Outside, under the ground, I can hear nothing other than the scurrying of the cockroaches’ feet beside me. I hurry along, wishing to be out of the cramped space.

Wriggling and wriggling, I finally noticed that we were heading back up towards the surface. I could feel the wind from the opening that the cockroaches had made for me. Squeezing and pushing myself along, I made it out. I crept along the floor and slowly opened my eyes.

There, right in front of my face, were a pair of shoes.

I recognised those shoes.

I had seen them a million times before.

The warden!

Terrified, I looked around. We had appeared at the edge of the cliff. I was surrounded. Only two options, back to the Hall or off...

"The cliff!" shouted the General inside my head. "Off the cliff!"

"Off the cliff?" I shouted back, in panic.

The warden had taken a step closer to me and he reached down towards me. Pushing myself out of his reach, I found myself closer to the brink of the cliff.

"Now, now, boy. Come away from the edge," the warden stepped back, looking worried. "Come back to the Hall and we can talk."

"Talk? How was that going to work when I couldn't speak?" I wondered, watching him carefully. I was afraid that he would grab me and drag me back to Spectrum Hall.

"There's nothing for you there. Come with us," the General instructed. "Over the edge."

Peering carefully over my shoulder, I saw the sheer drop of the cliff.

I looked back at the warden.

The cockroach general was right. There was nothing for me at the Hall.

Taking a step backwards, I felt my foot hover on the edge.

Another step and over I went...falling...falling...until...

Suddenly, I was grabbed by something sharp.

No, not some*thing,* somethings!

Opening the eyes that I hadn't realised that I had closed, I saw them...the pigeons. They had been waiting for me. They had caught me and were now taking me up, up, up into the air.

Away from Spectrum Hall.

Feeling the wind on my face, I could not believe how lucky I was. Had anyone ever escaped from Spectrum Hall before? I doubted it. I couldn't believe how close I had been!

The look on the warden's face!

Hardly daring to move, I kept very still as the pigeons carried me away into the night sky. Where were we going?

"You will see Kester, you will see!" Still the pigeons spoke to me, inside my head.

I thanked them for helping me escape.

"You will help us, Kester. You will save us."

"Save you how?" I wondered.

"You will see."

Feeling a little bit frightened, I wasn't sure what the pigeons would expect me to do. Knowing better than to ask, I kept quiet while we continued on our journey to...

All of a sudden, I felt myself being lowered to the ground. In a matter of minutes, my feet touched the uneven ground.

Looking around me, I could see where we were.

I knew this place.

I lived here.

This was my home.

"DAD!" I thought.

Rushing into my house, I threw back the door and darted inside. I was so excited. The pigeons had carried me home.

"Kester, wait!"

Startled, I came to a stop in the living room. Something was not right.

It didn't look the same.

It didn't smell the same.

Where was Dad?

"We can show you but you need to help us."

"Help you with what?" I asked them.

"Saving the animals. Saving us all, Kester."

How was I supposed to do that?

"We know where your father is," the pigeons said. "He was trying to help us but he needs you. He needs you to help us."

What did that mean? I wondered. How could I, a boy of 12, help my father, the scientist. I needed to talk to him. But how? I couldn't speak, even if I knew where he was.

"Use your mind, Kester. Let him in."

Let him in? He wasn't here! I couldn't let him into my mind when he wasn't here.

"Try," the pigeons said. "Open your mind and listen. He's not far away."

Closing my eyes and conjuring an image of my dad in my head, I concentrated really hard.

Thinking hard, I could recall the sound of his voice.

"Kester," I heard him say. "Kester."

"Dad! Dad!" I shouted, in my head. "Dad, where are you? I need you."

"I'm where the animals are. Look for me Kester. Look for me with the animals."

"But I don't know where that is, Dad. Please, help me find you," I called.

Fading slowly, the voice in my head whispered, "Look for me..."

Knowing he was gone, I didn't ask him anything further.

Looking back at the pigeons, I saw them watching me closely. Wondering if they knew where he was, I studied them and wondered just how far they could take me. They said that Dad was close by but the adults at Spectrum Hall kept telling us that the animals were gone.

"We can show you," the pigeons told me.

Placing my trust in the pigeons, I went outside and opened my arms for them to take hold of me once more. Gripping me in their claws, the lifted me off the ground. I closed my eyes and let them lead me where we needed to go.

A while later, I felt myself being lowered to the ground. Opening my eyes, I could not believe what I saw before me.

Surrounded by large, green trees, I could hear the sound of animals rustling in the distance. Shocked, I slowly stepped forward. Would my dad be here?

Racing through the trees, I searched everywhere.

Everywhere I looked, I saw green trees, long grass and I heard the rustling again.

Eventually, I found the source of the rustling.

A deer. A beautiful, male deer with antlers reaching for the sky.

"Kester, you found me."

It was my dad's voice. I whipped around looking for him.

"Where are you?" I shouted in my head.

"Turn around."

I turned slowly.

It was the deer.

He was talking to me.

He sounded like my dad.

"Dad?" I asked.

The deer nodded.

"What happened?"

He explained that he had found a way to save the deer from the virus. By placing his own mind inside the deer, he saved it from dying out with the rest of his kind. Knowing that I wouldn't understand, Dad showed me that the virus had affected the mind of the animals and that had caused their eyes to glow. When this happened, it was only a few days before the animals would die. Dad had surrounded himself with animals and had caught the virus. Researching its effect on his own body, he knew he would have to leave his own body. Joining with the last deer, he was able to save them both.

"How can we help the rest of the animals though?" I wondered.

"I have found a cure," Dad told me. "I know how to cure the animals that are left."

"But they're all gone, Dad." I said.

"No, they aren't," he replied. "They're hiding. They're protecting themselves. We have to save them."

Spending the next year together, Dad and I found the animals and used his research to save them. Using my gift to speak with the animals, I was able to help them understand what had happened and explained Dad's plan to save them. We made the medicine using the plants that grew in the forest where I had found Dad.

Slowly but surely, the animals came back into society.

I hadn't found my voice, but that didn't matter. I had found my dad and, together, we had saved the animals.