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It was a busy morning in January, and as usual, snowflakes were falling outside. I was eating my crispy, freshly baked waffles next to my little brother, Alex. I, James Pie, lived with my mom, dad and Alex above a bakery in Canada. My mom had blond hair and blue eyes, while my dad had brown hair and brown eyes. I had light brown hair and bluish brownish eyes. My best friends, Charlotte Miller and Mark Watson, were outside building an igloo across the street. After I was done eating, I hopped out of my seat and looked at my mom, then turned my head and tipped my head to some customers who had just entered the door. She nodded then walked to the new customers and greeted them. I loved that my family ran a small family business.

“Mom! Can you pour me some more syrup now?” Alex yelled across the room, after he had just gotten some more waffles.

“I can’t, but you can ask your brother!” My mom shouted back to Alex. I immediately skipped to the dining room and grabbed the jar of the sticky, amber colored syrup from the refrigerator. I unscrewed the lid and poured a little swirl on the waffles, just how Alex likes it. I put the lid on, sat it in the fridge and I paced over to the door. I put my hand around the brass doorknob, but then my mom reminded me,

“Honey, your coat!”

“Oh, yeah.” I grabbed my coat, pulled it over my head and my green sweater then strolled out the door. The school bus was waiting for me. The doors opened, I stepped up and walked down the aisle. I sat with my friends, who just came in after me. My town was surrounded by towering pine trees, and my school was very far away. There wasn’t a single school in thirty miles, and I didn’t know why. Anyway, the school bus’s doors closed with a squeak and drove away. I was sitting with Charlotte, who had freckles, chocolate brown hair, and glasses. She always looked very nice, and her usual clothing was either a skirt with a sequins T-shirt, or a full blue dress for **very** special occasions. Today, she was wearing a skirt with a sequins t-shirt. Mark, on the other hand, was wearing his usual skull t-shirt with blue jeans and his black cap covering his blond hair. The bus was starting to go up the steep hill we had to cross every day, with the pine trees still continuing along each side of the road in perfect assorted lines; then with a huge forest with many different kinds of trees behind it. The bus begin to groan and creak. The engine was sputtering and squeaking. The bus driver, Mr. Colts, sighed. He hit the dashboard and the gas gage went up. The bus started to speed down the other side of the hill and we all held onto each other’s back seat so that we wouldn’t fly out the window. For some reason, our school bus doesn’t have seat belts, unlike all of the other school buses in the district.

Then, finally the bus went back to its normal speed and the school was appearing through the thick forest of huge trees. The school bus was pulling into the long, loading and unloading driveway all school buses go through to drop the kids off. Then the bus doors shot open and kids started streaming out. Tomorrow was the one hundredth day of school and I have to bring one hundred of something. Kids walked through the doors of the great school, and I saw six stories towering

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above me. The kids reported to their classes. And fortunately, I just happen to be in a class with Mark and Charlotte. Our teacher's name is Mrs. Kate. She is an expert at teaching us math. I sat down at my desk that had a little piece of paper taped down the desk that said: James Pie. On the right of my desk sat Charlotte and on the left of me sat Mark. Mrs. Kate started with math. We were all in fourth grade, so we were learning division. Mrs. Kate asked me,

“James, was is forty-five divided by sixty?”

“Point seven five.” I told Mrs. Kate, confidently.

“Correct! My, have you been practicing?” She asked.

“Um, yes.” I replied, my face turning a slight shade of pink. Math continued. Next, we had music. Mr. Kake would teach us about music today. We all left the class room and walked down the hall to Mr. Kake's class room. When we were inside, I saw that there was a few violins, drums, and pianos, all laid out on a big table in the center of the room.

“Today we are going to learn how to play the violin.” Mr. Kake explained. After music class, we walked to the cafeteria. Our lunchboxes were set neatly on the table that had a sign above that read: Mrs. Kate. My classroom job is that I sit everybody's lunch box's by everyone's friend on our lunch table in the cafeteria. I always sit Mark's and Charlotte's lunchboxes next to mine. Everyone sat down at the table and started to eat. My favorite thing isn't school, but I'm okay with it. My most favorite subject in school is art. Mark said his favorite subject is music. Charlotte says her favorite subject is library. After lunch, we go to art. Mrs. Jay is our art teacher. After art, we're going to the library. As we entered the art room, there were blank canvases on our desks.

“Today, you are going to paint a self-portrait of yourself.” Mrs. Jay said. After art class and library, my whole class exited the school and hopped onto the school bus.

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“The bus should take you home faster, because it got a new engine.” Mr. Colts said after the doors closed. The bus started to go.

Now I could see that steep hill coming up.

“I hope the bus goes up. Because I have to pack my one hundred things.” Charlotte whispered.

“Yeah, me too.” I whispered back. Then the bus started to groan and creak again. It was less than a quarter up the hill, when it started to roll backwards! The kids begin to scream. Me too, but I just did that to fit in with everyone else. I wasn’t actually scared, because I knew that Mr. Colts must have had to have been a very well-trained bus driver. Right? Anyways, I stuck my head out the open window and looked then announced,

“There’s cars behind us!” Now everybody was really screaming! The bus crashed into the other cars, and I fell out the window and landed on the snow. Ambulances came and took everybody to the hospital. Everyone but me. I closed my eyes. Then something picked me up by my back.

After what felt two hours, I woke up. I saw some white, then some black stipes began to appear on them. *Oh no.* I thought. *I’m in a room with a snow tiger!* I ran across what seemed to be a den, then leaned on the cold wall, which caused me to shiver. Before me was a snow tiger sleeping in her den! I had to get away! But what if I woke her up? Then what would she do? I started to walk across the den one step at a time, but then I tripped on a stone. I fell down with a crash. I wasn’t hurt, but I might be soon! The tiger awoke. I quickly ran behind a huge, gray boulder and waited. The tiger stepped up from laying down and looked around. She growled. I was breathing heavily. I covered my mouth. She started to pace around the perimeter of the circle floor. *Soon she would see me.* I thought. She shoved the boulder I was hiding behind across the damp den, before meeting eyes with me. She smiled a wicked grin. I looked up and saw huge fangs, sharp as swords. I shuddered, while trembling from fright. She opened her mouth around me. I could imagine her eating me. I turned my head so I could stop looking at the colossal teeth, and squinted. I saw a little fish on the floor. I reached with all of my might and tossed it into her mouth. She chewed it and licked her lips, then lifted her jaw away from my head.

“What’s your name?” the tiger asked, clearly satisfied with the previous course of dinner.

“You can talk?” I asked, very surprised.

“I thought all animals could talk!” She exclaimed.

“I must be hearing things.” I muttered to myself. “Um, my name is James Pie.”

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“Pie!” she said.

“Huh.” I whispered, opening my little pocket and peeking inside. “I do have some pie.” The tiger appeared to be much larger when she came closer to my pocket and put a paw on it. She squeezed it and the pie popped out into her mouth.

“Could we be friends?” I asked.

“Sure! I never make any friends, because they’re always so scared that they think I’m going to eat them, that’s why I thought, if you were scared of me, I thought it didn’t matter. But now I am your friend!” I was beginning to think that we could be best friends!

“Will you promise never to eat me?”

“I promise,” She said. We shook on it. “Will you live with me now?”

“Uh, well... I have my own family, just so you know.”

“Oh, I understand.” She said. “But, maybe your mom would let you bring me to your house?”

“Hmm. I don’t think so.” I replied doubtfully.

2

It was about two o'clock now, according to my watch.

"Well, thank you for the visit, but I have to go home now." I expressed to the tiger. I walking to the opening that was supposed to be the door.

"Can I come home with you?" The tiger questioned.

"Uh, well, I mean, I don't think that my parents would be too crazy of the idea."

"Okay, bye!" She exclaimed. I walked out of the door. I could see the tiger pushing a boulder in front of the opening for the door. I walked slowly through the snow and sleet as the icy wind blew cold, crystal-like snowflakes onto my probably pink face. I shivered. I soon saw the black, asphalt road ahead of me and broke into a run. When I got out of the forest, I saw my mom's car parked on the side of the street.

"Mom!" I shouted. She was talking on the phone and then turned to me. I used my ice cold, almost frozen hands to climb up the hill to the asphalt road.

"Honey! Where were you? Wait tell me about it on the way home. Let's get you back to the bakery. I love you." She helped me into the car and closed the door. She stepped into the car and closed her door. The car drove away to our bakery. About twenty minutes later I could see our small block coming up ahead with our bakery then our house on top. My mom stopped the car on the road by our home, and we stepped out and walked inside. The bakery had just closed because of how much snow there was. I walked up the stairs, and into my room, and fell down on my bed. "This day was a dream." I whispered to myself, knowing that all of this was probably fake and not real. Hopefully.

The next morning when I woke up, I walked down the stairs, and Alex was eating some leftover waffles with maple syrup. I was collecting my one hundred things. I ate a pancake, then ran out door with a box that held my one hundred things clutched in my hand. I sprung onto the school bus. The doors shut, and it drove away. Today, I wore a red sweater under my coat. When then bus pulled into the unloading zone driveway at the school, the doors opened and kids ran out. I stepped off last, and then the doors closed. The bus rolled away. Charlotte was wearing a full blue dress for the special occasion. As we walked into the classroom, Mrs. Kate was sitting at her desk smiling. When everybody was in the class, Mrs. Kate started to ask division problems to us.

"Mark! What is seventy-two divided by nine?" Mrs. Kate requested.

"Eight!" Mark responded.

After math, Mrs. Kate asked, “Who would like to share their one hundred things first?” The whole class’s hands shot up like rockets.

“James, what have you brought?” Mrs. Kate questioned.

“I have brought one hundred fresh donuts fresh from my family’s bakery! Everyone in the class can have one! And I can have extras!” I shouted opening the box I was holding through all of class.

After everyone had shown their things and ate a donut, Mrs. Kate said, “You can have a half-snow day today. There is **so** much snow, soon you won’t be able to get out of the school!” All of the kids ran out of class and burst out the doors. Everyone made snow angels. Including me, Charlotte, and Mark. When we hopped to look and our masterpieces, our coats were coated with snow. The school bus came, and I stepped on, then everyone else. The bus’s doors closed and we were driven away. When I could see the steep hill coming up, I smiled. I was sitting closer to the window. Charlotte was looking at me with the corner of her blue eyes. The bus started up the hill. It groaned and creaked. Mr. Colts hit the dashboard. The bus went faster, and I whispered into Charlotte’s ear,

“I’m hopping out.”

“Wait, WHAT! But James-” I didn’t have time to let Charlotte talk. Then, the bus went backwards, and everyone screamed, except me. I hopped out the window, and landed in the snow. I ran into the woods, but about five minutes later I soon found that I was lost. I turned around and saw some tiger prints laid out in the snow. They looked the size of that tiger I saw yesterday! I followed the tracks, and then I came upon the tiger’s den. I knocked on the boulder door and took off my coat. The tiger opened the door. She grabbed me, took me inside and hung me upside-down. My coat fell out of my hands.

“It’s me, James Pie!” I cried. Right at the moment I said Pie, she put me down.

“Oh. Hi, sorry, it’s just that I didn’t recognize you.” The tiger told me.

“Oh. Maybe it’s because today I’m wearing a red sweater, instead of a green sweater. You might want to get used to me wearing a different color sweater, because I don’t want this to happen every day.” I explained.

“Every day?” The tiger asked confused.

“Oh, right, I was planning to come and visit maybe every day?”

“Oh, I hope so!” the tiger exclaimed. “Would you like anything to eat?”

“Um, what do you have?”

“Well, I have some fish I caught from the frozen creek, would you like that?” I gulped.

“Well, uh... ummmmm... Ooo! I have a special surprise for you!”

“What is it?” the tiger cried, pulling me closer to her face. “Tell me!”

“I have some leftover donuts from my class!” I explained still holding the box of donuts in my hand.

“Delicious!” the tiger exclaimed as she took up the box, and poured all of the leftover donuts into her mouth. As she chewed loudly, (with her mouth open) I asked,

“So, where do you sleep?”

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“Well, I usually ust fin nic clear spot on the loor, and uddle cup.” She talked while chewing.

“Can I make a firepit for you?” I immediately asked, trying to stop her from making that disgusting, revolting, and absolutely repulsive sound while chewing and talking at the same time.

“Sure! Then I can cook my fish!” the tiger exclaimed happily, after swallowing. I clutched a rock and a stick into my hands and rubbed them together, and surprisingly, on my first try, it made fire! Next, I ignited the fire onto a larger branch. Then, I laid stones around it. And in the end, it looked sort-of like a firepit. I quivered. The tiger grabbed me up and sat me on her fuzzy, white and black stiped leg. She laid down and snugged me like a stuffed animal. She closed her eyes, so I did too.

Whenever I woke up, the tiger was opening the door, and she said,

“Would you like to go home now?” It was dark outside, and then I looked at my watch. It was five thirty! I raced to the door.

“Oh. How am I going to get home in time for dinner?” I asked the tiger anxiously. “My mom and dad are going to wonder where I am!”

“Could I give you a ride?” The tiger asked.

“Yeah! Thank you!” I said. I couldn’t really picture what riding on the back of a tiger would look like, but I knew that it would probably be exciting. We walked out of the doorway, and she pushed the boulder in front. I leapt onto her back (with lots of difficulty), and she raced away. I had to hold on with all of my might! She was the fastest thing I’d ever rode on! In a few minutes (instead of twenty driving), I was on the edge of the road by my town. I hopped off the tiger, and ran through the snow to the bakery. I opened the door. My mom was inside scrubbing the dishes while weeping.

“Mom!” I exclaimed, running over to the counter by her.

“James! I love you! Were where you?”

“Ummmmm... I was... at...” I was trying to explain, but it was really tough.

“That doesn’t matter now. I’m glad your safe. Now quick, run into bed!” I ran into the bathroom to brush my teeth. After I brushed them, I went into my and Alex’s bedroom upstairs. I fell down onto my bed. I sighed. Then I fell asleep.

3

The morning was bright and snowy. I was looking out the window, watching Charlotte and Mark coming outside from their houses. It was six o'clock. I hurried down the stairs and saw my mom baking some more cupcakes in the oven. I put on my coat and backpack and opened the door. I tore out of the bakery and ran all the way to Charlotte's house. In her front yard, she and Mark were there building another igloo. I said,

"Hi! I'm going to the woods, okay?"

"Wait, James!" Mark was trying to tell me something, but I had to get to the woods quickly. I looked for cars, then crossed the road. I ran on the right side of the road and then I saw a frozen creek. I grabbed my backpack and pulled out some white ice skates. I thought about how my mom was always saying not to ice skate on frozen water unless it was approved, but the creek was really shallow. I placed the ice skates on and skated down the frozen creek. About a minute later, I saw a den. I jumped off the creek and landed in the snow. I took off my ice skates and walked over to the boulder door at the den. I knocked on the door. No answer. I knocked harder. Still no answer. I tried to push the boulder. Of course, I couldn't move it an inch. I walked around the den the saw a stone staircase. I marched up it. Then I pushed a boulder and there was a hole. I jumped right in. I fell down onto the ground. I turned around and looked. I couldn't find the tiger. I thought, *Oh no, I can't get out!* I was going to build a ladder, but there was nothing to build it out of. I started to move every boulder and rock in the den. So far, no ways to get out. Then, I moved the short flat rock and saw a wooden trapdoor. I pulled on the rusty, eroded handle. It opened and I jumped in. I must have fell down at least thirty feet. But, thankfully, there was a big fluffy cotton cushion below me. I stood up and immediately recognized what this was. An underground tunnel system! I walked through one tunnel, and then I saw a ladder. I climbed it. I pushed up a manhole cover, and saw it was the road right before the steep hill. I climbed down and kept walking. A few minutes later, I saw another ladder. I climbed up it and pushed up the manhole cover. It was right before the bakery! I climbed back down and kept walking for a long time. Finally, I found another tunnel sprouting out of this one. I turned to that one, and climbed up another ladder. But this time, it had a rock covering the end of the hole. I pushed with all of my might, and the rock flew up, and I saw the most incredible thing ever! It was a snow castle! It was about ten feet across, but still, it had three floors. I was in a big room that looked like a ballroom. Then, I climbed the ladder to the second floor. I looked around. I only saw a snow chair. I walked up more stairs to the third floor. I saw the tiger! She was laying down sleeping. I smiled. I walked to her and lay down on the snow as a pillow, then fell asleep.

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When I woke up, I looked at my watch. Ten o'clock. I think I should get home.

“Bye,” I told the tiger, even though I know she was asleep. I scrambled down the ladder. When I reached the first floor, I opened some doors and outside, there was a path that led to my backyard gate! I walked to backyard, and then I heard Alex say from our porch in our backyard,

“Where were you? Mom’s been looking for you! Come inside, it must be freezing out there!” I walked to our backyard slide door, and slid it open. I saw mom serving cupcakes off a tray onto people’s plates. The snow was so high that the door couldn’t open. That meant that people had to stay for a long, long time. Then I heard Alex whisper from the top of the stairs, “Come up here!” So, I walked up the stairs, and down the hall to our bedroom. I sat on my bed and Alex sat on his.

“So, what did you want to talk about?” I asked.

“Close the shades. Spies might be watching. Oh, and whisper.” Alex whispered.

“Hmm.” I whispered, closing the shades.

“Where are you going after school is done? Where were you just now? You can tell me. I won’t tell mom or dad,”

“Well, it might make you a little scared.” I explained.

“I’m not scared.”

“Well, you’re not scared yet. I’m nine. Almost ten. My birthday is in February. I can’t tell you because it’s a secret.” I opened the shades and walked out to the hall. Alex ran after me.

“Hey, Alex, I think mom said that she has some cookies for you.” I said. And of course, he ran down the stairs to ask mom about them. I ran to our bedroom, shut the door, and locked it. I lay down on my bed and started to read a book. Then, slowly, my eyes started to droop, and in no time, I fell asleep. When I woke up, I found my book on my head. I rolled my eyes and took it off. I sat the book on the shelf, and walked to the door. I unlocked it and walked out down the stairs. And to my surprise, Alex was eating cookies.

“Thank you for telling me,” Alex thanked me with his mouth full of cookie. I walked over to our dining room table. I sat in my chair. My dad brought over some tofu steaks with veggies around it and sat it in my spot. I got a fork and took a bite.

“Mmmm. Delicious!” I said as I sat my fork down. I pushed open the dining room doors, and walked the bakery area. Our bakery was the kind where you sit and eat at a table. I saw mom giving out free samples to little kids, about Alex’s age.

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“Hey, mom, I can take over,” I said.

“Oh, thank you.” I pushed open the thick wood doors that blocked the way to the dining room and curved around the counter and walked into the bakery area again, but this time I was behind the counter. I gave out the samples and my mom smiled while taking a cake out of the oven. Soon, all of the samples were gone. I took the tray and put it in the sink. Then, I went out of the counter area and sat back down in my seat and ate my lunch. After lunch, I thought, *I wonder why that tiger was sleeping a lot but not at her own den.* After I was done with my lunch, I put my plate into the sink, and went outside in our backyard. I opened the gate. I walked over to the snow castle, and opened the door. I walked inside. I climbed the ladder, and soon I reached the third floor. The tiger was nowhere to be seen. I think I might go in the tunnels to get to her den, because it is less cold. I walked down the stairs and pushed the rock away. I climbed down the ladder and ran as fast as I could all the way to the place I started in the tunnels. I climbed up a ladder, and pushed the rock, and then I saw the tiger right there. She looked like she was enjoying her sleep, so I just put the rock back down. I climbed down the ladder sadly. I walked in the tunnels until I got to the first manhole. I pushed it up and got out onto the road. I walked on the edge of the road and all the way back to my town. I frowned with disappointment.

4

When I saw the bakery, I walked along the side of the building and opened the backyard gate. I walked in the yard to the sliding door. Through it, I saw my mom closing up. After every single customer was out, I slid the door open partway.

“Mom! Can I sleep a Charlotte’s tonight?” I whispered.

“Sure!” she whispered back. I grabbed my sleeping bag and toothbrush, and coat, then headed out the door. I walked to the other side of the street. When I reached Charlotte’s house, I knocked on the door. Charlotte opened the door and helped me to a closet for my coat. After my coat was off, Charlotte led me to her bedroom. She pulled her purple sleeping bag out from under her bed. She zipped it open and pulled out a flashlight. After we were both in our sleeping bags, she turned on the flashlight and aimed it at the ceiling.

“So, was there something you wanted to tell me?” Charlotte asked.

“Well, yes. Ever since the incident with the bus, after school, I’ve been going into the woods. I met a t-” I started to explain, but then stopped.

“You met a what?” Charlotte asked waiting for me to respond.

“I met a... a tiger.” I stuttered.

“You what? You met a tiger?” Charlotte asked.

“Yeah, it’s kind of crazy. If you want, I can show you it tomorrow.”

“Uh...is it nice? Does she have a name? Do you feed her?” Charlotte asked.

“Yes, no, sometimes.” I replied.

“Hmm. I think it’s time for us to go to sleep.” Charlotte said. I heard her, but my eyes were closed, and I think she thought I was sleeping.

It was morning when I woke up, about seven o’clock. Charlotte wasn’t in her bedroom. I walked out into the hallway, and into the kitchen. Charlotte was making breakfast.

“Uh, you know I’m vegan, right?” I reminded her.

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“Yeah, these are vegan. There my mom’s famous waffles veganized.” Charlotte explained. When the waffles were done cooking, Charlotte flipped them onto a plate. She poured maple syrup onto both waffles. I look at the beautiful tablecloth with stipes and hearts. I grabbed a fork, that was sitting next to my plate and poked it into the waffles. I took a bite.

“Mmmm! These are the best!” I said.

“Thanks, I tried really hard.” Charlotte said.

Then, I said, “Hey, would you like to walk home with me?”

“Would I?” After we were done eating, we put our dishes in the sink. Then, we put on our coats and walked out the door. Soon, we got to the bakery and opened the door. My mom and dad and Alex were already downstairs. They were packing lots and lots of boxes.

“What’s all of this?” I asked.

“Were going camping!” My mom explained.

“What? When? It’s winter!” I exclaimed.

“Tomorrow at nine o’clock sharp.” My mom said peacefully. Soon, I walked inside the bakery and out the back door. I opened the gate, and walked along the path to the snow castle. I opened the doors, and walked inside. I opened the trapdoor, and climbed down the ladder and walked through the tunnels. As soon as I got to the main area, I climbed up the ladder and pushed away the stone.

“My parents said that were going camping! Then I can’t visit you!” I exclaimed looking at the tiger who was facing at the wall.

“Well, maybe I can come with you.” The tiger explained.

“How?” I asked looking at the tiger’s back.

“Well, it’s easy,” the tiger started to explain, with a mischievous tone. “I can sneak onto the top of your car, then, your dad or mom, or parent, whatever, drives us to the camping ground, then at night, I will guard you and catch meals. For you. If you don’t like what your mother makes.”

“Well, that does sound like a good plan, but, I always like what my mother makes.”

“When did she say you were going?” The tiger asked.

“Nine o’clock sharp.” I answered.

“You know, I feel like we have long conversations.” The tiger said. I sighed.

“That is not what we were talking about,” I hung my head in my hands in frustration. “Well, see you tomorrow at nine o’clock. Sharp.” Then, I walked over to the stone and pushed it away. I

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climbed down the ladder. Soon I saw the ladder that led to the snow castle. I scrambled up, and then opened the doors and ran on the path to the gate. I opened it. In our backyard, I slid open the back door, and walked inside. Then I walked up the stairs and into mine and Alex's bedroom. I sat down on my bed, then I just thought, *I know that tomorrow would be very exciting. Somehow.* Then soon I closed my eyes, hoping for a nice, cozy dream.

5

In the morning, I woke up and saw my family in the hall. I looked at my alarm clock. It was eight fifty-eight. As I walked into the hall, and I saw them packing boxes and bags. They were all carrying them down the stairs and out the front door.

“What can I carry?!” I shouted down the hall.

“”Pack some toys, or notepad and pencil. We already packed the food, clothes and the tents.” My dad said. “Wait. Did we pack the tents yet?” he said turning to my mom.

“Uh, I don’t think so. James! Could you please carry the tents too? There in the basement. We would carry them, but we’re carrying suitcases now.” My mom shouted up the hall from the bottom of the stairs.

I packed a notepad and pencil, and then I walked into the guest bedroom, then down the stairs and into the basement. I was holding my stuff in my hands, and then when I reached the basement, I grabbed a plastic bag, and dropped my notepad and pencil into the bag. Then, I saw the bags that held the tents all wrapped up tightly. We have two tents. The small one for me and Alex, and the big one for my mom and dad. Although, the last time went camping, Alex heard a sound outside of the tent. So, then he crawled into my mom’s and dad’s tent. So, now the small tent is officially mine. Anyways, I grabbed the two bags by the handle, and walked up the stairs. When I stepped onto the creaky floorboards of the guest room, I strolled into the bakery area and out the front door. I saw my mom’s car stuffed with things. I walked over to the back right door and hopped in. I closed the door and sat the tents and my bag onto the floor. The car started to roll away.

“Which camping ground are we going to go to?” Alex asked.

“Valcartier Campground.” My dad said happily. I looked out the window. We were on the highway.

“That would take hours!” I exclaimed.

“I know. I want the Pies to have a very long drive through beautiful Canada.”

“But dad! It would take so lo-” I complained, before my dad interrupted me.

“Oh look, a nice lake to skate on.”

“Dad, you don’t mean we’re going to skate, do you?” I asked hoping he would say no.

“Oh, of course not.” My dad said taking a turn into another lane. I sighed.

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I hope that tiger was able to jump onto the car. I thought. Then as I was looked out of the window, the tiger's paw slipped onto the window then back up.

"What was that screeching noise?" My dad asked. Everybody shrugged their shoulders. *Okay, the tiger is on the car.* I thought. I sighed again. I smiled. Soon, I looked at my watch. It said ten o'clock. The car started to go into a green pine forest.

"So, what are we going to do on our way to Valcartier?" I asked hoping that it would be something more fun than talking.

"Uhh, well, we could play I Spy!" My mom said.

"Yeah!" Alex shouted happily.

"How about you, James?" My dad asked me. I knew what I was going to say. But, if it was the only thing that I could do, then why not.

"Sure," I said smiling. "I did love I Spy, so I can love it again." Everybody smiled. Alex went first.

"I spy something green." He told.

"The trees?" I asked.

"You're right!" Alex said from my left. I was next.

"I spy something blue." I asked.

"Is it the sky?" Alex asked looking at me.

"Yup." I replied. My mom was next.

"I spy something orange." My mom said.

"A fox!" Alex shouted.

"Yes, Alex I saw a-"

"Traffic cone!" I shouted.

"Yes, James I also see an orange traffic cone. Wait. A traffic cone?" My mom said gasping. My dad took a really sharp turn right.

"Ahhhhh!" Everyone screamed. Including me.

A few minutes later, Alex asked,

"Daddy, why didn't you get a turn?"

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“Well, I can’t see stuff very well when I’m going fast, plus I have to stay focused on driving.” My dad said.

“Oh.” Alex was astonished. Soon, the car rolled out of the forest. I saw a most beautiful scene. There were empty plains covered in snow. There was a pine fence along the sides of the asphalt road. The road a few cracks, to mention it was very old. Our car was very new compared to some other cars that were behind us. I saw a little barn with an orange station wagon parked beside it. Then, as the car rolled on, we were back in the forest. I sighed again.

An hour later, I looked at my watch again. It was eleven o’clock. I lay back on my seat. I closed my eyes.

6

When I woke up, I think about ten minutes passed. I sat straight. I saw that we were on a highway now.

“James, it’s twelve thirty, are you hungry?” My dad asked.

“Yeah, did we pack food?” I replied.

“Yes. But, it was for the campground.” My dad continued.

“Wait. You mean, you only packed meals for the campground?!” I was so surprised that I couldn’t hear what Alex was saying. “Alex? What did you say?” I asked turning to look at him.

“I saw a drive through McDonalds.” Alex replied.

“Uh, I don’t think I’m hungry anymore.” I told.

“Well, I’m hungry, and Alex is too, so, I’m going to drive us there.” My dad said. So, my dad drove us to the drive through and ordered two cheese burgers for Alex and my dad. Then, the car drove to a parking lot, and they ate there. After they were done eating, my dad and Alex washed hands. Then, we were back on the road. I sighed. *When will we ever reach Valcartier?* I thought.

About an hour later, I saw a donut shop. And unfortunately, Alex saw it too.

“Ohh! Dad! Dad! Can we please go to that donut shop over there for dessert!?” Alex shouted very excitedly.

“Well, why not.” My dad said. I groaned.

Because, I thought. We need to get to Valcartier! My dad took an exit off the highway and onto a little two-lane road. Then, we parked in a little tarmac parking lot. We all sprang out of the car, and walked into the building. I saw a long counter made of glass with little glass trays full of yummy donuts. There were also a few little tables with chairs for customers to sit at. My mom and

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I sat at a table across from each other while Alex and dad ordered donuts. I could hear little Alex saying what he wanted. There was a little menu on the glass counter, and dad lifted it down so Alex could order. He pointed to all of them different colored ones like a yellow one with rainbow sprinkles one at a time saying,

“I want this one with that Jell-O and little wainbow dots things. I also want this brown one with Jell-O dotty things.” That one was a chocolate donut with yellow sprinkles. My dad chuckled. So, I did too. “I also want that one and that one and that one that one.”

“Um, I think we’ll get two please. One yellow donut with rainbow sprinkles and a chocolate yellow sprinkles.” My dad said. They walked over to an empty table, and started to eat.

“Um, mom, can I please have five dollars?” I asked.

“Um, sure?” My mom said as she gave me some money. I walked over to the counter and said,

“ I would like a donut that does not have chocolate in it.”

“Okay,” said the donut seller. I gave him the money, and took a donut. I walked outside the glass door, and saw that it was snowing! The snow was about two feet deep, and it already melted on the path to the parking lot! I walked along the path with the donut in my hand, and then when I saw our car, the tiger was on top sleeping. I opened the door that was the opposite side of the door I would open to sit down in my seat. I climbed up the door, and hopped onto the roof of the car. I closed the door, still holding the donut in my hand. I looked at the tiger and whispered,

“Wake up! I have a donut for you!” the tiger groaned and stretched. She sighed.

“Does it have chocolate in it?” she asked.

“Nope,” I replied.

“Oh, okay.” She sleepily as she grabbed the donut then stuffed in into her mouth. She swallowed. “Bleh! That’s the worst donut I’ve ever tasted. Eew!” That woke her up very fast.

“Okay, sorry. Um, well, I think we’re going to leave soon. So, uh, see you.” I sprung off the car and walked back into the donut shop. Inside, my mom, dad, and Alex were sitting up out of their seat. They walked over to the door. I opened it, at that moment I walked out. My family was behind me. Then, we hopped inside the car, buckled our seat belts, then the car drove out of the parking lot, and we were back on the highway! The car was going at sixty miles an hour! The other cars around us were probably going about that speed too. Then, the highway led into a pine forest again. I sighed. We were finally back on the road. For the delay of the donut shop and McDonalds, it was now four o’clock! I couldn’t believe it! Then, I guess this trip would take more than a day.

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7

Soon, the highway led out of the forest. This time, we saw a few houses along the edge.

“Are we almost to Valcartier?” I asked. The sky was getting dark.

“Well, I can’t drive all night. I would be too sleepy. We’re going need to find a hotel.” My dad said.

“Well, I see one. It’s on your next right.” I said pointing out Alex’s window. When my dad took the next exit, the car pulled into a parking lot. We all opened our doors, stepped out of the car, and our mouths fell right open. We were speechless. Right before us, there was a huge hotel. There was a sign right above the door, that read: Lucy’s Inn Paradise. Beside the words there was a picture of a girl on a beach laying in the sun.

“Uh, I think this is out of season. And in the wrong place. It never gets hot enough in Canada for a beach.” Alex laughed.

“Well, we better get inside.” My dad told us. Everybody walked toward the revolving door. We pushed through it, and my dad and mom walked over to a reception desk. I and Alex walked over to some blue chairs, and sat down beside each other. Then, a few minutes later, my mom said,

“Boys, come on!” So, me and Alex hopped out of the chairs and followed our parents. We walked over to an elevator, and Alex pushed the up arrow. The doors opened, and we walked inside the small room. My mom pushed the number three button. The doors closed. Then, about thirty seconds later the doors opened and we walked out. Then we walked through a hallway, then to a door that had a sign that read: five. My dad opened the door, and we walked inside. I gazed around the room. There were two beds. One big one, and one small one. In-between the beds, there was a little wooden nightstand. There was also a bathroom, which Alex and me walked into right away. Then, my mom handed us our tooth brushes and toothpaste. After were done brushing our teeth, Alex and I plopped down onto our bed, and fell asleep a few minutes later.

In the morning when I woke up, I saw that my family was already awake again. The beds were made. I sat up, and hopped out of bed. My family opened the door to the hall, and we all walked out. We walked down the stairs, then out the front door. We opened the doors to the car and sat

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down in the seats. Then, my dad started the car, and we were off onto the highway. The highway was leading us into a pine forest.

“Can we play I Spy?” Alex asked.

“Sure!” Mom said.

“I spy something brown.” Alex said.

“Um, the tree trunks?” My mom guessed.

“Well, no it’s a-”

“Deer!” I shouted pointing to a deer who was on the road. My dad took a huge right turn.

“Wow. That was a close one!” I said. The car was going out of the forest and into a plains area.

“Now how long will it be until Valcartier?” I asked my dad.

“Um, probably in an hour of two,” My dad said.

“Yay!” Alex shouted. My mom smiled. I was excited too. In fact, I was so excited, that I didn’t even make a single sound. For the next thirty minutes, I was completely speechless. I didn’t say anything. There was a pine forest all around the highway. Then, on the side of the road, I saw a sign that read: Valcartier Campground next five miles. I was really excited! We were so close! So then, of course in the next five miles later, I saw a sign that read, Valcartier Campground. My dad took a right turn, and into the campground we went, there were little branches that led off the main road that were the campsites, and they were all made of light gray gravel. Soon, the car turned left into the number seven campsite spot. My dad shut off the car, and we all unbuckled our seatbelts and opened our doors. When we got outside, we all smiled. There were towering pine trees covering all of the camp, and the most beautiful thing about the camp was the snow. It looked to be about a foot and half deep, and it covered the *whole* camp and beyond. The people who owned the camp were very nice people. I had heard about them on the news. They were so nice that they even shoveled the snow off the roads and gravel all by themselves. Anyway, my mom said,

“James, were going to talk to the owners, what very nice people they are, so, try to keep yourself and Alex safe. Bye!” Then, they walked across the camp to the owner’s cabin. They left me all alone with Alex.

“So, do you want to surprise mom and dad by setting up the tents?” I asked Alex.

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“Yeah!” Alex said. We opened the door to my seat, and Alex grabbed the bags and zipped them open. They all bounced out whole! We didn’t even have to build them! Alex and I pushed the tents to the left side of the gravel road. There was a big hill behind of where we put my tent, but, I think it should be okay. Then, a few minutes later, my mom and dad were back. They were so surprised! I looked at my watch, it said it was ten fifty. Almost eleven. Then, my mom finished unpacking, while my dad grabbed two burgers and two veggie burgers out of a plastic container. After he grilled the burgers, my mom got plates, and we all went into the big tent because it was really cold. My dad sat the burgers and the veggie ones onto the four plates, and we started to eat. Well, not my mom. She was closing the flap. Then she ate with us.

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We were done with lunch, when it was twelve o'clock, and Alex said he wouldn't want dessert. My mom opened the tent flap and stepped out. She shrieked. She came rushing back into the tent holding a container of pie while heavily breathing.

"Here is dessert, James," she whispered, handing me the container. "I saw a white tiger outside."

Oh no! I thought. She might tell the owners that they have a tiger in their campsite!

"Honey, I think your just a little bit tired." My dad told my mom. I sighed. *Phew!* I thought.

In the afternoon, at three o'clock, my dad insisted that my mom take a nap, so she did. With just the three of us, we had fun playing I Spy again. I used to not like it, but when I played that time before the last one, it really reminded me how fun it was. Then, when we were tired of playing, I asked,

"Can mom wake up yet?"

"Um, well she has been sleeping for a long time so, let's see if she's doing okay." My dad said. We walked over to the tent, (that includes Alex) and opened the little polyester flap. My mom was sleeping peacefully, but, of course, my dad had to wake her.

"Honey," he said loudly. My mom woke up with a groan.

"What?" she groaned sleepily.

"Um, you can wake up now," I finished my dad's sentence. To my surprise, she leaped out of the tent and frowned.

"It's five o'clock." She moaned. It was getting dark quickly.

"Um, well, I better make supper." My dad said.

"Well, I thinking *I* could make supper tonight." I said.

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“Okay, let’s see what James’s makes for us.” My mom said looking at Alex. I walked over to the car. I opened the back, and grabbed out four hot dogs. I put them on the grill, and I asked my dad to light it. He walked over to the car and grabbed a lighter, then lit the grill. He walked away. After they were done grilling, I took off the hot dogs and sat them on plates. I grabbed a pile of the snow, and threw it onto the grill. It sizzled out. I sighed. I grabbed the plates, and carried them to my family.

“Ooo!” Alex said.

“Yum!” said my dad. They ate them slowly, and I grabbed my plate and started to eat too. It completely dark now, and the only light was a really bright lantern. Then, after we were done eating, my dad said,

“Time to get into the tents,” So, I knelt down, and lay down into my tent. The rest of my family went into the other one. I slept for a very long time...

...until I woke up, to see my tent was tumbling down the hill! I tried to grab onto the gravel road, but the gravel just kept falling down the hill with the tent! But then, I saw the tiger grab me by the hand, and pull me up, and saved me!

“Thanks, but were will I sleep?” I whispered.

“You can sleep with me.” The tiger said. I gulped. I walked to the opposite side of the gravel road, with the tiger beside me on my left on all four. I looked at her, then at the ground. Then, when we reached the other side of the car, there was not a hill, it was flat land.

“Phew,” I exclaimed. The tiger sat down into the snow, and told me,

“Come on, I can be your blanket,” I sat down into the snow, and the tiger curled around me. I went to sleep in no time.

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When I woke up it was six o'clock, and the first thing I noticed was that the tiger was gone! I looked around, but then when I saw the gravel road, the tiger was on it, and she was eating *her* breakfast, which was a deer, and she actually grilled it, but I hope nothing caught on fire. I stood up, and saw that there was no fire, so, that was good.

“Oh, you made breakfast,” I said looking at her.

“Do you want some?” She asked with mouth full.

“Um, no thanks, I'm thinking about making myself some cereal.”

“Okay,” the tiger said. I walked over to the car, and opened the trunk. I grabbed out a bowl and a spoon, and some cheerios and soy milk. I sat at the picnic table, dusted off some snow, and sat down the bowl. I put the spoon in, then poured some cheerios out of the box. I sat the box down, then poured in the milk. I started to eat. If we were at the bakery, the milk would be cold out of the fridge, but since I'm outside, the milk is really cold and the cereal is too. After I was done eating, I put the dirty dishes into the wash basin we brought. I turned around. The tiger was watching me the whole time! She gasped in amazement.

“It that how you make cereal?” she asked.

“Yeah, um, it's really simple. I eat almost it every morning. Other mornings I eat waffles.” I explained.

“Wow, that's cool.” The tiger said.

9

I walked to my family's tent. I opened the flap. I said,

"It's almost seven o'clock," My mom yawned.

"Okay," she said sleepily. "I'll get up." So, she sat up, and stepped out of the tent. She looked where my tent used to be.

"Where in the world did your tent go?" she asked.

"Um, well, the wind blew it down the hill. I think." I confessed.

"Hmm, okay. Well, I think we'd better buy a new small tent." She said. I turned around, then I saw the tiger. She was in plain sight. Thankfully, my mom was faced where my tent used to be, while she looked down into the thick woods to see if she could see it. So, I ran over to the tiger, and whispered to her,

"Quick! Hide!" then the tiger leaped behind the car right when my mom turned around. Just then Alex and my dad came out of the tent, and they both had a peculiar face on.

"Where did James's tent go?" my dad asked looked at my mom.

"Um, he said the wind blew it down the hill. I don't think it was a very good quality. I think that we're going to need to buy a new tent for James." My mom said. Then, Alex walked slowly back into the big tent to rest more. My mom walked over to the car and opened the back. She pulled out some waffles that were in a container, then she closed the back. She sighed, and then handed me the bag. She walked back into the tent. It was just me and dad standing there, while having nothing to say. So, I broke the silence.

"Dad, um, do you think today we could go sledding?" I asked.

"Yeah! I bet that Alex and your mom would want to go too," my dad responded. His back was facing the car I was on the opposite. I looked above my dad's head. I saw the tiger reaching out her paw to stretch. It was going to hit my dad in the head!

"Dad, uh, let's go make mom and Alex some breakfast in bed!" I said very fast. I grabbed my dad's arm and ran, right before the paw touched even a hair.

"Wow, James, I've never seen you wanting to make you family breakfast in bed at camping in Valcartier Campground before."

"Um, I just think it might be because two out of four of our family is sleeping." I said.

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“Um, okay?” my dad said walking to the back of the car. He opened the trunk, then he said,

“Where are the waffles?” I looked into my arms. I was still holding them! I handed them to my dad, and he opened the red lid, put them on four plates, and gave me one. He carried two plates to the tent, with me following. Then, I opened the flap with my free hand and we climbed in.

After my mom and Alex were done eating, they climbed out.

“Can we go sledding now?” I asked.

“Yeah!” Alex shouted.

“Hmm, okay, we’ll go,” My mom said. “But only at ten.” Alex sighed.

“It’s okay,” I said trying to cheer him up. “it’s better than not going sledding at all.” He smiled faintly.

I looked at my watch. It said it was ten o’clock.

“Hey, mom, can we go sledding now?”

“Sure! You dad and I will watch from the bottom of the mountain.” my mom said.

“Yay!” Alex shouted. My dad walked to the back of the car, opened the trunk, and grabbed out two sleds. The big one was for me, and the smaller, circular one was for Alex. My dad walked over to Alex and handed him his sled, then dad turned, and gave me mine. All of the Pies ran along the side of the icy road, and soon I saw a huge mountain! It was taller and steeper than that huge hill close to my town! People were skiing and sledding down it. I and Alex dashed up the mountain,

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still holding our sleds. Then, Alex passed me, and stepped to the top first. It started to snow rapidly. Alex hopped onto his sled, and he raced down the mountain! When I reached the top, I saw lots of pine trees towering at the very tip of the mountain. I sat down my sled, and hopped on legs first! I zoomed down the mountain, but then I heard a bump! I turned around to see what it was. My mouth dropped open at the agonizing sight.

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The tiger was on the sled with me! Now everyone in the whole campground could see the tiger with me on a sled going down a mountain at sixty miles per hour in Valcartier Campground! People were watching from the bottom and Alex had already gotten down.

“What are you doing here? The whole campground can see you!” I asked the tiger.

“Um, well, I noticed we weren’t having as much fun as we used to in your town, so I thought I could hop on. I had no idea that there were millions of people on this mountain!” she roared. I looked at Alex’s face. He was terrified. I knew he knew that I had something secret. When the sled reached the bottom, it went onto the road, and down that huge hill on the side of the gravel road where our car was, we stopped in the middle of the woods. I ran up the hill and to my family. Alex’s face was still terrified.

“I think we’re all tired.” He huffed. All of us laughed.

“Honey, we’re still going to buy that new tent for you.” My mom said. Thankfully, with that laugh, my family (hopefully) forgot all about the tiger. I sighed happily. We all walked back to the campsite, and mom whispered something into my dad’s ear. Alex was already in the big tent. I was walking to my tent, but I stopped. I ran into the woods where I last saw the tiger. I followed the sled track down the hill and then found the tiger laying in the snow sleeping. I opened my mouth to say something, but nothing came out. I ran back up the hill and stepped into my tent. I fell asleep. When I woke up, I found that I was on the mountain sledding down. The tiger was at the bottom with her mouth open and I was sledding on a path into it!

My eyes opened. I was trying to catch my breath. That was just a dream! I sighed. I stepped out of my tent, and saw my mom making lunch on the grill.

“Oh, hi honey. You were sleeping for a long time. We didn’t want you to lose your dream. How about some lunch? After you eat, me and your dad have something to tell you and Alex.” My

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mom said turning to look at me. I smiled. Alex was eating chickpea salad with my dad on the picnic table.

“What are you cooking?” I asked walking closer to my mom.

“Well, for us I’m making grilled tofu.” My mom said. She knew I loved tofu. The tofu was done grilling, and my mom used a spatula to lift the sticks of tofu onto two plates. She walked over to the picnic table and sat down the plates. I sat down on the bench, and so did my mom. My dad handed us forks. After we were done eating, I waited until nobody was looking, then walked down into the woods again. I followed footprints, and I knew they was mine, because nobody else walks in these woods. Then, I saw the tiger, and this time she was awake. She was walking in circles on all fours. I hid behind a pine tree’s trunk, but too bad for me, because it was too skinny! So, then I raced as fast as I could to another tree that was thicker. I wondered what she would say if she saw me again. But then she started to sniff around. Oh, and I also didn’t think about that she could just see my footprints and tell that I was behind this tree. The tiger kept sniffing, until she knew I was there. She walked around the tree I was behind, and then saw me.

“Hi,” she said. I was very surprised at this. I thought she would still be furious.

“Hello,” I said casually as I walked out from behind the tree.

“James Pie! It’s so nice to see you again!” the tiger exclaimed.

“It’s nice to see you too,” I said hugging her. She put her soft, furry arms around me. Then we walked up the hill together. Then, we saw my family through all of the thick trees. They searching all over the campground for me. Then I said to the tiger,

“I think I have to go back to my family now,”

“Okay, see you tomorrow!” the tiger said waving as I started to walk up the hill.

When I reached the top of the hill, my family was really glad to see me.

“We were looking all over for you!” my mom exclaimed.

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“Yeah!” Alex cried. So, then we all hugged each other. I could see the tiger watching us with delight. I sighed. Going on a trip to Valcartier Campground was not as bad as I thought.

11

That evening my family was eating dinner when I came out of my tent from writing a little list of what I wanted to do with that tiger. I sat down on the bench of the picnic table and started to eat. There was a big bowl of veggie soup. That was another one of my favorite foods. After dinner, my parents had planned a special surprise for me and Alex. It was turning dark outside. My mom said,

“James, please take Alex into the big tent while me and your dad set up the surprise.” So, Alex and I walked over to the big tent and closed the flap and waited. About ten minutes later, my mom said,

“Okay, come out now!” I and Alex stepped out of the tent and gasped. There were vegan marshmallows on sticks above the grill.

“Some grilled vegan marshmallows!” my mom shouted. I and Alex grabbed a stick, and grilled them above the fire. Then, when they were done, we pointed our sticks away from the grill and my dad tossed some snow on it. My mom took the marshmallows off the sticks and sat them on plates. I and Alex picked them up, and took a big bite. I swallowed, then turned to see Alex. He was holding it in his mouth making sounds like,

“Hmmm! Bits boo bot!”

“Oh, Alex it’s very hot!” my dad tossed him a water bottle from the back of the car. Alex unscrewed the cap, dropped it on the snow, then drank it enthusiastically! Then he handed the bottle to my mom and said,

“Phew, that’s better,” my mom smiled.

“I think it’s time to get some sleep.” She said. So, Alex walked over to the big tent then stopped, and said,

“Good night,” then he vanished into the tent. Next, I walked over to the small tent, said too,

“Good night,” then I disappeared through the tent flap. Inside the tent was very cold and dark. So, then I pulled up the covers to my chin. I grabbed my notepad that was beside my pillow, then I shouted,

“Mom! Could you please turn on the lantern?” Then, to my surprise, there was light. I picked up my pencil and began to write what I would do with that tiger. Then, about five minutes

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later, I put my pencil and notepad beside my pillow again, then I felt my eyes dropping. Then, before I knew it, I had fallen asleep.

When I woke up, I looked at my watch. It said it was seven o'clock, which made sense, because it was bright outside. I could see through the tent. This new one that my mom bought me, was even thinner than the one I had before. So, I just had to have extra blankets. Anyway, I stepped out of the tent, and saw the tiger making breakfast again. This time, she was trying to pour cereal into a bowl. I walked over to her, and said,

“Um, you pour the milk after,”

“Oh, okay. I was just trying to surprise you with some cereal.” The tiger said.

“It’s okay, would you like to-” I stopped and turned around, to see a beautiful, blue car driving on the campground road. The window rolled down as the car came closer, and out of the window, popped out Charlotte’s face!

“Hi Charlotte!” I shouted.

“Hi James!” Charlotte shouted back. I turned around and saw the tiger standing right beside me. It didn’t matter if Charlotte saw her, because I already told her. The car drove to a little gravel campsite right beside us. The tiger ran into the woods when my family came out of the big tent. I ran over to the flap.

“Guess what? The Millers are camping here too!” I shouted. Right when I finished that sentence, Alex jumped out of the big tent.

“Yay! Yay! Yay!” he shouted, while clapping. Then my mom and dad came out of the tent too. They asked,

“What did you say?”

“The Millers are camping here too!” I repeated.

“Can we have breakfast with them?” Alex asked.

“You know what? That would be a great idea!” my dad replied, turning to Alex.

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“I’ll start cooking breakfast, and you, James, go ask the Millers if they’d like to come.” my mom suggested.

“Okay,” I said. I started to run along the side of the road all the way to Charlotte’s campsite. Soon, I reached their area. I saw a door on the car open and Charlotte came out.

“Hi!” She shouted, running over to me.

“Hi Charlotte, would you and your family like to come over for breakfast?” I asked. Then, Charlotte’s parents stepped out of their car.

“We definitely would!” the dad said as he walked over with his wife.

“Hello, Mrs. Miller and Mr. Miller. Follow me.” I explained, walking back to my family’s campsite.

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When I reached our campsite, I turned around and saw the Millers right behind me. My mom was already done with breakfast. She brought over two plates, then walked back, got two more plates, then she did it again. But then, then next time, she brought over one more plate. Now there were seven plates on the table. The Millers sat on the benches, and my dad walked to the car, opened the trunk, and came back with three lawn chairs. Each bench on the picnic table could seat two people. My dad sat up the lawn chairs, for me, my mom, and himself. Alex sat beside Mrs. Miller, and I sat on the end, beside Charlotte. Across from me sat my mom and dad. We started to eat.

My mom brought some of her famous waffles over to the table. Right when Charlotte took one taste, she shouted,

“Hey! These taste just like my mom’s!” I and Mrs. Miller smiled.

“Thanks.” My mom replied, before whispering. “I use the same recipe.” At that note, Charlotte gasped.



After breakfast, I saw that some of the snow was melting on the road and the gravel. The snow that was on the ground was about half an inch deep now, almost the least amount of snow we’ve ever had in Canada. Anyway, the Millers thanked us for the breakfast, and they walked back to their campsite. My mom turned to me.

“Well, that was a nice visit,” my mom said. “If only the Watsons were here.” Then, the exact moment my mom was done speaking, I heard tires screeching. I turned around. There was a black SUV parked on the road. Then, a door opened. Then, I saw a familiar face. It was Mark! He leaped out of the car. The SUV drove to a little gravel campsite right across from the Millers. Mark walked over to me.

“Hi, James, it’s nice to see you. Back in Snow Town, I was looking out my window, then I saw your family packing tents, so I thought that you were going camping so, then I told my parents,

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and, my dad said that you would probably be going to Valcartier, so, then we went camping too, then I saw you.” Mark explained.

“O-k-a-y,” I told him, not really catching everything he said. Then I saw several more cars driving across the road. Mark, after the cars past, he walked towards the road, looked left then right, then walked to the other side of the road. He walked over to his family’s campsite. Then, I asked my mom,

“Can I go play with some other kids?” I turned to look at her.

“Sure, just make sure I or Charlotte’s parents can see you.” Then, I dashed off to the side of the road, and kept running and running, until I found some kids who just got here today. Now, the snow was completely gone, so, there were no slippery spots. The kids were about my age, and they were just standing there, watching me walk over to them. Then, Charlotte walked over to their campsite too. And so did Mark. Finally, the other kids spoke.

“Hé, comment t’appelles-tu?” one of them asked pointing at me.

“Uhhhh...”

“Oh, sorry, that was French. I said, Hey, what’s your name?”

“James,” I said. “James Pie.”

“Okay Pie, what’s your name?” he said turning to point at Charlotte.

“Charlotte,” she said. “Charlotte Miller.”

“Got it Miller, now, what’s your name? With the skull shirt?”

“Mark,” he said. “Mark Watson.” The other kid turned to his friends, and continued,

“Okay, we have new friends. They are, Pie, Miller and Watson.” He turned back to us.

“Let’s play basketball.”

“Um, yeah, yay.” I said trying to sound happy. I didn’t want to play basketball, but I just did that to fit in. Charlotte walked over to me, she whispered into my ear,

“You don’t have to play basketball if you don’t want too.”

“Oh, and Miller can’t play basketball.” The other kid said.

“Yes she can. Girls can play basketball too,” Mark said. “Right?” he said tuning to me.

“Well, not in my games.” The other kid said.

“Um, I would advise quitting,” Charlotte whispered into my ear.

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“I quit.” I said while walking back to my campsite. I heard Mark say,

“Me too.” He ran over to me. So did Charlotte. I was in the middle, Mark was on my right, and on my left, there was Charlotte.

“I never want to play with those guys again.” I said.

“Yeah, can you believe it? They didn’t think I could play basketball! I mean, I don’t have my own basketball or hoop, but that doesn’t mean I couldn’t try!” Charlotte exclaimed. She sighed. “I guess that’s just how some kids are.” Charlotte finished. My friends and I walked back to my campsite, and when we saw the campsite, it was something unbelievable.

13

My family was packing up!

“We’re leaving today?!” I shouted at my mom very surprised.

“Yeah, that was supposed to be a surprise.” My mom said carrying some empty containers to the trunk of the car.

“But my friends just got here!” I shouted in frustration. I sighed. My head dropped as I marched into the woods to tell the tiger. It was much easier to see where she was because she was black and white, and there were just leaves in the woods now. I ran down the hill all the way to the tiger. When I saw her I spoke,

“My family is leaving today! Can you come to the car?”

“Yes, but please leave first.” I wanted the tiger to get on top of the car, so I ran up the hill and opened my door. I stepped inside, then slammed the door.

“Wow, James, do you want to leave really fast?” my dad asked.

“Um, I just want get back to my bedroom. You know, the good beds.” I lied. I opened the car door, hopped out, ran to Charlotte’s campground, and stopped to say,

“Bye, Charlotte.” I hugged her really tight. Then, I ran across the road, and stopped at Mark’s campground. I said to him, “Bye Mark.” I hugged him really tight, too. Then, I ran all the way back to my family’s campsite, opened my door, and saw my family was already inside buckled. I sat down into my seat, buckled, then closed the door.

“You know, James, the Millers, and Watsons, will probably be here for a longer time than we did. So, please don’t be sad if they aren’t back at our town for a long time. I know their you’re only friends you can play with.” My mom told me. I was very upset. But I didn’t cry. I heard a thump on the ceiling of the car.

“That was probably just an acorn.” I lied again, knowing that it was the tiger. My dad started the car, and pulled out of the little gravel driveway. The car drove along the road with towering pine trees aligning along the edges. I looked out the back window of the car. I sniffled. Then, I turned to look out the windshield, when I saw the sign for Valcartier passing by. My dad turned onto the highway, and we were out of Valcartier Campground. The car was driving into a pine forest. I saw lots of birds flying around. Alex, was snoring loudly, because he always says, *I’m awake on the way to the place, but not on the way back, because I’ve already seen the stuff on the way*

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there. I remember that saying a *lot*. Then I remembered that I was sad. I sniffed. I looked out my window. I saw a white paw with black stripes slide down the window. That was a message that the tiger was on the car. Then paw went whizzing back out of sight, because that was that greatest secret in the world. I felt my eyes drooping. I closed my eyes. I went to sleep.

When I woke up, I looked at Alex. I always look at him first because he's my little brother. I have to take care of him. He was awake, and my mom was asleep. But, my dad wasn't either. Because he was driving. I yawned, looked out the window, I saw that there was an empty grassland area with few trees. To think of it, it would be good to get home, but I still wouldn't have my only two best friends. Well, I would still have that tiger, but I mean someone that is human. I still feel like every time I meet her, our friendship gets even better. The car was going into a forest again, and there one thing that's suck in my head more than anything. I've been thinking about what Charlotte asked me. Does the tiger have a name? No, I answered, but it would be a lot easier to remember a real name, instead of 'the tiger'. I would have to ask her the next time I see her in private. Which will probably be a while. Because we would have to get home first. There was silence in the car. Alex was sleeping again, and so was my mom. It was just me and my dad awake. He was driving at sixty-two miles per hour. I sighed.

About thirty minutes later, I wished something exiting would happen. Police sirens turned on, and it woke up Alex and my mom. I looked out my window. I saw a sign that said my town name. it was only three miles away! I remembered something I've been wanting to know for a long time about our town.

“Mom, why are there no schools in our town for about thirty miles?”

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“Um, I don’t really know why.” I slumped down into my chair. “But that is a good question, honey.” Alex was reading a magazine.

“Wait, Alex, you can read magazines?” I asked him. I sat up. He lifted the magazine down so I could see his face.

“No,” he replied. “I was just looking at the pictures.” I laughed. I laughed so hard that I fell asleep.

14

I awoke to her Alex shouting,

“There’re beside us! There’re beside us!”

“Who’s beside us?” I said sleepily.

“The Miller’s! The Miller’s!” I awoke to that instantly. It could just be the car that looked the same. I looked through my window. And believe it or not, I saw the Miller’s car. “And there’s the Watson’s too!” I saw a SUV pull up beside the Miller’s car. It looked like Mark’s SUV. Then I saw the window opening on Charlotte’s car. Out popped her face. She waved. She stuck her head back in, then closed the window. Then Mark did the same thing. It was such a nice surprise. My friend’s left the campground just so that I could have a few friends to play with. And that includes that tiger.

About five minutes later, I saw a sign that read, Snow T Town. Our town’s name is a little bit peculiar. Wait. If our town is call Snow Town, then why would there be an extra “T” in there? It was probably just a spelling error. The car took an exit. The road led to my town. The car stopped to wait for the stoplight to change to green. Then, it did. Our car drove into our driveway. The car shut off, then we opened our doors. I ran onto the path that led to the snow castle. Then, I opened the doors, then climbed down the ladder. I ran through the tunnels. Then, I finally climbed up the ladder that led to the tiger’s den. When I climbed the last rung, I slid the rock off the top, and climbed out of the tall tunnel. I saw the tiger facing towards the wall.

“Hi,” I began. “It’s me, James.”

“Hello,” the tiger replied. “I think there something I should tell you.”

“Like what?”

“Well, it’s one of your biggest question. Why is there no school for thirty miles? Well, remember that sign for your town where it said Snow T Town?” I nodded. “The “T” stands for what I am.”

“A tiger?”

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“Exactly. They call this Snow T Town for a reason. It’s like Snow *Tiger* Town. That that sound more familiar? It’s infested by tigers!”

“But, you’re the only one here,” I told her, confused.

“I’m the only one here that you know of. Did you ever think I had a family?”

“Um, well, not really.” The tiger sighed.

“Follow me. Have you ever explored the part of the underground tunnel beyond the ladder to the snow castle?”

“No,”

“Good. Because I would be glad to show you.” The tiger walked to the ladder, and climbed down, so I followed her. Then, when we got to the bottom, the tiger walked on all fours down the tunnel. She pointed. “That’s the ladder for the snow castle.” Then, we walked beyond that, until we reached a giant wooden door. “This, is where the secret is.” The tiger pushed open the door. My mouth fell right open. There was a humongous hole in the tunnel. The hole looked to be about one hundred by one hundred feet. The hole was filled with black and white stiped tigers. The tiger beside me pointed up at the ceiling.

“This is right below town square. There are no schools in your town for thirty miles because the people who were going to build the school knew about us, (the snow tigers) and decided to build away from the huge den so the children could be safe. The school builder’s didn’t want to tell the mayor because then it would make people leave.” My mouth was still wide open, staring down at the millions of tigers.

“Um, well, I better get going home, but I have a quick question.” I told, starting running out the huge room and down the tunnel. The tiger ran after me. When she caught up with me, she was running beside me on my right. Then, very soon, I saw the ladder for the snow castle. I climbed right up it, then waited at the top for the tiger. She climbed up, and then walked to the other ladder. She whispered,

“I’m going to the third floor,”

“Wait! How do the millions of tigers get fed?” I asked.

“I feed them.” Susie replied. I walked to the doors, opened them, and ran on the path to my backyard. As soon as I reached the gate, I opened it, and raced to the glass sliding door. I slide it open, and saw my mom giving free sample cookies again. I walking into the dining room, then into the counter area.

“Can I give out the samples?” I asked.

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“Of course.” My mom replied. I took the tray, gave out the last samples the kids, then dropped the tray into the sink. I walked into the dining room, then up the stairs, and into my and Alex’s bedroom. I was still very surprised why there wasn’t a school for that long, but now I knew the secret. And I think it should stay a secret. I opened the bedroom door, and walked over to my bed. I sat down across from Alex who was on his bed sitting down too. He sighed.

“I wish I remembered your secret.” Alex said.

“Well, I want the secret to stay a secret from everybody but me and my friends.” I replied.

“Why do your friends get to know?” Alex asked.

“Well, because, um, I don’t know.” I stuttered, not knowing what to say.

15

I left the bedroom and walked down the stairs. In the dining room, my dad was setting four bowls of vegan chili.

“Hi dad,” I started. “I’m excited for dinner. Also, it feels good to be home.”

“You know what? I think that too.” My dad replied while walking to the stairs. I think he was going to get Alex. I walked into the bakery area. I saw that it was empty. Nobody was in the chairs, or on the stools by the counter, but the bakery, was as decent as it always was. I sighed happily. I walked over to the door, flicked a switch down, and the open sign outside turned off. I walked back into the dining room, and Alex was sitting in his chair, my mom was beside him. My dad came down the stairs, and sat down. I sat down last. My family was the best thing I had. I loved to have our dining room table back. We started to eat our chili. Alex ate first. He lifted his spoon, quickly blew on it, and took a huge bite. He swallowed with the whole family watching with intensity.

“Mmmm! That is the best chili I’ve ever had!” he shouted.

“Phew!” the rest of sighed in relief. Alex was always there to do something funny. I took my spoon up, blew on it, and took a bite. I swallowed.

“Hey, mom, I love this chili too.” I told my mom. My mom, we always have a way of communicating somehow, but however it is, we always get each other’s messages.

“Hey, James, are you happy to go back to school tomorrow? Now that winter break is over now.” My dad said. I smiled then nodded. And my dad, always there to tell me some kind of news. That is how the Pies are, and that’s how I like it. After dinner, I walked up the stairs to my and Alex’s bedroom. I sat down on my bed, looking out the window, staring into space. Tomorrow, I hope I could meet with that tiger. Because I have a surprise for her.

In the morning, I looked at my watch. It said it was six thirty. *Perfect.* I thought. I pulled the blankets down. I slowly walked out of the bedroom, trying not to wake Alex. I managed to get to the door. I opened it and ran out down the stairs. I opened the fridge, pulled out a container. I

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pulled off the lid, took a waffle, held it in my teeth, then closed the container and put it away. I ate the waffle cold, started to walk to the back door, but stopped to get my coat, mittens, boots and hat of the coat rack. After I put them all on, I unlocked the glass door, and ran out. I opened the gate, and ran down the path toward that snow castle. I opened the door, and walked inside. I closed the door, and started for the ladder that led to the other floor. I climbed the ladder all the way to the third floor, and saw the tiger. She was awake, and facing the wall.

“Um, hi.” I started to say.

“Oh, hi James. It’s nice to see you. I have a surprise for you.” The tiger began.

“And what’s that?” I asked.

“Well, you know how I have been facing walls for a long time?”

“Um, yeah.” I replied.

“Well, I wanted to keep a secret because I had... because I had babies!” My mouth dropped open. I guess this wasn’t the right time for my surprise. The tiger turned around, and she was holding a little cub that looked like a miniature version of the tiger.

“Well, one baby,” the tiger continued.

“Will the cub be able to talk? Because, if you can talk, and you are the cub’s mother, the DNA should make her talk. Right?” I asked.

“She might be able to talk when she’s older, but, I don’t think right now,” the tiger replied.

“Oh, okay. Um, I have a surprise for you.” I explained.

“Ooo. I wonder what it’s going to be.” The tiger said, waiting.

“Well, the surprise isn’t an object, it’s a word,” I began.

“Okay.” The tiger said. I continued,

“The surprise is... I have a few name ideas for you!” The tiger smiled.

“I’ve always wanted a name! all of the rest of my family can’t talk, but I was the only daughter of my mom who could talk. I felt special, but I couldn’t have any conversations with anybody.”

“Oh. That’s sad. I’m sorry.” I said.

“But now I can talk to humans! Do you think you could bring your friends Charlotte and Mark over to talk to me?” the tiger asked.

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“Of course.”

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Okay, here are the name ideas. Stacy, Lucy, Lacy, Sophia, Emma, Ava, or Susie?" I asked the tiger.

"Hmm, Lucy, no. Ava? No, not that either. What did you say that last one was?"

"Susie." I said while smiling.

"Hmm, Susie the snow tiger. Oh! That sounds good! My name is Susie. Thank you James!"

"I thought you would pick that one," I replied. "Thank you for the visit, but I think I should go now. Bye!" I exclaimed.

"Bye! See you again!" Susie shouted. I climbed down the ladder, ran out the snow castle doors, the stopped. I turned around, walked to the doors, closed it, then ran down the path. I opened the gate, ran inside the house, slid the glass door closed and locked it. Good for me, because then Alex was walking down the hallway. I took off my coat, mittens, hat and boots. Then, when I was done, Alex reached the bottom of the stairs.

"Hi James, do you want to play ping pong in our bedroom?" He asked.

"Um, maybe later? I'm still really tired." I replied.

"Okay." Alex said as he skipped to the fridge. He opened it, grabbed out a container, and pulled out a waffle. He stuck it into his teeth, closed the container, and shut the fridge. He ate the cold waffle happily, then walked back up the stairs. "Hmm, how could I invite my friends over to Susie's den without mentioning it to anybody else. *Maybe I could wait until after school?* I thought.

About an hour later, my parents woke up, my mom first, because she had to open the bakery. She walked down the stairs, one step at a time, then over to the kitchen. She pulled out some donuts she had made the previous night from the pantry, and set them on the counter.

"Today is your first day of school since winter break," my mom reminded me.

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“Yeah, I remember. I’ll see my friends today,” I reminder *her*.

“Oh yes, I remember. Time to get onto the bus.” I ran up the stairs, into my bedroom, grabbed my backpack, then ran back downstairs. I grabbed the front door handle, but my mom reminded me,

“Honey! Your coat!” I grabbed my coat, boots, and mittens, then strolled out the door. The bus was waiting for me. I ran to the bus, and entered inside. I sat down into a seat, then my friends rushed in. The doors closed. The bus started to go. After a few minutes, the big hill came. The bus groaned and creaked. Mr. Colts hit the dashboard and the gas gage went up. The bus was soon at the top of the hill. Then, the bus went whizzing down the hill at what seemed like seventy miles an hour! Mr. Colts hit the brakes, and the bus screeched to a stop.

“Kids, your teacher’s wanted me to tell you that she has a special surprise for you.” Mr. Colts told everyone on the bus. It surprised all of the kids and made them gasp, because he barely ever talks. Anyway, the bus was driving along the road again. About ten minutes later, the bus stopped at the long but thin driveway for the school. The doors opened. My friends got out, then me next, then all of the other kids. I walked into the building with my friends, but stopping in the hall. All of the fourth-grade teachers were standing in a perfect row to form a wall.

“Hello,” Mrs. Kate welcomed. “As Mr. Colts and the other bus drivers had probably already told you, all of us fourth-grade teachers have a surprise for you. We are having a field trip day.” All of the kids clapped. Including me. But I did that because I thought that a field trip would be a good way to learn.

“Where will we visit?” asked a girl.

“Well, why not visit our own woods in Snow T Town?” Mrs. Kate continued. I realized she had said the “T”.

“Yay!” All of fourth-graders yelled.

“So get on the bus again!” Mrs. Kate finished. All of the kids started to run the school buses. But then I had a bad thought. What if all of fourth-grade saw Susie? Then what would I do? Anyway, everybody was on the bus, the doors closed, and bus started for the woods. The bus that we were on now was a much larger one that was driven by a different person than Mr. Colts. This bus was called a grade bus. It is a bus that can transport a whole grade. About fifteen minutes later, the bus stopped on the edge of the road. The doors opened. Kids spewed out. Then started to look at trees, leaves, and all of the other stuff you would find in the woods. I got out of the bus last. I walked on the wet leaves, and then heard a kid yell,

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“Hey look what I found!” all of the kids ran over to see what wonderful thing he found. So I walked over there too. My mouth was wide open. I couldn’t believe the thing he found. It also worried me.

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What the kid had found had astounded me. I ran over to that kid to have a better look. Children were in crowds trying to see what miraculous thing he had found.

“I found some white hairs! I think they might be tiger hairs!” the boy exclaimed.

“Are you crazy?! Tigers don’t live in Canada!” a girl shouted.

“But it looks like tiger hairs,” the boy continued. I was very worried about this. What if the kids found trail then the den then Susie!?

“Hey! Look! A trail!” another boy shouted. “Let’s follow it!” the teachers were talking to each other, not paying any attention to what this kid had found. Now the crowd was following me and the boy as we followed the trail to see where it would lead. About five minutes later, another girl shouted,

“Hey look! A den! A den!” *Oh no!* I thought. The crowd was now very far out of the teacher’s view. All of the kids ran over to the den, all trying to open the door, but they kept saying,

“It won’t budge!” but I didn’t care, because I walked up the steps of that secret entrance through the top of the den. When I got to the top of the den, I pushed the little boulder away, and sprang in through the little hole. Inside Susie was sitting on the floor just staring at the door holding her little cub.

“Susie, all of fourth-grade is trying to get in! You have to do something!” I exclaimed.

“Okay, I have a plan. You hide right below that little tunnel downward with the ladder, so you can hear me and peek at what I do. Also, bring my cub.” Susie explained. I grabbed the fluffy cub, walked over to the little tunnel with the ladder, I pushed the rock over me, but left a little crack so I could peek. I saw Susie pull the rock door open, roar a bit, then I heard lots and lots of screams, probably from the kids. They ran away, I pushed the rock away, climbed the ladder, and stepped out. I handed Susie her cub back, and she closed the door. I waited a few minutes, then said,

“Thanks, Susie,”

“That’s what I do. Sometimes.” She replied. She pushed the boulder away, I walked out, and she pulled it closed. I ran back to the other kids. They were still heavily breathing. I was glad to see there was no damage done.

“Did you see the tiger, James?” a kid asked.

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“I sure did.” I replied.

“I told you they were tiger hairs,” The boy who found the tiger hairs.

“Well, I guess you were right,” apologized that girl who told the boy he was wrong. I walked over to the teachers.

“Kids! Time to go!” Mrs. Kate said. The kids ran over to the bus. When I saw everybody was inside but the teachers, I dashed towards the bus and through the door. Then at last, the teachers came inside the bus too. The bus driver closed the doors, and we were off to home. Mrs. Kate was sitting right next to me, looking out the window at pine trees almost as tall as a three-story building.

“You know James, since I’m on the bus home with the students, I can’t get to see your little brother Alexzander,” Mrs. Kate explained.

“He likes to go by Alex,” I reminded her.

“Oh, right I knew that. I just forgot.” Mrs. Kate told me. A few minutes later, the bus stopped at town square. I looked at my watch. Only ten o’clock! This was kind of a half day of school. The doors opened and all of the kids ran as fast as they could. I got out last, with my friends by my side.

“Um, Mark, do you think that I could have a sleep over? I’d ask my mom.” I asked Mark.

“Yeah, I’ll ask my mom. If she says yes, when you knock on the door, if I open it, that means you can have a sleep over.” Mark explained to me.

“Okay, see you there!” I shouted while I ran to the bakery. I opened the front door, and saw that customers were eating there baked goods that my mom had made. I ran across the room, and into the dining room. My mom was sitting in her seat. I sat down in my chair.

“So, why back so early?” my mom asked curiously.

“Well, today was a half day, and some good news is that there were no bus crashes today,” I told my mom. She chuckled. I hopped out of my seat and ran into my bedroom. I sank down into my bed.

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About ten minutes later, I heard the sliding door slide open then close. Then I remembered that my teacher was supposed to see Alex, but she never got a chance. I ran out of the bedroom, down the stairs, and sat in my seat at the dining room table. Alex sat down in his seat.

“Mom, can I have a sleep over with Mark?” I asked.

“Sure, but can you bring some vegan waffles for breakfast tomorrow? I don’t know if they have vegan stuff.” My mom reminded me.

“Okay,” I said walking to the fridge. I opened the door, grabbed out the container of waffles, and stuffed them into my backpack my mom handed to me. Then I realized that I still had my coat on! I ran to the front door of the bakery, put on my boots, and dashed out the door. I ran over to Mark’s porch across the street, knocked on the door, and Mark opened it.

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Mark led me inside, closed door, then said,

“James, I’ll show you to my room,” so then I followed him through his hallway. His house had lots of pictures on the walls. Then, finally, Mark opened a dark, wooden door. In this room, he had a normal bed on the far wall of the room, with a little nightstand beside it. The nightstand held a silver lamp with a few envelopes scattered around. The floor was soft, fluffy, grey carpet, with all of the corners tucked into the walls very nicely.

“Oops. I forgot to bring my sleeping bag!” I shouted.

“Don’t worry, you can just sleep with me in my bed.” Mark told me. “It’s only two o’clock, it’s not time to sleep yet. What should we do now?” Mark asked.

“Um, I think I have something to tell you. I told Charlotte, and I think I should tell you too.” I warned, walking to the door and closing it all the way. I ran over to the window, shut the shades, and hopped onto Mark’s bed. He hopped on too. The whole room was in darkness.

“Um, oh, uh, ah! I found it!” Mark grunted before turning on a flashlight, and pointing it at the ceiling. We sat criss cross on the bed.

“Okay. Are you ready for this?” I asked. Mark nodded. “On the day before I bought my one hundred things, I met a... a...”

“A what? I’m building pressure!”

“Tiger!” I shouted.

“Where?!” Mark asked looking in all directions.

“No, I met a tiger on that day.” I said softly. Mark’s mouth dropped open. “Yup, it’s insane.”

“Wow, I can’t believe that you’re friend’s with a tiger!” Mark exclaimed.

“Would you like to come and visit her with Charlotte?” I asked. “You’ve already met her.”

“I have? Wait, are you telling me that the tiger I met today was your friend?!”

“Yes. Her name is Susie. You did see her.”

“Hmmm, Susie. That’s a good name.”

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“Wait until you meet her.” I exclaimed excitedly. “Well, while she’s trying to being nice.” I looked at my watch. It was three o’clock. An hour had past. Oops. My mom forgot to pack my dinner!

“Um, Mark, do you have any vegan meals?” I asked.

“Um, I think so. Actually, could you tell me what ‘vegan’ means again?” Mark replied turning to me.

“Vegan is a diet of no meat of animal products.” I reminded him.

“Uh oh.”

“What?” I asked.

“You can’t have dinner here.” Mark replied.

“Well, I’ll have to go home. I’ll see you tomorrow after school!” I shouted, walking to the door that led out of the room. I opened the door, ran down the hall, and out the front door. It was twelve thirty. I ran across the road, and stopped at my front door. I twisted the knob, and ran inside. The bakery was empty, but my mom was behind the counter making dinner.

“Honey, why are you back so early?” was my mom’s first sentence when I came in.

“We forgot to-” My mom crashed some pots into the sink. “...pack my dinner.” I told her.

“Oops. Sorry honey. I forgot. But, how about you stay home for the night? Dinner’s already ready.” She said while picking up two bowls of soup then walking out of the room. I just stood there. She came back behind the counter, picked up two more bowls of soup, then walked out of the room. I walked into the dining room and sat down in my seat. Four bowls of soup sat on every side of the square table. Alex came running down from the stairs, and sat down into his seat. I saw the glass door slide open, and my dad walked in. He took off his boots and coat, then slid the door shut. He walked over to the table, sat into his seat, and said,

“So James, how did the first day of school since winter break go?”

“Pretty well,” I told him, knowing that it didn’t really go well. “We had a field trip.”

“Ooo! Where did you go?” Alex piped up.

“Um, the forest in our town.” I replied.

“That’s a good place to go. Did you study trees and bark?” my mom asked.

“Um, yes.” I lied to them. I started to eat my soup. It had cooled off while I was talking. *Mmmmmmm. This is some great soup.* I thought. My mom always makes food that I like. In about

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ten minutes, I picked up my empty bowl, walked behind the counter, and dropped it into the sink. I dashed to the stairs, up them, and into my room. I ran back out the door, and to the bathroom. I brushed my teeth, then ran back into my room. I sighed. Today had been a long day. I plopped down onto my bed, thinking, "What will happen tomorrow?" I slowly began to close my eyes. I yawned. I fell asleep.

19

When I woke up the next morning, I hopped out of bed, trying not wake up Alex. I crept down the hall, walked down the stairs, then stopped. I began to think. Why was I keeping Susie a secret from people? I told my friends, but why not my family? I didn't know why. I continued to walk. I opened the fridge. I pulled out the waffle container. I grabbed out a waffle, stuck it into my teeth, shut the container, and closed the fridge. I ate the waffle cold, then ran to the glass door. I stepped into my boots, put on my coat, and unlocked the door. I slid it open, and ran outside. I opened the gate, and dashed to the snow castle. I climbed up the ladder all the way to the third floor, and saw Susie sleeping soundly with her cub. I sat down beside her, and snuggled for a bit. I accidentally fell asleep.

When I woke up, I lifted up my watch. It was seven o'clock! Alex would be waking up soon! I climbed down the ladder and dashed out the doors of the snow castle. I ran through the gateway, and dashed right into the house. I kicked off my boots, pulled off my coat, then locked the door. I ran over to my seat, sat in it, and picked up magazine off the table. I pretended to read it. I hummed. Alex ran down the stairs.

"James? Did you hear that doors sliding sound?" Alex asked. I put down the magazine onto the table, and replied.

"It must have been a tree branch,"

"Okay." Alex answered running back up the stairs.

"Hmm. That was easy." I muttered to myself.

An hour later, I walked up the stairs, and opened the door to my mom and dad's bedroom. I walked in slowly. I walked over to my mom's side of the bed. I whispered into her ear,

"It's eight fifty. Time to open the bakery," I walked out of the bedroom into the hall, and about a minute later, my mom walked out of the room, dashed down stairs, and behind the

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counter. I dashed down the stairs after her, and saw she was already letting people inside the door. Alex dashed down the stairs saying,

“Hey James! Guess what?”

“What?” I asked when Alex’s feet touched the floor.

“Mom said that she called the principal of your school and said that I could come with you!” Alex finished.

“What? Wow. It could be like a brother day!” I announced.

“Yeah!” Alex agreed. My dad ran down the stairs. When he stepped on the floor, he asked,

“What’s happening?” my mom came from behind the counter and sighed.

“I called James’s principal to ask him if Alex could go with James.” She told my dad. My dad chuckled.

“Oh,” he said. “I was going to go to the mall today.” Alex frowned. His head drooped. I knew how much Alex loved the mall. He got to scrape cookie boxes off the shelves.

“Um, don’t worry, Alex. I’m going to the mall *after* when James gets home from school.

“Yay!” Alex shouted.

“You can use James’s old backpack,” my mom told Alex. “And I’ll pack your lunch’s.” My mom went to the fridge and pulled out several things. She ran behind the counter, and started to make our lunches. I grabbed my coat, put it on, grabbed Alex’s coat, and put his on. I pulled our hoods down, and my mom came out from behind the counter, holding our backpacks. She put Alex’s on, while I put on mine. My mom kissed Alex and I, and she opened the door. And we dashed out into the bakery area. I opened the door, and Alex and I ran out. As we were running to the school bus, side by side, I said,

“Alex, this is the bus I go to school on.”

“Oh,” Alex said as we were stepping into the bus. “It’s filled with more people than I thought.”

“Yup, it’s like that every day. Unless—” I told him. I and Alex sat down on the same seat. Across from us was an empty seat. But then Charlotte and Mark ran into the bus, and sat into the empty seat. I smiled. The bus doors closed, and off Alex and me went to school. Alex and I didn’t say one more thing the rest of the way.

When the bus stopped at the long but thin driveway, the doors opened. I hopped out of my seat, and walked to the doors, followed by Alex, and lots of other kids. Alex stared up at the six-story building.

“Um, is this your school?” Alex asked.

“Yes,” I replied.

“It’s a lot taller than a preschool.” Alex told me.

“Yup, but the inside is better.”

20

When I and Alex reached Mrs. Kate's class, I sat down at my desk. Charlotte said,

"I can get you an extra chair," then she went into the closet and came out with an extra chair. She sat it down right next to mine, and Alex sat down. The last person to sit down was Charlotte. Mrs. Kate explained to the class,

"We have a new student for the day. His name is Alex. He's James's little brother. Okay, um... Alex, you can color in these coloring books while everybody else does math." Mrs. Kate walked over to Alex and handed him some coloring books and some markers. "Okay. Charlotte, what is four divided by two?" Mrs. Kate asked.

"That's easy. Two." Charlotte replied. I glanced over at Alex. He had colored half of the picture already. About ten minutes later, Mrs. Kate was done asking us math problems. I looked over at Alex's picture. He was done. Now he was listening to Mrs. Kate.

"Okay, class, now it is time for you to go art. I'm sorry for those who love music, because Mr. Kake is sick today." The whole class stood up, and walked out of the door. Mark was frowning. "Hey," I started. "What's the matter?"

"I'm feeling blue." He replied.

"Why?"

"Well, it's not THAT big of a deal. I just wish that we had music today." I and Alex were the last ones to go out of the room. I was holding Alex's hand and leading him out of the door, but he ran over to Mrs. Kate and gave her a big hug.

"Thank you so much." Alex said handing the coloring book and markers back to my teacher.

"Oh Alex, you can keep these. If you ever come back to James's school, you can just bring this." Mrs. Kate said handing Alex back the coloring book and markers. Alex ran over to me, hugged me, then we raced out of the door.

After art, it was lunch. My whole class ran out of the art room, and to the cafeteria. I sat down at the table that was Mrs. Kate's. I opened my lunchbox that was sitting right in front of me, and started to eat. Alex, who forgot to take off his backpack for all of school, took it off his back, zipped it open, and pulled out a lunchbox. He sat it down on the table, and zipped it open. He pulled out a tofu sandwich, and took small bites. After lunch, all of the kids in the cafeteria were leaving. All of fourth-grade was running through the hall and out of the doors. I and Alex ran outside, hopped into the bus, and the doors closed. The bus pulled out of the driveway, and drove along the road.

When I saw the steep hill coming up, I whispered across the bus,

“Charlotte, Mark? Jump out with me!” Charlotte and Mark jumped out their window of the bus, and I grabbed Alex's hand. Then we jumped out. The bus was now going up the hill. My friends ran over to me and Alex.

“Okay. Charlotte and Mark, I'll show you to the T-I-G-E-R. Got it?” my friends nodded. “Okay, Alex, to can wait right by this tree. Okay?” I said pointing to a tree. I ran with my friends following, all the way to Susie's den. When I saw the boulder door, I yelled,

“Susie? It's me! James Pie! I'm with my friends Charlotte and Mark! Can you open the door?” Then, about a second later, the door shook. Gaps appeared around the rock. Susie pushed the boulder away, and me and my friends walked inside of the den. The door closed. Charlotte gasped. We turned around. My friends walked around the lair, examining every detail. Then, I said,

“Okay, now, here is Susie the snow tiger.” And Susie came out of the darkness. My friends turned around from the walls. Charlotte skreighed.

“It's okay. She's my friend. She won't hurt you.” *Unless you ask her to*, I thought.

“Can I pet her?” Charlotte asked.

“Yes.” I answered. Charlotte reached out her arm, and slowly petted Susie and the head.

“What's her name?” Mark asked.

“Susie.” Susie said out of the darkness.

“Wait. Who said that?” Mark asked.

“Susie did.” I told them crossing my arms.

“She can talk?” Charlotte asked.

James and Susie

“I thought all animals could talk!” Susie exclaimed.

“Okay,” Charlotte said.

“Ooo! I almost forgot about Alex!” I exclaimed. “Um, Susie? Could you maybe not be too scary for Alex? He’s very little, and I don’t want you to scare him.” I asked Susie.

“Sure thing, James.” Susie answered me. I walked outside leaving Mark and Charlotte by themselves in the den with Susie. The boulder was still pushed away. I stopped.

“Oh, and Susie? Could you maybe close the door until I get back?” I asked. I continued walking. Then I ran. All the way to the tree I told Alex to stay at. And to my surprise, Alex was sitting happily at the trunk of the tree. He was smiling.

“Hey, Alex, why the smile?” I asked.

“Do you have a surprise for me?” Alex said.

“Yes, I sure do.”

21

When I and Alex reached the den, I explained,

“This is where one of my friends lives.” I walked closer to the door. I knocked on it. “Wait, follow me.” I ran to the other side of the den, with Alex following me, I climbed up the stairs, and pushed the rock at the tip of the dome. I hopped in. Alex hopped in after me.

“I see Charlotte, Mark, you, and who else could there be?” Alex asked.

“Me,” Susie said, walking out of the darkness. Alex turned around. He gasped. Then when he saw Susie’s face, his mouth fell wide open and his eyes widening.

“Wh-what’s your name?” Alex asked inching away.

“Susie.” She responded.

“Yup, this is my other friend. She lives in a den.”

“O-okay. Can we go home now? It’s getting cold.” Alex stammered.

“Yeah, we probably should get home,” I responded. “Do you agree?” I turned to Charlotte and Mark.

“Yeah.” Mark said.

“Um, can we have a sleepover at yours tonight?” Charlotte asked.

“Hmm. I’ll ask my parents.” I replied. “Okay, I’ll show you a secret passage. Follow me. Bye Susie!” I my friends and Alex walked behind me as I slid the big rock, and I jumped onto the ladder. My friends climbed in after me. We climbed down the ladder until we reached the bottom. We ran down the long and dirty path of the underground tunnel. Then, when I recognized the ladder to the snow castle, I climbed up the rusty, tarnished ladder. My friends and Alex followed me until we climbed to the top. When I saw the bakery, I wondered, “How can I see the bakery now, and I couldn’t before?” I peered down at ground. There was lots of mud and water beneath my boots. I had realized that the castle had melted, and there wasn’t a single bit of white. My friends and Alex were staring around with me, until I finally said goodbye,

“How about we go home now. Bye Charlotte! Bye Mark!” And then my friends ran off to their houses across the street. I ran with Alex all the way to the gate of my backyard. I opened the gate. My brother and I dashed across the yard, and slid open the glass door. I stepped onto a rug

James and Susie

that had been placed by the door, and took off my boots. After I was done, Alex moved onto the rug and took his boots off while I shut and locked the door.

“Mom? Can my friends please have a sleepover?” I asked my mom who was setting bowls of warmed up soup onto the table.

“Well, honey, which one?” My mom replied.

“Both.” I told her.

“Um, okay,” she said. There was knock on the bakery door.

“I’ll get it!” I heard Alex say as he ran down the stairs. He ran to the bakery door, opened it and said,

“Um, James! Charlotte and Mark are here! There asking they can have a sleepover! Can they?”

“Tell them yes!” I shouted.

“Okay. He said yes.” Alex told my friends. The door swung open all the way, and Charlotte and Mark came rushing into the dining room.

“Hi! I’m so glad we could come over for the night! I bought my sleeping bag!” Charlotte exclaimed. “It feels like I haven’t seen you for years!” Mark was holding two sleeping bags in his arms. One was purple, and the other was blue.

“Okay. Let’s go up to my room.” I told my friends. I lead them to the stairs, as if they had forgotten from the other fifty or so sleepovers they’ve had at my house. I climbed up the stairs with my friends side by side. I opened the door to my and Alex’s room. Mark sat the sleeping bags onto the floor. Charlotte unrolled the purple one that was close to my bed. Mark unrolled the blue sleeping bag close to Alex’s bed. Just then, Alex came rushing down the hall, and stuck his head through the doorway of my and his bedroom. I also noticed he was carrying a cardboard box. He stuck his head back into the hallway, and walked off to my parent’s bedroom. I saw that my friend’s sleeping bags had a puffy spot on each. Then I saw Charlotte zip open the bag, and pull out a backpack. I assumed that Mark had a backpack in his bag too. I stared out the window, and saw that the sun was setting.

“Kids! Time for dinner!” my friends sat up from sitting on their sleeping bags, and raced into the hall. I slowly stepped onto my feet, and walked into the hall, trying to not step on my friend’s sleeping bags, that were very oddly long. I walked down the stairs, and saw my family and friends sitting at the table waiting for me. I sat down into my chair. Charlotte was on my left, and Mark on my right. My mom was right next to Charlotte, and my dad was across. Infront of

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everyone at the table, sat a bowl of soup filled to the brim. There were metal spoons in each bowl. Everyone picked up a spoon, and started to gulp their soup.

22

After my mom and dad had tucked me, Alex, and my friends into bed, my eyes were wide open. I hadn't gotten any sleep for the whole night, and it was already ten o'clock! I looked over at my friends and brother. Alex was sleeping soundful. Mark was holding his hand. I peered down at the purple sleeping bag right next to my bed. Charlotte was sleeping, while putting her hand onto my bed. I think she wanted to hold my hand. I held her hand, and I fell asleep. I was imagining something. If both of my friends and my little brother knew about Susie, why should I not tell my parents? Why should I not tell *everybody*? Would there be chaos if everyone knew that there was a huge den of tigers, right under town square? Well, probably. But, I guess I could just ask my parents if they wouldn't tell anybody.

When it was six o'clock in the morning, I sat up from my bed and looked down at my friend's sleeping bags. They were empty. I walked out the door of the room, into the hallway, and down the stairs. In the dining room, Charlotte was flipping pancakes off a griddle on the stovetop. I saw Mark looking through the fridge. When they turned around, Charlotte gasped.

"Oh! Hi James. Sorry, I didn't see you there. Mark and I are making blueberry pancakes. I'm doing the pancakes, and Mark's looking for blueberries." Charlotte explained.

"Um, I'm sorry, but we don't have any blueberries. But we do have strawberries," I told my friends.

"Okay. I'll look for strawberries," Mark said as he rummaged around in the fridge with his hands for a few seconds. "Ah! Found them!" Mark closed the fridge with his shoe, holding a container full of red strawberries. He walked over to Charlotte, who was now flipping the pancakes onto plates. He sat the container down, right next the stovetop. When there were no more pancakes left on the griddle, Charlotte turned off the burners, and grabbed the strawberries. She opened the lid, and sprinkled some small strawberries onto the pancakes. Charlotte picked up a plate, walked over to the dining room table, and sat down.

"Okay boys, you can grab your pancakes." Charlotte said. I walked over to the counter, picked up a plate, and walked over to the table. I sat into my seat. Mark went over to get his

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pancakes too. I heard footsteps coming from the stairs. It was Alex. His mouth dropped open when he saw us eating pancakes.

“Can I have pancakes too?” he asked, looking at Charlotte.

“Of course.” Charlotte responded. She sat up from her chair, and walked over to the counter. Charlotte used a spatula to lift two pancakes onto Alex’s plate. After we were all done eating, I remembered that my mom should open the bakery now. I sat up from my chair, and walked up the stairs. When I saw my mom sleeping on her bed, I whispered,

“It’s time to open the bakery.” My mom sat up on the bed, and hugged me.

“Actually, the bakery is closed today.” My mom told me.

“Why?” I asked.

“Well, your aunt Alice is coming today. I bet that your friends would like to meet her.” My mom said.

“Oh.” My mom walked out of her bedroom, so I followed her. When we walked down the stairs and into the dining room, I heard tires screech. My dad ran down the stairs. We all waited for my aunt to come into the bakery. The front door of the bakery swung open, and woman with blond hair, (about the same color of Mark’s) blue eyes, and a green dress. She walked into the dining room with her eyes looking at me.

“Hello everybody. Let me remember who is who.” Aunt Alice pointed at my mom. “Hi sister. And you’re Mitchel.” She said pointing at my dad. “You’re James.” She pointing at me. “And there’s little Alex. But who are these other kids?” my aunt asked me.

“Oh! Those are my friends. Charlotte Miller and Mark Watson.” I told aunt Alice.

“Well, I’m going set make my bed.” My aunt said. She walked up the stairs and into my mom’s and dad’s bedroom. I whispered into Mark’s and Charlotte’s ears,

“Come with me into my bedroom. I have something I need to tell you.” I noticed that Alex was no longer in the dining room. I climbed the stairs with my friends behind me. I opened the door to my and Alex’s bedroom.

“Don’t come in here!” Alex shouted at me. I closed the door.

“Hmm. Let’s go outside.” I told my friends. We raced down the wooden stairs, slid open the sliding door, and walked outside. My friends and I walked to the opposite side of our backyard from the gate. We sat down onto a wooden bench.

“Okay. So, remember Susie?” my friends nodded. “Well, you know how there aren’t any schools in our town?” My friends nodded again. “Well, do you why?” my friends shook their

James and Susie

heads. “Susie told me that it was because right under town square in a huge den infested with tigers!”

“How can you trust a tiger with something like that?” Charlotte asked.

“I didn’t. She showed me it.” I explained to my friends.

“Wow. I can’t believe that.” Mark exclaimed.

“Well, we better get inside.” I told my friends. We sat up from the wooden bench, walked inside, and shut the door. I loved our house. Charlotte locked the door, and Mark took off his coat and boots. I took off my coat and boots, while Charlotte did the same thing.

23

After all of our coats were off, I climbed the stairs and walked along the hall. I looked out one of the windows. Outside I could see the trees swaying in the wind. I saw birds flying. I saw chipmunks. And a tiger. And my baker-I jerked my head away from the window and looked out again. I was right! I saw Susie walking on all fours along my backyard. I ran down the stairs. I unlocked the door, and slid it open. I dashed into our backyard. I flattened myself against the siding of the house. I looked left at the glass door. I looked right. I saw Susie flattening herself against the siding too.

“Hi Susie. I just saw you out of the window. Oh! And I have a question. Should I tell my parents about you? My friends and Alex know.” I whispered to Susie.

“Um, sure. Just tell them to keep it secret.” Susie told me. Yes! I thought.

“By the way, why did you come into my backyard?” I asked.

“Well, uh, because I had to give you this.” Susie told me while handing me a small box. I opened the box’s lid, and gasped. There was a roll of paper. I closed the box, and told Susie,

“Thank you,” I walked back to the glass door, slid it open, walked inside, and closed the door. I ran up the stairs, and peered out the windows again. I saw Susie leap over the fence, and climb down the ladder that used to be inside on the small snow castle. Then I remembered, I can tell my parents about Susie. It’ll be okay. I marched down the stairs, and saw my mom making donuts for us. My dad was sitting at the table reading the news. Alex was upstairs, and my aunt Alice was still making my parents bed. Charlotte and Mark were probably upstairs with Alex. If not, they might be in the bakery area, where they could hear me telling my parents, but they already know. *Hmmm. Should I tell them now?* I thought. I decided not to. I walked up the stairs, and peeked into my parents’ bedroom. Aunt Alice was actually stuck looking at pictures from our family picture book. I shut the door, and walked to my and Alex’s bedroom.

“Alex? Are you in there?” I asked knocking on the door.

“Yes! And please don’t come in!” Alex responded. I wonder what Alex is doing. He’s been in my and his room a lot of times recently. I’m curious if I should go to Susie for advice. I ran down the stairs, slid open the door, and ran out into our backyard. I climbed the gate, (just for fun) and climbed down the ladder to the tunnels.

James and Susie

When I climbed up the ladder to Susie's den, I pushed the rock aside. I climbed up onto the cold damp stone floor. Susie was staring right at the hole that I just came out of, like she was waiting for me.

"Susie? Do you have any advice for when to tell my parents about you?" I asked.

"You didn't tell them yet?" Susie said.

"Um, well, I just feel like I shouldn't yet." I told Susie.

"Um, okay, but, now you should go and, you know, tell them. It'll be okay."

When I climbed up the ladder to where the snow castle used to be, I opened the doors, and ran along the path to my backyard. I climbed the gate, and ran over to the glass door. I slid the door open, and walked inside. I closed the door, and started to take off my coat. I took off my boots, and then walked over to my mom and dad, who were both sitting at the table. Right before my mom saw me, she shouted,

"Everybody! Snack time!" Alex ran down the stairs, with Charlotte and Mark running after him, and last, my aunt walked down the stairs. Everybody sat down in chairs, and we ate our donuts. After we were done eating, my aunt walked back upstairs. Charlotte and Mark walked toward the stairs, but sat down on the fifth step. My mom was washing the dishes, while my dad continued to read the newspaper.

"Um, mom?" I asked. My mom closed the dishwasher. She walked over to the table and sat down. I sat down too. "Dad?" my dad sat the newspaper down, and they both listened. "There's something I've wanted to tell you both for a long time. So remember the day before the one hundredth day of school? Well, that day, the bus rolled backwards down that steep hill, and I fell out into the grass. Something picked me up." I had a flashback of that moment.

"A lion!" my dad shouted.

"Um, close. A tiger. Then, after I had that sleepover with Charlotte, you wanted us to go on a camping trip in winter. The tiger hopped onto the car, and drove with us along the way to the camp. Then, the whole time she was with us. When we got back, one time she told me she had a

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cub, and answered one of my biggest questions. Why there were no schools for thirty miles. Because under town square is a *huge* den infested with tigers! And the people who were going to make the school knew about the tigers, and decided to build it farther away. I also saw that our town is named Snow T Town. The t stands for tiger. Snow tiger town. How about that.” When I was done talking, my parents looked like their jaws might fall off from how wide their mouths were open. “Oh, and please don’t tell anyone.” I finished.

24

It took a lot of talking to get my parents not to tell the public.

“You can’t just not tell the public about a den of tigers living under town square!” my dad argued.

“Shh! Somebody might hear you.” I insisted. Charlotte shouted loudly the next moment,

“There’s a camera crew spying on us!”

“What?” my mom shouted.

“It’s probably just some kids in disguise.” I told my friends. But, just to be sure, my family and friends ran up the stairs and into my parents’ bedroom. Along the way, Alex ran out of our room. My mom clutched the remote and turned on the TV. She switched to the news. The news reporter was saying,

“At a house in Snow T Town, there is a boy who looks like he is nine, had just told his parents about a tiger who he is friends with. He also told his parents why there isn’t a school for thirty miles in Snow T Town. There is a whole den of tigers under town square of Snow T Town. And speaking of Snow T Town, the t stands for *tiger*.”

“Oh no! Now the whole town knows about Susie!” I shouted.

“Susie?” my dad asked, confused.

“Oh, that’s the tiger’s name.” I replied. I looked out the window. Ten news trucks screeched onto the side of the road. Five people stepped out of each truck. They ran to our front door, opened it, and ran inside our house. I ran to shut the door of the bedroom. After I shut it, I locked it. There were bangs of people’s fists knocking on the door.

“What are we going to do?” I asked, panicking. “We’ve got fifty news reporters banging on the door to let them in!” everybody in the room, that includes my aunt Alice, hopped onto the bed. We all fell asleep to the explosions of argument from behind the door.

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In the morning, when I woke up at six o'clock, I strolled to the door, unlocked it, and slowly pulled open the piece of wood. News reporters were laying on the floor fast asleep and snoring. I jumped over them, and marched down the stairs. In the dining room, I went to the fridge, and pulled it open. I looked around for something that wasn't waffles. With nothing I could find, I shut the door, and walked to the table. I pulled a nice red apple from the top of the fruit bowl. I took a big bite. Aunt Alice was walking down the stairs.

"Oh. I didn't know you were an early riser." I told aunt Alice.

"And I didn't know that there would be fifty news reporters coming to your house!" My aunt stared over at the white door that led to the guest bedroom. "Hey, I forgot about that bedroom!" She ran over to the door and twisted the knob. "Come with me." I walked behind her, until I came into the guest bedroom.

"Why would you want me to come in with you?" I asked.

"Well, because I have a little something you've got to know." Aunt Alice sat down on the bed in that room. She patted the bed, and I sat down beside her. "I can't believe that you were keeping that huge thing a secret. And I mean, a huge tiger den under town square? It's just a joke! How could you trust a tiger?"

"I didn't. She showed me it." I answered. "I just wish I could see Susie again." I told aunt Alice.

"And I have an idea." My aunt told me with a mischievous voice. We sat up from the bed, and walked out of the room. We walked out of the house and stared at the road. My aunt got out her cell phone, and called somebody.

"Yes? Brian? I need you to pick us up." My aunt said into the phone. She hung up and said while stuffing the phone back into her pocket, "Brian is a taxi driver. Never quiet liked 'im, so, he's a good one for this plan." A few minutes later, and bright yellow car pulled off to the side of the road, and aunt Alice opened the door. I stepped inside, then my aunt who closed the doors. The inside of the car looked rather shabby. The seats had tears, and part of the steering wheel had broken off!

"Where to?" asked the man, who I thought might be Brian. Brian looked out his window, while my aunt sneakily opened the door, tippy toed over to the front of the car, opened the engine cover, and poured in some veggie broth. She dropped the container onto the ground, and stepped back into the car.

James and Susie

“Um, maybe by the forest, I mean, the steep hill?” my aunt asked. The car drove off. I saw the forest coming up, but when the steep hill came up, the engine died.

“Oh. Well, sorry, I’ll have to fix it.” Brian said, as he opened the door of the car. The he opened the engine, not noticing the door fell off, and my aunt and me ran off into the forest.

“Where does this tiger live?” My aunt asked.

“A den.” I replied.

25

When I and my aunt saw the den, she asked,

“Is this where she lives?”

“Yup,” I answered as we stopped at the door. I frowned when I heard yells,

“Were going to get you, tiger!” It was coming from the den! I dashed up the stairs of the den, shoved the top rock away, and gazed inside. Inside there was Susie, but there were also “Animal Control” inside trying to ketch Susie with a net! The huge boulder door opened, and my and fled up the stairs, while I saw Susie being taken away. And the cub was hiding behind a rock! One of the worker’s pants had a big hole in them. But, I was thinking, “How could Susie not break through that net?” But, then she did! The net broke from all of Susie’s pushing, and she was free! The workers ran away, back to their truck, and I jumped from the stairs, and landed on Susie. The workers stopped at their truck and watched.

“Wow. That tiger is really nice to that boy.” I heard one of the workers whisper.

After me and my aunt got home in Brian’s taxi, he asked,

“Why I like driving taxis is because after your done driving, you get tax. That’s why there called tax-is.”

“Bye-bye.” Aunt Alice said as the car drove away. When I opened the door to the bakery, my mom and Alex were already awake. My mom had just opened the bakery. I walked into the guest bedroom. I opened the basement door, and walked down the stairs. My dad was downstairs, and he said,

“I have a surprise for you. Oh, and everybody else.” The lights were off, so I couldn’t see. I walked back up the stairs, and shouted,

“Come into the basement if you want to see a surprise!” My whole family, and Charlotte and Mark, ran down the stairs. I followed them.

“I can’t see!” Alex complained. My dad turned on the light. Everyone gasped.

James and Susie

“Susie! You’re here!” I shouted.

“Yup, I’ll be coming to visit you a lot now that I found a passageway to your house. Actually, I found passageways to all of the houses in the town!” Susie explained.

“Yay!” Alex shouted. “Now I can play with one of James’s friends ALL of the time!”

“And I won’t have to wait until school is done!” Charlotte said.

“My mom makes good tofu.” I claimed.

“I think I can have tofu. But I can’t live on it.” Susie told us.

“You know what? I just remembered looking in the Pie Picture book, and I think this would be a great time for a picture!” Aunt Alice said. “I’ll go and get my camera!” then she ran upstairs. The rest of the family arranged in a picture view. I was by Susie, putting my arm around her head. My mom was beside me, and my dad was by my mom. On the other side of Susie stood Alex, and by Alex was Charlotte and Mark. Then my aunt rushed into the room with a camera and tripod. She sat the camera onto the stick, and set a timer for ten seconds. She clicked the picture button, and she ran beside Mark. We saw a flash of light, and my aunt ran to the camera.

“It look’s great!” My aunt shouted. “Especially with Susie in it too. This will be the first picture of the whole family with Susie!” Everybody was still smiling, and then my mom asked,

“How about a few more? Maybe one with James “riding” Susie?”

“Sure!” my aunt said. Everybody but me and Susie moved out of the camera’s view. I hopped onto Susie’s back, who was laying down back up. “Okay. Everybody, ready, set, picture!” there was another flash of light. The picture was taken. “Okay. Now let’s do Alex.” I walked out of the scene, and Alex stood by Susie who stood up too. The camera flashed, and I asked,

“Can we do one with Charlotte and Mark?” Alex walked out of the scene, and my friends sat down beside Susie. The camera flashed. “And one with my parents?” Charlotte and Mark walked away, and my mom and dad came in. They sat in Susie’s lap, and the camera flashed one more time.

“Okay. Let’s go up to the dining room for lunch.” I told my family and friends. Everybody walked up the stairs into the dining room. I glanced out of the window. I saw a building being built.

“Hey, mom! I think builders are building a new school!”

“Great!” my mom shouted as she walked up the stairs into the hallway.

“Hey, James. Here’s your box. Open it.” Susie told me. I ran to ketch up with everybody else. Even Susie was walking with our family. We didn’t care if news reporters were spying on us. The secret of Susie was out. Why would it matter if everyone knew? When I caught up with Susie,

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she handed me my box she gave me the other day. I opened the lid, and lifted out the piece of paper. It read, *Thank you for being my friend.*

I'm kind of glad you fell off that bus! I closed the box. A funny thing was, those news reporters were still asleep! When all of my family and friends were inside my parents' bedroom, my mom gripped the remote and turned on the TV. A news reporter on the screen was saying,

“New school being built in town square after secret of Snow Tiger Town has been revealed. Huh. Snow Tiger town. Very catchy.” My mom turned off the TV. Alex reached under my parents bed, and pulled out a box. The same box that I saw him carrying a few days ago. Inside there were several beautiful pictures that Alex drawn. Everyone smiled. The whole family, and my friends all hugged. Even Susie.