings. Slowly at first, and then, as the current of air starts to lift him, Kai takes flight over the crowd with a purpose. He cries out to the velociraptors to get their attention. He circles and dives toward them, dangling the eggs over their heads, tauntingly. The two velociraptors turn red now with rage and charge after the flying creature.

Suddenly, a door slams in the arena. Bea enters and stops, terrified. Still believing that Kai is actually one of the dinosaurs she says, “Oh, no. Not again!” But there are three. She yells into the megaphone, “Kai Rivers, I’m going to call Mom!” The crowd goes crazy with laughter! Bea charges in toward the feral dinosaurs undaunted by the crowds laughter.

The two velociraptors hunt in an arena filled with unsuspecting people. The female jumps and her jaws snap at Marvin, missing him. The animals turn back toward the flying creature.

Bea screams again into the megaphone, “Stop!” The raptors turn toward her. The male’s jaws snap at her she narrowly gets away. They are furious now, and impatient to finish it.

Kai circles the arena now, enjoying the freedom of his newfound wings. Out of all the creatures he has transformed into in his life this,

is by far the most amazing. The faster he goes, the air is cooling and refreshing. He spins through the air, enjoying this newfound liberty. The screams from the crowd get his attention, and he cocks his head to the side. From this height he sees a kaliedescope of colors swirling around every living creature. "This is unbelievable!" He thinks to himself. He is so happy, he could stay like this forever. He dives toward the velociraptors playfully, 'Ha! They'll never catch him!'

Suddenly, Kai is overwhelmed with fear. He realizes it is not him who is feeling this way, but the velociraptors. They are so scared of losing their eggs, that they can't think straight. The feeling is torturous. Kai knows what he needs to do. He flies low enough to be caught but just out of reach of the raptors, who quickly turn and trail closely behind him.

Kai slows as he approaches the vortex, the dinosaurs jaws snap at his wings trying to catch him. Kai smiles inside, knowing he is going to accomplish his mission and save the raptors and the eggs. And, with that, they all vanish into the swirling vortex.

The crowd waits quietly. The football players stop playing, their mouths open in awe. What just happened?

OJ sits up holding his head, then frantically checks his body to make sure he is still in one piece.

Bea, races toward the vortex, but is pushed out of the way by a hysterical Penelope who gets to the edge of the portal and screams with all of her might.

"Kaaaiiii!"

The crowd goes crazy, stomping their feet in appreciation. The mute girl spoke!

Marvin yells out to everyone to cheer, "Kai, Kai, Kai, Kai,.." The rafters of the stadium shake as the crowd catches on, shouting, "Kai, Kai, Kai, Kai,..." As the chanting continues...

CHAPTER 21

Inside the vortex, Kai spins wildly and uncontrollably. In the whirling kaleidoscope of colors turning in the void, Kai shrieks in agony as his skin tears off like fish scales, piece by piece. The scales vanish as he contorts, returning to human form. The raptors swipe at him, he lets go of the sack of eggs into the kaleidoscopic void and the female quickly snaps her jaws shut around the bag.

Kai somersaults and twists, deforming then he becomes the velociraptor we saw in laser tag. Again, his body spasms then warps back to human form. He writhes in pain, but his screams go unheard as yet, again, he transforms into another as the changes are becoming more brutal and instantaneous. He returns to the cavebear we saw in the mall. Then at once, he changes back into Kai. The changes occur more rapidly, one right after another, and each more excruciating than before as Kai becomes younger and younger.

Finally, he stops changing and seemingly floats in complete stillness. Nothing, but calm. It so peaceful. Then, as if he is watching a movie of his life on earth, memories of important moments in his life pass in front of him: A soft, sweet sound of a young girl's voice singing. It's his first memory on earth, the little girl with the long hair in the flowered dress. The girl turns and smiles at him. He recognizes her now. It's Bea! He feels joy for the first time. Then, the image contorts and Bea falls to the ground unconscious. Now, he feels incredible sadness. Everyone around him is so sad. A child's

hand reaches out in front of him. It's his hand. It touches a wooden casket. He is surprised and awed by the coldness. Bea takes his hand in her hand. "Our daddy is in heaven now, a machine broke and he died." Even at three years old, she knows everything!

Kai remembers more now as he revisits painful memories and all of the emotions that went along with them surge through him: Not being included on the playground in preschool, and feeling so dejected and sad because he was different. Then, feeling bad for defending himself after a classmate hit him and he hit him back. Sorrow and guilt rage through Kai, becoming one dark tormenting ball of anger in the center of his being as he remembers. It is a different type of pain than physical. Why can't he just let it go?! The memories are too much for him to bear and the reason he has to leave. All the heartache people cause each other. Why? What is the purpose? Why should he return to this reality? He longs to just be free of all the despair. He remembers flying as a pterodactyl. Ahhh, he was soooo free.

Then, just as he longs for it, the feeling of freedom passes through him, every sense of being wild and spontaneous, the way he feels when he is a creature, a monster, driven by instincts. The release from all of the emotional sadness and chains is exhilarating. Kai becomes aware of the calls of prehistoric animals, a place where you live, you die, no guilt nor pain, just peace. Kai turns toward the forest, he's made his decision. There is nothing holding him any longer. Finally, he is going to let go of being human and be who he longs to be.

And with that decision, the kaliedescopic world spins faster now as Kai falls out of the blackness moving toward the opening into the forest; no resistance. The forest sounds grow louder and louder as he gets closer and closer to accomplishing his goal. A life of pure peace, living on instincts, no more despair, just existing, is what Kai wants now.

Then through the forest sounds, he hears something. Voices? It is the sound of his name being called, "Kai!" He sees her dancing

eyes and then feels the wild laughter and happiness he felt watching Penelope laugh. Penelope. He smiles. He hears it again, but this time more forcefully, “Kai! Kai! Kai!” It’s Marvin!

The memory of Marvin bouncing on the beds with toy dinosaurs flying through the air. Then, like before memories of moments of happiness, pure elation with friends and family stream like a video through his mind. Memories of riding his bike for the first time. Feeling happy and free at the same time is intoxicating and wild in its own way. Like the feeling he had with the female velociraptor. Yes, he thinks to himself, he is making the right decision, there is nothing holding him back from returning to the prehistoric forest now.

The feeling of elation takes over, catapulting him through other happy memories. Bea, “It’s easy! All you have to do is just believe it. I mean really feel it coming true. Love it and own it.” The colors swirl around Bea’s head. Bea. Then the memory changes to his mother, telling him how much she loves him. Her eyes filled with happiness. It’s mesmerizing. In a blink of an eye, Kai sees the happiness in everyone around him in every situation. Why didn’t he see this before? The joy is overwhelming. The voices are getting stronger now, “Kai! Kai! Kai!”

Kai remembers Bea’s eyes filled with excitement after riding a cavebear and yet, even though he had felt the same while he was transformed, back in human form, he chose to be afraid and alone, terrified of hurting others. He spent all of his time worrying about hurting others and feeling guilty about who he is, when he could have chosen to be happy.

Again, Kai remembers how he felt when he was with the female velociraptor. He had refused to let himself become afraid. He couldn’t or Penelope and Dr. Thomas would have gotten hurt either by him or the velociraptor. Instead, he had given into to being instinctual for some reason the creature had accepted him. Was it really just feelings? Because he had given into feeling something other than fear? They connected simply by *instincts and feelings*?

Kai’s thoughts turn to Penelope, he remembers how they communicated with just a glance, instinctively. It was the same

as with the raptor. Is the key to him not changing into a feral creature, just following his instincts, his feelings? Her happiness was intoxicating. She was so much fun! The female velociraptor was driven by her own primal needs. No, it was this but it was also something more. He had felt important.

Penelope, Marvin, Bea, his mother... Every one of them have been willing to put their lives at stake to protect him. Kai remembers how this had made him feel bad because the thought of hurting one of them was too much for him to bear. He remembers, now, when the tables were reversed, and he had done the same to help the velociraptors enter the vortex, he had felt pleased and important for protecting the creatures, and he had prevented people from being hurt.

Yet another memory passes through his mind, "This mountain is sittin' on magnetite. There will be others alright!" Kai remembers OJ pushing against the door with the manic raptor on the otherside, to help Kai get to safety. Even OJ was willing to sacrifice himself to save *him!*

Suddenly, Kai can't wait any longer, he knows where he needs to be. Falling now, no longer spinning, he plummets faster and faster. And again, he feels the pain as his body contorts taking form again.

"KAI! KAI!..." He hears Marvin, OJ, and Penelope. Penelope! She's talking! Suddenly, his body is thrown out of the vortex and back into the arena. The vortex vanishes revealing a body lying motionless. There is a moment of silence. Is he dead? Kai moans, straining to move his legs.

Penelope races to Kai and throws her arms around him. Bea, Marvin, and OJ follow right behind helping him to his feet. The players circle around and lift Kai high into the air. Kai looks at his friends now, so happy to be alive.

Then the arena EXPLODES into applause, this was the best show ever!

END

AFTERWARD

Dressed in his lab coat uniform, Kai sits on his bed writing in his journal:

It's been two days. I received 20 stitches in my legs and three in my shoulder, but that seems like nothing considering I'm lucky to be alive. Funny thing, we won first prize at the GALA. Which Marvin can't stop bragging about because it is unheard of to win as a first year student! People were amazed with the quality special effects. Ha! Penelope is accepting all of the credit for that, of course. Bea is now known for her comedic abilities, and instead of ruining her upward momentum, she is now one of the most popular. The most shocking thing has happened, OJ has been given a substitute teacher position at the school because Dr. Thomas is taking a leave of absence. Dr. Sterling himself proposed the position to OJ. We all think it's just because Dr. Sterling wants to find out how OJ knew dinosaurs were going to show up in the first place.

The five minute class warning bell rings and Kai closes his journal then hides it in his bed. The door flies open to the room and Marvin and Penelope enter, both dressed in their lab coats. Kai tosses Marvin his backpack and they head out the door. But before they leave the room, Marvin lets his fingers trail over the

trophy, that reads 1st Place Winner SSS GALA. He smiles ear-to-ear, “Unheard of!”

In the hallway, Kai is mesmerized by the energy swirling above and around everyone racing to get to class. The hallway is buzzing with anticipation of the first day of school jitters. Kai looks at his two newfound friends and is thankful that he no longer feels like an outsider, a freak.

Suddenly, Kai’s backpack begins buzzing and the ground begins to shake. The three look at each other and move out of the way of the crowd. Kai searches his backpack for his electrometer as the lights in the hallway flicker and then go out.

A door opens nearby, it’s to the stairwell. OJ, who has appeared out of nowhere, grabs Kai and the others and pulls them in. “Did you feel that?!” OJ reminds Kai of Christopher Lloyd in the film *Back to the Future* when he is in this manic state.

Penelope, Kai and OJ look at Kai’s electrometer, the readings are off the chart! The lights flicker and then blink out as the ground continues to tremble.

Marvin squats down and covers his head, “Get down.” Then he realizes what is happening. “Oh, no!”

Kai looks at Penelope, Marvin and then to OJ, “You’re the one who said their will be others. Looks like we have work to do.”

