

The Promise



"You can't make me go!"

Sean frowned as he remembered his words. They rang in his ears along with the rumble of the plane's engines. Below, the tarmac dropped away and he faced the awful truth. Yes, Mum could make him go. All the way to China, and miss his entire Year Six with his friends.

He glanced across at her sitting in the seat beside him. The only good thing was her promise: "If you really hate it, Sean, we'll come home."

How could he like anywhere without Damo and his friends, his bike, and Razz, his dog?

No; Sean already knew he wasn't going to like China.

The Double-cross



"Sure you don't want the window seat?" queried Mum.

"No, thanks," said Sean. He looked around the small plane taking them to a distant, inland Chinese city. It was much smaller than the jet they had flown in from Australia to Hong Kong. On that flight, he'd had his own TV screen. He could choose any movie, or music, TV show or even play video games.

He stared at the back of the seat in front of him and asked, "Don't they have movies and stuff on this plane?"

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"No, not on domestic flights," said Mum. Sean scrunched up his face.

Just then a voice began speaking in Chinese over the loud speaker. Sean couldn't help grinning at Mum. The foreign words sounded so strange. He leant out into the aisle and looked around at the other passengers.

Most were reading or lying back with their eyes closed already. Except for the little girl opposite. She was staring across at him with her mouth open. Sean was tempted to poke out his tongue at her. What was she staring for anyway?

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This is Captain Chen Fei. Welcome to..."

Sean leant back and whispered to Mum. "He's saying that in English for us. Everyone else is Chinese."

Mum nodded. "We'll be the only foreigners where we're going too, unless there are some other volunteers. I'm afraid you might have to get used to being stared at."

"Great!" exclaimed Sean, clamping his eyes shut. He wondered what Damo was doing. He squeezed his eyes more tightly. Why did he have to have a mum with nutty ideas like volunteering to teach in China?

The Double-cross

He'd pleaded with her. "Not this year." He couldn't miss his last year with his friends before high school.

"Well, I can't take you out of classes once you start high school, Sean. It has to be now or never," Mum had said.

"Never" sounded good to Sean, but Mum had insisted. "It'll be a fantastic experience for both of us."

The only thing that stopped him from getting really upset was Mum's promise. And a promise is a promise. Mum always said that.

Sample pages