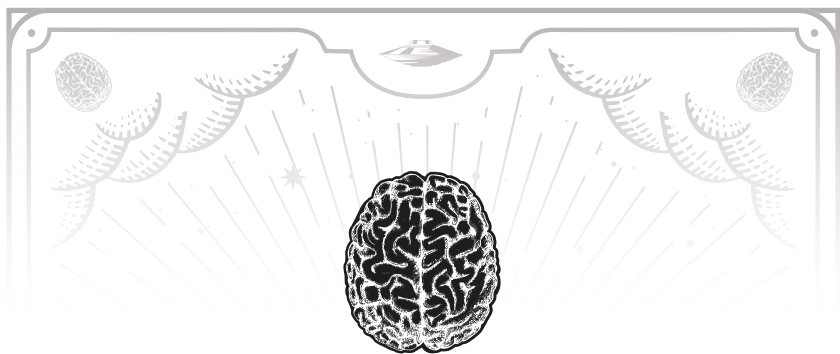




MIND READER

JENNIFER LISS



Chapter 1

THE FLASH

I saw a UFO, which made me one of the lucky ones. At least that was what I thought at the time. Why was I so fortunate? Well, the only reason I saw it was because of my dog.

It was a Saturday morning. My parents had taken Kiki, my younger sister, to an early basketball game. We lived in a community on the edge of a wide-open desert. When my sister had a game, my family often had to leave early to drive to another town.

I loved it when they were gone. It was the only time the house was all mine.

That Saturday morning, I had planned on sleeping late and then working on my project. I loved to build steampunk models. At the time, I was constructing a clock with hidden drawers. Unfortunately, the morning wasn't starting out as planned.

Banana, my dog, was barking her head off in the backyard. Hoping I could tune her out, I tunneled my way deeper under the covers. I just wanted to go back to sleep.

It didn't happen. Banana continued barking until I was fully awake. Frustrated, I finally threw off the covers. Then I got up and stomped down the hall. A sliding glass door led to our backyard. I yanked it open.

"Banana, be quiet!"

That was when I saw it. A bright light flashed in the sky and then seemed to drop toward the ground.

It was so intense that my instinct was to shield my eyes. When I brought my hand down, the light was gone. The sky was blue and cloudless.

Now Banana was whining and pacing the yard with her head down.

I stared at the sky, expecting to see something else, but nothing happened. The light had appeared quickly, without a sound. Then it was gone.

I crouched down and held out my hand. “Come here, girl.”

Banana came to me and gently dropped her head in my lap so I could scratch her ears.

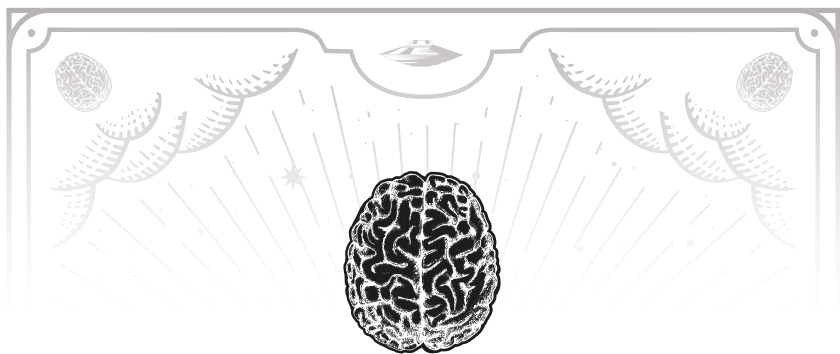
“What was that?” I asked her.

Of course, she had no answer. For a few more minutes, we stayed like that, crouched low, looking up at the sky. I sensed that something else was going to happen. But nothing did.

Eventually, I went back inside. My stomach grumbled, so I ate a bowl of cereal. By the time my family returned from the basketball game, I

had almost forgotten about the falling flash of light.

Then Kiki burst through the door, talking a mile a minute.



Chapter 2

SO UNFAIR

Lucas, did you hear what happened?” Kiki shrieked. “Jay called when we were driving home. There was an alien sighting right outside of town! It’s my dream come true. I can’t believe I missed it! That is so unfair!”

Banana wagged her tail happily when she heard my sister in the hallway.

Kiki came into the kitchen. She was still wearing her uniform. A basketball was tucked under her arm. My parents followed her, carrying bags of food.

“We picked up lunch on the way home,” my mom said. “Are you hungry, Lucas?”

I *was* hungry, but I wanted to know what Kiki was talking about. Scrunching my brow, I looked at my dad for an answer.

He chuckled. “Supposedly, Jay saw a flash in the sky this morning. He and Kiki are convinced it was an alien landing.”

Jay was Kiki’s best friend. They had been obsessed with aliens for years.

The hair on my arms stood up. “A flash?”

“Yeah! A really bright one,” Kiki said. “Jay saw it with his own eyes. He was at his window! First there was a flash. Then the light dipped down toward the horizon.”

I frowned. “Well, I guess I saw it too.”

Kiki stared at me. “No way. You? But you don’t even believe in aliens!” My sister dropped her basketball and threw her hands in the air. “Life is so unfair!” She stomped off to her room.

“You saw a flash in the sky?” my mom asked.

“Yeah.” I glanced out the window, as if the light were going to appear again. “It happened quickly. Then it was gone.”

My dad began pulling sandwiches from the bags. “It was probably just an airplane.”

Kiki stormed back into the kitchen. She had Jay on a video call. “Lucas, tell us exactly what you saw,” she demanded. Then she thrust the phone toward me. “We need to see if your story lines up with Jay’s.”

I relayed the few details I could remember.

“That doesn’t seem very significant,” my mom said. “It was just a quick flash.”

Kiki ignored her. “What do you think?” she asked Jay. “We should ride our bikes out to the site. We’ve got to check this out!”

My mom crossed her arms. “No way, kiddo. You’re not riding your bike alone into the desert.”

Kiki scowled. “I won’t be alone! I’m going

with Jay. We'll follow the Cactus Trail. Jay thinks it was just a couple of miles south of here."

My dad shook his head. "Nope."

"I'll go with them," I said.

Everyone turned to look at me.

"What?" I shrugged. "I don't have any other plans today. It's no big deal."

My curiosity was piqued. I just didn't want to admit that to everyone.

"Woo-hoo!" Kiki shouted into the phone. "Jay, Lucas is going with us. We'll be by in an hour! Get ready!"

MIND READER

In a flash, Lucas's world
is turned upside down.

After a mysterious
sighting, he soon
discovers he can read the
thoughts of others.

Is this a dream come
true? Or could it be his
worst nightmare?

WHITE
LIGHTNING
BOOKS®
MYSTERIES

 **SADDLEBACK**
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING
www.sdlback.com

LEXILE HL430L

ISBN: 978-1-63889-213-7

