



## Alexandra

Noah stood at the end of the aisle near the dairy refrigeration units gazing at the girl. She was about his age, eleven years. She had light brown hair that hung straight, almost to her shoulders. Her jeans were faded, and her T-shirt was charcoal grey.

She loitered by the display of doughnuts, watching his father help a customer at the register. He knew what that meant. He'd seen it before.

He walked up to her and said quietly so only she could hear, "You're going to shoplift, aren't you?"

She jumped at his words and whirled around to face him. She looked him up and down and focused for a second on the SpaceX logo on his black T-shirt. She raised an eyebrow. "Who are you?"

"I know that look," he said.

She wrinkled her nose at him. "Go away, Noah." She turned away.

He grabbed her arm and pulled her back. "How do you know my name?"

She studied him with a scowl and a deep concentration, then her face brightened up. "You want a doughnut?"

"I'm not letting you take one."

"I'm not going to steal it. Your dad'll give us one."

Who was this girl? "How do you know he's my dad?"

The customer finished and walked past them out the door, giving them an *Aren't you children adorable?* smile. Noah's father noticed the two of them. "Hello there, young lady."

She gave him an enthusiastic grin.

"You want a doughnut?" He opened the display case.

Noah's jaw practically dropped to the floor. He'd never known his dad to do such a thing since the day he became manager of the convenience store.

"Thank you," the girl said. "The chocolate one with nuts, please."

His father lifted the doughnut with tissue paper and handed it to her. She took it and said, "Thank you very much."

"How about you, Noah?" he said.

"Dad?" Noah said with trepidation. Was this even his father?

"Hurry up. I have work to do."

He tried to think. "Uhhh...bear claw I guess."

His father held it out to him. He took it like it was a tarantula and held it in front of himself, staring at it.

The girl gave him a little smirk and gazed at him as she took a huge bite of her doughnut and chewed. Suddenly she headed for the door.

Noah gaped at her, then gaped at his father, who returned to his duties as if something impossible hadn't just happened. He ran out the door after her.

She walked across the parking lot munching her doughnut. Noah chased after her, his bear claw dangling forgotten in his fingers. "Wait!"

"Go away," she said without looking at him.

He grabbed her arm and stopped her. She glared at him.

"How did you know he's my dad?"

"I got you a doughnut. I didn't invite you to be my friend."

"He never gives me *anything* from the store without paying for it."

She wrested her arm from his grip and took off. He trotted after her and walked alongside her.

"Who are you?"

She whirled on him with a dark expression. "If you don't leave me alone, I'll..." She huffed an exasperated breath and took off at a faster pace. He had to jog to catch up.

"I *won't* leave you alone until you tell me."

She rolled her eyes and stopped. "I'll just make you forget."

"No! Please. I don't want to forget. I want to know—"

"I don't *want* you to know."

"Why not?"

She walked away.

"I won't tell anyone," he called.

"That's what they all say," she said without stopping.

He ran and stood in front of her, forcing her to stop. They glared at each other for a moment.

“I *need* to know,” he said.

She sighed with irritation. “My name is Alex. Short for Alexandra.”

“I need to know *what* you are.”

“What do you think I am? A twelve-year-old girl.”

“You know what I mean.”

“No...I *don't*.” Her expression was full of stubbornness.

He returned the gaze and spoke deliberately. “Yes...you *do*.”

She peered at him as she popped the last bite of her doughnut into her mouth and chewed, then licked her fingers. “You gonna eat that?”

He lifted up the bear claw and stared at it, then took a bite out of it.

“You live nearby?” she said. It was almost a statement more than a question. “I could use a drink.”



## The First Mormons in the Moon

Moses forgot his stomach, forgot his frustration, forgot his calling from God. He grabbed Joseph by both arms and cried, “Do you know what this...this...discovery can do, man? It’ll transform the entire transportation industry. It’ll transform the world!”

He paced back and forth in excitement. “Massive amounts of freight can be transported across country—across the seas—cheaply. Prices for goods will plummet. This is a godsend to the poverty stricken of the world!”

Joseph watched him with amusement. Bertie grinned wide.

“People will be able to travel to the ends of the Earth, over rugged terrain, bodies of water. It’ll promote settling in wilderness areas, scientific exploration.” He stopped in his tracks, noticing the two grinning at him. “What?”

“Yes,” Joseph said, “wellsite will do all that. But these spheres won’t.”

Moses studied the paneled one. “It’s a transport, isn’t it?”

“Yes, but you asked the wrong question.”

Moses peered at him, wondering what the right question was supposed to be. It’s a transport to...to...

“Transport to where?”

Joseph headed for the rope on pulleys and tugged continuously at it. The gate rolled along the tracks until it exposed star-glittered sky through an opening large enough for both spheres to shoot up out of the stable. Before the gate slid to a stop, it revealed the shining half-moon at the edge of the opening.

Moses peered at the moon, then looked down at Joseph, who peered at him. A moment of silence pulsed.

“Dear God, you don’t mean...”

Joseph smiled.

“You...you can’t take those things to the moon!”

Joseph pointedly gazed at the panel still plastered on the ceiling. “If the roof weren’t there, that panel would be flying to the moon right now.”

Moses peered at the moon. Joseph and Bertie came up alongside him and gazed with him.

“We’re going to the moon,” Bertie said with reverence.

“No, you’re not, son,” Joseph said.

“Pa!”

“It’s too dangerous. After a few voyages, maybe then.”

“But I—”

“Brother Moses, I’m relying on your honor to keep silent about this.”

Breathlessly with his face still aimed at the sky, Moses said, “Who would believe me?”

Joseph chuckled. “Nevertheless...”

“I’m going, pa!”

Joseph tousled Bertie’s hair. “Very well...someday.”

“Does it work?” Moses said. “I mean, have you tried it?”

“Of course I’ve tried it,” Joseph said.

“I went with him, across the channel and back,” said Bertie.

Joseph went to the rope and pulled the gate closed. “Don’t you have chores need doing before bedtime, Bertie?”

The boy groaned the international chore-hating groan, the same one Moses had groaned throughout his childhood.

Joseph gestured to the door. “Please.” The three of them exited the stable. Joseph secured the padlock behind him. “Has your God ever brought someone to the moon, Brother Moses?”

Moses looked at him and found his eyes twinkling.

Joseph extended his hand. “It was an honor to meet you, sir. Good evening.” They shook, and he led the boy to the stairs. They descended into their flat.

Moses stared at the moon. The half-face on it grinned at him. Joseph’s words echoed in his mind. *Has your God ever brought someone to the moon?*

Before Bertie’s head disappeared, he stopped and peered at Moses. They locked eyes for an instant.

“Bertie?” Joseph’s voice called.

The boy cocked his head at Moses, then went in.

Moses walked to the street and headed home, his mind awash in thoughts. He remembered things he’d heard now and then as a converted Mormon, words people said came from the lips of prophets. Joseph Smith said there were men and women living on the moon the same as Earth, who were tall and lived long lives and dressed something like the Quakers. Brigham Young mentioned the inhabitants of “this little planet that shines, called the moon.” Hyrum Smith once preached that the moon was inhabited. Several men were promised in their patriarchal blessings that they would preach the gospel to many peoples, including those on the moon.

The thought flashed into his mind, *Yes, Joseph Wells! The answer to your question is yes. My God has brought people to the moon.*

And suddenly he realized the Spirit *had* led him to the boy, to the little sports-and-glassware shop

on High Street, and to the extraordinary man of science who had no interest in his message, but had invented a most marvelous machine, a transport that could bring Mormons to the moon.

To preach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ!



## A Face in the Window

“Are you watching another horror movie?”

“I dunno.”

“Quit watching those things when you’re alone! How many times—”

“Alright already.”

“You’re not crawling into bed with me tonight.”

“Geez, Mom!”

The double beep sounded again. “My battery’s dying.”

“Did you lose your cord again?”

Amy sighed.

“This is the second time. I’m not buying you another one.”

“Battery’s dead gotta go,” Amy blurted and ended the call. She dropped the phone on the sofa next to her and looked at the popcorn strewn all over. With a groan, she picked up the bowl and scraped the popcorn back into it.

She caught something out of the corner of her eye and turned her head toward the living room window. The curtains were partially opened, but she didn’t see anything but darkness. Without taking her eyes off the window, she rose to her feet slowly, apprehensively.

“I gotta find that cord.”

Leaving half the popcorn on the floor, she took the bowl to the kitchen, an open space visible from the living room. With her back to the window, she leaned on the counter. “Relax, Amy. There’s nothing there. It’s just your imagination.” She shook her head. “I gotta quit watching those movies.”

She turned and headed into the living room. Her eyes landed squarely on the window. She stared at it a moment, mesmerized, then turned away and held up her hand to shield her view of it.

“No one’s there. No one’s there.”

She headed for the hallway entrance that was just to the right of the television. Partway there, she dropped her hand. Her eyes caught movement again, and she jerked her head toward the window. She barely saw something before it disappeared to the side. She swore it was a face.

Immediately she dove back to the sofa, huddling on the floor beside it. She took a moment to catch her breath and her courage, then peeked over the arm. Nothing but blackness. The television made more horror movie noises.

She reached over the arm and grabbed her phone, never taking her eyes off the window, and dropped down on her butt, leaning against the sofa. She dialed.

“911,” said the operator. “What’s the address of your location?”

The phone emitted another double beep and shut off. She growled in frustration and threw the phone back on the sofa. “Stupid battery!”

She checked the window again over the sofa arm. Still nothing. She rose up to a crouch, took a deep breath, dashed to the window, and yanked the curtains closed.

She ran to the hallway and to her bedroom where she grabbed a baseball bat. She came back and peered around the corner into the living room. The movie made another horrifying scream.

“Shut up!” She reached over and shut the television off, then pressed her back against the wall and gazed about the room. Her eyes ended up on the front door.

“Judy!” she said as she thought of the next-door neighbor. She held up the bat, crept toward the door while scanning every corner of the room, and reached out for the knob.

Before she could touch it, the knob turned.

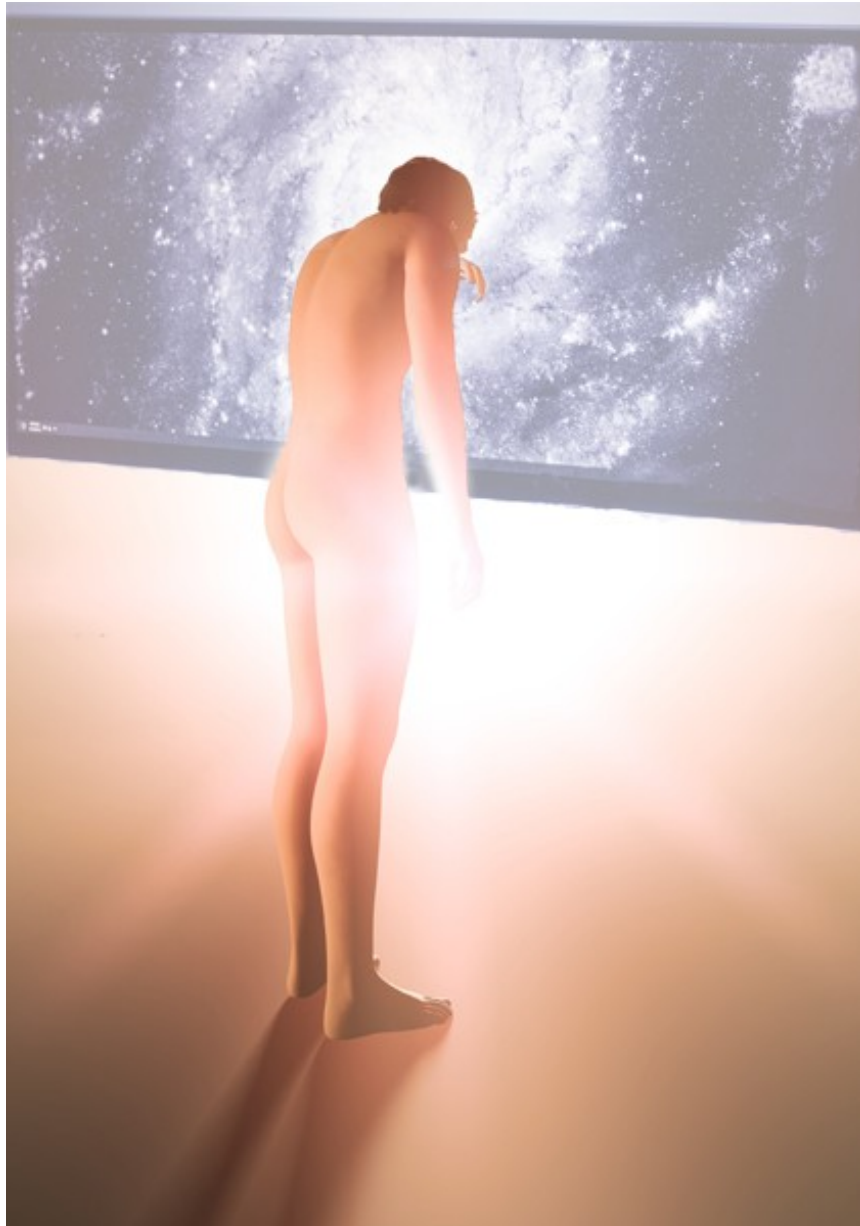
She jumped back. The door moved a millimeter, but the deadbolt stopped it in place. The knob and the door rattled, then fell silent. She inched toward the door and peaked through the peephole.

An eye stared back at her.

She recoiled and dashed into the hallway, then peaked around at the front door. Dead stillness permeated the house. She watched, eyes wide.

In her bedroom, glass shattered.





## Godblind

What a fool he was, waiting here for so long! He'd expected to hear voices. With the search party so near—with *any number* of search parties coming—he didn't dare move to the right or left. He plunged ahead, up the slope, away from the searchers, knowing that the path would become steeper very shortly, knowing that as Phylo struggled through the thick growth, he'd leave an obvious trail to follow.

Looking behind, he realized he was already leaving a trail. He changed his mind at once—he had no choice. He had to go for the river, because that was the only place Philo could pass without leaving a trail. Of course, the river itself would be an obvious trail, once Philo's path led the searchers to its

bank. But at least the searchers wouldn't know if he had gone up- or downstream.

Blinders urged Philo into a gallop. The noise and the movement couldn't be very subtle, and sure enough, he heard a cry behind him and the thudding of multiple galloping horses. The only advantage he had now was a head start and the speed of Philo.

He wasn't sure how quickly the river would appear. He was on foot before and not paying much attention as he fled. But a horse can run much faster than a boy, so it shouldn't be long.

And indeed it wasn't. He saw the water as soon as he heard the babbling. He had no time to hesitate. He had to decide at once which way to go. He felt sure the Gods would send a search party along the river, so upstream was his only chance.

He hit the water and swung Philo hard to the left. Philo picked his way through the water and rocks as fast as he could. Would it be fast enough? There was a bend in the river ahead where the trees masked it. If he could get to it before the searchers came into view...

Then what? The searchers would see no horse tracks on the other side and immediately know Blinders took to the river. At least half of them would follow him upstream even without seeing which way he went.

He pushed Philo as hard as he could, risking a broken leg for his poor horse. Was it worth the risk? "All is lost," Athena had said. Her dire warning sounded like there was no turning back.

All what was lost? He still couldn't figure out why his actions were so terrible. Did she mean he'd assuredly be attacked by a bear or mountain lion and lose his life? That was a possibility, but an "all is lost" possibility? Especially perched atop a horse?

What was so awful about going into the forest? And what would be the awful punishment if he were caught? The Gods had always been so loving and benevolent that Blinders couldn't imagine them exacting a punishment at the level of "all is lost." But he didn't want to find out.

As he rounded the bend, a rumbling wafted out of the forest ahead of him, coming from another sharp bend in the river. Thank the Gods this river had so many bends, or his pursuers would see him in moments.

Philo rounded the bend. The rumbling turned into a thundering. A twenty-meter waterfall blocked his path. He was trapped!

He could ride Philo off into the forest again, but it looked pretty thick. Another trail left in their wake, easily followed. And how long could poor Philo keep this up? He'd tire eventually.

All *was* lost, whatever "all" was. Unless...

"Philo, my friend," he said, leaning forward and patting him on the side of his neck. "You know I love you. You were supposed to be my salvation, but now you're just a burden to me. Please forgive me."

He rode Philo to the shore, pulled loose the pack and climbed off, then whacked Philo as hard as he could on the flank. Philo whinnied and charged into the forest, leaving damage through the brush.

Blinders dove for the waterfall. It pounded his head and drenched his pack, but he was able to scramble through it. On the other side was just enough of a depression in the cliff that he could stand behind the water with only its mist soaking him.

The roar of the fall deafened Blinders from any other sounds. He had no idea how long he needed to stand here before he could safely emerge. Nor did he know how much time his ruse would buy him. How long would Philo run through the thick foliage? Probably not long. Probably the searchers would find him within a minute or two. They'd know what Blinders had done and start searching for him back at the river. They'd look for signs of a boy on foot—on wet feet—and find none. There would be no other place for him to hide than where he was. In moments hands would reach through the sheet of falling water and grip him.

What a fool he was!

He should run. They must have dashed into the forest by now, following Philo's path. In moments they would return and find him. He had a narrow span of time to bolt somewhere else in the forest.

They'd return and find his wet trail and follow him again, but that was better than waiting here for hands to grab him.

He readied himself to rush through the waterfall when he heard someone shout, "Over here!" He froze.

Either they took longer to reach the falls than he expected and just noticed Philo's trail, or they already found Philo unmounted and returned to search for Blinders in the only place left to look.

Either way, he could only stay in place and wait.

Seconds passed. No hands grasped at him. They must have followed Phylo into the forest. Now was his only chance.

He dashed through the falls, coming out spluttering and wiping his eyes so he could see.

A lone man stood before him.

"Hello, Blind Boy." It was Eusebius, grinning carnivorously. He turned his head in the direction of Philo's path. "He's over here!"

As Eusebius shouted, Blinders dashed for the opposite shore. It was his last desperate chance.

"Oh, no you don't!" Eusebius cried as he lunged, barely grabbing Blinders' ankle. He fell face-first into the water. His left wrist twisted as it hit bottom. Blinders swallowed a mouthful of water and came up choking.

Eusebius put his mouth close to his ear. "Where do you think you're going, little Godblind boy? Little freak of nature?" He forced Blinders back to a sitting position in the river and clamped a strong rancher's grip onto his shoulder. "Your days of fleeing are over."



## The Dreamcatcher

Cassandra jerked back up, startling Ethan. Kevin moaned and thrashed about weakly.

“Oh my God,” Cassie murmured. “It *is* Coach.”

“What are you talking about?” Ethan said ominously.

She grabbed Kevin by both arms and jostled him. “Wake up!”

He woke up, stared at Cassie with wild eyes, then sat up and grabbed her in an embrace.

“It’s okay, Kevin, it’s okay,” she said as she hugged him and rubbed his back. She looked into his eyes. “Tell me what happened. Tell me what Coach did to you.”

He looked at her with a troubled expression, trembling.

“Talk to me, Kevin. It’s okay. Coach can’t hurt you now.”

A tear trickled down his cheek as his lower lip quivered. Cassie waited with anticipation. He glanced at Ethan, then closed his eyes and bowed his head.

She pulled him into another hug. “Oh, Kevin, what did he do to you?”

“Coach did something to Kevin?” Ethan said. His eyes burned with a smoldering flame.

“*Coach...hurt...Kevin?*” He marched to the window and peered out at Coach’s house. His face grew dark. He whirled and grabbed Kevin’s baseball bat.

“Ethan?” she said.

He marched for the door.

She stood. “What are you doing?”

“If Coach hurt Kevin...”

She ran to stop him, but he brushed her off and left.

“Ethan, wait!”

She ran after him. When she reached the top of the stairs, Ethan was already at the bottom. She ran down as fast as she could. He threw the front door open and marched out. She rushed up behind him. On the porch, she grabbed him and pulled him around. “What do you think you’re doing?”

He glared at her with flaming eyes. “He’s gonna tell me what he did.”

“It was just a dream.”

He pulled away from her grip. “If I have to beat it out of him, he’s going to tell me.” He stormed down the porch steps.

“Ethan, I don’t know if Coach hurt him.” He whirled in his tracks as she ran up to him. “It was just a dream image. I don’t know what it means.”

“You said it! *Oh, Kevin! What did he do to you?*”

She lowered her head. “I know, and I’m sorry. I jumped to conclusions. But it’s not enough evidence to bash someone’s head in.”

“If he didn’t do it, then what the hell’s going on?”

“I don’t know. I need to learn more.” She looked up to the second story. “I have to go back into his dream.”

“What’s this crap about going into his dream?”

She took a deep breath. “You remember I said I listen—more or less?”

Suspiciously he said, “Yeah...”

“Well, that’s the more.”

“You go *into* his dream?”

“I go in and become a part of it.”

“You can go in and affect it?”

“I can’t change anything. But I can talk to him, influence *him* to change it.”

“How come you didn’t mention that before?”

“You saw how your mom reacted to just listening.”

He visibly calmed down. “You could have told *me*.”

“I was hoping I wouldn’t need to go in at all.”

He squinted his eyes. “Is it dangerous?”

“It’s uncomfortable...confusing to the dreamer. Often they resist. That barrier I told you about?”

He thought about it a moment. “It’ll help Kevin?”

“That’s what this whole night is about.” She turned to head back, but he remained in place. She faced him. He had a plaintive look on his face.

“Cassie? Can you really do all this?”

“Yes, I can.”