

Westcrest

Episode #2 — Joy Ride

Jeremy kicks a leg over the bike and settles in behind Marcus.

“Hold my jacket,” says Marcus, indicating with his hands where Jeremy should tighten his grip. “Don’t let go.”

Noticing the lack of any helmets, Jeremy opens his mouth to mention it; then the bike takes off.

Jets of blue flame arc out behind them, scorching the bricks. Jeremy almost falls off in surprise but clings tight as the alley speeds past. As the bike reaches the road, Marcus raises its front wheel from the asphalt and the bike’s engine roars like some demonic stallion.

Jeremy tightens his grip and squints as the bike screams away from the kerb and the city dissolves into threads of light all around him.

Marcus whoops and turns to look at Jeremy, who urges him to keep his eyes on the road.

But traffic is no problem for Marcus as he ducks and weaves through the city streets. They pass theatres, parks and row after row of apartment buildings, leaving only a whisper of hot air in their wake.

Marcus works the throttle as they crest a hill and briefly pass into the air. Jeremy’s eyes widen as the wheels don’t return to the ground but windows begin to drift past him as they rise further into the air.

“A *flying* motorbike?” He says doubtfully and Marcus laughs.

“Helena will kill me,” says Marcus as the bike descends towards an expanse of empty road. Trees line the sides of the street and a cool breeze tumbles in from the lake.

“Helena?”

“You’ll meet her soon,” says Marcus as the bike hits the ground. For a moment the bike thrashes wildly from side to side and it takes every effort for Jeremy not to lose his grip. As Marcus regains control of the bike they begin to pick up speed.

Then Jeremy realises where they are headed—towards a low metal railing that separates them from Lake Freyja.

Jeremy screams as Marcus works the throttle and lifts the front wheel from the road. As they pass over the railing, Jeremy loses his grip. His arms flail as the bike tumbles towards the crisp surface of the lake.

Marcus grabs Jeremy with one hand, holding him on the bike. Its wheels spin furiously, while jets of hot air keep them above the water and propel them forward.

“Stay still,” he tells Jeremy.

“I can’t swim,” Jeremy offers weakly, as the dark surface of the lake churns beneath them. Once more he tightens his grip around Marcus. A thick mist rises up around them as they continue across the lake.

“Almost there,” says Marcus.

“But Lake Freyja is empty,” says Jeremy, but with much less conviction than he would have shown earlier that night.

“So you think,” says Marcus and as though on cue there comes the deep, bellowing call of something unseen.

“That’s just Nessie,” explains Marcus as Jeremy snaps his head from side to side, searching for the source of the noise.

“Is it too late to change my mind about the ride?” Asks Jeremy through chattering teeth as the mist begins to fall away from the bike and a beacon of light blooms out of the darkness.

As they draw closer to the light, Jeremy realises that they haven’t reached the far side of Lake Freyja, but an island at the very centre of it. And in the middle of the island stands an enormous mansion, beyond a shore of white sand.

The mansion is constructed of dark brick and decorated with sections of white trellis, overgrown with ivy. High, narrow windows look across at the lake amid gabled rooftops, and fluted columns frame a pair of imposing wooden doors. Rolling green lawn stretches out before the mansion and Jeremy can see both the glass panels of a conservatory and the domed top of an observatory nestled beside the main building.

“We’ll go in at the back,” says Marcus. As he guides the bike around the island Jeremy notices that the fog around them has dissipated and hundreds of glimmering lights twinkle like stars from across the dark waters.

But Jeremy doesn’t look back at the city for more than a second, preferring instead to keep his eyes fixed on the impossible island.

“Welcome to Westcrest,” says Marcus.