

*Across the Stars*

Morgan Elizabeth Huneke

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## Chapter One

# The Spaceship

“Tell me I’m not crazy.”

“What?!” Sara Watson looked up from the book she was reading. Her eleven-year old brother Charles stood in front of her. His blond hair was messy as usual, but his face was serious, not smiling as she had expected it to be.

“Tell me I’m not crazy,” Charles repeated.

“All right, you’re not crazy,” Sara replied. “But why would you even ask such a thing?”

“Well,” Charles slowly sank down beside her, “if I’m not crazy, then there’s a spaceship in the clearing... not the kind that astronauts use...the kind that’s in science fiction movies.”

Sara felt an urge to laugh, but, with one look at Charles’s face, it died away.

“You’re not kidding,” she said half in

assertion, half in inquiry.

Charles solemnly shook his head. Sara glanced around at the five golden-haired children playing on the swing set. They were too absorbed in their play to notice Sara and Charles's conversation.

"Please come with me," Charles begged. "If you see it too, I'll know I'm not crazy."

After a moment's hesitation, the two headed off into the woods.

*This can't be true*, Sara thought as she went along. *There can't be a spaceship in the clearing. It's impossible.* But one glance at the clearing confirmed that it was, indeed, true. There was a spaceship in the clearing. The children walked towards it. The spaceship was very large, supported on three thin legs. Sunlight glinted off of it, giving it a well-polished look. Charles walked up to it.

"Wow," he said. "I can't believe it is really here." He began looking at the underside of the ship. "I wonder," he said as if speaking to himself, "does this button activate the ramp?" Charles reached up and touched it. Instantly, they heard a whirring sound, and a ramp was lowered to the ground. Charles started up the ramp.

"No!" Sara darted forward and caught her brother by the arm. Her clear blue eyes were full of fear. Charles turned to face her.

"What's the matter?"

"Be careful. We don't know what's in there. There could be..." Words failed her as she fleetingly thought of what might await them in this

strange spaceship. "...anything," she concluded.

Charles looked at his sister. She really was a very pretty girl, with a pale, freckle-less complexion, delicate features and smooth, golden hair neatly plaited and pinned on top of her head. But Charles did not notice her beauty. All he noticed was his sister's just fear. He hesitated.

"I still want to go in," he said. But Sara knew how frightened he had become by the way he gripped her hand.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," Sara murmured. "He maketh me to rest in green pastures and leadeth me by the still waters." And the two advanced up the ramp.

The ship was cool inside. It seemed to be deserted. There was a long corridor that curved away in both directions. The children turned to the right. On the right hand side of the corridor there were two tiny rooms with a cot each. Nobody was there. There was, further along, a large room to the left with six bunks on the walls, a table in the center and a kitchenette along the back wall. Across from this room was the cockpit. It, too, was deserted. There were two more tiny rooms with cots on the other side of the spaceship and then they were back where they had begun. Charles loosed his grip on Sara's hand.

"I want to have another look at that cockpit," Charles said.

"I think we should go home," said Sara.

"It will only take a minute." Reluctantly, Sara followed her brother along the corridor.

The walls of the cockpit were entirely covered

with buttons. There were, in front of each of the two seats, a steering wheel such as one might find in an airplane. In between them, above a small drawer, was a screen.

“I bet this is the main computer,” said Charles.

He touched a button to the side of it. The screen flickered and then some numbers flashed up on the screen. Sara looked anxiously out the window. A rabbit hopped nonchalantly across the clearing as if it was not strange at all for a spaceship to be there. Sara felt a strange, sudden sense of unease.

“Charles, let’s go home,” she pleaded.

“Alright.” And the two departed from the ship. As Sara and Charles disappeared into the woods, the rabbit hopped up to the ramp. It sat erect for a moment, glancing this way and that. Then the rabbit darted up the ramp.

## Chapter Two

# Jack

“Why didn’t you let me come?”

Sara and Charles had decided to tell their brother Jack and their sisters Hetty and Lu the secret of the spaceship they had found in the clearing. Now nine-year old Jack felt that he had been left out of a grand adventure.

“You were too busy playing,” replied Charles.

“I still want to see it,” Jack protested.

“Not now,” said Sara. But she did not want to go back. Not even to show Jack.

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That night, when Sara was in bed reading, she heard soft footsteps in the hall outside her room. She looked up to see Charles standing in the

doorway.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

Charles sat down on her bed. “Do you think we dreamed it?”

Sara put down her book. “What?”

“The spaceship.”

Sara sighed. “I don’t know. I wish it was a dream. But if it was a dream, then surely only one of us would remember it. We both remember it. But...it’s impossible.”

“We could go look,” Charles suggested brightly.

“Charles!”

“What?”

“You want to sneak out of the house in the middle of the night?”

He glanced at her clock.

“It’s not the *middle* of the night. It’s only nine forty-five. And it would only take a few minutes. Just there and back. Just to look.”

“Well...”

Sara heard a noise in the hallway. Three golden-haired children stood in the doorway.

“I want to see the spaceship,” said Lu.

Charles beckoned to them. The three children ran and jumped on the bed.

“I’m trying to convince Sara to go make sure it’s there,” Charles said

“Are you going to?” Hetty asked.

“Can we come, too?” asked Jack.

“You have to be as quiet as mice.” said Charles. “Promise?”

Three golden heads bobbed up and down.

“Get the flashlights,” said Charles.

“But Charles...”

“You can stay here,” Charles suggested.

Sara shook her head. “If you’re going out, I’d better come with you. Someone has to look after you.”

Once Sara had armed all five of them with flashlights, and herself and Charles with pocket knives, she led her siblings down the hallway. From the flickering lights under the door of her parents’ bedroom, Sara judged that her parents were still awake and watching television. Sara felt guilty about sneaking out.

*But we’ll be back inside in a minute,* Sara assured herself.

She tiptoed down the stairs to the back door.

“Charles,” she whispered, “turn on your light and shine it at the door handle.” He did so. Sara slowly and silently unlocked the door and opened it. She led the way into the yard leaving the door slightly ajar. With her flashlight trained on the ground and Lu’s little hand in hers, Sara led the way across the yard. Once they had reached the relative safety of the woods Sara whispered, “Lights on.” Instantly, five points of light lit up the path in front of their feet. Five pairs of bare feet padded along the well-worn path. Sara shone her flashlight into the clearing. The light reflected off the ship. The ramp was still down. Jack ran up the ramp.

“Jack, wait!” Sara called. The other four followed him inside. Sara shone the light around the corridor. It appeared to be empty. Her eye fell

on a little booklet. Charles bent down and picked it up.

“It’s my Constitution,” he said. “It must have fallen out of my pocket earlier.”

Sara led the way to the cockpit. There was a dark heap on the floor. Sara started, then relaxed. It was a rabbit. Charles shone his light around the cockpit.

“Cool!” Jack seemed to have forgotten his vow of silence. He rushed forward to the pilot’s seat. Hetty and Lu raced for the copilot’s seat. Jack started pushing buttons.

“Jack! Don’t touch anything!” Sara yelled. But it was too late. Already the ground was far beneath them. A second later they were above the treetops. Sara felt sick. “Charles, land the ship!” she cried.

“I don’t know how,” Charles protested.

Sara gripped the back of the copilot’s seat. Her legs felt like Jello.

They were rising through the atmosphere. A moment later they were out in space. Sara felt a blast of power, then everything outside the window went black.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,” Sara murmured.

“Are we there yet?” Hetty asked.

Sara took a deep breath and composed herself. She must remain calm.

“Jack, Hetty, Lu,” she began, “we’re probably going to be on this ship for quite a while, so what you three need to do is get some rest.”

“But I want to stay in the cockpit,” Jack

protested.

Sara gave her little brother a stern look. The younger children followed her across the corridor to the big central room. She felt about for a light switch. Finding one, she flipped it on. Sara examined the sheets on the bunks. They seemed to be perfectly clean and even smelled of laundry detergent. She settled Jack, Hetty and Lu in each lower bunk and prepared to leave the room. Lu sat up in bed.

“What’s that?” she asked. Lu was pointing at the back wall to a door that Sara had overlooked.

Sara walked over to it and opened the door. She sighed with relief as she shone her flashlight about inside. It was a bathroom. It had everything a bathroom ought to have and nothing that it oughtn’t.

“It’s only a bathroom,” she assured the frightened five-year old. Lu settled back into bed and curled into a comfortable little ball. Sara turned off the light and tiptoed across the corridor. Charles sat in the pilot’s seat, trying to make sense of an instruction manual he had found. Sara sank into the other seat.

“Do you understand any of it?” she asked.

“Maybe.” Charles turned to his older sister. “Sara, we’re actually travelling faster than the speed of light.”

“But that’s impossible,” Sara protested. “Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity says that nothing can travel faster than the speed of light in that same substance.”

“Well, that’s what Einstein says, but that’s not



what this instruction manual says.”

“You would rather believe an instruction manual than Albert Einstein?” Sara asked incredulously.

“I figure that whoever wrote this instruction

manual knows an awful lot more about this ship than Einstein.”

Sara conceded the argument. Charles certainly had a point and she was in no mood to argue.

Charles closed the instruction manual. He pointed to the words on the front: The Ship of Divine Purpose.

“What do you suppose that means?” Sara asked.

“I was hoping *you* could tell *me*.”

Sara sighed. “I suppose if we’re meant to know we’ll find out somehow.”

Charles nodded his assent.

“Will this ship stop when it reaches its destination?” Sara asked.

“It is supposed to,” Charles answered.

“Then we’d better get some rest.”

As they left the cockpit, the rabbit hopped up into the pilot’s seat and sat erect, as if to keep watch through the night.

## Chapter Three

# Emarot

A terrible jerk woke Sara the next morning. She sat up in bed and at first wondered at her strange circumstances: a bunk in a strange room that was pitch black, though her instincts clearly told her that it was morning. Then she remembered the strange events of the night before.

“Charles!” Sara slid out of bed, wincing as her feet hit the cold floor, several feet below its accustomed place.

Charles was up in an instant. “Are we there?” he asked.

“We seem to have stopped somewhere,” Sara responded. They made their way to the cockpit, followed closely by three sleepy-eyed youngsters who had presently stumbled out of bed. A large, green planet loomed ahead of them. Charles slid

into the pilot's seat.

"Are you going to land this thing?" Sara asked incredulously.

Charles's only answer was a steady grip on the controls as he guided the ship into the planet's atmosphere. Sara prayed fervently for a safe landing. Charles gritted his teeth. The younger children watched through the window in fascination. The ship descended steadily through the clouds. It hovered a moment above the ground, then settled down with a thump.

"It's a good landing," said Lu. "We're alive and not hurt."

"Great landing," Sara corrected. "If the ship can be used again, then it is a great landing. This ship can be used again. Therefore, it is a great landing."

Sara looked about in an attempt to comprehend what sort of planet they had landed on. It appeared to be a nice place, smooth, green grass almost as far as the eye could reach with a dark green tree line near the horizon. A little ways away sat a tidy little cottage which had a comfortable, homey look to it. It appeared to be a pleasant place, but Sara had learned to put no store by appearances.

"Let's go over to that cottage," suggested Charles. "Maybe we can find out what sort of people live here."

Sara first checked to make sure that she still had her pocket knife, then took Hetty and Lu by the hand and followed her brothers out of the ship. The children trekked across the lawn. Before they

had quite reached the cottage, the door swung open revealing a short, plump, motherly-looking woman.

“Come in quick, before the Jorrid finds out about you,” she urged frantically.

“But...”

Sara found herself being ushered into the kitchen of a small but tidy cottage. It was not the sort of kitchen one expected from a foreign planet. In fact, Sara felt as if she had stepped back in time into a Victorian era kitchen. It was a pleasant room, with an old-fashioned cook stove and a long handled pump over a wooden wash basin. A plate of hot pancakes sat on the table with a jug of maple syrup beside it. Though the place was pleasant and homey, Sara couldn't help feeling a sense of unease.

“What's going on?” Sara asked. “Why have you rushed us in like this?”

“It's only this,” the woman began. “If the Jorrid knew there were outsiders on this planet he'd have you executed straight away. That's a fact.”

“Executed?” There was certainly a reason for Sara's unease.

The woman nodded. “Executed. So he does to all who resist him.”

“But we aren't resisting him,” Charles said. “We just landed here by mistake.”

The woman nodded. “But he'll execute any he wants to get rid of whether they resist him or not. And if one is from another planet, he'll want to get rid of you. That's a fact.”

“But we haven’t done anything wrong,” Sara said.

“True,” said the woman. “But tyrants can’t take chances. Any threat to their rule is done away with. That’s a fact.”

“Without a trial?” Charles asked.

“They have a trial,” said the woman. “But the Jorrid controls the courts. There’s no longer any such thing as a fair trial here on Emoria. That’s a fact.”

“Sara,” said Lu, “Didn’t King George III do that to the American colonies?”

Sara nodded.

The woman looked hard at each of the children. “America? You are from America? From Earth?”

Sara nodded. “We are. Our family has been in America ever since Jamestown. One of our ancestors was a Tobacco Bride.”

The woman looked confused. “What is a Tobacco Bride?”

“It doesn’t matter just now. But how do you know about Earth?”

“All inhabitants of this universe know of Earth. It is very important to all. That’s a fact. After all, it is the very planet where the Blessed Savior Himself became Man.”

“It would have been a good deal nicer if He’d never had any reason to become man,” said Sara. “I mean if the Fall of Man had never happened.”

“True,” said the woman. “Things would be a good deal nicer without sin.”

“But *why* do you know about Earth?” Jack

asked.

“That’s where our ancestors are from,” the woman said. “Don’t you know about the places your ancestors are from?”

“You mean you’re from Earth?” Charles asked. “You’re just as human as us?”

“We are sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. That’s a fact.”

“But how did you get here?” Sara was becoming intrigued by this funny little woman and the strange, foreign planet.

“Have you heard of Cain and Abel?”

“Oh, yes,” said Hetty. “They were two of Adam and Eve’s kids. And Abel loved God and gave sacrifices to Him because it was right and he wanted to please God, but Cain just did it to look good and because he had to.”

“And when God liked Abel’s sacrifice and not Cain’s, Cain got mad,” said Lu.

“And then Cain killed his brother,” said Jack. “It was the first ever murder. And Cain got cursed.”

“And then Seth was born,” added Lu.

“That’s a fact,” said the woman. “And right after that murder, some people were somehow transported to this galaxy of Stappenhance. But since we are human, we are subject to all the curses of Earth humans, even though we no longer live there.”

“You mean Original Sin?” Sara asked.

“Exactly. And because we have the same curses, we, just like you, need a Savior. That’s why we keep such close tabs on Earth. That’s a

fact.”

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by that obedience of that one, shall many also be made righteous.” Sara quoted.

“Romans 5:19,” said the woman.

Sara was surprised.

“You know the Bible?” she asked.

“Of course I do,” said the woman. “All true Christians do.”

Sara was beginning to feel at ease with the woman. At any rate, she was comfortable enough to introduce herself.

“I’m Sara Watson,” she said. “And these are Charles, Jack, Hetty and Lu,” indicating each in turn.

“I’m JudyAnne,” said the owner of that name. “I’m glad to meet you all.”

“Miss JudyAnne...” Charles began.

“Just JudyAnne, please.”

“Well, JudyAnne, there was an instruction manual in the spaceship that brought us here, and it said ‘The Ship of Divine Purpose’ on the front of it. Do you have any idea what that means?”

“Glory be!” JudyAnne breathed.

“What is it?” Sara asked.

“You see, when the Jorrid took over twenty years ago he cut off all communication with other planets. No one is allowed to leave; no one is allowed to come. My own sister, JulieAnne, was off-planet on a mission trip when the Jorrid took over. I haven’t heard from her since. That’s a fact. I was wondering how you got in. But the Ship of

Divine Purpose! That explains it all!”

“But what *is* it?” Hetty asked.

“Whenever there is a need in the universe and outside help is needed, the Ship of Divine Purpose is sent to whoever is supposed to help.”

“Is there a need here?” Lu asked.

“Oh, yes,” JudyAnne replied. “King Jorrid is very oppressive over Emarot. I don’t know how he deals with Theotocop.”

“I’m sorry, Miss, I mean JudyAnne,” Charles said, “but we just arrived. We don’t really understand how things work here on...what was this planet called again?”

“Emoria,” JudyAnne supplied. “I guess you wouldn’t, now that I think about it. You see, Emoria wasn’t the first planet inhabited in Stappenhance, but eventually it got colonized. When people first came here, they just lived in Theotocop. That’s the main city now. It’s very small compared to the rest of the continent. That’s a fact. Well, Theotocop got bigger and bigger and soon it was a whole state, or you might say country, all by itself. Finally, Theotocop got so crowded, being bound by the sea on one side and Emaria river on the other that some people left to start the territory of Emarot. That’s where we are now. It takes up the whole rest of the continent. Even though Emarot is separate from Theotocop and at least ten times bigger, they still rule us. That’s a fact. It was all well and good until Prince Jorrid became king. Since then things have just been terrible. I don’t know if the people in Theotocop are bothered by the oppression, but

here in Emarot we are sick of it. We'd be better off by ourselves. And now that you've come in the Ship of Divine Purpose, maybe it's time for us to separate from Theotocop and become our own country. With your help of course. That's a fact."

"Do you mean..." Charles began.

"You could be meant to save Emarot."

"Do you mean fight a war?" Jack asked.

"What sort of weapons do you use?" Charles asked eagerly.

Sara sighed.

"Flintlock rifles, swords and shields, bows and arrows," JudyAnne answered.

"No laser weapons or ray guns?" Jack sounded disappointed.

"Other planets use those weapons," said JudyAnne. "Here on Emoria we prefer to live the old way. Life is a lot simpler that way, or was, before the Jorrid. That's a fact."

"You're Amish!" Hetty exclaimed.

"No, Hetty," Sara corrected. "The Amish are currently only on Earth."

"Sara," said Lu, "*do* you think we're supposed to fight a war to save Emarot?"

"Differences *can* be resolved without war," Sara said.

"But we are meant to help," the little girl said half in assertion, half in inquiry.

"I don't know," said Sara.

"We did come in the Ship of Divine Purpose," Jack reminded his sister.

"But..." Sara sighed. She had begun to have a dreadful feeling that her siblings were right. She

turned to JudyAnne. “Is there any way we can get the people together to form a resistance?”

JudyAnne nodded. “We can meet in the People’s Treasury of Arms. I’ll sound the alarm system.”

Sara raised her eyebrows. An alarm system? It sounded rather sophisticated for people who preferred to live “the old way.”

Lu jumped up and down. “Will it be like a tax day tea party?” she asked excitedly.

Sara shook her head. “It’s too late for a tax day tea party. It’s time for a revolution.”

To read more and find out if the Watsons can free Emarot, *Across the Stars* can be purchased both as a print book and an eBook. Follow the link below for purchase links and more about the book.

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