



Jakeman

Deborah Ellis

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Diamond Willow Award nominee, 2008

Silver Birch Fiction shortlist, 2007

CLA Children's Book of the Year Award 2008 shortlist

VOYA's Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers list, 2007

Hackmatack Children's Choice Book Award nominee, 2008-2009

Jake and his sister Shoshona have been under foster care since their single mother was arrested for possession and trafficking three years before. Both have found their own ways to cope: Shoshona has become a bossy mother figure; Jake, who is a budding comic book artist, has created an alter ego named Jakeman. And unbeknownst to his sister, Jake continues his one-man letter-writing campaign to the Governor, pleading for clemency for their mom.

Along with an assortment of nervous, angry, and damaged kids, Jake and Shoshona take a community-provided school bus four times a year on the long overnight journey through New York State to visit their mother in jail.

This time will be like no other trip they've ever taken. Their adult chaperones contract food poisoning on the way back and must be dropped off at a hospital. And their driver, refusing to wait for another adult to replace their chaperones, sets off again with only the kids and a hidden bottle of booze in tow. In no time they are off the main highway and lost. And their driver, now staggering drunk, abandons the kids and walks off, leaving them in the middle of nowhere.

Angry and sick to death of a system that has deserted them at every turn, Shoshona takes the wheel. And through a series of crazy side trips, Jake and the others hatch a plan to visit the Governor's mother. And when the old lady sees that her son has dismissed Jake's appeals and refused to even reply, she helps them face off with the Governor himself. Jake and the others find themselves at a photo opportunity that ends in tragedy.

even as it gives the long-abandoned kids a forum to be heard at long last.

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