

Prologue

In the year 2065

Look deep into the eyes of a child.
You may capture their hopes and dreams.
You may also capture their fears and
troubles that stand before them.

Fighting the cold autumn winds, Sarah struggled to close the door. *It seems winter will arrive early*, she thought. There were stronger winds than anticipated, and she pushed even harder. “Take that,” she grunted. Even in her elder years, she could still pack a punch. Sarah won the battle to close the door. After shaking off the chill, she hung up her hiking staff. With quickened steps, she made her way to the family room, where she heard children’s laughter. “By the sound of it, I’d say everyone is here,” she mumbled joyfully.

“Hello, Sis,” Johnny said, tossing another log into the fireplace. “Did you find what you were looking for?”

“Hello, Brother. I can’t say for sure whether that was him I saw, but I know he’s still out there. I sensed him,” Sarah said somberly. “He could be anywhere. I gave it my best, but as much as I try, it’s impossible to cover the compound in one day. I can hear Father now.”

“Now that’s a lot of territory,” Johnny and Sarah chirped

simultaneously. With fondness, they reminisced about the old days.

“Honestly, Johnny, I don’t know what I would do if I caught up with him. Maybe it’s best I let him be.”

“It’s been how many years now? But it feels like only yesterday. Cheer up, Sis! Tomorrow is the day. We have everything prepared. Before I forget, I pulled out the chair as you asked. Sure you don’t want something more comfortable?”

“It’s perfect, Brother. It will do just fine.” After tucking in her long-knitted dress for padding, she took a seat on the solid oak chair.

With her presence made known, the children stopped their play. They were awestruck. “Nana!” they cried out together.

“All right, children, I’d like all of you to gather ’round,” Sarah called out.

“Are you going to tell us another legendary family tale?” one child asked excitedly.

“Tell us the story of that famous groundhog. Are the stories that they say true?” another asked doubtfully.

“A groundhog? I haven’t heard that one,” came a voice from the back. With legs crossed, they sat quietly as they anticipated a response. Only by the fire’s crackle was the silence broken.

Sarah was drawn to look out the window. On this cold

autumn day, she saw apple blossoms from springs past blow across the landscape. “Now that’s different,” she mumbled softly. “I haven’t seen that before. Wait a second—I *have* seen this. Oh my, it’s a message! After all these years. What could it mean this time?” She grinned.

While turning back to all the smiling faces, Sarah gave a larger smile. *How wonderful it is to see the family grow*, she thought. Looking deep into their eyes, she captured their hopes and dreams. But Sarah knew one child was deeply sorrowful.

“Now listen, children,” Sarah called out, just loud enough to be heard. “I invite you all to join me. As I remember, so too will you know.”