

**Slayer's Awakening –
Legends from the Imagination
By H.L. Nguyen**

Prologue

The Past, 1953 AD

With a quick glance at the date Jacob Sands thought, *Hey, today's my birthday*. If you knew him, he was 24. If you didn't, he was 43.

Jacob sat and enjoyed the rest of his newspaper at the local café. He took a moment to watch the compact cars pass by the immaculate gray stone fountain. He counted how many times the water streams leaped from rock to rock. He looked dazed, lost in a moment where no one else existed.

"Will that be all for you today?" The waiter said.

"Excuse me sir," The waiter said in an Italian accent.

Jacob shook off his daydreaming look.

"Sir..." The waiter said again.

"Yes. I'm sorry what did you say?" Jacob said.

"Oh, yes, that will be all for me. Wait, can I just have one more cup."

"Very well sir."

The waiter filled his cup one last time before giving him his change. Jacob took his final sips and continued staring at the streams, finishing his thought process. Feeling satisfied, he got up and threw the change into the relaxing fountain. The nostalgic flopping of the water reflected to his younger days of skipping rocks at the lake.

Just before Jacob walked down the busy street, away from the green and white striped awning, he briefly stared into the sun and continued to walk. He waved his hat for an instant, just to feel the cool air across his neck.

He headed down towards the nearby church wanting to meet someone he had never seen before, but would recognize instantly. If he were a local there, they would recognize his black case with the silver handle he always carried. When he reached the white stone church, he read the sign on wall: SAN PIETRO. He gently pushed against the dark brown wooden church door. He noticed a man dressed in white with a glowing aura outlining his body as if a four-year-old child colored him in yellow.

"Hello Bishop," Jacob said.

“Hello, what can I do for you today?” The Bishop said.

“It is not what you can do for me, but what can I do for you?” Jacob said while setting down the case on the table. “I heard you been having some trouble of late. I am here to make it all better. Just have a seat.”

“I don’t understand. What troubles am I having? What are you going to do? Who are you?” The Bishop said.

Without answering, Jacob opened his case and after a couple of seconds, a bright white light filled the room. When the blinding light dimmer to the normal setting, the Bishop was standing alone.

“Master Sands, I don’t think they are here. We must be going the wrong way,” Said a pudgy elf with pointy ears and dark hair. Many people knew him as Jacob but it seemed as though in this world he was given the title of “Master” A title fit for a hero.

“I don’t know Jelly; I have a feeling this has to be the right way,” Master Sands said.

As they walked along the path, the tranquillity of the moon’s reflection in the darkened lake gleamed beneath the rippling surface. It was a cold night, and Master Sands felt the light breeze tightening his face, but the weather was mostly gloomy there. He tried to swat away the trails of golden streams glittering nearby. They bothered his brown eyes, which his shaggy, dark red hair slightly covered as it grew covering the tops of his ears.

Master Sands marched along the path in his silver armor adorned with a black trim border and silky white cape. One would think the clunky armor would make a maddening clatter, but the well-fitted suit did not make a sound. The only sounds they heard were the operatic sounds of insects telling their story for anybody that wants to hear it. Master Sands looked ahead and became aware of the tall white stone churches. There were several of them standing throughout the long pathway.

“Ah Master, I still don’t believe this is the right way. We must turn...” Suddenly, a black shiny arrow, passed through Jelly’s body sporting a brown tunic and green sleeves, hitting Master Sands in the left shoulder. Then, a slow rush of blood dripped down the silver and black metal shell.

“Arrgggg! I guess they found us,” Master Sands said as a large transparent bubble covered up the entire area.

The intense pain trickled up and down his arm. He gripped the wound knowing it would reduce the damage. His training was extensive. Then, he heard the twine of the bow and another black arrow zipped across the night’s air. Judging by the trajectory of the flight, it looked like it came from the church bell tower. As the arrow approached him, his eyes dilated giving him a slight visualization advantage. Then in an instinctive shift, he swung his sword cutting the second arrow in half.

“I guess it’s time to party. I love it when I crash one,” Master Sands said while running for the gap between the rocks. The dive proved to be painful reminder. With his back against the rock, he grimaced out his next step.

Jelly ran towards his Master, rustling through his black bag and picked the golden ball from his entire collection. He hurried over and smashed it on the injured shoulder. When the golden ball shattered into several pieces, it released a dark maroon liquid, which then percolated into the armor. He watched as the unorthodox arrow popped out and hovered in the air for a moment. It suddenly flipped around and shot back. At that moment, the blood moved in a reverse direction trickling up the arm and back into the Master Sand’s body as if someone hits the rewind button. After a couple of seconds, there was a loud thud in the background; it looked like a man that was dressed all in white fell from the towering trees in the distance.

“You have any more of those in your bag of tricks?” Master Sands said.

“Yes master, just one more,” Jelly said.

“Great, keep it handy as I take care of the other one.”

Feeling like a new man, Master Sands peeked over the rock and found an outsized individual dressed in all smoldering black. From what he could see, the large man had chaotic black hair and a gray deranged face. He held a heavy sledgehammer, with a sharp blade behind the hammer’s head and had every intent of using its destructive capabilities.

“You killed brother! Come you coward,” The large man’s spinning head made the some of his words fade out.

“So this is what Bipolar Disorder looks like. I would have figured for something different. Man, they get uglier as they mature. Don’t they?” Master Sands said. Master Sands summoned his helmet and jumped out confronting the man in black.

“You pay for killing brother.” The large man said.

“Oh stop with your whining. If we are going to fight, then let’s fight,” Master Sands said.

Amidst the spoken words, the large man grinded his yellow teeth and charged. The swings of the sledgehammer came brisk and hard. Master Sands veered up blocking the overhead attack. Though the defense was standard, the powerful attack almost broke through the defensive hold. Nevertheless, the large man missed on his first attempt at Master Sands’ head. However, the instant second attempt, a swift upswing, caught Master Sands in the leg. Master Sands grabbed his bloody mess and hobbled away. With no time to recover, the large man charged him again. As he again mirrored his first attack, Master Sands had the foresight to use a patent defensive parry, a baseball power swing. It effectively collided with the sledgehammer, leaving it flying into a tree. Feeling anguish, the large man decided to try a hand-to-hand combat technique. The right-hand haymaker connected with Master Sands’ face sending him stunned and crashing to the ground. The large man stormed towards his lying opponent and went for a swift kick to the gut.

In the background, Jelly trembled with each blow to the body. He felt horrible because there was nothing he could do. After several kicks, Master Sands finally grabbed his foot and swept the other leg. The large man went down with a thud. Master Sands hobbled along the side pouncing with purpose. Gaining the ground advantage, he fiercely struck his opponent’s face. With his sword in his right hand, he pummeled the large man with his left fist. However, the large man just laughed and smiled with each crash of the fist. It was apparent that they had no effect. Master Sands stared and wondered what to do next. Then, the large man lifted him and tossed Master Sands several feet into the trees. Master Sands staggered got up and found the large man charging him again.

Man, he just doesn’t want to quit, what is he on? Master Sands wonder.

As the large man ventured closer at great speed, Master Sands yelled “*Plantar Fastis!*” A light beam emerged from the base of his sword and shot out of the tip. The beam struck the large man accelerating his legs. His legs kept pumping looking like he did not have the capacity to stop. Then with such great velocity, the large man later found himself stuck splitting a tree in

half. To add insult, Master Sands cut his right arm creating a much more painful experience. This gave Master Sands sufficient time to regroup and run back to Jelly.

“I hope you have what I need,” Master Sands said.

Jelly, with the red vial ready, threw it towards the waiting hands of Master Sands. With a quick drink, he felt the course of energy run through his veins resulting in the healing of his leg.

Master Sands looked back and found the large man missing. He turned to the left to find the large man still in his angered state, but this time, with his misplaced weapon. Master Sands was again surprised at the large man hasty stealthiness, after his successful weapon’s “search and rescue” efforts.

Then with another charge from the large man, he continued his rampage. Master Sands anticipated the show of aggression and waited for the right moment. Next, Master Sands spun counterclockwise with his sword catching the blade of the sledgehammer and pulling the large man forward. With a quick counterattack, he spun the other way cutting off his head. The large black-dressed man fell to his knees and turned into ashes. Feeling proud, Master Sands strutted over to his assistant.

“Did you see that? Did you see how well I took care of the Teck? I learned that from Archer. What number is that for me? I should be in the top three, right? You know I always say this, but we make a great team.” As Master Sands continued to boast about his victory, a white-dressed man hurtled his pike from behind.

“Master Sands, behind you!” Jelly said.

Master Sands instinctually knelt. He saw the small spearhead slide off his shoulder nearly missing his cheek. Then in one motion, he flipped his sword up reversing his grip and thrust it through the large man’s heart. The large white-dressed man collapsed on his back, took one last breathe, and turned into ashes.

“Does that count as three?”

Chapter 1

The Past Future, 2008 PE

It was foolish to think that one person can make a difference. Truly, one person cannot make a difference, but one heart can.

Griffin Northern stood in the middle of the forest with his eyes closed. Most people knew him as Griff, a bluish elf with passive tendencies, green eyes, and black hair from the Pentune Territory.

It was hard to concentrate and focus that day. The process of Kala was a lengthy yet dangerous one. When his father did it for the first time, it almost killed him. Every Nepateen had to go through it, but everyone told him that he was too young to attempt the process. However, this world was once peaceful and has now turned into a treacherous haven for greed and resentment. The only way to survive is to grow up quick.

His Father always said the best way to be one with the forest is to think about the worst moment in your life and let that feeling enrage you. Let it pollute your mind with anger and irritate your veins. When you reach your boiling point, a point you cannot stand anymore, stab this feeling in the heart. This is how you get the forest energy you need to complete Kala.

Griff closed his eyes and pretended that nothing else existed. Then, large shadowy figures came from behind the tall trees and crept along, leaving black smoky trails. Everything about them screamed dangerous and evil, even the weapons they carried. Each of the shadowy figure grabbed an arrow from their quiver. They loaded their crossbows and took their aim. Once the initial arrow left, the rest them sets off like a chain reaction.

Griff finally opened his eyes and found the barrage of arrows heading his way. He closed his eyes again and as the arrows gained closer, his body turned into a clear gel. He looked like a huge jiggling display of clear Jell-O. Each arrow struck the gel structure, penetrating deep. Then, a single sonic boom pulsed from the middle, punching each arrow out. As the arrows shot back passing through each shadowy figure, they disappeared into a black mist. However, one figure avoided his early demise by hiding behind a tree. Griff, still in his gel state, finally turned back into his normal self. Still with his eyes closed, he pulled an arrow, grabbed his bow, and shot it with a curving like motion hitting the last shadow behind the tree. The process of Kala was finally finished. He can now defend himself.

Griff smiled and looked down reaching for the parchment on the ground. He began to read the letter. He found the parchment earlier in the day while searching for food. He knew what it was before he opened it, which prompted his early decision to begin the process of Kala.

Suddenly, another bluish elf swung down from a tree branch and snatched the letter from his hand.

“Hey, give that back!” Griff yelled as he chased down his thief.

The thief released the flexible branch at the perfect moment and somersaulted forward. Griff continued to chase the thief throughout the forest, but the thief was too fast. Frustrated, Griff grabbed his arrow and aimed for the branches at the top of the trees. He tensed up and focused hard. The aim had to be perfect. The released arrow was just able to snap off a branch. He happily watched the branch crashed down on the thief.

“Okay Kore, give it back,” Griff said as stuck out his hand.

“You know how lucky you are. It is not everyday people find the invitation to become a Calic,” Kore said as she handed the parchment.

“I know, that is why I want it back,” Griff said.

Suddenly, the trees flashed red and then back to their natural green color in an alarming fashion.

“Kore hide. The Spiders have crossed the border,” Griff said.

They both ran to a tree and hid in their trunk. They both put their hands on the tree and turned the tree into a liquid state. They were able to walk through the bark as if it was their home. Once inside, the watery bark turned back to normal.

They crouched down frighten. Two goblin-like brown creatures emerged from the bushes and sniffed the area. They were carrying silver sickles in each hand. As they walked around the area, they breathe deeply as if the black leather armor was too tight.

“Evkiz, I know there are some here. I can smell them,” A goblin-like creature said.

“We better hurry Cina. They’ll be here soon,” Evkiz said.

They walked toward the bushes taking a swipe searching for any hidden body. They knocked on different tree trunks in the area.

“The flashes are bothering me, can you make that stop?” Cina said.

“Shut up and keep looking. We don’t have much time. Lord Tristan needs a body to test the orb,” Evkiz said.

Then Kore sneezed.

“I found one,” Cina said.

They ripped off the bark, revealing a frightened Kore.

“Grab her and let’s go,” Evkiz said.

As Cina grabbed the elf by the arm and lifted on his shoulder, Griff popped out of his trunk.

“Let my sister go. You dumb loofs,” Griff yelled.

“Look at this one. He’ll be perfect for the sacrifice as well,” Evkiz said.

Evkiz moved closer to grab Griff. Then, Griff took an arrow and shot towards his head. Evkiz was able to grab the arrow before hitting him and threw it back at Griff’s legs. The fast counterattack left Griff on the ground screaming.

“You didn’t know I could do that did you little one?” Evkiz said.

Evkiz reached down for Griff and suddenly, an arrow hit him in the arm.

“I guess you missed that one,” A person with white wings said.

Evkiz did not seem bothered by the arrow and threw his sickle at the winged person hovering in the air. The sickle flung along passing the winged person, but boomeranged back clipping the leg.

“The reinforcements are here. We have to move. Leave the big one behind,” Evkiz said. He grabbed the sickle as it returned to him and they both ran away carrying Kore with them.

“No, stop, bring her back,” Griff said as the goblins disappeared in the forest background.

“Damn.”

Chapter 2

The Past 2008 AD

The oncoming sea of red-coated guards galloping in one hypnotic motion was more than enough to intimidate anyone. Their elegant ride created a whirlwind of dust along the dirt path. Behind them, the trees stood basking in the glow of the sunny day. After a long ride, they reached their destination of the two-story Victorian house with the red door. The head guard dismounted his horse and focused on the purpose of his visit. With harmful intent, he marched towards the red door, kicked it down, and continued with his rampage followed closely by his entourage of bandits.

“Halt! By order of the Cardinal, you are under arrest for treason. Drop your swords and turn yourself in.” The head guard demanded as he pointed ahead.

“We don’t live by the Cardinal’s rules,” Athos said. He turned to whisper to his comrades.

“What are we going to do? There are fifteen of them and only three of us.”

“Those are my kind of odds.” A moment of silence fell upon them. “Come on brothers. All for one, and one for all!” Porthos said. They came with their swords entangled in the air; and with one deep breathe, they shouted at the top of their lungs and charged the crowd of guards in the foyer. From above, the slight speckle of blue on the eastern side of the room seemed less of a challenge for the enemy. On the western side, the sea of red seemed overbearing, but they preferred not to advance, instead stand their ground. With a quick charging burst from the Musketeers, they met in the middle and the conflict began. The sounds of the fight made beautiful music to the surrounding areas. Clashes of the swords moved fluidly like poetry in motion.

The well-trained red-coated guards had favorable odds, but their training did not teach them how to fight with the Musketeers. They did their best standing their ground, but one by one, the guards fell with extreme pain.

In minutes, the group of fifteen diminished to seven. With the declining numbers, the head guard knew he would be next. As the fight continued, he ran into another room. When he reemerged, a beautiful young blonde maiden stood between him and the fight. Translating body language can be difficult, but holding a person against her wishes was not difficult to understand. Her eyes told the story of terror as they both move from the room. She tried to fight back to

release herself from the grips of her capturer, but his strength denied her. Her body trembled as escape was impossible. However, with the sharp dagger to her throat, it was wise not to make any sudden movements.

“Drop your swords or she dies!” Yelled the guard. He brought the dagger closer to her throat showing the Musketeers he was not messing around. The extremely sharp dagger became visual bargaining tool when a small cut appeared.

“Please, help me. I don’t want to die.” Feeling powerless, the beautiful maiden cried for help with tears running down her cheeks. The Musketeers could see the terror in her eyes, the quivering of her lips, and the blood from her neck. The pleaded cries gave the Musketeers no choice but to surrender.

Clang...Clang...Clang.

“Okay you win, as you can see we are unarmed. We have done our part; now let the maiden go,” Aramis said.

“Ha! Do you think it would be that easy?” The head guard’s unsettling laughter puzzled the Musketeers. With a devious glare, he gestured a quick nod. The Musketeers looked at one another with confusion. Suddenly, the old chandelier came down from above as quick as lighting, striking them like an innocent bystander walking in the rain. The Musketeers did not even know they auditioned for the part of the fool.

One of the less wounded guards got to his feet and went unnoticed by the Musketeers. He sneaked his way to the base of the chandelier’s rope anchor hoping for an opportunity to seize the moment and when the moment came, he slashed the rope. Now, the Musketeers stand unarmed and trapped; probably two of the worst circumstances that could happen when dealing with this sinister adversary.

“As I said before you are under arrest,” The head guard said.

The Musketeers trained for years as one cohesive unit. They learned to fight within close quarters, watching one another’s back throughout the fight. The three of them fought as one, and now they stand trapped as one. Standing between the rings of the old chandelier, they felt their life would be over.

“It looks like the end for us,” Athos said.

“I think not!” An unknown voice shouted from above the rafter.

Everyone swiftly looked up.

A silhouetted figure stood above the hand railing on the second floor. In a hero's pose, the blue cape he had on wave through the air, but the wind was nonexistence. As the clouds dispersed from the outside, the sunlight reached the second floor from across the room, from the decorative glass plane, identifying the silhouetted figure.

"Oh, it's Traveler Sands," The maiden said with great joy.

"Curses, I hate that guy," The head guard said as sparks pop from his mouth.

Traveler grabbed his sword and in one graceful motion, he swung down, kicked the guard in the shoulder, and knocked the dagger out of his hands. The young maiden ran for cover to the nearby table. The head guard jumped to his feet, pulled out his own sword, and prepared for his attack. Traveler paused, quickly winking and smiling to the Musketeers, letting them know that everything was going to be okay. Afterward, Traveler walked up to the head guard, fixed his right glove and then his left. He wiggled his left arm and quickly made three swipes of his sword. Traveler then raised his hand as if he was a magician saying "Tada" after a successful magic trick.

"Ha, you missed. There's not a scratch on me," The head guard said.

"You really think so," Traveler said as he polished his sword with the side of his sleeve.

The head guard looked around with confusion and then looked down at himself. Without realizing it, he was disarmed and the buttons were cut off revealing his hairy chest. The head guard turned a glowing red.

"Someday Traveler, I'll get you!" The head guard said waddling out the door. The other guards left the building kicking up a dust trail as Traveler's swordsmanship convinced them that they did not have a chance. Then, Traveler turned his attention towards the trapped Musketeers. He bent down and easily lifted the chandelier.

"Thanks Traveler for saving us," They all said while shaking his hand.

"Aw, it was nothing guys. It's all part of the job," Traveler said.

The young maiden peeked out hoping the danger had faded away and then without hesitation, she ran towards Traveler. She kissed him all over his face, as a show of gratitude. The different shades of red of her lipstick hid his natural embarrassment. As they held each other, the Musketeers turned and walked away giving him some privacy after a job well done. Finally,

alone, Traveler held the beautiful maiden tightly in his arms, as a frame would hold up a striking painting.

“Oh, Traveler thanks for saving me from the clutches of evil,” She said as she paused from the long embrace. “Oh, by the way do you know where my car keys are?”

Huh, there were no cars in the 1600's. Traveler thought.

“Come on, where are the car keys Traveler? Traveler...we are going to be late...Traveler...!” The maiden voice faded away.

Traveler Sands jolted from his daydream, an obsession he has done quite often when he has time to himself. He stared at the upside down title that rested on his chest, *The Three Musketeers*, a fabulous book about teamwork and loyalty. He closed his eyes again trying to return to that positive state of mind, which he loved so much, but his attempts were futile. He blinked a couple of times trying to get a focus on his surroundings, but instead he realized he was sadly entering the realm of reality.

Traveler hated seeing the living truth in front of the mirror every morning. He could not stand that he did not excel in anything else his family excelled in. Therefore, he turned to the items that made him happy, which happens to be the comfort of his books.

At that age to even today, he loved to read. “Frameworks of the 1950's Automobile,” “The War Hidden behind the General's Eyes,” and “The Science of Basket Weaving” were some titles he would randomly pick up at the library because he wanted to challenge himself. However, his favorite books would have to be the classics tales, as written by great authors such as Charles Dickson, Alexander Dumas, and J.D. Salinger. It allowed him to escape the harshness of the real world and transport his mind to a familiar safe haven. Though the places were in his imagination, the important point was that they were under his control. However, more importantly, Traveler developed an uncanny ability of speed-reading from an early age. He would be able to go through a book and retain the knowledge within a few minutes. His parents never knew how this came about because none of them liked to read.

Traveler could not recognize it before, but his mother stood above him giving him a weird “answer me” look. She kept nudging him and asking for the whereabouts of the car keys.

Traveler never purposely tried to be unruly. He tried to be helpful and courteous whenever he could; however, he gave a typical teenage shrug and answer, which appeared rude.

“I don’t know Mom,” Traveler said.

Frustrated, she walked away giving her typical mother wave, signaling how useless teenagers can be. At the time, he did not know it, but this was the moment where it all began.

The Present 3015, AT

“Wait, wait, I don’t get it,” A child said with his hand way up in the air.

“Umm, sorry child, can you say that again?” The storyteller said.

The crackling fire made it difficult to hear anything other than the sound of his voice.

“I said I don’t get it. You need to tell the story right,” The child answered.

“You don’t get what my child?” The storyteller said.

“He doesn’t look like the Luminati Savior.” The rest of the children nod in agreement.

“Yeah I thought he’d be bigger,” Another child said.

The storyteller slowly stares at each one of them and watches their eagerness for answers. Then, he stares off into the night’s horizon. He feels the balmy night press against his cheek; he hears the slight rustling of the tree, and feels the warmth of the campfire. Then he raises his staff and increasing the intensity of the fire. The children flinch back surprised with his actions.

“Storytelling can be the most challenging thing people do,” The storyteller said. “They have to choose their word carefully and project them at the right moment. One misplaced word or sentence can change the mood dramatically, sometimes unknowingly altering the integrity of the story. Once that happens the moment is lost forever. However, my father once told me that one of the greatest tools a storyteller can have is a powerful character or a hero that can transcend the course of time. Well, this is my powerful character, before the Luminati Revolution. I knew him even before that time. I know him now when I am telling this story, but nobody knew the things he had accomplished.”

“I still don’t get it,” A child interrupted.

“Patience my young ones, this is just the beginning. Please let me continue. You would not know it just by looking at him, but this young man is the savior. You just have to just look pass

his scrawny arms, skinny chicken legs, and flimsy body. Just trust me when I say, this young man is special,” The storyteller said.

There was a puzzling look amongst the children sitting in the crowd.

“You don’t believe me; I don’t blame you. Just listen and watch. I will make a believer out of you yet. In the 232 years of my life, I have never seen anybody as amazing as him. This is going to be an amazing journey of Traveler Sands,” The storyteller said.

“Okay,” The children said in unison.

“So, where was I? Ah yes, right here.”

The Past 2008, AD

Traveler was part of a typical family with everyday problems, but this summer was not a typical summer for him. He did not know it yet, but this summer would be his first step of his long adventures.

Traveler was not tall or athletic like the rest of his family. Let’s just go down the family tree. Traveler’s father was an active military member that lettered in high school football, basketball, and soccer. Traveler’s mother was a track and field star that broke most of the high school records in long distance running and short track sprints. And we all know about the superstar status of Traveler’s brother; if you don’t I will explain later. With a list like that, who can compete? But Traveler tried his best to fit in. There was a time when the entire family tried to teach him the game of soccer. They thought how hard could that be, all he had to do was kick the ball and run. They still do not know how it happened, but that day, somehow he managed to kick his own leg, swept himself to the ground, and dislocated his shoulder-- just unlucky I guess. They spent the rest of the day teaching him how to play wastebasket ball in the emergency room.

Traveler did try his best at every attempt, but just could not keep up with his family. He was certain there must have been a mix up at the hospital. Another theory he developed was that in some far-fetched way, a bunch of ostriches must have raised his ancestors. It just skipped a generation here and there. (I know it sounds silly, but that’s how Traveler’s imagination works sometimes) He did not want to believe it, but every conversation was a huge feat in itself, he had

to extend his neck and lift his chin a little farther up than his normal range. This often led to mild situations of muscles strain. Needless to say, he tried to avoid long conversations.

Even though Traveler's conversations with them were at times brief, they were able to notice his short, dark red hair that just grew long enough to cover the tops of his ears and bits of his eyebrows, which gave them a perfect view of his beautiful brown eyes. Countless times, people have told him he bears a great resemblance to his beautiful mother, Mary Sands.

June 20, 2008, was the first day of summer or some might say Summer Solstice. Many schoolchildren lose focus counting the days left of school and dreaming about their summer adventures, but not Traveler. He loved being in school. For one, it was the one place Jake could not torment him and two, he felt a sense of accomplishment there. This year the principal and his teachers decided to let him skip a grade. He begged the school not to tell his parents. He convinced them the news would sound better coming from him, and he fought with himself day in and day out, on whether his parents needed to know. There was only one force that stopped him from furthering his higher education, and that was--Jake.

Jake was the big man on campus at his high school. How big? Well, if the President of the United States happened to drop by his high school, the secret service agents would quit their assignment immediately and join Jake's security team. He was the star athlete, and everybody worshipped him. To give you an example of his star status, he had his own parking spot, napping privileges, and his own nutritional coach, in other words a personal chef.

Next year, Jake would enter his senior year. College scouts would be coming from everywhere to sign the next big thing that happened to college football. Some sportswriters have wrote that he was "pound for pound the finest specimen of a pure athlete" Traveler knew that Jake could not afford any distractions and his little brother joining him in high school would definitely be one. Nevertheless, that was the least of his worries. Traveler had other ideas on his mind. He was beginning to realize that his life was not the typical family life. It all started with a trip to see his grandfather.

On the way there, Traveler's family did their best to pass the time. Traveler's father was limited to the amount of activities he could do, but he had his own special way of passing the time. He would often listen to classic rock stations at a higher decibel level than his normal vocal

range, and when a great song came on, he would tap furiously on the steering wheel. His rhythmic beatings were never in beat with the music, but he did not care.

Mary never liked the radio stations he had on, so she would pull out her iPod shuffle that was loaded with classical music. She tried to swoosh her hands with the beat of the music, acting as if she was in control of every note the orchestra played. She could have done this for hours, and sometimes she had too.

Jake did his best to pass the time as well, but at Traveler's expense. Jake and Traveler never got along. Like oil and water, the two did not mix well. Jake hated Traveler from the moment he came into the world and tormented him as much as he could. You see, Jake was a spotlight hog and loved being the center of attention. Even at the somewhat mature age of seventeen, Jake still makes every effort to torture Traveler.

His parents never knew what was going on. For all they knew, they had two little angels in the backseat. Mary pulled out her ears buds and said,

"Honey, it has been a long time since you have seen your Dad."

"And if we have left at 0700 hours like I wanted to, we could have been there sooner and now, we're stuck in traffic," Traveler's father said while tightening his grip on the wheel. He could not find a song on the radio that he liked for quite awhile.

"Honey, don't snap at me. I didn't put all these cars on the road," Mary said.

Suddenly AC/DC "Thunderstruck" came on and his mood lightens up. "I'm sorry Babe. You're right, I haven't seen him in awhile. I get a little guilty when I don't." He paused. "I love this part." He needed to slam his imaginary crash cymbal. "You know, I try to be the best son I can, but there is only so much I can do," Eric said while mouthing out the words to the end of the song.

Traveler's father was Major Eric Sands, a United State Air Force officer. Serving his country was, at times, challenging. Being stationed all over the world, deployed to unknown areas, and exposed to stressful work environments could sometimes take a toll. However, the benefits can outweigh the negatives. The best part of his job, the part he loved the most, was the vacation time. The man loved to travel. His travels led him to the best seats in the house. Viewing the aesthetic historic buildings and beautiful landscaping through his eyes was better

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