

Chapter 1

The night lay thick with the day's humidity. The locust and other unseen creatures were restless, as the night air wrestled with the temperature gauge. Bryan sat on the wooden porch that had been built along with his grandparents' house two family generations ago.

Darkness fell across the fields of corn and alfalfa. Tiny beacons of light began to appear in the distance. More and more appeared as Bryan looked in all directions around him. There were fireflies hovering just a few feet above the ground. They seemed to be communicating.

Bryan thought perhaps they could communicate with each other, or maybe they were sending him some encrypted signal. Whatever the case, Bryan rose to retrieve a large glass jar he had prepared, by using one of his grandfather's screwdrivers to punch several slits through the metal lid.

With the large jar in his hands he jumped off the porch and headed for the tiny beacons. Bryan ran out into one of the grassy fields near the house and was soon surrounded. He sat the large jar down on the ground and carefully unscrewed the lid and took it off.

He stood very still watching the tiny beacons become increasingly closer. Fireflies were not known for their speed and Bryan gently brought up his arms and hands. As one came near he opened his hand and gently grabbed out at it. He quickly closed his hand. Not too tight, so as not to harm the tiny beacon.

He placed his closed hand into the top of the large jar and released the firefly. He quickly replaced the lid. The tiny beacon looked lonely. Bryan waited patiently for another to come near. He repeated the process over and over again until his jar was aglow with what seemed to be hundreds of fireflies.

Bryan's grandmother called from the back door of the house. "Bryan, it's time to come in for the night."

He called out, "Okay...Grandma."

He picked up the large jar holding it up to eye level, surveying the fireflies. They glowed in his hands. He wanted to show his grandpa his new treasure. He left the glowing large jar at the doorstep by the back door and raced inside.

"Grandpa...Grandpa...where are you?"

His grandfather's voice came from the living room of the house. "I'm in the front room, Bryan."

Though his grandmother didn't allow running in the house, Bryan walked very fast to the living room where his grandfather was sitting reading the weekly paper.

"Well...there you are. What have you been up to, son?"

Bryan looked anxiously at his grandfather and replied, "I've been outside collecting millions and millions of fireflies."

His grandfather looked at him in astonishment. "Millions and millions...my you have been busy. I have to see this catch of yours for myself!"

Bryan's grandfather folded the paper the best he could, placed it on the table beside his chair and rose from the chair. "Come on...we better have a look. Where do you have this tremendous collection of fireflies?"

"They're on the back porch!" replied Bryan all excited.

"I hope you have them contained somehow," joked his grandfather.

"Oh yes...I have them in a large jar."

"Did you remember to give them the breath of life?" his grandfather asked.

"Yes...I made sure to put several slits in the lid just like you told me."

"Well...let's not keep them waiting...."

Bryan led the way out onto the back porch, holding the screen door open for his grandfather. He bent down and picked up the large bright jar. Bryan turned around and held the jar up for his grandfather to see.

"My...you did collect a bunch of them!" exclaimed his grandfather.

Bryan felt proud.

"But you know that now you have had a chance to admire them, you will need to set them free," stated his grandfather.

"Why...Grandpa?" pleaded Bryan.

"Because...they have important work to do out in the field tonight. They must light the way for the growth of all things," replied his grandfather.

Bryan holding the large bright jar up between him and his grandfather had an inquisitive look on his face. "I don't understand, Grandpa."

Bryan's grandpa helped him place the large bright jar on the steps beside them. He then motioned Bryan to sit on the steps beside him.

"You see son...there is an order to all things and all creatures in life. Everything runs in a pattern or cycle...and if that pattern or cycle is broken, then everything that would follow gets interrupted."

"Grandpa...what does 'interrupted' mean?"

"It means that what was to continue on...will not continue on. Therefore...if these fireflies are not allowed to do their work in lighting the fields, then the other creatures that depend on their light will stop also."

Bryan at the tender age of ten was always amazed at the knowledge that seemed to run through his grandfather's veins. No matter what he questioned his grandfather on, there always seemed to be a logical answer that came forth from his lips.

Bryan and his family, that included his mom, Marie Lowe, his sister, Natalie, and his younger brother, Keith, were staying with his stepfather's parents for the summer. His mom had remarried when he was about five years old. His stepfather was currently in Norway setting up special seismograph equipment to assist the Norwegians in detecting earthquakes. The rest of the family was to make the journey to Norway at the end of the summer.

Bryan's stepfather, Frank Lowe, was still trying to secure a place for the family to live in Lillehammer. Housing was tight and hard to find for a whole family in the small resort ski village.

It was the summer of 1963 and John F. Kennedy was the president. There was ongoing tension between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Bay of Pigs botched CIA led attack in Cuba on April 17, 1961 had given the United States a black eye in the face of the world. The Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, was constantly lashing out at the United States on all the news reports.

Bryan at the age of ten was far removed from the Soviet Union and Cuba on his grandparents' farm in southern Illinois. He didn't watch any of the news reports, because his grandparents did not care to have TV in their home. They only took the local paper and it was delivered in the mail once a week. The news within those pages is already dated by the time it reaches their readers. Bryan had glanced hurriedly through a paper or two, but found little that interested or pertained to his life. He had had a subscription to Boy's Life once and that was more than enough to whet his appetite for extracurricular reading.

Bryan liked the outdoors the most. His grandparents had approximately fifty-five acres for him to roam on. The majority of the land was used for farming, mainly corn and soybeans. His grandfather was what you could term, a gentleman farmer. He didn't farm the land. He had a brother-in-law and his sons handle the farming chores. Grandpa would split the costs and profits with them. There were a few wooded areas that Bryan enjoyed exploring and had pretended many times that he had discovered new territory on the fifty-five acres.

One of his favorite places was the old barn out back of the homestead. It was quite large and had various divided rooms and areas to it. The barn had had many uses for the last eighty years. In recent years with Grandpa and Grandma in residence, it had pretty much stayed empty and slowly as the years wore on, come into disrepair. But not to the point that Bryan couldn't use it for a fort or for setting up house with the cute girl, Molly, just down the gravel road about a half-mile away.

At first Bryan balked at the notion of setting up house with Molly. But as girls tend to be, she was strong-minded enough and a little bit too cute for her own good and Bryan finally gave in. Truth be known, Bryan had a crush on Molly and she seemed to play it to the hilt to get her way.

Before he knew what hit him, she was calling up on the party line to have him come down and help her carry some of the household items back to the barn. Bryan played it smart and took his large Red Flyer wagon with him. His grandparents had got it for the grandchildren to use when they stayed over.

His mom was currently waiting to deliver a new baby. She had been bedridden in the last few weeks leading up to her delivery date, and her doctor had advised her to stay the last couple of weeks in the hospital. She was pretty sure she was having a boy again. She was carrying the baby low, which in scientific circles indicated it would be a boy. Bryan hoped it would be another brother, one sister was all a ten year old could handle. His sister and brother had opted to stay with some cousins. Bryan had his grandparents and the place to himself for the whole weekend.