

# STAR

## 10 years prior

“Even now we can’t explain what we see when we look at the sky,” I announced, my hands tucked under my head as I lay on my back, looking up.

“Colors have different wavelengths. When light comes in contact with the earth’s atmosphere...” my brother, Brian, started to say — missing my point.

“That’s not what I meant,” I interrupted, stirring my Slurpee to keep the syrup and ice from separating. “It used to be celestially revered, but now... it’s just space.”

“There’s a lot more to space than space. Stuff we can’t even see like dark matter or...” Brian explained, taking every opportunity to recite his favorite textbooks.

“Again, not what I meant. And, by the way, we have the same major, remember?”

“Ok... So... are you talking about God?”

“No, I’m talking about stars.”

“Why?”

“Because they’re the closest thing to an explanation we have. And they’re the only thing we see in space.”

“Uh... moons, planets, comets, asteroids...”

“Brian... never mind,” I sighed, giving up on discussing something outside of what we knew — something that I felt. We’re not alone. And, when I looked up, that was the feeling I couldn’t explain.

---

## Day 1

The room was quiet just long enough for me to hear myself think. Brian sat hunched over his screen, watching the coordinates update every few seconds. Everyone else fidgeted or paced—too anxious to keep their bodies from racing along side their minds. But, despite the blistering unrest I'd caused, it was comforting to think I'd actually discovered something.

"Shouldn't this be classified?"

"If we let the people who are able to classify it know about it... then, yeah, it'll be classified," I replied, blowing into Brian's ear to try and pull him away from the screen.

"It's probably a manmade probe or satellite that's malfunctioned, and we witnessed it by chance—there's nothing to worry about," Dennis suggested, flipping through the data printout. He kept a stern expression and a skeptical tone. He was the only member of a SETI organization that didn't want to find anything—too much paperwork.

"I'm not worried about being worried... and it isn't a satellite."

"It's not a satellite according to 'a snapshot from a few hundred million miles away, and your personal opinion,' that is."

"Satellites don't do what this thing's doing. So, like I said, it's not a satellite."

"This thing, and kites wrapped in aluminum foil, are how conspiracy theories start."

"Only if we tell someone," Jan interrupted, raising her voice to an audible level for the first time in weeks.

"We don't have a choice."

"We have a choice."

"Not if we want answers we don't," I muttered, the bureaucracy of discovery resonating in my skull. "Bottom line is that we don't know what it is, and we lack the resources to find out. All we have are theories based on assumptions. And unless we tell someone who can tell us otherwise, those theories are all we'll ever have... right now, that thing is a dot in the sky and nothing more."

"It's a UFO," Jan exclaimed, acting as the angel to contradict Dennis over my shoulder.

"If I **sneeze** hard enough it's a UFO," Dennis grumbled, triple checking the data.

"Look... we don't know what it is and that alone should be enough for us to clue into the possibilities outside of the norm."

"You're right. Now that I think about it, it's probably the mother-ship towing the monolith, balancing on the tip of E.T.'s glowing cock."

"If we keep its existence in this room, then it becomes a conspiracy. But, if we hold onto our balls and go out swinging, we may get the answers we want."

"Or, more likely, the lies we don't."

"That's a risk we're gonna have to take," I insisted, making my decision with or without his consent.

"And why's that?"

"Because it's a risk I'm going to take and you can't stop me."

"I don't see the point of doing anything... It's getting closer to earth, and our telescopes will let us know what it is before any expedition can. So why bother asking anyone if it's just a matter of waiting?" Jan mumbled, close enough to me that I could actually understand what she said.

"Because, someone else may already know about it."

"And you think they'll just welcome us into their club? Not likely," Dennis complained, adjusting his glasses to rub his eyes. "I've seen stats like this in the past. But when I called them in they either disappeared or were accounted for by computer error."

"You've seen stats exactly like this?"

"Not exactly," he replied, as Brian stood up slowly from his chair—breaking his silence with a loud gasp.

"Holy shit!" he screamed, plunging his face so close to the monitor that he bumped his nose. We all crowded around him to look at the screen as the coordinates refreshed. Only, this time, they didn't change.

“What is it?” Jan yelled, jumping behind us to see over our shoulders. Dennis and I stood with our mouths open as Brian started to laugh, grabbing the back of his head with both hands as he paced around the room. “What is it?” Jan asked again, squinting to try and see what all the fuss was about.

“It stopped,” I exclaimed, barely believing it myself. “It stopped moving.”

*Continued in The Collection: Volume One*

---