

“James and Tresa — or whoever lived here last — sure loved signs with lame expressions,” Ichiro said. He forced a laugh, trying to lighten the mood.

Jacob didn’t respond. The signs might have been homey when the house had been lived in, but now they felt unsettling.

Ichiro shrugged and said, “Let’s move on. This kitchen stinks.”

Jacob nodded, eager to put the whole situation behind them. They exited the kitchen through a different door and found themselves back in the front hall. There was a door that led to the east wing of the house, but it was locked. Without pausing to wonder what was concealed behind it, Jacob moved down the hall to the next door. It swung open when he pushed on it, so he and Ichiro entered the room.

It was filled with mismatched furniture that seemed odd and disjointed: large antique office furniture (a desk, a chair and a wooden filing cabinet) and baby furniture (a crib, a changing table, a rocking chair). Behind the crib was a closed door. The wooden walls had been painted shades of light blue. Perhaps the oddest item was a medical skeleton that stood on a pole near the door, and there was yet another framed motto on the wall:

*Let them sleep,
for when they wake
they will move mountains.*

Jacob felt more uncomfortable with every passing second spent in the house.

“This is the weirdest baby’s room ever,” Ichiro said. He sat in the office chair. It groaned and squealed, a grating sound that dug into Jacob’s eardrums and made him wince. “This desk is old, man. Like, super old. Even older than most of the junk you see out at the flea market.” He tried to open the drawers but they were locked shut. He swivelled the chair around and it screeched loudly again.

“Cut it out,” Jacob pleaded.

“Sorry.” He stood up and crossed the room, where he examined a picture frame that leaned against the wall. He picked it up and looked closely at it. “Hey, check it out. It’s a medical diploma. Speaking of the flea market, I wonder if I could sell this to someone out there.”

Jacob peered over Ichiro’s shoulder at the old certificate written in elegant script on yellowed paper.