

# Safe and Sound

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Draft: 3.20.08

*Late August. ABBIE is sitting on the couch in lotus position, eyes closed, concentrated on breathing for her yoga exercises. In front of the couch is a coffee table, on which there is a pack of cards, some magazines, a paper with a picture of the earth on it, a FedEx envelope full of paper, and a homemade replica of the Liahona (a small basketball painted gold with glitter glued on and some cardboard apparatus taped around). After a few seconds, there is a knock on the door. ABBIE gets up and answers the door.*

ABBIE

Dave? What are you ... you're back already? Aren't you supposed to be in school? In Provo?

DAVE

Not till next week.

*Walks in.*

Long time no see, huh.

ABBIE

Well, yeah. Wow.

DAVE

Thought you might be a little more excited to see me. Almost three years, wasn't it?

ABBIE

No, I'm sorry, I'm just ... surprised. Didn't expect to ... to see you.

DAVE

Should I leave? I don't want to—

ABBIE

No! No.

*Gives him an awkward hug.*

Please, sit down. I'm sorry, I just ... it's been a while.

*DAVE walks over to couch and sits down.*

DAVE

Those earrings.... Wait, those are from when ... you haven't worn them since, like, second grade.

ABBIE

Yeah. Dad gave them to me.

DAVE

Man, I'd give almost anything to go back and be a kid again.

ABBIE

*Quietly:*

So would I.

DAVE

So, you still dating that one guy? Domino or whatever his name was?

ABBIE

Dominic. No. Two years ago.

DAVE

Oh. Sorry to hear that.

ABBIE

No, it's fine.

DAVE

Well, if you're interested, there was this guy with me down in Ethiopia over the summer—real nice guy, from North Carolina or South Carolina or something. He's at BYU, but you could come down and visit us sometime. He might be your type, you never know.

ABBIE

Thanks. I'll think about it. But how was your mission? Mexico, right?

DAVE

*Nodding:*

It was ... the worst two years of my life. *(Pause.)* Just kidding. *(Pause.)* They're good people. Really good people. *(Pause.)* The people in Ethiopia, too.

ABBIE

Was that just for the summer?

DAVE

Yeah, a humanitarian thing ... building houses and stuff. I wish I could go back. And to Mexico. I mean, we're living it up here, swimming in luxury, and they're barely scraping by. The third world is practically a different planet, Abbie. You can look at the pictures all you want, but here, here in a nice, big house with plenty of food, and air conditioning, and electricity, and indoor plumbing—you *have* to go there to understand it.

ABBIE

Ethiopia *and* Mexico. Wow. So ... exotic. You were on the east coast of Mexico, right?

DAVE

Yeah. Yucatan Peninsula, that area.

ABBIE

I wonder if they left any evidence.

DAVE

Evidence?

ABBIE

The city of Enoch. You know, Gulf of Mexico?

DAVE

Um, Abbie?

ABBIE

No, seriously, I read about it. God just pulled it straight up out of the ocean and it's out there in space somewhere. There might be evidence around the edges. You never know.

DAVE

Oh. (*Pause.*) That's ... cool.

ABBIE

Yeah. And—oh, hold on!

*Reaches over and picks up the FedEx envelope from the coffee table.*

You've got to see this.

*Points to the envelope excitedly.*

Just look at it!

DAVE

I *am* looking at it. It's a ... uh ... a FedEx envelope?

ABBIE

Well, yeah, but look inside.

*Pulls out some white papers and waves them in front of Dave.*

*This* is what I'm talking about.

DAVE

*Takes the papers from ABBIE and looks through them.*

Photocopies?

ABBIE

No, they're originals. The lost hundred and sixteen pages, Dave. I found 'em. On eBay.

DAVE

*Looks at ABBIE somewhat incredulously.*

eBay. The hundred and sixteen pages. From the Book of Mormon.

ABBIE

Yeah, some guy had them up for sale. Mike ... no, no ... Mark? Yeah, I think that was it. Mark Hofmann. Well, something like that. Anyway, I've been watching out for them for a while now, and—

DAVE

Wait. Whoa. Um, Abbie, these are photocopies. Of First Nephi.

ABBIE

They are? You sure? I mean, it was on *eBay*, Dave. They don't even let you sell body parts on there. It's *got* to be legit.

DAVE

Doesn't look like it. Come on, it's not like they'd be on eBay anyway.

ABBIE

But they're *lost*. They could be *anywhere*. (*Pause.*) Heck, they could be in your *attic*.

DAVE

You know, you're right, I guess they could ... if I had an attic.

ABBIE

Whatever. My point is, they're out there somewhere. And if *I* don't watch for them, *somebody's* unscrupulous hands are going to get hold of them.

DAVE

Uh, didn't that already happen?

ABBIE

But the bad guys are so much *worse* these days. I mean, think of what would happen if Al-Qaeda found them.

DAVE

*Picks up the deck of cards and opens it.*

I ... honestly ... have no idea.

*Starts building a house of cards.*

Look, Abbie, that's cool and all, but ... don't you think hunting down the hundred and sixteen pages is just a little ... well ... you know ... *weird*?

ABBIE

It's like Indiana Jones, Dave. It's not weird. It's *cool*. Ask anybody.

DAVE

But you're not Indiana Jones. Or even, like, Lara Croft. You weren't like this before. I mean, you used to have *normal* hobbies. Cross-country and track and all that. But this? Abbie, guys don't go for girls who ... you know ... *weird* ... you know what I mean?

ABBIE

Dave, Dave, Dave. This is *important*. It's not just the hundred and sixteen pages, even. Think about it—somewhere out there is the Liahona.

*Picks up the replica from the table and shows it to DAVE.*

It's like ... like a crystal ball, but for the good side. Just imagine, it would tell you everything you need to do, where you should go, what to say.

DAVE

I ...

ABBIE

And the Urim and Thummim? Dave, I bet that with the Urim and Thummim you can see the spirit world. Maybe even talk with them. If it got into the wrong hands, can you imagine how bad that could be?

DAVE

I think that's all kept pretty safe. It's not like God's going to just let it get lost.

ABBIE

How do you know? He lets his own *children* get lost.

*Silence.*

DAVE

Agency? The Liahona doesn't have agency.

ABBIE

I meant, like, Disneyland "lost." Not prodigal son "lost." But whatever. The hundred and sixteen pages are out there, somewhere. What's so bad about looking for them?

DAVE

Uh ... it's not *bad*, it's just ... I don't know ... *weird*. Next thing you know you'll be hunting down the lost Ten Tribes.

ABBIE

Oh my gosh.

*Starts shuffling through the papers on the coffee table.*

I've got to show you this.

*Pulls out a piece of paper with a picture of the earth on it.*

I already know where they are, Dave. Inside the center of the earth.

*A moment of incredulous silence.*

DAVE

Um, Abbie? Isn't it kind of hot in there?

ABBIE

No, seriously, like a hundred years ago, this admiral guy flew over the North Pole and found that there's kind of like a hole there. I mean, it tucks in, so you can fly all the way through the center of the earth and just pop out the South Pole. It's like a big huge bead. And the Ten Tribes live on the inside. Upside down, of course. Well, not for *them*.

DAVE

It doesn't look like that on Google Earth.

ABBIE

They photoshop it out. It's a coverup.

DAVE

Abbie, come on, that's crazy. I mean, yeah, they're Google and they can do almost anything, but that's a pretty big secret to keep under wraps. It would've been in the papers *years* ago. And in the textbooks. It's a lot easier to just believe that the North Pole is normal.

ABBIE

Then what about the moon?

DAVE

Abbie.

ABBIE

Haven't you seen the pictures? Astronaut guy, lunar lander ... and *the flag*?

DAVE

So?

ABBIE

The guy has a shadow. The lander has a shadow. But not the flag. It's fake. We never landed on the moon.

DAVE

Right. And aliens helped build the pyramids and they made the crop circles too but then we nabbed 'em and stuck 'em down in Area 51 in cold storage. I know. I know.

ABBIE

Huh? No. That's science fiction.

DAVE

*Shaking his head, he sees a piece of paper on the coffee table and picks it up.*

What's this? Granite Mountain ...

ABBIE

Don't worry about that.

DAVE

The Granite Mountain Vault? A schematic?

ABBIE

It's nothing.

DAVE

*Puts the paper back down again and goes back to building houses of cards.*

Abbie, you're not planning to ... you know ... break in or anything ... right?

ABBIE

Not ... um ... not *really*. I mean, I wouldn't really call it that. Just ... testing the security. Make sure it's solid. Like, didn't you hear about those kids that broke in a few years ago? They could've gotten away with the gold plates.

DAVE

I think Moroni has the plates—Abbie, this is crazy. I leave for a few years and you go all psycho on me.

ABBIE

Psycho? Dave, the truth is out there. Sure, they've cloaked it in all sorts of disguises, but it's out there. You've just got to open your eyes.

DAVE

Abbie. Abbie. That stuff's made up. It's not real. The world is *normal*.

ABBIE

I don't know what world you live in, but "normal" isn't the word I'd use to describe it. There's all sorts of stuff going on all the time and you have no clue it's even happening. Like the stuff under a microscope.

I guess ...

DAVE

Or out there in space.

ABBIE

*Looks up at the ceiling.*

Oh, you've got to see this.

*Walks over to the wall and turns off the lights.*

You're not going to try a séance or anything kooky, are you?

DAVE

No, no. I don't do that stuff. Look at the ceiling.

ABBIE

Oh. Wow. That *is* pretty cool.

DAVE

Painted them on myself. I mean, it's just glow-in-the-dark fingernail polish, but it works.

ABBIE

It really does. Must've taken a while.

DAVE

Sort of, I just projected one of those charts onto the ceiling and marked where they were all supposed to go. It wasn't that hard.

ABBIE

It's impressive. Is that Orion over there?

DAVE

Yeah. And that's Sirius over there—to the left of Orion.

ABBIE

What's that really bright one, over near the door?

DAVE

Kolob.

ABBIE  
*Nonchalantly:*

*Silence.*

Kolob.

DAVE

ABBIE

Based on my calculations, of course. I could be slightly off.

DAVE

*Slowly:*

Right. *(Pause.)* Abbie, you really should stop messing with all this fringe stuff.

ABBIE

The mysteries of God are “*fringe*”?

DAVE

You know what I mean. It’s not normal. It’s . . . it’s *weird*.

ABBIE

Dave, Kolob is part of the gospel. I mean, God *lives* there. You can’t say God’s house is *fringe*. I mean, if anything, it’s the *center*.

DAVE

You’ve been reading way too much science fiction, haven’t you.

ABBIE

You know, it’s funny. We believe an *angel* came down from heaven to talk to Joseph, and that’s totally kosher, but Kolob isn’t? Raising your arm to the square and casting out devils is fine, but the signs of the times are *fringe*? Dave, this is a fantasy religion. We believe in the supernatural. Water into wine, raising people from the dead, immortality *in this life*—I mean, the Three Nephites talked with *Jesus*. They’re *apostles*. But . . . we . . . we pretend like they don’t even exist. John the Beloved, too. And Cain? Walking the earth forever? He’s out there, somewhere, Dave. Maybe he’s Bigfoot, maybe he’s not, I don’t know. But he’s real. On this earth. Right now. He could be in New York, and maybe the Three Nephites are in Tokyo and John the Beloved’s down in New Zealand, and—

DAVE

Whoa, whoa, Abbie. This is not normal.

ABBIE

That doesn’t make it not real. Our whole religion is based on believing in stuff you can’t see, Dave. Faith.

DAVE

This isn’t about faith. Abbie, you used to be so—

ABBIE

Dave, the gospel’s got all this cool stuff in it—like . . . like those two prophets at the end of the world, you know, in Jerusalem? Pulling down fire from heaven and torching the bad guys and all that. The whole book of Revelation is chock-full of amazing, wonderful, beautiful things like that. But we never talk about it. It’s all metaphorical, we say. What if it isn’t? Don’t you believe what

the scriptures are saying? I mean, if all the cool stuff is just figurative, then how do we know the Resurrection's not figurative, too?

DAVE

Abbie. You know it's not.

ABBIE

I *know*, Dave. I'm just saying that not everything in the scriptures is a metaphor. The flood was real. Like, you can see the remains of the ark in this glacier on Mount Ararat in Turkey. And Moses parting the Red Sea? They found human bones and chariot wheels at the bottom.

DAVE

Abbie. That's cool. But there are more important things.

ABBIE

But "cool" helps me *believe*. It wakes up my imagination. It ... it reminds me that there's more to life than what I can see with my own eyes. Isn't that what the gospel's all about? Isn't that what you were preaching for two years?

*Silence.*

DAVE

There's more to it than that. The gospel's about ... oh, gosh, like ... service? Love and compassion? Abbie, you should've seen some of those kids in Ethiopia. They're starving to death. These kids need people to *help* them, to love them. They need somebody there for them. And ... and trying to catch UFOs isn't going to do them a *bit* of good. Remember what your dad always says?

ABBIE

Don't ...

DAVE

"Focus on what matters." Focus on what matters. I thought of that every day of my mission. Some of the girls in Mexico were really cute, you know. Heck, sometimes when I was out there riding my bike, trying to find people to teach, sometimes I even wished I could just do some homework, maybe take a midterm or two. I missed it. BYU, my friends, my mom. But those words—"focus on what matters." On the real stuff. Not these flimsy theories.

ABBIE

Dave ...

DAVE

The *gospel's* what matters. The principles. The ordinances. The things Jesus taught. I mean, just look at your dad. He's rock solid.

ABBIE

Can't we just ... never mind.

*Silence. DAVE looks at his watch.*

DAVE

Almost five o'clock. He should be back from work right about now, shouldn't he?

ABBIE

*Slowly:*

You didn't get the letter?

DAVE

Letter? When'd you send it?

ABBIE

Like two years ago.

DAVE

No. I figured you were just really busy. I mean, everybody says they'll write, but nobody really does. *(Pause.)* It's okay, though. Don't worry about it.

ABBIE

I thought you knew.

DAVE

Is he out of work?

ABBIE

*Slowly:*

Right after you left, we ... we found out he had cancer. It was already too late. *(Pause.)* Dave, he's dead.

*Silence.*

DAVE

You're kidding, right?

ABBIE

I wish. *(Pause.)* Every morning I wake up hoping it was just a bad dream, that he'll still be downstairs in his armchair reading the newspaper, or in the kitchen making me toast with peach jam, or in the den taking some computer apart and putting it back together again.

*Silence.*

Sometimes, when I'm looking up there, I can almost feel him. Out there in the stars. Like he's watching me.

*Silence.*

But most of the time I can't feel anything. Like he's offline or something. Maybe he's too busy, doing whatever it is they do over there.

*Silence.*

I wish I could talk to him again, even just once. *(Pause.)* Sometimes I... it feels like if I could just... No, it's stupid. Never mind.

DAVE

*Compassionately:*

No.

ABBIE

Maybe if I could just find the Liahona or the Urim and Thummim or something, maybe I could get a message through.

*To the ceiling:*

Dad? I'm sorry.

*Silence.*

I miss you.

DAVE

*Quietly:*

I miss him, too.

*Long silence. Abbie walks over to wall and turns the lights on again.*

DAVE

Remember when he used to take us out on hikes? Up the canyon? *(Pause.)* "Focus on what matters." The birds. The flowers. The trees. The waterfalls. Everything. *Life.* The *real* mysteries of God.

*Silence.*

ABBIE

If I could just hear his voice again... I'd do anything.

DAVE

He taught me how to fish. That river, just off the main path. Standing there knee-deep in the water, both of us freezing to death—it must've been October or November—just waiting for the rainbow trout to bite. It took like an hour before we caught anything.

*Silence.*

I still have that screwdriver set he gave me, you know. The little ones, for working on computers. He showed me how to install RAM without zapping it—static electricity, I mean. *(Pause.)* And how to get the inner tube out of my bike tires, when they went flat. *(Pause.)* How to be a good home teacher.

*Silence.*

And now he's gone.

*Long silence.*

I want a refund.

ABBIE

I wish there was a big “undo” key for the universe. Go back and ...

DAVE

Fix everything. Yeah.

*Silence.*

I don't know, maybe if we find some kind of cosmic superglue and duct tape ...

ABBIE

eBay.

DAVE

*Laughs.*

They've got almost everything on there, don't they.

ABBIE

Yeah. *(Pause.)* Almost.

DAVE

Yeah.

ABBIE

*Looks up at ceiling.*

Maybe someday I'll get through. *(Pause.)* I've got to keep trying.

*Silence.*

DAVE

If you do ... let's make it a conference call.

*Blackout.*