



**FIVE HOURS INTO THE DRIVE THROUGH** the desolate New Mexico wasteland, twelve-year-old Andy Greenwood was convinced that nothing could survive here. The only moving thing he'd spotted so far was a dust devil swirling across the cracked highway.

The tired old bus that carried Andy and ten other boys was struggling to keep the temperature inside bearable. The air was clammy and lukewarm, but better than the heat Andy could feel radiating through the scratched, cloudy bus window when he placed his palm against it.

Andy sat near the back of the bus. As he turned from the window and looked forward, he could see that most of the other boys were sleeping. A couple of them

were staring, unseeing, out the hazy windows, or at the floor.

A high chain-link fence came into view, running beside the road. After driving along it for a few minutes, the bus turned off the broken blacktop highway onto a darker paved road that led away from the highway. Andy could see what looked like a building at the end of the road.

A large sign was mounted on the fence. It had been painted bright white. Black letters spelled out THE RECLAMATION SCHOOL FOR BOYS, INC. Underneath was written: WE PUT BOYS BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK! There was more, but they passed the sign before Andy was able to read what it said.

A group of low buildings came into view. They were windowless cement blocks painted gray. The paint had faded and chipped from being exposed to the harsh conditions. The place looked less like a school than an abandoned factory where atomic bombs had been constructed.

The bus pulled into a seamed and patched circular drive in front of a building marked 1A, and creaked to a stop. The driver opened the doors and exited the bus without a word.