

A LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

BY Calvin Habig

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When Jasmine first saw Ethan at church, she was afraid of him. Sometimes he had big thick glasses and dark brown wild hair that went every direction. Other times he didn't have the glasses on and his eyes had a distant, vacant look. He was very slender and a bit shorter than the rest of the boys his age. Because he was a little shorter, Jasmine at first thought that he was younger than he really was. Ethan always seemed to stick close to his parents, often holding one of their hands as they walked through the church building.

Jasmine went every Sunday with her father to the Bayshore Community Church, even though she protested. This church stuff was OK, but her friends made fun of her for going. She would rather be at home or with her friends. Especially now. Now that she just had a few weeks left.

Jasmine had lived in Bayshore all of her life. She had long black hair that went halfway down her back. She was broader than most girls in her class and because of that people didn't guess how fast she was. She was an excellent soccer player & her size made her a great defender. Her black hair and darker skin reflected her dad's native American heritage.

Jasmine had just finished fifth grade at Nestucca Valley Elementary School which was located on Highway 101 just outside Bayshore. Even though she lived close, she still rode the bus every day. She got good grades, but school wasn't easy for her. She had to work hard to earn them. Next year she had looked forward to going to Middle School in Beaver. But not now.

At first, Jasmine would have just ignored Ethan as one of the vacation residents who come and spend the summer in Bayshore, (just a littler weirder looking than most), but he always had the biggest smile on. When she first saw it, she thought he was laughing at her or at something at church. But he ALWAYS had on that smile.

It was only after a couple of weeks that Ethan came to Sunday School before worship. As always, his mom led him to the room. Their teacher, Mr. Dirks was quickly at the door and led Ethan (with Ethan holding on to his elbow) to the table.

"This is Ethan Barrett," said Mr. Dirks. He and his family are here for the summer. They live through the rest of the year in Newberg. Ethan, do you want to tell everyone the rest of your story?"

"Hi!" Ethan began confidently, looking at no one in particular. "I'm Ethan from Newberg and I just finished fifth grade. My mom and dad home-school me, since both of them are home during the day. I have an older brother who is away at college, so it is just my mom, dad and me. I am legally blind, which is why I sometimes wear these glasses and why I always stick near my mom & dad when I am in a new place."

"If you're blind, why do you wear glasses? You don't need glasses if all you see is black." asked Veronica Meyer. Veronica was always inquisitive and interrupting people to ask questions.

Ethan turned to where Veronica sat. "I don't see black. I see things, but they are very fuzzy. The glasses help me see them better, but still everything is very fuzzy. Plus, I can only see like a tunnel ahead of me. I can't see anything on either side unless I turn my head. I can tell that you have dark hair and that what you are wearing is blue. But unless I got really close, I can't make out your face.

"Lucky for you!" joked Teddy Ross. Veronica stuck her tongue out at him.

"But I can't see you unless I turn my head to look at you." Ethan finished.

Throughout the rest of the class Ethan joined in like he had been part of the class for years. He obviously knew the Bible very well and made funny comments. Not mean ones like Teddy Ross. Just funny.

He always seemed to have a joke or pun to associate with each Bible story they read. One time it was "How did Adam and Eve feel when expelled from the Garden of Eden?" The answer? "They were really put out." Or another time, "Who is the greatest baby-sitter mentioned in the Bible?" And the answer? "David: he rocked Goliath to sleep."

After church Jasmine learned that she and her dad were going over to Ethan's parents' (the Williams) house for lunch. She and Ethan spent the afternoon comparing school experiences and comparing Newberg to Bayshore. Jasmine asked him further questions about being blind:

"How can you learn if you can't read?" Jasmine asked.

"I can read just fine." replied Ethan defensively. "I read Braille, which are raised dots on a page. The text books that aren't available in Braille, my parents read out-loud to me. I can write out my math, but I write REALLY big."

"Come on, I want to show you my favorite place in this house."

The two of them went upstairs to a room that looked like Ethan's father's office. Ethan was able to walk alone, but regularly reached out to touch objects that were where he knew they should be, to get his bearings.

He walked right over to a pair of French doors at the end of the office and stepped out onto a deck that overlooked the ocean.

"I love it up here because I can hear the ocean and feel the wind. I can be up here alone and my parents don't worry about me wandering off. I sit up here and think and pray."

"It is beautiful up here." said Jasmine, marveling at the beauty. "And you have a great view of the lighthouse."

"The lighthouse? Where is a lighthouse?"

"The lighthouse on Kiwanda Rock."

"I have never heard of it."

"I can't see it from my house in town. But out here from your place you can see it great. The sand dunes block seeing it from the road and all the ground around it is private property. While the beach is public, there are big signs telling people to keep off the islet.

"Eyelet?" asked Ethan. "Isn't that what you put your shoe laces through?"

"I-S-L-E-T.," Jasmine spelled. "An islet is a very small island. This one is just off of shore. Some old lady in Portland owns it, but no one is ever there."

"Doesn't anybody light it at night?" asked Ethan.

"Oh, it is never lit. It hasn't been lit for many, many years. Nobody ever uses it anymore and because it is private property, hardly anyone knows much about it."

"Describe it to me." pled Ethan.

"Kiwanda Rock is in two parts. There is a smaller part of the island that sticks up kind of like a haystack. The second part is much bigger and taller."

Jasmine stopped and looked the islet over. Although she had grown up in Bayshore, she had never had such a good view of the lighthouse.

"The top of the big one is totally flat and looks like it has been leveled off. The lighthouse is the only thing on the top of the rock. But half-way up there is a small concrete building that looks like it was for storage. And beside it is a big water tank, probably for fresh water.

"The lighthouse itself," she continued, "is a two story square block building a little bigger than a house. It is made of brick and rock and looks like it used to be painted white. Most of the paint has been worn off by storms. There are windows, but most of them have been blown out. On top of the square block is a two story tower. The bottom half of it is all brick, but it has more of the white paint still on it. The top half is black something. Maybe black rock. Maybe metal... I can't tell. But there is a beautiful dome on top. Below the dome are windows from where the light used to shine."

"Have you ever been out to it?" asked Ethan.

"No way!" said Jasmine. "It is forbidden—like I said, there are big signs. Anyway, you can only get to it at low tide. At high tide it is completely surrounded by water. You have to go through knee high water when the tide is lowest, but I hear

you **could** walk out there. You would just have to be careful. But at any other time, it is too deep and the riptide is too unpredictable. Only a fool would try to swim out to it. You would never make it.

"But it is private property and no one ever goes out there. I heard of a couple of college boys went out there one time. They got stranded by high tide. The sheriff was waiting for them when the tide went back out and arrested them for trespassing. The old lady who owns it doesn't want anyone out there."

"I wish I could see it," said Ethan sadly. "It sounds beautiful."

"It is mostly spooky to me," replied Jasmine. "It is pretty sad looking. No one is taking care of it and it just looks worse and worse every time I see it."

Jasmine and Ethan became fast friends. At first Jasmine would come to Ethan's house...because that was where he was comfortable. But in time they began to venture out together. Ethan's parents were very protective...always wanting to know where they were going, how they would get there and how long they would be gone.

Ethan always carried a cell phone with him. It was really cool.

Ethan usually had ear buds attached to his cell phone and whenever he had to wait for his parents or wait at all, the ear buds were in his ears and he was smiling & rocking to whatever music he had on that day.

"I've never seen a phone like that...what is it?" Jasmine asked.

"It's an combination cell-phone and MP3 player. It is set up to be voice activated, so all I have to do is open it up and say a name and it dials automatically. Or I say a song name or an album and it plays those on command as well!"

As their friendship developed, Ethan and Jasmine would walk out to Cape Kiwanda Drive and walk south into town. Jasmine felt a bit odd either holding Ethan’s hand or holding his elbow. But walking along the road was too dangerous for Ethan to do without some guidance. At times they would walk all the way to downtown Bayshore. They would turn on Pacific Avenue and pass Fat Freddy’s Diner. They would turn at the Sudsy Sea Laundromat and walk up Brooten Road past the Grateful Bread Bakery to the Public Library. It was a busy place. Young moms would come with their preschoolers in tow for story-time. Older people would saunter by during the day to read the paper and gossip. There was a steady traffic of summer guests & year round resident checking out a book to read on the beach or on their deck.

Several times while they were there they would watch three skater friends, Nick McDaniel, Kayla Harris & a summer guest Pooja Tharavaad all practice their skateboards on the steps & handrails outside the library. Jasmine told Ethan about the terrible fall that Kayla had taken last summer off of Overlook Rock in the river that runs through town and how Nick had held her head out of the water while she was unconscious until help arrived.

Kayla didn’t skate for several months after that. But this summer Pooja was back and the three of them were regular fixtures in the library parking lot.

There weren’t really many places for Jasmine & Ethan to go and just hang out for fun in Bayshore. So they spent time at each other’s house. Occasionally they would go down to the beach at the state park.

After a couple of weeks hanging out together, they were at the beach when a red hair, very freckled boy came up to them.

“Hey Jasmine...I haven’t seen you all summer! Where have you been hiding yourself?”

“Hey Dylan. Dylan, this is my friend Ethan. He is from Newberg, but he is living here with his parents this summer.”

Dylan looked at Ethan and then said to Jasmine. “Where did you find him! I bet you can see Mars through those glasses.”

Dylan laughed derisively, but neither Jasmine nor Ethan did.

“Actually no. I can’t see Mars. I can barely see you. But your flaming red hair is pretty hard to miss. You look like a fire truck.”

Jasmine almost bit her tongue to keep from laughing. She tried to put on a serious face.

“We met at church,” she finally said.

“You mean your dad still make you go to church? BO-O-O-ORING! I go to Mass with my grandparents when we go to see them in Seattle. My dad actually fell asleep & snored during church one time!”

“I take it that you don’t go to church?” said Ethan.

“You’re brilliant with obvious things, aren’t you Mr. Four-Eyes. No I don’t go to church. I would rather sleep late or play computer games, or play soccer or ANYTHING more than going to church.”

“That’s too bad. There are lots of fun things there,” replied Ethan. “And you learn about God.”

Dylan looked at Jasmine & rolled his eyes. "Where did you pick up THIS Martian? His hair looks like antennae sticking out all over his head! You always tell me how much you don't like church."

"Well...it's OK."

Ethan looked at her, a frustrated look on his face, and said, "You know...what time is it?"

Jasmine looked at her watch: "It's 6:30."

"I'd better be going home."

Both Ethan and Jasmine started gathering up their things.

"Jasmine, you don't have to leave just because Ethan does," said Dylan. "Stay here for a while with me."

"No, I have to take Ethan home."

"What?!?"

"Jasmine didn't tell you," said Ethan "that I am legally blind. I can see some, but not enough to walk out by myself. Jasmine has been nice enough to guide me around town, including here at the beach. But I need her help to go home."

Dylan looked at Ethan, but didn't say anything.

Ethan continued, "That's why I have these thick glasses. They help me see a tiny bit. Without them there is no way I could see anything."

"So she's your seeing eye dog?" Dylan said with a sneer on his face.

"Go away Dylan." Blurted out Jasmine, angry with her friend's meanness.

"Hey...," Ethan asked, "do you want to come to my house with us? My mom will fix you dinner & there are games we can play after we eat."

Dylan looked around on the beach. Play games with a blind kid...how boring! But he didn't know anyone out here today. “I got nothing better to do.”

Ethan pulled out his phone, flipped it open and spoke “Mom.” When his mom answered, he told her he was bringing home two friends for dinner.

*Two **friends**? thought Jasmine. Dylan just insulted both of us! How can he be your friend?*

After he had hung up the phone, Dylan asked him about it.

“I've never seen a phone like that.” What is it?”

“It's a cellphone/MP3 player. I have thousands of songs recorded on here so I can listen wherever I want.”

“I wish I had either a cell phone OR an MP3 player. You have BOTH in one unit? Can I use it as we walk to your house?” Dylan said, eyeing it carefully.

“I guess. Just don't drop it. It is pretty expensive and it's pretty new.”

Dylan took it and put the ear buds in his ears. Most of the way to Ethan's house, Dylan was playing with it listening to music...and wishing it were his own.

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As the three of them walked to Ethan’s house from the Beach, Jasmine asked, “Why did you invite HIM over? He was making fun of both you AND me?” She knew Dylan couldn’t hear a word they said with the music playing through the ear buds.

“My parents always told me to be especially nice to people who are mean to me. Not a lot of people are mean, but whenever I see one, I want to be especially nice to them. Perhaps I can win them over. But whether I can or not, I want them to see Christ’s love through my actions.”

“OK, dude, whatever,” said Jasmine pretty amazed. She thought: *This guy was a lot different than most of the kids at the church. He worked to live out what they taught at church.*

“Last Sunday,” Ethan went on, “when the preacher talked about Jesus healing the man born blind, that guys was kind of like me. I was born legally blind. But there are worse kinds of blindness than mine! Some people are so blinded with hate that they do stupid things. Some people are blinded by jealousy. Some people’s greed makes them blind. Mine just happens to be that my eyes don’t work as well as most people’s. Blindness means you can’t see things as they really are. I am not really very blind, compared to some people whose blindness is caused by their anger, their bad language or fear. I know that Jesus is my light and he will lead me where I need

to go. When I meet people like Dylan, I just figure that Jesus could heal their blindness if they wanted him to, just like he healed the blindness of that man in the Bible.”

“Why doesn’t he heal YOUR blindness?” Jasmine asked, and then immediately wished she hadn’t.

They walked in silence for several minutes.

Finally he said quietly, “I don’t know.... But all my life I’ve had to believe that he wants to use it for something good.”

Jasmine didn’t answer and they walked the rest of the way to his house in silence.

When they arrived home, Ethan asked Dylan for the phone back.

“Just one more song!” Dylan pled.

Finally he handed it over to Ethan, who put it in the pocket of his sweatshirt which he had just hung on a peg by the door.

The three of them ate dinner with Ethan’s parents and then played games.

They played checkers—the black & red checkers were different sizes and the squares had recessed circles in them for the checkers to fit. With a quick brush of his hand, Ethan could tell where the pieces were and where to move next. And he knew the checker was in position when it dropped in the recessed circle.

They then played cards. It was a little different in that every time Dylan & Jasmine laid down a card they had to announce what it was. At first Dylan couldn’t figure out how Ethan was figuring out what each card in his own hand was worth. And then with a big smile, Ethan pointed out the Braille raised dots (like bumps) on

the corner of each card. Again, by rubbing his hand over the edges of his cards, he could tell what cards he had in his hand.

They played word and memory games like “My Grandfather’s Trunk” One of them would begin “In my grandfather’s trunk was [a hat]. The next person would have to say, In my grandfather’s trunk was a hat and [a watch]. Then the next would say, “ In my grandfather’s trunk was a hat, a watch, and [a dog]. They kept going around in circles adding to the list of things in “my grandfather’s trunk” until someone couldn’t remember the whole list in the right order and then it would be down to two people who kept going. While Ethan was very good at the game—he’d had lots of practice—both Dylan and Jasmine won a few rounds.

They laughed & giggled and the tension on the beach seemed to be fading away.

At some point, Jasmine looked at Dylan and said, “Dylan! Ethan has a GREAT view of the Kiwanda lighthouse from upstairs! You’ve got to see it. We’d better hurry...it’s almost dark!”

The three of them went upstairs. Dylan was amazed at how smoothly Ethan moved in familiar territory. They walked through Ethan’s dad office and out onto the deck. The sun was just setting. The purple and green and orange streaks filled the western sky as just a sliver of the sun showed over the ocean. In just a few minutes the darkness would cover everything.

“Look!” Jasmine shouted as she pointed. “It’s there!”

“Wow!” Dylan said, marveling. “It IS cool up here. Kiwanda Rock is pretty tucked away and hard to see unless you are actually out on the ocean or up close like this.”

“Tell me more about it” Ethan asked.

“I’ve said about all there is,” replied Jasmine.

Dylan picked up: “It looks like a big house with a round tower on top. Except the house is flat on top. There are two stories of the house part—kind of like a block house and two stories of tower on top of that. There are windows going up in a line...probably along a stairway....”

Suddenly Dylan was quiet for a minute.

“What? Go on!” urged Ethan.

“Just a minute,” replied Dylan in a hushed tone of voice.

After a minute he said, “There it is again!”

“There is what?” asked Ethan.

“A light. There is a light moving in the lighthouse.”

“No, there can’t be,” said Jasmine. “No one is allowed out there.”

“Come over here and watch with me.”

Jasmine came to the edge of the deck and looked to where Dylan was pointing.

“I don’t see anything.”

“You have to wait. Twice I saw what looked like a flashlight beam shine in the tower. There must be somebody out there.”

The two of them stood side by side watching the tower, while Ethan fidgeted nearby.

“It’s just your imagination,” Jasmine finally said. “There is nothing there.”

“Are you calling me a liar?”

“No, I just think you saw something that LOOKED like a light and you thought it was something that it wasn’t.”

“I SAW A LIGHT OUT AT THE LIGHTHOUSE. There is someone there.”

Dylan urged insistently. “You don’t believe me. I’m going home.”

“Don’t go,” urged Ethan. “We believe you.”

“It doesn’t matter. I’ve got to go.”

Dylan left the balcony and walked through the office and out the door to the hallway.

The front door of the house was on the opposite side of the balcony, but after a minute or so, Ethan and Jasmine heard the heavy door “thud” as he left.

“He has quite an imagination, that friend of yours,” joked Ethan.

“I guess so,” said Jasmine. “It’s just that while Dylan gets in trouble a lot and does and says some stupid things, I have never known him to lie. I believe that he THOUGHT he saw a light out there. But it probably was just the setting sun reflecting on something in the tower.”

The two of them moved off of the deck into the office and headed downstairs where Ethan suggested they play a new game of cards.

“I better go, too,” said Jasmine.

“Sure, let me walk you out to the porch.”

Jasmine grabbed her jacket off of the peg where they had hung them. Ethan did the same. But as he lifted up his sweatshirt, a puzzled look came over his face. His hand reached down, first into one pocket and then into the other. It wasn’t there.

“My cell phone is gone,” Ethan said in an exasperated tone. “Dylan must have taken it.”

“You think so?” Jasmine asked.

“Where else would it have gone? I know I put it in here.”

“We could walk over to his house and get it back if you want,” said Jasmine.

“He doesn’t live too far away. I’ve never been inside his house, but I’ve been by there lots. It shouldn’t take us more than ten minutes to walk there.”

“It’s getting pretty late. I’d better check with my parents.”

In just a minute Ethan had moved to the room where his parents sat.

His mother was reading. His father was watching a news report of a bank robbery earlier in the day in Lincoln City.

“Dad, I loaned my phone to Dylan as we were walking home. He wanted to listen to music on it. He just left and the phone is gone. I thought he have given it back to me, but he must still have it. Is it OK if Jasmine and I walk over to get it?”

“Ethan Scott Williams!” his mother exclaimed. “That is a very expensive phone your father gave you. You have to keep better track of your belongings. If you’re not responsible, we’ll have to take it away.”

“Yes, ma’am” replied Ethan. “May Jasmine and I go get it?”

“I don’t know, Ethan,” his father replied. It’s getting late and it’s dark out.

“Dad! It’s not that far. Jasmine and I should be there in ten minutes and back in another ten. I shouldn’t be gone more than ½ hour.”

His father looked at Ethan’s mother. She shrugged and said, “As long as Jasmine stays with you, I guess I don’t have a problem with it.”

“Great!” said Ethan.

“Just a minute young man,” his father interrupted. I haven’t agreed with your mother yet. Maybe I should just drive you over there myself.”

“David, you can’t. Remember: you are waiting for that phone call from Ned Warren in Seattle? If you are not here when he calls, it might be a long time before the two of you can connect and he can give you the interview for your article. I think the kids should just go.”

Mr. Williams was a free-lance writer who wrote magazine and newspaper articles. At times he traveled a lot, but usually he was able to work from home and do research on the phone or on the internet. That also allowed him to be at home to help his wife with Ethan’s schooling.

Mrs. Williams was a book editor and did most of her work by e-mail or phone. Because of Ethan’s blindness, she had written two books on home educating the blind.. But both Ethan’s mother and father had passed on their love of learning and of books to him.

His father delayed for a minute, and then said to Ethan, “I don’t like it, but OK. Go ahead and get the phone. But call me as soon as you are on your way back.”

“Thanks Dad!” Ethan yelled. He moved back towards Jasmine. “Let’s go!”

The two of them headed out the door and towards Cape Kiwanda Drive. Ethan quickly grabbed her hand. He didn’t like walking out in the dark. It was hard enough to get around when there was light and he could make out that there were big objects in front of him; even when he couldn’t specifically tell what they were. But when it was dark, he was TOTALLY blind. He didn’t like that at all.

They walked several blocks and turned onto Cape Kiwanda Road. They had just started walking south towards the center of town when Jasmine said, “There goes Dylan!”

“What?”

“Dylan just darted across the road. He has put on jeans and a black sweatshirt, but I know him. That was him!”

“Dylan!” she yelled. She began to walk faster. She was almost dragging Ethan along. Suddenly he tripped and went down on one knee.

“Go! Run ahead and catch him. I’ll just sit here until you come back. Get my phone and bring it back to me.”

Jasmine took off running. She quickly turned the corner where she had seen Dylan walk. It only took her a minute to see his form moving toward the beach.

“Dylan!” she yelled.

He stopped and turned.

“Jasmine? What are you doing here?”

“I came to get Ethan’s phone back. You took his phone.”

“I did not take anyone’s phone. Did that guy tell you that I took it? He’s so stupid. I bet he hid it just so he could get you not to be my friend.”

“I told him you don’t lie,” said Jasmine. “So, don’t lie to ME most of all. Give me the phone and I’ll take it back to him. Then everything will be fine.”

“I don’t have any phone!” Dylan said strongly.

“Well you’re going to have to come back with me and tell that to Ethan. He’s convinced that you took the phone.”

"Why would I want to see him? Some weirdo who would accuse me of stealing a phone?"

"Just come on back. At least talk with him."

Dylan hesitated for a couple of moments, then rolled his eyes, shrugged his shoulders and moved begrudgingly back towards where Jasmine had left Ethan.

As they approached him, Jasmine said, "Ethan, Dylan said he didn't take your phone."

"Of course he did. It put it in my jacket pocket when we got home and it wasn't there after he left. I told my parents that he still had the cell phone. If they had taken it out of my jacket for some reason, they would have told me when I mentioned it. Is he with you?"

"I didn't take your stupid phone," insisted Dylan.

"Where were you going, anyway?" Jasmine asked Dylan.

Dylan thought for a minute. "OK...so I'm going to go out to the Kiwanda Rock Lighthouse. You didn't believe I saw something. So I am going out there to prove to you that there is something there."

"It is against the rules to go out there," warned Jasmine.

"I don't care," Dylan replied. "I want to know what's there."

"Well we're not going with you," said Ethan. "It is too far, too dark & too dangerous."

"Yea, scardy-cat won't go out with me. Come on Jasmine, let's go together. Leave blind boy here."

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“You’re just so brainless, Dylan” said Jasmine. “There is no reason to go out there...especially in the dark.”

“I brought a flashlight,” Dylan said as he smiled confidently.

“Jasmine...let’s just go home. I need to go tell my parents that I can’t get the phone back from Dylan.”

Dylan looked genuinely irritated: “I told you, I don’t have it! Just GO HOME!”

“Jasmine? Are you going to take me home?” asked Ethan.

Jasmine looked from one friend to the other. She felt truly caught.

“Dylan, you can’t go out to the lighthouse,” she pled. “You just can’t. It’s dark, it’s dangerous...”

“And I’m going to prove to you there is something there,” finished Dylan.

“And what if there is? Then what?”

Dylan smiled. “Whoever is there...”

“Or whatever...,” interrupted Jasmine.

Dylan continued, “Whoever...they’ll never see me. But I will bring back something as evidence that I was right. Mr. Bible smarty-pants won’t believe me unless I bring back proof.”

Ethan said nothing in response at first and then said quietly, “I never said that.”

Dylan turned to go.

“Dylan,” Jasmine said sharply. “This is dumb. You don’t have to prove anything...and if you want to go, you should at least wait until it is light.”

“Sorry Jazz, you can’t talk me out of it. If you were REALLY concerned, you would go with me so we could look out for each other. You’ll never get a chance like this, again. Once you move to Tennessee, there will be no more beaches or lighthouses or friends. Do this with me one time before you go.”

“What is he talking about?” asked Ethan.

“In a month my family is moving to Tennessee. My dad has a new job there. It is going to be the end of my life. I have ALWAYS lived in Bayshore. All my friends are here. My school is here. My nana and papaw live in Tillamook. I will never see them again. I won’t know anyone in Tennessee. What if they hate me? I like our house here. I have asked my dad to PLEASE let me stay and move to Tillamook with nana & papaw or live with a friend, but he won’t let me. He says I HAVE to move to Memphis. My mom doesn’t want me living with her in California because she has a new husband and he has five kids. She says, it would be too much for her. And so I am having to move to Tennessee with my dad.”

“That’s hard” said Ethan.

“You have no idea. You can come here in the summer because you live just a couple of hours away. You have both parents, but mine are divorced. You live close enough to visit. I will live on the other side of the country.

“So come on, Jazz. Let’s go see the lighthouse.”

“I would...but I have to take care of Ethan.”

Ethan bristled at those words.

"You don't have to take care of me. Dylan, give me back my phone and you go on. I'll call my mom and she can come down and pick me up. I'll just stay here until she comes."

"You are deaf as well as blind! I said I don't have your phone. I can't return it, because I don't have it."

"I don't believe you."

"See you two losers later," Dylan said as he turned to go.

As he walked away, Ethan whispered to Jasmine, "Is he going to be OK?"

"I really don't think so. I have a bad feeling about him going to the lighthouse by himself."

Ethan thought for a minute and then decided, "Maybe if we went part way with him and we could see from the shore if there was anything out there, then we could talk him into giving up this idea of going out to the lighthouse."

"But...you didn't think it's a good idea to go out there," said Jasmine hesitantly.

"I still don't. But I agree it is not good for him to go alone. He needs you with him. And I can't just sit here by myself forever. Without my phone, it is just as dangerous for me to sit here as it is for him to out to the lighthouse. Let's go with him and try to talk him out of actually going out to the rock."

Jasmine exhaled slowly & shook her head. "I don't know which of you boys is more foolish...him or you. OK, let's go."

She turned to face Dylan as he was walking away.

"Dylan! We're coming! Just slow down. The two of us can't walk as fast as you can. I've got to be Ethan's eyes for him."

She grabbed Ethan's hand and put it on her elbow and began to walk toward the ocean.

At first they walked on side streets and sidewalks. But fairly quickly they came to the end of the street. There were small foot-paths through the brush where people had made paths out to the beach. When they reached the end of the street, Dylan pulled a flashlight out of his pocket and turned it onto the path.

As they walked, Ethan asked Dylan, "Why don't you ever go to church with Jasmine? It isn't as boring as you think it is."

"She's never invited me," Dylan said looking at Jasmine. "She is always telling me how awful it is."

Jasmine was quiet for a minute. "It isn't that bad. Some parts are actually fun. But you talk about how boring it was for you at your grandparents church, so I figured ours would be the same. I didn't want you to think I was a nerd like some of the people you talk about at your grandparents church. I just want to be your friend."

"A real friend would not let anything cloud the light so he could know how to be a friend of Jesus himself," said Ethan.

"Oh, get off the Jesus talk," said Dylan. "That's not my thing. Plus I am way too busy taking care of my parents to come to church."

"Taking care of your parents?" asked Ethan.

"It's none of your business," Dylan said sharply.

They walked in silence for a few minutes. They were almost through the brush and out to the beach.

Jasmine whispered to Ethan: “Every weekend his parents drink too much and smoke pot. Lots of weekends he has to put them to bed, or clean the floor or furniture after they throw up. Some nights, if they are too violent, my dad has let him stay in my brother’s bedroom. His dad hasn’t worked in several months and they don’t have much food. But his parents seem to have plenty of money for alcohol & marijuana. That is probably why he was so willing to come to your house to eat. He may not have eaten anything all day.”

She thought she was whispering quietly enough so that Dylan couldn’t hear her, but he said over his shoulder, “That’s not so. There was a piece of pizza in a box in the trash this morning and so I ate that for breakfast.”

Ethan shuddered.

“I take care of myself,” he continued. I don’t need anybody else.”

By this time they had reached the beach and were now walking north parallel to the ocean.

In the darkness they could hear the roar of the waves. The moon was not out yet and so they could not see much. There were lights in the houses on the Bayshore side of the sand dune and occasionally a light from a house would illuminate part of the beach and they could glimpse the waves rolling and crashing in onto the beach. Dylan kept his flashlight trained straight ahead.

At times Dylan would walk with them, at other times he would hurry on ahead, like he was going to leave them. But he always slowed down so the other two could catch up.

Ethan said, “You know, Dylan. You DO need somebody else. You shouldn’t have to take care of your parents like you do, but it is good that you do. But Jesus

can come into your heart and show you the way and help you not to become like them. He can show you how to live a happy life so that you don't need the alcohol and the pot. And he can give you the wisdom to know how to handle life.

“A verse I learned at camp one time was: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.*” (Eph. 5:8-9)

Dylan didn't say anything. They continued to walk along.

Finally Dylan spoke up, “Everybody I have ever known has disappointed me. My parents, my sister, the teachers at school, most of my friends. Except for Jasmine, here, they all push me away or make fun of me. And that's OK. I don't need ANYBODY. They will only disappoint me eventually. I have to take care of myself at home and I will just always take care of myself in everything.”

Ethan responded, “But there are lots of things in life that are too big for you to take care of yourself. Plus God wants to take care of you. The Bible also quotes the words of God to say, *I will never leave you or forsake you.*” (Josh 1:5)

“Yeah, lots of people say lots of things. But either they don't mean it or they can't do what they promise.”

“But God isn't like that! He doesn't promise what he can't do and he always does what he says.”

“So you say...” Dylan responded derisively. “I don't think that even if there is a God, that he knows I exist.”

“That's not true. The Bible says there is nowhere we can go where God is not. He knew me and you even before we were born. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

They had come to bend in the beach, and the lighthouse was before them, just off shore. It looked dark and brooding.

"We're here." Jasmine whispered to Ethan. He stopped and turned and faced the ocean.

The three of them stood there, Dylan and Jasmine staring at the big black building on top of the rock. No lights seemed to shine anywhere. They stood in silence for a couple of minutes.

"OK, you've seen it up close. If there was something or somebody out there, they're gone. Now let's go," said Jasmine.

"You've got to be kidding!" said Dylan laughing. "No way. This is an adventure. I'm going to prove to you two that there is...or was...somebody out there. I'm going."

"Dylan," pled Ethan. "There is no sense in doing this. I believe you saw something. My parents are going to begin to get worried. We are way past that half-hour I said we would be gone. Can we please just go back now."

"You two go back if you want...but I'm exploring the lighthouse. I've wanted to do this for years. Now's my chance."

With that, Dylan splashed out into the ocean towards the islet.

"Dylan, this is stupid!" said Ethan when he heard the splashing. "Let's go home."

"Come on," said Jasmine as she grabbed Ethan's hand and pulled him out into the water toward the lighthouse.

4

The water was extremely cold. The wet cold quickly soaked through Ethan's shoes and socks and he gasped when he felt how cold the water really was. Jasmine had sandals on and she shivered for the first couple of minutes they were out in the water. It was about as far as a football field out to the rock and so it took a few minutes. The water kept getting deeper and deeper...first over their shoes, then half-way up their calves, and then on top of their knees. The waves were not super high, but she could feel the tug of the undercurrent even at this shallow depth. She understood how dangerous it would be if the water were much deeper.

Ethan breathing became more and more labored. The fear of being blind, in the dark, and being drug out into extremely cold water, where he didn't know if, or when, it would drop off over his head, and heading out to a place he knew was dangerous, and with no way to contact his parents was weighing heavier and heavier on his chest.

“Dylan, this is too deep!” he said. “We can't make it. I admit it. I'm afraid. Let's go back.”

Dylan did not respond. He just kept moving out deeper and deeper into the water.

Jasmine had always heard that it was almost like a land bridge out to the islet. Normally this far out from shore, the water would be way over their heads. She kept

expecting that at any minute Dylan would disappear under the surface of the water. The water had seemed to stabilize in depth just above their knees.

But they kept walking out further and further. Suddenly, the water, while still almost up to their knees, was not as deep as it had been. The three kept moving forward, until at last Dylan reached the bottom of the rock. They had seen that there was some sort of fence around the bottom of the outcropping. There were signs posted all along the fence warning people to stay out. With his flashlight, he shone the beam up and down the fence. It was a barbed wire fence with razor wire around the top.

This lady who owned the lighthouse REALLY did not want anyone in her building. He moved the beam up and down the shore of the rock as Jasmine & Ethan caught up with him.

They all three stood silent for a minute.

“It doesn’t look like there is anyway in,” said Jasmine. “Maybe we should go back.”

“Sure...you go back,” replied Dylan.

She breathed a sigh of relief until he said, “But I’m going to find a way into this lighthouse.”

He began to move, in the knee-deep water around the island.

“Dylan! You have no idea whether or not the water is the same depth all the way around the islet. You could just drop off! This is dangerous!”

Suddenly Dylan whispered: “Hey! Come here! A hole has been cut in the fence!”

The three of them made their way around into a segment of the rock where a big bush shielded the view from the shore. Behind the bush, a section of the fence had been cut away. The three of them moved towards it and then they saw it...a small rubber raft that had been drug up onto the rock through the hole in the fence. It was tied up and tucked in between the bush and the barbed wire fence so that it could not be seen unless you were behind the bush.

Jasmine pushed down on the side of the raft. “Dylan! That raft is totally full of air! It hasn’t been here long.”

“I know! That means that somebody is still here! Let’s find out who!”

There was no turning back for Ethan...he was at Jasmine’s mercy and Jasmine felt the need to protect BOTH of her friends... her new friend and the friend that she had had for years, whom she would soon be leaving when she went to Tennessee.

They slipped inside the barbed wire fence. As he went in, holding onto Jasmine’s elbow, Ethan got too close and his jacket caught on part of the barbed wire.

“Wait! I’m caught” he whispered.

Jasmine moved around and undid his jacket, but tore it in the process.

“It’ll mend,” she said.

“I just hope WE do!” Ethan replied in a whisper.

Dylan had begun to scamper up the rock. Most of it was just black volcanic-like rock. But there were a few bushes growing out of crevices here and there. They all looked beaten, haggard and like they were barely holding on. Jasmine felt more and more like she was one of those bushes.

It took Dylan just ten minutes to climb up to the top of Kiwanda Rock.

Jasmine and Ethan followed, but it took almost twice the time. Dylan was waiting for them when they reached the flat part of the big outcropping.

The lighthouse, a massive empty hulk, stood in front of them. There was an old rusted and abandoned child's swing-set leaning up against one side of the building. Jasmine couldn't imagine kids living out here. The ground was littered with bird poop and the shells of thousands of crabs & mussels that the birds had dropped on the rocks to break open in order to get the meat inside.

They walked, step by step, closer to the main lighthouse building. There was still a bit of a path observable that they crossed that had apparently at one time gone down to the water tank and to the storage building, both of which were nestled on the safe side of the rock, exposed to less of the wind and punishing, driving rain than the big lighthouse itself.

They reached the main building. A solid concrete foundation had been built, a bit larger than the lighthouse building itself. The lighthouse was then built on top of the concrete foundation. The front entrance had an outside stairway that went up the concrete foundation to the first floor. That apparently was the formal place people had entered back when the lighthouse was operational. They also saw a door in the concrete about halfway down the side of the building. It must be a door into a lower level. They made their way there.

After making their way down the side of the building, Dylan shone his flashlight on the door handle. It was shattered. A large padlock that had once secured the door had been broken off, it looked like by pounding a rock on it. The padlock itself was unopened, but the bolts holding the hasp to the wall had been

broken off. The door was now held secure by a rock that had been placed in front of it as a door-stop.

Dylan slid the rock away, grabbed the door and easily it swung open. He looked at the other two and moved inside. Jasmine kept shaking her head, “No, no, no.”

But he kept moving and so Jasmine and Ethan followed.

Ethan kept muttering under his breath, “John 14:1, John 14:1; John 14:1.”

“What is John 14:1?” Jasmine asked Ethan.

It’s the words of Jesus to his disciples *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”*

Jasmine smiled and began, “John 14:1, John 14:1, John 14:1.”

It was dark and cool under the first level of the lighthouse. Because all three of them were wet from just above their knees down, and the wind blew incessantly on the Rock, they all shivered. Whether it was more from being cold or afraid none of them knew. But in here the wind was almost unfelt.

This room provided a foundation to connect the building above to the solid rock below, but probably also was used for some storage. It was also designed to drain water away from the lighthouse. There were no outside windows in this basement like structure, but there were slits at the bottom of the walls and they had grates over them, apparently to keep small rodents out. Water that splashed over the rock and even partway up the lighthouse during strong winter storms could drain away and the residents upstairs could stay dry.

This area looked like two big rooms, covering the whole lower space of the building. In the middle there was a staircase that went up to the main floor. There were, then, the stairs that took you into the tower where the light had been located.

Beginning with Dylan and then Jasmine, closely followed by Ethan, they made their way up the staircase. There was a door at the top and Dylan stopped when he got to it. He put his face up to it and then down at the crack at the bottom, listening.

Slowly he opened the door and moved out into a hallway. Jasmine & Ethan, holding hands quickly followed.

On either side of the staircase were two small bedrooms. A rusted set of bedsprings was leaned against the wall in one of them.

Down the hall to their right was the big main front door of the lighthouse. To the left of that was a room that looked like an office. Probably it was where the lighthouse keeper had done his paperwork and kept his logs.

Next to that, directly across from them, was what looked to be a family room. There was a fireplace against one wall and bookshelves had been built on either side of it. Dylan's light showed that there was nothing on the shelves now, but a couple of old cans and lots of cobwebs.

Ethan froze. He heard something. “I hear voices!” he whispered.

Dylan and Jasmine froze and listened.

Jasmine shook her head. She heard nothing. Neither did Dylan.

“I think it is your imagination,” he said, trying to convince himself as well as Ethan. “If you did hear anything, maybe it's the wind.”

Ethan listened some more. Without his eyesight, he had developed a keen sense of hearing. He could hear things that others swore were not there. But he always heard correctly.

No, there are definitely voices, he thought. Up above us, in the tower. I can't make out the words, just murmuring. But they are definitely voices in the tower. Human voices.

Slowly they moved down the hall. Beyond the bedroom to their left was a storage area and then a kitchen. While anything movable had been removed, there was a sink and a wood cooking stove hooked against the wall. There was a tall counter that surrounded the kitchen and separated it from where a dining table had probably once stood.

Laying on the counter were several items—two coats, two ski masks and a white bag. The coats were modern, not old. Dylan picked up the bag and it said on it, “Property of Washington Federal Savings.”

“Dylan!” Jasmine whispered. There was something on the television when we were at Ethan’s house about a bank robbery in Lincoln City! The robbers must be hiding out here at the lighthouse!”

“Dylan, we’ve got to get out of here,” Ethan said urgently.

Dylan stood for just a moment and then slowly nodded his head.

“I think you’re right,” he said, finally convinced.

The three of them turned and began to slowly make their way back towards the door leading to the first level. Jasmine led, feeling her way along the wall and holding onto Ethan’s hand who followed her. Dylan trailed Ethan while shining his light all around behind them.

They had just reached the top of the stairway, when suddenly a phone rang. It rang loudly. Jasmine knew it wasn't a phone upstairs. It was a phone ringing right behind her. Right in Dylan's pocket!

5

Dylan’s eyes were huge. Jasmine’s eyes were even larger in shock. Even Ethan, who couldn’t see anything in the darkness had eyes wide open in shock and fear.

Dylan quickly reached into his pocket and pulled out Ethan’s cell phone.

“How do I turn it off!?!” he asked panicked.

Ethan reached out his hand and Dylan placed it in Ethan’s hand. Ethan quickly touched the answer button on his phone and put it up to his ear as the three of them renewed their quick descent down the stairway.

“Ethan?” the urgent voice came on the other end of the line. “Ethan? Is that you?”

“Dad, it’s me. We are out at the lighthouse and we are in trouble. The bank robbers are here and they are after us.”

At that very minute the three of them could hear the thud, thud, thud, thud of heavy feet running down the stairs from the tower down to the main floor.

“Dad, we need help. Call the police!”

Ethan turned off the phone as he crammed it back into his jacket pocket.

By this time they were out of the lighthouse and out on the flat part of the rock. As they ran, Dylan had pulled out ahead of the other two.

Jasmine started to lead Ethan over toward the descending climb to where they had come in through the hole in the fence.

"No!" cried Dylan. "They will just follow us and you are too slow with Ethan. Come this way!"

They quickly turned and followed the path that led down to the water tank and storage building. Within what seemed like minutes, but was actually just a few seconds they were able to hide themselves behind the water tank.

"Stay here!" said Dylan.

He ran off to check out the storage building.

Jasmine peeked very carefully around the tank. She quickly pulled back when she saw two men burst out of the lighthouse.

"I know I saw people running across the yard in the moonlight!" one of them yelled to the other.

They both were men and both looked very rough. One was slender and short the other was tall and bulky. She had seen the glint of moonlight off of what was probably a gun in the shorter ones hand.

She pulled back and knelt down with Ethan. Ethan was praying under his breath.

She heard one of the men yell to the other, "I'll go check around the raft. They are probably heading down there to get away! You go back in and totally search that lighthouse from top to bottom. I don't want them hiding in there."

"But Pete!" the other protested. "I saw them running across the yard, I think toward the storage building!"

"You can check that next, but I don't want them slipping out and getting away if they are in the lighthouse while we are down searching the storehouse. They can't get out of there without coming down the hill to the boat. And I'll be there waiting for

them if they do! If they try to get out any other way, they will be trapped like mice at the fence.”

In a minute, Dylan was there by Ethan and Jasmine’s side.

“There are some great places to hide in the storage building. It is unlocked, and there are lots of crates and boxes and rooms and platforms. It is pretty dirty, but it has great hiding places!”

“But I heard them say that they will search there next if they don’t find us at the boat or in the lighthouse,” protested Ethan.

“There is no other place for us to hide. Right now we are going to have to trust God to distract them and keep us safe,” said Dylan.

Ethan turned his head as if he were looking at Jasmine in a bewildered way.

This was Dylan talking?

Dylan grabbed both Ethan’s and Jasmine’s hands and pulled them toward the storage building. Once there, he led them through several rooms and into one filled with old wooden crates.

“Dylan, you take Ethan back into one of the crates and hide there. I am going to watch from here at the door. If they come, I can duck into one of these other crates that’s close by.”

“No, let’s just stick together,” said Dylan.

“Following your advice has done nothing but get us into trouble. Now go!”

Dylan took Ethan’s hand and they moved quickly through the maze of crates until Dylan found one that was partly open, but had a lid that could be closed upon them.

They both were panting hard as the two boys slipped inside and pulled the door shut on themselves.

In the silence and the dust they both crouched. The only sound they could hear was the heaving of their own chests as they panted for air.

“Did you really mean what you said about trusting God to distract them and keep us safe?” asked Ethan.

“Well, at least keep you and Jasmine safe. I believe God will protect you. And, I can’t figure out about Jasmine. She seems to know more about this Bible stuff than she has let on. I don’t know why she hasn’t talked with me about it, but I’m sure she has her reasons. But I believe God will keep her safe too. Me...I don’t know. Maybe God will use me to run across the grounds and distract the robbers so you and Jasmine can escape. I might not make it, but at least you two would be safe.”

“I don’t think that is a good idea,” replied Ethan. God cares for you just as much as he does for me or for Jasmine. If we trust him, I believe he will get us out of this.

“I know what you said about casting my burdens on God...about him being able to take care of me with the problems with my parents, and with me losing the only friend I have, as she moves to Tennessee. I know that you said I should turn my life over to God, but it seems a little late now. Why should he save me out of this after all I’ve said and done?”

“You haven’t said and done too much for him to stop loving you. God is *not* like your parents. He DOES take care of you and he loves you even when you are not very loving back to him.

Ethan continued, “Sometimes he allows us to go through hard things simply so we will turn to him,” Ethan continued, “I’m not happy about my blindness, but I think it has actually helped me turn my trust to him. I have lots of friends at groups we go to for other blind kids who are bitter and angry. I’m just glad that even though I can’t see, I can see God just as clearly as you can, even though you have physical eyes that work a lot better than mine. I see him moving around me and working every day, maybe because I have to be attentive and listen for his voice.”

Dylan moved, stepped outside the box and then returned. “It looks like Jasmine is still by the front door. But I don’t dare shine my light over there in case they see my light, just like I saw theirs.”

Ethan continued whispering to Dylan: “I believe God not only wants to get you out of this, but he wants to help by leading your life, showing you where to go and how to live; to give you strength and wisdom; to forgive you for the things you’ve done wrong; to someday take you to heaven to be with him.

“You need to believe that he is the son of God, commit your life to following after him and living the way HE wants you to live. You need to tell others of that and you need to be baptized. That is how you become a follower of Jesus.”

Suddenly, they heard yelling outside. Both of them sat silently for a few minutes. The only sound they could hear was the sound of their own heavy breathing.

“I’ve been doing OK, taking care of myself.”

“Maybe in some ways you have. But it appears that you haven’t been making very good choices since I have known you. Stealing, lying, stubbornness, pride. Life

only gets harder & more complicated. But with Jesus leading you, you have the strength to face WHATEVER happens in life.

Jesus said: *Come to me, all you who are weary, and burdened, and I will give you rest. (Matt 11:28-30)*

My mom describes it as taking a heavy backpack full of books and just putting it down and letting Jesus carry it. As long as I trust him, the burden is much lighter. But when I start to worry, it is like I pick up that backpack of books again and the burden gets heavier and heavier.”

Suddenly there was a gun shot outside of the storage building. And then there was more yelling. *What was going on out there. Had Jasmine tried to sneak out and gotten shot at? Were the robbers shooting each other.*

A hundred possibilities ran through their heads. After it was quiet for a few minutes, Dylan stuck his head out of the crate & looked toward the door. No sign of Jasmine. Suddenly a light flashed across his face. He dropped back down & pulled the lid quickly over the case.

“There is somebody there. As I was looking for Jasmine, suddenly I saw the shape of a man standing in the doorway of the storage building. He had a flashlight aimed right at me. I don’t know whether he saw me or not!

The boys heard someone walking through the storage building, boots pounding on the rock floor as they walked. Closer and closer the feet came. There was clamor as lid by lid was pulled off the crates, clattering to the floor, the flashlight stuck in the boxes and then after determining it was empty, the footsteps continued around the building.

“Come out now!” a voice ordered.

The steps could now be heard in the back part of the storage room. They hovered together as Dylan could see flashes of light as the flashlight was shone from one part of the backroom to the next.

Suddenly the lid was pulled off their box.

“Get out here, now!” came the command.

All Ethan could see was a bright light shining against the blackness. But Dylan not only saw the light, but he also saw the gun being held, pointing at their faces.

6

"Hey, it's *you* kids!" the voice suddenly exclaimed. The gun disappeared and big hands reached down to help each boy out of the crate.

"Are you guys all right?" the man asked.

"As they were being lifted out of the crate, Dylan saw that the man wore a sheriff's deputy's uniform.

He continued, "We have caught one of the bad guys, but we are still searching for the other one."

"It's a sheriff's deputy," Dylan whispered to Ethan.

"Jasmine?" Ethan asked.

"Jasmine?" the deputy responded.

"Our friend was watching at the door and then she disappeared right before you walked into the building."

"I'm right over here," a voice suddenly yelled as the lid slid off of an unexamined crate in the front room.

"When I saw what was happening, I hid in one of the boxes until I knew we were safe," she said.

"What IS happening?" Dylan asked.

"We have caught one of the bank robbers, but the other one is still hiding out from us here on the island. I thought maybe he was in here and so I came in searching crates."

“How did you get here so fast?”

“We have been watching the lighthouse for some time. We saw evidence that they were here—they weren’t real careful with their flashlights, but after watching we also knew that they were up in the tower and if we sent any officers in to arrest them, the bad guys had the benefit of being up in the tower & seeing & shooting down on us. There was no cover.”

“Why did you let us come over, then, if you knew we were here.”

“I don’t know how, but somehow someone was not watching closely enough and you slipped over here without our seeing you at all. After you were on the island, we did see you go INTO the lighthouse. We were evaluating how to effect a rescue, when one of your fathers called and let us know you were indeed over here. It became obvious that you being over here distracted them and once we saw that they were out of the lighthouse, and separated from one another, we moved in. We wounded one of the robbers down by the boats. Seems he was waiting there for you to come down and we came up behind him.

“You wounded him?” asked Ethan.

“Yes, when we told him to put his hands up, he spun in order to shoot one of the deputies that I was with. But I was quicker and able to shoot the gun out of his hand. That was the gunshot you probably heard.”

The radio on the deputy’s hip crackled.

“We have apprehended McDonald, sir,” said a voice over the radio.

“That’s good,” said the officer. “We can go out of here now.”

The four of them walked out of the storage building. Dylan was surprised to see the number of officers swarming over the island. They had indeed had officers waiting for the right moment to attack the lighthouse.

All three young people were escorted off of the island and back to dry land. Ethan's parents were there waiting as soon as they got off of the beach. Jasmine's dad and Dylan's parents were notified and they came and got their children as well.

While they were waiting for their parents to come, Dylan and Jasmine sat in the back of a patrol car.

“Dylan, why did you lie to me about the cell phone?” Jasmine asked. “I made such a big deal defending you... ‘Dylan may do lots of things, but he doesn't lie,’ I told others. You not only lied to them, but you lied to me.”

Dylan shrugged his shoulders & looked down at the back of the seat in front of him.

“I dunno,” he finally said softly.

“What do you mean you don't know! You had to stick your hand in his sweatshirt. You made a decision to steal the phone. There HAD to be a reason.”

Finally Dylan said, “I was afraid.”

“Afraid?” asked Jasmine.

He nodded his head.

“Of what?”

“Of you finding someone else to be your friend over me. Of you wanting to spend your last few weeks in Bayshore with someone else instead of me. Of what it will mean next year in middle school for my only friend to be gone.”

Dylan paused for a minute.

“And afraid that there might really *be* something bad out at the lighthouse. I didn’t know about bank robbers, but if there were something bad, I knew if I had the phone, I could call for help. I probably also knew that people would be looking for me as soon as the phone was discovered.”

“That doesn’t make stealing right,” Jasmine said sternly.

Dylan said nothing, but nodded his head to say that he understood.

“Please forgive me for lying to you,” he finally said.

“How could I not forgive you,” Jasmine reassured him. “We have been friends since before I can remember.”

“Jazzy, if we were such good friends, why didn’t you ever talk to me about Christ?” Dylan asked.

Jasmine looked down at her hands, but did not respond.

Dylan paused and then said, “I think I want to become a Christian.”

“What?” said Jasmine, excitedly.

“Ethan and I talked a lot in that crate. I have decided that I need to come to church with you and learn more about Jesus.”

“Wow! That’s great!” exclaimed Jasmine. “I was always afraid that you would make fun of me if I acted like church was important to me.”

“I might have. But I needed to hear what Jesus could do for my life. Ethan said that God could strengthen me to face the tough things in my life. I don’t know

how long I can continue to deal with my mom and dad and their actions. But I also feel guilty for some of the things I have done. I want to be able to know that I can be forgiven of those things. Ethan said that I needed believe that Jesus is the son of God, commit my life to following after him and living the way HE wants me to live. I need to tell others of that and I need to be baptized. I am not sure what baptism is, but if Jesus wants me to do it, then it's something I want to do.”

“Wow! I would love to have you come to church with me!” said Jasmine.

“Why didn't you ever tell me these things?” asked Dylan.

Jasmine sat quietly without speaking for a minute. “I don't know. At church I remember them teaching us the verse ‘*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*’ (Matt. 5:16) I guess I was just afraid.”

“If a lighthouse keeper had been afraid to go up in the lighthouse and light the beam, many ships might have been lost because they couldn't find their way. Don't be afraid to tell others that you love Jesus and what he can do for them.”

“I won't,” replied Jasmine. “Ever again. And you know what? I think that it'll be OK for me to move to Tennessee. If God can protect us from bank robbers with guns, he surely can take care of me and make things alright in a new city and in a new school.”

“But don't forget to tell people of your love for God, even in Tennessee,” urged Dylan.

“Oh, I won't. Never again.”

The three friends spend most of their time together for the next several weeks. Dylan became a believer and was baptized. He began attending church with Jasmine and Ethan every Sunday. Eventually, the following winter, because he let his light shine, even his parents began to attend, to see what had changed their son so dramatically.

Finally the day came for Jasmine to move. There were many tears, but she didn't change her mind that she would be OK in Tennessee because God was going to go with her and protect her.

“I'm sorry I won't be around to guide you around Bayshore for the rest of the summer,” she told Ethan.

“Hey! What about me!” protested Dylan. “I've been guiding him just as much as you have over the past few weeks. I'll just have to take over until he has to go back to Newberg.

“You'll be my guide dog?” Ethan asked teasingly.

Dylan blushed, remembering what he had said to Ethan and Jasmine that first day on the beach.

“No...” he said. “But I will be your friend.”

THE END

PARENTS/READERS GUIDE

The purpose of this reader’s guide is to suggest topics for thought, discussion or journaling for students reading this book. A parent can read the questions and discuss them with the young person, or he or she can read the questions and think about them for himself. Each chapter has a theme verse, but other verse to go along with the theme of each chapter will be suggested. Memorizing especially the verse for the chapter would help you to better be the light!

CHAPTER 1.

1. What do you think that Jasmine meant when she said, “now that she just had a few weeks left?”
2. Have there been times when you were afraid to tell friends you went to church or that you follow Jesus?
3. Have you ever known anyone who was blind? How did it make you feel?
4. Why do you think Jasmine hasn’t seemed to tell Dylan much about Christ?

CHAPTER 2.

1. What do you think will happen?
2. How do you react to people who treat you meanly?
3. Do you know people who are blind in ways besides not being able to see with their eyes? Do you think Jesus can help them?
4. Can you think of other games a blind person could play?
5. What do you think that Dylan saw out at the lighthouse?

6. Memorize the chapter verse: John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

7. Other verses to read:

- John 3:19-24
- John 9:1-25
- John 12:35-36, 46:
- 1 Peter 3:9

What do these verses say about light and it’s importance. Why do some people reject light?

CHAPTER 3

1. I don’t think that Ethan, Dylan and Jasmine going out to the lighthouse is a very good idea at all? Do you?

2. What things frighten you? How can Jesus help calm those fears?

3. Where can you go that God is not?

4. What does it mean that God knew us even before we were born?

8. Memorize the chapter verse: Ephesians 5:8-9: *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).*

9. Other verses to read:

1. John 4:1-43
2. Luke 19:1-10
3. Romans 8:10
4. John 17:23
5. Galatians 3:26

What do these verses say about light and it’s importance.

10. How can Jesus be “in” you?

11. What things can dim Christ’s light from shining through you?

CHAPTER 4

1. What does it mean to follow the light of Jesus?
2. How many ways can you find in which Dylan is not following the light?
3. Memorize the chapter verse: John 14: 1: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled.*

Trust in God, trust also in me.”

4. Other verses:
 - Matt 14:22-33
 - Psalm 27:1
 - Colossians 1:10-12
 - I John 1:5-7

What do these verses say about light and it’s importance.

CHAPTER 5.

1. Has Dylan too many bad things for God to forgive him of his sins?
1. A burden can be something besides something physically heavy. It can also be something that we fear or worry about. Do you have burdens that are not physical burdens?
2. How does it show MORE trust in God to obey him in the first place than to trust him to get you out of a jam?
3. Do you believe that God will hear their prayers? Why or why not?
4. Memorize the chapter verse: Matthew 11:28-30: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*
5. Other Verses:
 - Mark 2:1-12
 - Isaiah 40:29-31
 - 2 Corinthians 1:3-5
 - Psalm 27:1

What do these verses say about casting our burdens on the Lord? How can new do that?

CHAPTER 6.

1. Who do you know who needs you to be a light for them?
2. How can you be that light?
3. Memorize the chapter verse: Matthew 5:16: *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*
4. Other Verses:
 - Acts 3:1-19
 - Matthew 5:14-16
 - Hebrews 12:1-2
 - I Peter 3:15-16

What do these verses say about being an influence on others for God?