

It all started three months ago. Ms. Peterson said we could go outside for recess, and I went to where I always go, the monkey bars. I was swinging across the bars, when I saw something in the distance. I couldn't see what it was so I decided to get a better look at it.

It was what looked to me like a map. It was covered in words that filled every space of the paper. Puzzled, I sat down on the grass and started reading. I was curious to see what was inside, and maybe find out why it was on the playground. I began reading, slowly and carefully:

*"I'll start by saying hello, I don't like jokes they're mainly just a hoax. And I promise this isn't one. Now don't say I didn't warn you - This is a message from the shadows of the Eragon Desert. Over the hills, around the valley and if you keep walking you might meet someone named Halley. If you find him that's a sign that you're close to your destined time. Good luck my young sir I hope you find it. If you do then you will have an experience like none other. I'm warning you now it's scary and cold so be ready for anything. So if you're up for the challenge be my guest and just don't give up . You will be glad you didn't give up. Just look for the----*"

"WHAT?" I yelled. I can't believe it! There's a rip in the page, right at the end! I then turned it to the back and found a map of the Eragon Desert and then I saw a X in the middle of the map, which I assumed was where I would find this "thing." I then saw a circle about 1 finger length away from the X, which I assumed was where I would find Halley. I didn't know what to think. Should I do it? Was I picked for a reason or was it something I just happened to find? I am only in 5th grade so I didn't know what to do. Then again, this might be my only chance to experience something no other human has before. I've always wished something like this would happen and I can't imagine if I made it back alive. I stuffed the map in my jacket pocket and didn't tell anyone about it. But then I thought about it again even if I do go, I don't know what I'm supposed to look for. Buried treasure? A diamond? Or some old man who acted like some wise guy and

before he died wrote some useless riddle? I thought it would be better to take care of it in the morning.

That night I couldn't fall asleep. All I was thinking about was that riddle and what I should do about it. I kept going over the words in the riddle but I didn't know what I was looking for so it could have been right in front of me! I didn't even know where I could find the other part of the map! I wanted to show someone, like either my mom or somebody who could help me.

I thought hard about this for a few weeks but then I decided it wouldn't be realistic for a fifth grader to find buried treasure -or whatever it is- so I just went on with my life and tried to forget about it.

Two years passed and nothing really changed. I was still getting passable grades, and I still didn't have many friends. One sunny afternoon I was walking home from school and I found a slip of paper on the on the ground. It was the missing part of the map! I went straight to my room and read it. It read:

*“Door. Find the door and you can find something deep in your heart that nobody has ever had the chance to find before. I picked you because I see you’re struggling with the loss of your dad but I can help you only if you believe this is real. Remember you can either stay and feel sad for your loss or have the chance to find another world. Remember it’s a long journey and you might not find what you’re looking for. Are you up for the challenge?”*

I didn't know what to think. Should I be happy that I found the last part of the map that I've been looking for or be scared at what my next decision is? Should I tell anyone now? Or keep it for myself? I thought maybe I could go by myself, but then my parents would be worried even if they knew where I was. I was stuck. School was almost over so that's good. After a little while I went downstairs and decided I would eat some dinner because I'm starving and would sleep on it and hopefully in the morning I would have an answer.

It was morning and still no answer. Summer came a few weeks later and I was really dreading my last few weeks of school. It was hot and I had a major amount of homework but I got through it. I did not like school but luckily I wasn't the only one who didn't like it. Many of my classmates talked about how it was too long or too hard but I just really disliked the teachers. Mainly it's because I felt like every teacher I have hated me. They either gave me detention or they punished me, for what I supposedly did but never do! All the bullies in my school do things that they know they would get in trouble for, and blame it on me and somehow I am the one who ends up getting in trouble. Many kids in my class don't know much about me they don't even know that my dad died when I was only five years old! They think I am like everyone else in my class.

The next morning I woke up with a smile on my face, that's the first time I have smiled in a long time. Last night I had a dream that I think can help me with this situation about the map.

The dream was about a bird. At first all I saw was an egg, then I saw a crack and out popped a head of a baby bird. It looked frightened by being by itself because it's mother was out trying to catch food for it's young. The bird looked around, and about a minute later the mother came swooping in holding a worm in her mouth. And the bird realized that that was it's mother, and the baby bird wondered about his dad. The baby bird asked the momma bird "Where's my dad?" And she reacted only by shaking her head.

I woke up sweating and cursing at the pillow. I looked up at the clock and realized it was 4:00 in the morning! I sat up on my bed trying to calm myself down, and decided the only way to do that was to go down stairs and have a nice, cold cup of water. The water was refreshing and it calmed me down better than I thought it would. After about 10 minutes I went back to my bed, to try to go to sleep again. It only took me 2 minutes to get back to sleep and again the dream came back. It showed the bird about a week later learning how to fly. At first I saw the bird try to fly on it's own and it plopped out of the nest and suddenly fell straight to the ground. Then I saw the mom come to the nest and teach the bird how to fly. And after about 10 tries the mother had taught the bird how to fly correctly. Then I woke up. What I learnt from that dream was that I shouldn't try to

figure out what to do by myself I should ask my mom, and ask her what she would do if she was in my situation.

The next day after school I told my mom everything, about the dream and how I found the map 2 years ago. After I finished talking she was silent for a moment, then she replied with an very unexpected answer. She said softly “Nick, I don’t know if you know this but I’m going through a hard time in my life too, and since summers one week away I think we should both take this opportunity to try something new”

“Mom what are you trying to say?”

“I think we should both go.”

“Really?!?”

“Yeah.”

Then quickly she added “but before we make any plans we have to check out the map and see if it makes sense to go, but if it does I think it will be a good opportunity to have some bonding time with you, because since your father died we haven’t had the time to really talk to each other like we used to.” That was true. When I was young we used to be really close and since the death of my dad we stopped talking to each other as much.

Summer came fast. My mom had finally picked the day we were going, it was next week! I couldn’t wait. I was really excited but also nervous because if we eventually find the door, what would we find inside?

The week went fast. Late nights. Slow mornings. The day before we left I was really curious about what we would find. I thought about all this when I was packing the night before we left for our adventure. My mom had mapped out the whole route we were going to take, she estimated it would take around 2 days to get there and around 2 days back.

The next morning, we decided to leave early so we could walk a little bit later today before it got dark. My mom said the car ride is 1 ½ hours away, I didn’t care how long it was I just wanted to get there.

I woke up by my mom yelling, “30 more minutes!” I answered with a unanticipated, “yay.” And dozed off again. The next time I woke up was from hearing the car pull up into a driveway, I opened my eyes and realized we were here. I soon found

out that the place where we were starting our journey is where you take your dog for a run, but then my mom told me that it leads into the Eragon desert. We didn't pack a lot because we didn't want to be carrying a lot of weight on our backs we just brought the things we needed which was mainly food, water, and a tent. Luckily my mom found out that Halley was actually a restaurant, and if we took the route we planned we would go straight in that direction. After the first few hours we realized it started getting cold and dark so we decided to call it a night and stopped right by a tall Oasis. We then set up our tents and put our bags down, and went to sleep.

In the morning I woke up with an ache in my back I then got up and found out that I was sleeping on a bump the whole night. I looked up and found my mom sore also feeling her back, so I asked her what happened. She said quietly, "We should get going now we are wasting time." It was a slow start for both of us, even though most of the ground was flat. We were still so sore from the night before it took us twice as long as it would've other days. Over time it got better, and I again asked her if she was also sore from last night. She said she was but other than that she slept fine. Then she checked the map to make sure we were going in the right direction and when I looked up I found the checkpoint we have been looking for. Halley.

It looked like it hasn't been touched for over 20 years but we still walked in. It creaked as I walked on the steps to the front door, I tried to open the door but it wouldn't budge. My mom then tried and after a few minutes she forced it open. We walked in slowly and carefully. It smelt like a sock was rotting there since forever. It was also empty and full of dust and cobwebs. All I could see was a desk filled with dust. I then realized the only way to see if they're actually is somebody here we have to ask. I yelled, "Hello." It echoed across the whole room. A few seconds after I heard a little ruffling of something, I looked around. Looking frightened I asked my mom if it was her and she said it wasn't. About a second later a person peeked out from the dirty desk. My mom asked slowly, "Are you Halley?" He replied by nodding his head. Then he lifted his head all the way out from under the desk, and said it's pronounced (Ha-li). Then I realized it was a boy who sent us the letter. He had dirty, long blond hair and he was wearing all torn up clothes. He told us to come into his house and took us behind the desk. I looked around and saw that he had made a small cozy house of his surroundings. He told us that

he had been living here for a few years now, and that he has learned to love his own little home. Then he told us how he got stuck here in the first place. "It was about 2 years ago" he said looking up like he could picture the scene. "I found the same note that you found, but back then I was only 14." He paused for a second, then started again "I told my parents but they didn't believe me so then I asked my only brother, and he said he would go with me because he was also curious. When we got there we searched around for almost an hour looking for the door, but we couldn't seem to find it. Also in the letter it said your dad died, which mine didn't so I didn't know how that related to me. Anyway we kept searching for hours, after about 3 hours of looking, my brother said we should head back, he said it was just a scam. He added if after 1 more day we didn't find it, he would go back home. The day went by, and still no door or any secret passage anywhere in sight. I didn't believe that it was a scam so I kept looking day after day until I gave up looking. I was walking home and found this rusty old place, and decided instead of going back to my house I just wanted to live out here. And that's exactly what I did. So now I'm here, eating dates and plants, and finding new things to keep me busy each day. So about a month ago I sent the letter you're holding in your hand, to someone hoping it would get to them and another young heart searching for adventure would come searching for the mysterious door. Just like you."

My mom and I were speechless. I had so many questions but I only managed to blurt one out. "Do you want to come with us?" He took a minute then after he thought about it he excitedly said, "Of course I would!" He then said "Let me go pack my bags, I'll also bring some extra dates in case!" My mom walked over to me with a frown, and whispered in my ear softly, "This guy better help us, or I'm going back home." That night we slept in Halley's mini hut, and I was a bit squished but it was much better than my recent nights. In the early morning we started walking. Halley told us it would only take 20 minutes to walk until we got to the spot, but in the scorching heat it felt like hours. Then he said we were near the area where he thought the door would be. We double checked the map and found out that he was right. We asked him where he looked and he said he mainly checked mainly around the area and in the trees. After a few hours of looking, my mom said that the person who sent Halley the letter in the first place wouldn't have made it easy to find so we have to look in places we wouldn't have looked

before. We took a break for an hour thinking where we have checked so far and where we haven't checked. We looked and thought all day about where the door could be, but we didn't even find a clue.

The next morning I woke up and couldn't find my special coin that my dad gave me before he passed away. When he gave it to me he said keep this close with you, whenever you're scared or sad you can always look at the coin to remind you I'm always with you. Before I went to sleep, I thought I put it in my bag, but I couldn't find it there. I looked around in my tent and still, no coin. I got out of my tent and looked around, then I asked my mom and Halley and they said they haven't seen it. Then I realized I must've dropped out of my pocket while I was looking for the door. I tried to remember where I left it and starting digging to see if it did fall out of my pocket. After a few minutes I asked Halley and my mom to help me look, they were willing because they knew how much this coin meant to me.

About an hour later Halley screamed from across our tents, "I found it!". We rushed over and saw he made a 2 feet deep hole into the ground "Here it is" he said handing me the coin. I looked down the hole where the coin was and in the corner of my eye I saw something. "What's that!?! " I asked frantically. My mom looked puzzled but Halley then said, "Oh I see it now, that small light in the crack right?" I excitedly said, "Yeah exactly, do you see it mom?" She turned her head sideways and said, "Yes, I do now". Then before I had the chance to ask the question, she took it right out of my mouth, "What do you think it is?" I shrugged but Halley said, "Well, there's only one way to find out. And that's by digging". The closer we got it turned brighter and brighter and made me even more curious to find out what it was. After I brushed all the extra dirt off I finally found what it was. "I FOUND THE DOOR" I screamed as loud as I could, but then I was still.

Who should go down it first? Should Halley go down first because he got the letter in the first place? Or should my mom go first because she went this far all the way for this? Or should I go down first because I have gone through all this trouble trying to figure out what the letter meant with no supporting help? Halley slowly said, "Nick, I think you should go down first," I looked at my mom she said, "Okay but yell if you need any help and I will jump in, in a heartbeat." I took a deep breath and looked at Halley and

told him that he has been a great friend and I'm very thankful for your helping me find the door and sending me the letter. Then I turned to my mom and said that if I don't come back, you have been a great mom and I love you. It killed me to see tears in her eyes. The last time I saw her cry was when my dad passed away. I took another deep breath closed my eyes and jumped into the door.

I woke up all dizzy in a pitch-black room, then a second later I woke up in a bright white room. It kept changing black and white, then after a while it changed to a doctors office. I got up and I saw my mom holding my dad's hand and then my mom giving birth to me, then after a few seconds it changed to my living room. It was just me and my dad. It looked like around a year before he passed away. We were playing with my favorite trucks. Back then I was only 4 and playing with trucks was my favorite thing to do in the afternoon. I tried to walk but an invisible force stopped me, it felt like an invisible circle around me, keeping me from moving. I put my hand out and almost immediately felt the force push me back again.

I then saw my dad say to my younger self, "Look what I have for you Nick." And I saw him give me the coin that I was holding only a few minutes ago. Then, in a blink of an eye, it changed to my dad driving to work and I suddenly felt the push of the other car crashing into our car. I looked over and saw my dad. He was dead right in front of me but I couldn't do anything to help. I was useless while watching my dad die. I made an attempt to move again but again the invisible force held me back. I started screaming, I couldn't tell if anyone heard me, but I didn't care. Then it flashed again and I saw the ambulance take him away, I started crying while yelling. It flashed again and I was back in the doctors' office, watching me waiting with my mom in the waiting room. We were both a mess. We couldn't stop crying and then I saw the doctor come talk to my mom and tell her that my dad passed away. It flashed again and it was of me jumping over and over into the door. It messed with my mind, and I tried to stop but it kept doing that over and over again.

It all suddenly stopped. I was still screaming and I looked up and saw my mom and Halley still waiting there. Then my mom asked calmly, "Are you going to go in or not?"

"No."