

Chapter 14: School Begins

Chris and Bobby were up early and ready for school. They walked out the door and Davey, Billy, and Junior ran up behind them.

“Hey guys,” Davey said, “wait up.”

Chris slowed down so they could catch up.

“Do you know how to get there?” Davey asked.

“Yeah,” Chris said mom told us.

“Oh yeah,” Davey said, “forget that she grew up here.”

“Do you know what class you’re in?” Chris asked Davey.

“They’ll tell us when we get there,” he said, and they all walked along together not saying too much. Junior picked up a rock and threw it down the street, which prompted Billy and Bobby to do the same.

They walked down Patrician Drive until they came to a short standing of woods and walked through the woods, then across the field behind Jeff Davis (junior high school), to the main road which led to Bethel Elementary a few blocks away.



They walked through the open main doors and a man standing in the hallway greeting them who was directing students on where to go.

“Good-morning boys,” he said, “I’m Mr. Ballaugh, your principal,” he said shaking their hands, “what grade are you in?”

“Sixth,” Chris said.

“Second,” Bobby said.

“Last name?” he asked as he looked at his clipboard.

“Charme,” Chris said.

“Ah,” he said when he found their names, “Chris you’re in room fourteen and Bobby you’re in room one down this hall.”

“Davey you’re in room twelve with Chris,” he said, “so show him where to go,” then he looked at Billy and Junior, “you both are in room two.”

Davey gave Chris a high-five because they were in the same room, then Davey led the way and Chris followed.

As they walked towards their room, several said hi to Davey and most just looked at Chris and wondered who he was.

“Hi Chris,” Debbie said as she walked ahead of him into her room, which just happened to be the same room as theirs.

“Hi Debbie,” Davey said, “so you met Chris at the pool?”

“Yeah,” she said, “he was doing some cool dives off the high dive.”

Chris just looked down and acted a little embarrassed.

“High dive?” Davey said, “I’ll show you some moves next time we go,” he continued, “the pool is still open until the end of the month.”

“Sure,” Chris said to Debbie as she swished by him to greet her friend who had saved her a seat.

“Who’s that?” Donna asked Debbie as she sat down, “he’s cute.”

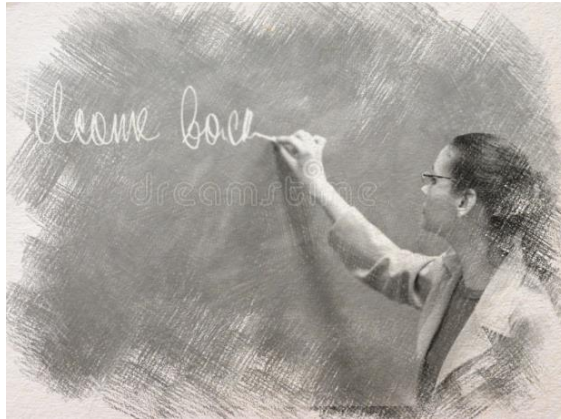
“His name is Chris,” Debbie said, “he’s from California.”

“California? Cool,” Donna said loud enough for Chris and Davey to hear.

“You’re already popular if Debbie likes you,” Davey said, “way to go.”

“I didn’t do anything,” he said, and looked over at Debbie and she smiled back at him.

“Ok class let’s settle down,” the teacher said when she walked in. “I’m Mrs. Butter,” she said as she wrote her name on the board.



She continued, “hope you all had a nice summer, she looked down at her notebook, “I’m gonna call roll now,” she continued, “Brenda Abbot”, she looked up and recognized Brenda as she raised her hand.

“David Bell,” she looked up, and he nodded at her, and she check him off her list.

“Bubba Buttress,” she looked up and didn’t see him, “then he dashed through the door and sat down in the back.

“Here ma’am,” he called out as he sat down.

She gave him a stern look for being late. She continued with the role until she got to “Christopher Charme (she pronounced it Charmey)”, and everyone laughed, “that’s Chris Charme (charm ay)” he corrected her, “it’s French,” he noticed that Debbie and Donna looked at each other, then smiled back at him.

“Ah,” Mrs. Butter said, “thank you for the correction Chris.” She continued until she finished the role.

“Today,” Mrs. Butter explained, “I’d like everyone to write a one-page short story telling us who you are and something memorable that happened this summer,” she said looking around and quickly quieting them for their mumbling and complaining, “I’ll call on each of you to stand up and read it to the class,” more complaining sounds, “now,” she continued, “let’s get started, and remember just one page, three paragraphs.”

Chris wrote his pretty quickly. When finished he put his pencil down and looked around. Most everyone was still writing. He looked at the teacher and she returned him a smile.

After about thirty minutes, she announced, “ok class, that should be plenty of time, now let’s hear about each of you. Let’s begin with Chris Charme (pronouncing it correctly this time), since he finished first.

Oh no, Chris thought, that's what I get.

He came up to the front of the class and everyone stopped writing and gave him their full attention.

Chris read:

"My name is Chris Charme. I was born in Jacksonville, Florida, lived in Virginia Beach until I was six-years-old, then moved to San Diego. I have a younger brother, Bobby, who also goes to school here.

We moved to Hampton this summer into my grandpa's house on Patrician Drive, which is also where I mom grew up. My mom also went to this school when she was little.

I like to surf and skateboard, but I like surfing better. I went to Virginia Beach this summer and surfed with my mom and dad. The waves were small, but I had fun.

I like our new home. I met some new friends (he looked at Davey, then Bubba, then Debbie – and she smiled), but I miss my family and friends in San Diego too.

Then he sat down.

"Thank you Chris," Mrs. Butter said, "that was very interesting," she said, "so both your mom and dad surf?" she asked.

“Yeah,” Chris said proudly, “and they skate too, I mean skateboard.”

Debbie and Donna looked at each other again and now think he’s even cooler than ever.

“Thank you Chris,” she said, “who’s next?” and several students raised their hands.

“Ok Debbie,” Mrs. Butter pointed to her, “you can go next.”

Debbie looked at her paper and began reading:

“My name is Debbie Coffner, I live at 29 Northampton Drive and I was born here. I have two sisters, Katie and Diane, who are younger than me and haven’t started school yet. My dad is a pilot in the Air Force, and my mom is a house wife, and president of the Women’s Club.

I like swimming and diving and I also like to skate (roller skating that is). I also love to read and over the summer, I read some good books, my favorite was “Where the Red Fern Grows.”

I also spent a lot of time at the pool this summer (she looked at Chris) and met some new friends.”

She sat down and Donna high-fived her.

“Very nice Debbie,” Mrs. Butter said, “thank you.”

Many shared their stories and Chris learned a lot about his classmates and wondered which ones he would eventually be friends with. He like Davey and Bubba, and now he thought he might like Debbie too.

“How’d you like your class Bobby?” Davey asked when he went to meet him at his classroom with Chris.

“It’s ok,” Bobby said. “The teacher is nice,” he said as he hooked back up with Billy and Junior and they all began the long trek back home.

As they walked through the short woods, Davey stopped and said, “this is where everyone comes after school at Jeff Davis to fight.”

“What?” Bobby said.

“Yeah,” Billy jumped in, “there were some good fights last year,” he continued, “even two girls got into a fight.”

“Yeah,” Junior said remembering the fight, “they were pulling hair and everything!”

“You gotta be kidding?” Chris said.

“Nope,” Davey said, “you’ll see.”

They got close to home and Davey yelled out, “see ya tomorrow!” and he and Billy ran across the street to catch up with their dad who had just pulling into the driveway.

“How was school?” mom asked as they came into the house and headed to the kitchen for some snacks and Freedom jumped up to greet them.

“It was ok,” Chris said.

“Ok,” Bobby agreed, “I like my teacher.”

“Good,” mom said, “I’m so glad you liked it,” as she thought back to when she was a child going there with her sister, “I have some great memories from that school.”

Dad pulled up in the driveway and Freedom cried at the back door until Chris opened the door to let her out. Bob petted her for a few minutes then came in.

“Hey guys,” dad said as he washed his hands, “how was school?” Chris nodded his approval as munched on an apple and Bobby said, “Good”. Dad smiled at mom and let Freedom out to run in the back yard. Bobby ran out to play with her.

