

Willow Potter

Washington Middle School | 8th Grade



Jeffrey & Jeremiah

an excerpt

Jeremiah rushed past the exit, the same way someone might run when a murderer is chasing them. He slowed to a stop when the exit was around the corner, but his little beetle heart was still pounding. Jeremiah’s mind continued to replay that day no matter how hard he tried to think of something else. It happened well over five months ago, but he still remembered every single detail.

~~~~~

Something felt off that day, it might have been the stress Jeremiah felt every day from his parents leaving, but he knew something was wrong. He hatched only a week ago, but as a ground beetle, he had only fifty-two weeks to live at best. “Bye Jere!” his mom and dad yelled while leaving. Jere was his mom’s nickname for him, and he loved it. Of course he liked his full name, but something about having a shorter option appealed to him. Jeremiah was left alone in his family’s hollowed out room in the underground colony. And just like every day, his parents were heading to The Rock to get food.

The Rock was where most ground beetles exited to the surface to hunt for food. Jere’s favorite was seeds found in the dirt, but he also enjoyed eating ants and smaller beetles. The Rock was also a hunting ground for larger animals. He had heard hushed talks from the older beetles of young grubs who lost a parent to the predators that waited atop the gray stone slab that was The Rock. Jeremiah knew that he was prey, and it was a dangerous world for beetles because of the countless dangers that lurked above ground.

Jeremiah had only had The Rock described to him. Honestly, he had never been further than the main tunnel. Whenever he tried to go to the surface, he could only stand around the corner from the exit completely paralyzed by fear. Nothing bad had ever happened to him but he still dreaded whatever might happen above ground. So, when his parents left that day, he was worried for them, but they had been okay so far, right?

~~~~~

Jeremiah had spent countless hours wishing he could have stopped them from leaving, wishing he could have begged them to stay. But he didn’t, he just sat there thinking that so many more days after then would be the same.

~~~~~

Jeremiah peered at the room he sat in. He had just woken up, in time for his parents to say goodbye before they left. He took in the rich brown soil that made up everything he knew. The floor, walls, and ceilings of every cavern and hollow of the beetle colony was the same comforting and pleasant earth. At some point, Jere got tired of waiting for his parents to come home with food. How long had it been since they left? Did something happen to them? Maybe his parents got caught up chatting with their beetle friends. Maybe they got lost on their way back. Or maybe something happened on the surface. What if they got hurt?

More and more questions were spiraling in his brain; where were his parents? Finally, Jeremiah left the dirt room to search for other beetles who might give him answers. He stepped out into the massive hollowed out main tunnel of the colony. Entrances to other beetles’ homes lined the walls and went multiple stories high with bridges made from slivers of wood in between. How was he ever going to find his parents in this? Jeremiah headed towards the exit that led to The Rock. Every step he took with his six skinny dark legs he got more and more scared. His parents were supposed to come back to him.

Jeremiah heard shouting down the tunnel that led to the exit. This couldn’t be good. That’s where his parents were supposed to come from. They should have walked that pathway earlier and come home to him. Joe, who was a young squat beetle, came rushing up to him, slightly out of breath. “Jeremiah! Did you hear what happened? Are you okay?” Jere stared blankly at Joe. He had no clue what this kid was talking about.

“Shoot man did you not hear? Bro, I don’t know how to tell you this.” What the heck was he talking about? Did something happen?

“Joe, what happened? Why would I not be okay?” Jeremiah was startled now. He needed to know what happened. A second beetle who Jeremiah recognized as his parent’s friend crawled up to them before Joe could respond. He looked lifeless and shell-shocked; he might as well have seen death.

“I’m so, so sorry Jeremiah. They’re gone.”

