

The Moonman Cometh

C.S FRITZ
A CHRISTMAS STORY



A Patrol Original

THE MOONMAN COMETH

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A **Patrol** Original Story

The Moonman Cometh

A CHRISTMAS STORY

EDITORIAL

Content Director
Eleazar Ruiz

Writer
C. S. Fritz

Developmental Editor
Caitlyn Carlson

Editor
Pip Craighead

CREATIVE

Illustrator
C. S. Fritz

Head of Design
Eleazar Ruiz



A dark blue, starry night sky with a faint constellation outline. The stars are scattered across the frame, with some appearing as bright, multi-pointed stars and others as smaller, dimmer dots. The overall tone is a deep, dark blue, suggesting a clear night sky.

For Colleen, a light in my darkness

TO THE READER

The book you currently hold in your hands is, in many ways, a book rooted in my own childhood. Like the main character of *The Moonman Cometh*, I grew up on a small farm in the Pacific Northwest. I was very lonely as a child; I had to be the man of the house, which meant running the farm and taking care of my family. And it drained me. The story of *The Moonman Cometh* comes from the yearning I had as a child for somebody who would step into my life and make it right.

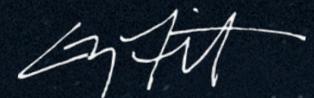
Jesus did that for me. Jesus was the figure who came into my world and brought hope and purpose—giving me not just what I wanted, but what I needed.

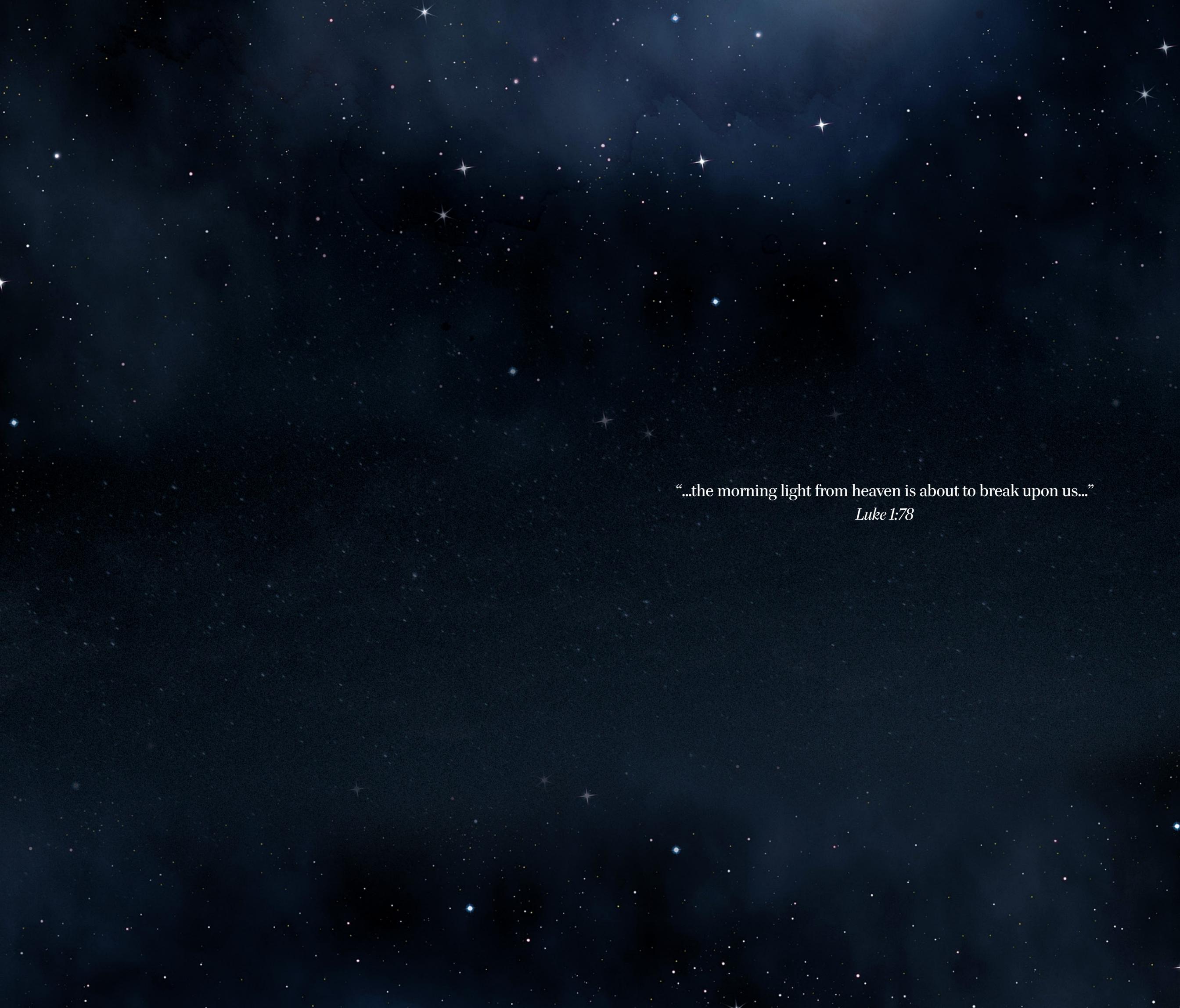
With *The Moonman Cometh*, I essentially took the hopes and longings of my own childhood and put them into a seasonal story. When I originally started talking to the team at Patrol about doing a book, we spoke of wanting to make our own Christmas character who was seasonal yet had a mysterious

undercurrent. We wanted to depict a character you'd have to learn to trust; someone who made you a little bit uncomfortable, but also brought a deep sense of relief. The Moonman was that character.

Storytelling is a powerful vehicle for communicating biblical truths, and my hope for *The Moonman Cometh* is that it would help spark conversations between parents and kids about the real meaning of Christmas: the Incarnation of Christ. This book is intended to help your family focus on what the seasonal celebration is really about: the hope of God breaking into darkness.

This hope is not unfounded optimism or wishful thinking. It is the light of Christ being born in a manger, bringing redemption to a broken world. May *The Moonman Cometh* reflect that truth to you this Christmas—and for many Christmases to come.





“...the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us...”

Luke 1:78







*Plop
Plop
Plop*

THE BOY HUDDLED OVER the old farm sink and watched another drop fall. He caught the water in his palm and lapped it up with shame. There wasn't much extra water to be had in these parts. It felt selfish to take even this.

"That's the last of it," he whispered, looking out the kitchen window over his father's Christmas tree farm.

"Every path has a few puddles, Papa used to say. Didn't he, Bella?"

The family bloodhound looked at him mournfully and licked his dirty hand.

What happens when even the puddles are dried up, Papa?

The boy slid the curtains closed and turned to stir a little butter into their dinner of boiled oatmeal.



“Mama!” he called out. “I made you some of that gruel you like.”

He could hear his mama shuffling around as she tried to muffle her crying.

“Mama?”

The sounds stopped for a moment.

“Well, I’m going up to bed now.” He often felt like he was talking to an empty house these days. “I’ll be up early fer tendin’ to them trees, just in time to sell for Christmas—don’t you worry.”

The only good-night he heard was the creaking of the wooden floors.



Yes, he'd be up early to tend the trees. He was the man of the farm now. Of course, there wasn't much left to tend these days.

Papa used to grow tall Douglas firs and bushy Noble firs as far as the eye could see. He could even grow wild Monterey pines and blue Colorado spruces, and no other farmer in the county could do that.

But it'd been some time since anything had taken root in this soil. The trees were parched for water and dying where they stood.

Still the boy rose before the sun the next morning to work with the Christmas trees, just as his father had always done. He cut away dead limbs and shoveled new earth over grey trunks, but mostly . . . he talked to the trees. He found himself murmuring words he'd heard since he was small: "If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'" and "Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin' it back in." The words comforted him, and he figured they might comfort his trees as well.





He went on like that all day until the moon appeared overhead.

Suddenly out of the high grass came a strange sight: fireflies, glowing like pocket-sized stars. He tried to snatch some out of the air as he headed back to the farmhouse, but gave up when he stopped at the old dried-up cobblestone well to pray.

A prayer for Mama.

A prayer for Papa to return and fix the farm.

A prayer for happiness.

He prayed these prayers every night, but no one ever seemed to hear.



On this night, the night before Christmas, he stared down into the well and waited. Minutes passed. A lifetime. As the silence loomed deep, so did his anger. He slammed the lid shut.

“Some Christmas,” he said under his breath as he turned back toward the house.

Then, from far within the earth, he heard a small, muffled voice.

The boy whipped around, dropped to his knees, and pressed his ear against the well’s lid. He tried to slow his breathing, afraid he’d miss something in the silence.

“What do you think, Bella?” he asked the dog.

Bella gave a *guff* of disapproval.

“Well,” he said, determined to be brave, “I’m fixin’ to see what’s down in this ol’ well, no matter what you say. For Mama.”



The boy stuck his fingers between the stone walls of the well and the lid. He lifted the lid quietly, not wanting to rattle whatever was down there.

At first, the only thing that emerged from the darkness was more silence and the smell of stale dirt.

Then—

“He is coming,” the mysterious voice hummed from the deep.

Terrified, the boy and his dog stared at each other. Bella began to tug at the boy’s overalls, pulling him back from the well. But something drew the boy forward. He placed both hands on the edge of the well and looked down.

He had to know what that voice was. He lowered a thick rope toward the bottom—then descended down the well. Fireflies zoomed ahead of him, lighting the way.





The trip down was long and slow. His hands burned from the rope. As the fireflies flitted around him, each dry stone seemed like an eye watching him go deeper and deeper.

Then, closer this time—*“He is coming.”*

Everything in him told him to scramble back up the rope, but it was too late. He was at rock bottom.

He turned and saw a small cardinal perched on the barren ground. Its feathers were the brightest of reds. There was a wax candle fastened to its head, and slung over its small body was a leather satchel overflowing with what looked like tiny scrolls.

What in tarnation? the boy thought in disbelief. His heart thumped like a rabbit’s hind leg.

Far above, Bella began to bark, and the bird launched into the sky like a popping red ember. The silver bells attached to its satchel chimed and echoed off the walls.

The only thing left on the ground was a small piece of rolled parchment.

The boy picked it up and scrambled back up the rope. He sat down next to Bella under the light of the stars and read the scribbled words.



*The Moonman doth cometh,
And here he doth seek
The engulfing darkness
and the fear beneath;
His presence is near
whether wanted or not,
And whatever he gives,
it cannot be bought.*