





SEVEN

Izzy squeezed the branch and hung on for dear life. The allosaurus smashed into the tree again, and Izzy screamed as it quivered. He looked toward the time machine, but the shadows from the trees had completely engulfed it in darkness. The dinosaur backed up and began circling the tree. *I wonder if it will ever give up.*

Suddenly, a bright flash of light lit up the meadow to the south. *Was that the time machine? Jax must have made it.* Then his stomach tightened as the realization settled over him: *He just left me here. Now I'll never get home.*

Then something strange happened. There was another blinding flash of light. As Izzy's eyes re-adjusted, he thought he was dreaming. In the few brief seconds of illumination, the car seemed to be back in the same spot from which it had just disappeared.

He looked down, only to see that the dinosaur had not left its position. It had also turned to look in the direction of the time machine, but the light didn't hold its consideration for long. With a short scream, the dinosaur resumed stalking him.

Realizing that this was no dream, Izzy looked in the direction of the car again, but saw only darkness. *Why did Jax leave me here? He could have at least tried to distract that thing. I would have done*

it for him. Izzy could not shake the thought that he had just been abandoned. Tears fell from his eyes. He pulled one trembling hand to his face to wipe away the salty drops as they became a steady stream.

The blinding light disappeared. Jax and the girls were engulfed in almost total darkness. A few lights on the dashboard and the light of the computer monitor yielded only minimal illumination.

JT kept her hand near the keyboard and looked out her window. "Did it work? I don't see anything."

"Well, we're not in Kansas anymore," Jax said.

"But we didn't start out in Kansas," Micky said, a little confused.

Jax and JT just looked at each other and rolled their eyes.

"I'm pretty sure it worked," Jax said, getting back to business. "We're obviously not in the garage anymore, and it *was* pretty dark when I left."

"Can you turn on the lights so we can check?" JT asked.

"I'd really rather not. And if you'd been here when I left, you'd feel the same way. I don't want to attract any attention. Plus, Izzy shouldn't be too far away."

"Where is he?" Micky asked as she peered into

the darkness. "Come on, turn on the lights."

"Relax. As long as this is where I left from, Izzy is almost directly to our northeast."

Micky rolled down her window. "If I can look at the stars, I can tell you which way to go."

"Um ... Micky ... " JT tapped on the digital compass that had come with the car. It currently read southeast.

"Oh ..." she said, sitting back into the seat. "I'm gonna shut up now."

"JT, there are two sliding switches on the dashboard, right next to the doorframe. They control the amount of power that goes to the repulsors. The one on the left controls the front and the other is for the back. Slide those levels up slowly so we don't shoot way up in the air."

JT did as she was told, and the car lifted off the ground.

Jax looked out his side window. "That's amazing. I can't believe you guys did it. Keep going." When they were even with the tops of the trees he said, "That's good." He waited a moment to make sure the time machine held its altitude. Satisfied that they would be okay where they were, he turned to JT.

"I need you to climb into the back seat now and strap in." He looked over his shoulder at Micky. "Make sure you're strapped in, too. Things are pretty basic because of how quickly we attached

your devices, and I'm going to need both of you to open the back doors and move the repulsors manually to steer and propel us."

JT gave a grim nod of understanding and undid her seat belt. The car rocked slightly as she clambered over the seat.

Micky also agreed and slowly opened her door. She slouched down in her seat, reached out her hand, and then said, "I've got mine."

JT quickly buckled herself in across from Micky, opened the door, and reached down. "I do, too."

"Okay, on the count of three, point the bottoms to the left. That'll spin the back of the time machine to the right. Ready? One...two...three."

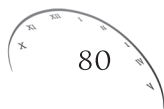
The girls pushed their repulsors in the appropriate direction, immediately sending the time machine into a dizzying spin. From the initial thrust, Micky's upper torso was flung toward the open air, and she screamed. On the other side of the car, JT's door slammed on her arm, and she let out a yelp of pain.

"Whoa, stop! Let go."

"I already did," Micky said.

"Yeah, me too."

The vehicle slowed in its spin, and after a few moments stopped. Jax looked up at the compass. "Well, whaddya know? You guys managed to point us in the right direction. But would you please be



a little gentler next time? Obviously it doesn't take much to move us."

"Yeah, yeah," JT said as she rubbed her arm. "Can we just get going?"

Jax looked ahead, straining his eyes to where he thought Izzy was. "Okay, Izzy should be straight ahead of us a couple hundred yards, up on a ridge. Point them toward the back."

The car moved forward, picking up a little momentum as the girls pointed the thrusters farther toward the back. Jax looked through the windshield. "Okay, that's good. A little more ... perfect." The world's first flying car didn't move very quickly, but the three teens were able to coordinate their movements enough that they could move with reasonable efficiency.

Several stars were now visible. With them providing a little bit of background to the ridge, Jax could tell they were getting close. He couldn't quite tell where the dinosaur was, and hoped they wouldn't accidentally run into it as they made their approach.

"Alright, we're getting close to a fairly steep incline, and it's probably going to be turbulent. Give me a quick forward thrust, and then close your doors as quietly as you can."

The girls followed Jax's instructions, closing their doors just as they reached the base of the incline. The time machine lurched upward about

twenty feet, and JT cried out in surprise.

The vehicle leveled out and slowed to a stop. Jax looked out his window, searching for the tree. He noticed a large mass at the base of a tree that he assumed was the dinosaur that had chased them. He motioned with his finger, first for the girls to not make a sound, then for them to put their heads close to his. "There he is. Looks like we'll have to turn just a little to the left."

The girls made the appropriate adjustments. When he was satisfied, Jax pointed in the direction they were facing. "Okay, straight ahead now, and not too fast." He took a deep breath. "Here we go."

Izzy continued to swirl in a sea of emotions. *Even if he did come back, what could he possibly do to save me? I'm on my own here, one way or another.* Yet, even with despair threatening to overwhelm him, there was a little spark inside him that demanded he survive at all costs, a small voice that told him his only option was to wait out the night and hope the monster below would give up by morning.

His resolve strengthened, if but a little. Shifting in his perch, he felt around in the dark for a place to steady himself in case he fell asleep. Then, above the sound of the dinosaur's breathing and footfalls, he heard a scream. *What was that?* He froze, straining his ears. *It sounded human, but*

that's impossible. My mind must be playing tricks on me. When the sound did not repeat, he settled back against the trunk of the tree and focused on the beast, fighting back a wave of disappointment.

He was all set to wait out the night when suddenly the scene before him was bathed in bright light.

As he looked back to find the source, he heard twigs snapping and wood scraping against metal, but these were soon overwhelmed by a loud roar. When his eyes adjusted, he saw what he thought were headlights coming straight at him.

Seconds later, he heard Jax yell, "Okay, stop!" A door opened in front of him. "Izzy, get in!"

Grabbing a branch in his left hand, Izzy stepped carefully onto a limb. He grabbed the open door with his right hand and then jumped in. He slammed the door behind him.

"Sorry I'm late," Jax said.

Still in shock, Izzy asked, "Can we just get out of here?"

He was startled when a pair of arms wrapped around him from behind. "Ahh!" He turned and realized JT was giving him a hug.

"We're so glad you're safe," JT said as she released her hold on him.

Izzy sighed. "I didn't know you guys came too." Before he could say more, the dinosaur beneath them roared again.

“I think he’s mad that his snack is getting away,” Jax said.

Hearing the deafening bellow brought back all the fear and chased away any sense of relief in Izzy’s mind. He turned to Jax and begged, “Let’s just get out of here, now.”

“You’ve got the computer. Just hit the Return Home button, and we’ll be on our way. Izzy? Izzy!”

Izzy jolted from his shock and reached for the button. He pushed it. Nothing happened. He pushed it again, but still nothing happened.

“Uh-oh,” Jax said. “We have a problem.”





EIGHT

What problem?" Izzy asked.

"Looks like we don't have enough power to make it home. The hover technology must be draining the battery faster than I thought."

"Are you saying that we're stuck here?" Micky asked.

"Only until morning," Jax fired back as he examined the read-outs on the dashboard. *C'mon Jax, this is no time to lose your temper.*

He took a deep breath. "We can charge up the battery as soon as the sun comes up and then—" He was interrupted by a scream from JT. He whirled in her direction and saw that she was pointing straight ahead of the car.

Jax faced forward, and the sight in front of him brought back all the fear from the chase earlier in the night. Illuminated by the headlights, another allosaurus was coming straight for them, and this one was much bigger. Izzy and Micky both screamed, and Jax's mind raced to find a way out.

"Izzy, the right side of the dashboard ... the two sliding switches. Slide them all the way up right now!"

Izzy slid the switches up as far as they would go and the car shot up another ten feet in the air, forcing all four passengers down into their seats. It rocked in the air for a few seconds before smooth-

ing out. Now both dinosaurs were underneath them, and Jax breathed a sigh of relief.

“How many of those things are there?” Micky asked.

“I don’t know. We saw two earlier—”

“How much power do we have left?” Izzy asked. “Obviously, we can’t hover here all night.”

“I’d say we have about five minutes before we drop out of the sky,” Jax said.

“We have to move to safer spot,” Micky said as she slowly opened her door and reached for the repulsor. JT voiced her agreement and did the same.

“How far can we go in five minutes?” Izzy asked.

Jax shut the headlights off. “I’m not sure, but anywhere is better than here.”

“I know. Go south. While I was in the tree, I saw another ridge over there that we can reach. It looked like there was a river there, too. Maybe we can get across it and be out of reach of those things.”

“Sounds good to me,” Jax said.

“JT, forward on three.” As soon as Micky said, “Three,” the time machine leapt forward.

“Woohoo! That’s more like it.” Izzy said.

Jax looked back and noticed that the dinosaurs were no longer interested in following them. He knew they weren’t in the clear, but it was a huge relief to be out of immediate danger. “JT, slowly

turn your repulsor inward until I tell you to stop. Micky, you just keep the pedal to the metal." The machine began to turn south, and Jax realized they were about to head down the steep ridge. "Hold on guys."

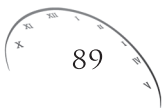
The front of the car tipped down as it cleared the edge. It rocked side-to-side for a few seconds as it sped up. Once they were righted, Jax told the girls to go straight, and they began moving over the meadow at around twenty miles per hour. Jax turned on the low fog lights so that he could see a few feet in front of him. He continued to check the battery gauge to make sure they had enough power, as it was losing energy at a sickening pace.

"Izzy, go ahead and slowly slide those switches down about a third of the way. That will save us a bit of battery power."

"Sure thing. Hang on back there." He slid the levels down, and the car responded by gently dropping about ten feet while slowing down slightly.

"Look, Izzy, there's your river. We're almost out of power, but I think we can make it. Once we cross, I'm going to turn the lights on again to find a place to land."

When he turned the lights on, he noticed the ridge. There was a level area directly in front of them about halfway up the incline. It was coming up quicker than expected. "Close your doors and brace for a landing."



“Jax, you need to shift into neutral before we land so the wheels don’t lock up,” Izzy said.

Jax complied. “Good thinking. When we clear the edge, bring us down slowly.”

As the words left his mouth, the lights dimmed quickly and with one last flicker the power was gone. The car dropped a few feet and hit the ground with a thud, jolting the teens. Jax pushed hard on the brakes, and it soon came to a halt.

“Whew. Is everyone okay?” Jax asked.

Micky and JT confirmed they were fine. Izzy said, “Yeah, I’m good. Good thing the computer has its own battery. I’m going to save all the data from the trip and then shut it down.”

“So, what now?” Micky asked.

“I think we’ve had enough fun for one night,” Jax said. “I’m just going to stay in the car and sleep. I’ll get the battery charged up first thing in the morning, and we’ll be on our way.”

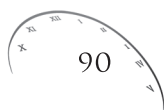
Jax closed his eyes and leaned against the headrest.

“Whoa,” JT said a few moments later. “Look at all those stars.”

“They’re amazing. I’ve never seen anything like it,” Izzy said.

JT opened her door. “I’m going out for a better look.”

“Me too,” Micky said as she sprang from the other side of the car.



Izzy looked at Jax. “I bet they wouldn’t get out if *they* had been chased by a dinosaur.”

Jax was tired and hurt all over. He wanted to sleep, but JT was outside, and his desire to be with her was stronger. “No kidding, but we can’t let a couple of girls be braver than us. Come on.” He grunted and then slowly climbed out. Seconds later, Izzy got out too.

The crescent moon was low in the east. The rest of the sky was dominated by countless stars. Having grown up near a large city, Jax was not accustomed to seeing the stars at all. After looking up for a minute, he walked to the back of the car, opened the trunk, and pulled out some water, granola bars, and blankets. He returned to the front of the car and unfolded the blankets onto the ground. *Finally, a quiet moment in a wild evening.*

They each grabbed a snack and lay down to look up at the stars.

“How are you doing, Izzy?” JT asked.

“I’m good. Better now. I never thanked you guys for coming to get me. So, thanks.”

“No problem,” Micky said and the others agreed.

“Jax, I thought that thing had got you. What happened when it was chasing you?” Izzy wondered aloud.

Still staring up at the sky, Jax recounted his harrowing chase along the ridge and how the di-

nosaur had knocked him off the edge of the cliff.

"When I saw you up in the tree, I figured the only way to get you down was to go for help."

"I thought you were just leaving me. Man, I'm glad you didn't," Izzy said.

"Jax, are you alright?" JT asked with a great deal of concern. "How come you didn't tell us any of that earlier?"

"Yeah, I'm alright. The fall knocked the wind out of me, and I'm a little sore." He turned his head to gauge JT's reaction. "I guess I was so focused on getting back to Izzy that I didn't have time to think about it."

"That was really brave, you know," JT said.

"Yeah, totally," Micky said.

"Thanks, but you guys all would have done the same for me, right?"

"Well ...," Micky said. "We might have left you up in the tree a while longer."

The group laughed together before Izzy said, "I was up there long enough for all of us."

What a wonderful ending to an extraordinary day, Jax thought. Here I am with my best friends in a dangerous prehistoric world with real live dinosaurs. We've just discovered time travel, and the girls invented hover technology.

While he listened to his friends try to figure out the constellations based on what they had seen in textbooks and planetarium shows, Jax realized

something didn't feel right. Then it hit him. *Dangerous. That's it. I almost died. Izzy almost died. If that wasn't enough, I carelessly brought the girls back to this world. Izzy needed my help, but they could have been killed, too. JT could have been killed. JT could have been KILLED!* That thought hit him harder than the allosaurus had earlier in the evening. All sense of relief and joy left him. He was furious with himself for allowing her to be in danger. *We're still in danger. Who knows what's out there?*

His thoughts were interrupted by JT's voice. "Jax, I was wondering why you made Micky and me swear not to tell anyone about the solar cell you were using."

Jax took a deep breath to settle himself before speaking. "That thing is top secret. As far as anyone knows, it doesn't exist. The only other one in the world was destroyed the night my dad died. The Bureau probably assumed the prototypes were fried in the blast too. My dad told me one time that every country in the world would do anything to get their hands on what he was making. We figured it would be best to keep it secret."

JT put her hands behind her head. "Well, I'm not going to tell anyone, but it seems like you were planning on it."

"What do you mean?"

"You were planning to take this thing to the science fair. Did you guys really think that Mr.

Li and the rest of the judges wouldn't find out about it?"

Izzy spoke up. "Um ... yeah ... I guess we didn't really think of that. We were so focused on trying to see if we could get it to work that it didn't occur to us how we would demonstrate it to the judges if it did work."

Jax didn't want to consider what she was saying. He was already more than upset with himself for putting her in danger. Now he had to face the realization that he might not be able to enter the science fair. It was too much for him to handle. He stood up and began walking to the car. "I'm going to sleep." He ducked into the car and slammed the door much harder than he planned to. He leaned forward and rested his forehead on the steering wheel.

JT watched Jax disappear into the car, flinching when the door slammed behind him. "Izzy, do you think he's okay?"

"I don't know. You know how he gets sometimes. He has had a *long*, crazy day." Izzy paused for a few moments and said, "I don't know how, but we might be able to hide the battery from the judges."

Micky snorted. "There's no way. You know the judges inspect everything. You might be able to

hide the battery, but you couldn't hide all of the wires and the dozens of devices that require power."

"You're right. I'm not sure what we'll do. I'll talk it over with Jax in the morning."

For several minutes, no one spoke. JT stared up at the stars and marveled at the beauty of the night sky unhindered by manmade lights. She thought of Psalm 8. *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him...?*

She prayed silently. *Dear God, thank You so much for protecting everyone tonight, especially Jax and Izzy. Thank You for Your beautiful creation and for caring so much about us—for loving us, even though we don't deserve it. Lord, please take away Jax's bitterness toward You. Help him to understand that You love him and—*

"JT," Micky said. "Umm ... never mind."

JT opened her eyes. "What?"

"Ah, it was nothing."

"No, it was something. You know you can't do that to me. Now I'm curious. What did you want?"

Micky rolled on her side to look at her friend. "Well, I was just gonna ask how you were doing with all of this?"

"All of what?" JT asked as she turned to Micky.

Micky looked down at the ground. "You know, we're seventy million years in the past. Doesn't

that go against everything you believe? I mean, doesn't the Bible teach that the earth is only about six thousand years old?"

"How do you know that we're seventy million years in the past?"

Micky looked JT in the eyes. "Do you honestly have to ask that? You saw that dinosaur. Everyone knows they went extinct sixty-five million years ago."

"Look, just because we saw a dinosaur doesn't mean that we are millions of years in the past. From a biblical perspective, God made all the land animals, including dinosaurs, on the sixth day. And you're right; the Bible teaches that He did that about six thousand years ago."

"You don't expect me to believe that, do you? Every scientist knows that dinosaurs lived millions of years ago. We even have the fossils to prove it. I thought you were smarter than that."

JT sat up and took a deep breath. "Micky, it's not a matter of intelligence; it's about our starting points, our presuppositions. We just created hover technology by using science, and I worked out the problems right along with you. I didn't have to give up my belief in the Bible to do science."

Now Micky was sitting. "But you're rejecting what every scientist knows to be true."

"No, I'm not. First of all, there are many scientists who believe exactly what the Bible teaches

about the age of the earth. So that's not even a good argument. Second, even if every scientist did believe the earth is millions of years old, it wouldn't matter. Truth is not decided by popular vote."

"I still don't see how you can really believe what the Bible says. Everyone knows it's full of errors, especially on this topic."

Silently thanking her youth pastor for his lessons on these types of arguments—apologetics, he called them—JT covered her legs with a corner of the blanket. "Let's get back to your original question about how far back in time we are. Izzy, what time period did you program the time machine to go to tonight?"

He hesitated before answering. "Forty-five hundred years ago, but ... but it must have taken us back seventy million years, which was the setting from the night before. I mean, look around. This place doesn't look like Egypt. It looks more like South Dakota."

JT cocked her head. "How would you even know what those places looked like that long ago? They wouldn't be anything like they are today."

He looked thoughtful. "Yeah, that's true."

"So then, the main reason that you think we are seventy million years in the past is that there are dinosaurs here?"

Micky hesitated. "I guess so."

"Well, Izzy says they programmed the machine

to forty-five hundred years ago.”

“That doesn’t prove anything. He also said that it must have used the settings from the night before.”

JT said nothing for a moment, praying silently. *Lord, help me find a way to show them the truth of your Word.* Then she looked at Micky. “Dinosaurs can be explained from a biblical time scale, too. It doesn’t require millions of years to make sense.”

“JT, look, I know you really believe this stuff. But we go to the top science school in the country and have some of the best science teachers in the world. Are you going to tell me that they are all ignorant?”

“I’m only saying that they have probably only been taught one way of looking at the world. They’ve never learned to question what they were being taught. From a biblical perspective, most of the fossils that we find in the rock layers were laid down by the flood of Noah’s day. This would include dinosaurs, which is the main reason they aren’t alive anymore.”

“Wait ... you believe in Noah’s ark, too?” Micky laughed. “Everyone knows that thing is a myth. I still can’t believe someone as smart as you can believe this stuff.”

“Look, I don’t have all the answers, and I’ve never claimed that I did. My youth pastor has studied this topic for years. You should come with me to talk to him.”

"I don't think so. I highly doubt your youth pastor knows more about this subject than all of our teachers."

This wasn't going as well as she hoped. JT knew that Pastor Rich could help Micky understand what she was trying to tell her. She looked at the night sky again, and a thought popped into her mind. *That's it.* "Micky, if I could prove to you right now that we aren't seventy million years in the past, would you come with me to talk to my youth pastor?"

"If you could prove it to me right now ..."

Micky repeated slowly. "Sure, if you can prove it to me, then I'll go with you to talk to your youth pastor."

"What about you, Izzy? Would you be willing to come too?"

"I guess so, but I don't know how you plan to prove your point."

"Alright, here goes." JT lay back down and pointed up. "Look at the stars. What do you see?"

"Come on," Micky said impatiently as she lay down. "We see stars. Don't give us that 'Intelligent Design' stuff, because scientists have shown how stars can form without the help of a creator."

"No, just give me a minute. I wasn't going there. We were talking about the constellations earlier, right? Look, there's the Big Dipper, and that *W* up there, that's Cassiopeia, right?"

“Yeah, we see them. So what? How do those prove your point?” Micky asked in a tone full of cynicism.

“Think about it. The stars are moving through space as the Milky Way spins, right?”

“Yeah, we talked all about that last year in our astronomy unit,” Micky said.

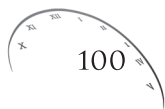
“Well, if the stars are really moving, which we all agree they are, then the stars would have been in completely different locations relative to Earth seventy million years ago. But,” JT paused for effect. “If we are only forty-five hundred years in the past then they would still be in nearly the same positions.”

“That’s not true.” Micky hesitated. “Since all of the stars we see are in the same spiral arm of the Milky Way, then they would still look the same seventy million years ago.”

“Actually,” Izzy said, “I think JT’s got a point. I’m pretty sure they would be completely different that long ago.”

“But what if every so often they realign, and we just happen to be at a time when they look the same?” Micky asked.

“Come on,” Izzy said as he sat up. “You know better than that. There’s no way that could happen. There are millions of stars that would have to be in the same places. The odds of that happening would be astronomical—pardon the pun.”



“But ... I still don’t believe that all those scientists are wrong,” Micky said.

“That’s okay, but you still have to meet with my youth pastor now.”

“Yeah, you got me,” Izzy said. “I don’t agree with your position, but when I get a chance, I’ll go with you.”

“Whatever,” Micky said. “I can’t believe I’m going to talk to a pastor about science.”

The threesome lay still for a few more minutes while looking up at the stars. JT prayed silently. *Thank You for showing me the answer, Lord. Please help that meeting with Pastor Rich to go well. Open their eyes and let them see the truth. And, if possible, please let Jax come along too.*

Izzy broke the silence by standing up and telling the girls that they should all sleep in the car for the night, for safety’s sake. They stood and followed him to the car. The girls climbed into the back seat and snuggled in underneath one of the blankets that they had just been laying on. Izzy had offered to let them each have a blanket, but they decided to share so that he could stay warm, too.

“Good night, guys,” JT said.

Micky smiled, apparently harboring no grudge about the discussion. “G’night, girl.”