

THE MISSIONARIES

John Boston

Caleb wondered who in the hell was knocking on his door at such an ungodly hour. It was barely eight o'clock in the morning.....*on a freaking Saturday*, for goodness sakes. His dad, Arnold was in the shower, getting ready to go to work.

He answered the door and was surprised to see two well dressed and well groomed men standing at his front door.

“Good morning. I’m Brother Andrews. This is Brother Gaines. We’re spreading the gospel of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. May we have a moment of your time?”

“Yeah, why not. I’ve got nothing but time. Come on in. You guys want some coffee or something?”

“No thank you, we don’t drink coffee.” said Andrews.

They stepped into the single wide trailer that had become home for Caleb and his father over the past year. His father worked at a nearby mine and could be gone for days on end. Caleb had graduated high school two years before and hadn’t done much since.

“You guys sure did come a long way to give me your sales pitch.”

“Our Elders want us to get out into some of the rural areas. He dropped us off this morning and won’t be back to pick us up until this afternoon.” said Gaines.

“Man, you guys don’t even get paid for doing this.”

“Our reward is in heaven.”

“Boy, let’s hope so. You sure you don’t want anything? I won’t even charge you for it.” said Caleb.

“No, we packed some sandwiches and bottled water, but thank you anyway.”

“Well, let’s get to it. Caleb noticed there was no car parked in front of their trailer. It was fifty miles to the nearest civilization and there wasn’t much there anyway.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t catch your name.”

“Oh, Caleb Johnson. My dad’s name is Arnold.”

“Well Caleb, tell us what you know about the Mormon Church.”

“Not much I guess. I know you like to have big families. I had a friend in high school. He was Mormon. He got married right out of high school. He’s already got a kid. I couldn’t imagine being married with a kid.” said Caleb

“He’s part of the Mormon community. He’s not doing it alone. He has the love and support of millions of other Mormons around him.

“I see. I got to tell you guys. This is just plain weird.”

“What’s weird?”

“How many houses were you planning on visiting today? The two trailers next to us are empty. There isn’t anybody else for like ten miles around here.”

“Yes, well, we were planning on staying up the road with the Freitags. Do you know them?”

“No.”

“They own that nice horse ranch just about a mile off the road. Don Freitag used to be part of our temple. He said we can stay at his ranch for a few days. Get us out of the city. Our Elder thought it might be a nice change of pace for us.” said Andrews.

“I see.”

“Caleb, what do you know about the Book of Mormon?”

“Not much.”

“Would you mind if we read some passages together?”

“No, but first, I’d like to ask you guys something.”

“Of course.”

“Why should I read the book of Mormon? Why not the Bible or the Koran? What makes your religion so special?”

“Our rich history. Tell me Caleb, do you have any religious training at all?”

“I went to church a few times with my grandpa when I was a kid. Not much. Dad is not religious at all.”

“What makes our religion not special, but the true word of God is Joseph Smith. He was directed by the angel Moroni. All of our wisdom was handed to him on these special golden plates.”

“Where are these golden plates?”

“They were returned to Joseph Smith’s farm in New York. The plates were seen by 11 men. They are called the book of Mormon Witnesses. This is what the angel Moroni commanded.” said Andrews.

“So, no plates? How do we know Smith just didn’t make up the whole thing?”

“The plates were translated by Smith himself. The language on them was very old, most likely Egyptian and they were copied from an even earlier source going back into our remote past.”

“So, why did the Angel command him to return the plates? How come no one has ever tried to find them?”

“Caleb, we believe all of your questions can be answered right here in the book of Mormon. The entire story of the plates can be found in a chapter called *The Pearl of Great Price*.” said Gaines.

“That’s odd. I didn’t know Mormons could have tattoos.” said Caleb pointing to a tattoo on Andrew’s arm.

“We aren’t.” said Andrews, quickly covering up his sleeve.

“So, why do you have one then?”

“Caleb, I was excommunicated from the church when I was 17. I ran away to Los Angeles and live a very sinful and decadent life until I was saved by a Mormon missionary when I was thirty. I’m much older than Brother Gaines, probably much older than most missionaries. My path to salvation was different than most. I’m probably lucky to be alive. I know from a very personal experience what great power the Book of Mormon has. I’m living proof.” said Andrews.

“Oh, sorry, I didn’t know we had company.” said Arnold as he walked into the kitchen.

“Guys, this is my dad, Arnold.”

“Sir, my name is Brother Andrews, this is Brother Gaines.” he said standing up and shaking his hand, “Nice to meet you boys.”

“They’re Mormons.” said Caleb.

“Have you guys come to save us from ourselves?” he asked.

“That’s one way of looking at it.”

“Well, don’t get your hopes up. Then again, *miracles do happen*.” he said as he grabbed his lunch box and thermos out of the fridge.

“You’ll have to excuse me, I’m late for work. Caleb, don’t stay up too late, we have to go to Bishop early in the morning to pick up feed.”

“Oh, right.”

Arnold stepped out the door and Caleb watched him leave.

“Are you guys sure you don’t want anything? Not even a bottled water? It’s like a hundred degrees out there. Here, let me see if we at least have some canned food you can take with you.” he said, getting up and walking over to a kitchen drawer. He pulled out a small revolver and pointed it right at the two men seated across from him.

Andrews and Gaines' good natured humor evaporated in a nano-second. Their carefree smiles were now gone. Caleb knew he had them. His hunch was correct.

“It’s loaded, I assure you.”

“Caleb.....what is going on here?” asked Andrews.

“You tell me. You can start by telling me who you really are and what you’re doing here.”

“Caleb, what are you talking about, we told you who we were and why we’re here.” said Gaines.

“Yeah, yeah you did. I don’t buy a word of it. I think you guys had other ideas. Tell me, Brother Andrews, when were you guys going to make your move? I’ll bet my dad being here kind of threw you off. I think you were just hoping he would leave, now weren’t you?”

“I don’t know what you think we are, but I’m telling you the truth. Here, do you want to see my driver’s license? How about my debit card from the church? How about my prayer list from the temple? Take a look.” said Andrews, throwing his wallet on the table.

Caleb slowly reached for it, never taking his eyes off the two of them. Andrews had a driver’s license from Provo, Utah. His other cards had his name on it as well.

“Brain Andrews. 211, East Windsor Ave #4. Nice to meet you. Now who the hell are you?”

“What on Earth would make you think we are anything but what we told you?” asked Gaines.

“Simple. Paul Freitag died last month. No one is at his ranch. His wife is staying with their daughters in California. I’m not buying the tattoo on your arm. No way in hell the church would let you walk around with that. Not when you’re trying to recruit, no way. And last, but certainly not least, it’s what I learned from my grandpa.”

“And just what would that be?”

“The eyes. It’s always in the eyes. I don’t listen to what you say. I watch what you do. You aren’t even aware you’re doing it. See, when I pulled the gun out of this drawer, if you were really, who you say you are, you two would have looked scared shitless, but you didn’t. No, the look in your eyes was something else entirely. You guys were angry. You saw me holding that gun and you realized your whole plan just went up in smoke.”

“Caleb, you’re insane. Please, just let us leave.”

“Leave? You got to be kidding me? I let you go and you guys will just come back when we’re sleeping and kill us or something. Not a chance. Maybe I should just call the sheriff. Maybe he can find out who you two really are.”

Caleb kept his pistol pointed at the two of them as he reached for his cell phone. He dialed 911 and put it up to his ear.

“Hi, this is Caleb Johnson, I live at Route 264, number 202 in Dyer. I’m holding two people at gunpoint. Please hurry. No, no I can’t stay on the line.....get someone here asap.” he said and hung up.

“Caleb, come on, this is crazy, you aren’t going to shoot us, put the gun down.” said Andrews.

“Take your hands off the table again and I will shoot you. You got a piece on you?”

“Of course not. Caleb, please, just call our elders, or our Bishop if you don’t believe us. Here, call him. His number is right here.” said Gaines as he pointed to his wallet.

Caleb quickly grabbed the wallet and looked at the cards. He dialed the first number and got no answer. He dialed the second one and still got no answer. It went straight to voicemail.

“Looks you guys came up short. I got to hand it to you, you guys are good. You could probably fool anyone else, but you aren’t fooling me.”

“What aren’t you telling us Caleb?” asked Andrews.

“What do you mean?”

“You didn’t just pull this out of a hat. Something in the past must have happened to make you think we are something we aren’t. What happened?” asked Andrews.

“Paul Freitag was murdered last month. Someone shot him in the head and robbed his safe. You wouldn’t happen to know anything about that, now would you?”

“Last month we were both working at a homeless shelter in Las Vegas. We had nothing to do with his death.” said Andrews.

“About a month before that, Old Miss Landry just vanished from her house at the end of the valley. When her daughter arrived, she noticed that all of her jewelry was missing. See, in both cases, there was no sign of forced entry. The killers just walked right in and made themselves at home. You guys have the perfect over. Look a place over and decide if there’s anything worth taking. No one would even think to question you, and if they did, you had all your ducks in a row to make the questions go away. You’re good, I got to give you that. I just don’t know what you were thinking with this house. My dad and I don’t have anything worth taking.”

“Caleb.....I’m sorry. I just can’t be rational with an irrational person.” said Gaines.

“Why don’t you tell me more about your life in LA? What kind of shit did you get yourself into?”

“That’s none of your business.”

“No, Brother Andrews, remember: *you were the one who came knocking on my door, not the other way around.*”

“What do you want to know?”

“The truth, if you even know what that is.”

“I was 17 and living on the streets. I’m sure your imagination can fill in the rest.”

“Come on, don’t hold back on me now.”

“I sold drugs. Is that what you want to hear? I sold drugs and made porn films. I did a lot of things I’m deeply ashamed about. I’d really rather not talk about it.” said Andrews, getting visibly upset.

“So, what made you change?”

“I talked to a missionary. We prayed together. I was living in sin with a woman and had a child with her. My own child was taken away from me by the state. I can’t even see my own son without a supervised visit. Is that what you want to hear?”

“I just like to know who everybody is.”

“We are going to get up and we are going to walk out that front door and never come back here. You can shoot me if you want, it won’t be the first time I have been shot, but I will not sit here and be forced to relive my painful sins, not with you.”

Caleb fired a shot that went right past the both of them. The deafening ringing, caused both of them to go into shock.

“You son of a bitch! Don’t do that again.” said Andrews very angrily.

“Not to worry boys, the cops will be here shortly.”

“The sooner, the better. Hopefully, we will still be alive when they get here.” said Gaines.

“What about you, Caleb? What are you doing out here? You seem just a little too smart to be stuck in some place like this.” said Andrews.

“My dad works at the mine, that’s why I’m here.”

“No, that’s why *he*’s here. Not you. I doubt very much anyone with half a brain would be sticking around here unless they had a very good reason for doing so. What are you hiding from?” asked Gaines.

“Nothing. I just don’t like society, or people very much. I’m going to start work at the mine next month. I’ll be making a killing and have no bills to pay, so why wouldn’t I stay here?”

“That’s a good answer, but I don’t think it’s the real answer. Something about all this isn’t right. I doubt very much a guy with your brains would be happy shoveling shit in some mine when he could be out there, living his best life and making a name for himself.”

“Everybody’s different. I’m perfectly happy, right here, with no goddamn people or neighbors. Somebody once upon a time said that *hell is other people*. I couldn’t agree more.”

“Mr. Gaines, do me a favor. Take off your clothes, you can leave your underwear on, but take off everything else and throw it in a pile.” said Caleb.

“I will not.”

Caleb raised his pistol right at his head. Gaines quickly stood up and began disrobing. He stumbled as he took off his shoes and threw them into the clothes pile on the floor. Caleb walked over and began going through them. He felt something in the pants pocket and pulled it out. His eyes suddenly got very wide.

“Well, what do we have here?” he said holding up a stun gun.

“Where the hell did you get that?” asked Andrews.

“Look, Caleb, it’s not what you think. Brian and I got robbed last month in Las Vegas. They put guns up to our heads. I was only trying to protect myself.” said Gaines

“Maybe, or maybe this is what you guys used on poor old Miss Landry.” said Caleb as he turned it on and was surprised by the sharp spark it emitted.

“I’ll be holding onto this. Now, Brother Andrews, it’s your turn. I’ll save you the hassle. Here, here it is. You can see I don’t have anything else on me. He said as he rolled out his pants pockets and pulled up his pant legs. He put a large folding knife on the table. Andrew grabbed it and put it in his pants pocket. He took out Gaines’ driver’s license from his wallet.

“Um, Brother Gaines.....your driver’s license says you are five foot three and about fifty pounds heavier. You want to explain that one?”

“I lost fifty pounds over the past year. I ran and watched what I ate. I wrote five foot eight on my application and for some reason the girl at DMV thought it was a three. So, yes, I can explain it.”
“The picture doesn’t even really look like you.”

“I got contacts and shaved my head when I started the mission.”

“Just saying, this driver’s license could almost be for someone else.”

Gaines threw his hands up in the air and sat back down.

“Can I have my clothes back now, please?”

“No. So you two lambs of the Lord who are out here to spread the good word, just happen to carry a stun gun and a lockable knife on you at all times. Signs of the times I guess.”

“Knock it off Caleb, what we do can sometimes be very dangerous. We might be Christians, that doesn’t mean we’re naive and stupid.”

“No, you guys definitely aren’t stupid. You just seriously misjudged this house, that’s all. I guess one mistake in your line of work is all it takes.”

“When are the cops going to get here?”

“It might be a while. You guys should get comfy.”

The three of them sat nervously across from one another. Andrews had a scowl on his face that was just downright *unholy*. Gaines looked nervous as well, but more pissed off than nervous. There was nothing said for several minutes between them. Andrews kept looking at his watch.

“How long does it take for the police to respond to a 911 call out here? It’s been over an hour.” he growled.

“It’s a big county, with only a handful of officers. Lots of open space out here. Lots of space for people to just disappear.” added Caleb.

“How long are you going to keep doing this?” asked Gaines

“As long as it takes for you two to tell me the truth.”

“We have told you the truth. We’ve been telling you the truth since the moment we stepped into this damn trailer.” said Andrews.

“You guys crack me up. You’re going to be those guys in prison who will swear they’re innocent, right up until the moment they go into the gas chamber. I guess you’re right and the other seven billion of us are wrong.”

“Just what exactly are you going to tell the police when they arrive. You’ve been keeping us at gunpoint for well over an hour. That’s called kidnapping, which I am pretty sure is a felony in this state.”

“No, I am making a citizen’s arrest, which under the Nevada Revised Statutes 171.126, I am perfectly able to do.”

“What are you? A lawyer now?” asked Gaines

“I’m sure as soon as the sheriff proves who you guys really are, the game is over for you. Bet you never thought some 21 year old kid would be the one that busts you.”

“You haven’t busted us, you idiot. We weren’t doing anything wrong.”

“Well, time will tell.”

“I’m pretty sure, I can sue the hell out of you, if you can’t be charged with anything.” said Andrews.

“Sure me? I don’t have anything.”

“I can take this trailer, not sure why, but at least you won’t be able to call it home anymore.”

“You want to know how I know, you guys won’t do anything. I’m going to use the bathroom. I know you’ll both be here once I get back. See, if you really were innocent, you’d make a break for it. You and I both know you have to kill me before the sheriff gets here and be gone. Gonna be a little hard to do when I have the only gun.....or were you planning on just shooting the cops too? Either way, you’re screwed. I’ll be back.”

Caleb walked out of the kitchen and into the bathroom. He closed the door behind him.

He heard the front door open and shut. Caleb knew exactly where they were going. They wouldn’t be too hard to find.

Andrews and Gaines ran into the abandoned trailer next door. Gaines had grabbed his clothes and was frantically trying to get dressed.

“Why the hell didn’t we just run down the road? Why did you run in here?”

“No. We have to be here when the cops arrive. Who the hell knows what that kid is going to tell them. He could make up anything. I want them to hear our side first.”

“This guy is crazy. I’m going to look for a weapon or something.” said Gaines as he raced into a nearby room down the small hallway. Andrews was looking out the window. The kid must have seen them run in here. What kind of game was he playing?

“Brain.....Brain, get in here!” said Gaines.

Brain ran down the hallway and into the small room. Laying on the floor, was a partially decomposed corpse.

“Oh, my God.”

“This was not supposed to go this way. What the hell did you get us into?” asked Gaines.

“How the hell was I supposed to know the kid would pull a gun on us so fast. Wait a minute.....we got a problem?”

“What?”

“There’s no way in hell that kid would have called the cops with this body just laying in here. I don’t think he ever called the cops. That little shit has been playing us the whole time!”

“Bravo, Mr. Andrews, Bravo. I see you’ve stumbled onto our little secret. That would be the remains of one Dennis Cooper. He was a real asshole. Terrible neighbor. Absolute nightmare. One night, my dad just shot him. I guess it’s true what they say.....*good fences make good neighbors.*”

“Okay, Caleb, you got us. We were going to kill you and rob you, then your dad came in and ruined everything. We were just going to leave. I guess we both have secrets, now don’t we?”

“It’s just so damn nice to not have any neighbors. So nice not to have to look at another human soul. Mr. Cooper was the poison of humanity.”

“So, you guys just left his dead body in here? What the hell were you thinking?” asked Gaines

“Well, we were going to just happen to discover the body today as a matter of fact. I was going to say the smell was horrible and I went to investigate. They might investigate, but they won’t be able to pin anything on us. I figure we’ll buy the property off his kids and be done with it. Sorry boys, but you two really picked the wrong house. By the way, did you kill Freitag and Landry?”

“What difference does it make?”

“None.” said Caleb as she shot both of them. He stood over them and watched them both fighting for their lives.

“I’ll kill you Caleb, if it’s the last goddamn thing I ever do.” said Andrews as he spurted blood from his lips.

“Your heavenly kingdom awaits, Brother Andrews. Have a nice ride.” said Caleb

He made certain both of them were dead before he called 911. He knew his call was key. He had to make it sound believable. After all, he was just terrorized by two psychopaths pretending to be Mormon Missionaries.

Caleb ran into the arms of the first officer on scene. He had stabbed himself with the knife he took from Andrews. The remaining deputies arrived a few minutes later, as did the sheriff. Caleb had rehearsed his story and made certain it was believable. It was over in less than a week. Andrews and Gaines were not who they say they were. Brian Andrews and Gavin Gaines were missionaries who had gone missing a few months ago in Las Vegas. Caleb told them they had confessed to murdering Freitag and Landry as well.

“Jesus, son. You’re a hero. You’re damn lucky to be alive.” said the sheriff as he patted them on the back.

Caleb knew nothing would come of the investigation, if there was one. He knew he was taking a big risk, but he had no choice. There was no way he could have let them walk away after they saw the body.

“Where did you hide the body?” asked his father.

“I put it in the well house out back.”

“If these guys hadn’t been scumbags, you and I would both be in jail right now.”

“Dad, they were scumbags. No one is going to do anything, after all.....*I’m a hero, remember?*”

“You’re just lucky. These idiots just picked the wrong house. How did you know they weren’t missionaries?”

“Easy.....they had all the right pieces, except one, probably the most important one. I can’t believe they forgot it.”

“What?”

“They forgot to bring the Book of Mormon with them.”