

**Harper Green**

Washington Middle School | 8<sup>th</sup> Grade



# Jeffrey & Jeremiah

*an excerpt*

Jeffrey crept over the floor of cold, dark dirt, the pine needles from the trees above digging into his creamy pale brown scaled feet. The moon was rising to his right, soon to become a flashlight in a dark room. Dusk was always the best time for hunting, every decent predator knew that. The twilight air felt like knives in his skin, and the pine needles dug into his feet.

This was his one chance. His one chance to prove to his friends, his community, the entire world, that he, Jeffrey, could be brave. That he was just as strong, fast, and worthy as his parents.

A twig under his foot sent him falling back into reality, the weak moonlight almost blinding after the darkness of his fantasy. Jeffrey shook his head once to clear his mind and prowled onward. When the tall, flat top of The Rock came into view, he could see the light gray, speckled, surface gleaming in the moonlight. He stretched out his little four-inch-long lizard body on the cool stone, chin pressed close to the hard rock. All he had to do now was wait.

"You know there's nothing left," said a robin passing by.

"Waiting won't do you any good," said another.

"We're leaving and going south," added a third, "we won't make it up here".

They left him there in a flutter of red and brown, feeling increasingly nervous with the minutes passing by. Still, Jeffrey was determined. It took a long time, longer than he expected. He didn't know how everyone else could wait that long! Finally, they appeared. Two little deep brown and black shadows, just barely visible. It was the shimmer of their backs that gave them away in the corner of Jeffrey's eye. He crept down from his perch on The Rock. When he was just above them, he opened his mouth wide, his long tongue between his teeth. Suddenly, all the memories rushed to his head.

*He was one year old again, so naïve, so sheltered, so unknowing. He did not think that it was possible. He hadn't even considered that they could be prey to some. His parents were heading out to The Rock, which had always been the best place to find the delicious ground beetles the lizards considered food.*

*"Stay here," they said. "We want you to stay safe. The world can be an extremely dangerous place for a sweet little lizard like you".*

*"Okay, don't worry, I will" agreed Jeffrey.*

*So, when it was time, his parents crept out without him. They, just like him, had walked through the tall, shadowy pines, giants in the sky above them. They too, just like him, had walked the cold, dark, dirt path laden with pine needles. And they, just like him, had lost themselves in the fantasies. That had been their final mistake.*

*With a loud swish, something came swooping in from above, at first glance an angel, at second, death. The white and brown head of the owl came into view, the fluffy tufts of fur enormous compared to the two lizards. It was so close Jeffrey was so sure his parents could see each individual glossy feather on its neck. It scooped up both lizards in its beak so quickly, there was absolutely no chance of survival. The sickening crunch of fragile bones and limp fall of their bodies let Jeffrey know they were dead before it even left the ground.*

*Unbeknownst to his parents, little Jeffrey had snuck out just after they left, the feelings of frustration and rage boiling in his gut. He had always been treated like a child, but he knew he could do so much more if only he had a chance. His plan was to make a catch himself, become a hero for finding food in the everlasting famine, and also gain some regular hunting privileges.*

*Jeffrey caught up to them quickly; they were not very fast on their small, tired legs. He trailed just behind them, just close enough to not get lost, but just far enough to be on his own. Because of this, he got a close-up view of their murder, a kind of horrific new movie. He hid as fast as possible, scurrying into an already-inhabited hole in a nearby pine tree home to a family of squirrels.*

*"Go away you little cold-blooded rat!" yelled the largest one.*

