

"MARLOWE"

Written by
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From the unpublished Book Marlowe
By Mark Mc Quown

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FADE IN:

INT. MOUSE BURROW - DAY

Underground on a Virginia farm, Marlowe wakes up in his burrow and realizes he is alone. He looks through the trash and fur covered walls to the sun light coming down the hole.

Marlowe grabs his possessions - a human watch on a chain and two rings which he drags to the top and looks out towards the house and the barn.

EXT. VIRGINIA FARM - DAY

Marlowe takes off towards the house pulling his treasure all the way under the porch and into the darkness under the house.

INT. UNDER HOUSE - DAY

A large dark spider with green eyes leers across at Marlowe as he hops across the dirt to an old sub floor.

He pulled his treasure up to the subfloor and then back further into darkness where he leaves it as he peers up through a hole in the real floor into a kitchen.

Marlowe crawls up and reaches the hole when a huge cat's paw slaps down across the opening and knocks Marlowe to the subfloor.

LOUISE (O.S.)

What have you got down there
cat? Lloyd, have you seen this
hole down by the stove?

LLOYD (O.S.)

Haven't seen it yet. I'll come
look directly.

Marlowe waits and explores until he spies another hole where the gas line goes up behind the stove. He crawls up the gas line and waits for his eyes to focus.

He could see dust, old food particles, a dead mouse further under the stove and out in the kitchen Marlowe could see the cat and the dog playing.

He hopped back towards the hole but discovered kernels of dog food which he picks up, sniffs, licks and sniffs again and then he eats the nuggets and goes to sleep.

Marlowe wakes up from the purring of the cat who walks up and back in the kitchen waiting. Marlowe sees the stairs on the far side of the kitchen and decides it is now or never.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The mouse tears out from under the stove and hops like a deer to the stairs. The cat is instantly right behind him.

Marlowe bounces up the stairs, two stairs at a time until he hits the landing.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The cat is just behind him. Marlowe picks the first door in front of him and dives under the doorway as the cat smashes into the door and bounces off.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eleven-year-old Cole sits up in the darkness.

COLE

What was that? Who's there?

Cole hears his mother outside the door.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Oh my God. Miss Penny knocked herself out. Lloyd, the cat is unconscious.

LLOYD (O.S.)

I'm coming, I'm coming for darn
sakes.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Cole, are you all right in
there?

COLE

What happened mom?

LOUISE (O.S.)

It's all right son, you go back
to bed now, the cat just knocked
herself out hitting your door.
Must have been chasing something.
Good night son.

COLE

Good night mom, dad.

All is quiet as Marlowe steps out from the darkness and
examines the room. There are balls, bats, gloves, shoes,
clothes, books, belts, backpacks, toys, toys and more toys.

Marlowe sees, in the middle of a pile of toys - a miniature
house, just his size. He carefully scampers over to the toy
house and crawls in the front door.

INT. TOY HOUSE - NIGHT

There are rooms and rooms of small furniture made just for a
mouse. Upstairs there are beds and tables and bureaus with
drawers to hide treasure in. Marlowe is beside himself.

He finds a mirror and suddenly sees himself for the first
time. He looks long at the mirror - changing his pose,
cropping his ears, holding his whiskers back and finally
turning so he can see his tail and his back.

He finds no food in the kitchen but plenty of boxes that
look like food. In another bedroom he finds doll clothes
and puts on a vest and goes back to the mirror to see how
he looks.

Marlowe runs back and finds pants and a shirt and puts them on and plays in the clothes, sitting in all the chairs and holding up toy glasses that are empty and toy plates with no food.

Finally, Marlowe climbs up the stairs and finds a warm bed and crawls into it and goes to sleep.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The bedroom door slams open and Lloyd yells at his son.

LLOYD

Cole? Get out of that bed and get ready for school.

COLE

Ahhh. K dad, just getting up.

LLOYD

You don't get to miss the bus anymore this year, understand?

COLE

Yes sir.

Cole climbs out of bed and dresses as he looks through his toy pile. He finds his shoes in the pile right next to the toy house.

Cole pushes the house sideways to get his shoe and the roof accidentally slides off showing Marlowe, standing on his back legs and sniffing the air.

Cole freezes and Marlowe freezes. Cole, slowly leans down until he is on his knees, towering over the top of the house.

He takes both fists and tries to scrub out his eyes using a twisting motion back and forth. Marlowe does not move a whisker.

Cole looks down again and shakes his head in disbelief.

COLE

You - got clothes on.

Marlowe's large dark, glistening eyes look like some kind of moist candy frozen in the head of a mouse with clothes.

LLOYD (O.S.)

Cole! If you miss the damn bus
you'll be grounded for a week.

COLE

Okay dad, I'm coming.

Cole slowly lowers the roof back onto the toy house and then turns toward the door but Miss Penny is standing right in the middle of the doorway purring.

COLE

Oh. So that's what you were
chasing last night, huh Penny
girl?

Cole quickly picks up a backpack and then the cat and goes out - closing the door behind him.

COLE

Don't anybody go in my room
today - I'm working on a project.

Marlowe steps out the front door of the toy house and begins to explore the room. He goes into every corner and every dark space looking for a crack or a hole or some other enemy who might wait for him in the night.

On a kitchen plate on the edge of Cole's desk Marlowe finds a piece of pizza and after smelling it and licking it, he sits down on the desk with the pizza in his hands and looks out the window as he eats.

Marlowe takes the pizza and drags it into the toy house and finishes it sitting in the rocking chair.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

The roof is lifted off the house. Marlowe jumps out of the rocker and rushes upstairs until he meets Cole's eyes and he freezes.

COLE

How can you have clothes? Are
you an alaene?

Cole slowly lowers his hand into the toy house.

COLE

Now, don't bite me aleene, I'm
not going to hurt you.

Marlowe looks at the huge hand and doesn't know what to do. He looks at Cole and Cole looks back. Marlowe doesn't feel any fear so he steps slowly forward toward the hand when he realizes that he still is holding onto the pizza. He pushes the piece up above his head and places it in Cole's hand.

COLE

Wow. You're offering me food.
The old pizza which was on my desk.
Wow, this is soo cool. I'm Cole.

Nothing happens so Cole points to himself with his other hand and repeats,

COLE

I'm Cole. Guess you don't speak
inglish. Maybe you're like a
general or something so I should
salute you.

Cole takes his free hand and salutes Marlowe. Marlowe watches with fascination and then repeats Cole's action and salutes Cole. Cole retracts his hand from the house and sits down on the floor of his room.

COLE

This is so - I mean this is -
I have a aleene general in my
room and no one in all the
world knows.

Cole looks down at Marlowe who is waiting to see how it all turns out.

COLE

Hi.

Marlowe does not answer.

COLE

Hi.

Again Marlowe does not answer. Cole reaches over to his back pack and takes out a pencil and paper and writes 'hi' on the paper and shows it to Marlowe.

Marlowe looks at the scribble for a long time. Cole holds the paper closer to the mouse. Marlowe looks closer at the shapes on the paper.

Cole folds the paper so it is smaller and he finds a miniature-golf-course pencil and lays the pencil and the paper down in the room in the toy house.

Marlowe moves across to the paper and the pencil.

To Cole's amazement Marlowe picks up the pencil and holds it so it sits over his shoulder with both of his little hands around the base.

The mouse walks to the paper with the pencil and examines the shapes that Cole used. Marlowe draws those shapes with the word 'hi'.

Cole is totally frozen looking at the mouse message.

COLE

No one - is ever going to believe
this. I don't even believe it
myself - except that I see the
paper you wrote on and it says
hi.

Cole points to himself.

COLE

Cole. I am Cole. My name is
Cole. What is your name?

Cole points to Marlowe who just stares up at him wondering what he wants. Finally, Cole takes the paper out of the little house and with his big pencil he writes his name. Cole. And then points at himself again. Cole carefully places the paper back in the house.

Marlowe notices out of the corner of his eye a book in the toy stack which was open to a page which started with the symbols M A R L O W E.

Marlowe had no idea what it said but he liked the way the shapes fit together and the way the whole word looked after all the shapes were made so - as carefully as possible and with Cole looking on like he was watching a major surgical operation - Marlowe copies the letters from the book and then put the pencil down.

COLE

Mar - Marlo - Marlowe - you are
Marlowe.

Marlowe heard his name or the name he gave himself, for the first time. Cole pointed at him and said it again so Marlowe was pretty sure that he was that sound - Marlowe.

Marlowe sat back as Cole wondered around his room trying to make sense of the situation.

Suddenly and without warning Miss Penney was in the room and now in the air on her way down to land on the mouse in the toy house.

Cole did not skip a beat as he pulled Miss. Penney out of thin air and grabbed her around the scruff of her neck and took her in the hallway.

He returned to his room and he closed the door. Cole walked over to his computer and typed some words. He hit print and the printer printed a sheet of paper which said in large, bold letters, Keep Door Closed.

Cole found some tape and took the paper and the tape into the hall and he taped the note on his door and then returned to Marlowe.

Cole walked back to his bed and sat down on the corner looking at Marlowe.

COLE

Wow. This is just so cool. I guess I'll have to feed you and everything until we figure out a way to tell everyone. I don't suppose you know how to make some money so my dad and mom can keep our farm, do you? Guess not.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Cole, it's time for dinner so
wash up and come down.

COLE

All right mom, just a minute.
Listen, I'll steal some food off
the table and bring it to you
after dinner. My mom is a really
good cook. I don't know if you
like our kind of food but, if you
liked that old pizza you'll love
mom's cooking. Okay, gotta go so
you better go back in and close
the door.

Cole goes to the door and closes it behind himself. Marlowe
hears him RUNNING down the stairs.

He walks back in the front door of the little house and
closes it behind himself.

Almost immediately Marlowe comes back out the front door and
climbs into the pile where he saw the book and finds the
book again with the word Marlowe on the page. Marlowe sits
in front of the book and carelessly begins to turn the
pages.

He sees all the words but they don't mean anything to him.
He quickly goes back in the toy house and brings back the
paper with the words written on it and compares it to the
ones in the book.

Hours go by as Marlowe studies the book and the way the
words are arranged. He traces the words across the page with
his tiny hand. He finally falls asleep with one thought on
his mind. Among all these words - he was Marlowe and the
human was Cole.

Marlowe opens his eyes slowly and he is rocking back and
forth in Cole's palm. He tries not to show fear but Cole
is huge like a giant in the eyes of the mouse.

Cole stops and lowers his hand and Marlowe immediately jumps
out and onto the floor.

COLE

Sorry. I didn't want to wake you. You were reading the book weren't you. I can't even read that book so you are very smart.

Cole points to his head and repeats it.

COLE

Smart.

Marlowe finds the pencil and small, folded paper and offers them to Cole.

Cole takes them and immediately writes down S M A R T and then shows it to Marlowe and then points to his head.

Marlowe bounces up across some toys until he is on Cole's desk. He walks to the end of the desk and waits. Cole comes over and gets down on his knees so they are face to face.

COLE

Smart.

Marlowe closes his eyes down and wrinkles his nose and moves closer to Cole and looks right at Cole's mouth as Cole says it again.

COLE

Smart. Like you are. Because you want to see what is making the sound. Right? Right. Marlowe, come over here. Let me show you this.

Marlowe hops across to the computer table where Cole sits down. Cole presses some keys until a program comes up that shows words and how to pronounce them.

COLE

I tried as hard as I could not to tell anybody in school about you. I almost did but I didn't. I just had to think really hard about what would happen - if I said anything. Right?

COLE

Look at my hand. Cole points to his hand as he pushes the mouse and shoves the cursor over the word 'right' and the computer speaks the word. See?

Marlowe sees everything on the screen, on the desk and in the room but his eyes are focused on Cole's hand as his finger pushes the mouse and the computer talks.

COLE

It's not really funny I guess but this is called a mouse. Pretty crazy. Okay, this is what I am gonna do. I can leave this program on and you can learn if you understood anything I said and I know you did because you are a smart aleene and it's my job now to teach you. Now it's on and you can type from here any word.

Cole slowly types out Marlowe and then puts the cursor over the word and just before he pushes the mouse, Marlowe jumps right next to his hand and pushes the mouse button and the computer says his name, 'Marlowe'.

Marlowe and Cole look at each other for a long time and then a huge smile grows across Cole's face which lights up Marlowe's face.

COLE

Smile.

Cole types in the word, points to his face and his smile and Marlowe pushes the mouse button with his tiny little hand and the computer says the word, smile.

LLOYD (O.S.)

Cole, do we have to wait dinner for you every night of the week?

COLE

Coming, coming. Okay. I have to go but I'll bring more food and ah some water and other stuff you might need - here. Okay, see you Marlowe.

Marlowe watches sadly as Cole goes out the door and closes it. He briefly sees the sign to keep the door closed before it whizzes past his face. Marlowe stares at the computer screen. He looks over at the book and back at the screen.

He looks at the paper where Cole wrote the words and slowly Marlowe starts to piece the puzzle together.

He pushes the mouse again over his name and again the computer says his name, Marlowe. A smile slowly grows on Marlowe's face and he feels it.

He instantly runs down to the tiny house and rushes inside where he finds the mirror and he looks at himself. He smiles slowly and his eyes almost bulge out of his head in excitement.

Marlowe bolts out of the toy house. He runs so fast he runs across a wall sideways until he jumps on the bed and then bounces all the way back to the house where he sits in front of the mirror and he smiles over and over and over again.

Marlowe swaggers out of the house and bounces back up to the computer table. There are words everywhere in the room on posters, notes, books, maps, toys, puzzles and even on the machine.

One by one Marlowe types them out on the key board and then has the computer speak the word. First, one at a time and then later five at a time and then even later ten at a time until Marlowe falls asleep on the key board.

Miss. Penny stares down at the mouse, asleep on the key board. Her tongue passes across her nose and upper whiskers in a flash. Her purr grows louder as the hair stands up on her tail.

Marlowe is frozen below her with his little heart racing a hundred miles an hour. His eyes are frozen in her eyes.

Suddenly Miss. Penny makes her move and lunges down on Marlowe with her mouth wide open. Marlowe squeaks as the cat's teeth touch his skin and instantly Marlowe wakes up alone on the key board with his legs moving in all directions.

Marlowe scampers down to the toy house and jumps inside.

The bedroom door opens and Cole comes in. He drops his stuff on the floor, closes the door and then sits sadly on the end of his bed looking at nothing in particular.

Marlowe sees Cole from the toy house window. Marlowe recognizes that look but doesn't understand it.

He bounces out the front door and hops up on the bed and sits next to Cole until Cole finally realizes the mouse is next to him.

COLE

Hey. Sorry, I didn't see you there. Hi.

Marlowe recognizes the sound of 'hi' and he perks up as Cole raises his arm and waves.

Marlowe watches him for a moment and then repeats the motion and waves back to Cole.

COLE

Right. That's right. I sure wish I was as smart as you aleene because my mom and dad could use my help right now cause we're going to have to move. We just broke I guess. What we need is to find the treasure - that was left here some place by my grandfather who had something worth a whole bunch but he hid it and no one can find it cause we searched and searched for a long time.

Cole watches Marlowe to see if he is following the story.

COLE

My dad almost went crazy cause
we couldn't find anything.

Suddenly from downstairs came the sound of a loud ARGUMENT
between Lloyd and Louise.

Lloyd (O.S.)

...and in the end it was all over
some stupid watch, some damn...

LOUISE (O.S.)

...don't you dare start using that
language in this house.

COLE

Oh boy. Now dad's talking bout
the watch that he says has a
clue to the real treasure.
Of course dad is the only one
who seen the watch cept he
described it to me many, many
times so it's like I seen it
but really haven't.

Cole looks down at the toy house as Marlowe sticks his
head out the window.

COLE

Do you know what a treasure is?

Marlowe looks at Cole but does not understand.

Cole crosses his room and picks out a book on the book
shelf. He flips through the pages until he finds what he
wants and then he sits down outside the toy house.

COLE

See this?

Cole holds up a page to Marlowe which is a picture of a pile
of treasure.

Marlowe comes out of the house and stands in front of the
picture.

COLE

This is treasure. I don't know if grandpa had something like this but this is what we are looking for. And there is a clue on grandfather's watch.

Marlowe looks over the treasure picture until he focuses on a ring. He gets very excited and starts to jump around and then he looks around and remembers how he got in this room.

COLE

What is it?"

Cole watches Marlowe with fascination as the mouse jumps down and goes to the bedroom door. He looks under the door and sees Miss. Penney's paws standing right on the other side.

COLE

You can't go out there. The cat is out there.

Marlowe jumps up on the bed and then down on the floor in front of the door. He repeats this until Cole gets the idea.

COLE

Okay, I'll take you out, I guess. You have to stay hidden so my mom and dad don't see you. That would be bad.

Cole reaches down and opens his hand and Marlowe jumps in.

He deposits Marlowe in the pocket of his shirt and he opens the door and Miss. Penny runs in immediately and Cole close the door and locks her in.

INT. THE UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

He heads downstairs until he gets to the bottom of the stairs when Marlowe climbs out of his shirt pocket and crawls down Cole until he gets to the floor.

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY

The mouse takes one second to look around and then races like a gazelle across the kitchen and disappears under the stove.

Cole follows him into the kitchen.

He gets on his hands and knees in front of the stove and tries to see under but it is too dark.

COLE

Marlowe, you under there?
Marlowe, Marlowe - where are
you?

After a few moments Marlowe suddenly appears with his arm stuck through a ring so he is holding it up near his shoulder.

Marlowe gently places the ring on the floor and looks up at Cole and makes his mouse face smile, ear to ear.

Cole reaches down and picks up the gold and diamond studded ring made a long time ago. He pushes it from hand to hand examining the shinning diamonds like small pieces of glass shining up out of a pool of gold leaves and roses.

Marlowe looks up instantly and in a fraction of a second he jumps up and climbs into Cole's pocket. Before Cole can even say anything, Miss Penny is purring at his feet and rubbing her body back and forth across his legs.

LOUISE

You locked the cat in your room
Cole, did you know that?

Cole turns around he sees his mom standing behind him and his dad just coming down the stairs. Before Cole can say a word his mother grabs the ring out of his hand.

LOUISE

Where did you find this Cole?"

Lloyd walks in the kitchen.

LLOYD

Find what? What did the boy find?

Louise holds the ring up and Lloyd stops in the kitchen just staring at it.

COLE

It was under the stove. I
dropped a marble and it rolled
under and when I was looking
for it I saw the ring and pulled
it out.

Lloyd looks long and hard at Cole and then back at the ring.

Louise walks into the living room and sits down and fans herself with her hand trying to catch her breath. She turns and looks at her son.

LOUISE

Cole. That is your father's
grandmother's wedding ring and
it's been lost since the first
day our family ever moved into
this house.

COLE

Is it valuable? Will it save
the farm?

LLOYD

It is valuable - very valuable
but not enough to save the farm
but it will buy us some time and
- it's a sign that the rest of
the fortune could still be here.
Go give this to your mother Cole
and then come back here and help
me.

Cole hands the ring to his mom and then returns to the kitchen where he helps his dad pull the stove out from the wall until it is in the middle of the room - as far as the steel gas line will let it move.

COLE

Oh boy, it is really dirty
back there dad. Look, there's
even a dead mouse.

Lloyd gets on his hands and knees and aims a flashlight down the small hole where the gas line comes up.

LLOYD

This holes even too small for a mouse to get through. That damn ring must have been down here the whole time but under one of these legs or something and we never saw it.

LOUISE

We should say a prayer of thank you.

Lloyd looks at Louise long and hard and then just steps out of the area where the stove lives and leaves into the living room.

LLOYD

You say a prayer while I go and call Sandy down at the jewelry store and see if we can get an estimate on my mother's ring which was really her mother's ring and maybe older.

Cole looks for a long time behind the stove to make sure there is no more treasure in some corner but the area is totally clean and there is nothing else to see.

Cole runs upstairs and closes his door behind him. He rushes to the book and holds up the picture.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

He uses his finger to trace every object until he comes to the ring. He looks down at Marlowe who is just climbing out of his pocket.

COLE

You saw this ring didn't you?
You saw this in the treasure
and you knew where it was.
That is why you are so smart
and you are. If you knew - if
you could see...

Without another word Cole jumps off his bed and races for the computer. He types a few words and hits the mouse and images of watches come up on the screen.

Cole finally finds the picture he is looking for and he shows it to Marlowe who never made it out of the pocket.

Marlowe is stunned. There on the screen is a picture of his watch treasure including the chain.

He hops out of the pocket down to the desk and then closer to the screen until he finally reaches up and touches it but it is flat and does not feel like his treasure watch.

COLE

You know don't you? You know
where it is don't you? You can
show me where it is right?

Marlowe is very excited but does not understand what Cole is saying.

Cole hits the print button and his printer prints the watch.

Cole pulls the paper out of the printer and sets it on the desk in front of Marlowe. Marlowe stands on it, touches it, walks on it and then thinks about what his next move is going to be.

COLE

Show me. Show me the place.

Marlowe hears the words but they make no sense to him. Marlowe looks out the window and Cole notices.

COLE

Is it outside? It is. I know it
is. I can tell by the way you
reach for it. I'll bet it's in
your old house, where you were
before you came here - cept you're
an aleene and...

LLOYD

You stay home Cole while your
mother and I drive into town
and see how much we can get for
the ring - you found.

Cole hears the front door slam and a few minutes later he hears the car drive away.

He puts out his hand for Marlowe and Marlowe jumps in it excited about a new adventure.

Cole pops the tiny mouse in his shirt pocket and grabs a flash light from his bureau drawer. He also picks up his Swiss Army knife out of the toy pile and a small, camp shovel he keeps in the corner for camping trips.

COLE

Okay Marlowe, we are going to find the watch and make everything in my family happy again.

Cole walks out of his room.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

Cole walks down the hall to the stairs, down the stairs to the front door and out the front door.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Cole walks carefully down the front steps and starts to walk toward the field when Marlowe pops his head out of the pocket.

Marlowe sees where they are and immediately runs down Cole's body until he stands on the ground facing the porch.

COLE

What is it? I thought your home was out in the field?

Marlowe looks up at Cole and then into the darkness under the porch. Marlowe slowly walks toward the side of the porch.

Cole steps around the mouse and watches as he approaches the darkness under the porch and then further under the house.

COLE

So your house is under there?
I never been under there and
it's too small for me to go
with you.

The tiny mouse seems to understand what Cole is saying so without any more words Marlowe walks into the darkness.

INT. UNDER HOUSE - DAY

Cole takes out the flashlight and makes a light for Marlowe until it's too dark and the blackness eats up the light and the mouse disappears beyond under the house.

Marlowe carefully moves toward the light coming down from the house from the holes in the floor in the kitchen.

He sees the subfloor and feels safe but just as her arrives at the subfloor a large, dark spider drops down from the upper floorboards and lands in a defensive position right in front of him.

He turns and runs for the light outside but the spider is quicker and races in front of him and turns as Marlowe catches up.

The spider stands on its back legs about to lunge its fangs down into Marlowe when the spider is knocked completely off its legs and tumbles into the dirt.

A mouse about Marlowe's size and age stands looking at him, holding an old, short butter knife.

He turns and they both see the spider standing up, trying to see what happened.

The new mouse turns and Marlowe instinctively turns with him and they both scamper off.

They reach a wooden post which they climb up and through a hole in the floor and enter a burrow of mice.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Cole waits in the yard outside. He walks back and forth occasionally trying to call Marlowe but the mouse does not return.

Cole sits on the ground with the flashlight and tries to see under the house but it's too dark.

After a long while, Cole moves up to the porch and sits on the porch swing, rocking slightly back and forth.

Eventually Cole lies down on the swing, closes his eyes and goes to sleep.

INT. MOUSE BURROW - DAY

The mouse burrow is full of excitement and curiosity as each mouse, older and younger, all come and examine the mouse in human clothes.

They touch him, they sniff him, they lick at him and he seems to be a mouse but his attire is completely different than anyone in the colony.

Finally, a very old mouse with graying fur and nose whiskers comes down the row in the small burrow tucked up in a wall somewhere in the house.

The older mouse examines Marlowe carefully doing everything the other mice have done. After smelling him for a long time the older mouse sits in front of Marlowe and thinks about this new addition to the family.

Finally, the older, larger mouse stands up and takes a step closer to Marlowe. He leans down slowly and Marlowe begins to feel something awful in his stomach.

As the head of the older mouse came closer and closer Marlowe finally decided to do something so he smiled.

The old mouse jumped away and instantly other mice surrounded Marlowe and drove him back.

They drove Marlow into a small crease in the wall which formed a tiny room.

He stepped back into the crease of wood and noticed that it had been carved out or scratched out by many, many claws and it took a long time.

He had never seen mice act in this manner even though his clothes were obviously different than the rest.

He could see outside the crease two very large and ugly mice standing guard.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - EVENING

Lloyd
Son? Cole? Wake up Cole, wake
up.

Cole wakes up and sees his father standing over him. It is night and no lights are on. He realizes he is on the porch swing.

LLOYD
What are you doing out here Cole?

COLE
I - I came out to lie in the sun
and I guess I fell asleep.

Cole looks around for Marlowe but there is no sign of the aleene.

LOUISE
Come on into the house Cole
and get ready for dinner"

COLE
Yes mom.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole bounds upstairs as fast as he can and rushes into his room and closes the door.

He hops over to the toy house and takes off the roof but Marlowe is not home

Cole puts the roof back on and sadly walks out and closes the door behind him.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family all sit at the dining room table and eat a huge supper the like which Cole couldn't remember in his short life time. There was steak and potatoes and green beans with butter sauce, thick dark gravy for the potatoes and whole milk just cold enough to drink.

There was berry pie for desert and vanilla ice cream to put on top.

Lloyd and Louise had bought a bottle of wine and coffee and it was a great celebration as dad and mom took turns telling the story of selling the ring and pushing all the money into mom's purse and then rushing off to the grocery store where they laughed and laughed as they bought food for dinner and weeks beyond.

At the end of the meal Cole did his chores in the kitchen and then brushed his teeth and put on his pajamas and laid down in bed while his mother cozied him up with pillows.

She told him the story of Christ and why they prayed to him every day and how he had answered their prayers even though Cole new it was Marlowe who had answered those prayers.

LOUISE

What's the matter Cole, why are you crying?

COLE

I don't know mom. I can't say. It's a secret.

LOUISE

All right Cole. When you get ready to tell me, I'll be ready to listen. Now you go to sleep and let the sleep fairy take you away to your favorite place so you can play. Good night.

COLE

Good night mom. And thanks.

Cole pulled up the covers as his mom shut off the light and closed the door but not all the way.

Cole sat in his bed and waited. He waited and waited and waited until he fell asleep waiting.

He woke up in the very early morning while it was still dark outside. Cole carefully climbed out of bed, grabbed his flash light and Swiss Army knife and headed out the door.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - NIGHT

He carefully closed the screen door so he didn't wake up the cat or the dog.

Cole climbs down the steps until he reaches the ground and there he turns to one side so he can look under the porch.

He snaps his light on and a huge rat, sitting right under the edge of the house, hisses at Cole and bears his ugly teeth.

Cole rolls backwards in fright and gives out a small yelp but no one in the house can hear.

He pats the ground trying to get his hand to locate the light. He finds it and shakes the flash light which bounces back on but the rat is gone.

Cole looks further under into the darkness trying to figure out if he should crawl under to find his friend.

Cole, on his hands and knees just waits as his mind weighs both sides of the question.

A slow, low growl comes closer and closer to Cole. He turns his light around and right behind him is a gray coyote with his teeth bared at Cole.

The dog door slams shut and Smoker jumps off the porch at the coyote who runs quickly back toward the hills and the pack.

The front door slams open and Lloyd steps out with a double barrel shot gun. Lloyd sees Cole with the light.

LLOYD

What was it son, the coyote?

COLE

Yes, sir.

LLOYD

Did you see it close?

COLE

Real close dad. He's gray with really big teeth.

LLOYD

All right Cole, you go on back to bed now and if you ever hear anything out here like that again, you come in and wake me son - you understand?

COLE

Yes sir. Good night.

Cole makes sure he still has his knife and he turns off the flash light.

He runs up the stairs of the porch.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole runs up the stairs of the house and back to his bed where he covers up his head with the thick quilted comforter and goes to sleep.

INT. MOUSE BURROW - NIGHT

Marlowe leans against the old wood post of the house and wonders how long he has been there.

Finally, Marlowe can't stand it anymore so he sticks his head out and no one is there.

Slowly Marlowe investigates until he is sure that no one is around and he starts back, smelling his own scent, moving closer and closer to the point where they entered the wall from under the house.

He comes to where the opening was but it is filled up with pieces of wood and cloth and junk and it's all crammed in so tight he can't even remove one small piece.

Marlowe turns around and goes back the other way. He follows the mouse scent which brings him to another dead end in the wall.

Finally, Marlowe sees the only way out is up and he looks for a pipe or cord or wire but finds none.

He finally just starts to climb the side of the wall until he reaches a hole, drilled by humans, through the wood and he pushes himself up through it with some difficulty.

INT. THE ATTIC - NIGHT

The attic of the house is dark. Marlowe's huge, moist eyes glisten as he sees deep into the darkness of rat country.

A male and female rat stood ice still looking down on Marlowe.

Finally, the male broke his trance and moved around the mouse slowly smelling all parts of the animal.

When he had done the female took a few quick smells and then turned around and walked off across the insulation bats, covered here and there with rat droppings. The male followed her and the mouse followed them.

The rat colony had located in the corner of the attic beams where they continued on outside and formed the eaves of the house.

Around these corner beams were holes where the plaster was never finished and these holes were the doorway into the house from the outside.

Marlowe popped his head up out of the insulation and it was day in the attic and light came through many holes in the roof and holes around pipes that went through the roof and holes from tin grates that vented the attic.

He took one step and then another step and finally a third step and it was all clear. He took one more look around and there they were.

Four of the ugliest rats Marlowe could imagine and their hot, red eyes looked like flaming coals and they moved together like a trained unit and Marlowe knew in an instant that he only had seconds before his life ended in agony.

Marlowe moved backwards as they surrounded him and then the biggest of the lot jumped in front of Marlowe and stood up.

Marlowe froze except for his face which had the huge desire at that moment to smile. Slowly the smile spread across his face until his teeth were bared, his mouth closed and his eyes popping.

For just a moment the large rat stepped back in fear of the smile and right at that time the hallway entrance hatch down into the house slammed open and Lloyd stuck his huge head up through the hole and turned on the attic light.

The rats were gone in an instant as Lloyd yelled down to the others.

LLOYD

My God Louise we got ourselves a damn village up here.

LOUISE

Don't swear Lloyd - in front of the boy.

LLOYD

Cole, you go down in the kitchen and get them trapes, the poison pellets, the sticky rat plates and some cheese and peanut butter. Go now son.

COLE

Yes, sir.

LLOYD

Well, that boy said he could hear something up here and by gosh - he did.

Suddenly Lloyd turns around and there, just in front of the attic vent stands a mouse in clothes - smiling.

Lloyd grabs onto the ladder with both hands. Then he lets go with one hand and plucks his glasses out of his pocket and puts them on.

The mouse is even clearer now. Lloyd can see right down to the animal's teeth. His eyes start to run out of focus. He tries to rub his eyes with one hand while still holding on but he loses his balance and his feet slide out of the ladder rungs and he slides straight down to the hallway floor where he falls back and then onto his back.

Lloyd looks up - focuses his eyes as Louise starts screaming for help - and sees, hanging over the lip of the hatchway to the attic, a mouse in a vest, pants and shirt and an ear to ear grin on its face. That is the last image Lloyd had in his mind when he finally passed out.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

The ambulance drives out of the gravel driveway and then down the lane leaving Cole, holding onto his mother around her waist while Louise clutched herself around her chest.

Marlowe, unaware of the tragedy, had waited until all the people had come and gone carrying Lloyd away, making a lot of noise and carrying many, many objects Marlowe had never seen.

All was quiet in the hall. Marlowe crept down one leg of the ladder until he was just off of the floor. He could see Cole's door down the hallway - which seemed totally empty even of the cat.

Marlowe was just about to hop down from the last rung when he looked up and saw the four ugly rats roaming around the hatchway hole peering at him.

Marlowe knew it was now or never and he flew off the ladder with a bounding leap. The largest rat was right behind him as they both narrowed their distance to Cole's door which was shut.

Marlowe could feel the hot breath of the ugly beast behind him. The world seemed to slow down and everything was moving in slow motion.

Marlowe turned down on his side and slid toward the hole like it was home base. The rat dug in its claws on the hardwood floor to slow down just as he was approaching the closed door.

Marlowe - sliding on his side just about to go under the door - looks back in horror as the cat comes up on the rat from behind with her mouth completely open and the full force of her huge body coming down into him from a leap.

As Marlowe passed in slow motion under the door he saw the rat's face turn from the hunter into the hunted just as the cat lurched down with her mouth and plucked the rat right off the floor and flung him across the hall into the wall where he smashed and then slid down in a pile of crumpled fur and bloody whiskers.

Marlowe watched under the door as he came to a stop to see the cat lift the rat in the air with its paws and then jump back down on the rat until he stopped moving.

After that she played with him look a ball, bouncing his broken body across the hall and then retrieving it again just to play another round.

Marlowe was exhausted and could no longer watch the scene in the hallway - always thinking that it could have been him.

He limped back into the toy house and closed the door.

The tiny, shivering animal made his way up the stairs and plopped down on the bed in the first room he got to.

Marlowe closed his eyes and did not dream but escaped into the infinite dark world of no shapes and no sounds except before long the tiny sound of Marlowe - SNORING in a dark, empty sleep.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Cole sat quietly in the waiting room while his mom paced back and forth wringing her hands and assorting her hair, in between crying into a hanky.

Cole can't stand it any longer and he sorts through the magazines until his hand falls on *The Scientific American*.

Cole reaches down and opens the magazine like a deck of cards and Cole's eyes grew very large and his attention was straight down on the left hand page.

CLOSEUP - MAGAZINE

A magazine articles reads, "Human brain cells make mice smart. A team of neuroscientists has grafted human brain cells into the brains of mice and found that the rodents' rate of learning and memory far surpassed that of ordinary mice. Remarkably, the cells transplanted were not neurons, but rather types of brain cells, called glia, that are incapable of electrical signaling."

"The new findings suggest that information processing in the brain extends beyond the mechanism of electrical signaling between neurons."

Cole looks up and his head ached from all the words.

He rubs his eyes as he reads the very bottom of the page,
"a theft in the lab where some of these mice had been stolen
and never returned."

COLE

Maybe - you're not a aleene
Marlowe. Or maybe you are
and you are the leader of those
ones that were taken. Wow.
Marlowe, I think you're famous
and you don't even know what
that means.

A doctor finally comes in and starts talking to Louise.

He sees his mom raise up her hands and arms like she was
trying to fight something.

Finally, the doctor motions for Cole and his mom to follow
him.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDORS - DAY

They walk forever until Cole stops at the door behind Louise
because there were so many tubes and wires and things
hanging off of his dad.

INT. PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Finally, Louise motions for him to come in and stand beside
the bed. He stood for a long time and then Lloyd opened up
his eyes and he looked straight up at Cole and started to
talk.

LLOYD

You seen him haven't you? You
seen - the mouse that wears
clothes.

LOUISE

Oh God Lloyd, Cole has not seen
any such thing and..

LLOYD

...I seen him. Up in the attic while I was on the ladder. Clear as day he was dressed. In a suit. He scared me and I fell. Hurt myself.

LOUISE

Lloyd, you almost killed yourself and you didn't see any damn mice in a damn suit and I don't want to hear that kind of talk until you get your senses back, do you understand me? We live on a farm and we need you. We need you.

Louise starts to cry and Cole backs slowly out of the room until he can't hear her any longer.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDORS - DAY

He sits in a chair outside the room and waits. Finally, Louise comes out of the room and takes Cole by the hand and they go home.

INT. THE HOUSE - LATE DAY

Cole looks around at every corner but Marlowe is not to be seen.

Finally, Cole lies down on his bed with his hands under his head looking up at the ceiling trying to understand the events.

Suddenly he sits up and freezes. He concentrates on sound.

He jumps off the bed and gets down on his knees and he moves slowly toward the sound which is almost not there.

He arrives at the toy house. Cole reaches over and slowly removes the roof and there, asleep on one of the beds is Marlowe - snoring.

Cole cannot contain himself and carefully places the roof back on the house.

He jumps around his room waving his hands and arms above his head like a football fan and then - crash - his door opens and his mom stands there glaring at him.

LOUISE

What is it? Are you up here cheering that your dad is in a hospital?

COLE

No mam.

LOUISE

Then what?

COLE

I can't tell you.

LOUISE

What? What did you say young man?

COLE

It's a secret between me and..

LOUISE

Have you been down there playing with those Rodger boys again? You have and do you know how I can tell - because you always comeback home with some attitude that is not appropriate for you or your age or this family. So you will tell me the secret or you will be grounded, no playing in the field or with your friends until you cough it up.

Louise turns and closes the door behind her.

He stood in shock for a few minutes until he realizes that Marlowe was out of the house and watching him from the floor.

COLE

Marlowe, Marlowe, I thought you
were dead. But you're not cause
aleenes live forever, even if
they have human brains.

Cole sits down on the floor and tries to think about what he
should do when Marlowe starts jumping up and down until Cole
sees him and puts out his hand.

Marlowe jumps in the hand and then hops up to his shirt
pocket and drops in.

COLE

Okay I guess. I really don't
know what this means but maybe
you want to go back and look
for the watch now that it's
light outside.

Again Cole gathers the flash light and the Swiss Army Knife
and heads down the stairs.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

He passes through the kitchen and living room and out the
screen door onto the porch.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

He jumps down the steps and turns and walks to where the
steps disappear under the house.

Marlowe hops all the way to the ground and instantly
disappears under the house.

INT. UNDER HOUSE - DAY

He runs straight for the sub floor and jumps up onto it and
runs further into the darkening cave.

Marlowe curled his nose back like he had seen rats do and he
tried to snarl as he ran but it just came out a squeak.

Ahead he could see something sparkle in the dark with light coming down from the hole in the kitchen behind the stove.

Marlowe arrives and unwraps the watch from a kitchen towel scrap.

He sinks his teeth into the chain and pulls and the watch dutifully followed him.

Marlowe races for the light outside and runs so fast he jumps right into the waiting hand of Cole who drops the flashlight.

Cole fondles the treasure as Marlowe makes his way into the pocket on Cole's shirt.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Oh My Gosh.

Cole's mom is standing right behind him. He turns and shows her the watch.

COLE

It's - it's the treasure watch
mom - it was the secret.

Louise walks a few more steps forward and gently lifts the watch out of Cole's hands.

She staggers over to an old chair on the porch and sits down and starts crying.

Cole moves across the porch and approaches his mom. He holds out his hand and she grabs it and places it on her shoulder and looks up.

Slowly Louise eyes grow wider and wider and wider until they are about to pop out.

Cole looks down and sees Marlowe looking straight into the eyes of his mom.

Louise passes out.

Cole holds her and steadies her on the chair and suddenly she wakes up and stands up.

Now Louise is looking down at Marlowe but her eyes are just as eye popping.

She drops straight back down into the chair but as she passes the mouse she is in slow motion and gets a very long, good look at the animal in clothes.

LOUISE

Your father saw a real mouse in clothes, isn't that right Cole?

COLE

Yes mam.

LOUISE

And - the - animal is the one who found the watch and the ring, is that right son?

COLE

Yes mam.

LOUISE

Does - it talk?

COLE

No - but I been teachen him things and he's got a name. Marlowe.

Marlowe recognizes his name and looks up at Cole and climbs out on his arm.

LOUISE

Ohhhhhh. I'm sorry but I am terrified of rats and mice. But - obviously Marlowe is no ordinary mouse. Did those clothes come out of the toy house?

COLE

Yes. And they fit him perfectly.

LOUISE

Good. That's good. Cole, I am just going to go into the house and get myself a drink and I don't want to scare the little critter so if you'll just back up and give your old mom some room...

Cole backs up as Louise stammers to her feet and immediately disappears into the dark house.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Cole carefully enters the house and sees his mom at the dining room table drinking whisky from a shot glass.

LOUISE

What is it Cole?

COLE

Well mom I used to think Marlowe was a aleene but then I read this really cool story in a magazne while we were waiting for dad and it's one of those that dad reads all the time.

Louise pours another drink as Cole runs off and returns with the magazine.

He puts it down in front of her and steps back.

Louise unconsciously takes her glasses off the table and puts them on.

LOUISE

Scientific American. Experiments
- mice injected with human -
animals are smarter - lab mice
stolen and still not found.
New York.

Cole sits down at the table and Marlowe walks off his arm onto the table.

Louise looks like she has seen a ghost.

LOUISE

Let him stand - he should stand
on the magazine - not the table.

Marlowe seems to understand her concern and he hops back on Cole's arm and sits.

LOUISE

Cole, we have to go to the hospital and get your dad out. They think he is not mentally well but he is more well than all of us I think. Marlowe must stay here in his - your toy house until we get back and then we - we will see when we get back, won't we?

COLE

Yes mam.

Cole moves restlessly across the kitchen and up the stairs. He hears his mom pour herself another drink and starts crying again.

When he is almost at the top of the stairs he hears his mother laughing and crying at the same time.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Cole is half asleep as his mother drags him down the halls, up the elevators, down more halls, back again because they went the wrong direction and finally into dad's.

Cole immediately curls up in a stainless steel chair with a leather padded seat and goes to sleep.

Suddenly Cole felt a pull on his arm. He opens his eyes to see his mother pulling him up. Behind her, dad is in a wheel chair with his clothes stacked on his lap complaining how this wasn't right.

Cole is pulled again down the endless hallways and up and down elevators and finally out the front door and then into the back door of the car and then it all went black.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cole slowly opens his eyes and slowly focuses on two figures standing at the end of his bed.

He sits up and rubs his eyes as Lloyd and Louise come into focus.

LOUISE

Cole, your dad and I want you to get dressed and then call us after you've brushed your teeth and washed your face, do you understand?

COLE

Yes mam.

Cole hopped out of bed after his parents left and immediately opened the top of the toy house but Marlowe was not there.

Cole leaves his bedroom and quickly returns, put his shoes on and sits on his bed.

COLE

Okay mom and dad, I'm ready.

Lloyd and Louise come in and stand awkwardly for a moment and then Louise sits on the edge of Cole's bed while Lloyd sits down at the desk in front of the computer.

LLOYD

Where is it Cole? The rat.

COLE

It's a mouse dad and he's not here - right now.

LLOYD

I read the article Cole and those mice were in New York and the folks who stole them didn't bring them all the way out here to another state, okay? Second, that animal had clothes on and the only way that could have happened is if you did it.

COLE

But...

LLOYD

Don't interrupt me Cole. Now -
I don't know where you got
that animal and I don't know
how long it took you to train
him to wear clothes but it must
have been awhile to do that
which is probably why your
grades are down and you're not
doing as well in school as you
were.

COLE

But ...

LOUISE

Stop Cole and listen to what your
dad is saying.

LLOYD

So, this is what we are going to
do. You're going to wait until he..

COLE

Marlowe...

Cole says defensively.

LLOYD

Marlowe comes back, you're going
to trap him, bring him to me and
we will take Marlowe far away
from here and let him go in
someone's field. And in the
meantime we are going to study
our family watch to try and
find the message that was left
in it concerning the family
fortune and its whereabouts.
Do you understand?

Cole shook his head even though he didn't understand.

INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Marlowe stood next to the watch on the table in the living
room.

He could hear the voices coming out of Cole's bedroom but the words did not make sense

He carefully pried open the top and pushed the dull silver lid open on its silver hinge.

Marlowe looked with marvel at the watch face, the letters inscribed in gold, the two large hands and the tiny black second hand.

He used his finger to trace the letters embossed on the white, pearl backing.

The DOOR upstairs CLOSED LOUDLY. He quickly closed the watch cover and it was then that he noticed that there were small, very small feet carved around the rim of the silver cover.

Marlowe nervously traced the almost microscopic feet around the rim until they stopped at a symbol.

He could see that it was a round shape inside a square box and then another round shape inside the first round shape.

There were green triangles touching each other at their base around the inside. In the middle were red and blue diamond shapes placed next to each other forming a star shape.



Lloyd and Louise were almost at the table so Marlowe runs down a table leg and hides.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Lloyd and Louise sit down and Lloyd picks it up and rolls it around his hands as he looked in every corner, under every lip and curve until he gently sets it down and rubs his eyes for relief.

Louise put on her glasses and picks up the watch and does exactly the same routine her husband has just performed

LOUISE

I just don't see anything.

Cole walks into the room unnoticed and sits down at the table. He waits but neither of his parents see him really they are so disappointed.

He reaches across the table slowly and puts his hand on the watch and pulls it back to him. He sits and stares intently at the piece as Lloyd and Louise talk in the background.

COLE

I guess it isn't the right watch,
huh?

LLOYD

Hello Cole, I didn't even hear
you sit down, I'm sorry.

COLE

So, it ain't worth anything?

LOUISE

Isn't dear, not ain't and it
could be worth something, your
father and me just thought it
was worth a whole lot more than
an old, silver time piece."

Cole reaches across the table and pulls a magnifying glass to him and then he picks it up and examines the watch closely.

He finally looks up slowly with the glass still at his eye and he sees an enormous Marlow and yells.

Louise sees the mouse and screams as she shoves her chair back away from the table.

Lloyd is dumb founded and does not move but he does not take his eyes off the well-dressed rodent.

Cole calms down and puts the glass down right next to the watch.

Marlow carefully walks over to the watch and stands next to it looking at both parents.

COLE

That's Marlowe dad and I'm
pretty sure he is 1 part aleene
and part smart mouse from the
aperiments they did on him in a
lab.

Lloyd and Louise try to speak but nothing comes out.

Marlowe leans down and delicately turns the watch so he can see the side of the lip.

Then his tiny hands take the glass and props it up in front of the lip and he stands and holds the glass waiting.

Cole finally gets off his chair and bends down so he can see through the glass at the watch.

COLE

Wow, dad, there's some tiny
little feet that walk around
the part that opens. Look.

Lloyd stammers up, holding onto the table so he doesn't fall over and then he stands all the way up and slowly moves around the table, never taking his eyes off of Marlowe, until he arrives at the place Cole was now standing. Slowly and awkwardly Lloyd gets down on his knees until he can see through the glass.

LLOYD

Well I'll be hornswoggled. It's
true. Little etched feet that
move around the lip until they
arrive at...

Excitedly Lloyd stands up and then sits immediately in Cole's chair.

He takes the glass and the watch and turns the watch until he arrives at the sign.

LLOYD

Well damn. What is this? Never
seen anything like this. Louise,
come over here and look at this.

Louise also stammers up and also uses the table for support before she is sure of her legs and then she starts the journey around the table to Lloyd who holds the glass and the watch up in the air so she doesn't have to bend over to see it.

LOUISE

I'll be. It's a blessing from
the Lord that is exactly what this is.

LLOYD

What is it?

LOUISE

Why, don't you know Lloyd, the man who knows everything about barns? My great grandparents were traditional Pennsylvania Dutch and they did what all their Dutch neighbors did, they painted these hex signs at the peaks of barns in Pennsylvania and the surrounding area. I was taught that they were "painted prayers," or petitions made visible, asking God for the blessing of protection for their homes and farms. The sign also asks Heaven for, good fortune, abundance and prosperity or inviting guests to be welcome in your home.

LLOYD

Well ain't you just an encyclopedia of information Louise. Barn would have said it all - it's somewhere in the barn!!

Lloyd stands up and puts the watch and the glass on the table and then he sees Marlowe, standing and waiting and Lloyd sits down again.

Louise also sees Marlowe again and sits in another chair at the table. Cole walks over and stands behind Marlowe and no one talks.

LLOYD

Cole, sometimes things come about that are just darn right impossible to believe and this seems to me and your mother - to be one of those times. Now, I don't even know what to say - to you or this animal.

Lloyd tries not to look at Marlowe as he speaks.

LLOYD

Marlowe obviously turned the watch so we could see the feet and the symbol. I wish with all my heart I could explain that - to someone - but I can't even though I know it's true. You understand Cole?

COLE

No sir.

LOUISE

Of course he doesn't understand, you didn't say anything. What your father is trying to say Cole is that we now know that Marlowe, a mouse in toy store clothes, lives in our house but we can never tell anyone. Ever. You understand Cole. If we went out and told all our neighbors that we had a mouse dressed in clothes who seems to understand something about us and does not fear us - our neighbors would have us hauled away in a wagon and the county would take you and put you up for adoption and no one would ever ask about Marlowe.

COLE

I get it dad. People would say we were nuts.

LOUISE

They'd say more than that I'm afraid but - right now we have something to do in the barn and that mouse is obviously coming with us, right Lloyd?

Lloyd looked at Marlowe for a long time and then he looked at Louise and Cole and then back at Marlowe.

Cole walked to the table and put his hand out and dutifully Marlowe hopped in and Cole transferred him to his shirt pocket where Marlowe jumped in and then popped his head back out - looking like a tourist going for a trip.

Lloyd shook his head up and down for 'yes' as he turned and walked toward the front door.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Louise fell into line followed by Cole and the tiny army of four marched out the screen door, across the porch and down the steps.

INT. THE BARN - DAY

The barn contained a history of junk, transferred through the family down to this final resting place where sections of the barn were this families stuff and other parts were packed with some cousin's material belongings, giving the whole place the effect of being some old, lost junk store now covered in dust and a place in the dark for spiders and rats to rule.

They moved to the barn where they all stopped as Lloyd took his own tour around the entire outside of the building arriving back where he started.

LLOYD

Nothen on the outside.

Lloyd and Louise look at each other and then they both turn and walk into the huge opening mouth of the dark barn.

Lloyd turned on a light switch but many of the lights were burned out so there wasn't much change in the room.

Lloyd started in one direction and Louise and Cole in another.

After the first hour of searching Louise goes in the house to prepare lunch and Lloyd climbs the old, rickety, wooden ladder to the loft.

He swipes away at the cobwebs as he climbs but just as he is about to reach the top a wooden rung breaks under his legs and he starts to fall.

Cole runs out of the barn yelling for his mother and then he rushes back in to his dad hanging from one of the rungs and trying to grab one higher but his legs are stuck in the broken rungs below his feet.

LLOYD

Cole, Cole, run up the back
stairs and throw me down a rope
and hurry son.

Cole takes off like a rabbit and runs all the way to the back of the barn and then up the stairs along the back wall to the loft.

He jumps up to the loft level and runs across the loft, jumping over old bicycles, boxes, trunks and old ski equipment until he gets to the wall with the ropes and such hanging off hooks.

Cole grabs a rope and pulls but the rope is stuck in the hook.

LLOYD

Come on son, I don't have too
much time left for I pass out
here.

Cole pulls and yells and kicks and pulls harder, pulling with all his might until the rope bundle pulls three or four wall boards off the wall exploding onto the ground.

LLOYD

Cole!! Cole!!

COLE

Coming dad, coming.

Cole grabs the rope and rushes to the edge of the loft where he throws over a loose end.

LLOYD

Okay Cole, tie that off on
something solid. Use one of
the knots I showed you.

Cole looks around anxiously and sees a round metal hook sticking out of a post going all the way to the ceiling. He quickly loops the rope through the hook and ties it off.

COLE

Okay dad, it's tight.

The post shakes and trembles as Lloyd adds his weight to the rope and pulls himself up to the loft where he crawls over the ledge and rolls onto his back gasping.

LLOYD

Guess that ladder isn't any good anymore, huh?

Cole walks over to his dad and helps him sit up.

Lloyd grabs his son and gives him a huge hug. Cole, who was never hugged by his dad before doesn't know what to do so he just stands there and waits for it to be over.

LLOYD

You did good Cole. You saved your old dad's butt from falling all the way to the ground which would have meant that I was back in that ambulance again going back to that same hospital and adding up more bills than we have the money to pay for - so thank you.

COLE

Yes, sir.

LLOYD

Where is Marlowe, Cole?

Cole suddenly remembered Marlowe and turns to rush over to where the mouse rolled out of his pocket but Marlowe is standing there pointing at something.

Cole runs up to Marlowe and the mouse jumps up onto his arm and hops back in the shirt pocket.

Lloyd comes up behind Cole and they both stare at what Marlowe was pointing at.

LLOYD

I don't even believe that I am
saying this Cole but that is one
damn smart mouse.

Cole and Lloyd continue to look at an old wall built in some
earlier period of time that had been closed up with the wall that
held the ropes and other barn hardware on hooks, wires and nails.

In the middle of the wall was the symbol from the watch. The
symbol was only about ten inches square and faded almost to the
point of being gone but just enough of the colored triangles and
other shapes exist to see that it was the symbol from the watch.

LOUISE

Lunch is ready.

LLOYD

Louise, come up here but don't use
the ladder, it's rotten. Come up
the back steps.

Cole and Lloyd stood waiting as Louise made it to the top of
the loft and then complained about the junk and filth all the way
across the loft until she arrived at the wall and immediately
stopped talking.

LLOYD

The mouse found it.

COLE

Marlowe.

Cole corrected his father.

LOUISE

Oh my God. How do we get in
there?

Lloyd hobbled down the back steps and returned almost as
soon with a hammer, crowbar and a hand saw.

He starts pounding at the top of one of the wall boards
until it breaks away from the nails and falls into a dark
room.

Lloyd continues on with the hammer while Louise and Cole use the crow bar and their feet, kicking at the old wall boards until they fall into the unknown room and form a hole the size of a door.

Lloyd, Louise and Cole with Marlowe step into the darkness. After their eyes have adjusted the three see a room filled with antique furniture.

LLOYD

Cole, go get the big light from
the kitchen and use the stairs
and don't fall.

Cole runs towards the back steps and in a few moments he runs back up the steps and into the room where he hands his dad the big light. Lloyd turns on the light and walks a few steps.

The entire room is filled with antique furniture dating back to the fifteenth and sixteenth century, all covered in dusty fading sheets.

Cole and Louise walk along pulling sheets off an old spinet harpsichord, an ancient kitchen hutch, a full set of Victorian couches with matching wing chairs, more chairs, an elegant fire place mantle, lamps, beds, paintings and all stacked neatly in rows and all in perfect condition.

Lloyd finally walks over to a piece of furniture and pulls an old, dusty sheet off and there in front of him is a large, black desk with a top standing portion with doors and above it, the very top opens up like a piano lid to expose little, letter cubby holes and slots.

LLOYD

Does anyone know what this is?

COLE

It's a desk dad.

LLOYD

It's an Edison Desk Cole. This
desk right here was built by
Thomas Edison and is probably
worth, more than the farm.

COLE

Who was Thomas Edison?

LOUISE

Now Cole, you must have learned in school about Thomas Edison, he invented the electric light bulb and electricity, didn't he Lloyd?

COLE

But this is a desk

LLOYD

That's right Cole, he was an inventor and built many things and one of my family used to work for him in his carpentry shop and that relative may have even worked on this desk.

COLE

Are we going to sell it?

LLOYD

Yes son, as soon as we can get it out of this barn - it goes on the auction block, along with probably everything else in this room. It's as fortune - in furniture. It is a treasure and we found it - because of a mouse - how ironic can that be?

COLE

What's irenic mean?

LOUISE

Come on boys, we can talk about irony over fried, baloney sandwiches with home made potato salad and - something licious for Marlowe.

The three walk out of the barn arm in arm and race into the house.

INT. THE BARN - LATE AFTERNOON

The Edison Desk is being lowered on ropes with Louise on the bottom giving directions.

LOUISE

Lower, lower, just a little
lower, we're almost there.

Cole is straining with the rope and Lloyd not much better when a crack came bounding out of the beam

LLOYD

Get out of the way Louise.

The beam broke and the desk bounded down a few feet and crashed on the hard ground.

The rope jumps out of Cole's hands and Lloyd just let's it go and then turns and runs for the stairs.

They all stand and look at the broken piece scattered on the floor.

Suddenly Marlow's ears stand up and he instantly runs down Cole's body and over to the desk where he stands looking deep into a fracture in the wood.

Louise cried as Lloyd tried to hold her and comfort her.

Lloyd looks down and realizes that Marlowe is on the floor and not moving.

LLOYD

Cole! What is that mouse up to?

COLE

Marlowe.

Answered Cole in a controlled voice.

LLOYD

What's he doin son?

Cole got down on his knees and tried to see what Marlowe could see but it was too dark.

COLE

We need a light dad.

Lloyd lets go of Louise and takes a few steps across the barn to a cabinet and brings back a flash light.

He turns on the light, shakes it a few times to get it brighter and then he aims it at the break in the wood and they all looked in.

COLE

What is it dad?

LLOYD

It's - it's a - stamp, Cole. Here, let me get closer.

Lloyd gets down as far as he can and looks way into the darkness.

LLOYD

My God, you are truly real and you have some crazy sense of humor

LOUISE

Lloyd you be careful of how you speak about our Lord. What kind of a stamp is down there?"

Lloyd adjusts the light a bit and takes one more look and begins to laugh.

LLOYD

The most valuable stamp in the world Louise is stuffed in the middle of this desk and is more valuable than our entire neighborhood around us.

COLE

Really dad, I just thought they were worth pennies.

LOUISE

What are you saying Lloyd?

LLOYD

I believe the stamp I am
looking at is worth millions.

Cole and Louise both make a sound but no words came out.

Lloyd turns to Marlowe and looks at him for the longest time. Finally, slowly, Lloyd reaches out his arm and extends his hand down to Marlowe.

Marlowe looks at Cole and then he looks at the hand. He looks at Cole one more time and then he calmly jumps up into Lloyd's hand.

Lloyd stands up fully without taking his eyes off the animal.

LLOYD

I - don't know exactly who - you
are or - where you came from and
as much as I laughed quietly as
Cole's notion that you are an
alien - I am now - or what I
mean is that - you are with us
Marlowe and we take you into our
family and will protect you as
long as you choose to stay with
us, so help me God.

LOUISE

Amen.

Marlowe could feel that something good happened so he hopped up to Lloyd's shoulder.

Lloyd turned his head so he could see the mouse and then he turned his head toward the house and walked in that direction.

He took his sons hand with one hand and Louise hand with the other and the family walked out of the barn, out of debt, out of fear and into a world that no one could have possibly imagined.

INT. THE HOUSE - LATER DAY

Cole looked at the rows of stamps, all placed on linen squares Louise cut out of some really expensive fabric.

They were all covered with thin plastic sheets the size of his school notebook paper. Also on the table were books about stamps, magnifying glass and tweezers and latex gloves and special little lights to see the incredible detail.

Cole leaned over the table carefully and looked down at a blue stamp. He slowly sounded out the words as he read the note next to the stamp.

COLE

The U.S. Franklin Z-Grill was published on 1867. This is the rarest of all postage stamps in US. Only found 2 pieces that remain. In 1988, 1 cent Z-Grill stamp sold for \$ 930,000.00.

Cole picks up a magnifying glass to see it more clearly. He slowly leans closer to the stamp.

STAMP BUYER ONE

You be careful what you're doing son. You know how much that one square inch of paper is worth?



COLE

Nine, three, 0 0 0 0, dollars.

All the men surrounding Lloyd turn around and stare at Cole who carefully withdraws to a position further away from the \$930,000.00 stamp.

Everyone else turns back to their conversation except Lloyd who looks at his son in a new light, in a new way.

Lloyd leaves the group and walks to his son. He checks in Cole's shirt pocket to make sure that Marlowe is not there.

LLOYD

I'm very proud of you Cole - and your friend.

COLE

Marlowe

Cole answers a little tired of his dad's mistake.

LLOYD

Marlowe, of course. Cole, you have to understand that it is going to take me a long time to - address the mouse as Marlowe but I will, I will I promise.

Lloyd gives Cole a tight hug and then returns to the men talking stamps.

Cole returns to the table to look at a safe distance at the beautifully made stamps worth more than Cole can imagine. Then he noticed the red stamp with an upside down airplane printed in blue.



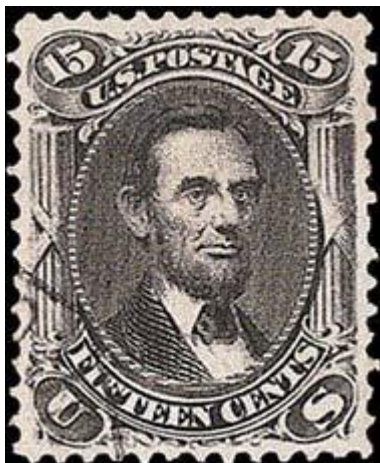
Cole scoots over closer to this stamp and just laughs and laughs until one of the men walks up next to Cole and whispers.

STAMP BUYER TWO

That is called a mistake because the plane is upside down and that mistake makes this stamp worth a little over a halfmillion dollars. What do you think about that?

The man walked back to the circle of men and Cole went on admiring the beautiful colors and designs in all the beautiful stamps.

Then Cole recognized the face on one of the stamps. It was a black stamp with the face of Abraham Lincoln in the center.



Cole moved a little closer and recognized Mr. Lincoln's face.

COLE

Hey dad, it's the face of President Lincoln. I learned about him in school.

Several men walk over to Cole and a large, fat man, smoking a cigar looks down at the stamp and then at Cole.

STAMP BUYER THREE

That stamp right there son was
issued in 1867 and sold for
fifteen cents.

The buyer leans over without getting his cigar close to the
stamps and takes a closer look.

STAMP BUYER THREE (cont'd)

Now the damn things worth about
a quarter of a million. Have no
idea what it's worth, unused,
like you see it right there.
You think that's a lot of money
for one stamp?

COLE

Yes sir.

Cole walked away from the table and made his way up to his
room where he closed the door.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

He immediately lifts the roof off Marlow's house and finds
Marlowe fast asleep on one of the beds.

He carefully replaces the roof and then climbed onto his own
bed and his old build-a-bear and snuggles himself to sleep
as bear stands guard over the domain.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Weeks later, while the family packs to leave for New York
City, Cole runs to the front door and opens it.

There is a UPS package on the porch, Cole takes it.

COLE

It was the UPS man for the
fifth time today and it's only
ten in the morning.

LLOYD (O.S.)

Just put it over with the rest
Cole and stay guard on the door.

COLE

Yes, sir.

Cole paces back and forth, sitting every once in a while in a chair placed in the hall just for him.

The telephone rings.

FARM HAND

Christenson residence - who is this? Excuse me sir but the Christenson's are not - who are you again? Will you hold please? Lloyd, it's your Great Uncle Mart.

LLOYD (O.S.)

Don't have any Great Uncles living Harley and he is not on the list. Please just read the lines and hang up Harley.

Harley

Yes, sir.

Harley goes back to the telephone as Louise comes down stairs with a suitcase and her bag.

She stops in the dining room where she sees Cole speaking to Marlowe while taking a break and Harley speaking to another person on the telephone.

LOUISE

I never had any idea we had as many relatives in this living world and every single one of them is broke with a hardship story.

LLOYD

And half of them aren't even relatives Louise - you wonder how they found out.

COLE

That's pretty easy dad since our newspaper run a front page article with pictures and everything.

LLOYD (O.S.)

That's right Cole, and this is something definitely you want to remember.

Lloyd comes into the kitchen.

LLOYD

As soon as you have money, every crawling God made creature that can talk and understand what the dollar sign means, wants a part of your claim and many of them will do anything including taking your life to get what they believe is honestly part theirs. That is why we are leaving.

Harley takes another call and Cole answers the door but shuts it almost as fast.

COLE

More reporters' dad.

LLOYD

Just keep it closed Cole and only take the mail and UPS.

Louise stands still in the dining room and looks long and hard at each little prize and memento that she found along the way of this life journey. Her heart skips a beat at each piece of furniture, every photograph, each dish and candle that is a piece of the fabric of their lives.

She strolls into the kitchen and touches the photographs on the refrigerator that tell a history of the Christenson family, the lives, the births, the deaths - the dogs and cats that lived and died on this family farm.

Quickly Louise takes every picture and magnet off the refrigerator and places them in a plastic bag which she then hides in her day bag.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

They all step out on the porch for the last time. No one moves for a long time.

Louise finally sits down on the porch swing for one last rock back and forth.

The van stood solemnly in the front yard with Smoker and Miss. Penny in traveling containers in the back.

Louise stands up and walks to the steps.

Lloyd walks to her and takes her hand. Cole walks to the other side of them and takes her other hand.

She turns once with a white handkerchief in her hands wiping her eyes.

LOUISE

Thank you God for this house and farm - and all that we have received.

LLOYD

Amen.

COLE

Amen.

They stepped off the porch as a group for the last time and loaded themselves into the van.

Harley opens the front door and steps out on the porch and waves.

LLOYD

You take good care of that house Harley, it's a fine home and it took care of us all this time. We'll call you when we get in the city. Thank you Harley, couldn't have done this without you.

Harley waves as the van driver pulls the van around in the dirt drive and drives away in a cloud of dust.

Harley stands on the porch for a few minutes watching them go.

HARLEY

They'll be back. Folks always come back home.

INT. NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT

Cole looked out the window on the twenty second floor of the apartment they bought outright. There was a hundred and eighty-degree view of New York City.

Central Park was only a few blocks to the west.

He turns and sees the hired cook and the house cleaner who lived in the apartment with them.

Cole walks to his bedroom and sees the tiny play house that Marlowe lives in. He passes the note on the door that says 'No one or animals was to enter here'.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - TELEVISION ROOM - NIGHT

Cole and Marlowe played on the floor of the television room after dinner.

The news was on and Lloyd and Louise seemed very interested in news about a virus.

NEWSCASTER

A virus that has started on the West coast by an older, African/American man who had just returned from South Africa by way of South America, is leaving a trail of death behind him that is now being investigated by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

LLOYD

Can't understand these people who bring these diseases into our country.

LOUISE

I don't think he realized it dear.

LLOYD

He didn't realize he had a hundred and two-degree temperature?

Cole listens as he plays with a train and track kit, just Marlowe's size and he was driving Marlowe around the carpet with a remote control.

Marlowe sits happily on a flat car eating blanched peanuts from Virginia.

Marlowe could see the television as he whizzed by and he recognized the word virus when it came on the screen.

Marlowe came around again so he was passing the television and again he picked out words like death and the numbers in the thousands.

He could tell by the look on Lloyd and Louise face that these were terrible things that were growing more terrible.

A bell rings and Cole stands up and kisses his parent's good night.

Marlowe jumps up his leg and climbs to his shoulder as Cole leaves for his bedroom.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marlowe sits in front of the computer in doll's pajamas. He is staring intently into the computer screen.

CLOSEUP - The Computer Screen

The screen shows the definition of virus as it appears in Wikipedia. His tiny eyes darted back and forth as he had learned to read fast.

Page after page after page of information about viruses, their history, their evolution, mutation, difference from bacteria, treatment, prescriptions, death toll and recent new virus species the world had not seen in the past.

MONTAGE

- A) Marlowe is sitting in front of the computer reading medical texts in different pajamas.
- B) Marlowe with a calendar on screen that he checks off the days with which shows many weeks passed.
- C) Marlowe reading new news on the number of dead from the spreading epidemic.

D) Marlowe in different pajamas, months later, holding his head from the pain of the terrible news he reads on the screen.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

It was a morning like most of the others except that Lloyd was engrossed about the news on the television and he sat in front of it most of the day - also talking to Harley back on the farm.

Cole and Marlowe played in front of the television.

NEWSCASTER

The virus in California has spread from the patient who brought it from another country to one aid worker and one doctor who were all in quarantine.

COLE

What is quarnteen mean dad?

LLOYD

It means that you are put in a place where other people can't come in contact with you unless they are wearing protective clothing with gloves and a mask and everything.

Marlowe hung out of Cole's pocket and seemed glued to the television. His eyes watched every word and he listened to every sound and seemed to understand something that Lloyd and Marlowe did not.

He climbed part way back into the pocket and listened to Cole and Lloyd talk about the bug and how it hurt you and how it could hurt a large number of people and even kill them.

Louise comes in from the kitchen.

LOUISE

What is in the news that has you all so captivated?

LLOYD

The virus in California spread
to a doctor and a worker.

Lloyd looks across at Louise who sits down and listened for a while.

LLOYD

It's a different strain than
the last one that killed so
many in Africa. This is more
dangerous and they are saying
it has mutated.

Louise gets up and leaves without saying anything.

Lloyd continues - talking to himself.

LLOYD

California is in quarantine and
the people in the largely
concentrated cities were afraid
and are looking for a way out.
And - of course - the snow storm
of the last one hundred years
is blanketing the whole country
from the west to the east.
Everything is different. This
thing escaped the cages we built
for it and now it's out.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It is very early in the morning and the outside world was
dark and cold and covered in snow.

Lloyd reaches over and shakes his son.

LLOYD

Cole, Cole, wake up son and
get dressed.

COLE

What's happening dad?

LLOYD

We're leaving, now.

Cole jumps out of bed and gets dressed.

He lifted off the top of the toy house but Marlowe was already awake and ready.

He jumps out of the house and up into the pocket of Cole.

COLE

Something big must have happened
because we're leaving.

LLOYD (O.S.)

Come on son, bring Marlowe's house.

Cole reaches down and wraps his arms around the house and takes it down the stairs.

IN. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - NIGHT

At the bottom of the stairs he recognized a familiar face as Harley helps carry other things down to a waiting van.

INT. THE VAN - NIGHT

Into the van go some suitcases, a few day bags and boxes - filled with money.

Smoker and Miss. Penny are on the bottom of their travel cages and pushed up next to the back of the back seats. Marlowe's house is next and then some pillows and blankets, and the guns.

LLOYD

Don't touch these Cole, they're
loaded and dangerous.

Smoker started barking and biting at the sides of his cage.

Everyone piles in and Harley locks all the doors and turned on the wipers.

LLOYD

Listen everyone, we are going
home but we have to drive
through the city first to get
out to the highway.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LLOYD (CONT'D)

It's going to be dangerous because no one is supposed to be traveling and especially trying to leave because the city is under quarantine. Just buckle up and hold on and let Harley do the driving. Thank you Harley, for risking your life for us - we will not forget.

Harley pushed down the gas pedal and the van slips and slides until the four wheels grip the road and they were off.

The wipers barely keep the snow off the front window.

It was cold and the wind was howling. Louise clutched Lloyd and Smoker whined at the bottom of his cage.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY ROADS - NIGHT

The van went up and down over the hills of snow and bounced on the blocks of ice in a roadway that no longer existed.

Lights were on in the buildings and at the street crossings but the black van was the only thing moving in the white, snow covered city.

A loud POUNDING sound comes from one side of the van and then shouting.

STREET PERSON (O.S.)

Hey, hey, where do you think you're going?

The van quickly passed a police man standing guard at a building.

The officer chases after the van for a short space and then just disappears in the white back ground.

A few more miles ahead and it happens again only this time with several officers who are helping an ambulance driver dig out the ambulance.

More yelling and hitting the side of the van but Harley was nonplused and just drove without recognition of the outside clamor.

INT. THE VAN - NIGHT

Cole rolled over to one side and went to sleep.

INT. THE VAN - MORNING

Cole brings himself back to life because he is cold and Marlowe is jumping up and down on his chest.

Cole opens his eyes but all he can see was white. He can't make out the inside of the van because a door is open.

He jumps up from his deep sleep and grabs the sliding door and with all his strength he pushed the door closed and the snow stopped from coming in.

Cole looks around as fast as he can move his eyes and he realizes that the van is still running but Harley is pushed up against the steering wheel and his parents are both unconscious in their seats.

Smoker starts barking.

COLE

It's okay boy, it's all right.
We just had some kind of accident
and..

Cole reaches his mom and sits her upright in her seat.

He pulls Harley back so he is in his seat and then Cole climbs into the front seat and turns the heat on high.

He pulls Lloyd back upright and after Lloyd settles in one place he looks out the window but they are in a snow bank so it is just white.

Slowly Cole looks over the control panel until he finds the wipers and turns them on.

He pushes Harley's seat back as far as possible and then climbs onto his lap and looks down at the gear shift.

Marlowe hops over and points to 'R' and Cole shifts the lever to 'R' and the van starts backing up.

Marlowe points to 'D'' and Cole stops the van and shifts and the van moves forward.

Marlowe sits up on Cole's shoulder and guides him with directions since Marlowe can see much better in the snow and through it.

Suddenly Marlowe jumps up on the wheel and the wheel turns the van right into a drive out area. Marlowe's ears are twitching.

COLE

What is it? Why did you do that?

Marlowe looks up at Cole and then he turns and looks out the back window.

Cole turns and looks and without warning a snow machine chugs past them spewing out dark, diesel fumes as it sprays a rooster's tail of pure white snow.

Marlowe jumps up and down on the seat and points forward.

Cole looks at the truck fading in the distance and he pushes his foot down as far as he can and the van pulls back into the snowy road and races after the snowplow.

Cole pulls his leg up slightly and the van slows down until it is just following the plow into a white and unknown world for Cole.

Marlowe used his tail to point to the flashing red LED on the map of the Satellite Locating Device on the dashboard.

COLE

Okay, okay, I get it. That's us and that machine knows where we're going, right?

MARLOWE

Right

Cole looks down at Marlowe and Marlowe looks up at Cole and then he grows his big smile from ear to ear.

Cole keeps looking down at Marlowe and then the road and then down at Marlowe again.

COLE

You spoke. You said right. Right?

Cole looks right at him. The smile goes away and the mouse shapes his mouth and utters a word

MARLOWE

Right.

Cole goes back to driving and following the snowplow and then he starts laughing.

Marlowe tries to shape his mouth, he tries to push air through the shape in little bursts and finally, with a few missteps - Marlowe starts laughing.

Cole looks down and watches the mouse laugh which made him laugh even harder which in turn made Marlowe braver to express this strange thing.

INT. THE VAN - AFTERNOON

Louise wakes up first. She is slow to come to consciousness but finally figures out she is covered in a blanket and then realizes that Cole is driving the van under the direction of a field mouse

She passes back out.

Lloyd takes a long time to come too and also realizes Cole is driving on the lap of Harley who is unconscious.

LLOYD

Cole, Cole.

COLE

Dad! Dad!!

LLOYD

Don't let go of the wheel son.

COLE

Dad, are you all right?

LLOYD

I'm all right and I want you to lift your foot off the gas and pull over here on the side of the road.

COLE

Yes sir.

Cole happily follows his dad's instructions until the van comes to a stop.

Cole climbs off Harley's lap while Lloyd checks him and Louise woke up.

Lloyd massages Harley's shoulders as he speaks to him slowly and finally, after a long time, Harley returns to this world.

HARLEY

What happened?

LLOYD

We don't know. You must have fallen asleep is the only thing I can figure.

COLE

We hit a snow pile.

Everyone turns and looks at Cole as he wraps up in the blanket next to his mom who holds him tightly.

COLE

I had to drive out cause we were all cold cause the door opened I guess.

LLOYD

What door was open?

Cole looks at his dad and points to the sliding door.

LLOYD

So, you closed the door and then what?

COLE

We had to check and make sure Smoker and Miss. Penny were all right and then I turned on the heat and set you guys up so you could feel better.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

COLE (CONT'D)

Then Marlowe heard the sounds of the snow truck so we waited until it passed us and then Marlowe pointed that we should drive behind the truck while it cleared the snow.

LLOYD

That's very clever Cole - very, very clever because son, you saved all our lives.

Lloyd gets chocked up.

LLOYD

And you're only twelve.

Everyone's eyes shifted to Marlowe.

LLOYD

That's - very clever Marlowe, you are - I just can't say what - I can't even say what I think because it all makes no sense but no matter that - you are something beyond me and all we can say is thank you Marlowe - whatever you are.

Marlowe let his huge grin grow across his tiny face as he recognized what they said and he also recognized how hard this all really was for them - since he was just a mouse.

When it was all said and done, Harley climbs back in behind the wheel, Lloyd sits in shotgun and Louise and Cole sit in the back seats with Marlowe.

INT. THE VAN - MORNING

Cole wakes up and he recognizes the street signs and he knows it is only a matter of time.

The van drives off the main highway and onto the single lane roads.

Suddenly, there it was. Their house, their barn and fields and old machinery and junk

And there were walls - walls that had never been there before that were high and made out of concrete block with no openings except through a front gate that was electric and opened for them as they were driving in.

Lloyd looks back and watches Cole for a moment.

LLOYD

Harley did all this Cole while we were in New York. He did it because - because there is something very bad happening out there - which is why we left New York.

Cole is very aware as he looks at the huge concrete structure.

LLOYD

Do you know what I'm talking about son?

COLE

Yes, sir. The bugs.

LLOYD

That's right Cole - their called a virus which I guess is a very tiny bug, so small you would need an electron microscope to see them. A microscope that would magnify them thousands and thousands of times larger than they are.

COLE

Why don't they like us?

LLOYD

It's not the kind of bug that likes anything Cole. It's a virus and doesn't have a brain.

COLE

What's it got?

Lloyd
You know, we should all talk
about this after we get into
our house and unpack our stuff
- what do you all say to that?

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

The van stops and the doors all opened and Cole was the first one out yelling and screaming and running around like a mad man.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

Cole ate breakfast at the table but ate fast so he could go outside and explore.

LOUISE
Eat slowly Cole and chew each bite.

LLOYD
And Cole, when you finish you
have to sit down and talk with
your mother and me about - well
about why we have a wall and why
there are other people here now,
do you understand?

COLE
Yes sir.

LLOYD
And about Marlowe, you, your
mother, me and Harley are the
only ones who know about
Marlowe and that will be the
way it stays until we say
otherwise.

COLE
I get it.

Cole looks down at Marlowe who looks up out of his pocket home and they both seem to have an understanding about this situation.

Cole slows down his eating and pops a few morsels into his pocket for the ever hungry animal now living there.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Cole rushes outside with a warm jacket and a cap and starts walking inside the wall.

There were places where you could climb up and see on the other side. The wall went all the way around the compound and made it look like an island in the middle of a bunch of fields.

Just outside the wall there was a low steel fence that had signs on it warning of high voltage.

There were also cameras that moved all the time, back and forth and then past the electric fence there were just fields and roaming clouds.

Marlowe, who was cold because he wasn't growing any winter fur for some reason, popped his tiny head up so just his eyes and nose stuck out of the jacket pocket.

INT. THE BARN - DAY

There were people there working on making food and putting it in boxes for storage.

INT. BARN LOFT - DAY

Further up on the hay loft Cole found the room where the treasure was discovered was full of televisions which showed the areas of the compound.

Older men turned to him and introduced themselves and then went back to watching the televisions.

Cole noticed that the men in the room were also watching pictures and graphs on other televisions and they talked about the virus and how far away it was and also about electricity and what would happen when it went down.

COLE

You know Marlowe, we gotta
check on this virus bug and
see what this is all about?

Marlowe's little hand reached up out of the pocket and gave Cole a thumbs up and then it disappeared again.

He walks out of the barn and straight into the house.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Cole runs up to his room.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Marlowe immediately jumps out of the pocket and hops over to the computer desk and jumps up and waits.

Cole hits a few keys and then Marlowe turns his tail around and punched in the letters v i r u s.

Cole slowly reads the definition.

COLE

Any of various simple submicroscopic parasites of plants, animals, and bacteria that often cause disease and that consist essentially of a core of RNA or DNA surrounded by a protein coat. Unable to replicate without a host cell, viruses are typically not considered living organisms.

Cole looks down at Marlowe with a wondering eye.

COLE

Did you get that?"

Marlowe shakes his head 'yes' and points with his tail to another definition and Cole slowly starts to read that one when Marlowe interrupts him and reads it out loud.

MARLOWE

An extremely small living thing that causes a disease and that spreads from one person or animal to another. A disease or illness caused by a virus.

Cole is so shocked he has to walk across the room and sit down on his bed.

COLE

You talked - for real. You said a whole sentence.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

COLE (CONT'D)

You can talk can't you? I mean
you can say more than one word.
You read those words and then you
talked.

Marlowe lets the grin take over his face and then he looks
cautiously at Cole and speaks.

MARLOWE

I learned on the computer.
It shows you how to shape your
mouth to say words and it speaks
them for you so you know how
they sound. It took a long
time and I really - uh - like
talking.

COLE

You'll like my mom a lot more
then because she is the talker.
My dad reads a lot and that's
why he's so smart.

Marlowe and Cole just stare at each other. Man and beast
look into each other's eyes and know they share a common bond
in language.

Cole's bedroom door opened and Lloyd stepped in.

LLOYD

Can I come in?

COLE

Sure dad.

Lloyd walks into the room and looks around and is slightly
surprised that it is so clean.

He notices Marlowe is sitting in front of the computer screen
and he walks over and sees the information about viruses.

Lloyd thinks about it for a few minutes and then comes over
and sits on Cole's bed with him.

LLOYD

Cole, I don't even know if I could fully explain to you what is happening in the outside world not only in the United States but in the whole world. A deadly disease has come to us and is taking us from the earth by the thousands every day. I want to show you something.

Lloyd walks over to the computer and sits at the desk. Marlowe is right below him.

Lloyd tries to speak to Marlowe as he is typing. Marlowe listens and shakes his head up and down as if saying he understood what Lloyd was saying.

LLOYD

I know you're really a smart - I mean I know you are really - well, we can try it again later but for now, Cole come over here and look at this.

Cole walks over and on the screen is information about the Black Death. Cole slowly reads it in his head.

COLE

The **Black Death** was one of the most devastating pandemics in human history, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 75 to 200 million people and peaking in Europe in the years 1346-53.

LLOYD

Do you understand all those words son?

COLE

Kind of.

LLOYD

Here, let me read this for you.

But instead of Lloyd's voice the voice of a tiny, unordinary, ordinary field mouse came out of Marlowe.

MARLOWE

The **Black Death** was one of the most devastating pandemics in human history, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 75 to 200 million people and peaking in Europe in the years 1346-53.

Lloyd pushes the chair back and stands up, never taking his eyes off the mouse.

He staggers back to Cole's bed and falls backwards on it but instantly sits back up still looking at Marlowe.

COLE

He talks dad.

Marlowe continued to stare at Lloyd until Lloyd finally found his voice and gained some control over his mind and imagination.

LLOYD

I - what I mean to say is - I just can't believe I heard what I heard even though I know I heard it. You can talk. You talked - to me.

MARLOWE

Yes sir.

There was kind of a rye look on Marlowe's face as he felt slightly superior for the moment.

LLOYD

And - you understand what those words mean Marlowe?

MARLOWE

Yes sir.

Lloyd started to laugh a bit and then he cried some and then he laughed a bit more as his entire world of understanding was being smashed to pieces by a rodent the size of a small soft ball.

His brain was wriggling inside his head cavity and he felt slightly nauseous but he fought for control over himself and finally settled down in silence for a few seconds.

LLOYD

You see Marlowe, I have been a mouse and rat hater since I was young. That's what I was taught. And there has been no mouse or rat in our world history that spoke or wore clothes or that understood the English language.

Lloyd took a longer look at the tiny animal.

LLOYD

I mean Marlowe - do you have a language for your own - a family?

Marlowe shook his head 'no' and sadly thought about that strange fact.

LLOYD

Marlowe is teaching us Cole. He is teaching us that all animals have - something in them that we don't know about - something that relates them to us in a way that just impossible.

Lloyd looks down at Marlowe but he can't speak. He looks at his son but he still can't find words that make any sense.

LLOYD

Cole, go down and get your mother and bring he up here, don't tell he anything.

COLE

Yes, sir.

Cole sailed through his door.

LLOYD

I hope you understand Marlowe,
that it is very difficult for
me to talk to you. You're a
mouse. You should be in a trap
or a burrow but you're here in
human clothes and you can speak.
I could never tell anyone I'm
sure you understand. It would
be like you introducing me to
your mother. I mean - what
could you say that she would
understand?

MARLOWE

I see your point.

Marlowe sits down and they both wait and wait and wait until
finally Louise and Cole come through the door.

LLOYD

You better close the door
Louise and come in and sit down.

A shrill scream came dancing through the door and echoed all
the way down the stairs. It was like a scream and a wailing
sound that was interrupted with occasional laughter.

People working on the compound stopped their work for a
moment as the trail of laughter and tears passed them,
heading for the empty fields.

EXT. THE COMPOUND - DAY

Months later Cole and Marlowe are walking on top of the
wall.

MARLOWE

You see master Cole, there must
be workers to operate the stations
or the electricity stops, like now.

Cole walked dragging a loose limb blown in on the recent
winds. Marlowe sat on his shoulder with his legs bouncing
up and down on Cole's chest. He also had a stick but it was
just a sliver.

Marlowe used the stick as a pointing device when they reached high areas and they could see most of the compound.

MARLOWE

So you see Cole, that your father was quite smart when we lived in New York as he could see this was all going to happen in the near future so - to protect the compound from loss he added of power he added photovoltaic panels to every surface that didn't already have a solar panel. He then added a very large battery storage system in the garage so in the event that the power went out - as it has - the compound would have enough electricity to run normally.

COLE

How do you know all this Marlowe?

MARLOWE

I really can't say Cole because I don't know. I just know but I really don't understand what that means. That is not all. The compound has a water well that produces over twenty gallons a minute which is more than enough water. Also, in the past, there was a gas line run into the hills behind the compound. The line is cemented in a tunnel used to mine gold but now is too full of gas so it is quite dangerous but not for us - and the gas is under its own natural pressure so there is really no equipment required besides a few regulators, some valves and lines and pressure reduction devices to make the gas useable.

COLE

You're just a walking dictionary
Marlowe.

MARLOWE

Well, sitting.

Marlowe chuckled and then he squeaked and then he laughed until he almost fell off of Cole.

MARLOWE

I made a little joke.

Marlowe stops in mid word and froze. Cole stops for a moment seeing Marlowe and he frozen.

COLE

What is it?

MARLOWE

We're in trouble and we have to
run, now.

Marlowe dropped straight down into the pocket and Cole took off toward the house. After only a few seconds an alarm went off in the compound and around the wall.

Cole looked over his shoulder as he ran and a dark figure with dirty, torn clothes climbed up from the outside and stood up. He held something out toward Cole and then turned enough for Cole to see a bow and cocked arrow aimed at his back.

Marlowe popped his head out of the pocket and yelled.

MARLOWE

Run! Faster. Faster!!

Cole is running as fast as he can until his foot hits a loose stone and he loses his balance and falls forward.

He puts out his arms and hands to protect his face and he falls just on one side and slides in the dirt until he comes to a stop.

The figure loosens his grip on the arrow.

Cole turns back and sees the arrow and the man in silhouette.

Cole opens his eyes wide in terror as Marlowe sticks his head out and instantly sees the dark figure on the wall and then BANG.

A gun shot goes off and blows the figure off the wall backwards.

In just moments the back part of the compound is filled with men and women with rifles and hand guns, climbing up the interior wall ladders and a gun fight breaks out that is ear shattering.

Lloyd runs up behind Cole and pulls his blood covered son up off the ground and into his arms.

He passes Cole on to Louise who carries him immediately into the house.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

In a few moments the gun fire stops and only moments after that, Lloyd comes into the house to check on Cole who sits on the sofa waiting for first aid for the cuts and scratches he received when he fell down.

Lloyd
Are you all right Cole?

COLE
Yes dad, just a little scared.

LLOYD
What about you Marlowe?

Marlowe sticks his hand out of the pocket and waves and then retracts it again.

Louise returns from the bathroom with alcohol, bandages, Neosporin and a few cue tips. She works nervously on Cole while she and Lloyd talk.

LOUISE
Who was it?

LLOYD

I'm afraid it was our worst nightmare but we were prepared - although not enough. It was a small gang of five or six - I couldn't tell. They were sick, you could see that at a distance and we killed all of them.

LOUISE

How did they get on the wall?

LLOYD

The alarm system didn't pick them up fast enough and we are looking into that right now. Harley is burning the bodies right where they are and they we will spray with disinfectant when it all cools down.

LOUISE

Cole, I want you to go upstairs, leave your clothes out in the hallway and take a shower but don't get these two bandages wet. I'll come up in a minute and wash Marlowe and his clothes so make sure he doesn't take a nap.

Cole stands up and Marlowe sticks his head out of the pocket.

MARLOWE

I was just cleaned.

COLE

Don't get into it Marlowe, mom knows what to do.

Cole stalks off through the kitchen mumbling along with Marlowe who was also mumbling about too much water and too much soap.

LOUISE

What happened?

LLOYD

I don't know Louise, a very expensive security system failed on us and life as we know it is getting more precious everyday so we can't go wrong here. I'll check in the barn and see if there's any more new information.

INT. THE DINING ROOM - DAY

A month later Cole enjoys his thirteenth birthday. Cole is at the table opening presents, mostly hand made things including food treats.

He is about to open another mystery gift when a huge scream comes from the living room where many of the guests in the compound had gathered around the television where pirate television was now being broadcast from somewhere.

Everyone around the table including Cole, runs into the living room just in time to a female announcer in some pretty terrible clothes and no makeup, deliver the most needed to hear news in many a life time.

From a darkly lit room with a window of Los Angeles behind her and standing under hot, clip lights sweating, the newscaster said these words.

NEWSCASTER

They believe they have found a cure.

No one in the compound heard anything after that because of the joy and shouting.

The newscaster goes on to say,

NEWSCASTER

Another compound formed in and around the UCLA medical center had stayed intact as a unit of health care and spent twenty four hours a day working on a vaccine.

Cole was still holding his unopened gift when he realized that his dad did not look very well so Cole worked his way through the people standing and jumping around until he reached his dad who was sitting on the sofa.

COLE

Are you okay dad?

LLOYD

I'm fine Cole - I'm, just a little under the weather, that's all.

Lloyd reached down and gave his son a big hug and Cole could feel how hot his dad seemed.

LLOYD

I'm just going to go upstairs and lie down for a while. Can you keep an eye on things down here?

COLE

Yes sir.

Lloyd stood up as many of the guests patted him on the back and shoulders and congratulated and thanked him for keeping them all alive.

Lloyd turned to each person and thanked them and finally he turned to Louise who could also tell that her husband was not well.

Cole watched in horror and slow motion as his dad reached out for Louise but she was too far away so he fell.

Cole could see in his dad's eyes the terror as his father fell past him like a giant oak

Cole saw it all so slowly but still, as he reached out to catch Lloyd, the man was too big and passed through his small hands onto the carpet.

Everyone in the room helps carry Lloyd upstairs.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cole sits up on his bed and speaks to Marlowe who is sitting on the computer desk.

COLE

So tell me again how the virus could get over our wall.

MARLOWE

It uses air now, as a vector and a vector is the tool the virus uses to move with. It didn't use the air before so you could only get it by touch but now the virus has mutated.

COLE

What does that mean?

MARLOWE

It means, Master Cole, that the bug has changed itself so now it can stay alive in the air and use the air to travel to another host.

COLE

So now it can come over the wall? So no one here is safe now?

MARLOWE

That is correct. So now it is only a matter of time unless we have the vaccine.

COLE

But there is, we heard it on pirate television.

MARLOWE

I am aware Cole but that vaccine is in California.

COLE

We gotta get it to save my dad.

Marlowe looks at Cole for a very long time.

COLE

Do you know where California is?

Cole looked across at the book shelf and then jumps across the room and takes a book and opens it to a two-page map of the United States.

CLOSEUP - A US MAP

Cole pinpoints where they are in Virginia and then pinpoints California. He put one index finger on one place and the other index finger on the other and he looked at the distance in between.

COLE

How far is that?

Marlowe hops up and takes a long look at the map. He wrinkled his nose and reads the Legend which showed the scale of the map.

MARLOWE

We need a ruler or measuring device.

Cole jumps up and walks over to his bookshelf and grabs a ninety-nine cent wood ruler and brings it back.

Marlowe has him measure the distance between his fingers and then Marlowe does the mental calculations at which time he sits down and drops his head.

COLE

What's wrong, is it very far?

MARLOWE

Yes. It is in fact 2268.65 miles.

COLE

How far is that?

Marlowe punches up the calculator function on the computer and punches in the appropriate keys with his tail and then he read the answer.

MARLOWE

11,343,250 feet.

Cole sits and looks at Marlowe and then looks at the number and then looks at Marlowe one more time.

COLE

But how far is that?

Marlowe shakes his head back and forth because he couldn't answer the question.

MARLOWE

If you were in an airplane going five hundred miles an hour it would take about five hours or a little less to get to California.

Marlowe and Cole turn around and there is Louise standing in the doorway drinking a cup of tea.

She finally walks into the room and sits on the end of Cole's bed.

LOUISE

Why, are you two planning a trip because there are no airlines anymore? The airports are full of groups and bands of people who have the virus but it doesn't kill them because the virus lives in those bodies. Those bodies keep the thing alive. The pirate news calls them sleepers. We are stuck here until someone brings us a vaccine because there is no possible way to go across the country to California and back here and still be alive. We are in God's hands and Marlowe, I know that probably doesn't mean anything to a mouse but there is a more powerful force on this planet than man and that is who we should be praying to every day to help us through this time.

Louise turns on her heels and glides out into the hallway.

MARLOWE

Who is this God fellow she
talked about?

COLE

God is really big cause God is
everything, even you Marlowe.

Marlowe straightened his ears as he received this new news
that he was God.

Cole went through his closet looking for something. He
comes out with a book which is maps and roads, every page
and showed it to Marlowe.

COLE

This book shows every road and
every way to get anywhere in
this country.

Marlowe examines the book.

Marlowe brought up train routes that were sporadic.
Cole comes up behind Marlowe's back and studies the book.
He could see a train route from Virginia to California.

COLE

What about it

MARLOWE

Your father is infected with
the virus. It must be the
sleeper your mom spoke of.
If a vaccine does not come to
this compound, it will wipe us
all out in a short matter of
time. We have to be smarter
than the bug.

Marlowe was explaining the trip to Cole who sat completely
still, almost not breathing and hating every second of the
trip already.

Cole stopped listening and ran to his dad only Marlowe
jumped in front of him and literally roared to make him
stop.

Cole stopped.

MARLOWE

Cole - the virus is very smart even with no brain. It has changed itself, adapted in people's body but it doesn't kill the host now since it needs a body to survive.

COLE

What's a host?

MARLOWE

It's the person Cole - in science they call the person a host, I don't know why.

COLE

So, their zombies like in the movies we watched - without dad or mom knowing.

MARLOWE

No Cole, they are like slightly sick people but they don't eat each other - they are dangerous because the virus is in them and can spread from them.

COLE

And where do those people live now?

MARLOWE

They are in small colonies all over the world - just trying to survive until medical science finds a cure.

COLE

I sorta feel bad about them - cause it's not their fault huh?

MARLOWE

That's right Cole, it's not their fault but we have to stay away from them - all of them while we look for the cure in California - in a Ronald Reagan - in a hospital.

Cole was very tired. He closed his eyes and let his mind wonder.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cole is on one side of the room making lists and Marlowe is looking through picture books about the United States.

In the corner behind the computer is a back pack, canteen, bedroll and everything else they need for a trip.

MARLOWE

Be sure to hide those things from your mother.

COLE

Yes, yes, I know. They have been here for days and she hasn't found them yet. When do you think - we should leave?

MARLOWE

Tomorrow morning is the time.

Cole looks long at Marlowe as the tears well up in his eyes.

COLE

I'm really scared and I'm going to miss mom and dad.

MARLOWE

I know Cole. Me to.

COLE

Come on, let's go out side and just look around for a while.

Marlowe jumps up on Cole and runs up his body and drops down in his pocket home.

Cole looks around his room for a moment and then walks to the door and opens it.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

The front door opens and Cole walks out with Marlowe's head and arms out of the pocket dangling like a doll.

EXT. THE COMPOUND - DAY

Cole walks the entire area of the inside wall, stopping and thinking then moving on.

INT. THE BARN - DAY

He walks through the busy barn and takes it all in as people come up and say hello and how are you.

INT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Cole moves through each room and tries to remember exactly where every little thing is.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cole is asleep when Marlowe crawls across his face to wake him up.

MARLOWE

It's time.

COLE

What? What time Marlowe, it's dark?

MARLOWE

It's time to go Cole, tonight.

COLE

But, but, but what about...?

Marlowe had already jumped off the bed and across to the computer desk where he waits with a pencil and paper.

Cole weaves across the room in sleep, sits down at the desk and looks at the blank paper.

MARLOWE

Write a note to your mom, Cole
and quick.

Cole picks up the pencil half consciously and scribbles a note until he had said all he could.

He put the pencil down.

Marlowe guided him through dressing and collecting the backpack and bedroll.

COLE

Okay, I got socks, underwear,
maps, a compass, a lighter,
flashlight, knife and some
snacks.

He rolled up his sleeping bag and tied it under the backpack.

He took a few pencils and some paper and pushed them in a side pocket and he clipped his canteen onto the side of the pack.

Cole slips on a jacket and a cap and ties a scarf around his neck.

He hoisted up the back pack and adjusted it on his shoulders.

Cole takes all his stash of money and puts it in his pockets and then Marlowe jumps up onto his shoulder and then drops down into the jacket pocket.

Seconds later his little head sticks up out of the pocket with a small, doll's clothes cap on his head

Cole stands in the doorway of his room and looks at it for the last time in a very long time ahead.

Cole steps out of his room into the hall and right on the tail of Miss. Penny who yowls and growls and then runs down the stairs as soon as Cole lifts his foot.

He waits in frozen silence with fear growing on his face.

Marlowe waits also but with an expression of satisfaction rather than fear.

The house was quiet and so was the compound as they went down the stairs.

Cole looks down in the dark and there is Smoker standing in front of him and waiting to play.

COLE

Smoker, what are you doing here
dog? Come here Smoker, come
here.

Smoker stands on his back legs as Cole pets him.

Smoker smells Marlowe and tries to get his nose closer to the jacket pocket until Cole finally pulls out a piece of beef jerky from a side pocket.

Smoker grabs it and runs off into the darkness of the house.

Cole goes out the front door.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole goes down the steps and turns and goes around the house towards the back

EXT. THE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Then all the way back into the part of the compound where the sick people tried to get in but were killed by Harley and Lloyd.

Cole climbs up to the top of the wall, turns one more time and looks at his home

He then lowers himself down the backside of the wall. The alarms went off. Cole hits the ground running.

COLE

Which way?

EXT. VIRGINIA FARM LAND - NIGHT

Marlowe sticks his head out and smells the air and looks around.

He smells the air again and points to the west.

Cole follows his direction and turns west and off down a trail that he would never travel again.

Cole is absolutely lost. Periodically they stop and Marlowe would look at a map.

They come over a rise on a pine wooded hillside and down below them in a green valley of fields and fences is the black pair of lines that Cole knows as the train tracks.

The mouse points down and down they went.

Cole skips around the boulders and larger rocks as they came closer and closer to the tracks.

They stop at a small spring and Cole fills the canteen as Marlowe laps up the water on his knees with his head almost in the pool.

Suddenly the hair on Marlowe stands straight up and Marlowe is on Cole's jacket faster than Cole could follow him.

MARLOWE

Leave. Now.

Cole had just clipped the canteen onto the backpack.

He turns and starts to run toward the tracks.

MARLOWE

No, back into the woods, quick.

Cole looks down at the mouse and without thinking turns a hundred and eighty degrees around and ran as fast as he could toward the trees.

As Cole is running he could hear something behind him and after a few more yards he could tell that it was the sound of DOGS.

Cole takes a quick look over his shoulder and he could see a small pack of dogs running full speed and growling as they ran towards him.

He turns back and pours on the speed.

The pack gains ground but Cole was not running any slower.

He could see the trees in front of him and he knew why Marlowe had sent him this way.

He looked from tree to tree to see which one was the closest with branches he could get to fast.

Through the pines Cole sees an old oak with lower branches and he heads for the oak.

A pain starts in his side and it hurts to run which slows him down and closes the distance even more between him and the pack.

MARLOWE

Faster, faster Master Cole!

COLE

It hurts. It hurts to run.

MARLOWE

It will hurt even more if those dogs catch us.

Cole sucks up the pain and pushes his legs just one more time until they are at the tree.

He didn't stop running he just jumps into the lowest branch he could and instantly, like a monkey, Cole goes up the branches using the strength in his arms since his legs were spent.

EXT. CUP OF TREE - DAY

The first dogs hit the tree and jump up to the first branch and then the second and then one dog falls and then another dog falls and they all stop for moment.

Cole keeps climbing until he has no strength left in his arms and he stops.

He is in a large cup of the tree where several branches shoot up like a hand with the fingers folded upward.

He is twenty feet off the ground. The dogs are barking and growling and fighting as one by one they try to climb the tree.

MARLOWE

I feel sorry for them. They are used to being fed and now they have to hunt for food and they even forget who they are because they are so hungry.

The dogs calm down after a while and then lay down and go to sleep.

Cole was tired too so he unrolled his sleeping bag and placed it down in the cup of the tree and climbed into it and went instantly to sleep.

Marlowe tried to stand guard but after a short while he too crawled into the bag and up on Cole's shoulder where he curled up like a dog and went to sleep.

EXT. CUP OF TREE - LATE DAY

Cole and Marlowe wake up to silence and bright sun light.

Cole jumps up quickly and looks all around them but the dogs are gone and the only sounds are birds CHIRPING and the very faint sound of a TRAIN coming toward them.

Marlowe cocks his ears and in an instant judge how far away the train is.

MARLOWE

We have to go now!

Marlowe jumps up on Cole's shoulder and then down into the pocket.

Cole quickly rolls up the bag and throws it in the pack and then starts down the tree.

Finally Cole jumps to the ground and they start out across the meadow.

The sounds of the TRAIN grow louder as Cole runs harder through deep meadow grass.

Marlowe suddenly pops his head out of the pocket and sticks his nose as far in the air as he can.

MARLOWE

Their coming back.

COLE

Who?

MARLOWE

The dogs!!

Instantly the grass drops down slightly and Cole sees the pack running right toward them.

Cole turns a hard right and heads directly downhill towards the tracks.

The dogs shift like a flight of geese without missing a beat.

MARLOWE

Turn toward the south, now.

Without question Cole changes his direction again so that now he is running up the tracks with the train coming behind him.

The dog pack shifts again to correct the angle toward Cole.

The dogs are running right next to the track and are only seconds behind Cole and the mouse.

The sound of the TRAIN is deafening.

Marlowe crawls all the way up to Cole's head and shouts in his ear.

MARLOWE

Turn your head and look at the train.

Cole turns his head and to his amazement he is right next to the train - a box car with the door slightly ajar.

MARLOWE

Jump in, now!!

Again, without thinking, Cole takes a tremendous jump and just hits the side of the car with his hands scraping across the splintered wood inside, trying to get a hand hold.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Marlowe jumps into the car as Cole pulls himself up so that his top half is in the car and the rest of him is dangling along the side.

Suddenly Cole screams out.

Marlowe runs to the edge and sees one of the dog has locked his jaws onto Cole's leg and is bouncing along the rocks next to the track.

Marlowe's chin curls back and his teeth bare and he jumps out of the car and lands on Cole's leg, just up from the dog.

Marlowe steps down a few inches and opens his mouth and growls right into the dog's face.

The dog suddenly opens his eyes and sees the rabid mouse with his huge teeth moving towards his nose.

The dog lets out a huge yelp and let's go of Cole's leg just as Marlowe jumps back on the leg and scampers up the boy's body and into the train car.

Cole clammers up into the car and reaches down and rubs his leg where the dog had latched on.

Together they watch the pack slowly run out of energy and fade away down the tracks as the train starts up a steep ascent.

Cole wraps his leg in a handkerchief and then crawls over to the door and hangs his legs out as the train slowly pulls itself up the grade.

He looks over at Marlowe on the ground and realizes that Marlowe is staring directly behind them into a dark corner of the car.

Cole turns himself into the car and squints with his eyes and barely makes out a person in the darkness.

MARLOWE

We're not alone.

Finally the figure in the corner darkness crawls out in the light and addresses Cole.

CORRIE ANNE

You got a mouse that talks?

Cole sits amazed as he looks at a girl about his age who is wrapped up in warm clothes and carries a bundle on a stick. She was dark haired, a little taller than Cole and she wears glasses.

COLE

I don't have him. His name
is Marlowe and he - lives with
me.

CORRIE ANNE

It talks.

MARLOWE

I am not an it, I am a very
ordinary field mouse and I am
called Marlowe.

CORRIE ANNE

It talks really good.

Marlowe is the smartest animal I know - he is even smarter
than me.

CORRIE ANNE

He ain't smarter than me. There
ain't no mouse, louse, rat or
bird that is smarter than me

COLE

Marlowe is smarter than you.
Can you talk mouse talk? No.
But Marlowe can speak and he
knows what he's talking about.

The girls sinks back into the corner and covers herself
back up.

CORRIE ANNE

He ain't as smart as me - he is
a mouse. What do they call you?

COLE

Cole.

CORRIE ANNE

Where you from?

COLE

Virginia.

CORRIE ANNE

Were in Virginia dummy.

COLE

Don't call me a dummy. I know a lot of things. I know where the antidoe is.

MARLOWE

Cole, we should talk about something else.

COLE

Oh. Oh yeah. Okay. Where are you from?

CORRIE ANNE

I just can't believe that mouse talks. Are you sure that's not a toy with batteries?

Marlowe turns to her and curls his lip back and puts out another enormous growl and the girl screams and hides under her cover.

Cole looks down at the mouse with a new understanding and admiration.

CORRIE ANNE

All right, I believe you, get that animal away from me. It's a mouse and it talks. A talking mouse - what antidote? Are you talking bout the plague that's killed everyone? Cause if you are - I need that. That's where I'm going. To find it.

COLE

What's your name?

COLE

Corrie Anne.

MARLOWE

That's a very lovely name.

CORRIE ANNE

Mouse talks pretty good for a rodent. How did you learn how to do it?

MARLOWE

The computer.

Marlowe turns away in disgust and looks out at the scenery as it passes the train.

CORRIE ANNE

My family is sick with it but they ain't dying.

MARLOWE

That is because they have the strain of the virus that has mutated into a non-lethal strain so as not to kill its host - too quickly.

CORRIE ANNE

Wow, you are smart. What does that mean?

COLE

It means that the bug keeps changing to protect itself so now, instead of it killing the people it gets into it just lives in them till it can figure out what to do next. My dad has it like that.

CORRIE ANNE

So, that is where you're going, ain't it?

MARLOWE

Yes!!

Marlowe turns back to the scenery and Cole can't take his eyes off the girl.

CORRIE ANNE

I'm going with you.

Cole and Marlowe share a look that said a thousand words.

They all sit at the open door and watch the scenery go by. The train was going West - right toward the center of southern California.

INT. TRAIN CAR - NIGHT

Night came fast and so did the cold. Cole wasn't prepared for that much cold and Corrie Anne just buried herself next to him for warmth.

Marlowe on the other hand was warm as toast in Cole's pocket with his fur all bushed out he looked like a blow fish in a suit.

Cole and Corrie Anne are bunched in a corner, covered with his sleeping bag and her blankets.

CORRIE ANNE

What happens if we don't make it?

COLE

My pa dies, everyone in my compound dies, your parents die - and we die.

MARLOWE

That is why we have to make it. We have to make it there and we have to make it back.

COLE

And we have to pray that they all stay alive until we come back.

CORRIE ANNE

Amen. And we will come back. I can feel it now and I didn't feel it before. Before I was just scared but now - now there is you and a darn smart mouse that talks and everything.

MARLOWE

We have to come back. The world
may not survive unless we bring
back the vaccine. We can do it.

CORRIE ANNE

We will do it.

COLE

We are doing it. Good night.

CORRIE ANNE

Good night

Marlowe's furry head sticks out of his pocket home and a
large grin grows across his tiny face as he sinks back down
protected and warm from all danger.

FADE OUT.

THE END

The End of Part One of Marlowe