



DOOR  
into the  
SKY

by Jared "Hawk" Yelton



## Contents

Introduction	New Horizons
Chapter One	Everything Changes
Chapter Two	Learning the Basics



# Introduction New Horizons

My Tuesday began pretty bad. It just didn't want to be a good day; I hate Tuesdays. I had to get up at six to get ready for school and I'd forgot to set my alarm clock, that started things badly from the very beginning. I missed the bus and got a ride with a neighbor. Then I noticed I'd forgotten my algebra book. So I received a zero on my assignment and slept through english. I got a pink slip in type class for typing a short paragraph when I was supposed to be typing a memo. Finally it was time to go to lunch, but naturally, I'd forgotten my card and with or without breakfast, I was going to starve some more. I somehow lived through that, then fell asleep in science, and missed the written formula for our next lab project, which now I would have to get someone to show me, or forfeit. The bell rang and my seventh hour class did not bring happiness to me, even if it was the last one. It was what I had nicknamed "R.S." for 'Retarded Sports', which is a better description for physical education class. I wound up having to be the so-called 'captain', and led the thirty students through a bunch of garbage they called exercises, which were nothing more than simple movements quite unlike any that might appear on a fitness TV show. Then I discovered we were playing football, which has got to be the last thing on earth I would want to do for fun. I think a more appropriate name would be 'SmooG', an acronym for 'Simulated Murder On Outdoor Grounds'. Fortunately, I was able to remain at a distance from any action. Finally I got to go home, which could have been a disaster itself, but went fairly well. However, I was locked out of my house and had to wait for my mom to get home from work. After about half an hour, I remembered that she was gone to my grandma's and I was supposed to get off there and help them with some basement furniture. So I left my school bag on the steps and walked the half mile to my grandma's. There I found a fury of angry people, because I was not only late, but they had hurt themselves trying to get a large chair down a narrow staircase. I was without hope, they didn't know I had lived through hell at school, as my expression showed. Of course, my grandma saw this, and being in one of her unusually foul moods thought I was displeased with her or her home, or something. She began to get a disgusted look and one way or another, I was eventually told to go away. I walked back home in silence, with no one to talk or complain to. Passing the road to my work place, I thought painfully about the 90 degree heat I would soon have to work in. Arriving at home, I found my school bag covered with bird droppings and cursed myself for leaving it under the feeder. Mom drove up five minutes later, and yelled at me for not leaving the key out, which I had not been able to find anyway. I got inside and had some lunch, although not enough to fill me, and noticed the time. I was now twenty minutes late for work. I went down to do my chores and found my boss not happy. Sometimes I could be a little late and he wouldn't care, but he seemed to not like it this time. A corral of cows had already been fed and the small calves watered. I fed without too much difficulty and began heading back home.

The large tree just north of where I worked had three or four hawks in it, a large nest had been there for several years. I sometimes watched them, but had never paid much attention to where they went or exactly what they did. I watched them now for a few minutes and wondered if they ever had problems like I did. Probably not. They flew over everything; not too much to worry about, I supposed.

Finally I got home and had dinner and went to bed. My bad day was over and tomorrow was going to be better; I hoped. I set my alarm and planned for a better day.

Everything went well, perfectly fine, during school on Wednesday. I lived through it all without trouble. Then I went to work on time but took forever to get done. I wasn't feeling that great, at least, not like working and feeding cows. Walking home from work, I suddenly had a strange feeling, like someone was calling my name. I looked around and tried to determine where it was coming from. I walked into the nearby field to see if that was where it was from. I heard it again. It was like a summons, but not my name. I knew it was calling me, it was like a different language. I understood, but yet, I didn't know the words.

"Who is calling me?" I asked.

The voice called again.

"Where are you?" I looked all directions, but the field was desolate.

The voice continued, and eventually it became clear that I was supposed to look up.

There, circling above me, about fifty feet high, was one of the hawks. I stopped myself from assuming anything, knowing that this had to be a joke. I began searching for an FM receiver or some kind of electronic device. I had friends that might try something like this. But the voice went on again, in more of a telepathic meaning than a language. It meant to look up again. I knew it wasn't a joke anymore, but who was it? It obviously wasn't the bird. I looked up and found the hawk descending. It landed on a fence ten yards away. The voice said to come here.

I had no idea what was going on, but I walked leisurely over to the fence where the hawk was perched, thinking how unusual it was for it not to be scared. The hawk never flew. Its head was eye level and now only a couple of feet away from me. I had never been so close to one in my life. I liked birds of prey, but I never considered actually watching and studying them. Nevertheless, this was an incredible experience.

I heard the voice again, this time indicating that it was right before me. Which meant it had to be the hawk. I began to think I was crazy. But I wanted to see if it really was the bird, or if it was an elaborate practical joke. The voice began speaking again, now in understandable words:

"I have been watching you for quite some time, actually, a great deal of time—and I am interested to know more about you and your ways."

"What?" I asked.

"You understand, but you are unsure of this. I didn't consider... You have probably never talked in this manner before. It is a common method of conversing between all creatures. It is used only in very special or rare occasions. It is understood by everything because it doesn't use words; it uses meanings. Now you understand it better because you have listened, and you interpret it in your own way."

"You mean that animals and people actually can communicate?"

"Yes, but very rarely. If animals conversed with themselves, there would be havoc on the planet. Most animals have no understanding of any communication, so therefore very little occurs. But my point is to ask you something, if you would consider it."

"Uh, yeah, what?"

"I have lived a long time for my kind. And I have excelled at what I must do to survive. This has given me time to become acquainted with other kinds of life. I found my main interest in the dangerous world of humans. They seem to dominate the world, which, in many ways, they do. But I wanted to learn more about them and get to know their ways. I have watched you for a long time. And now I am finally glad to have my courage up and be able to face you like this. You may not notice it, but right now, I'm scared out of my mind to sit here like this. We all have instincts that safeguard us from possible harm with humans."

"What is all of this leading to, though?" I asked, stepping slightly closer. The hawk remained steady, although its head jerked somewhat. It never moved its beak, except twice quickly for something. It was hard to get used to talking to something that didn't move its mouth.

"I am wanting to ask your cooperation in something that has never been tried before..."

"Oh, sorry to interrupt, but, what is your name?" I had to know.

"My name? You are young, and naturally inexperienced with our ways. We have no names, not in such a manner as you mean. But we are often called by our parents something that reflects our personality or distinctive traits. My name, then, is Atwheek-fweehir."

The word made no sense, it sounded like a strange hawk's whistle. But there was an implied meaning. I knew from the sound that there was wisdom, courage, and extreme curiosity in that mysterious mind. I had never even wondered if there was such intelligence other than the human race. And now I knew a secret, regardless of the objective of this whole ordeal.

"Anything else?" the bird cocked its head and stared intently. Its fiery red eyes majestic behind the hooked black and yellow beak.

"I suppose... I just wanted to know why, of all people, you would decide finally upon myself."

"My range is great, but is not unlimited. This area is ideal for my survival because there are not too many people, abundant fields, and very little altered earth. Much of this land is natural and unchanged. That is how I prefer things; untouched as they are begun, and changing only as they should. Few people around this region seem like desirable souls. You are also very close to my residence, where I spend a lot of my resting time," the bird looked up for a second, behind its back at an impossible 180 degrees. Its nest was in sight from the field, in the highest part of the large tree, some hundred feet up. Then it continued to gaze into my own eyes. "You were close, and you were understandable. I could almost imagine what your intentions may have been; that they were good, and that you were also looking for new horizons."

"My main reason for summoning you and conversing with you is that I would like to ask if you were indeed looking for new horizons, and if so, what do you seek?"

"I really don't know. I just live and let live, I guess. I suppose I am too careless, as far as the fact that I am letting my whole life slip away in a slow, melting fashion. I guess I'm too lazy to do anything about it. What I really need is a vacation from it all."

"I knew you may have had some distant thoughts, perhaps."

I noticed that the sun was setting, but nevertheless just as hot. I was quite uncomfortable standing in dry alfalfa, in the hot sun, talking to a wild bird. The whole of it all made me nervous and sweaty. "I was wondering if perhaps we could move to a different location. Somewhere we could talk and I would be a little more comfortable."

"You are uncomfortable?"

"Yes, I am unable to simply stand in a fixed spot for a long time. I've been working and my legs are tired, uh, what was your name again?"

"Atweehk-fweehir," the bird whistled with haunting clarity.

"A-week hear... How would it be if I just called you Awheek?"

"That would be fine. What do they call you?"

"My name is Cassin Wallace. But you may refer to me as Cass."

The hawk had trouble grasping the word. It had no implied meaning and was only a sound to it. Nevertheless, Awheek tried to say my name, "Whess."

"That's okay, you can call me whatever you want. Wes is fine."

"Very well, then, where would you like to go to discuss this?" the hawk unfolded then repositioned its left wing, its expression never changing.

"The big barn over there has wooden benches to sit on; it would be suitable," I said, pointing slightly to the old wooden building.

"I will go over there and wait for you to come."

Without further pause, the hawk glided upwards and landed on the roof of the barn. It seemed to require no effort at all on its part. Then the hawk arced gracefully in a half-circle and disappeared through a far window. I walked out of the field and proceeded around the fence surrounding the various manure-covered corrals and began walking back into where I worked, staring up at the barn.

I wondered what this was all about. I knew I was not dreaming. I could always tell if I was dizzy or if I was actually seeing and hearing legitimate things. It had gone too far to be questionable anymore. I knew there was something up. Something deadly serious.



I entered the barn from the straw packed floor and peered around tentatively. There was no sign of the hawk. I suddenly had a feeling that nothing I had just experienced was real. But just at that same moment, I caught a slight movement in one corner of the loft. The bird's feathers were dark: dark orange, deep brown, and barred white and brown. It fit in perfectly with the old boards of the dark corner.

I began to climb up the side wall of the barn, as there was no ladder, and eventually I was once again eye level with the hawk. I pulled myself up and scrambled onto the loft's deck. The hawk took two awkward steps, then flapped quickly onto the top of a vertical board. I sat down on a rickety bench on the side.

"What kind of new horizons are you wondering about?" I asked.

"Hopefully similar to yours..." Awheek began his commentary. "There are always going to be new things to explore, but the chance to find a good one, one that really means something to you, that is rare. And in this day and age, anything rare is probably worth looking into..."



# Chapter One : Everything Changes

Awheek explained everything, and left very little untold. He had probably organized his thoughts very carefully over a long time. What he really wanted was to explore. He was glad he was able to fly and that exploring came easy to him, but his true desire was to be able to understand the things he saw. Humans were the top of the list. He wanted to know about people, and he wanted to see what it was that gave them such a high place in the world. He had watched me for four or five years, ever since we moved into this town; something I had not suspected. And he was more curious than ever, and had finally decided that he would try to establish contact with me.

He was very nervous at first. Humans were dangerous no matter what. He had seen a hawk shot once, by a farmer in a field. He was unable to understand why only a loud noise could drop a fellow hunter of the skies. That was the last time he ever hunted near humans. Today he had watched me and decided finally that I was a decent person. He saw no destructive attitude in me. As I was leaving he was about to simply land in front of me and start there, but he couldn't do it. Instead he had to circle for a few minutes, then land on the fence.

Regardless, he was wondering if I would also like to explore new horizons and try to understand the ways of hawks.

"Of course," I said, "I've never really watched you a lot, but often I like to see you and your, uh, family up there doing things. Are we going to sit here and explain our worlds to each other?" I asked.

"We could, but that probably would take forever. Actually, I was thinking of something a little more involved," Awheek looked away, out of the window. This was going to be something he couldn't say easily, I could tell...

"I was wondering if it would be possible to..." he stopped for a moment.

I shifted my position, once again feeling a shiver down my spine. A large bird was sitting right in front of me, talking seriously and actually having a conversation. "Possible to what?" I asked.

"Possible to explore by actually experiencing the other 'world', the other of us."

"What?" He had completely lost me.

It sounded very, very much like a sigh. He paused for a moment, then retried his explanation, "I am suggesting a transposition. An exchange; perhaps you might call it."

"You don't mean..." it had to click through my mind.

Awheek looked back at me. "Yes, I do. I mean for only a certain time of course, but yes, a full change and time to discover that which we seek."

"But do you realize that...□that this could completely mess things up? I mean, yes, I want to very much; now that you bring it to my mind, I want to more than anything else. But wouldn't it change your life in a bad way as well? I mean, if I were to suddenly be carrying through with your affairs and ordeals? And if you were to do the same with mine?"

"I can see that we have much to learn here as well," Awheek sighed again.

"What do you mean?"

"We can still carry through with this, but we each will have a lot to learn before we begin. I can see that this will be hard and take patience."

"Indeed. There is a lot to tell each other," I looked at my watch and decided that I had a few more minutes. I didn't want to be late getting home, and upset my parents. "Where do we begin?" I asked.

"Well," Awheek glide-flapped from his perch down to the bench. "You could start by explaining that," he said, indicating the watch with a curious glance.

I looked at it and thought for a moment. This was going to be hell. There was no way any animal was going to understand time, or at least, how people manipulated it. But I had to start somewhere, sometime. "This is called a watch. It provides information regarding how far the day has progressed. For instance, now it is getting close to sunset, so it says 'eight-twenty', which is just a way of indicating that sunset is becoming close."

Awheek seemed to understand, except when I mentioned eight-twenty, but he grasped the concept fairly quickly. "There are reasons, perhaps, why you would want to know the day's progress, but I cannot see any."

"It really is a dumb concept, if you get right down to it, but it has a lot of uses. And believe me, in a world full of people it is a necessity. We have all kinds of places we have to be at specified times and such. It's called a schedule. Some days I don't have to go anywhere or do anything, so I could care less. On others, though, it has really helped out. However, I wish we didn't have such a complicated life."

"Ah, but that's what is so interesting about it—the complexity. Tell me why you have to go places and be there accurately."

"That differs from person to person, but no matter what,□it's always hard to explain. Probably the most common reasons are education and working. We don't get food by hunting on our own, instead there is a complex system of buying and selling things—like trading."

"Trading?"

"Well, giving something of yours for something of somebody else's that you want. And in this case, we work, doing various things, to earn money. Money is a form of property that you can trade for things you want, and the more of it you have, the better things you can get."

"Okay. I have noticed that you have large moving objects which, I finally figured out, transport you places. I assume they take you to your places of work?"

“That and a lot of other places. They are called cars, by the way. Education, too. We go to certain places to learn things, most of which makes little sense until you can apply it when you are grown and have a good job, or a place to work. Also entertainment. We go lots of places for entertainment and fun. You might see us go to the canyon and camp out, or we might go to a large building for a musical concert. It depends a lot on what you feel like doing, and how much time you have left.”

Awheek was quiet for a moment. He was simply staring at the far wall in the barn, his expression serious and never changing. “I followed what you said until you mentioned...□entertainment. I have noticed people in the canyon, with large bags to sleep in, which they make big somehow... What is entertainment, exactly?”

“Well, I suppose you don’t really have an exact form of entertainment like we do. I don’t know—it’s what we do for fun, relaxation, or simply to admire something of great value.”

“Oh. And the last thing, you mentioned ‘musical’...” he trailed off, not needing to ask.

“Music. That is probably one of the things you may never come to understand. Music is like a bunch of sounds put together that pleases you, or has a meaning somewhere. I’m sure you’ve probably heard some before, but just don’t know it. Don’t worry about it yet, though, you’ll either get to hear some later or something. What’s really important is for you to know all that is necessary for us to do this for while. And that is going to depend on how long we want to keep it up.”

“I would assume for many lights,” he was quiet again. “Uh, how would you express that? I have never had to explain anything concerning the lights.”

“You mean days? We have numbers to take care of things like that. They say how many of something just by a word or a picture, do you know what I mean?”

“Yes. Explain that, if you would, I’m sure it will help.”

“Okay. You know what ‘one’ is. Two is one, then another...”

I continued to explain to him the numbering system, showing the first ten on my fingers. He decided to venture into that later, as well.

“Okay, then, I would assume for about—five lights, I mean days.”

“You are catching on well. I’m surprised to see how fast you learn,” I truly was amazed at this bird’s intelligence.

“It has taken me a long time to get things straight,” he sighed again. “You have a fascinating world, I have wanted to know much, and you have already given me more knowledge than I would have hoped to obtain. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for being all I wanted and more. Also, your world is dangerous, and I live for danger.”

“Thank you. I would also hope to learn from you, but I have to go home right now, otherwise my mom will worry that something might have happened.”

"I understand that; worrying. As a parent I have worried about my children. One question, though, regarding this subject: How does your age and such differ from ours? I know that all things have different periods of adulthood and life spans, but I have not been able to figure out yours."

"Well, do you know what a year is?"

"No, not exactly."

This was going to be hard. "Okay, but you're familiar with the seasons: winter, summer, and so on?"

"Yes. I fly to the warmer region when it becomes cold and icy here. Then I return during the next... summer."

"Okay. From the time you leave to the next time you are ready to leave again, is one year. All four seasons pass."

"A year."

"Right. Well, you live for about twenty or so years, right?"

Awheek stared again. He was trying to recall what I had said earlier about numbers. Then he said, "Yes, that seems about right."

"Okay, we, as children, grow up for about the same amount of time, twenty years, then we usually are ready to start a family of our own."

Awheek visually was surprised, by bobbing his head back quickly.

"Then our final year is usually about eighty or ninety years old."

"That is a long time..." he stared again.

I looked at my watch again—and gasped. I was about half an hour late. "I really must go now..." I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"I could go with you, as I have no obligation."

He had a good idea. But what was I to do with a Red-tailed hawk at home? My parents would go crazy. They knew about hawks, and that you simply didn't go to work one day and come home with a perfectly tame, friendly hawk. I wanted to talk some more, and desperately bad. This whole event was something I needed, even though it had never occurred to me before. This whole thing was just the break I needed. I agreed with everything Awheek had said about wanting to explore. But when I was supposed to be sleeping and the house perfectly quiet, I very well couldn't have a bird in my room and be talking to it. I would have to figure out some way to continue my conversation with Awheek, and not wait until tomorrow. I was too excited now to be patient.

Suddenly, Awheek spoke again, "You realize I am using a kind of thinking to speak to you. I am not able to create words like yours with my beak. Therefore, it is possible to use it the other way as well. It just takes a little bit of practice. I heard everything you were just thinking about."

"Really?" I said aloud.

"Since it was not directed at me exclusively, it was hard to understand, but yes, I heard you."

"Kind of like telepathy," I said. He was right. He hadn't been opening his beak or even moving, for that matter. He simply stood there and I heard him. "Okay, let me try directing it at you."

I was looking at him in the fading light, at his folded wings and his tail. Getting a good look at what I had before seen only at a distance. I wondered how he felt; if being so light and capable was a great feeling, or if he was stuffy and tired. I directed my question at him.

"It is truly a great feeling. I have tried to imagine myself in your place, always on the ground, but I can never quite do it. I guess I don't have a very good imagination. But as an example, I could, if I wanted to right now, simply dive off this place where we are now."

It worked! I wanted to go ahead and see him do a few things before we left. He obviously heard me, because he spread his wings and flew easily off the edge of the loft. He turned in a graceful arc, just inside the perimeter of the barn. He swooped down, just grazing the straw of the ground with his wingtips, then pulled up and turned in one swift motion to disappear out the window. Then he came through the high window and landed without a sound on a rafter.

"Very easy," his thought came to me like someone calling from the same distance. "One just needs to have experience. This—you called it a barn—is easy to navigate, I have done it many times."

"I have never noticed," I called from where I was leaning against a vertical column.

"I usually come here to finish a meal or get rid of what I cannot eat. You are generally never around, although once or twice you have been. I would assume that you never hear anything, as I am gone in a short time."

Awheek stood high on his legs, then dropped off the rafter, spreading his wings and arcing back to the loft. In less than three seconds, he was back on the board he had originally perched on.

"Shall we go?" I asked him.

"That would be fine," he replied.

I climbed down the side of the barn; the same way I had come up; and proceeded homeward. Awheek remained above me at about the same height as the barn. Soon I was in my front yard and wondering what to do next. Awheek glided down softly onto the ground and folded his wings.

{How I am going to get you inside is a puzzle that may take a little while,} I thought towards him.

Without looking up he replied, "I will wait here while you examine the situation."

{That's a good idea. I'll try to be right back. If I am not soon, then you can look for me in that window,} I pointed at my window behind some trees.

"Window?"

{That large square.}

"I am still confused, but I know what you are indicating. I will wait in the cover of those trees."

{Okay. I'll be back in a short while, hopefully.}

Awheek waited until I had crossed in front of him and went inside. Then he glided to the large rock in front of my room window.

My mom did not complain about my being late. In fact, she was just happy to see that I was back. I had gotten back just as the sun had set.

I went into the laundry room to take off my boots and change clothes. Sometimes feeding cows could get smelly. I went into my room and opened the window. Awheek looked up and said, "I see now, this is a sort of hole in your home."

{It helps, for light and for looking outside.}

"What do you want me to do? Shall I wait?"

{I have to eat dinner first, then I should have some time to be alone here. I'll hurry.}

"Okay. I will be nearby."

With that, he took off and circled somewhere above our house. I went into the kitchen and reheated my pizza. I could hardly eat anything because I was so worked up about what had just recently happened.

I devoured my pizza and thought about how ludicrous this thing was. I mean, a Red-tailed hawk and a human talking and having a regular conversation; planning an event that could change their lives indefinitely. It was crazy... But I loved it, every bit of it.



## Chapter Two : Learning The Basics

When I went back into my bedroom, Awheek was once again perched on the rock outside my window.

{Okay, I think I will be left alone for the rest of the night,} I informed him as I opened my window all the way.

"That should let us continue our conversation. Do you want to have me come in there, or would you rather me stay here?"

{You can come in. Just let me get the screen off of this, then you can come through.}

I finished taking off the screen and set it to one side.

"I won't be able to fly through that; it's too narrow, and too close," Awheek said, observing the window carefully.

{I can lift you in, that would work out better and probably make less noise.}

"Okay."

Awheek jumped off the rock and moved under the window. I reached down, leaning out the window as far as I could and tried to find a suitable way to lift him inside. Unfortunately, there was no place I could grab him without hurting him, or getting scratched.

{Where am I supposed to get ahold of you?}

"I can simply step onto your arm, I don't think I will be a burden for you."

{I'm sure you wouldn't, you don't weigh very much; but I'll have to get a glove or something because your talons will hurt my wrist.}

"That is likely."

I grabbed my pillow off my bed and took off the pillowcase. I wrapped it around my arm and extended it down to Awheek. He stepped lightly onto my arm and the weight, although slightly more than I suspected, was not very much at all. He was barely three pounds. I could feel the pressure of his talons' grip through the pillowcase. If I had not gotten it, he would have easily had me bleeding by now.

I let him step off onto my desk, clearing away a stapler and some papers. He looked very strange on my desk, considering that there was a computer next to him, and two stereo speakers. He was examining my room with curious interest while I replaced the screen and closed the window.

{Very strange, isn't it?} I asked him, knowing he was bewildered.

"I never knew..."

{There is a lot—more than even I know—to the human world.}

“And this is only a part of it. What is this—place—called?”

{This is my room; the place where I sleep and do various things.}

Awheek saw a picture of a Red-tailed Hawk on the wall, just above my desk. He sat there looking at it for a moment, then said, “I see you have us on thin, uh...”

{It's called a picture. We use a thing called a camera to capture something and put it on a flat surface like that.}

“You mean that is a real hawk, trapped on a...”

{No, not at all. That's only the image of it. Only the light reflected from it.}

“Very interesting. It looks very real, although there is no movement,” Awheek looked for a moment more, then turned his attention to the computer. I could tell it was going to be a long night.

Things went faster when you didn't have to verbally say everything. As the night wore on, I was able to 'talk' faster using telepathy. I began to learn how to use meanings and 'pictures' instead of individual words or thoughts. We were able to cover things faster as time progressed. We started by going over everything in my room; I showed him how to operate the things he needed to during our exchange. Then we moved on to how to deal with my parents and how to talk to other people. I taught him as many words as he was not familiar with. What was going to be hard, though, was teaching him how to read and write, because if he was going to carry through with this, he would need a lot of background in that, because of my requirement at school.

We figured that it would be good to plan for next week, because spring vacation made the five days at school only three. He wanted very much to explore, and he was serious and determined. I couldn't believe how fast he caught on to everything. I began to wonder if he was just saying 'yes' to everything so we could move on, but when I later asked him questions regarding important things, he, after only a few seconds of thought, was able to remember quite closely.

Of course the whole thing would be hard to fit into one week—there was a lot of learning to do; mostly for him.

We covered everything I could possibly think of in five or six hours, which may have taken about nine or ten if it had been verbally. After a while, my parents had gone to bed, so my door needed to be opened, and my mom wanted to check my room and say 'good night'. Awheek had to hide under the bed while she was there. Thank goodness for telepathy, or else the moment my parents went to bed would have been the last of our conversation for the night. But with mind-to-mind talking there was no sound. I could imagine what it might look like to someone who may have just walked in: A boy sitting up in bed staring at a hawk which was perched on a bookshelf about two or three feet away in semi darkness with only the light from outside garden lamps. It would have been a strange looking scene to the outsider indeed.

We covered a great deal that night. I got up at about three in the morning to turn on my alarm for school tomorrow and sat down on the edge of my bed. I gently lowered Awheek to the bed by putting slight pressure on his sides. It was amazing how small he was under that thick layer of feathers. He was warm and very soft. Tomorrow and the next night would be more or less my turn for questions. I wanted to know more about his kind of life.

I was getting tired, and needed sleep for tomorrow at school. Although it was the last thing I wanted to do, I told Awheek that I would have to say good night and that I would see him tomorrow. He was also reluctant to go, but finally, when the clock said 4:13 A.M., I quietly opened the window and removed the screen once more.

As a last thing to say before he disappeared into the night, I asked him if he would meet me by the bus tomorrow morning.

"Why then? You discussed that you are only going to be able to talk for a very short time in the morning."

{Well,} I thought to him, {I sort of want to, well, you might not understand yet, but I'd like to show you to a few people that ride my bus. It's kind of a thing I've always wanted to do—have a hawk in falconry.}

"Falconry?"

{Yeah, kind of a sport where people train hawks and falcons to fly by command or retrieve prey,} I told him. I had not really thought about it, but it was something I had always wanted to do.

"Yes, of course. I have seen you go there before, and I will meet you on the way."

{Thanks. I'll have a glove on, so when I hold out my arm you can land on it.}

"Okay. I appreciate your willingness to do this, this exchange."

{Actually it's something I have always dreamed of—although not seriously before.}

"I am glad I found you. See you tomorrow morning."

{I have learned quite a bit as well, just talking about things I am used to. I am very glad you found me, too.}

"I will give you some information regarding myself tomorrow. I might consider following your route in that large, uh, bus. Once again, thank you. See you in the morning."

I let him out the window and saw him as he cleared the trees, navigating silently away.

{Bye!} I called. My spirits were high. I closed the window and climbed into bed. It was the beginning a short, but restful night of complete peace, waiting until tomorrow.

My alarm woke me the next morning. It hadn't been the most restful night, but I had gotten enough sleep. I had a whole new attitude towards life right now; I felt a lot better about everything. I found my most exotic clothes and put on a shirt with eagle and hawks printed on it. I put on a leather glove I had found downstairs

which was tight and strong. I ate breakfast and threw my school books in my bag. I combed my hair so that it had a wisp hanging over my forehead and soon I looked very good, if I didn't say so myself. That day was going to be great—so was the rest of the week. I had everything going well. And no matter how good this week was, next week would be the best of my entire life, I felt sure of that.

As I stepped out the front door, I noticed the sunrise was beautiful. It would make a perfect morning to see Awheek. I walked across the lawn and began walking to the bus stop. A small shape was perched in the tree down at work. Another one sat just below it. It was the hawks, probably just waking up as well.

I got about halfway to the bus stop when one of them took flight. I felt a rush of adrenaline as I realized it was Awheek. I had the sort of feeling that you get in the morning when everything you had previously done suddenly seemed like a distant memory or a dream. Now the slight shock of seeing Awheek getting closer made me get excited all over again.

He circled when overhead. I got closer to the bus and saw about ten people already on. This was where the bus started its route, parked in front of the driver's home. She left at about seven, so I was about ten minutes early. Many people came and got on early so they could finish homework or simply get a good seat. I rarely came earlier than ten minutes. Generally I never missed it and was always somewhat early.

With my pack slung over my back and the few people lazily watching me, I decided it was a good time to call Awheek.

I thought 'towards the sky', directing my thoughts as best I could, {Awheek! Can you hear me?}

The reply was like someone yelling from across a roaring river; very faint: "Yes! Shall I come?"

{Go ahead, I'll be ready.}

There was no reply, but I heard Awheek whistle loudly, the wind making him sound far away and mysterious. He began a dive as I stopped and watched him. He was coming fast. He slowed and pulled up as I extended my arm. He landed lightly, almost without any extra pressure. He leveled himself and folded his wings.

{How are you doing this morning?} I asked him.

"I am fine and well rested, but hungry. I will probably follow you until you reach your destination, then hunt."

{Okay.}

I turned my attention to the faces in the window of the bus. All of them had suddenly changed from miserable, tired souls, to alert, interested, and perhaps startled kids. It was a great feeling. I turned my attention back to Awheek; let them sweat it out.

{Okay. You are a fine looking bird...} I hadn't told him earlier, and it had suddenly come to mind.

"Please, no flattery," he said. I detected a sense of laughter in his thought. "I'm just an old explorer."

{See you later, Awheek,} I said, feeling our friendship grow. I raised my arm slightly, just enough so he could feel it. He took off without flaw, a perfectly level glide across the road, then a slanted flapping flight gaining height.

I watched for a second more, as Awheek cleared a horse barn and flew past his tree, then doubled back and gained tremendous altitude. I got on the bus quietly and was faced by an uproar of mixed voices. Just ten people or so could make a lot of noise. I managed to understand that their main question, however varied, was: "What was that?"

They probably didn't even know that a person could train a Hawk, let alone meet one by chance. To them it probably looked very strange indeed. I spoke loudly over the voices: "My Hawk. His name is Awheek," I said clearly, and sat down in the front, which was not my usual place. I wanted to see out the large window to search for Awheek.

The voices quieted, but three or four kids about my age came up to the seat behind me and began asking questions.

No one my age in my town were my friends. Every one of them were almost exact opposites of myself. They had probably tried to shoot a Hawk before, but whether they had succeeded or not, I didn't know. I disliked every one of them for various reasons. Josh, the closest neighbor, was heavily into guns and shooting things. I never did know exactly what he shot at, but I would bet it wasn't anything good. Trevin was probably half nuts, I didn't know what he did besides hang around Josh and brag about things that were dumb anyway. Another one was a friend of Josh's I didn't know. Finally, the fourth was a person whom I thought was new in town, but I wasn't sure.

"What kind of bird was that? Was that a Hawk?" Josh asked first.

"Yes," I said. "I train them. Falconry." How else was I going to explain this? it was nice to finally have a true friend, and something that they would never have: a lasting friendship with an animal, Awheek.

"Where'd ya' get him?" Trevin asked.

"He was found injured a long time ago. I'm not sure exactly where; a friend helped me." I didn't know what else to say. I was beginning to get tired of them. I suppose I had just hoped they would see that I was friends with Awheek and nothing more. I should have known.

"A Red-tailed Hawk named A-week?" How old is he?" asked the new kid.

Somehow, I already liked him.

"I am not sure. He's about fifteen or sixteen I would suppose. I'll ask... um, I'll find out one of these days. And yes, he is a Red-tail, and his name is Awheek," I said, making the "h" in his name clear.

They went on for a short while, asking stupid questions after the initial ones. Basically poking fun by asking dumb questions because they were jealous. It had not been my intention from the outset when I asked Awheek to come in the morning to make them jealous. I wanted to make a point. And that point was basically a

summary of myself in saying I could have a friend and do things. I had always felt like a nobody around them simply because I had no interest in their hobbies. And I had no intention of becoming a friend of theirs if it meant liking their things. Now I had shown them that my life was different, and that I needed no further so-called 'enlightening lessons' from them regarding what they wanted me to do. I was sick of them and in my way, that was how to get rid of them.

They became quiet and went back to their places. Finally the bus driver came out and we soon were on our way.

School again! I hated that place these days. It seemed like my grades and my whole life there were becoming a sticky mess. But somehow I felt better about everything now. I was going to fix everything...

I noticed Awheek through the windshield, flying high and circling. He would have no problem following. The bus never went fast, and even if it did, I was sure that with altitude he would have no problem catching up. It had been a long time since I had read my book on birds of prey, so I couldn't remember what their average cruising speed was. All I remembered was that in a dive, speeds regularly reached above 100 miles per hour, and often considerably more. I couldn't believe how lucky I was...

Algebra was finished in no time. I was doing my neglected homework on the bus. Hurrying, but still able to think clearly, I was able to finish everything even before we switched busses. That was the road to improvement.

With homework all done and put away, my life getting better by the second, and Ahweek circling overhead, I felt like it was time to relax and enjoy life.