

LION HEART AND ALESSIO: THE VICTORY RIDE

by Megan Joy Chapman

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PROLOGUE

HEY, SPORTS FANS, dudes, and dudettes. How’z it? My name’s Victor (aka Vic) and I’m a skate rat. In other words, I’m a die-hard skateboarder with big dreams. My motto—*Be Victorious*.

But this zany tale you’re about to read isn’t about me—It’s about my favorite family on the planet—Jed and Mak’s family. But prepare yourselves ‘cause some of the characters in this story are total wack jobs. But hey, let’s be real. No one’s perfect—we all have our issues we need to work out. Right?

OK, I’m not gonna beat around the bush, so here’s the deal. You’re about to embark on a killer adventure with my bros, Jed and Mak. So if you’re game for some eccentric family drama, sick skateboarding, and a good belly laugh, then grab a bev with some popcorn and just hang back and enjoy the ride!

Later!

Chapter 1

CATCHIN' AIR

Labor Day Weekend
The Victory Ride Skateboarding Competition
Massachusetts

JED'S DARK HAIR peeked out of his gray camo beanie. He watched, wide-eyed, from the stands as his older cousin Mak took his signature stance. Mak looked like a crouching tiger ready to eat everyone's lunch. He wore his favorite black T-shirt that read *Face your fears*. That was Mak's motto. With a crooked grin and fierce look in his eye, Mak touched the front of his silver Pro-tec helmet and let fly.

Yep, that's my cousin! Jed wanted to shout when Mak launched off the lip of the quarter-pipe. Mak had sucked so much air, he looked like he was flying in slow motion. Man, what a rush to see him soar, his sandy hair streaming out of his helmet with a slight smile on his clinched lips. Showing off with only three seconds left, Mak grabbed the tail of his board, sending his family into a hooting rage. They were always the rowdiest bunch—full-on sports fanatics.

"That's the way to be, Mak!" Grandpa Holt hollered, pumping his fist.

Grandma stuck two fingers into her mouth and whistled over the loud music. She was trying to compete with Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust." Considering Mak was totally

slaying his tricks, it was pretty ironic for *that* song to be playing.

“Get ‘em, Lysandros!” the rest of the gang bellowed, calling Mak by his last name.

Even Mak’s two-year-old brother, Little Anatoli, was into it. With gold jewelry dangling from his neck and a Binky still in his mouth, he kept raising his pudgy hand above his head and shouting, “Bravo, Makarios, bravo!”

Makarios (aka Mak) and Little Anatoli were half-Greek—hence the funky names, gold jewelry, and European lingo. As soon as they both started walking and talking, Mak and Little Anatoli used their hands to emphasize their words. And if you listened very carefully, you heard a tinge of a Greek accent. Their dad, Eleftherios (aka E), was 100 percent Greek. He was born and raised in Greece, he spoke Greek as well as English, and all his ancestors were from the Old Country. When E married Mak’s American mom, who was Jed’s mom’s sister, Bean, they moved to the United States. That’s where Mak and his brother were born. So that made Mak and Little Anatoli half-Greek and half-American.

Even Jed was a smidge Greek, ‘cause his dad had Greek ancestors. But Jed’s dad was born in America and spoke only English. If it weren’t for their double-shot of Greek coffee-colored hair and deep, glistening brown eyes—plus the fact that they *loved* feta cheese—no one would ever know that Jed or his dad were Greek. Their swag was full-on all-American.

Jed loved hanging with Mak and the fam. Sunday dinners at Jed’s house were the best. Grandma Holt always cooked up a megafeast while the rest of the gang caught a game on the tube, usually the Red Sox or Patriots. Then Jed and Mak would skate ‘til dark on the quarter-pipe in the driveway.

Family ties aside, skateboarding linked Jed and Mak way closer than blood. As soon as they mounted their skateboards

for the first time, Jed and Mak dreamed about going pro. In fact, they hoped to get sponsored someday and skate for the United States. I mean, what could be better than traveling the world competing against the best? *Nothing*, they had agreed.

Don't get me wrong. Even though Jed and Mak were die-hard skate rats, they still played every sport known to man: hockey, soccer, baseball, lacrosse—you name it. But when they didn't have a game or practice, they skateboarded together. They'd been practicing nonstop since Jed was four years old and Mak was seven. Whether it was Sunday sessions in Jed's driveway or hitting their favorite skate park just south of Boston, Jed and Mak made sure to snag plenty of airtime. Jed's potential blew Mak's mind. He was popping ollies at age five with nothing short of a Rocket Power skateboard! Jed had seen the Rocket Power on Nickelodeon and just had to have it. But Jed retired that baby. Now he rocked a Plan B, just like Mak.

Mak always treated Jed like an equal. Their three-year age gap didn't matter. When Jed joined Mak at Victory Skate Park for the first time, Mak introduced him to the other kids by saying, "This is my cousin, Jed. He rips!" Then he took Jed on a deep drop. With his Greek swag in check, Mak rose his hands and looked Jed square in the eyes. "No fear, Jed."

Of course, Jed's stomach clenched and his big brown eyes grew skittish. Mak was crazy! And I mean, can ya blame the dude for thinking it? Mak had talked Jed up so much to all his bros, and now Jed had to prove it!

"C'mon, Jed. I know you can do it," Mak had said. "*Just believe!*"

So Jed cranked up what little courage he had and charged it.

But it didn't matter if Jed nailed it or not. Mak always met him at the bottom, beaming. "You keep that up, little Jedster," he would encourage, "and you'll be the next Ryan Sheckler!" Mak was like a supercool big brother Jed never had.

Before long, Jed was the one challenging Mak! He'd bounce new tricks off Mak to see who could go higher, faster, or better. They both loved the competition and earned the respect of their peers. Their rep started growing around their suburban Boston neighborhood. "Two skate rats chasing a dream!"—that's what the other kids at the skate park always said.



The music blared: "Bump, bump, bump! Another one bites the dust!" People in the stands continued hooting and hollering. Jed curled his toes with nervous expectation and held his breath. Mak had steered his board and was ready to drop in, and Jed wished he could fast-forward a whole year, when he'd finally be old enough to enter the Victory Ride skateboarding competition with Mak.

With an intense expression gripping Mak's face, his board finally made contact with the earth again. He blazed down the ramp and skidded to a stop on the cement.

Epic landing!

Mak took off his helmet to check the overhead clock. His hair was damp, sticking to his forehead. When he saw that he'd made perfect time, he pumped his arms over his head.

"Yeah, baby!" he said, cheering himself on.

Jed and Mak's family went nuts, as most New Englanders do when one of their own claims victory. Mak tucked his board under his arm and flashed them a thumbs-up. His

confident smile was so broad that his aquamarine eyes looked like paper-thin slits.

Stoked for his cousin, Jed pushed through the crowd to be the first to congratulate Mak. *Only one more year, and we'll be competing in the Ride together!*

Or so Jed thought.

Unfortunately, life doesn't always turn out the way we plan. Life as Jed knew it was about to take a sketchy turn...



A TEXT FROM LION HEART AND ALESSIO

Hey, skate rat warriors!

Thanx for comin along on our 1st mission. Hope ya had fun. We had a blast! Anyways, make sure ya keep ur eyes peeled 4 our next 2 assignments—Mission Peace and Mission Patience. We'll give ya a hint. One involves a hollow leg. The other, snowboarding on a glacier! Sounds crazy, we know. But that's how we roll!

Oh yeah, 1 more thing. Don't 4get 2 check out ur personal invitation below. Just sign ur name & hop on the ride. Jesus has a great adventure planned 4 u!

So guess there's just 1 thing left 2 say . . .

May His Spirit b with u!

Ur friends,

Lion heart & alessio (aka lh & a)

AN INVITATION TO THE LORD'S SALVATION

"AN INVITATION TO THE LORD'S SALVATION"

TO MY CHILD:  _____ FROM: GOD- THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

THIS COUPON ENTITLES YOU, _____, TO ETERNAL LIFE IN MY KINGDOM.
TO RECEIVE THIS FREE GIFT, YOU MUST REDEEM IT HERE: AT THE CROSS.

HERE'S HOW:

1. Confess and repent of your sins: Admit that you've sinned against Me. Tell Me you're sorry for the things you've done wrong and that you're going to stop.
2. Have faith in Jesus Christ, My Son: Believe that when Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment for your sin.
3. Begin a relationship with Jesus through His Holy Spirit: Ask Jesus to come into your life, to fill you with His Holy Spirit and to take away your sins.

If you accept this invitation for eternal life in heaven, scratch here for bonus reward:

*Coupon expires at time of death



IN LOVING MEMORY



No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind
has imagined what God has prepared for those
who love him.

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

NIKOLAOS LYKOURINOS

AKA: Nikos

Motto: *“Face your fears”*

Born: March 28, 1996

Victorious: June 24, 2008

CONTACT THE AUTHOR

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If you signed your name on the Invitation to the Lord's Salvation and decided to begin a relationship with Jesus through His Holy Spirit, email us at:

LHandA@meganjoychapman.com

We'd be stoked to hear about it!