

The Moon People

Lisa Vandiver



**BOOKS TO DIE FOR
CHARACTERS TO LOVE**

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The Moon People

Introduction

Have you ever heard of the Moon People? No? I hadn't either. Then I met one. Yes, I really did meet someone from the moon. A real life Moon'lin. That's what we call them, but I'm gettin' ahead of myself. I guess I should start by tellin' you who I am. I'm Jarrett Crenshaw, and I'm thirteen years-old now. I was ten when I met my first Moon'lin. I s'pose I will begin my story on the night my life was turned upside down and changed forever. Yeah, that's where I'll start.

Chapter One

Three years earlier

The cool, moonless night had begun with a gentle snowfall over the Smokey Mountains. However, within two hours, the gentleness gave way to a heavy downpour, forcing Thomas Crenshaw to turn his wiper blades on to clear the windshield. Thomas had left their family cabin in the afternoon with his ten- year- old son, Garrett as the snow began. Driving these roads was precarious in clear weather, but this sudden snowstorm made them near impossible to maneuver, and the situation put Thomas on edge. He had checked the weather report before leaving the cabin and had been assured by the weatherman the area would only receive a light dusting.

“How much longer do we have, Daddy?” Garrett withdrew his gaze from the screen and looked at his father.

Thomas peered at Garrett through the rear view mirror, smiling. “Not much longer. By the time you finish your movie, we’ll be there.”

“Okay.”

“Did you have fun this weekend?”

Garrett shrugged his shoulders, “I guess so. I missed Jarrett, though.”

Thomas nodded, “I know; I missed him too, but he was sick. He’ll make the next trip to the cabin, okay?”

“Okay.”

Thomas refocused on the road, while Garrett went back to watching the cartoon.

Buzz

Buzz

Buzz

Thomas glanced at the center console and smiled when it displayed Millicent’s name and number on the screen. He tapped

the phone icon on the steering wheel, answering the phone, “Hi, darlin’.”

“Hi, Tommy. Where are you?”

“We’re at Bear’s Crossing. How’s my sick boy doing?”

“He’s doing better; he’s asleep. How did Garrett make it this weekend? Did you both have fun?”

“Yes, we had a blast, though we did miss Jarrett, and you.”

“We missed you, too. I won’t keep you, but I wanted to let you know the weatherman says a blizzard is on its way.”

“I think it’s here,” Thomas clicked the wiper blades to a higher speed. “We’ll be there soon.”

“Okay, I love you, Thomas.”

“I love you too, Millie.”

Suddenly, a large wolf leaped from the woods, ran into the center of the road, and stopped.

Thomas grasped the stirring wheel and turned hard to the left, narrowly missing the large, unnatural looking creature.

“Daddy!” Garrett screamed out with fear.

“Hang on, Son!” Thomas fought to steer the vehicle. Images of his family flashed before him as he glanced at a terrified Garrett, and heard Millicent’s frantic voice yelling at him through the phone.

They swished on the ice, causing the SUV to swerve, sliding across the road.

“Ahhh!” Thomas and Garrett both screamed as their vehicle plummeted off the cliff.

“Daddy! I’m scared!”

“I’m here, Garrett! Daddy’s here!”

Garrett screamed bitterly as the car plunged downward into darkness. His head slammed into the side of the back door panel, causing his ears to ring.

He reached down and took hold of the locket swinging from the chain

around his neck, and held to it tightly as he thought of his brother. *Jarrett! I wish you were here!*

Out of nowhere, a huge, bright light flooded the car. It seemed to Garrett that time had frozen as the vehicle stopped moving and hovered in the air. Orange flames ignited from somewhere inside the car, and Garrett screamed his father's name between violent coughs. In the midst of the chaos, Garrett thought he heard comforting voices whispering to him, just before he succumbed to the smoke.

Beyond the bright light, a strong, yet compassionate voice rang out, "Come with me, Thomas."

Thomas instinctively reached into the back seat, and pulled Garrett in his arms and obediently followed the familiar voice toward the light.

Once the vehicle slammed into the ground, it exploded into a ball of fire.

Chapter Two

Jarrett fell back against the pillow, sweating profusely while his heart beat wildly at the nightmare he had just experienced about his father and brother. “Daddy! Garrett!”

He reached his hand to his neck and took hold of the locket swinging from the chain, and grasped it tightly between his fingers. “Garrett!” Mere seconds had passed before he heard his mother scream from downstairs.

“Garrett! Thomas! Please, answer me! Tommy!”

Jarrett knew what had happened, for he had seen the accident. He lay there, frightened with tears streaming down his face, and not sure of what to do as he heard his mother’s agonizing cries. Some time passed when Jarrett saw blue lights flashing

from outside. He scrambled from the bed and peered out of the window. There, he saw a patrol car parked in his drive. His heart sank as he watched two police officers exit their vehicle and make their way toward the front door of their house.

When the bedroom door opened, Jarrett knew it was his mother coming to give him the bad news about his father and twin brother. He sat upright on the bed and propped his back against the headboard. After wiping his tears, Jarrett took a deep breath.

“Momma.”

Millicent stood in the darkened bedroom.

“Yes, it’s me.”

“Momma, something terrible has happened to Garrett and Daddy.”

Millicent fought back her tears as a lump swelled in her throat. “Yes, baby.

There has been a terrible accident. I'm sorry, son, but they're dead."

Jarrett squeezed the locket tighter. He blocked out the remainder of his mother's words as he thought about his twin brother.

Millicent rushed to Jarrett and took him into her embrace. He rested his head on her shoulder, and they cried together, knowing their lives would never be the same.

Chapter Three

The following morning, Jarrett awoke fever free, but feeling horrible. His entire body ached, especially his heart. He had hoped all the terrible things from the previous night had been a nightmare, but he knew it had been all too real. Garrett and his father had died. How he wished he could turn back time and then he could perhaps convince his father not to take Garrett away. Jarrett pulled back the covers and got out of bed.

He moved to the bay window and looked out at the sky. It had continued snowing, and the ground was covered with fresh snow, hiding the tracks of the police cruiser which had brought the bad news the previous night.

Nobody had expected the sudden storm. It was as if it came from nowhere.

Jarrett grunted as he looked from his bedroom window at the fresh, undisturbed powder on the driveway where there should have been tire tracks from his father's SUV when he would have left for work in the early mornings. But not today and not ever again. Tears bathed Jarrett's face as the pain consumed him. He had wept several moments until he heard a knock on the door.

“Jarrett.”

Jarrett turned and gave his mother a somber look. “Momma, is it real?”

Millicent walked across the hardwood floor to where Jarrett stood. “I'm afraid so. But we'll see them again one day in heaven.”

“Why do people have to die, Momma? I don't like it.”

“I don't like it either, sweetheart, but it's a part of life. We all will die one day. We don't know the day or how we'll die,

but we simply must live life to the best of our ability and be as good a person as we can. We need to make the most out of life that we can until our time comes. But, you know we will see them again in heaven.”

“Yeah, I know.” Jarrett looked down at the floor, frowning.

Millicent reached her hand out and caressed his face. “I’m sorry you have to learn about death so early in life. I wish I could...” She choked on her words and groaned. It was hard for her to conceal her anger in front of Jarrett, but for his sake, she knew it was what she must do. Millicent was angry for what had happened to Thomas and Garrett. She had cried bitterly, asking the question, ‘why,’ repeatedly through the night.

Millicent inhaled deeply, shoving the pain aside while walking toward the door. “Breakfast is ready.”

“Okay, Momma, I’m coming.”

Overwhelmed by the loss of his father and brother, Jarrett left the room.

Chapter Four

Millicent tearfully gazed into the eyes of her best friend, Trish who had come after hearing the news. Trish had remained with her throughout the night, comforting Millicent as best as she could.

“Millicent, how is Jarrett doing?”

“He’s heartbroken.”

“Oh, honey, I’m sorry. I wish I had the perfect words to comfort you, but I just can’t think of anything.”

Millicent reached out and touched her friend’s face. “Your presence is enough, Trish. Thank you.” She then cleared her throat, “He’s coming down after he dresses. Is there anything I need to do to help you finish preparing breakfast, Trish?”

“No, I have it all completed. I woke Amanda up; she’ll be out here in a

moment. I think she might be a comfort to Jarrett.”

Millicent walked with Trish into the dining room. “Yes, I think she’ll help him. My boys sure love her and Caleb. I’m sorry you had to drag her out of bed last night to come over here.”

Trish smiled, “My children love your boys too and don’t worry about my bringing her. She would not have had it any other way. If Nathan and Caleb had been here, they would have come as well.”

Millicent took a seat at the table while Trish poured more coffee into her cup. “Oh, where are they?”

“He got a call yesterday from the EPA while he and Thomas were loading the vehicles. He had to fly to Washington for a situation that suddenly came up, and didn’t have time to bring Caleb home. I must say, I do like the pay from his work, but not all the absences from the family.

At least, this time, he has Caleb with him, and we'll meet him for Christmas wherever he's at." Trish suddenly gave Millicent a pained expression. "I'm sorry for rambling. It was insensitive of me."

"Trish, I'm glad Caleb is with him, and I'm also glad you will join him for Christmas."

Trish brushed back the tears glistening in her eyes. "I haven't been able to reach them this morning. I received a text earlier from him saying he would call me as soon as he could. He said they both were fine. I didn't want to give him the news in a text." Trish frowned. "Though I'm sure he's probably already heard about it, and he'd be here if he could get away, you know that."

Millicent sighed. "Of course, I know it. I guess he'll get a new partner now that Thomas is..." Millicent's voice trailed off.

Trish placed her hand on Millicent's shoulder as she brushed tears from her face. Without saying another word, she turned and walked into the kitchen.

Trish returned shortly with a silver tray containing several sausage links, biscuits, butter, and a bowl of chocolate gravy. She placed it in the center of the table as Jarrett descended the staircase and Amanda walked down the hall.

Millicent forced a smile on her face. "Thank you for breakfast. It looks delicious."

"You're more than welcome. I know how Jarrett loves my homemade Biscuits and Chocolate Gravy, so I made extra for him."

Trish and Millicent glanced down at all the food on the table and laughed, as the children entered the room.

Chapter Five

Jarrett smiled when he saw Amanda in the hallway.

“Hi, Amanda.”

“Hi, Jarrett, I brought my horse barn and collection over to play with you.”

“Thanks, come in, and we’ll play after breakfast. Where’s Caleb?”

“He’s with Daddy. They got to go on a sudden trip for Daddy’s work.”

Jarrett laughed, “Oh, I bet you’re mad.”

“You bet I’m mad. Daddy now owes me two trips. If I hadn’t been in the parade, I could have gone with them.”

“Well, at least you got me.”

Amanda smiled as she followed him into the kitchen. “Yeah, I’m glad about that, too.”

“Me too.” Jarrett nodded and then turned and walked to the table.

“Oh, no, it’s snowing hard again. If it keeps snowing like that, we’re going to have a record snow this year,” Trish chuckled as the children joined them.

Jarrett laughed, “I hope it gets ten feet deep!”

Amanda chimed in, “No, fifteen deep!”

“You two kids are crazy! That much snow and we’ll have to tunnel through the entire town just to move around,” Millicent playfully fussed.

“Why is it kids want it to snow and parents want it to stop? Oh, I know, because it will keep them out of school,” Trish quipped as Amanda and Jarrett sat at the table.

“I do hope it’s enough to keep us out of school,” Amanda confessed. “And that’s not a joke.”

“I’m with you on that,” Jarrett chimed in.

Millicent shook her head, “We have you all in a private school, isn’t that enough?” She then laughed, “Will you two ever love school?”

The two friends exchanged glances and then answered together, “No!”

After the laughing ceased, Trish teased, “Okay, keep dreaming. In the meantime, let’s eat.”

After Jarrett had finished eating, he and Amanda went off to play as Millicent’s phone rang. She quickly picked it up and looked at it. “It’s the highway patrol.”

Trish stood and walked to the chair where Millicent sat, placing her arm around her.

After Millicent had finished the call, she laid the phone down and sobbed.

“Oh, Thomas, Garrett.”

“What did they say, Millicent?”

“The highway patrol has tracked Thomas’ GPS,” Millicent groaned. “I heard them crash. While I was on the phone, I heard the sounds of the vehicle when it crashed into a guardrail.” Millicent broke down.

“Did they find Daddy’s SUV?” Jarrett asked, racing into the dining room.

Millicent reached out and touched his shoulder.

Jarrett squared his shoulders and looked her in the eye.” Tell me what they found, Momma.”

Millicent cleared her throat and wiped her face. “The snowstorm prevented a thorough search last night, but this morning, the rescue team searched the stretch of road where Thomas and Garrett had been traveling, tracking your father’s GPS to this particular spot, and then the signal disappeared. They found a damaged guard rail which looked as though a

vehicle careened through. Pieces of a vehicle were scattered on this particular section of highway. They also found your father's wallet."

Jarrett looked down. "What caused them to crash?"

Millicent shook her head. "Most likely, your father lost control on the icy roads and flew over a guardrail."

Jarrett shook his head, "Have they found the SUV?"

"No, son, they haven't. The ravine is quite deep as is the snow there."

"I can't believe they're gone. I mean, there's no way of knowin' for sure since they can't find the SUV, right?"

"It's because it's more than likely at the bottom of the ravine, Son," Millicent struggled to speak through tears. "They can't get to it. This particular section is at the crest of the mountain pass."

Trish walked over to Jarrett and touched his shoulder. "I know the stretch

of road they're talking about, Jarrett. There is a deep crevice at the bottom of the ravine."

Millicent groaned, "Yes, I know the area as well. They will never be able to find the SUV, Honey, I'm sorry, but nobody could survive a crash from that height."

Jarrett shook his head as he leaned against the door facing, silently staring off into space.

"Jarrett, come here, sweetheart," Millicent whispered through tears.

"Can I go back to the playroom?"

Millicent looked at Jarrett with profound sadness. "Yes, you can."

Amanda and Jarrett walked into the playroom and sat on the floor. As they set out Amanda's barn and horses, Amanda looked at Jarrett.

"I'm sorry about your daddy and Garrett."

Jarrett could not bring himself to meet her gaze.” Thanks.” His shoulders slumped as he thought of them.

“I wish I could take your sadness away, Jarrett.”

“Thanks, Amanda. C’mon, let’s play.”

“Alright.”

The two children played together silently, but without their usual enthusiasm.

Chapter Six

When the evening arrived, Trish and Amanda prepared to go home. The four now stood at the front door, exchanging goodbyes. Trish hugged Jarrett and then Millicent. “If you two need me at all, please call me, okay? We’ll be in town for three remaining days.”

“We will, and thank you, for spending the day with us, Trish.”

“I’ll check on you tomorrow.”

“Alright. Please call me and let me know you got home safely.”

“We’re just five blocks away, honey.”

“Please, call me when you get there.”

“Okay, I will. Try to get some rest.”

After Millicent had locked the door, she turned and looked at Jarrett somberly.

“Momma, can I go to my bedroom?”

Millicent bent down and gently caressed her son's cheek and then kissed him on his forehead. "Sure, go ahead."

Jarrett said nothing, but simply nodded and walked away.

Millicent wished she could take his pain away. *It takes time, and eventually he will be able to go on*, Millicent had told this to herself repeatedly, but at that moment, she did not believe it any more than Jarrett would have if she had said those words aloud to him.

Millicent's mind traveled back to the last conversation she shared with Thomas and Garrett.

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"I love you, Garrett. You have fun with Daddy, Nathan, and Caleb this week."

"Okay, Momma, but I am gonna miss Jarrett."

“I know you will, sweetheart, but he’ll make the trip next time. You just try to have fun and don’t worry about us. I love you.”

“I love you, Momma.”

Millicent hugged Garrett once more before he raced out of the door to the car.

She then sighed as Thomas wrapped his arms around her. “I love you, Thomas. Call me when you arrive at the cabin tonight.”

“I will, darlin’. I love you too.” He kissed her passionately and caressed her cheek. “I certainly am going to miss you, my love. Meet you in our dreams.”

Millicent blushed at his words. She could not help herself even after twelve years of marriage. He had been the only man that made her feel so deeply. She knew he would be her only love.

“Millie, when you look at me like that, I don’t want to leave, but I have to go.” He leaned in and kissed her, gently

caressing her neck once more, and then turned and walked through the door.

Millicent closed and locked up for the evening then she walked to the kitchen to get Jarrett some soup.

~ ~ ~

Consumed by the memory, Millicent collapsed onto the bottom step of the staircase, sobbing with grief.

## *Chapter Seven*

Jarrett swallowed hard as he approached the bedroom he had shared with Garrett. The sickening feeling and the inability to catch his breath consumed him, and he stopped. The closed door somehow looked heavy to Jarrett, and he wondered if he would be strong enough to open it and go back inside their room.

The weight seemingly shifted from the door knob and onto Jarrett's small shoulders. It took every ounce of his strength to complete the once simple task of opening a door.

When he stepped inside the room, everything reminded Jarrett of his twin brother. They had not separated for long periods of time. If Jarrett had not gotten sick, which hardly occurred, then he would have been with his father and

brother on the trip. Jarrett forced the lump swelling in his throat back down, and tried to ignore a throbbing headache.

He looked at his and Garrett's beds, whose headboards rested against a wall, side by side. Jarrett's bed, decorated with the Milky Way galaxy, rocket ships, planets, moons, stars, and astronauts, boasted many diverse colors, divulging Jarrett's colorful, active personality. Garrett's bed, decorated with robots, computers, books, and other scientific tools, reflected Garrett's quiet, thoughtful one.

The bedspread on Garrett's bed had been somehow thrown back off the pillow and was lying to the side. Jarrett grumbled as he crawled on the bed and began to tuck the spread back over the pillow when his grief hit him. Sobbing profusely, Jarrett fell onto the bed, burying his face into Garrett's pillow.

After Jarrett had cried for some time, he lifted his head from the pillow, sat upright, and glared out of the window as Garrett's face flashed in his mind.

## *Chapter Eight*

“Daddy.”

“Well, look who has decided to wake up. It’s sure good to see your sparkling blue eyes, Son.” Thomas sat in a chair next to Garrett’s bed, holding his son’s hand.

“Where are we, Daddy?” He glanced around the bright, white room, focusing on the closed door as his head spun. Garrett tried to lift his head, but dizziness forced him to lay back.

Thomas inhaled deeply, “I need you to try and relax while I answer your question. We were in an accident. Do you remember?”

“Yes, I do. Where’s Momma and Jarrett, I wanna see them now.”

Thomas shook his head, “Son, they aren’t with us, but I promise you, we’ll see them again.”

Garrett turned his head away from his father, his eyes filled with tears. “I want Momma. I want Jarrett. Where are they?” He attempted to get out of the bed, but Thomas reached over and gently yet firmly held him still. “You cannot go anywhere, Son; you must rest to heal completely.”

“Momma! Momma! I want my Momma!”

“Please, Garrett, calm down. We will get them as soon as we can.”

While Thomas attempted to calm Garrett, someone opened the door and walked through it. A nurse approached the bed and administered a shot into the I.V. “This will help him rest, Sir.”

“Thank you.”

The nurse turned and walked out of the door, closing it behind her as

Thaddeus Crenshu walked inside, with a mournful expression. “It’s hard to see him like this.”

Thomas continued holding Garrett down on the bed until the medicine took effect, and Garrett stopped struggling. Once he had drifted off, Thomas released his hold and turned to look at the man standing behind him. “He’s upset. Father, you should have retrieved Millicent and Jarrett from our home. It would not have taken long to get them.”

“And risk losing you and Garrett in the process? You both were severely injured when we got you aboard the Ranger. Garrett had stopped breathing several times. He had a concussion and a collapsed lung. Thomas, you were bleeding internally and had charred glass dangling from your chest, so my main priority at the time was your and his life.”

Thomas exhaled, “I’m sorry, Father. I am simply venting my frustrations. If

Kysmoro hadn't gotten us from my vehicle when he did, then Garrett and I certainly would have died. We could not have survived without advanced medical technology from our world. Thank you."

"Once the ranger arrived back here, my thoughts were only focused on you and Garrett. It is amazing to me how with our technology you were near death, but now are standing before me whole once more. I'm proud of our doctors and scientists."

"As am I, Father." Thomas touched his father's arm, and smiled. "You did the right thing. Why did you come for me?"

"Thalia has been taken from us." The senior man's face creased with worry.

Thomas' expression turned angry as he stood. "Who has taken my sister?"

"The devils themselves. We requested an audience with the Vdoda. They have agreed to meet us in the Trivex universe."

Thomas glanced at Garrett once more and then he followed his father out of the room.

They said nothing as they walked past a glass desk, through two large glass doors, and into a long, narrow corridor.

Once they had walked away from the medical wing, Thomas spoke. "It is good that you have come for me. We will strike them down should they not return Thalia safely to us."

"Thomas, I believe the negotiations will work. You are a masterful negotiator, and I have faith you can make them see their error in taking Thalia."

"I will work on terms for her release immediately, Father."

"Thank you, Son. I knew I could count on you."

"I wish Nethyel was here with me."

"I'm sorry, but I have sent him on another mission. Tressla will join him within the week. Thomas, please, don't

worry about your wife and son. I've sent Asbara a message, requesting him to travel to Earth and retrieve them. They shall be on the Earth's moon awaiting your return."

"Thank you, Father."

"However, Kysmoro will be at your side through the situation."

Thomas smiled at the mention of his Moon'lin friend who had saved him and Garrett. He also happened to be a childhood friend to Nethyel and Thomas. Thomas was pleased to have him at his side to aid him in rescuing his sister. Moon'lin's were small in stature, but stout at heart and mighty warriors. "This is wonderful news."

"I thought you would find satisfaction at knowing Kysmoro would be your second during this ordeal." Thaddeus stopped and gazed out of a small window. "Your mother has worried

herself into a panic; I pray this situation is remedied quickly.”

“Is Mother aboard?” Thomas glanced hopefully at his father. “I want to see her.”

“Of course, you should come to dinner tonight while Garrett rests.”

“Yes, I shall.”

“As soon as we rescue your sister, we’ll return for your family; I swear it.”

“Thank you, Father, and please do not worry about it again. We need to focus on rescuing Thalia. I hope they’re treating her well.”

“Their representative swears they are treating her with absolute respect.”

“If they are not, there will be great consequences.”

Thaddeus inhaled deeply. “Thank you, Thomas. I know when they find out you are the one coming for them, they will rethink things.” Thaddeus chuckled with a slight grin.

Thomas leaned against the wall and smirked. “They thought I was out of commission. Well, they’ll certainly be shocked to find out I’m back.”

“Thomas, the Terror has returned.”

Thomas clutched his father’s arm. “Father, they may wish to negotiate once they hear I am on my way to them, the last thing they want is my locating their secret base.”

Both men shared amused expressions.

“I think once Garrett understands where we are at and what we’re doing, he’ll be excited about it. It’s just he and Jarrett have never been apart.”

“The separation will only strengthen their affection for one another. Twins have a unique and special bond. Some even say the bonds are magical at times. I’ve seen it in several of my children.”

“I believe this is the case with my sons. They’re certainly close.”

He hoped his boys and his wife would forgive him for the separation. Thomas had an obligation to fulfill his duty, and then he would reunite his family.

## *Chapter Nine*

Thomas had slept in a chair next to Garrett's bed the entire night. When he saw Garrett's eyes flutter open, he leaned forward, and touched Garrett's hand." How are you feeling, Son?"

"I'm a little sore, Daddy." Garrett glanced around the room, "Where are we?"

"Hmm, well, this is an interesting tale, Garrett. I don't..." Thomas scratched his head. "I'm not sure where to begin." Thomas leaned back in the chair and ran his hands through his thick, black hair. "Okay, I'll just come out and say it. Garrett, we're flying in space; we're on a Royal Flagship, with a military fleet."

The shock at his father's response played out clearly on Garrett's face.

"Okay, Daddy. I am Garrett. I like robots,

not science fiction stuff; that'd be Jarrett," Garrett pulled himself upright on the bed and laughed while he pressed his back against the headboard.

Thomas chuckled as someone entered the room.

"It looks like our patient is fully awake now, thank the powers that be."

Garrett looked up into the eyes of the large, green creature. His eyes widened, with a frightened expression as he gasped slightly. He then looked at his father with concern.

"Hello, young man. I am most pleased to see you awake."

"Gretyl is my friend and a physician. She saved your life, Garrett."

"Thank you for saving me," Garrett forced the words from his dry mouth.

"You are most welcome, young sir. It is certainly nice to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you too, Ma'am."

“Oh, what pleasant manners. If you eat a bit of food for me, I’ll get you up for a walk.”

Garrett relaxed and nodded with a grin, “Deal! I am kinda hungry.”

“Fantastic, I shall return shortly with some food. According to my studies of humans, children your age enjoy a variety of foods. Since you’ve been sleeping for a while, I suggest something soft. Oh, I know, what about something called Chicken Noodle soup and ice cream?”

Garrett nodded enthusiastically, “Yes, Ma’am, I like Chicken Noodle soup and ice cream. Do you have chocolate?”

“I do, and I shall fetch it and the soup for you.”

After Gretyl had walked out of the room, Garrett looked at Thomas with a big grin. “I like her.”

“Good, I’m glad you do. She is one of many physicians we have on this ship

and throughout the fleet. My father prides himself on having a full medical facility to care for everyone with the most advance technologies in the medical field.” Thomas reached and ruffled Garrett’s hair playfully. “And I’m proud of the way you handled yourself with her. You were brave.”

“You taught me to be brave, Daddy.”

“I need you to continue to be brave, Son. In our fleet, you’ll see many different species, although Moon’lins are the primary species aboard it. They are all nice, and they work for my father.”

“Your father? I have a grandfather?”

Thomas grinned. “You sure do and a grandmother, and lots of cousins, aunts, and uncles.”

“Cool, but Daddy, are they human?”

Thomas cleared his throat, giving Garrett a serious look. “No, they aren’t humans, but they look like you and me.”

Garrett's eyes danced with curiosity mixed with surprise. "But, if your daddy ain't human then you're an alien."

"You're right; I'm not a human, I'm from Gherdisa, a planet in the solar system of Paradisa. We're known as Gherdisins."

"Whoa! Can you disappear, or turn into a creature like Gretyl? Oh, man, can you do cool magic tricks, Daddy?"

Thomas chuckled at the stream of questions Garrett threw at him. "No, I can't transform into anything nor can I disappear, but I can do a bit of magic when I need to."

"Wow, this is pretty cool."

"There are a lot of cool things your old man can do, Garrett. What do you say if after you eat, we take a tour of this ship, and I introduce you to some people? That is if you feel up to it."

“I say yes!” He then paused and gave his father a serious look. “What’s a Royal Flagship?”

Thomas reached over and touched his son’s hand, “Good question. A Royal Flagship such as we are on, is where the primary leaders of the fleet stay while journeying with the fleet. From this Royal Flagship, big decisions are made.”

Garrett grinned broadly, shaking his head with great interest. “There are more ships traveling with this Royal Flagship, and they’re called a fleet?”

“Yes, there sure are. A fleet is a large group of military crafts traveling together for missions, under the direction of the Royal Flagship. We have battleships, destroyers, several kinds of cruisers, shuttles, and fighter ships called the Gallant as well as several types of exploration shuttles.”

Garrett clapped his hands with excitement, “Cool! Do ya have laser weapons?”

Thomas laughed, “We certainly do, and as soon as you are well enough, I’ll show you around the fleet and show you our arsenal.”

“What’s an arsenal, Daddy?”

“It’s a collection of the various weapons we use to defend ourselves.”

“Oh, this is exciting. Boy, would Jarrett love to be here.”

Thomas laughed, “He sure would, and we’ll go and get him and Mom as soon as the mission I’m on is completed. And then you can tell him all about it.”

Garrett grinned, “Okay, Daddy.” His eyes then lit up, “Do you have robots?”

“Yes, of course, and we’ll see them, but for now, I need you to eat and get strong for me.”

“Okay, Daddy.”

Gretyl then returned to Garrett's room with two steaming bowls of Chicken Noodle soup and two bowls of Chocolate ice cream.

“Thank you, Ma'am.”

“Please, Garrett, call me Gretyl.”

“Okay.”

After serving the food to them, Gretyl turned and exited through the doorway.

## *Chapter Ten*

“Are you ready for the walk?”

Garrett could not hide his excitement as Gretyl appeared at the doorway.

“Yes, I sure am.”

She laughed as she walked to the bedside and helped him sit upright. Once he sat on the edge of the bed, he moved his feet. “Ooh, they’re tingling.” He wriggled his toes and looked wide eyed at his father and Gretyl.

Gretyl smiled, “Yes, you should give your feet some time to wake before you try to stand.”

After a few moments of Garrett wriggling his toes, Gretyl and Thomas help him to stand.

“Fantastic, Garrett. You are a champion,” Gretyl cheered.

“I’m proud of you, little man,”  
Thomas rallied him on.

“Thanks, Daddy. Can we take the tour of the spaceship now, uh, I mean Royal Flagship?”

Thomas gently ruffled his son’s hair. “Sure, but let’s see how these legs are going to work for you before we go strolling around this big craft.” Thomas playfully fussed, “If Jarrett were here, he’d tell you there’s a significance difference between a ship such as this one and a shuttle, such as the one that picked us up and brought us here. That particular one is called a ranger.”

Garrett rolled his eyes and laughed, “Yeah, I guess I better get my words right so that Jarrett can be proud of me when I tell him about this adventure.”

Thomas and Gretyl laughed, as Thomas bragged on him, “Garrett, I’m proud of your decision to look upon this as an adventure. Perhaps you should

write about it and tell of what all you're experiencing here. That way, you'll remember your first trip to space forever."

Garrett's eyes sparkled, "Yeah, that's a great idea. I could be a writer like Momma. Thanks, Daddy."

Thomas pointed to a small circular window. "There's something I think you'd like to see." He and Gretyl helped Garrett move toward it.

Garrett's eyes widened as he looked out of the window at the many spacecraft flying around him reflecting colorful, twinkling lights. From his view, he saw another large spacecraft soaring near them. "That is a big ship."

"It's called a battleship. There is a second one identical to it traveling along our other side. These battleships remain near the Royal Flagship as protectors."

Garrett's gaze drifted from the battleship to smaller ones that surrounded

the larger ships. There were more than he could count and in multiple sizes and shapes.

“Whoa, are those warships?” Garrett pointed to the smallest ships assembled. These red and black ships had mounted weapons on the front and back.

Thomas smiled with pride, “We call them Gallant. They are our fighter crafts that defend us. One person flies the craft and mans the front gun while his robot companion controls the rear gun.”

Garrett’s eyes danced with excitement. “A Robot?”

“Yes, a robot. I knew you’d find that little fact cool.”

“I do, Daddy!”

Thomas chuckled and then continued, “The battleships house our Gallant and exploration shuttles while this ship houses the medical and other necessary shuttles. The larger ships you see ahead of us and the Battleships are

called cruisers. They remain in front of the larger fleet and are used to explore a territory before the fleet's arrival. Two cruisers and a six Gallant usually travel together as a mini-fleet. A single battleship usually travels somewhere between the main fleet and the smaller one. Then there are four Gallant and a battleship that bring up the rear.”

Beyond their ships, Garrett caught the first glimpse of the dark far reaches of space. It appeared different than he had imagined it would look. Billions of asteroids in various sizes and shapes drifted lazily through the area, and smaller pieces even floated near the ships. Every so often, large ones getting too close for comfort got cut into smaller pieces by lasers shooting from various ships.

“Whoa, this is amazing. I wish Jarrett were here.”

Thomas placed his arm around Garrett, "I'm glad you're here. I promise you, Jarrett will be with us one day."

"I can't wait, Daddy."

"Neither can I, Garrett."

***Buzz***

Thomas frowned as he looked down at his wristwatch. "Oh, I've been summoned to the bridge. Son, while I'm gone, I want you to shower."

"Awe, okay." Disappointment clearly reflected in his expression.

Thomas hugged Garrett then glanced at Gretyl, "If he feels like it later, he can come to the bridge before going to our cabin."

Gretyl smiled. "I'll bring him myself, sir."

"Thank you." Thomas turned and walked away.

"Gretyl. Where are we?"

"We are still in the Earth's galaxy, the Milky Way."

“I can’t believe I’m in a spaceship.” Garrett stopped and looked at Gretyl, laughing, “I mean, Royal Flagship. Jarrett is the one who likes the idea of space travel. He should be here.” Garrett turned and gazed back out of the window with a sad expression.

“There are easy tips to remember the differences between ships.”

“There are?”

“Yes, A Royal Flagship is primarily for the royal family and dignitaries. It’s the brains of the fleet, where military strategies are planned, and where the battle orders are created. The battleships and other ships underneath it are simply supporters of the Royal Flagship. These ships are used to protect and serve the Royal Flagship. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sort of.”

“You’ll understand it with time as you begin your studies.” She then gently

directed him toward the medic, “What subject interests you?”

“I like robots.”

“Robots? Well, you’ll like this trip because there are plenty of robots for you to meet.”

“Really? Real-life robots?”

“Yes, real-life robots,” Gretyl mused. “Now, I do believe your father wanted you to take a shower. If you do this for me, I’ll take you to where Sir Thomas is if you feel up to it.”

“Alright.”

“You may go through those doors to find a bathroom with everything you’ll need. I will gather you some clothes and leave them for you at the door.”

“Thanks,” Garrett walked past Gretyl toward the two double doors.

## *Chapter Eleven*

Garrett followed Gretyl onto the bridge with a mixture of excitement and sadness. Spaceships and the universe were Jarrett's passion, and Garrett wished his twin could be here to share it with him.

“Hi, Garrett.”

Garrett waved at his father and forced the sadness aside. “Hi, Daddy.”

“Come and watch with me.”

Garrett turned to Gretyl. “Bye, Gretyl.”

“Goodbye, Garrett. You'll not return to the medic, but I shall see you around the ship, and you're welcome to come and visit me anytime you'd like.”

Garrett grinned, “Thanks for taking care of me.”

“You are welcome, my friend.”

After she had walked away, Garrett hurried to his father side. He watched with amazement as their large Royal Flagship swept past a moon, and hovered in front of another smaller craft. “Whoa! What is that?”

“Yeah, pretty amazing, huh?” Thomas said through chuckles. “It’s the Earth’s moon.”

“No way!”

“Yes, way. We could travel through a tunnel inside of the moon to a base, but unfortunately, we have other plans. We’re simply meeting with this cargo ship to gather supplies and then we’ll continue our journey.”

“Awe! I’d like to see the inside of the moon,” Garrett groaned.

“And you shall, but not this time,” Thomas winked at his son.

“Jarrett told me once that it takes three days to travel to the moon from Earth.”

Thomas swelled with pride, “And Jarrett would be correct. It does indeed take three days to travel from Earth in an earthen vessel, but our ships are much faster. It’s only taken our fleet eight hours to arrive here.”

“Wow!”

“Hello, Garrett.”

Garrett turned to look at a senior man who had approached them.” Hi.”

“Son, I want you to meet your grandfather, Thaddeus.”

Garrett gasped, “You’re my grandpa?”

“Yes, I am, and it is an honor to meet you finally. I look forward to meeting Jarrett some day as well.”

Thaddeus extended his hand to Garrett but then wrapped his arms around him, and drew him into a warm embrace.

After they had hugged, Thaddeus pointed to a monitor attached to the right side of the large window, “I suggest you

watch this event. I think you'll find it quite interesting as we are fueling and taking on supplies this supply craft delivered from the Moon'oro base.”

Garrett peered at the screen and watched wide-eyed as the cargo ship slowly maneuvered toward a circular bay door of their ship. Once the small ship connected to the Royal Flagship, the bay door opened, and several robots and men began moving items from the small ship to the large one through a sizable, ventilated tunnel.

Garrett jumped up and down with excitement as he watched the action on the monitoring screen. “Those are robots!”

Thomas and Thaddeus laughed with delight as they watched Garrett's expression light up with pure joy.

“Yes, they are robots. So do they meet your expectation, Garrett?” Thomas teased.

Garrett nodded with enthusiasm, “Oh, yes Daddy, I can’t believe I’m looking at real life robots.”

Thaddeus shot Thomas a prideful glance. “I have a feeling I know what studies this young man will focus on for his live’s work.”

“Yes, Dad, I agree.”

Garrett watched the loading procedure and was mesmerized by the robots. He could not wait to see one up close. Suddenly without warning, he heard Jarrett’s voice. “Garrett!”

He whirled around and found himself looked into the familiar eyes of his twin. Garrett thought he looked tired, and sad.

“Jarrett! Jarrett, please don’t cry. I’m alive, Jarrett, I’m alive.”

Thomas and his father glanced in the direction that Garrett looked toward, when they heard Garrett call his brother’s name.

Thomas touched him on the arm.  
“Garrett, are you alright?”

Garrett’s expression now appeared somber. “I just heard Jarrett calling my name, and I saw him, Daddy. He looks really sad. I told him not to cry.”

Thomas and Thaddeus shared concerned looks. “Son, it was just your imagination. I miss them too.”

Thaddeus whispered, “I know the darkness of space can cause one’s mind to drift easily and play tricks with it.”

Thomas nodded, “I agree, as a boy, my mind always found other places to linger when we traveled great distances in space.”

Garrett frowned, “It sure did seem real, though.”

“I am sure it did, but it wasn’t.”  
Thomas inhaled deeply, “What do you think of this room?”

“I like it, what is it?”

“This is the control room; we call it Command Central or the Bridge,” Thaddeus pointed to a chair in the center of the room, and on a higher deck.

“That’s the Captain’s chair. The chair next to it is the First Officer’s chair.”

Thomas laughed, “I sat in the third chair watching you direct this ship quite a bit, Father.”

“Yes, you did, Son, and I enjoyed having you there. I must say, I miss living on the ship.”

Thomas laughed, “I’d say becoming Prime Ruler of our world is quite important, Father.”

Thaddeus chuckled, “Yes, and it keeps me busy.” He pointed to a tall human who had just approached them, “This is Captain Poindexter, and he is commander of the Dove now.”

“Dove?” Garrett asked.

“Dove is the name of this Royal Flagship. Our fleet is known as the Peacekeeper Fleet.”

“Cool.”

Thomas held his hand outright, “Captain Poindexter, it’s nice to see you again, Randall.”

“It’s nice to see you, Prince Thomas.” Captain Poindexter then glanced at Garrett with a grin, “Welcome aboard the Dove, Prince Garrett.”

Garrett grinned, “Thank you. How fast can this ship fly?”

Captain Poindexter laughed, “I’m not sure exactly how fast, but I can tell you, it’s pretty fast.”

“You have a great job, sir. Where’s the pilot’s chair?”

Captain Poindexter gently patted Garrett’s shoulder. “Thank you, I think it’s a great job myself. The pilot sits in the center seat just below my perch, there.”

Captain Poindexter pointed to a long panel, in front of the Captain's chair on a slightly lower deck, but to the right. The pane panel resembled a horseshoe. This entire deck faced the large window that displayed the galaxy. The panel had several colored knobs, buttons, and switches beeping and ringing often.

In the center of the panel, a short man with long black hair and a goatee sat. "This is Moses Jacques; he is our pilot. He is from Galileo, the largest of Jupiter's moons."

Garrett gasped, "He's from a moon? Whoa, that is wild."

Thaddeus chuckled, "Most everyone on this bridge is a Moon'lin from the far reaches of the known universes. Moon'lins are quite intelligent people and are precise in every task they are given."

As Garrett looked around the room, he noticed that many of the aliens moving

about were short in stature. “Are all Moon’lins short?”

“Yes, some more so than others, but it is certainly a defining trait. The tallest Moon’oro I’ve met to date stands about 4’9.”

He then pointed to six Moon’lins sitting in front of small monitors and keyboards which surrounded Pilot Jacques. “These wonderful Moon’lin’s are Pilot Jacques’ Co-pilots.”

“Whoa! It takes that many people to drive a spaceship?”

“On a Royal Flagship, yes.”

Garrett looked at the numerous people at the various stations around the large room. His heart pounded with excitement. There were several humans in the room, while a few were different species with their unique descriptions.

“What do the other people do?”

Captain Poindexter waved his hand around the large room. “They help Jacques and me with important data.”

Garrett interjected, “Data means information.”

Captain Poindexter nodded, “Yes, it does. Good job, Garrett. The data helps keep the ship at its best and safest for the fifteen hundred souls who work and live on this ship while traveling the universe.”

“Gah! That’s a lot of people! What do they all do?”

Thaddeus laughed, “Yes, it is. Our entire fleet is quite large and, we need medical personnel on each ship, people who study maps, some who can interpret other languages, many who work in the engine rooms, and a lot of others I cannot begin to name them all.”

Garrett whistled. “Wow.”

Captain Poindexter nodded, “It is quite extraordinary how well we work together to keep the Royal Flagship and

in fact, our fleet as a whole, running smoothly. Now, concerning work, I'm afraid I must get back to directing the activities. Please excuse me. I'm sure I'll see you again."

Garrett waved at Captain Poindexter as he made his way toward his perch. "Bye."

He then turned to Thomas and Thaddeus and asked through a yawn, "Can we look around this ship?"

Thomas and Thaddeus laughed and then Thomas commented, "Sure, we can, tomorrow. You look tired."

"Why don't you two retire to your quarters for the night? You can eat, and relax for the remainder of the evening."

"I think it's a good idea, Father. Tomorrow, you can have a tour. Is that okay with you, Garrett?"

Garrett groaned but then nodded. "I guess so."

“Thank you, Father.” Thomas glanced over at Thaddeus.

Thaddeus led Garrett and Thomas off the bridge and down the hall until they came to a door on their left.

## *Chapter Twelve*

Garrett followed Thomas and Thaddeus off the bridge, and to the door leading to their room. “This will be where you’ll stay, Garrett.”

“Grandpa, where do you sleep?”

Thaddeus pointed toward the bridge. “Your grandmother and I live in the room on the right as you leave the bridge.” He waved his hand in the air, “This hallway in addition to several more on this floor of the ship is the Royal Quarters. They are only for members of our family to use.”

Thomas pointed at a small black keypad with dark blue numbers and letters on it. “Garrett, can you punch in these numbers; 12, 05, 67, 49.”

When Garrett punched in the numbers, the silver door slid open. “Whoa! That is wild,” Jarrett exclaimed.

Thaddeus gently touched Garrett’s arm, “I must go now, and have dinner myself with your grandmother. I shall see you tomorrow. Enjoy your meal and have a good evening.”

“Goodnight, Grandfather.” Garrett hugged Thaddeus and then hurried inside to explore the quarters.

He had just walked to the edge of a black marble bar when he stopped dead in his tracks and gasped. There on the other side of the bar stood a brick red robot with a body resembling a three-tier snowman, though he stood taller than Garrett. The robot turned, and its black crystal eyes twinkled red scribbled lines that seemingly swam in its eyes.

“Hello, Garrett, I am your service robot while you are aboard the ship. It is

nice to meet you.” The robot held out its black mechanical hand.

Garrett giggled as Thomas approached him. Garrett took hold of the hand, counting each finger. “You have four fingers and a thumb just like me. What’s your name?”

The robot clumsily turned his black lines where his mouth should be in an upright position as if it were trying to smile. “I have no name, and yes, I have hands like yours so I can grasp things and be as efficient as I can to do things for you.”

“I like your voice; it sounds like a real person’s voice.”

“It is due to the program installation. You can give me a name if you like.”

Garrett turned and grinned at Thomas. “Can I?”

Thomas shrugged, “He said you could, so go for it.”

“But how do I do it?”

The robot interjected, “Simply say what my name shall be, and I’ll answer to it.”

Garrett giggled as he thought about it for a time, and then he held up one finger in the air. “I’ve got it. Your name shall be Lloyd.”

“My name shall be Lloyd.”

Thomas laughed, “Okay, Lloyd it is. I like it.”

Lloyd then announced, “I have prepared dinner for you. I also have a message from your mother, Prince Thomas.”

“Please, read the message, Lloyd.”

In an instant, a gentle female voice spoke through Lloyd.

*“Thomas and Garrett, I hope you enjoy your meal. Mother.”*

Garrett’s mouth gapped open. “Was that my Grandma’s voice?”

Thomas smiled, “It certainly was.”

Garrett walked past Lloyd to the bar and climbed onto a stool. “I’m going to like you, Lloyd.”

“Wonderful, Garrett, I’m pleased you like me. I will now bring forth your dinner.”

Thomas and Garrett shared amused glances as Lloyd walked into the kitchen. Thomas then whispered, “You need to go and wash your hands before you eat.”

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After dinner, Thomas helped Garrett settle into bed. “Want me to read a story?”

Garrett nodded as he yawned then he looked at Lloyd, who sat in a corner just outside Garrett’s bedroom. “Goodnight, Lloyd.”

“Goodnight, Garrett, Goodnight Prince Thomas.”

Thomas playfully waved at Lloyd. “Sleep well, Lloyd.”

Lloyd's eyes immediately closed and small blinking blue lights appeared in the center of his chest.

Thomas pointed at the cover of the book, "This is called *Twin Mischief*, by Carrie Vaught. He laughed as he winked at Garrett, "Hmm, I know a couple of twins myself that like to get into some mischief."

Garrett snickered, and then yawned.

"Okay, let's get to our story before you fall asleep on me."

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"That was a cool story," Garrett yawned.

"Yes, it was. Now, you try and get some rest. You've had a busy day."

"How can you tell if it's day or night, Daddy?"

Thomas pointed to his wristwatch.

"This helps me."

Garrett's eyes brightened, "It's a watch."

Thomas chuckled, “It’s more than a watch. It’s called a contracto, and it keeps me informed about a lot of things.”

Thomas pointed toward a small circular window that lay to the right of Garrett’s bed. “I also know how to read the universe. You’ll learn how to do it too, but now, try to rest.”

“Will you stay with me until I fall asleep?”

“Of course, Son.”

Thomas moved from the chair and sat on the bed next to Garrett, then wrapped one arm around him. He then called out, “Lights off.” Immediately, the lights blinked off.

“Cool.”

Thomas chuckled, “Yeah, it’s pretty cool.”

“But not as cool as Lloyd.”

Thomas whispered softly, “Sweet dreams, little man.”

As Garrett drifted off to sleep, he found his dream led him back to Earth and his twin.

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Once Garrett drifted to a sound sleep, Thomas walked back into the main room, sat down on the sofa, and gazed out of the window at the open universe. Thoughts of his lovely wife and son consumed him. *Oh, Millie, how I wish you could hear me. I'm alive. Garrett's alive. We will be back for you. I swear it.*

He then had an idea. He grasped the communicator lying on a table near him, punched in some numbers and waited for a voice.

“Asbara here.”

“Asbara, it's Thomas Crenshu.”

“Hello, Prince Thomas. I can hardly hear you as I'm entering earth's atmosphere.”

“My father told me you’re going after my family. I want to send a message to Jarrett.” Thomas quickly typed out the message and sent it to Asbara.

“Of course, Sire. Safe journey to you, and may it be successful. Your message just arrived.”

“Perfect, thank you, Asbara, and I wish you a safe landing on earth.”

“Please send my regards to my brother.”

“I shall, Asbara.”

The signal then faded, cutting the connection. Thomas was thankful he had at least gotten the message for his son delivered to Asbara.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

It had been a few days since Millicent had held the memorial service at their home for Thomas and Garrett. She had wanted to do it while Trish and Amanda were still in town so they could be there.

Jarrett had slept, but not rested easily since the accident. He wondered if he would ever be happy again. Losing his twin brother was like losing a part of himself, and he could not explain it, but he felt empty inside, and he had an ache in his heart that he somehow knew would never go away for as long as he lived.

Jarrett groaned as he tossed and turned in his bed. The bed beneath him disappeared, and his body felt strangely light. His eyes popped open, and he gasped when he saw blackness all around

him, and he seemed to float in the air. Then a small flicker of light appeared, and gradually grew lighter until he saw his brother and father standing with their backs to him in a high place. They were overlooking a room full of strange creatures and other humans who were concentrating on control panels. In the center of all this activity, Jarrett noticed a huge window displaying a galaxy full of stars and passing asteroids with many crafts both small and large soaring between this craft and several other large ones nearby.

Garrett and Thomas stood inside the large ship while it was attached to another ship. Beyond all the activity of the crafts, Jarrett could hardly believe his own eyes.

“Whoa, It’s the moon.”

When he turned to look at his brother, he sadly discovered Garrett was gone.

Jarrett heard a small crackling sound from somewhere in the now darkened room. Feeling a bit bewildered by what he had just seen, Jarrett rubbed his eyes, blinked, but when he opened them again, the twinkling light he saw in the center of a mirror which stood in one corner of his room remained there. While the soft crackling noise continued, a light grew until it had covered the entire mirror. Holding his breath, Jarrett held his breath as he jerked upright in the bed, drawing himself into a ball in the corner of the bed.

With his heart pounding, wildly, Jarrett watched a small figure step from the center of the bright light and then out of the mirror.

The bright light then began to slowly fade until only a soft glow emanated from the mirror, revealing a four-foot man wearing a black tuxedo, with a black top hat, and holding a cane at his side. His

round face resembled a human in every way, except for his short nose. Instead of having two small holes in the nose, it had only one nail sized hole in the center. Jarrett glanced at the man's hands and quickly counted four fingers and one thumb.

Finding it amusing to wear a long dusty jacket and black boots over the tuxedo, Jarrett decided it was best to conceal his thoughts.

The little man removed his hat and bowed before Jarrett. "Hello, young Master."

"What's your name?"

"I am Asbara. The last name you cannot pronounce, no Earthling can, so simply call me Asbara. Master Jarrett, I'm not going to harm you. In fact, I'm here on a mission."

Jarrett thought Asbara had a nice voice, and he decided the small man spoke the truth when he swore he meant

him no harm, but he remembered the warning his parents gave him regarding ‘stranger danger,’ and decided to hold off on making a final decision about this strange visitor from the mirror.

“How do you know my name? What kind of mission are ya on?”

“Ah, tis an important mission issued me from your father, Master Thomas Crenshu.”

Jarrett frowned, “My father is dead. He and my brother, Garrett died in a car accident. You’re not even saying my daddy’s name right.”

“Ah, I am most pleased to tell you, young Master, your father, and brother are not dead at all.”

“Yes, they are. They died in a car accident a few days ago. My dad’s SUV went over a high cliff.”

“This would be most distressing to hear, young man if the story were true, but I spoke with your father just a few

hours past, and he and your brother are very much alive.”

Jarrett narrowed his brows and frowned. “Where’d ya see ‘em?”

“I did not see them. The fleet in which they traveled, was fueling up and receiving supplies above our base when I last spoke with Master Thomas. They were preparing for an emergency rescue mission.”

Jarrett huffed as he threw back his covers and climbed across his bed. He stomped over to Asbara until he stood in front of him with a crossed expression.” It’s not very nice to tease a boy who just lost his brother and daddy. You’re mean.”

Asbara drew in a deep breath as he scratched his smooth face.” I’m not deceiving you, young man. They were rescued from their vehicle before it crashed into the ravine.”

Jarrett glared at him, not sure if he should believe Asbara. “Rescued?”

“Yes, my brother saved them by pulling them into his ranger, and then carried them to the Royal Flagship.”

“If that’s the truth, then why didn’t they come and get us?”

“There was no time, young master, but we shall get into that all later.”

Asbara began pacing as he caressed the side of his temple while mumbling. He then exclaimed, “I was supposed to say something if he did not believe me.” He then turned and grinned at Jarrett.

“Your father said to tell you he regretted not canceling his weekend trip with Garrett. He wishes he had when you got sick. If he had done so, then you would all be together.”

Jarrett’s mouth dropped. “How’d you know that?”

“I have a note to you from your father.”

“Can I see it?”

“Yes, but it’s back at my ranger. I’ll take you to it once it’s repaired.”

*This funny little man in the top hat knows my name and that I’ve been sick, He must be tellin’ me the truth,* Jarrett thought. He then broke into a grin. “I guess I believe you. Something tells me you’re a good person. I wish you could take me to my dad and brother, though.”

“It was my plan, but to be completely honest with you, I’m afraid it will have to wait awhile longer. You see, I am afraid as I entered Earth’s atmosphere, some debris hit my ship and caused it to short circuit and crash on Earth. I can repair the damages, but it will take some time.”

“My momma told me I don’t have to return to school until after the New Year. Maybe I can help you repair it.”

“Ah, this is a lovely idea.”

***KNOCK***

Jarrett turned toward the door and smiled. “It’s Momma checking on me.”

When Asbara said nothing, Jarrett turned to look at him once more but discovered he was gone.

## *Chapter Fourteen*

When Millicent walked into Jarrett's dark room, tears managed to escape and slip down her cheeks. She brushed them away as she approached her sleeping son, snuggled beneath his bedcovers. She gently caressed his head before turning to leave the room.

“Don't cry, Momma. I just found out that Daddy and Garrett aren't dead. I can't wait to see them again.”

“Honey, what did you say?”

“I said I just found out they aren't dead.”

Millicent struggled to compose her emotions, “Honey, they're in heaven, we've talked about this.”

“No, you're wrong, they're alive.” Jarrett insisted as he yanked covers over his head in frustration.

Millicent gently placed her hand on the blanket, covering his head. “I’m sorry you’re hurting.”

“Momma, they’re waiting for us to come to our new home.”

“Okay, Jarrett, and where is this new home we’re meeting them at?”

“I dunno.”

“Son, I’m sorry you’re so sad. I’m sad too, but you have to move on from this tragedy and accept they aren’t coming back to us.”

“Momma, you don’t believe me? Just ask the man in the black hat.”

The little hairs on the back of her neck stood on end. “What man?”

Jarrett giggled as he threw the covers from over his face. “He’s little and wears a tall black hat. He has a funny looking nose.”

“Where did you see him? When did he come to you?”

“He came to my room tonight. He was here when you knocked on my door.”

“Jarrett, sweetheart, you were alone when I came into your room.”

Jarrett remained silent.

“I think I know what’s going on here.”

“You do?”

“Yes, you obviously had a dream.”

Jarrett peered around the room and for the first time, he noticed the bedside lamp was off. He glanced at the mirror, sitting in the corner, with clothes draped over the top of it. He felt tears well up inside him as he groaned within his thoughts. *It had been a dream.*

Tears streamed down his face. “Oh, Momma, it felt so real.”

Millicent gathered her son into her arms and hugged him tightly. “I know. Sometimes dreams can seem real when we want them to come true. I’m sorry.”

Millicent hesitated then suggested, “I can read you a story.”

“No, that was Daddy’s job.”

Millicent ignored the pain in her heart at his words.” Okay, well, if you need me, call me. Goodnight.”

After Millicent had left the room, he rolled onto his side and tried to sleep, but suddenly he heard Garrett’s voice, “Don’t cry, I am okay, Jarrett.”

Peace filled him, and he drifted off into a restful sleep.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

While working at her desk, Millicent's mind began to wander. Realizing she was in no mood to work, she leaned back in her chair when something caught her eye. She leaned forward, rubbed her eyes, trying to clear her vision. It was then she saw ghostly apparitions of Thomas and Garrett standing in the center of the room. Garrett held out his hands toward her, and Thomas looked longingly at her.

Millicent's heart raced as she stood and began moving toward them, but they evaporated into thin air before she could reach them.

"No, no, this isn't real. It's my imagination. Oh, God, make this stop. Make the dream go away." Millicent collapsed to the floor, overcome with anguish.

After several moments of overwhelming grief, Millicent pulled herself from off the floor and made her way to her bedroom.

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Millicent found no rest as she tossed and turned all night, having the same dream haunting her repeatedly. She glanced at the clock. *Midnight*. It was then she saw Thomas appear in the bed beside her, causing her breath to catch in her throat. Millicent's heart raced as he leaned in and kissed her.

She extended her arms to hug him, but he disappeared. Her eyes fluttered, and when she finally opened them, she realized it had only been a dream.

“Oh, Thomas, I miss you,” she embraced his pillow and inhaled the cologne still lingering on it, mourning her loss.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

Jarrett glanced up and saw streams of sunlight pouring through his window.

Out of the corner of his eye, a movement caught his attention. He turned and saw Asbara at the foot of his bed.

Asbara blinked twice and then jumped up on Garrett's bed with his legs crossed.

Jarrett frowned as he pushed his back against the headboard and glared at Asbara, inspecting him carefully. "Are you real?"

Asbara glared back at him, void of expression. "I do believe so."

Jarrett whistled, "I'm sure glad you came back to see me."

Asbara blinked his eyelids rapidly, still with no expression.

“Why do you blink your eyes so much?”

“The Earth’s atmosphere is quite different from my home, and sometimes, my eyes burn.” He then flicked his hand in the air, dismissing the strange look from Jarrett. “Shall we stay on the subject at hand, which is why I am here, dear boy until I accomplish my mission of bringing you to my home where you shall meet your father and brother.”

“Where is your home, Asbara?”

“Oh, my, didn’t I tell you where I came from?”

“No.”

“Oh, dear, I do apologize.” Asbara removed his hat, smiled, and whispered, “Dear Master Jarrett, I am pleased to meet you. I am Asbara, and I am from the Moon.”

“Did you say the moon?”

“I did indeed.”

Jarrett jumped up in his bed, laughing, "I'm ready, let's go!"

"No, no, not yet, dear boy, your mother should be prepared for the trip."

"But she don't believe me. She says you ain't real. Just in my imagination. She says Daddy and Garrett are dead."

Asbara rubbed his chin and blinked his eyes as he often did while thinking about things. "Adults don't like believing without seeing. As I told you, I spoke with your father; he is alive. I know it's hard to believe this, but I assure you it is true."

"I want to believe you, but it's hard to believe it."

"I know it is, Jarrett. Okay, now I just dropped by to check on you, but I must go now. You be good for your mother today."

"Okay, I will," Jarrett grinned as Asbara disappeared.

## *Chapter Seventeen*

Millicent stopped at Jarrett's bedroom door when she heard his voice. He was mumbling to himself, and it concerned her greatly, but she was not sure what she should do about it. She pushed her concern aside and entered the room. "Good morning, Son. Did you sleep well?"

"Yes. Asbara says it won't be long before we can go see Daddy and Garrett."

Millicent frowned, "I'm worried about you, Jarrett. While I think it's completely natural to dream of your father and brother, I don't think it's okay to believe the dream of a little man in a top hat is real, because it isn't."

"He is real. Didn't you just see him standing with me when you walked into

my room, Momma? We were right there next to the mirror.”

“Jarrett, I only saw you standing there. Dreaming about things you want, doesn’t make them real, and it’s not healthy.”

Millicent touched his shoulder, but Jarrett withdrew in anger. “I need to get dressed.”

“Sweetheart, we need to talk about this. You have to realize it’s just a dream.”

“Momma, I wasn’t dreaming. I was awake when the little man came to me this morning.”

Millicent frowned. “It’s called a daydream, Sweetheart. I have them too. I dream about Garrett and Thomas, too, but the reality is they aren’t coming back to us. I’m sorry. I know it’s difficult for you, Honey, I feel like my chest is crushing my heart sometimes, and I can’t breathe, but we can get through this.”

When Jarrett did not answer, she turned and walked toward the door, but stopped before leaving the room. “Let’s go out for breakfast this morning.”

“Okay, Momma.”

Millicent glanced over at Jarrett once more before turning and leaving the room.

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Jarrett and Millicent drove to the restaurant in silence. Millicent kept her eyes locked on the road while Jarrett stared out of the window at the passing hills. When they arrived at the restaurant, each one ate their meal in silence. Neither seemed to have much of an appetite as they merely picked at their food.

When they returned to their vehicle, Millicent turned the opposite direction from home and continued driving for twenty minutes until she pulled into the parking lot of a floral shop.

“Come on, Jarrett. I want to buy some floral arrangements.”

Jarrett said nothing as he followed her through the floral shop. He wondered why she had purchased a white cross stake, several pots of red plastic plants, and a wreath, but because he was still mad at her, he decided not to question her.

It was only when they parked on the side of a long, winding country section of road that Jarrett decided to speak.

“Where are we, Momma?”

Millicent stepped out of her car and opened the back door. “Come on; I want to show you something, Sweetheart.”

Jarrett followed his mother to the side of an ice-capped snow bank.

Millicent withdrew the items she had bought from a bag and placed them on the side of the road. She then looked gloomily at her son.

“This is where it happened, where Thomas and Garrett...” Millicent’s voice caught in her throat as tears filled her eyes.

“This is where it happened. The car hit the other bank, and then crashed through that railing.” Millicent pointed to a missing railing with yellow tape stretched across it.

“They died here, Son. I wanted to place the wreath and flowers here in honor of them.” She could no longer hold back her tears and wept bitterly.

After Millicent had gathered her resolve, she whispered, “Jarrett, I know without their bodies, it’s hard to believe. I know it’s hard for you to accept their deaths, but Honey, they are gone. This is the place where it happened.” She walked to Jarrett and wrapped her arms around him.

Jarrett tried to pull away, but Millicent held him tighter, until he

stopped fighting her, and broke down. “I know you’re mad at me, but you must face the truth.”

Jarrett’s heart ached. How he wished he could make the pain stop. Maybe his mother was right. Maybe Asbara only existed in his mind.

“Jarrett!”

Jarrett could not believe what he saw when he looked at the yellow tape. He rubbed his eyes, but the image of his twin hovering in the air in front of him remained.

## *Chapter Eighteen*

Millicent heard Jarrett call out Garrett's name, and she looked down at Jarrett, who had his eyes fixed on the yellow barriers.

“Jarrett, honey.”

“Momma, look, it's Garrett. He's standing there, looking at us. Can't you see him?”

“No, because he's not there.”

“Yes, he is there, Momma! I see him.”

“Jarrett, you're scaring me. There's nobody there.”

Millicent bent down and grasped Jarrett's shoulders. “Snap out of this. Come back to reality, Son. I cannot lose you too!” She sobbed as she held Jarrett.

Jarrett felt bad at causing his mother to cry, but he knew what he saw. He

looked back at where he had seen his twin, but now he was gone. “He was there, Momma! Why won’t you believe me?”

He glared at her with anger burning in his eyes, “I never want to come here again! Never!”

Jarrett jerked away from his mother and ran to the car as fast as his feet could carry him.

Millicent groaned. She now wondered if she had done more harm than good.

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On the way home, both Millicent and Jarrett were silently stewing over their fight at the roadside. When they arrived home, Millicent followed Jarrett into the house, calling his name, but he ignored her as he ran up the stairs, to his bedroom, and slammed the door.

Millicent's heart broke when she reached the door and tried to open it, only to find it locked. "Jarrett, please open the door."

"Go away, Momma. I don't want to speak to you."

She lifted her hand to knock on the door but then thought better of it. Perhaps time and distance would smooth things out for them. Millicent took a deep breath and turned toward her office. She hoped work would take her mind off things for a while.

## *Chapter Nineteen*

Jarrett walked away from the door and stopped in front of the mirror. He looked deep into it with mournful eyes. “I sure could use a friend just about now.”

Immediately Asbara appeared in the room and sat on the floor, with his legs crossed.

“Hi, Asbara! I’m glad you came back to see me.” Jarrett grinned broadly.

Asbara smiled, “You called for me.”

“I did?”

“Yes, you said you wished you had a friend, did you not?”

Jarrett nodded, “I did, but how did you know?”

“I have my ways, dear boy.”

“I’m ready to see my Daddy, let’s go!”

“No, no, not yet, young man, we cannot go until I’ve completed my repairs, and then there’s a matter of your mother.”

“But she don’t believe me. She says you ain’t real. She keeps tellin’ me Daddy and Garrett are dead.”

Asbara rubbed his chin while he thought on the matter. “As I told you, I spoke with your father before I left for earth. You must believe me; your father and brother are very much alive.”

“I do.”

“Jarrett, I know when you were at the accident site today, it was difficult for you to reason things out, but I need you not to give up on me.”

“Okay,” tears filled his eyes as the image of the yellow tape, showing where the car had left the road, flooded his mind.

“I am still attempting to repair the ship. You just keep believing.” Asbara suddenly became silent, lost in thought.

“You heard momma and me?”

“Of course, I’m never too far away. Even if you can’t see me, I’m still listening and watching over you.”

Asbara waved his hand and laughed, “Now, Jarrett, I have an idea. Would you like to take a short trip with me?”

Jarrett’s eyes grew bright, “Would I ever! When can I go?”

“Now would be a splendid time.”

Asbara snapped his fingers, and in an instant, a puff of smoke appeared inside the room.

Smoke swirled around Jarrett until he could no longer see his room. When it evaporated, he realized he now stood in an open field.

“Where’s your spaceship?”

“It’s here, but nobody can see it.”

Jarrett squinted his eyes and peered hard at the field, and within moments, a circular, crystalline ship appeared before them.

Jarrett squealed with delight as he ran toward the now visible spacecraft. “Whoa, Incredible.”

“My, that sounds like a large word for such a small boy. What does this word mean?”

Jarrett thought for a moment. “Something like good, but better.”

Asbara roared with laughter. “I’ve heard many humans use the word. I appreciate the fine compliment to my ship, but how do you see it?”

Jarrett shrugged, “I dunno, but it’s right there, and it’s a glass ship.”

Asbara shook his head with confusion as he thought about it. *Why is this boy able to see my ship? No human should be able to see this ship. Wait, oh, how silly of me. That’s why he can see it.*

“It’s a crystalline ship, actually, my dear boy,” Asbara chuckled. “Now, we must enter because I don’t want anyone to see us.”

Jarrett shook his head with a most serious expression. “Yep, that would be bad cause they would capture you and cut you open to see what is inside of you.”

Asbara cupped his mouth and playfully shook his body, “Ooh, I would like to keep my body intact, please.”

They both enjoyed this playful exchange while walking up the long, narrow ramp.

Once the two entered the ship, the ramp slid into its place.

“Asbara, did you make the ship invisible again?”

Asbara shook his head. “No, because it was never visible.”

“But I saw it.”

“Yes, indeed you did, and one day you’ll understand why. Now, come, come let me show you around my ranger.”

Jarrett inspected every inch of it as Asbara led him down the narrow passageway. “I can see outside, but nobody can see us?”

“Yes, you are correct; I can make the ship appear and disappear at will, but I never have any reasons to make it visible when I’m on Earth.”

“Whoa. I like this spaceship, but it’s smaller than I thought it’d be.”

“Yes, indeed. We call it a Ranger. It was simply designed for short range travel for no more than six passengers.”

Jarrett ran to a small console which had numerous buttons and switches.”  
“You pilot the Ranger from here?”

“You are quite astute, young Master Jarrett. You may examine the buttons, but please don’t touch them.”

Jarrett beamed with delight as he looked over the panel. “What kind of fuel do you use?”

Asbara explained, “Crystals and solar energy power our crafts. There are many crystals accessible on moons. Now, I must work on the console for a bit, but you are welcome to explore. There are only a few rooms on this particular ship which are the kitchen and the restroom, but it should keep you busy while Reggie and I test the controls.”

“Thanks, Asbara.” He then stopped. “Who’s Reggie?”

Asbara pointed to a small black square robot sitting in the corner of the ship. The robot rested on four rollers with its small body frame placed on a square metal plate. Attached to the robot’s side were two small knobs. “Reggie, I’m back.”

Reggie zinged to life with a mixture of rings and low tones while colorful

lights appeared and blinked inside his facial and chest areas. Then he rolled to Asbara's side. "Hello. Asbara."

"Hi, Reggie, please say hello to our guest. His name is Jarrett."

Reggie extended one of his elastic knobs toward Jarrett, and in a hypnotic, deep tone, he spoke. "Hello. Jarrett. It. Is. Nice. To. Meet. You."

Jarrett giggled and shook hands with Reggie. "Hi, ya, Reggie." He then exclaimed to Asbara, "Oh, this is just cool. I wish Garrett were here. He loves robots."

"Oh, then he'll love the trip he's on now because he'll see plenty of them." Asbara chuckled and then waved his hand. "Now, Reggie and I must concentrate on the Ranger. You may explore."

Jarrett laughed as he turned and hurried away.

## *Chapter Twenty*

Millicent sat in her recliner, looking out of the window as the snow mixed with rain hypnotically splashed against the window.

Tears wet her face as she gazed from the window to the staircase.

She stirred uneasily as her mind took her back to the previous conversations with Jarrett. He seemed so convinced the little man had come to visit him in his room, telling him that his father still lived. However, she knew it had only been a dream.

*How I hated to break his heart,* she thought.

His words replayed in her mind. *He came to my room.*

Jarrett believed his imagination was a reality, and it worried Millicent. She

was not sure this was a healthy route for her son to take. However, it had only been a week since the accident, so it would be natural for him to have such dreams. She thought she had done the right thing in taking Jarrett to the scene of the accident that morning, but now she feared it had only complicated the situation since Jarrett had convinced himself that he had seen Garrett.

With the dreams she had experienced coupled with Jarrett's loss of reality, Millicent decided it was time to seek therapy. It frightened her, but she knew she could not continue taking care of her son if she did not seek help for herself.

Millicent had not slept well since the accident, and she doubted if she would sleep much tonight either, and in there lay the problem. She lacked sleep; she lacked the desire to eat or to do anything except wallow in her grief, but she knew it was time to begin healing for her and

Jarrett's sake. Perhaps a therapist could prescribe something to help her sleep during the night, so she could get rest and begin her road to recovery.

Millicent stood and glanced out of the window once more before moving through the house, turning the lights out for the night.

After Millicent had gone upstairs, a small, shadowy figure passed by the window she had just been looking through. The shadowy figure moved swiftly and silently through the home, and down the hallway, only to disappear at the end of the hall.

## *Chapter Twenty-One*

Breakfast went as usual for Millicent and Jarrett. Millicent said good morning; Jarrett mumbled something in return. After their meal was complete, Millicent dismissed him.

“Please go and get dressed because we have somewhere to go.”

“Where are we going?”

“I think we need to see a doctor.”

“I’m not sick.”

“It’s not that kind of doctor. It is a therapist. I believe he can help us begin our path to healing over the tragic accident.”

Jarrett said nothing more as he turned and left the dining room.

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Now, as they sat waiting to see the doctor. Millicent had wanted to try and speak to Jarrett during the drive over, but

each time she looked at him, he glared at her and then turned away. It broke her heart, so she decided not to try and force him into a conversation.

“Jarrett Crenshaw.”

Millicent and Jarrett walked to the nurse holding a clipboard.

“Hello, Jarrett, hello Mrs. Crenshaw, I am Nurse Miller. Jarrett, you may come with me.”

Jarrett hung his head as he walked past Nurse Miller, never glancing at his mother. When Millicent tried to walk through the door, the nurse blocked her. “You may wait here. I’ll be with him the whole time.” She closed the door and walked away.

Jarrett followed the nurse down the hallway and into an office. She led him to two chairs situated in front of a desk.

“You may have a seat, Jarrett.” Nurse Miller pointed to the closest chair in front of the desk then sat next to him in silence while she looked down at her clipboard.

It felt to Jarrett as though he had sat there for hours. While he waited, memories of his twin and their time together began filling his empty mind. He had not realized someone new had entered the room until he heard a man clear his throat loudly. When he looked up into the dark eyes of the one standing in front of him, cold chills ran down his spine.

Holding out his hand, the man introduced himself.

“Hello, Jarrett. I’m Dr. Robert Homer. It’s nice to meet you.”

Jarrett looked nervously at the doctor but then dropped his head, remaining silent.

Dr. Homer reached his hand out and touched Jarrett’s chin. “No, don’t look down or away. Look at me.”

Jarrett stirred in his seat then lifted his head and looked at Dr. Homer.

“Now, that’s better. Sit up straight in your chair. Always use good posture.” Dr.

Homer leaned against the corner of the desk in an authoritative stance.

“Your mother says you’re sad over the death of your father and brother.”

“I’m not sad.”

“If you’re not sad, then how do you feel about their deaths?”

“I’m happy because I’ll see them again.”

“Jarrett, do you know what it means when someone dies?”

“Momma told me that people leave the earth and go to heaven.”

“Your father and brother are not living. Therefore they have died. You won’t see them again.”

“My Daddy and brother didn’t die. They went on a trip and soon Momma, and I will take the same trip.”

“Do you think you will die soon?”

“No, Momma and I ain’t gonna die.”

“To go on the trip your brother and father traveled, you must die, as they have died.”

“No, sir, they ain’t dead.”

“Jarrett, do you want to die?”

“No, I don’t wanna die, but I wanna see Garrett and my daddy again.”

“I think you’re confused, listen to me carefully. For you to see them again, as some believe there is a world beyond death, you must die, as your father and brother have died.”

“They ain’t dead. Asbara told me he talked to my daddy.”

“Who’s Asbara?”

“My friend who comes and talks to me in my room.”

Dr. Homer scribbled notes and then looked at Jarrett once more. “Oh, you’re referring to the man in the tuxedo and top hat. Right. How did he get inside of your room?”

“He came into my room through the mirror.”

Dr. Homer walked behind his desk and took a seat. “The mirror? Hmm, interesting. What does he look like?”

Jarrett giggled. “He’s short and fat. And he has a funny nose.”

“Where does he live?”

“He lives on the moon.”

Dr. Homer cleared his throat while shaking his head.

“Huh-uh, the moon. Okay, well, I find this story interesting. You have a great imagination, but you do know he’s not real, don’t you? You are experiencing a dream.”

“He is real, and I saw him just this morning. He came to my room and wished me a good morning, but then disappeared.”

“Okay, Jarrett, let’s go ahead and bring your Momma in with us.”

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Although Jarrett was mad at his mother, he snuggled close to her when she sat by him.

Dr. Homer looked down at Jarrett and then at Millicent over his glasses. “I believe Jarrett’s using his dreams to mask his sadness over the loss of his brother and father. I’m concerned he is confused about death.”

Millicent nodded, “I don’t like to see him sad, but he needs to understand they’re not coming back. Can you help us?”

Dr. Homer leaned back in his chair. “There are numerous things we can do.” He looked at Jarrett, “Son, are you sleeping well at night?”

Jarrett said nothing but only shrugged his shoulders.

“I would like to see him again tomorrow as we’re out of time today. I want to go over my notes this evening and then evaluate him again tomorrow. Then we can discuss our options in depth.”

Dr. Homer stood and walked past the desk. He waited for Millicent and Jarrett also to stand, and then he led them to the door.

“Thank you, Dr. Homer.”

“You’re very welcome, Mrs. Crenshaw.”

He placed his large hand on Millicent’s shoulder. “And if you need anything at all, please call me, day or night.”

He then looked at Jarrett, “I will see you on Wednesday, Jarrett.”

Jarrett walked past Dr. Homer without answering him.

“Jarrett, say good-bye to Dr. Homer.”

Dr. Homer shook his head, “It’s alright, Mrs. Crenshaw.”

Jarrett hurried down the hall, then rushed outside to their car, with Millicent running after him.

“Whew, you’re fast.” She smiled, hoping it would ease the tension between them. When Jarrett did not respond, she

shook her head. “What do you want from me, Jer?”

He raised his head and glared at her. “I want you to believe me, Momma.” He opened the back door, slid into the seat, and then dropped his head.

## *Chapter Twenty-Two*

On Wednesday, Jarrett sat on the sofa in Dr. Homer's office with his head down. Nurse Miller sat next to him while Dr. Homer sat in a chair facing them with a pen and notepad.

“Okay, Jarrett, we've had two sessions now, let's try some exercises.”

Dr. Homer reached his hand over and tapped Jarrett on the arm. “Right here, keep your eyes on me. It's not only rude, but it's also an indication you aren't taking these sessions seriously.”

Jarrett met the doctor's gaze, glaring at him in anger.

“Now, I want you to repeat the phrases I say. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“My daddy is dead.”

Jarrett remained quiet and hung his head.

“Repeat the phrase, Jarrett.”

Jarrett said nothing. He kept his head hung low and crossed his arms over his chest.

Dr. Homer narrowed his eyes.

“My brother, Garrett is dead.”

Jarrett shifted in his seat but remained silent.

Dr. Homer exhaled with aggravation clearly noted in his tone. “Jarrett, you will say these things as I have instructed.”

When Jarrett said nothing and kept his head lowered, Dr. Homer huffed. “Okay, shall we try this again?”

Multiple times, the doctor attempted to coerece Jarrett into repeating the phrases, but Jarrett remained quiet and refused to look at him. Finally, after forty-five minutes with Jarrett, Dr. Homer stood from his desk with marked anger etched on his expression.

“You’re dismissed.”

Jarrett stood and walked out of the office.

For the remainder of the week, and the following week, Jarrett returned to Dr. Homer's office for more counseling. Each session began and ended the same as the previous one. Dr. Homer had attempted to convince Jarrett of his father and brother's death, while Jarrett remained steadfast in his belief that he and his mother would reunite with them.

After setting his pen and pad down on the desk, Dr. Homer removed his glasses and leaned back in the chair, "Alright, Jarrett, I've attempted to reach you with counseling, but nothing I've done appears to be working. I think it's time for a new strategy."

He looked at Nurse Miller. "Will you bring in Mrs. Crenshaw?"

When Millicent walked into the office, Dr. Homer pointed to a chair near Jarrett. "Please, have a seat."

Millicent glanced at Jarrett, and as usual, his head was hung low. She sat in the chair and placed her hand on Jarrett's hand and waited for the doctor to speak.

"Mrs. Crenshaw, I believe Jarrett isn't sleeping well, and I believe he may need something to help him rest at night."

Millicent frowned, "Okay if you think it would help him."

"I do." Dr. Miller looked at his watch. "I will call in the prescription and my nurse will see you out."

Jarrett said nothing as he hurried toward the door.

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Millicent looked in the rearview mirror at Jarrett. How she wished she could take the sadness he felt from him. "How did the session go today?"

Jarrett ignored Millicent and looked out of the window. She tapped the stirring wheel but decided not to pursue a conversation.

Once they arrived home, Jarrett jumped out of the car and ran inside of the house.

“Jarrett! Jarrett, wait!”

Millicent ran after him, following him to his bedroom.

“Jarrett.” She turned the knob to walk inside the room but realized he had locked the door.

“Jarrett, please open the door. I just want to talk to you.”

“Go away!”

“We need to talk.”

“I don’t want to talk to you. I’m mad at you. Daddy and Garrett are alive! Dr. Homer is mean!”

“Jarrett, Stop it! They are dead! Do you hear me? They’re dead! They’re not coming back. We will never see them again!”

The bedroom door suddenly swung open with Jarrett standing there glaring at Millicent. “I hate Dr. Homer, and I hate you!”

After he had finished screaming at her, Jarrett slammed the door in her face and locked it. After several moments of stunned silence, she walked away, sobbing.

## *Chapter Twenty-Three*

Jarrett stormed to the chair next to his closet and plopped down on it. He stared at the blank wall, wishing he could turn back time.

All at once, Abara appeared in the center of the room. When he saw Jarrett in the corner, his heart sank.

“My dear boy, what’s with all the gloom? You didn’t greet me at the mirror as you usually do. And where’s your delightful smile I’ve grown accustomed to?”

Jarrett remained transfixed on the wall, not answering Asbara.

“My dear boy, soon we will go. I promise you. Only, do not give up hope now. Just today, I’ve recognized some life returning to my ship. Your father is set to meet us on Moon’oro in two days.

Jarrett slowly turned his head and glanced at Asbara. “I want to see my daddy and Garrett.”

“It is not long. Just a few more sessions with old Dr. Meany and then I’ll take you to your father.”

Jarrett wiped his nose and smiled slightly before he stood.” But, why can’t we go now?”

“I still have a few more small adjustments to the ship. In the meantime, you must make up with your mother. You don’t hate her, really, now do you?”

“No, Asbara, I don’t hate her. I’m really mad at her, though. She doesn’t believe me. She yelled at me.”

“You also yelled at her, my boy, and that makes her sad. Even sadder than you’re feeling now.”

Asbara pulled out his pocket watch and glanced at Jarrett.

“I must go now. Lots of work to do and you must go to bed.”

Jarrett took hold of Asbara's arm.

"Please, stay with me."

Asbara's eyes shown with compassion. He put his pocket watch away and pointed to the bed.

"For a short time, but you must lay down. Rest will do you good, yes, rest is what you need."

Asbara led Jarrett to the bed and drew back the covers. After he had gotten into the bed, Asbara pulled the covers over him, tucking them snugly around him.

"Tell me a story, Asbara."

Asbara clicked his teeth together as he thought hard about what kind of story he should tell.

"Hmm, let me think. Oh, yes, I have one. We were in a battle on Mars."

"Mars?" Jarrett's eyes grew big with excitement.

Asbara jumped onto the edge of Jarrett's bed, giving Jarrett a stern look,

“Yes, Mars. Now, don’t interrupt, it’s very rude indeed.”

Asbara attempted to mask his amusement, but when he saw Jarrett smiling, they both burst out laughing.

“Now, where was I?”

Jarrett reminded him with deep interest reflecting in his eyes, “Mars, you were in a battle there. I always knew there was life out there. I can’t wait to go to Mars, Jupiter, Venus, and Pluto and all the other planets.”

“Yes, of course, there’s life beyond your planet. Why do these Earthlings insist on believing they’re the only ones in the universes, and intelligent at that?” Asbara chuckled and shook his head. “Earth is a mere baby compared to the other worlds, and has so much yet to learn.”

“Why haven’t the other planets tried to connect with Earth?”

“They have, dear boy, but Earthlings are brutal to their visitors because they’re afraid. They simply are not ready to receive

the knowledge of the universe as other worlds have and to be honest; we're not sure they can be trusted with such knowledge of power."

Jarrett shrugged, "I think I'm ready to discover new worlds."

Asbara smiled. "Of course, you are; you are indeed your father's son. He was always curious about everything. Oh, now I've gotten off the storytelling, now let's see what were we talking about? Oh, yes, there were about fifty of us against the Plutotians."

"Pluto people? I thought we were talking about Mars."

Asbara looked crossly at Jarrett, "Yes, I'm telling you about a great battle on Mars. Let me get there. Those from Pluto we call Plutotians. Small little buggers, but sneaky ones, they are, yes indeed. They took our beloved Moon'oro Queen, Moriah captive, and we went after them. The Martians informed us of the Plutotians location on

Mars, so that's how we knew they were there.”

Jarrett stretched his arms out and yawned. “This is cool.”

Asbara watched his eyes grow heavy. “We climbed to the top of Agelin Mountain, and settled for the night, planning our battle strategy for dawn. I puffed on my pipe, while Cap'n Noron drank his moon juice.”

Asbara watched Jarrett's head sink lower into the pillow, but continued speaking.

“That Cap'n Noron, why, he's a fantastic Moon'oro of today's Moon'oro society. He's a plump one too, with long white hair flowing down his back, with a matching white beard too. And when he laughs, he sounds like he's got a belly full of jingly bells tucked away inside him, he does. He rather reminds me of the legendary elf, you earthlings talk so much of, the one that goes about on Christmas morns, handing out toys and such.”

Asbara softly chuckled when he noticed Jarrett's eyes closed, and his breathing steady.

Asbara then leaned over and touched Jarrett's forehead softly. "Goodnight, young Master Jarrett, soon, your family will be reunited, I promise."

Asbara then twitched his nose and disappeared.

## *Chapter Twenty-Four*

Millicent watched Jarrett fiddling with his food and wondering how things had gotten so bad for them. Neither of them noticed Asbara in the shadows, watching them.

“We have to begin your medication after dinner. I’ll give you a pill tonight, and it will help you rest. You’ll take the other pill in the mornings. It will help you to focus.”

“Okay, Mom.”

Millicent stood, and walked to the kitchen, only to return shortly with a pill in her hand. “I’m going to my office to get some work done. Please don’t go outside, it’s getting late.”

“Okay, Mom.”

Millicent took a step and stopped. She then turned and looked at Jarrett.” Why are you calling me Mom, now?”

“I’m not a baby, anymore. Only babies say Mommy, or Momma. I like Mom best.”

“Oh, I see. Okay. I’ll be in my office.”

Asbara waited for Millicent to turn the corner, and then he approached Jarrett. He hopped up on the table and sat mumbling with his hands tucked under his chin.

“Not good, not good at all. No, no, not good at all.”

Jarrett grinned at his friend, “Hi, Asbara. I’m glad you’re here. My Mom is making me take medicine.”

“No; not your Mother’s idea, but Dr. Homer.”

Asbara exhaled, then glanced at Jarrett, expressing concern.

“Don’t take any more of those pills, young, Master Jarrett, though I do not know how...”

Asbara stopped speaking when he watched Jarrett take the pill out of his mouth, and lay it on the table.

“How did you manage not to swallow the pill?”

“I saw my daddy do it once when he was sick. Mom gave him the pill and walked away. Daddy threw it in the wastebasket.”

Asbara chuckled with a silly expression and clapped his hands.

“Ah-ha, very good.” Asbara’s expression changed to one of concern.

“But, you should always take your medicine, young Master Jarrett. Yes, yes, always take your medicine.”

Asbara jumped down from the table and ran into the kitchen and to the cabinet where Millicent had put the medicine.

“What ya doing, Asbara?”

Asbara waved his hand in front of the cabinet; the door opened, and then the bottle Millicent had taken the medicine from, floated down into his hands. Asbara opened

the bottle, looked inside, and smirked. He uttered a few strange words and waved his hand over the pills. He retrieved a pill and handed it to Jarrett.

“No, you just said not to...”

“Go on, dear boy, take one.”

Jarrett took the pill and popped it into his mouth and then grinned, “It tastes good.”

“Yes, indeed. I rather like candy myself. This way, you can take the pill your Mother gives you, and it won’t cause a fight between the two of you.”

“Candy? Cool.” Jarrett held his hand over his mouth as he giggled. “Okay, now I suggest we go to your room, and you can teach me some games you Earth people play or read me a book.”

Jarrett nodded with a grin, “Do ya know what video games are?”

Asbara shook his head, “I don’t, but it’ll be something you can teach me tonight.”

“C’mon, it’ll be fun.” They raced up the stairs, laughing like old friends.

## *Chapter Twenty-Five*

Millicent sat on the sofa, rehearsing her decision to visit a therapist. She had slept better at night since starting the medication but often felt groggy during the day. She had hoped the therapist would help Jarrett, but it certainly had not seemed to help, but it had in fact made things worse to the point that the last words he said to her were, *I hate you.*

The words echoed in her mind repeatedly, leaving Millicent heartbroken and not sure how she should proceed from here.

After she had taken her prescribed medicine, Millicent fell asleep and relived the night her whole world was turned upside down.

“Thomas... Garrett, no, no...” Millicent awoke from the nightmare, trembling.

“It will be okay, Millie.”

Millicent caught her breath. “Thomas.”

She shook her head. “It’s only my imagination.” Then she swore she saw him walk across the hallway, between the kitchen and the dining room. Millicent jerked from the sofa and followed the shadowy figure into the kitchen, but then it disappeared. Overcome with emotion, Millicent slid down the wall, crying.

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The following day, Millicent was surprised when Dr. Miller had called her and scheduled an emergency meeting to speak to her about Jarrett.

She now sat with Jarrett in the doctor’s office while he sat at his desk scribbling notes. She was shocked when Jarrett touched her hand with his trembling one. She gazed deeply into his eyes, and what she saw disturbed her. She hardly recognized the child she loved. Where there once was a

happy, active boy, now sat a withdrawn, sad, and frightened child. *Frightened*. The words rang in her mind as if a bell suddenly rang out a warning. *Jarrett is frightened of the doctor*. Millicent squeezed his trembling hand and put her arm around Jarrett, pulling him closer to her.

Dr. Homer cleared his throat loudly catching her attention. She held his gaze, ignoring his stern expression. “I believe there is nothing further I can do for Jarrett in these sessions. He’s frankly unreachable through the methods I’m afforded in this office. I think it would serve you and him well if you placed him in a facility. Once he’s there, we can work with him one on one, without...” He leaned forward in his chair, without breaking eye contact with her. “Distractions.”

“A facility? Surely you aren’t suggesting I take my son to a hospital, and just leave him there?”

Millicent glanced at Jarrett who had his head lowered and then looked back at the doctor with agitation filling every fiber of her being. She gathered her thoughts quickly and stood from the sofa, still holding Jarrett's hand. "It's time for us to go."

"I'll retrieve the number for you, and I'm sure I can have them accept him tonight. I realize it's one day before Christmas, but your son is in a critical situation." Dr. Homer reached for his Rolodex for the number.

Millicent shook her head. "No, Sir, I don't want your number. Our relationship with you is complete."

"That would be a grave mistake. Your son is mentally and emotionally ill. It's our job to take care of him." Dr. Homer stood from his desk.

"No sir, it's my job to take care of him, it always has been, but I've failed him. I only hope I've not caused more damage by bringing him to you. Goodbye."

Millicent stormed toward the door, practically dragging Jarrett behind her. Jarrett turned his head slightly and smirked at the doctor before his mother tugged him out of the office door.

On the way home, Millicent drove in silence, mulling over what the doctor had said. She had been so caught up in her grief that she had not taken care of her son as she should have. Millicent worried the time spent with the horrible doctor had created worse problems for Jarrett. It was then she heard soft humming coming from the backseat.

She glanced through the rearview mirror and smiled at her son. Her heart suddenly felt light. *We will be okay.*

“We may wake up to more snowfall in the morning. The weatherman says we’re getting several inches of snow tonight.”

“I hope it snows as tall as a giraffe,” he grinned.

Millicent and Jarrett then laughed together.

Suddenly realizing what day it was, Millicent then groaned. “Jarrett, oh, no, it’s Christmas Eve. Son, I haven’t bought you any gifts.”

Jarrett shrugged his shoulders and then grinned slyly, “I know what would be a great gift, Mom.”

“Oh, yeah, what would you like from me?”

“Mom, can we go to the cabin?”

Millicent felt her heart twitch with excitement. She had wanted to take Jarrett to the cabin many times since the accident, but she feared he would refuse.

Millicent felt a wave of hope fill her again. She nodded approvingly, “Yes, we can go. I’ll make the preparations when we get home. We can leave within the hour.”

Jarrett grinned, “Thank you, Mom.”

He then went back to humming happily.

## *Chapter Twenty-Six*

With Jarrett packing his clothes, he and Millicent were ready to leave their home for the family cabin within an hour. Millicent loaded the last bag inside the trunk and walked to the car. “Okay, all packed. It’s starting to snow, so I think we’re leaving just in time.”

Jarrett smiled from the backseat.

“Thanks for going to the cabin, Mom.”

“You are welcome, Sweetheart.” She looked at the DVD player. “You enjoy your movie, and we’ll be there before it’s over.”

“Okay, Mom. Please, drive careful.”

Millicent felt a lump swell in her throat at her son’s words. He had obviously worried about driving in the snow.

“Jarrett, I promise you, I will drive as careful as I can, okay?” She paused a

moment. “We’re driving a different route than the one Dad took.”

Jarrett frowned, “Okay, Mom.”

“Hey, no frowns allowed in this car.”

Jarrett nodded as a smile crossed his face.” Okay, Mom. No frowning.”

“Hmm, much better, there’s the smile I’ve missed.”

Turning on the ignition and turning the radio on her favorite Christmas station, Millicent pulled out of the driveway.

After several miles, the weather began to worsen. The once light snowfall was now a mixture of snow and sleet, making Millicent thankful they were nearly to their destination.

While they were at their home, preparing for their trip, Jarrett was angry at her for not believing him about Asbara. However, he loved his mother, and he had missed their good times. Therefore, when they left their house, he decided to leave his anger there as well.

When she turned the last curve and drove a half mile, she came to a sign that read: **CRENSHAW**. She reached over and turned off the radio. “We’re here, Jarrett.”

Turning off his movie, Jarrett watched with anticipation as Millicent turned the SUV down a dirt road, now covered in snow.

The vehicle drove until it reached two large iron gates. She put the car in park and placed her hand over to the door handle.

“I can open it, Mom.”

Millicent opened her mouth to protest but then paused. She gave him a slight nod and smiled. She watched as he struggled with the lock to the gates, and the chain, but she waited until he completed the task. She then drove the vehicle through the open gates and parked, waiting for Jarrett to return after securing the gates.

Jarrett jumped back inside of the car breathing heavily with a big grin. Millicent

could see that he was proud of his accomplishment.

“Thank you. I didn’t want to get out in the snow. You did me a big favor.”

“Awe, it was nothing, Mom.”

Millicent drove the car down the familiar narrow dirt road. She thought of the many trips they had made here as a family, and her heart ached for Thomas. He was her first boyfriend and the only man she had ever loved. A tear threatened to escape the corner of her eye as she thought back to the first time they met twelve years ago.

Thomas had walked into the diner where she worked, dressed immaculately in a tuxedo, and he immediately caught her eye. She was eighteen, alone, and penniless, but determined not to follow in her mother’s footsteps. Little did she know this distinguished, striking man would give her even more of a reason to succeed?

Millicent brushed the tear away with the memory as she parked the car. She and

Jarrett each grabbed their bags from the trunk and ran to the house through the snow. Unlocking the door, Millicent moved to the side to let Jarrett in first. She laughed as he ran through the door with lightning speed.

“I’m going to go after the other bags; you can take yours to your room, shower, and put on some dry clothes.” Millicent then turned and walked out of the cabin.

Millicent unloaded the last of the suitcases from the car and closed the trunk.

With a suitcase around each shoulder, she walked toward the front porch with her laptop and makeup bag in her arms. She had gotten half way between the front porch and the car when she saw two large eyes peering at her from behind a bush near the corner of the house. Suddenly, she heard the howls of wolves from somewhere in the nearby mountains. Her throat went dry, and she froze in her place. *What do I do? I move, that’s what I do.*

Nothing could have prepared her for what happened next. With her heart pounding, she watched as a wolf emerged from the bush.

It was the largest wolf she had ever seen, and the eyes were unnatural, almost human-like as it stared at her, and growled with a low, menacing growl.

*Run.* She ran as fast as she could across the yard, up the steps, and onto the porch. Without glancing back, she opened the door and hurried inside the house, slamming the door behind her. When she looked out of the window, she saw a second wolf as large as the other attack the first one, and the two fought. Millicent slid down the door and sobbed as her body trembled with fear and adrenalin. When she heard one screech, she crawled to the window and peeked out. The two wolves squared off, but then they disappeared into thin air. Millicent looked around the yard but did not see them. With a held breath, Millicent leaned back against

the wall with thoughts soaring through her mind. *Did I just imagine that?* She shook her head. “Oh, my, goodness, I’m losing my mind.” After catching her breath, Millicent noticed a fire burning in the chimney, and stood, making her way over to it.

*When did Thomas teach the boys how to build a fire?* Millicent rubbed her temples and then turned and made her way to the kitchen. She had wished Trish had not left town, but it was the holidays, and she belonged with her family. *Beginning tonight, I’m going to put my life together.*

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Millicent pulled a pizza from the oven and sliced it. She brought it to the living room and set it on a small coffee table near the fire. She then walked to the edge of the staircase and called to Jarrett. “I have dinner prepared.”

Jarrett walked down the stairs and hurried to the food. He grabbed a piece of pizza and began to eat it.

“Hey, wait on me, you,” she laughed as she sat down next to him on the floor.

“Sorry, Mom, I’m just starved.”

“I can see that. I thought a nice picnic in front of the fire would be relaxing. Jarrett, when did Dad teach you to build a fire?”

Jarrett giggled and shrugged, as he motioned to it, “It’s a good one, ain’t it?”

“Yes, it is thank you, Sweet Heart. Oh, I forgot drinks, I’ll be right back.”

While his mother had gone to the kitchen after drinks, Jarrett sat gazing into the fire, looking forward to the days to come. It had been hard for him to conceal his excitement about the things Asbara promised for him and his mother the next day. For weeks now, he had anticipated his reunion with his father and brother.

Asbara had promised they would be leaving Earth tomorrow. Jarrett wished he

could tell his mother the good news, but he knew better.

He thought about Asbara's last words to him while they were in his room. *It was best she discovered the truth as the events unfolded.*

"Here we go," Millicent placed a glass of tea on the mantle in front of Jarrett and then sat back down on the floor.

Millicent laughed, "I am quite hungry so let's dig in."

Millicent laughed as she watched him eat his food and she was pleased to see his appetite had returned.

"It is very good, isn't it?" She took a drink of her tea.

With a full mouth of food, he nodded, "It sure is."

Millicent shook her head, "Don't talk with your mouth full; that's gross." She stifled a laugh. He had smiled more times tonight than she had seen him smile in several weeks. She knew in her heart now

that she had made the right decision to end the therapy.

Then the thought of the wolf came back into her mind, and she glanced at Jarrett with concern in her eyes. “Jer, did you hear anything going on outside your window while you were upstairs?”

Jarrett had shaken his head before he took a bite of his second pizza, “No, why Mom?”

“Oh, nothing, I just thought I heard wolves out there.”

Jarrett giggled, “Of course you heard wolves, Mom. We’re in the mountains, and they are everywhere.”

“Of course, how silly of me,” Millicent laughed and then began eating.

When they finished off the pizza, Millicent cleaned up the dishes while Jarrett remained in the living room. When she returned, he asked her, “Do you wanna play some games?”

“Sure,” Millicent smiled and sat down on the floor across from Jarrett.

They played checkers twice and then pulled out another board game and played while reminiscing about old times at the cabin. Though remembering Thomas and Garrett, caused them to tear up, Millicent felt this time together reminiscing about their loved ones had been good therapy for them, as they had enjoyed reminiscing more about good times than sad ones.

Feeling tired, Millicent yawned, and then looked at the clock.

“Oh, Jarrett, it’s midnight. I cannot believe we have stayed up so late.”

Jarrett giggled, “It’s Christmas Eve.”

“Yes, it is, and we’ve both been stressed, so I supposed it hasn’t hurt us, has it? Oh, but I hope Santa didn’t pass us by because you were still awake.”

Jarrett rolled his eyes and laughed, “There’s always next year, Mom. Besides, I

had fun with you tonight, and so it was worth giving up some gifts.”

Millicent hugged Jarrett close and then they stood. “Oh, my boy, I love you so much. You make me so proud.”

Jarrett watched his mother turn out the lights and then when she approached him; he asked, “Will you tuck me in?”

Millicent kissed his cheek. “Oh, yes I would like to do that.”

After pausing for a moment, Millicent took Jarrett by the hand, “I’m sorry for putting you into therapy. It wasn’t a wise thing for me to do. I hope you’ll forgive me.”

“I forgive you, Mom.”

Millicent hugged him. “Thank you, now let’s get to bed, I’m tired.”

They both laughed as they walked up the stairs for the night.

After she had tucked her son into bed, Millicent walked into her bedroom and

stopped at the door. “Oh, Thomas, I miss you.”

After changing into her gown, she turned off the lights and got under the covers. She drew Thomas’ pillow near her, hugging it tightly, and drifted into a romantic dream of them together.

## *Chapter Twenty-Seven*

Thomas watched Lloyd set the tray of food on the bar. “Thank you, Lloyd.”

“You’re welcome, Prince Thomas.”

Lloyd smiled at Garrett as he placed the second tray in front of him. “Good morning, Garrett.”

Garrett reached out and touched the robot on the arm. “Hi, Lloyd.”

“Would you like orange juice this morning or milk?”

“Milk sounds good, thank you.”

Thomas sat on the barstool next to Garrett. “How are you feeling this morning, Champ?”

“I feel great, Dad, how are you?”

“Dad? Why are you calling me Dad this morning?”

Garrett grinned, “I dunno, I just think Daddy is too childish now.”

Thomas laughed, “Okay, Dad it is then.”

He then removed the silver covering from the tray and pointed at the delectable display of fruits, bread, and meats resting there.

“My, this looks good.” Garrett picked up his fork and began eating as Lloyd set juice down in front of him.

“Prince Thomas, do you require more coffee?”

Thomas nodded his head and smiled. “Yes, thank you, Lloyd.”

Garrett licked his lips. “It looks good. Are those eggs and bacon? Whoa, where’d they come from?”

Thomas laughed. “Aliens have to eat too, Son. Believe it or not, our world has animals resembling Earth’s creatures, and we utilize them much as Earthlings do, but we’re not as brutal as Earthlings are; we only kill for necessity, not a sport.”

“I figured your world had flying cars and cool robots.”

Thomas laughed, “We do have flying vehicles, robots, and other cool things, but we have beautiful country sides as well.”

“Whoa, I can’t wait to see it.”

Thomas playfully ruffled Garrett’s hair, “And I cannot wait to show it to your mother, you, and Jarrett. Now, eat up because I have some people I want to introduce you to.”

“Who, Dad?”

“My mother for one; she’s anxious to meet you. I then will take you to meet some boys your age and let you hang out with them while I get some work done. This afternoon, Father will come and get you or send for you to come to his quarters from here on out, as I’ll be busy working on negotiation details.”

“Awe, Dad, I wanna stay with you.”

“I’m sorry, Garrett, but I don’t think it’s a good idea. I will probably fly out tonight

from the fleet and make my way to where we're meeting those who have Thalia. It's not going to be a safe place for you."

"Please, don't get hurt, Dad."

"I will come back, Garrett, I swear it."

"Okay. Do you think we'll like each other?"

"Who, Grandma? I know you'll like her. She loves her children and is a wonderful mother. She's worried about Thalia, so I hope you'll help cheer her up."

"I'll do my best. Dad."

"I know you will, and thank you. I'm so proud of how you're handling things."

Garrett bit into his food, and then asked with a full mouth, "How long will it take us to reach the place where Aunt Thalia's at?"

"Don't talk with your mouth full,"

Thomas whispered as he playfully socked him in the arm. "We'll be there by tomorrow since we're traveling through the Galaxy Chamber or GC for short."

"What's a GC?"

“It is anonymity in space by which we use to travel across time and space. A trip that would usually take our entire lives to reach will only take a few short days to arrive. This fantastic discovery was made three millenniums ago by space travelers by sheer accident.”

“Whoa, what happened?”

“They were traveling through space and accidentally got too close and sucked inside, but quickly discovered that by moving in and out of each of the colored spheres, they could enter and exit the chamber at will, and eventually found their original origin. They announced their discovery to the universes.”

“That is cool.”

“You know what’s cooler about this story?”

“What?”

“My dad was just a little boy when the GC was discovered and he was on the ship that discovered the GC.”

“That is cool.” Garrett took a drink of his juice and then looked at Thomas with a worried look. “Dad, you do what ya gotta do to get Aunt Thalia away from those bad guys.”

“Thank you, son, for understanding.”

“What if they won’t release her?”

“Then I must fight for her, Garrett. Sometimes, we have to fight for what’s right. Do you understand?”

“I think so.”

“Let me put it this way. If there were bad men trying to harm your mother, what would you do to protect her?”

“I’d do whatever I had to do to save her. I would not let anybody hurt my mom or my brother.”

“Yes, you would do all you could do to keep them safe, so that is what I’m doing now. I’m trying to save Thalia while I protect our people from these enemies who want to kill and enslave us.”

“I understand, Dad, and I know you’ll win ‘cause you’re the bravest man ever.”

Thomas chuckled as he took a sip of coffee. “Well, sometimes I get scared, but I struggle with my fear and fight for what’s right. And that is the mark of a true hero, okay?”

“Okay.”

After they had finished their breakfast, Thomas replaced the dishes onto the tray.

“Okay, let’s get the day started.”

“Can Lloyd go with us?”

“No, he has to stay here, but I’ll make sure he is taken to Father’s quarters for you.”

“Okay, bye, Lloyd.”

“Goodbye, Garrett and Prince Thomas.”

Garrett turned and followed Thomas out of the door.

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Garrett was nervous at meeting his grandmother, but once he did, he realized

she was nice. She was quite sad over her daughter, but Garrett managed to get her to smile, and even laugh once. When he and his father got ready to leave, she hugged Garrett and Thomas.

After visiting his grandmother, Thomas took Garrett to meet the other children at the youth center. Garrett found this large facility to be ridiculously awesome. However, he became excited when he saw many robots in different shapes and sizes zipping around the large room. He could not wait to talk to them and check out how they were put together and functioned.

“Garrett, say hi to Zylon and Kysmoro. Zylon is the manager of the youth center, and he is from the Earth-Moon and Kysmoro is from Xoris, a moon within my solar system. Kysmoro is on my team of negotiators.”

Zylon and Kysmoro looked at Garrett and smiled while each one said hello to him.

Kysmoro was quite tall, but Zylon appeared to stand around four foot and looked a bit more rugged with long hair trailing down his back and tied in a ponytail. He had a scar trailing from his left temple down to his chin, and into his unkempt beard.

“Hi, Zylon, hi Kysmoro.”

Zylon turned and called some boys over to them. “Garrett, I want you to meet Yikis, Adodis, and Ophynis. Boys, will you show Garrett around.”

Ophynis and Adodis were tiny, and Garrett knew they were Moon’oro’s. Yikis had the face of a goat and the body of a human.

Kysmoro suggested, “Ophynis, would you mind showing Garrett the simulators first, I’m sure he’ll like those a lot.” He pointed to several large machines to their right.

“Yes, Father.”

Garrett looked somberly at Thomas, “Dad, when am I going to see you again?”

Thomas leaned down and looked Garrett in the eye. “Son, I’m hoping this will all be over within a few days.”

“Okay, Dad. I love you. Please be careful.”

“I love you too, and I promise, I’ll take care and see you soon.”

Ophynis grinned as he motioned with his hand, “C’mon, I know just which one to show you. My dad told me you like robots, so this is your lucky day, ‘cause we have a robot simulator.”

“No way!” Garrett exclaimed with excitement. He began following his new friends, but he stopped and glanced back at Thomas with reluctance.

Thomas motioned his hands forward, “Son, it’s okay, I’ll return soon. Have fun with your new friends.”

Garrett ran back to Thomas, hugged him once more, and then took off toward the simulators with the other boys.

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After enjoying a day with his new friends, Garrett returned to his grandfather.

When Thaddeus saw Garrett, he smiled warmly. “Hi, Garrett, I wondered when you would get here. Dinner is waiting for you. I hope you’ll forgive me, boy, but I’ve already eaten.”

“Hi, Grandpa, I’m glad to see you too. My new friend asked me to come stay with him, but I decided to be with you would be more exciting.”

Thaddeus laughed, “I am honored you chose to be with me. Come, sit and eat your dinner, while I conduct my duties.”

Garrett sat in the offered chair and began eating his dinner of macaroni and cheese, with a piece of steak. “This is delicious.”

“Yes, our chiefs aboard the ship are the best,” Thaddeus grinned. “I only bring the best staff on board the Royal Flagship.”

“It’s a huge ship. Dad took me on tour this morning after we left your cabin. I enjoyed seeing the engine room, the greenhouse, and the youth center. My favorite place there was the robot construction simulator.”

“I had a feeling it might be, and you know, it was my favorite place as a child too.”

“It was?”

“Yes, it was. I think it’s wonderful that you and I have so much in common.”

Garrett grinned as he finished his meal and drank the last bit of juice. “Where is my Dad? Is he still on this ship?”

Thaddeus shook his head. “Thomas has traveled ahead of us to the Trivex system to meet a ship belonging to the Vdoda holding Thalia. He hopes to have the negotiations completed by the time we get there.”

“Oh, okay.” Garrett hung his head.

“Garrett, it will be okay. We’ll be there by tomorrow morning.”

Garrett lifted his head and looked at his grandfather. “Okay, Grandpa.”

Thaddeus wished he could do something to make Garrett feel better then he had an idea. “Garrett, do you like to fish?”

“Yes, Grandpa, I love to fish.”

“Why don’t you and I retire to my quarters and make a list of things to do when you and Jarrett arrive on our home world.”

Garrett grinned, “Alright, but first you’ll have to tell me what kinds of things your homeworld has.”

“I can do that, but I want you to say ‘our’ homeworld because it is yours as well.” He turned and looked at the captain.

“Captain Poindexter, I’m retiring for the night with my grandson.”

“Yes, Sir, Good evening, Garrett. Sir, have a restful evening.”

“Thank you, come on Garrett.”

When they got into the private quarters, Garrett looked around the room. “Where’s Grandma?”

“She’s retired for the night.” Thaddeus pointed to the sofa. “Now, Thomas had Lloyd deliver himself with a suitcase for you, so after you go and change into your pajamas, we’ll make that list.”

Garrett laughed when he heard Lloyd approaching. “Hi, Lloyd.”

“Hello, Prince Garrett.”

“Prince? You haven’t called me that before.”

“My program now requires me to call you by the title.”

Thaddeus chuckled, “You are a prince, Garrett, so you should use the title.”

The two sat down on the sofa and began chatting about the world of Gherdisa, and the galaxy of Paradisa. Lloyd created a list of activities they planned for their trip and printed the list for them. Before long, two

hours had passed, and Garrett began nodding off, and eventually laid his head down on the armrest.

Thaddeus gently pulled Garrett from the sofa and carried him to the extra bedroom, and placed him on the bed, then tucked him in for the night. He leaned down and kissed Garrett's forehead. "Goodnight, sweet boy."

"Lights off," Thaddeus called out, and immediately the room faded into darkness. Thaddeus exited the room and closed the door behind him.

## *Chapter Twenty-Eight*

Garrett found himself trapped in a horrible nightmare where Jarrett and his mother were riding a snowmobile and being chased by an enormous wolf.

He screamed a warning to his mother, but she could not see him, nor hear him. For an instant, he and Jarrett made eye contact, and the two reached their hands out toward one another. Suddenly the image of Jarrett and the scene disappeared.

The sound of loud buzzards and the bed vibrating beneath him brought Garrett out of his terrifying dream. Bolting upright, his body soaked with sweat, Garrett peered into the darkness of the room. All of a sudden, Captain Poindexter's voice blasted through the intercom system.

“Code Red, man your station.”

“Lights on.” Once the room lit up, Garrett slipped his house shoes on and ran past Lloyd and through the quarters. After entering the hallway, he turned and ran out onto the bridge. He saw his grandfather sitting in the chair next to the Captain’s chair.

“Garrett, come here, son,” Thaddeus called to him.

Garrett hurried to his grandfather’s side. “What’s going on, Grandpa?”

Thaddeus pointed toward the giant window, “We’ve just entered the Trivex sector and in the midst of a battle.”

“Where’s my Dad?”

“I’ve been informed that Thomas and Kysmoro had transported from their cruiser to the Vdoda’s Command Ship.”

Garrett’s eyes grew wide as he glared out of the large window and watched the numerous Gallant involved with a massive fight against gray and blue fighters.

Ships were exploding or catching fire all around them as the Crystalline torpedoes hit their intended targets.

“Grandpa, I thought the Gallant could shoot lasers from their weapons.”

Thaddeus looked down at Garrett and smiled. “Yes, they can, but you can’t see lasers, they are simply a special form of light used in many ways. Some lasers you can see, and some you cannot.”

“I hope Dad is safe.”

Thaddeus placed his arm around Garrett’s shoulder. “Me too, Garrett.”

Garrett and Thaddeus both watched as a fighter exploded into a fireball of blue and red flames directly in front of the Flagship. The fighters were zipping back and forth, looping around one another as they searched for the best vantage point against their enemies. Many Gallant created a protective circle around the Royal Flagship and the vulnerable ships of the fleet.

Beyond the skirmishing fighters, opposite their Royal Flagship hovered a massive spacecraft.

“Grandpa, is that the Vdoda Royal Flagship?”

“I do believe it is. It looks quite damaged, doesn’t it?”

Fire flared from various areas of the enemy vessel as it slowly moved through the galactic void.

Their ship repeatedly vibrated as the enemy attacked it. Lights blinked, alarms rang out, and voices raised across the deck as each man carried out his task.

Garrett grasped the bar in front of him in an attempt to steady himself, but Thaddeus gently pulled him into the seat next to his. His heart raced as he watched the Gallant battle for victory.

“How are the shields holding?” Captain Poindexter called out.

“Strong, sir at ninety-nine.”

“Very good, Fathorn, keep me informed.”

“Aye, sir.”

“Gilmore, are those weapons ready to fire?”

“Aye, sir, ready.”

“Fire when ready.”

“Aye, sir, firing in 3, 2, 1, fire!”

Gilmore punched a red flashing light on his panel, and in thirty seconds, an orange light appeared on the screen in front of Gilmore.

“Sir, that hit has destroyed the Vdoda’s shield. They have lost complete control of navigation.”

“Very good, charge those weapons again, Son.”

“Aye, sir, charging.”

Garrett listened to Captain Poindexter issue orders with each officer on the bridge, following them completely. He then returned his focus to the battling one man fighters. “Are we winning, Grandpa?”

Thaddeus placed his hand on Garrett's shoulder and whispered, "I believe we are, my boy, but we must not become confident until the last enemy fighter is destroyed along with the remainder of their fleet."

Out of nowhere, a popping sound, and a burst of light appeared on the bridge and blinded everyone for a few moments.

When Thaddeus opened his eyes, his heart raced with panic to find that Garrett was disappearing. He reached his hands out to touch Garrett, knowing it was simply not possible. The boy had somehow been transported to another place.

"Transport room, where is my grandson?"

"Sir, he's been transported onto the Vdoda Royal Flagship."

Thaddeus stumbled to his feet in a rage of panic."NO!"

"Sir, the Vdoda is attempting to reach us."

Captain Poindexter pulled his eyes from the distraught Thaddeus and onto the screen. “Put the connection through.”

The screen lit up and flickered several times, but when it finally became steady, everyone gasped at what they saw. There in the middle of the enemy’s bridge stood Garrett next to Thalia, and they were restrained in the arms of two large reptilian creatures. To their left, Thomas fought with a larger reptilian creature. Surrounding them, were several of Thomas’ men and other reptilian’s exchanging laser blasts and discharging weapons at one another. The screen then went black.

## *Chapter Twenty-Nine*

Thomas froze in place when Garrett materialized in front of him next to Thalia. As the ship shook violently, Thomas stumbled but ready to shoot those who held Thalia and Garrett with an arc shot.

Taking advantage of the distraction, the reptilian fighting with Thomas struck him on the back of the neck. The force of the blow knocked the Hand Arc-Shot to the floor where it slid away from his reach.

As the battle rage on, the pilot dipped the ship lower, causing the ship to go into an uncontrolled spin. Fortunately for Thomas, this caused him and the reptilian to fall in separate directions.

Quickly gathering his senses, Thomas withdrew his Glaive Rod and turned onto his back.

As the enemy Vdoda Struggled to avoid the flying debris, he slowly made his way back to the Prince.

Despite the chaos around him, Thomas managed to stand and advance toward the creature once more. Suddenly a piece of metal smashed into the face of the Vdoda, causing him to lose his balance. Seeing this opportunity, Thomas rushed the creature and thrust the laser weapon deep into his belly. Immediately the Vdoda Commander cried out with agony, as his skin melted beneath the energy blade. Catching fire from within, he burst into a fireball, completely engulfing the room.

As this enemy fell, Thomas took the long bolt and began firing at another approaching Vdoda enemy.

When Thalia realized Thomas and his men were winning the fight, it gave her strength unlike she had felt before. Inhaling deeply, she maneuvered her ankle behind the heel of the guard holding her. Careful

not to draw attention to what she was doing, Thalia elbowed him as hard as she could, following through with a twist of her body so that she now faced him. Taking him completely by surprise, she reached up and dug her fingernails into the side of his neck with one hand while grabbing his short blaster from the holster with the other.

Not hesitating, she shoved it against his abdomen, and squeezed the trigger. The Vdoda guard immediately released his grip and fell to the floor, dead.

Thalia then turned and began shooting at the Vdoda officers while grasping Garrett's arm, pulling him with her behind an overturned desk. Approaching from behind, a Vdoda guard grabbed her tiny body and slammed it against a wall. He then scooped up Garrett with one arm and pointed a Glave Rod to his chest.

Thomas discarded the spent bolt weapon and pulled his Glave Rod out once more and battled the remaining enemy on

the bridge while Kysmoro fought his way to Thomas.

“Thomas, we have conquered the ship.”

Thomas nodded, “Good job, but don’t celebrate just yet; it’s about to blow.”

He pointed toward a panel against the wall which housed a pressure gauge. A feeling of urgency consumed Thomas as he watched the tiny red pointer vibrate erratically between the orange and red zones.

Kysmora shook his head, “We need this ship to survive because there’s valuable data.”

“Can’t we transfer the data from their computers to ours?”

“Yeah, if we have enough time.”

Thomas grinned, “Then get to it.”

“Yes, sir.”

Kysmoro hurried toward the main computer panel and began deciphering the codes to transfer the data.

“Thomas Crenshu, drop your weapon, or I shall destroy your son.”

Thomas turned and looked into the eyes of his frightened son. He then focused on the enemy that threatened Garrett’s life. Anger raged in Thomas at the sight of this foul enemy holding a Glaive on him. One swift motion to Garrett’s chest would end his life in a matter of seconds.

“Release my son, and I’ll let you live.”

The Vdoda guard growled with hatred and mumbled, “You have killed our commander, and now you, your son, your sister, and your entire fleet will be destroyed.”

Thomas raised his hands in the air. “Look around you, this ship is nearly destroyed, it’s going to blow, and if we don’t get off it, we’re all going to die; including you.”

“I will avenge my Commander before my death comes.”

Realizing he would not convince the Vdoda to release Garrett, Thomas called out, “Captain; we request assistance to return to the ship.”

With no reply returned, Thomas knew it was up to him to get them out of this dire situation. Suddenly the ship shook violently as its pilot dipped it into another spin. Thomas grasped a nearby panel and held onto the edge of it, but kept his eyes locked on Garrett.

When he saw the Vdoda stumble backward, he knew it was his chance. “Garrett, run.”

Garrett immediately obeyed and ran toward his father.

As Garrett ran from the Vdoda guard, Thomas leapt from his position and toward the guard. The guard had fallen against a wall and lay sprawled out on the floor, but when he saw Thomas charging him, he prepared for the impact.

The two men fought aggressively, each one exchanging blows. After several intensely filled moments, Thomas shoved the enemy away from him, causing the guard to stumble backward. Thomas saw an Arc- Shot on the floor near him, and quickly snatched it. Just as he pointed the weapon at the Vdoda's head and pulled the trigger, he felt a blade penetrate his side. The burning sensation became more than he could bare, and he surrendered to unconsciousness.

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Realizing they were running out of time, Captain Poindexter called out, "Kyser, bring my children and our men aboard."

Kyser immediately attempted to lock on, but he called out, "Sir, the lock is weak."

"Get that lock on them."

Trying again, Kyser breathed a sigh of relief showed the transport in progress.

"They should be coming into medical now, sir."

“Medic, do you have Prince Thomas, Prince Garrett, and Princess Thalia?”

After a few stressful moments had passed before a reply reached them. “Sir, I have Prince Garrett and Princess Thalia, but not Prince Thomas.”

“Stand by.”

“Please, inform the Queen of the events and have her escorted to medical.” Thaddeus then rushed off the bridge.

## *Chapter Thirty*

Garrett trembled with fear as he sat on a bed inside the medical unit. He recalled the feeling he had while getting transported. It was unlike anything he had experienced, but he had not yet decided as to whether he enjoyed it or not. That decision was still out for debate. It was scary, yet exciting at the same time. He knew Jarrett would have enjoyed it, and in fact, that thought is what made him fight against his fears.

Mere moments seemed like hours to Garrett but eventually the door opened to his room. He had to admit seeing his grandparents walk inside, made him feel much better. “Hi, Grandma, Grandpa.”

His grandmother hurried to his side and hugged him tightly. “Oh, I am so relieved to see you’re okay, honey.”

“Hi, Garrett, I’m sure happy to see you.”

Garrett smiled at his grandparents and then he shot his grandfather a serious expression. “Where’s my Dad and Aunt Thalia?”

At that moment, the door opened once more and a creature resembling a Sasquatch entered. “Prime Ruler Thaddeus, you may see the princess now.”

Thaddeus looked at Garrett. “I’m going to see Thalia. I’ll be back soon.”

“Grandpa, where’s Dad?”

Thaddeus gave Garrett a sad look. “I’m not sure. I...”

Suddenly a human female rushed in with excitement. “Prime Ruler Thaddeus, we have Prince Thomas.”

Garrett jerked off the oxygen mask and ran past his grandparents and the others into the hallway. “Dad!”

When he saw Thomas lying on a stretcher, he ran into the room.

Gretyl stood next to the side of the bed, fidgeting with an I.V. in Thomas' arm, while a Moon'lin male adjusted Thomas' oxygen settings.

“Daddy!” Garrett rushed to the bedside and grabbed Thomas' hand.

“Dad!” Garrett cried as Thaddeus and his wife rushed in after him.

“Garrett, your father will be fine. He's resting now.” Gretyl looked at Thaddeus. “He has no broken bones. However, he does have a concussion, and he has received an injury from a Glaive in the side, but fortunately, the burns were minimal. He's also oxygen deprived a bit, but he'll heal. Thalia is receiving oxygen.”

She then gently touched Garrett's shoulder, “You need more oxygen as well, Sweetheart.”

Garrett smiled, “Please don't make me leave.”

Gretyl patted his face softly, “You may remain here if you allow me to reinsert the oxygen tubes?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Alright, I’ll send for it then.” She turned and spoke to the Moon’lin male. “Please bring the oxygen unit in here for Garrett, and then after he’s set up, bring a recliner in as well.”

Garrett grasped his father’s hand and held it tightly as he watched him sleep. After a while, Thaddeus gently touched Garrett’s shoulder, “Your father will recover.”

“I don’t want to leave him, Grandpa.”

Thaddeus nodded, “Okay, but at least sit in this chair they’ve brought you and rest.”

“Thanks, Grandpa.” Garrett sat in the chair by his father’s bed. He kept his eyes locked on Thomas, fearing if he looked away, he might disappear.

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“Garrett.”

Garrett opened his eyes to see his father lying on his side, smiling at him.

“Hi, Dad. How are you?”

“Aside from feeling like a hammer hit my head, I’m okay, Son. I am so happy to see you. I was worried about you.”

“You saved my life, Dad. I’m okay, but I hate having these tubes in my nose. Can I take them out now?”

Thomas touched his hand. “I hate them too, but they thought we needed oxygen, so let’s keep them in awhile longer, deal?”

“Okay, deal.”

“Where’s Father?”

“He and grandmother are with Thalia. She’s okay, but sleeping.”

“Good, good. I’m glad you’re with me.” Thomas attempted to move, but groaned when he tried to turn on his side.

“Do you want me to help you or get Gretyl?”

“No, no I’m fine. Garrett, now that we have my sister back with us, we can reunite with Millicent and Jarrett. Are you ready to see them?”

“Yes!” Garrett giggled and then covered his mouth.

“You go ahead and laugh with joy, Son. I am laughing inside,” Thomas teased as he drifted back to sleep.

## *Chapter Thirty-One*

Jarrett knew he was dreaming, but it felt real to him in every way as he watched the battle scene between two huge Royal Flagship and their fighters. The red and black fighters were dominating the gray and black ones. The Royal Flagship was severely damaged with fires raging in several areas of its body.

The Royal Flagship then exploded into a raging firestorm inside. Once the fireball drifted away, the gray and black fighters turned and fled through a strange vortex that had suddenly appeared.

As the scene faded, Jarrett glanced at a different gigantic ship, and his heart pounded with excitement when he saw Garrett sleeping in a reclining chair next to bed that their father slept on.

“Garrett!” He woke up with his heart still pounding.

All at once, the sunlight flickering through the window caught his eyes. “It’s morning!”

Jarrett exclaimed as he bounced from the bed and ran to the window, peering out at the snowy morning. “Today’s the day I’ll get to do some space traveling too.”

With excitement, he hurried to the bathroom for a shower.

## **Chapter Thirty-Two**

The sunrise found Millicent in the kitchen preparing an old fashion breakfast of pancakes, sausage, eggs, and grits. She often tried to cook similar meals for her family on the weekends since weekday mornings were simply too hectic. They all came to cherish their weekends together.

Millicent's heart ached for Thomas and Garrett. She struggled with her loneliness for Thomas, experiencing many sleepless nights as she lay in her bed. She even found herself reaching her hand out to touch him during the night as she slept, and reliving their happiest moments together, wishing she could have had more time with him.

Each time she gazed at Jarrett, her heart longed for Garrett. She loved Jarrett and was thankful he had gotten sick the night before

their father/son's weekend. If he had gone with them that day, she would be mourning for him as well. They were so full of life. Watching them play together brought back her memories of her childhood with her sister, Gillian, who had died so many years ago. She had sensed Gillian with her the night Thomas and Garrett died.

When she heard Jarrett bouncing down the stairs, Millicent wiped her tears away just as he entered the kitchen. She turned to him with a loving smile.

“Good morning, Jarrett.”

“Good morning Momma. It snowed a lot last night.” He ran to her and hugged her.

She playfully rolled her eyes. “I know so I suppose that means I have to get the snowmobile ready, right?”

Jarrett nodded his head with enthusiasm, “Right.”

She placed the breakfast platter on the table and took a seat next to Jarrett and before long, all the food was gone. After

breakfast, they each dressed and prepared for their snowmobile ride.

They walked to the shed storing the utility vehicles, and Millicent prepared the snowmobile. Millicent straddled the cycle and Jarrett climbed on and sat down in front of her. Grabbing both of their helmets, she handed Jarrett his, and then they each slipped them on their heads.

“Are you ready?” Millicent asked Jarrett as the motor roared to life. He eagerly nodded his head and screamed out with delight, “Yeah!” And then they were off.

They rode through the field, passed the creek, and up the big hill. After they had got to the top, Millicent turned the snowmobile to the right. She had in mind to take the usual path that Thomas had always taken in years past, Oak Hollow. This particular path was straight, wide, and very safe for the kids. Little did she know that she and Jarrett were heading straight for danger as they rode into Shadow Alley without care or

thought. The snowmobile had no trouble maneuvering over the thick snow. As they made their way through the familiar trail, each one caught up with the view of the snowy mountain. The ice cycles hanging from the tree branches shimmered brightly in the sun, resembling grand chandeliers that might have adorned the ceiling of a magnificent grand hall.

Without warning, the enormous wolf from the previous night lurched at them from behind a large tree. With its unnatural eyes boring down on them, the creature advanced, causing them both to scream out with fear. Millicent without thought hit the gas in an attempt to outrun the massive wolf.

## *Chapter Twenty-Three*

Thomas had always been the daredevil and when alone, took far too many chances in Millicent's opinion. However, Millicent had been the cautious driver with or without her children. But, in this circumstance, she threw caution to the wind and her only thought was to escape this wolf chasing them, as she turned right onto Shadow Alley. She now traveled on a path meant only for the more experienced and risk takers. Little did she know, that the area had experienced a landslide the previous day and had created a sinkhole.

Fear threatened to overtake Millicent as she continued an escape.

Unnaturally swift, the wolf ran, more so than an ordinary wolf should be able to run.

Millicent wondered if she were in some nightmare. *Wake up*, her mind screamed. As

the frosty air bit at her face, she realized this was no nightmare. She also knew the outcome did not appear well for them. As Jarrett huddled closer to her, she watched the wolf gain speed. She drove the snowmobile recklessly as she attempted her escape, scraping against trees, over stumps, and through small creeks. After crossing the last creek, the wolf had now caught up to them and leaped forward toward Millicent with snarling canines ready to tear into her.

Suddenly, without warning, an arrow sailed through the air, and hit the wolf square in the chest, causing the animal to land on the back of the snowmobile, gravely injured. Millicent released her hands off the accelerator and applied the brakes, but the machine skidded uncontrollably down a sharp incline, and off a cliff. Millicent wrapped her arms tightly around Jarrett and decided if they were to fall into the hands of imminent death, she wanted their bodies to remain together.

As their snowmobile spiraled out of control, and toward a dark, seemingly bottomless pit, Millicent realized they were suspended in the air, and not moving.

*How can this be? We should be crashing by now. We should be dead.* Her thoughts were interrupted when she saw the dying wolf float past them; only, it began transforming between human and wolf. In human form, the wolf resembled Dr. Homer.

Out of thin air, a little man wearing a black tuxedo, with a top hat and a cane in his hand, appeared in front of Millicent and Jarrett. He fit Jarrett's description of his visitor perfectly.

Dr. Homer transformed into the unnatural wolfman and made one last attempt to attack Millicent and Jarrett.

Pointing his cane at the dying creature, the strange little man commanded,

“You shall not harm them. You must leave us now.”

The Wolfman snarled at Asbara and moved toward him. However, with one swift movement of the cane, lightning shot through it and circled the creature in a miniature electrical storm, hitting the creature until it burst into a ball of fire. In the midst of this situation, a loud explosion occurred, and when the smoke cleared, and the blinding light dimmed, the creature had disappeared.

Millicent quickly inspected Jarrett and was relieved to find him unharmed. Millicent's head was still swirling in disbelief as she took in the scene before her.

Asbara waved his hand in the air. "This is not at all what I had in mind when I awoke from my slumber this morning. Not at all."

"We're floating," Millicent could not believe she could see each side of the snowy cliff.

"Suspended. I can do such things as I feel the need."

“Excuse me, but who are you? Are you the Angel of Death, coming to escort us to our final destinations?”

Jarrett laughed and tried to pull away, but she firmly held him in place. “No Mom, he’s Asbara. I told you about him. I told you he would lead us to daddy and Garrett.”

Millicent’s body tingled with nervousness at Jarrett’s words.

“I am not the Angel of Death though I have met him. He’s nice enough.” He gave her a comforting look. “Indeed my task is to take care of you, so let us move forward. We can’t stay suspended all day now can we?”

He floated over next to them and held out his cane. “Grab hold of this cane, and do not let go of it. If you do as I instruct you, then I may yet pull you out of this very troublesome dilemma.”

From above them, a low whistling filled their ears while a soft blue light shone down on them.

Millicent and Jarrett took hold of the cane. “Now, Master Jarrett, I need you to snuggle close to your dear mother and do not wriggle. Be very still.”

“Are we going into your Ranger?” Jarrett asked excitedly.

“We certainly are.” Asbara next pushed a small button on his coat pocket and spoke unrecognizable words, this causing a great wind to begun swirling around them. Millicent gazed inside the now forming funnel and watched a small hatch open. Suddenly they moved forward, and she gasped but continued holding the cane with one hand and Jarrett with the other.

She looked down at Jarrett with concern. “Don’t be alarmed, Jer, I’m right here with you.”

Jarrett giggled, “I’m not afraid, Mom. I’m excited.”

She shook her head as she realized she was the only one frightened as they entered the opening.

“Welcome to my ship, Mrs. Crenshaw.”

Millicent gazed around the crystal ship she found herself in, as she walked to a clear window and peered outside. She was amazed to see the ship hovered over the mountain.

“It is quite an extraordinary view, don’t you think?”

Millicent turned and looked at the little man. “Yes, but I still think this is a dream.”

Asbara smiled, “I assure you, it isn’t.”

He then pointed to three chairs sitting in the center of the room. “I’ll show you to your seats; we really should be going. Reggie, get us out of this hole.”

Millicent followed Asbara to a seat as the robot came to life and took the pilot’s seat next to where Jarrett sat.

“Mom, this is awesome. I can’t wait to zoom through space.”

The room seemed to spin, and Millicent thought her head would pop. She could not believe she was looking at a robot

sitting next to her son in a spacecraft, not to mention that a little man in a tuxedo had not only saved her from a snarling unnatural wolf but also, plummeting to her death.

It was all quite unbelievable to her, and she had decided she had completely lost her mind. She touched her head and shook it and then closed her eyes.

“Jarrett, I don’t think your mother wishes to hear of our traveling plans at the moment,” Asbara chuckled softly. He gently directed her to a chair. “Mrs. Crenshaw, I understand this is a bit disconcerting, but I assure you, I am a competent pilot as is Reggie.”

Millicent sat down and buckled her seatbelt. “Thank you, sir. You saved our lives back there from that wolf, ah, man, ah, wolfman creature.”

“Please, call me Asbara. The wolfman creature is called a Cretlip. His kind can transform from human form to creatures at

will. He was never the doctor you were led to believe he was.”

“I don’t understand why he was after us.”

“He is employed by an enemy who wants nothing more than to destroy any civilization, who will not bow to them. You will receive the answer to the questions swirling in your mind, at the right time and from the appropriate person. My task is simply to get you there.”

“Tell her where you’re taking us, Asbara.” Jarrett grinned with wide eyes.

“I’m taking you to the moon.” Asbara sat down, buckled himself in next to his trusty robot. “Thank you, Reggie, I’ll take over the controls now, but would you see to our guests by preparing them something warm to drink and a bit of food?”

“Yes. Asbara.” Reggie then turned and rolled away.

When Asbara began turning knobs and pushing buttons, the ship moved. He glanced

at his passengers and grinned, “Is everyone ready?”

“Yes!” Jarrett exclaimed.

Millicent rubbed her forehead. “As much as I’ll ever be, I suppose.”

Asbara gave her a concerned look, “Mrs. Crenshaw, please don’t be alarmed if you feel nauseous, it is quite a normal feeling for someone who hasn’t traveled before.”

“Thank you for warning me.”

Asbara then shifted his gaze to Jarrett. “Would you like to ignite us?”

“Really? I can?”

“Certainly. All you have to do is push that button.” Asbara pointed to a small green button on the control panel.

Jarrett looked back at his mother and grinned, and then back at Asbara. “Now?”

“Yes, now.”

Jarrett reached his hand out and clicked the button. Immediately, the ship shot off

from the mountain and had reached the far reaches of the atmosphere in mere moments.

Then they entered space.

“Did ya see that, Mom? I made the ship go.”

Millicent laughed, “Yes, I saw it, and felt it.”

Asbara placed the ship on autopilot and stood while laughing with them.

“You both relax and enjoy the trip. The controls are set so we’ll be there before you know it. I shall help Reggie with his tasks. Jarrett, would you like to go with me?”

“Yes.”

After they had walked away, Millicent released her seatbelt and walked to the nearest window and peered out at the vast void of space. Space was unlike anything she had imagined. There were twinkling lights all around her, and she occasionally caught a glimpse of a shooting star in the distance.

She recalled hearing that meteors were simply a body of matter that appears as streaks of lightning when they enter Earth's atmosphere. From this view, however, it looked quite different. The colors she gazed at from the window were magnificent. How she wished she could share this beauty with Thomas.

Her heart beat fast at the thought of reuniting with him and Garrett, but her mind still had difficulty grasping it as truth. She leaned her head against the window.

“Oh, Thomas, are you alive? Can we truly be reunited? What happened?” Millicent had so many questions going through her mind. She sighed, “If this is a dream, it's one I hope I never awake from.”

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After they had eaten, Millicent relaxed in her chair, and enjoyed watching the anonyms of space. Though space was quiet, it was rather busy with all the

asteroids and meteors. There had been a few instances where she swore she saw other spacecraft passing them. She kept those thoughts to herself, as she was not completely positive she had not truly lost her mind.

Asbara and Reggie provided plenty of entertainment for Jarrett as they invited him to assist them in their duties on the ship.

As they settled down for rest on the ranger, Asbara confided. "We shall arrive at the Earth moon in twelve hours."

As Millicent gazed at the twinkling lights blazing past her, she drifted to sleep.

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Twelve hours into the trip, Asbara walked from his seat to where Millicent slept. He gently shook her shoulder. "Millicent, we have arrived."

Millicent let out a sigh of wonderment as she looked at the moon while Jarrett

laughed with high energy as he jumped up and down.

“Is daddy here? Is he, is he? Is Garrett here too? I want to see them.”

Millicent glanced eagerly at Asbara for an answer to Jarrett’s question. Asbara winked playfully at Jarrett. “That my dear boy was the plan six weeks ago.”

Their ship approached the light side of the moon at high speed but slowed its pace as it crossed over to the dark side, and then Asbara piloted the ship down toward the surface of the moon.

Soft white lights begin sparkling out of a very large crater.

Suddenly the radio blared to life as a female voice spoke through it. “Ranger 156, please, key in your passcode.”

Asbara promptly reached his hand to the keypad, and swiftly added a set of numbers.

“Thank you, Ranger 156, the shields are lowering. Please, stand by.”

Asbara smiled down at Jarrett. “It won’t be long now, young Master Jarrett.”

Jarrett giggled, “I can’t wait to meet all the people on the moon.”

“Ranger 156, you may now enter, welcome home, Sir.”

“Thank you.”

With the shields down, the ship methodically made its way inside.

Once the ship entered the crater, the Ranger followed the soft lights down into a dark cavern. As they traveled inside the large tunnel, twinkling lights from both sides of the ship caught Jarrett’s attention.

“What are those?”

“They are glowing crystals that cling to the walls and ceilings. They are quite valuable to us as we travel these tunnels.”

“Whoa, what was that?”

“What did you see, Jarrett?” Millicent peered out the window.

“I’m not sure, but I thought I saw a dragon.”

Millicent laughed softly, “Don’t be silly, Jarrett. There aren’t dragons in here.”

They each shot Asbara a concerned glance. He nodded, “Oh, but there are many extraordinary species of life inside the moon, dragons included.”

Jarrett cheered, “Yes, I knew it.” He went back to searching for more signs of life in the chamber as they continued on their way.

They traveled for several moments when all at once, the enclosed, cramped, cavern opened into a large landing dock inside a much larger cavern. The ship flew between several empty docks and then birthed itself at the end dock on the right, hovering in the air. Below the docking bays lay a wide lake stretching between two large islands. Each island held a tall tower resting on its smooth stone street. Beneath these towers, greenhouses, and small structures lined the streets.

Millicent looked out of the window of the craft, amazed by what she saw. Above the docking stations, there were large glassless windows from which many people and other strange creatures were looking through. She desperately searched each face and down at the crowds of people on the streets, but found neither Thomas nor Garrett. Her heart sank.

“Do not despair, Millicent.”

Millicent turned to see Asbara holding up an object similar to a cell phone. “My communicator is operating again. I just spoke with someone from the control tower. She has informed me that Master Thomas’ ship landed a few hours ago. He and Garrett are on their way to us now.”

Jarrett shouted with unbridled joy while Millicent held tight to her own.

“Thank you, Asbara.”

“C’mon, Mom,” Jarrett exclaimed as he walked swiftly toward the opening ship’s door.

Asbara shook his head and laughed,  
“I’d say he’s a bit excited.”

Millicent bit her lip nervously. “Yes, I’d say so.”

Asbara motioned his hand toward the exit. “After you, Millicent, they are waiting.”

## *Chapter Thirty-Four*

Millicent took a deep breath in an attempt to calm her frazzled nerves. A part of her still believed any moment now she would awaken from a cruel dream. Still, there was a small voice inside urging her forward, *you shall soon see, it's real*. She exhaled once more and then forced her feet toward the exit.

Moments later, they walked out of the ship. Millicent followed Asbara and Jarrett down the long ramp, and onto the massive dockside streets. She was amazed that several greenhouses and water reservoirs rested underneath the floating ships.

Millicent had just stepped onto the street when she heard Jarrett squeal with happiness. "There they are! I see them!" He then took off running through the crowd of people.

She looked in the direction where he ran, and thought her heart stopped beating when she saw Jarrett hugging Garrett.

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After the boys had hugged one another, they pulled away and laughed.

Garrett exclaimed, “Jarrett, I’ve missed you so much!”

“I knew you were alive! Asbara told me you were, and I believed him, I just knew it was true!”

“I got lots to tell you.”

“I can’t wait to hear about all you’ve done.”

Thomas appeared from behind a man and walked up to the boys. He took Jarrett in his arms and embraced him tightly.

“Daddy!” Jarrett exclaimed as he held tight to his father.

“I knew you wouldn’t give up on me once you met Asbara. I love you, Jarrett.”

“I love you too, Dad. I’ve missed you and Garrett. I couldn’t have made it without Asbara. Thank you for sending him to me.”

Thomas pulled away, while gently caressing Jarrett’s face. “Oh, you are welcome, Son, but I wasn’t the one who sent him, but I’ll explain that at a later time.” He glanced at each of the boys and then drew them both into a loving embrace as they shared a laugh.

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Garrett looked through the crowd until he saw Millicent. Immediately he broke into a big grin and began running toward her. When they met, she lifted Garrett into her arms and hugged him tightly while tears of joy streamed down her cheeks.” Garrett, oh my beautiful boy. I love you, and I’ve missed you so much.” She caressed his face, pulled away, and looked at him with a big smile.

Garrett laughed, “I love you, Mom, and I’ve missed you too.”

“You’re the loveliest woman I’ve ever laid my eyes on.” A deep voice whispered behind her.

Garrett wriggled out of Millicent’s arms and ran over to Asbara and Jarrett, leaving Thomas and Millicent alone.

Millicent caught her breath as she stood upright and looked into the dark haunting, blue eyes of her husband. “Are you real? Please tell me this isn’t a dream I’ll awaken from.”

“It’s not a dream, baby; I’m real.” Thomas wrapped her into his arms, kissing her passionately.

“Oh, brother, not the kissing!” Garrett rolled his eyes, and dramatically slapped his forehead with his hand.

Jarrett scowled, “What’s the point in that stuff?”

“I dunno,” Garrett shrugged.

Asbara chuckled as he placed his hand on each boy's shoulder. "Come on boys, let's give them a moment. Let us go and see the fish in the canal. He gently guided the boys away from Thomas and Millicent.

## *Chapter Thirty-Five*

Thomas led his family from the huge docking bay, and into a long, narrow cavern hallway, then up three flights of rock steps. When they reached the third level, they turned right and walked down another hallway until they reached the fourth door.

Millicent was surprised when she saw the apartment. The front room had a sofa and two overstuffed chairs while the kitchen, directly behind the front room, had the usual things one expected.

“It’s just like an ordinary apartment,” Millicent whispered with amazement.

Thomas passed her and pointed toward a narrow hallway opposite the kitchen. “Yes, it is. There are three bedrooms and two bathrooms down that hall.”

“I could almost forget where I’m at.”

Thomas agreed, “Yes, they have done well at putting together small apartments for their visitors. The section we’re in is for their Earth visitors while the caverns in other locations are prepared for various species from across the galaxy.”

“I see. How thoughtful of them to go to such extremes to make sure their visitors feel comfortable. I’d be curious to see each dwelling, to see how they differ from ours,” Millicent’s eyes danced with excitement.

Thomas grinned, “Ah, says the curious writer.”

They laughed together, and then Millicent’s expression turned somber. “Why did you leave Earth without me, Tommy?”

Thomas took Millicent by the hand and led her to the sofa, where he sat with her on a loveseat. “Boys, come in here, please.”

The boys walked into the room and sat together across from their parents in a large oversized, plush chair.

Thomas glanced at Millicent, and then Jarrett, "I'm sorry for leaving you behind. I would have taken you with us if I could have."

Jarrett looked at his father, "We were sad without you, and Garrett."

He then glanced at Garrett, "But I think I saw you a few times."

Garrett's face lit with excitement. "I saw you too."

Both boys then shot one another bewildered stares. "Whoa, those times we saw each other was real."

Garrett held up his hand. "Wait, were you standing on the side of a road once?"

Jarrett frowned, "Yes, I was."

"And you were lying in my bed, crying? I told you I was alive. Did you hear me?"

"Yes, I did. Wow, that's incredible."

Garrett then looked at Millicent with concern. "You were on the snowmobile with Jarrett, and a big wolf was chasing you."

Millicent's mouth dropped open with shock. "Yes, it happened our last day on Earth."

Thomas groaned, "The Wolves were chasing you?"

"Yes, Asbara said they worked for an evil sect of beings bent on destroying anyone who refuses to bow to them."

Thomas nodded. "I had no idea they were on Earth." He then gasped, "The wolf. A wolf jumped out in front of my SUV that night. It caused us to wreck."

Millicent cried, "Oh, Thomas, how dreadful."

Jarrett's eyes grew big, "Oh, man, that means that all the things I saw happening to you were real too? The car crash, the Royal Flagship hovering above the moon while taking on supplies, and the huge battle between the two fleets?"

Garrett giggled and exclaimed, "Yes, that all happened!"

Thomas was amazed at listening to his twin sons share their visions with one another. Then he recalled what his father had said about the powerful connection of twins, and realized there truly was a powerful spiritual connection between his sons.

Millicent glanced at Thomas. "I can't believe it."

Thomas shook his head. "It is amazing. I've never witnessed such a connection."

Garrett grinned broadly at Jarrett, "Dad and I have been on a big spacecraft, hmm, our Flagship, fighting to save our Aunt Thalia. Jarrett, we have grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins, lots and lots of cousins, but I ain't met all of them yet, just Grandpa, Grandma, and Aunt Thalia. And Jarrett, Daddy is from another planet!"

Jarrett glanced at Thomas, and he could not disguise his intrigue. "Wow. Have we a big family? A war? Is Dad an alien?"

Thomas exhaled as he leaned back on the sofa, listening to Garrett tell of his adventure. He sat there thinking of how he would explain to Millicent why he had not revealed these things to her. While he held these things back to protect her and their boys, he feared she would not understand.

“Grandparents, war, your planet, what is Garrett talking about, Thomas?” Millicent threw the questions at him with concern clearly marked in her voice.

Thomas took his arm from around her and rested his hands in his lap, fidgeting nervously. “I should have told you things about me years ago, but I wasn’t quite sure how to approach the subject.”

Millicent cleared her throat nervously, “We’ll discuss this later when we’re alone. I’m thankful that you and Garrett are alive. Just a few short hours ago, I thought you were both dead.” Her voice cracked. “And now, here you both are.” Tears streamed

down her face, and she inhaled in an attempt to compose her emotions.

Thomas reached his hand to hers and squeezed softly. “I’ve missed you Millicent, and I know Garrett has missed you. I love you, darlin’.”

Millicent caressed his face. “I love you too, Tommy.”

Thomas took a deep breath and began, “I am Thomas Crenshu. I’m from the planet of Gherdisa, in the galaxy of Paradisa. Our world is an advanced civilization which is millenniums ahead of Earth in technology. We have flying vehicles, advanced robots, and I’m particularly proud of our medical advances.”

Thomas smiled at Millicent. “We have no cancer; no illnesses Earthlings are accustomed to. When we do feel ill, we simply rest for a few days, while our bodies naturally heal themselves with natural ingredients. We live extremely long lives, so we’re doing something right. The usual

cases of death are of extreme old age and from wars, or at the hands of others.”

He then looked at Jarrett, and winked playfully, “We are also a world of vast plants and much water. A most precious resource indeed.”

Jarrett sat up straight with excitement dancing in his eyes. “Tell me about the enemy you fought, Dad.”

“Fifty years ago, a race of beings appeared in our galaxy, attacking us. After their water, and food source depleted to a dangerous level, and their people, nearly destroyed after a horrific firestorm, they were forced to leave their world in search of another. Instead of seeking peaceful asylum, they raged a vicious galaxy war with attempts for hostile takeovers. Some worlds they dominated easily and turned the people into slaves, but others were not so easy. After wreaking havoc on the planets they attacked, they would then set out to find others to attack. They found Paradisa, our

galaxy, full of many planets that are similar to Gherdisa. They systematically began attacking us. The universal council called for unity against the enemy. My people have been fighting against the powerful enemy, Vdoda for forty-five years.”

Millicent trembled with fear and grieved for the worlds destroyed by the destructive power of the Vdoda. “Why did you come to earth?”

“To hold council with your leaders. I’m the eldest prince of Gherdisa, and a member of the Paradisa Protection Group as well. We were sent out by the council to warn the planets in your solar system of the pending danger that might be coming your way. Earth is still too young to comprehend, to be trusted with all our knowledge. But, negotiations and a fragile relationship still exist with earth.”

Millicent shifted uncomfortably but never looked away. “How old are you?”

“I’m one hundred years old.”

Jarrett and Garrett looked at one another, and then at their father with wide eyes. “Whoa, you’re old, Dad.”

Millicent shook her head. “Oh, I...cannot believe you are...old. You look so young. I...”

Thomas laughed at their reaction but then gave Millicent a serious look. “We do live long lives. We have two hearts; the first one is where your heart is. The second one is on our lower backs.”

Each boy touched their backs and then took turns touching each other’s backs.

“Yes, Jarrett, you have the same anatomy as I do. Two hearts.”

“Whoa!”

Millicent leaned back on the sofa and stared at her husband and her boys. “How is that possible? They’ve been to doctors, had examinations, so why has no doctor ever found the second heart?”

“They’ve never had X-Rays, Millie, think about it. We don’t take them to the

doctor often, only when you've insisted in doing so. We practice natural healings, and use natural remedies for their illnesses.”

She placed her hand over her mouth, “This is why you were so adamant in our living the holistic lifestyle.”

Millicent did not wait for Thomas to answer as she immediately stood and walked to where her boys sat. She got on her knees in front of them, and began touching their chests, and then their lower backs.

Thomas joined her and took her hand. He slowly guided her hand across each boy's chest and then around to the lower back until she felt the second strong heartbeat.

“I cannot believe it. What would have happened if I had taken them to a doctor and they had experienced a Xray?”

Thomas shrugged. “It's not detectable to your Earth machines, and the second heartbeat in the back doesn't beat as their first heartbeat does. I must confess to you,

that the few times we've taken them to doctors have been doctors from our world."

Millicent's mouth gapped open. "It's why you insisted on finding the perfect doctors for our boys. Oh, my, this whole thing has been staged from the beginning so I would not discover the truth."

"Millie, darling, I didn't do this to keep the truth from you, but from the Earth world. I simply chose not to take the chance with their lives. Our people are hearty people and usually are quite healthy. Think about it; our boys have only been sick, what, three times in their whole lives?"

"I can feel it. It didn't take me long to find it, Thomas."

"You can only detect it now, because you know it's there. Before, you weren't searching for it."

"Yes, you're right." Millicent shook her head, "You should have told me about this, but I do understand why you remained silent, but I wished you had trusted me."

“Dad, tell us all about our real home.”

“That could take a while.” Thomas stood and took a seat in a second oversized lounge next to the boys. “My father, Prime Ruler Thaddeus Crenshu, is One hundred and seventy-seven. My mother, Queen Lyla, is one hundred and sixty-two. I have twelve brothers and nine sisters still living. I’m the oldest.”

“Your poor, poor mother, she must be tired,” Millicent sighed.

Thomas chuckled, “No, the children vary in different ages.” He saw Millicent’s eyes fill with worry, and he gave her comforting glance. “Children are considered a great blessing to our people.”

Millicent smiled, “Oh, so I guess you want more children?”

Thomas grinned, “Yes.”

She broke eye contact with him. “You called her a Queen, so your family is royalty?”

“Yes, essentially, my father is King of our planet, but he’s called Prime Ruler while my mother is called Queen. He only took reign a year ago when his father passed on.”

“Our children are royal? You’re a Prince. What does that mean for them?”

“It means they will receive the best of everything in life, and our people will adore them as they adore most of the royal family. They will have a better life within this realm than in the Earthly one that I can assure you.”

The knock on their door broke the intense moments shared by the Crenshaw family. Thomas reached over and touched a screen attached to the side of the table, causing it to light up. When the screen lit up, it showed Asbara with a taller female of his species, standing at his side, just outside of their door. Thomas quickly rose to his feet and walked to the door. He opened it with a big smile.

“Asbara, Virata, hello. Come, sit with us.”

“Thank you, my Lord, but Virata and I want to invite you to a feast this evening at the Gardens.”

“We will be there.” Thomas motioned at Millicent who had just walked up behind him.

“Virata, please meet my wife, Millicent. Millie, this is Asbara’s wife, Virata.”

Virata curtsied to Millicent. “Milady, it is an honor to meet you.”

Millicent repeated the curtsy, causing Thomas and Asbara to chuckle slightly.

“She bows before you because you’re my wife, and royalty,” Thomas explained.

Millicent flushed with shyness, “Royalty, me?” She then glanced at Virata. “You don’t have to curtsy to me. I’m just as honored to meet you. Asbara helped us so much. He saved our lives.”

“Thank you, Lady Millicent. Asbara is certainly an honorable man.” Virata beamed

with pride while resting her hand on her stomach.

Millicent smiled. “When is your baby due?”

“In four cycles, hmm, Earth’s four months.”

“It shall be our first child,” Asbara announced with joy.”

“And it’s a boy,” Virata said with happiness shining in her expression.

“Congratulations,” Thomas and Millicent chimed together.

Asbara nodded his head, “Thank you, Milady.”

Thomas pointed to Asbara and said, “Asbara’s brother, Kysmoro aided me in rescuing my sister.”

Millicent smiled at Asbara, “Bravery must run deep in your family. I look forward to meeting him.”

Thomas frowned, “I’m afraid the meeting will have to wait as Kysmoro remains with my parents on Father’s cruiser.

He's Father's Prime Secretary, and they are on their way back to our world.”

Asbara beamed, “I'm pleased with my brother's advancements. Our parents would have been proud.”

“He was instrumental in carrying out the rescue,” Thomas replied. “I couldn't have done it without him, and he cracked the Vdoda computer, so we were able to gather some great intel about the Vdoda. That's why they were hurrying to get home so they can analyze the information and hopefully figure out how to defeat them once and for all.”

Asbara chuckled, “I'm proud of the maturity you, Nethyel, and Kysmoro have grown to, Thomas.” He glanced at Millicent, teasing, “They were quite the mischievous trio in their youths.”

Millicent laughed, “Oh, Asbara, you must fill me in some time.”

Thomas playfully rolled his eyes, “Oh, no, believe me, darling; you don't want to

hear about the antics of my youth with my best friends.”

Asbara winked playfully at Millicent, “I shall Millicent, but for now, we must go. We’ll see you at the banquet.” Asbara and Virata turned and walked away.

“I knew you’d do well as a royal, and as my wife.” Thomas wrapped his arms around her.

“I have so much to learn.”

“Millie, it takes time, you’ll get it.”

“Thomas I must tell you, I’m gravely upset with you for not revealing your past to me, but I understand why you kept it from me.”

Thomas leaned in and kissed Millicent’s lips. “Thank you. I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

Millicent shook her head but smiled softly as she gently caressed his face.

“Hmm, you bet you will.” She then kissed his cheek, “I love you.”

“I love you, Babe.” Thomas wrapped his arm around her waist as they returned to their sons.

## *Chapter Thirty-Six*

When Millicent stepped out of the bedroom, she could not conceal her joy when she saw Thomas and the boys standing together in the front room, dressed in tuxedos.

“Oh, my, look at the handsome men in my life. I feel like the luckiest girl in the world.”

Jarrett grinned, “Mom, you look beautiful.”

“Yeah, Mom, I like that red dress,” Garrett chimed in.

“We’re the lucky ones, Millicent.” Thomas walked over to her and embraced her, kissing her cheek softly. “You look gorgeous, honey, and I’m certainly a lucky man.”

Millicent blushed at Thomas’ words. “Thank you. We should go.”

Thomas held out his arm and Millicent took it and followed their boys out of the apartment.

When the Crenshaw's walked inside the lavishly decorated dinner hall, where guests could gather for dinner should they wish, Millicent became amazed by the lovely, cozy atmosphere any five-star restaurant would be proud. Greenery draped across the walls with colorful flowers attached to it and the bouquet of roses placed at each table, set the mood as romantic and cozy. Soft, classical style music playing in the background by musicians finished out the theme perfectly.

When the Royal Family walked to where Asbara sat, everyone at the table stood out of respect.

“Good evening, Asbara, and Virata.” Thomas pulled out a chair for Millicent and then looked at the two Moon'oros standing next to Virata, nodding his head. “Captain Orley, Captain Kinata.”

After polite greetings had been exchanged, the boys sat next to one another and began chatting until Garrett punched Jarrett's arm. "Look, Jarrett." He pointed to a chubby man with a long white beard and hair approaching the table.

Jarrett's eyes broke into a huge grin at the man when he stopped at the table. "You're Cap'n Noro."

"Yes, son, I am. Somebody has been telling stories again?" Captain Noro glanced at Asbara with gleaming eyes.

Asbara shook his head, "Jarrett, I thought you were asleep when I told this story."

Jarrett giggled, "I kinda was, but I heard this part about Cap'n Noro."

"You look like Santa Claus," Garrett exclaimed.

Jarrett nodded with enthusiasm, "He sure does."

“Ah, Santa Claus, huh? I’ve heard of this legendary fellow. Thank you for the compliment.”

Everyone laughed as Captain Noro bowed before the Royal Family. “Prince Thomas, it is wonderful to have you back with us.”

“Thank you, Captain. I am pleased to have returned.”

“You have a lovely family.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Where is Nethyel?”

“I’ve been told he’s on a secret mission for Father.”

Captain Noro shook his head, “Ah, I see, well I’m sure you will reunite soon.” He then moved passed the table and sat at a table several rows passed them.

“How goes the watch this evening, Commander Kinata?” Thomas glanced at a Moon’oro male sitting next to Virata.

“It goes well, thank you, sir.”

Captain Orley lifted his mug, “Thank the Gods.”

The men all held up mugs and toasted together. “Yes, thank the Gods.”

Millicent turned to Virata, “It is very beautiful here, I still can’t believe I’m in a base in the center of the moon.”

“Thank you. We’re proud of this base, in particular; it is our most treasured one of all the bases because it’s the central base as well as our central storage for food and weapons.”

“How many bases do you have on the moon?”

“We have four bases, and each one specializes in certain studies, so depending on what field of study you are involved in depends on which base you live at. We travel through the canals of the moon, to each of the bases for training purposes often. It helps to allow everyone to appreciate the tasks of others.”

“I think that is a lovely idea.”

“I agree. It helps with moral and shows us that all our jobs are important. We’ve done this for generations, so we’re accustomed to moving. Now that we have the ships, it makes it much simpler, and safer.”

“Do you get tired of traveling between bases?”

“No, not at all. We know nothing else, so it is a way of life for us.”

Millicent had always thought traveling would be adventurous. She laughed within her mind *when I thought of traveling; this isn't exactly what I had in mind.*

After chatting for some time, Asbara turned to Thomas and Millicent, “I would like to take the boys fishing later this evening.”

“Thank you, I know they will enjoy it.”

Thomas glanced at Millicent. “Is that okay with you?”

Millicent nodded, “Of course.”

Thomas took Millicent by the hand,  
“Will you dance with me, Darling?”

After saying goodbye to their boys,  
Millicent followed Thomas to the dance  
floor where he immediately embraced her.

“I’ve missed you so much.”

“I’ve dreamed of you every night,  
Tommy. I thought I’d never see you again.”

I’ve longed to be in your arms. It’s been  
too long since I’ve had you in my arms,  
babe.”

Thomas leaned in and kissed Millicent  
lovingly, but then the kiss became one of  
passion only lovers share.

## *Chapter Thirty-Seven*

Asbara and Virata with the twins walked down a narrow path alongside the river where it flowed into the mouth of a dark cave. Asbara held his hand upright when he reached the bank near the mouth.

“We stop here.”

“What do we fish with?” Jarrett looked around at the others, realizing there were no fishing poles.

Garrett pointed to a woven basket and a net, “With those.”

“Why don’t we just fish with some fishing poles?” Jarrett looked at the basket and net.

“Your father brought me a fishing pole once, but I didn’t like it, but he could catch dozens of them. I just resumed fishing the way in which I was most successful. With these!” Asbara held up the basket and net.

Virata laughed as she threaded the thin rope through a basket. She next lowered the nets and baskets into the river. Everyone settled down on the bank and waited.

Jarrett glanced into the dark tunnel.  
“Can we explore the cave?”

“No, my lad. Too dangerous. There are Mokaya’s, Mosita’s, and other nasty creatures out there. We have protective force-fields to keep them out and us in.”

“Cool, where’s the force field? I can’t see it.”

“You can’t see it because it’s invisible.”  
“What are those creatures you mentioned?”

Virata explained, “They are large, ugly creatures who hunt our people. These foul beasts killed many of our people. We had to remain hidden most of the time. Our men would hunt and fish while the creatures slept, but when cycles changed, we had no choice but to move, and that’s how most of our people would lose their lives.”

Asbara nodded sadly, “This continued for many centuries until your people discovered us and introduced us to the force-field technology. Let us fish now.”

*BEEP, beep, beep.*

Concern crossed Asbara’s expression as he glanced at Virata. “This is not good.”

“I must go. Something is approaching the surface at high speeds.” Virata grasped Asbara’s arms, “I hate to leave you and the boys.”

“Go, and I’ll get the children back to their parents and meet you in the control room.”

She kissed Asbara, and then hurried away. Asbara gathered up the buckets and nets from the water. He looked anxiously around the cavern, “Boys, let us go and locate your parents. I feel it is important we all be together.”

As they prepared to leave, the cavern shook, causing rocks and crystals to fall

around them as they were forced to the ground.

Asbara wasted no time in pulling the boys upright. “Run boys.”

The ground vibrated while the cavern quaked. Suddenly, the ground began to split apart.

Out of concern for the boys, Asbara yelled at them, “Boys, look in your duffle bags and get your suits and helmet out. I believe it’s time to put them on.”

Each boy stumbled backward, falling to the ground, but managed to dress in their suits and secure the helmets on their heads.

Asbara reached over and turned Jarrett’s oxygen on as the ground shook violently, causing Garrett to fall into the river. Jarrett without thought jumped into the river after his twin. Asbara quickly entered the water and reached the boys. He tugged at each one’s arms and succeeded in pulling them close to him, but the three of them were carried into the darkened tunnel by the

rushing water. Asbara clung to Jarrett and Garrett with both arms as they floated swiftly in the strong currents. Garrett gasped for air, and though Asbara tried several times to turn his oxygen on, his attempt failed. He could not understand why he could not get the cylinder to turn on. Through the light of the crystal rocks glowing throughout, Asbara spied a bank and lunged forward. He managed to reach it and pushed Jarrett and Garrett to the bank. He quickly began to work with the knob on Garrett's oxygen tank until he got it to turn on. Slowly, Garrett began to take deep, long breaths.

Asbara quickly checked out their suits to assure they were not breached.

“Where are we Asbara?”

Asbara gazed at Jarrett with concern. “Somewhere in Zakkel's tunnel. Stay close to me. We may encounter Mokaya's and Mosita's.”

“Is Garrett going to be okay?” Jarrett looked down at his brother with concern.

“Yes, he’ll be fine. He just needs to get his air back.”

Asbara gently touched his shoulder.

“Garrett, how are you feeling?”

“I’m okay, but I don’t like, not breathing.”

***SQWAK***

“What was that?” Garrett asked, peering into the darkness.

Asbara reached for a crystal closest to him, but it was just out of reach.

“Jarrett, see if you can get that crystal for me. Garrett, it is one of the foul creatures, but it’s not near us.”

Jarrett pulled the crystal out of the wall, and the vibration caused others to fall to the ground.

“Ah, ha, very good, Master Jarrett. Master Garrett, are you feeling better?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Very good.” Asbara clutched the crystal in his hand and shined it in all directions. “Look, there. It’s a tunnel.”

***SCREECH***

“That sounded like it was close.” Jarrett groaned as he shined the crystal he held in his hand around him.

Garrett nodded, “Yeah, I think it was close, Jarrett.”

Asbara jumped to his feet and yelled, “Move! Move to the tunnel, now!”

Asbara reached it first. He shined his light inside and saw nothing, so he turned to the boys, “Go, get in, boys.”

Jarrett crawled into the small tunnel, followed by Garrett, and then Asbara.

Asbara turned swiftly around and stared out of the tunnel hole. Large green eyes covered the hole, and a loud, ear piercing screech vibrated the area, followed by heavy breathing.

Suddenly, other creatures landed on the ground near this creature and screeched.

Asbara clasped his hands over his ears but urged the boys to move deeper into the tunnel.

The beasts were now sniffing the ground, and snorting in search of the prey they sensed was close by them. The bank shook from the heavy-footed animals walking and reverberated through the tunnel where Asbara and the boys hid.

Asbara slid his body passed the boys and led them through the tunnel until they came to an opening. He shined the light into a small cavern room, then entered it. He tugged each boy through the opening and helped them to the ground. Asbara walked over to the boys and pointed out a canister attached to the sides of their suits.

“These are your rations. All you have to do is suck on the straw attached to the inside of your helmet, and it will pull your nutrients from the container into your mouths.”

Each boy contorted their mouths in displeasure.

“The rations are good for you, young masters. They will give you nutrition until your father finds us. Sip only enough to still your hunger pains.”

Asbara finished attending to the boys and then drew out some bread for himself. After he had finished, he walked to the cavern wall and removed a crystal and then gave it to Garrett. “We all have crystals now to light our way. Keep them close to you. I have noticed it’s quiet out there now, so I’m going to investigate.”

“Please, don’t leave us.”

Asbara looked calmly at Garrett, “I shall return shortly. You’ll be safe here. This room is closed off to itself. No beasts can enter here. Rest. I simply want to take a look and see if the beasts have left or how many are out there.”

Asbara hopped into the tunnel and disappeared into the darkness. Garrett and Jarrett huddled together.

## *Chapter Thirty-Eight*

Millicent reached her hand across the bed and gently stroked Thomas' chest, and touched his beating heart. Then she ran her hand to his back.

“It's very strange that you have two hearts.”

Thomas laughed softly as he wrapped his arm around her, drawing her close, “Not to us.”

“How long do your people live?”

“We once had a royal to live to be four million years old, but our life expectancy is around one million years. In our world, I'm still very much a young man.”

“You and the boys will outlive me.”

She swallowed nervously. “I'm glad. I don't have to live through the agony of losing you to death. I couldn't go through it again.”

“Oh, baby, don’t think about that. We have plenty of love and life to share. You too will live a long, happy life with us.”

“How can you know this?”

“Once we get you to our world, and you breathe the fresh, clean air, your body will begin to regenerate to its original intended state. You see, we believe that our world is one of the original homes of humans. There was a great war in our middle history, and many from our worlds were taken from their homeland and dispersed on deserted worlds, left to die. However, the ones left on these worlds struggled to survive, and eventually became civilized societies. We believe Earth is one of these deserted worlds. So, if this is correct, you are one of us. If we’re incorrect, then your people are at the least quite similar to us.”

“What an Incredible theory. Obviously, through many centuries of life on a foreign world would have weakened the DNA, right?”

“Yes, you are correct, but many people brought from Earth and other worlds, back to our worlds within our solar system, had experienced life transforming changes in their bodies within a year and went on to live long lives they would never have lived on Earth and the worlds they left. This is why I can assure you, Millie, you will live an extremely long and happy life as my wife.”

“I hope you’re right. Tommy.”

“Millie, I’m sorry I kept this secret from you for so long.”

Millicent paused a moment, inhaling deeply, lost in thought. “I feel as though our whole lives together have been a lie.”

“It wasn’t that simple.”

“You didn’t trust me.”

“I did trust you. I simply was trying to protect you and our boys. It has been a great burden to me, and I wanted to keep that strenuous burden from you as long as possible, never to deceive, but to protect.

I'm sorry, darling. I never meant to cause you grief."

Millicent gently caressed his arm. "I know it wasn't your intention. I feel like you are somewhat of a stranger to me."

"Millie, I'm sorry to hear that, but I understand it. I hope you'll believe me when I say I'm the same man who fell in love with you all those years ago, and who loves you now."

Thomas raised upright and flicked the bedside lamp on. He then turned and playfully held his hand out toward Millicent.

"Hello, I'm Thomas Crenshu. I come from an alien world and a royal bloodline."

Millicent laughed softly. "It's nice to meet you, Mr. Crenshu."

Thomas drew his back up against the headboard. He reached his hand out and caressed hers. "I just returned from causing devastation to an enemy, and they may be coming to attack my home world. I had planned to return to Earth, but plans have

changed. I've told Father I don't want to return. He's agreed I've spent enough time on Earth. Do you want to hear more about me?"

Millicent inhaled deeply as she sat upright in the center of the bed, crossing her legs, and looking intently at him. "Yes."

"I'm first in line to the throne, and I have responsibilities to fulfill to keep honor in our family."

"Tommy, I understand your people need you, and I would never want you to turn your back on them. I have to admit it's frightening and I'm a little overwhelmed about the future and where we fit into it."

He reached up and pushed back a strand of hair from her face. "You and our sons fit into my future if you'll still have me. Do you still want a future with me?"

"Yes, Thomas, of course, I do now that I know you still want me."

"Darling, I've told you before, you're my soul mate. You're stuck with me." He

winked playfully at her. “As to the boys, they will get a first-rate education.”

“What will I do?”

“You can continue to write. You could write about our adventures. I assure you, you’ll have plenty of things to get involved in and never become bored,” Thomas chuckled softly.

“I must admit, I’m quite intrigued by it all, yet anxious.”

“I’ve traveled the universe many times, and with each new place I travel, I find it exciting yet a bit disconcerting, so I do know how you feel.”

He then cleared his throat, “I have one more bit of surprise for you. It’s concerning Nathan and Trish.

Millicent’s eyes grew wide as she exclaimed, “They’re from your world too.”

“They are from my galaxy, yes. Millicent, we had to keep our identities secret.”

“I know, Thomas. I understand.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I’m fine. I’m pleased that I’ll be reunited with Trish once more. And the boys will enjoy this news as well.”

“Thank you for understanding. I...”

***DING***

“Something’s wrong! Get dressed.”

Millicent and Thomas moved quickly from the bed and threw their clothes on. He then handed her an EVA suit. “Put on this suit on.”

Millicent cried, “What about the boys? They don’t have suits.”

Thomas held his hand out. “They will be okay; their suits are in their backpacks.”

Thomas secured his suit and then turned and made sure Millicent’s worked correctly.

“Thomas, we have to find them.”

“They’re with Asbara. He’ll take care of them.” He grabbed his communicator from off the desk and clicked it on. “Asbara.”

When he got no response, he attempted to contact him a second time. “Asbara, come in, this is Thomas. Do you read me?”

He groaned with irritation. “Virata, come in, this is Thomas.”

“Master Thomas, I am in Command Center.”

“What happened?”

“An Asteroid sir, but it’s been destroyed. We’re completing the cleanup now. I left Asbara, and the boys at the south end of the river, near Zakkel’s tunnel but I don’t see them.”

“We’re going there now. I’ll let you know what I find. He reattached his communicator to his belt and then with Millicent in tow, hurried out of the room to the dockside.

## *Chapter Thirty-Nine*

Millicent and Thomas, with troops of Moon'oros, Thomas' guards, and others searched through the debris scattered near the south tunnel.

Something shiny caught Millicent's eye, and she rushed over to it. "Thomas!"

When Thomas got to her, she shoved the object into his hands. "It's Asbara's communicator. Oh, my God, Tommy, they fell into the river!"

Thomas glared at the communicator, and then at the raging river.

"You don't know that. He might have dropped it when trying to escape. I've got men searching for them on the compound." Just then a Martian approached Thomas.

"Tell me you found my boys."

“No, sire, we didn’t find them, we’ve searched everywhere; we left no place unsearched.”

Millicent screamed and collapsed into Thomas’ arms. “No! No! Oh, God, no!”

All of a sudden, Thomas’ communicator beeped. While consoling his distraught wife, he answered the call.

“Thomas here.”

“Sir Thomas, have you found Asbara and your sons?” Virata’s panicked voice heard in her tone.

“We found this communicator near the south river end.”

Virata moaned, “It has to be Asbara’s. We were by the water when the alarms occurred. The shields were down long enough for them to enter the tunnel.”

“I’m afraid you’re right,” Thomas looked at the Command Center above them, and into her eyes.

“They’ve been swept into the tunnel!” Virata stumbled back into the arms of

Commander Kinata. She gently helped Virata to a seat nearby.

“I’m going after them,” Thomas kept his eyes locked on Commander Kinata.

Knowing she could not talk the Prince out of searching for his children, she relented without argument. “I’ll prepare a group for you, Sire.”

“Please look after Virata.” Thomas then glanced at his wife, “I swear I will find them.”

“I know you will, and I’m going with you.”

Thomas shook his head. “No, Darling, it’s dangerous out there. I absolutely will not take you with me.”

Millicent shot Thomas a cursed look. “They’re our sons. I’m going with you. You may be accustomed to others obeying you, but this is me, and you know I don’t take orders well.”

Thomas could not conceal a smirk. Inside he thought, *That’s my girl*. He was

about to say something when Captain Orley approached them. “Sire, my men will meet you at the south cavern.”

“Thank you, Captain.”

Captain Orley looked down at Millicent, “Milady, we shall find your children.”

With determination, Millicent stood, and wiped her eyes. “Yes, we will because I’m going with you, Captain.”

Captain Orley shot Thomas a surprised look, but Thomas shrugged his shoulders, “Don’t argue, Captain, she’s determined to go, and once she’s set her mind on something, then I simply agree.”

Four rafts gathered together, four guardsmen with Thomas and Millicent while four Guardsmen traveled in a raft behind them. The other rafts carried four Moon’oro warriors in each of these boats. Thomas looked at all the men gathered.

“Thank you, men, for coming with us.” He then radioed into the control center.

“We’re ready, lower the shield.”

“Sir, the force field is lowering, you can enter in 3, 2, and 1, go sir.”

One by one the men rowed their rafts into the dark tunnel. After the last boat had got through, Virata called to Thomas, “Sir, the force field is back up.”

“Thank you, Virata. We’ll see you soon. Thomas, out.”

Thomas was pleased the river had calmed down, and their boats moved smoothly down the canal. Everyone carefully watched for any signs of Asbara and the boys until they came to the first river bank. Some of the men remained with the rafts while others quickly searched the bank. After not finding any signs of anyone, they returned to their boats and continued downstream.

“You mustn’t give up hope. We will find them, Millie.”

“I will never give up hope on them, Thomas. How far will we go into the tunnel?”

Thomas waved his hand outward, “This tunnel leads to bigger, broader canals, and those lead to other canals. One direction leads to the mountains, the other to deeper caverns. I’ll not quit until I’ve found them.” “Another isle approaching.” A Moon’oro warrior alerted everyone.

Thomas gently stroked Millicent’s hand when they prepared to leave the raft.

“They couldn’t have gone far.” Millicent squeezed his hand, “I know they must be frightened and cold.”

“Asbara will care for them. The suits will keep them dry and warm.” Thomas then turned and led her onto the shore where they searched this island just as they had the previous one.

Island after Island was searched in the same manner as the previous for two hours,

but no sign of Asbara or the boys were present.

Thomas stood with Moon'oro Captain Orley on the bank of their latest stop.

“Captain, which direction should we go next?”

Captain Orley thought on it and then looked at Thomas. “I don't like to separate. However I believe we should go in different directions, it will help speed the search up. We could set a designated time to regroup.”

FLAP

SWISH

“Beasts are coming,” Thomas groaned as he looked at Captain Orley with an alarmed look.

“Back to the boats, men!” Captain Orley called to the warriors.

Everyone hurried to the boats quickly, drawing weapons for defense. All the guardsmen surrounded Millicent and Thomas in a protective circle.

“It is a Mokaya,” Thomas instinctively wrapped his arms around Millicent as the scaly creature, with horns protruding from his forehead, flew in fast and hard. Its long razor sharp tail swished through the line of rafts, causing everyone to fall on their stomachs in a protective manner. The large creature then circled and returned to the closest raft, and scooped up three warriors with its sharp claws, and disappeared into the darkness. The warriors screamed as they were carried away.

Millicent cried with panic, “We have to save them!”

“It’s too late for them,” Captain Orley whispered.

Millicent buried her head into Thomas’ shoulder and cried pitifully as he held her tightly.

Thomas motioned for Captain Orley to come to him. He pointed to the three islands which lay near one another.

“Captain, they are on one of these three Isles. I can sense their auras strongly.”

“We must hurry. Mositas and Mackay’s will come for us. They will alert others to our presence. We will be picked off one by one unless we find temporary covering.”

Suddenly, soldiers called out a warning. “Makaya! Mosita! Approaching! Ahh!!!”

Before anyone had any chance to do anything, one beast flew low over the boat and plucked a soldier closest to the front and flew away. The other guardsmen surrounded Millicent and Thomas as they fired their weapons. One beast growled as it dropped the lifeless, headless body of the guardsman into the boat. Millicent screamed as the men continued firing at the beasts.

Suddenly, a barrage of beasts swooped into the boats, and captured the men, and flying away with them. The attacks continued several minutes, causing them to lose several men at a time.

“I see a light flickering! Yonder, to the left!”

Captain Orley peered into the darkness and saw a lone crystal lying on the sand. “Make haste to that island! The boys are there.”

The rafts raced toward the island as the beasts continued their assault. The guardsmen quickly lead Thomas and Millicent off the boat, and into a shadowed area of the island. The others scrambled off the boats as they continued firing their weapons at the beasts. The bullets hit the scaly, hard crusted shells of the beasts, and bounced off, not hurting them.

When a Guardsman standing to the right of Millicent got plucked away, he dropped his weapon. She quickly retrieved it and began firing.

## *Chapter Forty*

Asbara looked down at the sleeping boys with concern showing on his face. Their food supply would possibly last only a day or two.

Attempting to remain alert to keep watch, Asbara finally surrendered to slumber. He then began dreaming about his wife.



Asbara and Virata stood together in a greenhouse, tending to the flowers and plants, laughing and chatting.

He stopped his task, and took her hand, displaying a concerned expression.

“Do you think your father shall give me permission to be your mate.”

“I see no reason why he wouldn’t. Our fathers sit on the council together, and our

mothers work together at the Command Center. We're destined to be together."

Asbara nervously nodded his head.

"Yes, yes, you are right. I'm worrying about nothing."

Virata smiled softly at him and wrapped her arms around his neck, kissing his cheek.

"Yes, my love, you are."

She then found his lips and kissed him, soothing his fear away.

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Asbara groaned, "Virata, I wish I could see you once again." He then leaned his head back, closed his eyes and concentrated hard, attempting a telepathic connection with her.

I'm safe. I'm with the boys.

Virata sat staring at a monitor, thinking of Asbara, their baby, and how she wished she could see him. Suddenly an impression

filled her mind. She reached her hand up, touching her forehead as Asbara's voice spoke to her as clear as if he had been sitting next to her. *We are safe.*

Bolting upright in her chair, Virata's heart raced. *I hear you, my love. Where are you?*

Zakkal's tunnel. I do not know my exact location. We floated a great distance through the tunnel before we were able to escape the water. I do recall we remained in a steady flow, not turning left nor right.

Prince Thomas is in the tunnel searching for you. Asbara. Asbara, Are you still with me? Asbara.

“No, no, no.”

She quickly jerked the communicator off the counter.

“Prince Thomas. Prince Thomas, come in, please.”

“Prince Thomas, here.”

“This is Virata. I've just mind connected with Asbara; he says he and the

boys are okay. They are on one of the islands inside of the tunnel. He says they didn't turn left or right but remained in a steady line. I lost connection with him before he could give me any clearer details.”

“Very good! We shall continue searching for them.”

“Virata out.”

The commotion outside of their hideaway alerted Asbara and the boys.

When they heard loud screeches, and weapons firing, Jarrett, and Garrett shared relieved expressions and cheers. Asbara jumped to his feet and ran toward the tunnel entrance.

“Stay here, boys!”

“No! Asbara, don't leave us!”

Asbara walked to the boys, wraps his arms around them, and whispered, “I have to let them know we're here, or they might leave us.”

Realizing he was right, each one nodded.

“I’ll be back soon, boys, remain brave.”

The Makaya swooped down all around Thomas and the men, in an attempt to attack them as they searched the island.

Thomas glanced around the area and spotted a small tunnel entrance with a small glow of light coming from it. He tugged on a guardsman and pointed to the hole. “Look there, a cavern entrance.”

The guardsman nodded.

“Go, go.” Thomas took Millicent by the hand and hurriedly made his way to the cavern entrance as the other men followed them.

“Millie, get inside quickly and make your way through the hole. I’ll be right behind you.”

She wasted no time in climbing inside and moving rapidly down the tunnel hole.

As the group made their way through the tunnel, a soft light appeared ahead of them, moving in their direction.

“Thomas, what is it?”

“I don’t know, but don’t move.”

“I am here!”

“Asbara!” Millicent called out.

“Yes, milady!”

Thomas then called out to Asbara.

“Asbara, there are more coming. Turn back.”

Asbara swiftly turned about and hurried to the cavern room.

When Millicent climbed out of the tunnel, she saw her boys, and ran to them, wrapping her arms around them, and crying with joy.

Thomas fell to his knees and held his family close together. “Oh, thank the Gods for watching over my boys.”

A loud swoosh traveled through the tunnel as fire erupted into the cavern room, incinerating three Guardsmen near the hole.

“Get that fire out!” Captain Noro commanded, and several warriors and guardsmen worked together to extinguish the fire, but their comrades were dead.

Thomas shoved his family down, “Get to the ground.”

With the fire extinguished, they all were breathless as they waited for whatever would come next.

Outside of the cavern, the warriors and guardsmen that remained continued to fight the beasts, until the beasts overran them. Trampling the warriors and guardsmen, the beasts tore their victim’s limb from limb, feasting on their bodies.

Some of the beasts flew around the island inspecting every inch of it, while others destroyed the boats.

The ones on the island sniffed the ground, and when they found any breathing, they finished killing them. They then took

their prey and flew away in different directions, finally leaving the island quiet while the boats sank into the water.

Inside the cavern room, the boys clung to their parents, whimpering with fear.

“Thomas, what must we do?” Millicent looked into his eyes with worry.

Thomas shook his head, “We have no choice, but to wait.”

Captain Orley exhaled as he leaned against the wall. “They will eventually leave. We must remain quiet and still.”

“That could be awhile. The monsters won’t leave until they’ve made sure that there is no way to get in here,” A warrior pointed out.

Thomas exhaled, “You’re right. I think we should all move against the wall, away from the hole.”

He gazed at his family and gently squeezed Millicent’s hand. “I need to speak

with the Captain. Remain here, and you'll stay safe."

Thomas motioned for Captain Orly and his men to move away from his family for a conference. Once he had them in an opposite corner, he began speaking.

"What are our options, Captain?"

"Wait. They will eventually tire and leave. They may even take the dead with them, and leave now."

Asbara spoke up, "They are quite intelligent beasts, believe me. I've seen their wits in times past. They could be laying a trap for us."

Thomas agreed, "Yes, and if they do leave, how do we know they won't leave one here to guard us?"

Captain Orley groaned. "We must not panic. The fact is we don't know anything. I suggest we all take this time to rest. In a few hours, we'll send someone out to inspect the area; we'll see what our options are then."

They all shared concerned looks but knew this was their best option.

Thomas exhaled, “Yes, this is a good plan.”

After their small conference had ended, the men found places away from the entrance, and sat down, resting against the wall. Thomas and Millicent stretched out on the floor with their boys.

Chapter Forty-One

A guardsman awoke and carefully crept to the entrance, peering into it, and listened carefully.

“Where are you going, Guardsman?”

The guardsman turned and looked at Prince Thomas. “It has been silent for some time, Milord. I believe the beasts have gone. I shall go and inspect. I will return with news.”

“What’s your name, Son?”

“I am Sergeant Elias Gordada.”

“Well, Elias, you have an excellent plan, but you’ll need someone to watch your back.”

Elias shook his head, “No, Sire, not you.”

Thomas chuckled softly. “I outrank you, Son, so lead the way. Let the others rest.”

“I meant no ill respect, Sire. My hope is to one day become a member of your elite guard.”

“Your accent gives you away. You’re brethren from Royal City; I’m pleased to have you here. I would be pleased to have you on my team. Elias, I wouldn’t be much of a man or prince if I allowed you to take to this dangerous task without an aide.”

Elias reached his hand out, smothering the light in Thomas’ hand. He then slowly entered the tunnel with Thomas following close behind.

Elias cautiously peered out of the hole, and then climbed out of it when he saw that the beasts were gone. He gasped at the sight of the destruction, and ran to the river’s edge, cursing.

Thomas shook his head in disgust and mourned the loss of the men as he followed Elias.

“How shall we get out of here, Elias? We have no boats.”

“We have life rafts, Sire. Perhaps I can travel back to the base, and bring a rescue boat.”

“Hmm, so dangerous of a plan, but it may very well be our only option. Let’s return to the cavern and discuss the options with the others.”

Millicent awoke to find Thomas gone. She looked at Asbara who stood near the entrance with Captain Orley and the other men. “Where is my husband, Asbara?”

“Out there. He and a guardsman are missing. I suspect they went to evaluate the damage.”

“We are here, Millie.” Thomas slid inside the cavern and gave Millicent a comforting look.

“What did you find, Master Thomas?” Asbara braced for the news he knew would come.

Thomas shook his head. “Destruction; all of the boats are destroyed. Sergeant

Gordata says we have inflatable rafts inside our emergency kits.”

“They are one man rafts. The boys and Asbara don’t have any.” Captain Orley looked at Asbara, frowning.

“We searched and found two life rafts. The boys can have one, and Asbara will take the other.”

Captain Orley shook his head. “I’m afraid the boys won’t be able to paddle against the current. Perhaps you and your wife can sit in a raft with each of the boys.”

Millicent exhaled, “It’s dangerous but better than staying here.”

Asbara nodded, “I think we should go soon if this is to be our plan.”

Thomas glanced at Captain Noro, “Captain, we’ll do what you think best.”

“I think it is possible to succeed, if we hurry along, now.”

Thomas glanced at Millicent, “Let’s do it. Millie, you and Asbara gather up the rafts. Elias and I will take them to the river’s

edge, and inflate them. Captain, you and the men, be our lookouts as we complete the task.

As everyone began on their tasks. Jarrett and Garrett looked around at everyone working and hurried to their father.

Garrett and Jarrett looked up at Thomas with eagerness, “What can we do, Daddy?”

Thomas smiled at the boys’ enthusiasm to help. “Thank you both for wanting to help us. You boys gather up all the crystals you can find lying on the ground and bring them to the front of the tunnel.”

Thomas then turned to the captain. “Contact the base, let them know of our plans. Tell them to have lots of soldiers and weapons standing near the force-field.”

Everyone finished their tasks inside the cavern room and gathered back together for a meeting.

“Millie, I want you and the boys to be the last to enter the tunnel. Stay in the tunnel

until we're ready for you. If there is trouble, you turn them around and get them back in here. Asbara, stay with my family.”

One by one they entered and crawled through the tunnel. When they reached the end, Elias peeped in at them and smiled.

“It is clear.”

Everyone worked to assemble the rafts, and then placed them on the bank. Asbara leaned into the tunnel and called to Millicent. “It’s time.”

Millicent and the boys quickly moved to the rafts.

“Are you scared Momma?”

“Yes, I am Jarrett, but Daddy and all of these men will protect us.”

She pulled the boy close to her, whispering, “Look how far you and I’ve come already. We’re going to survive this too.”

“We did survive Dr. Grumpy and the crash, didn’t we? Yeah, we’ll be okay.”

Millicent laughed and hugged her son. “Yes, we did. Somehow, I know we’ll survive this as well.”

Thomas approached the boys. “Are you guys ready for an adventure to remember. “Jarrett you will ride with me.”

“Yes, Dad.”

Thomas leaned down and hugged Garrett. “I hope you enjoyed our adventure together.”

Garrett grinned, “I sure did, Dad. It was awesome to be a part of a real firefight in the sky.”

Millicent gasped, “What? What firefight?”

Thomas and Garrett shared amused looks, “Let’s talk about that later.” Thomas playfully cleared his throat. “Garrett, stay very still in this raft. It’s easy to tip over. I’m very proud of you, Son, we’ve done well up to this point, so I depend on you to take care of your mom on this trip, okay?”

Garrett laughed once more, “Yes, dad, we sure have! I’ll be brave, just like you.”

Thomas gently stroked his face, then hugged him.

“I’m proud of how brave you’ve been, Son.”

Jarrett groaned, “I missed a firefight, awe.” He then looked at Garrett, “But, this will be fun.”

Garrett placed his arm around his brother. “Don’t worry; there’ll be plenty more fights to come.”

Jarrett laughed, but Millicent displayed a worried expression while Thomas smiled with pride. Jarrett touched his mother’s hand, “Mom, think about the adventure we’ve all shared together here. I’ve dreamed about such an adventure with a life among the stars.”

“Yes, Sweetheart, I know you have, and I’m happy for you.”

When the boys began whispering to one another, Thomas turned to Millicent and

gazed deeply into her eyes. “I love you, Millie.”

“I love you too, Tommy.”

Thomas leaned in and kissed her lips. He then whispered into her ear, “I hope one day you’ll forgive me.”

Thomas fought back his tears as he looked at the boys who were huddled together. “It’s time to go, boys. Jarrett, C’mon son.”

Then Millicent grasped his arm and embraced him. “Thomas, you did what you had to do to save your sister. There is nothing to forgive. I love you. Please remain safe. We need you. I can’t lose you again. Don’t you know how I feel about you? You and the boys are my life.” She then kissed him passionately.

When their lips parted, Thomas saw tears glistening in her eyes. He knew she loved him and still trusted him. This brought tremendous relief to him and filled him with more determination to save them.

“Don’t you worry, Darling, we’re all going to make it through this.”

After Thomas and Jarrett had walked away, Garrett looked up at his mother. “Don’t be afraid, Mom, I’ll take care of you.”

Millicent leaned down and hugged him. “Thank you, Garrett, having you near me makes me feel better already.”

Thomas called the men together before entering his raft. He looked at Elias and smiled, “Elias, I now promote you to Guardian of the Royal Family. It shall be your task to remain with my wife and children, and to assure their safety.”

Elias bowed reverently to Thomas, “Sire, thank you for trusting me with your family’s safety. I will protect them.”

“Thank you.”

“I want you to stay close to my wife’s raft. No matter what happens to me, it is your task to keep my family safe.”

“I understand, sir.”

Captain Orley gave Thomas a serious glance. “Sire, I want your raft near your wife, followed by Asbara. The remainder of us will bring up the rear.”

Thomas nodded, “Yes, sir, Captain Orley, we will do this. It is a good plan.”

Thomas looked at each man standing within their circle. “Thank you all for your sacrifice to protect my family.”

He then got into the raft first, and then Jarrett joined him.

“Don’t be afraid, Jarrett. I’ll protect you.”

“We will make it. Mom and I have come a long way; this is nothing.”

“I’m proud of you. We will get through this because I don’t intend on losing my family again.”

Chapter Forty-Two

Once everyone entered their rafts, they traveled the canal in silence determination for quite a while.

The warrior in the last raft heard the flapping of wings behind him. He turned to see an approaching, snarling beast swooping down upon him. "Beasts! Beasts!"

The words had just escaped his lips before the beast snatched him from his raft, and flew away.

Everyone rowed faster as they heard the warning and the sound of many creatures pursuing them.

Captain Orley with several warriors and guardsmen stopped and began firing at the beasts.

The firing suddenly stopped, but the beasts continued their pursuit.

Asbara yelled at Thomas as he caught up to him, "Master Thomas, you must stay straight on the river, do not take a left or a right, stay on the straight path."

"Straight ahead, got it, Asbara!"

Elias stopped his raft and waited for Millicent to catch up with him.

"We're here, Milady, you keep rowing straight ahead, and you'll reach the base."

Millicent continued past him. "Thank you, sir. What is your name?"

"My name is Elias, Milady."

"Thank you for keeping us safe, and leading the way."

Elias nodded and then pointed ahead of him. "Keep rowing straight ahead and as fast as you can, Milady. You are not far now. I shall remain here to aide Prince Thomas and Asbara."

"Millicent, go!" Thomas screamed at them.

Suddenly a large gray beast flew swiftly down and approached Asbara's raft, blowing smoke from its nostrils.

"Asbara!" Millicent screamed when she saw the beast above Asbara.

Asbara turned his head and saw the fire coming at him, and he bent down, narrowly escaping the attack.

Thomas caught up to Millicent. "Millie kept rowing, we're nearly at the base."

She turned and with a renewed strength, rowed toward the tunnel exit. She breathed easy when she realized her, and Garrett had arrived inside the base. She turned her raft around and watched, waiting for the others.

"Thomas! Asbara! They're still in there!"

As the three men continued rowing, a beast huffed fire from his nostrils and ignited Thomas' raft.

Thomas pushed Jarrett into Elias' raft as he rowed past him. "Go, Elias! Get my son to safety!"

Elias grasped Jarrett by the shoulders and dragged him into the raft, and rowed away.

When Asbara reached Thomas's boat, Asbara dove into the water as Thomas got into the raft.

"Asbara, what are you doing? Get back in here." Thomas grasped Asbara by the arm, holding onto him with all of his strength.

"No, we'll be too heavy, it will sink the raft."

"No, you only weigh a little more than the boys, it will hold us."

"Let me go, Thomas."

"No!"

"Let me go! The beasts are almost on top of us, you can't carry me, let me go!"

"Hold on the side, Asbara, we are almost there."

"No, I'll only slow you down."

"Ugh! No, I won't let you go!"

Asbara pulled from Thomas' grasp and swam away from the raft, sealing his fate.

"Go!"

Thomas gazed at Asbara and cursed, but then turned and rowed until he reached the safety of the cavern. "Get the shields up now! The beasts are nearly upon us!"

Immediately the shields began lifting.

Thomas turned the raft swiftly around and glared at the tunnel, looking desperately for Asbara.

Virata without hesitation pressed the shield button. The shield rose half-way when she saw Asbara bobbing in and out of the water, barely missing his chance to get inside. Commander Kinata ran to her and held her hand still before she hit the stop button. Virata fought to get loose from Commander Kinata.

”It’s too late! They are upon him, even now! It’s too late!”

“No! No, no, no!”

I love you Virata. Tell my son of me.

I love you too, Asbara. I will, my love.

Virata broke down, sobbing for her husband.

Millicent, Jarrett, and Garrett cried out with joy when they saw their father, but Elias glanced at Thomas with alarm, “Where’s Asbara?”

Thomas frowned and dropped his head. “He’s gone.”

Jarrett pointed with excitement toward the tunnel. “Look, there he is!”

“Why isn’t he coming in?” Garrett turned and looked grievously at his father.

Millicent shot Thomas a desperate look, “Thomas, we cannot leave him out there.”

With agony etched in Elias' expression, he cried to Thomas, "I can save him." He began rowing toward the tunnel.

The shield moved into its place and stopped while Asbara remained inside the dark tunnel, bobbing in the water.

Thomas shook his head. "It's too late for him. The beasts are right on top of him."

Elias dropped his head and groaned.

Thomas stared at the hole, and at his friend one last time.

Asbara watched the shield slide into place, and he released a relieved breath. At least his people were safe. He then heard the beasts flapping wings and turned to face the large creatures. The beasts huffed smoke and breathed heavily as they surrounded Asbara. Suddenly all at once, the fire-breathing moon dragons blew fire at their surrounded prey, causing Asbara to duck into the water in an attempt to escape them.

Chapter Forty-Three

The following morning, hundreds of humans and other species on the base, dressed in black mourning robes, arrived at the lakeside to bid their farewell to Asbara, Captain Orley, and the men who died the previous day. In the water, several flowers and rose petals floated in the water, with pictures of everyone who died, attached to a center wreath. Virata, with Millicent's arms around her, mourned with the boys and Thomas.

As soft music played in the background, Commander Kinata stood inside a boat floating behind the giant wreath and gave a lovely eulogy regarding the souls who sacrificed their lives and saved the base.

In the early morning, Thomas and his family walked with Virata onto the docks toward the red and blue shuttle craft

hovering at dockside. The area buzzed with energy as workers and robots busily loaded the ship.

The boys were full of excitement as they ran to the dockside, followed by the adults. The shuttle with its fresh, new paint mesmerized Jarrett. “Is that the ship we’re getting on?”

“This is simply a shuttle we’ll take to the Royal Flagship, which hovers above the moon,” Thomas explained.

“It looks like a dragon,” Jarrett pointed toward the front portion of the shuttle. The fierce art scheme depicted the eyes of a monster with sharp fangs protruding from where the weapons were housed.

All at once, Thomas and both boys exclaimed, “Dragon Kiss.”

Thomas smiled, “Yes, I like it. I shall call my Flagship and its escorting fleet, Dragon Kiss.”

“Boys, come and say goodbye to Virata,” Millicent called to them.

Virata hugged each boy tightly. “You boys will enjoy your new world, but be careful, and listen to your Mother.”

Jarrett frowned with tears glistening in his eyes. “We will, Ma’am.”

Garrett dropped his head and nodded. “Yes, Ma’am.”

“Ms. Virata, take care of the baby.” Jarrett forced a smile on his face.

Virata gently touched Jarrett’s cheek. “I will, and I’ll send pictures of him.”

The boys then moved away so that Millicent and Virata could speak alone.

“I’m so sorry for your loss, Virata. Asbara saved our lives. He was a wonderful, caring individual.”

“Yes, Millicent, he was. He loved you all very much. I too, have grown to love you all.”

“We love you, too, Virata. Can you come to visit us?”

Virata nodded and smiled as Thomas approached them.

“Yes, I shall travel there as we have family there.”

“Boys, get on the shuttle; the staff will show you to our quarters.” Thomas stepped next to Millicent.

Garrett and Jarrett waved once more to Virata, and hurried up the ramp, and disappeared inside the shuttle.

Millicent hugged Virata once more and then walked passed Thomas toward the ramp.

Thomas turned toward Virata, with tears streaming down his face as his lips trembled.

“There are no words needed. I know you loved him. He loved you too, Prince Thomas. He would sit for hours and tell me about the precarious situations you, Nehiel, and Kysmoro would get into.”

Thomas laughed, “Yes, and he was always there to bail us out.”

“He was so proud of all of you. He shall sit in a place of honor in all Moon’oro history.”

“I’m sorry. I tried to remain with him, but he would not let me stay. He, he...”

“Hush, now, Master Thomas. Asbara wouldn’t want you mourning him, or feeling guilty over him. Go now, to your world, with your family, and be happy. You have many struggles still ahead of you in your fight with the enemy of your world.”

Thomas drew Virata close, and hugged her as the remainder of his guardsmen, including Elias, gathered near the ship. He then turned and walked up the ramp and inside the vessel followed by his elite guardsmen.

Virata moved away from the shuttle as its engines roared to life. She wrapped her arms around herself and watched it slowly move toward the west tunnel and disappeared into the darkness.

Chapter Forty-Four

The shuttle released from the docking bay, and flew upward, into the departure tunnel. Gaining speed as it traveled through the tunnel, it shot out of the opening and soared across the moon to the Royal Flagship.

Once the royal family transferred to the large Flagship, the fleet began its trip across space toward the GC.

Thomas turned from the window. “This path will take two weeks to travel, so you all might as well get comfortable. Boys, I will have you begin your education tomorrow while we’re traveling.”

“Awe,” the boys moaned together.

Thomas laughed. “Now, before you get too bummed out, I promise you, it will be the most fun you’ve ever experienced in your life and certainly better than any Earth

school. You both will learn all about robots and space travel among other awesome things.”

The twins cheered as their parents laughed.

Thomas glanced at Millicent. “I’d like to show you around the ship and introduce you to some people I know you’ll get along with.”

Millicent followed Thomas into the kitchen. “It sounds wonderful, Thomas.”

She opened the fridge door and smiled, “It’s well stocked.”

Thomas pointed to the shelves in the kitchen, “You’ll find the entire kitchen well stocked, but it doesn’t mean you have to cook. We have several Chefs on board to deliver meals if we so desire.”

Millicent smiled, “Okay, I’m impressed with that little detail.”

She and Thomas laughed as he nodded. “It’s not so bad traveling. After all, we’re

Royals, and everything is taken care of for us.”

Millicent shrugged, “That will take some getting used to.”

“You’re worth it, darling. I’ve always thought of you like royalty.”

Millicent blushed, but then rolled her eyes, “You have always made me feel special.”

Thomas winked playfully as he wrapped his arms around her waist, drawing her into his arms. “Millicent, you are special. I can’t imagine my life without you.”

KNOCK

“Boys, will you answer the door.”

“Who could that be?” Millicent asked.

“I’m not expecting anyone, so I have no idea.”

Millicent took his hand and the two of them walked into the front room.

“No Way!”

Millicent and Thomas' face lit up with joy when they saw Trish, Nathan, and their kids standing outside the door. They then laughed as Thomas teased their children, who stood in stunned silence.

“Boys, let them come in.”

Nathan laughed as Thomas hurried to his friend and the two bear hugged.

“Nathan, I had no idea you were on board. I was told you were on Earth at the Peace Conference.”

“My duty was completed there, and I got an invitation to come join you here.”

“This is amazing; I'm glad to see you.”

“So am I, buddy.”

Millicent hurried to Trish, and hugged her tightly.

“Oh, Trish, I'm so happy you're here.”

“I am too; it's good to see you. I want you to know; I had no idea Thomas was alive, or I would have told you, I swear it.”

Millicent pulled away and gave Trish a comforting look. “I understand.”

Garrett and Jarrett greeted Amanda and Caleb, laughing.

“What are you guys doing here?”

Garrett quizzed.

“We just found out we’re aliens,” Caleb giggled.

Jarrett shook his head, “This is wild. We’re all aliens.”

The children were laughing when the apartment door opened and in zipped Lloyd.

Garrett squealed with delight and ran to his robot friend with the other children surrounding them. Garrett wrapped his arms around Lloyd, hugging him tightly. “Lloyd, what are you doing here?”

“I belong to Master Thomas so I shall go where you go.”

“Oh, my Gah!” Garrett playfully smacked his forehead while laughing. “This is so cool.”

Thomas chuckled as he and the others joined the children. “Father sent him to you as a gift.”

Jarrett inspected Lloyd carefully, “This is too cool. Congratulations, Garrett.”

“Jarrett, you have a gift as well, from Virata.”

Through the door at that moment, entered Reggie, rolling toward Jarrett.

Jarrett cupped his mouth and stood there eying the little square robot. Finally, he hurried to Reggie and hugging him.

“Wow, it’s good to see you, Reggie.”

“It. Is. Good. To. See. You. Jarrett.”

Garrett pointed to Reggie, “He is pretty cool, too, Jarrett.”

“Thank you. He’s really special to me.”

“I am learning about the interface and other cool things; I can reprogram his voice to be cooler.”

Jarrett held his hand up. “No, I love Reggie just the way he is.”

Millicent walked over to the little robot and gently touched him. “Hi, Reggie.”

“Hello. Millicent.”

Millicent wiped tears from her eyes as she explained, “This was Asbara’s robot.”

Everyone in the room paused a moment as they thought of their friend.

Thomas approached Jarrett and smiled at the robot while touching his son’s arm. “He’s a fine robot, Jarrett.”

“He sure is, and I bet he and Lloyd will be good friends.”

The twins nodded and laughed, “Oh, yeah.”

Caleb glanced at his father, “I want a robot.”

Amanda laughed, “So do I, but I want mine to be female so I can dress her in pretty dresses and put makeup on her.”

The boys scowled while their parents laughed.

Garrett then glanced at Thomas with a hopeful gleam in his eye, “Can we go and explore the ship?”

Thomas shrugged, “Sure.”

Jarrett then asked, “Can Amanda and Caleb go too?”

Nathan nodded. “Of course.”

After the children had left the apartment with their robots, Trish placed her hand on Millicent’s. “I couldn’t tell you. I’m sorry for keeping this from you. When I went to visit Nathan, I had no idea we were going to be leaving Earth.”

Nathan looked at Thomas, then Millicent, “I wanted to go back for you, Millicent, but my Commander said someone had already put a plan in place to retrieve you and Jarrett.”

Thomas nodded, “Yes, my father sent Asbara to retrieve them.”

Millicent touched Trish’s arm, “I am glad you’re here, but I don’t know you, Trish.” She looked at all of them. “I don’t know any of you. However, I’ve made peace with this situation, and I do understand why you kept it secret.”

Trish cleared her throat nervously, “I can’t take back the past, but what I can do, is to let you know me now. While we’re on this Flagship, will you give me a chance to make it up to you?”

Millicent thought about the years they had spent together as friends. She had known Trish two years prior to meeting Thomas, and they had immediately bonded after Trish gave her the job as a waitress in her restaurant. She then met Nathan when he and Trish began dating. Trish had been there for Millicent through her turmoil. They had become best friends.

“Let’s take a walk.” Millicent pointed toward the door.

Trish smiled, “A walk sounds nice.”

Millicent and Trish spent hours together that evening as Trish revealed to Millicent about her life and where she came from. In reality, Trish was Thomas’ cousin, Tressla. Nathan’s name was called Nethyel. Her

father was Supreme Minister of Khornosh, a world which lay nearest Gherdisa.

Much to her surprise, Millicent and the boys enjoyed their two weeks aboard the ship. While Thomas, Nathan, and Trish was busy planning defenses for their home worlds, the boys had enjoyed their time in school, and they met new friends, of many species.

Millicent spent most of her time in a greenhouse and had begun a journal of her experiences since Thanksgiving, and she had already completed the book of their adventure to the moon.

Two weeks after leaving the moon, one evening, Millicent sat on the sofa in their cabin reading.

Thomas and the boys burst through the door with excitement and hurried toward the large bay window followed by Nathan,

Trish, and their kids. “Darling, come look at our home world.”

The boys ran to the nearest window and stared out wide-eyed. Thomas pointed at a large planet, seemingly close enough to touch. On either side of the large planet set three moons. The planet, full of many dynamic colors mixed appeared gigantic against its six small moons which surrounded it.

Millicent stood and made her way to the window, with growing curiosity about the new place she and her children would call home.

“Welcome to Gherdisa, a planet in the solar system of Paradisa. Gherdisa shall become your home if you allow it to embrace your heart.”

“It’s breathtaking, Thomas.”

“I never grow tired of this particular view.”

Millicent’s eyes danced with excitement, “Oh, Thomas, your description

of it compares to seeing it with my own eyes. I cannot wait to see the mountains, seas, and all it has to offer up close and personal.”

Thomas leaned over and kissed her cheek. “I’m pleased you like your first view.”

Garrett laughed, “Grandma and Grandpa are awesome, and they told me they couldn’t wait to meet Jarrett.”

Jarrett whistled, “This is the best trip ever, and I can’t wait to see all our family.”

Trish said with delight, “Our family will love all of you children.”

Nathan laughed, “Of course they will, and Thomas and I have already made plans with Prime Ruler Thaddeus and your father on what we’re planning for them.”

The kids all gathered around Nathan and began chiding, “What do you have planned for us? Tell us!”

Millicent laughed at the happiness exuberating from the children. She could not help but get caught up in their enthusiasm.

“I’m so happy for you, boys. This pleases me to know you’re both going to be a part of a large family that loves one another. They will love you as one of them.”

Thomas wrapped his arms around her waist, “Oh, Millie, they’ll love you too, baby. I didn’t stand a chance against your charms. Throw your fear away, and let your beautiful spirit shine.”

He playfully winked at her, “You know, the one that stole my heart.”

Millicent exhaled as she gazed into the blue eyes that always gave her hope. She knew she and Thomas had much to work through, but when looking at him, she still felt loved. How could she fight against destiny? She knew she could not. “I love you, Thomas.”

“And I love you, Millicent Grace Crenshu.” He leaned in and kissed her

passionately. “And I swear, my family will adore you, as will the people of our world.”

Millicent leaned her back into his arms, and glanced at the rapidly advancing world; the world she would now call home. *I hope so.*

Chapter Forty-Five

In a dark river tunnel, on the Earth-moon, a dark figure splashed out of the water, gasping for air. He swam quickly away from the screeching beasts searching for him in the waters. He thanked the Gods when he saw an island in front of him shining with crystals. He made haste toward the island, knowing this would be the first step to returning home.

Conclusion

“Well, that’s my story of how I met the Man from the Moon. As you can see, my life turned out quite differently than I had ever thought it would be. Do you still doubt in the possibilities of life outside the world of Earth? Well, I never doubted, and look at me and my brother, Garrett. We live in another world now, and travel quite a lot with my father who is pretty important in the war against our enemy, the Vdoda. We haven’t won the war, but we’ve managed to keep them in our galaxy, and away from the Milky Way, so I think we are making progress.

Mom did find her place in our world. She is heading a new program, Immigrants Assistance. This new committee welcomes and helps newcomers to our planet adjust.

I also must tell you; our little sister, Keira, is two years old and my parents told Garrett and me that my mom is having another baby. Isn't that exciting? Garrett and I hope the baby is another girl. Mom and Dad say they don't care, so long as the baby is healthy. I guess that is all that matters, after all.

Oh, what happened to Virata? That is a whole exciting story on its own, but I will tell you this. Asbara didn't die, but he survived with Captain Orley, and they are extremely important in the struggle to keep Earth and the Milky Way safe. Asbara and Virata now have two children; a boy and a girl who are four and one.

I've met lots of Moon'lins since meeting Asbara. I've learned they don't all resemble Asbara and his people, but they're the kindest people I've yet to meet. Don't think you've ever met one? I wouldn't bet on it. Check their nose out. Does it look real? Or...Maybe they come from my world

or another galaxy...After all, beyond the Milky Way, there are countless universes still unexplored. According to my father, Garrett and I have at least ten millennia to visit as many worlds as we can. We travel to Earth often on peace treaty conferences. In fact, Garrett and I are with Dad, visiting Earth now on one such mission, so the person standing next to you might just be me.

Cast of Characters

Garrett

Jarrett

Millicent

Thomas

Asbara

Thaddeus

Virata

Gretyl

Kysmoro

Captain Orley

Captain Noro

Captain Kinoto

Lyla

Thalia

Nathan/Nethyel

Trish/Tressla

Amanda

Caleb

Vdoda Creatures

A Message from the Author

I hope you enjoyed The Moon People; If you enjoyed this offering, please check out my other work.

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## *About The Author*

Lisa Vandiver lives in Tupelo with her husband, Matthew, their daughter, Keira, one cuddly Calico, four feisty little dogs, and three horses. Lisa enjoys Geo-Caching, attending her daughter's Equestrian events, and homeschooling.

Lisa writes multi-genre stories, serves as coordinating producer and co-host of Deadly Reads Radio, Journey Into The Night, on BlogTalkRadio