

## **The Eternal Fugitive**

by Taylor Morgan

“Open up!!!”

A young man was flying directly outside of a small plane. How was this even possible? That’s my student TJ. How was he flying? He began to pry open the door against the wind, struggling to get a good grip. She tried to help, and together they managed to open the door just enough for TJ to squeeze through. Brin jumped into the backseat as he fell into her seat, sealing the door shut once again.

“How are you here!!!” she yelled.

He looked at her, then at her student, and asked her for the headset. She handed it to him, and TJ plugged in his newly acquired set.

“Hi Brin,” TJ said, voice calm despite the situation. “It’s good to see you.”

“How are you flying outside of the plane?!” Brin asked, wildly confused.

“There are a lot of strange things in this world, and I just happen to be one of them,” he replied, unperturbed. “Who’s this?” He pointed at her student.

“That’s Cierra,” Brin replied, still shaken up.

“Do you trust her?” he asked.

“Yeah, I think so,” she said.

“Good enough for me. How much fuel do you have?” TJ asked.

“Maybe four hours.”

“Good, we can make it where I hoped.” He turned his attention to the plane's controls, he broke the transponder, and turned off all radar equipment.

“You can’t just destroy and steal the plane, TJ. The school will be furious,” Brin protested.

TJ turned to her, his expression grave. “They’re dead. We’re in a lot of trouble. Well, I’m in a lot of trouble and I’m bringing it to you.”

Brin was shaken by this revelation. “Dead?”

“The whole school, or I should say airport. I have a place for us to go, but I need to do what I can so it’s harder to follow us.”

“Why are you in trouble?”

“They’ve been looking for me for thousands of years. And now, they’ve found me.”

“Thousands of years!?”

“That’s right. So now we need to run and hide. I came to you because if they find you, you’ll get killed as well. They will do whatever it takes to find me.”

“They’ll kill us too?”

“Yes, but I’ll do what it takes to not let that happen. As you can tell, I have a few tricks of my own.”

“Where are we going?” Brin asked.

“Your place. In Montana. We’ll stay there for a few days, and then your dad will meet us with transportation.”

“My dad’s involved in this?”

“Yeah, why do you think I ended up as your student?”

“I’m so confused.”

“I’ll explain everything soon. For now, I need to take control from your student. It would be best if she sat in the back for a while and you sat up here to help fly.”

“Okay, we’ll switch,” Brin said.

Cierra, still processing everything, unbuckled her seatbelt and climbed into the back. Brin moved to the co-pilot's seat, and TJ took over the controls. The tension in the small plane was palpable, the hum of the engine the only constant in a rapidly changing situation.

As they flew, TJ began to explain. "I'm part of an ancient lineage, tasked with guarding a powerful secret. Over millennia, I've developed abilities that help me survive. Flying outside a plane is just one of them."

Brin listened intently, trying to piece together this new reality. "Why are they after you?"

"There's a group, an ancient order, that wants to exploit the power I guard. They believe capturing me will give them control over it. They've chased me across continents and centuries. Recently, they found me and attacked the airport to draw me out."

Cierra, from the back, finally spoke up quite loud without the use of her headset. "What happens now!?"

"Now, we get to safety. Brin's father is part of a network that's been helping me stay hidden.

Once we reach Montana, we'll regroup and plan our next move."

Hours passed as they flew over vast landscapes, the tension easing slightly as they approached their destination. The sun was setting when they finally saw the outline of the Montana wilderness.

As they landed on a secluded airstrip near Brin's family cabin, they were greeted by her father, a stern but kind-looking man who seemed to understand the gravity of the situation immediately.

"Dad, what's going on?" Brin asked as they disembarked.

"Brin, there's a lot you don't know. TJ and I have been working together for a long time. When you started showing an interest in flying, I made sure you would be his instructor. It was a way to keep you both safe."

“But why didn’t you tell me?”

“I wanted to protect you. The less you knew, the safer you were. But now, things have changed.”

They moved into the cabin, where Brin’s father had prepared supplies and a secure setup. TJ and Brin’s father discussed their next steps while Brin and Cierra tried to make sense of everything. Late into the night, TJ revealed more about the ancient order pursuing him. “They believe the secret I guard can grant immortality and immense power. They’ve destroyed entire civilizations to get to it.”

Brin’s father nodded. “We need to move quickly. They’ll track the plane eventually. Tomorrow, we’ll head deeper into the mountains. I have a safe house there.”

As dawn broke, they prepared to leave. The journey ahead was dangerous, but TJ’s resolve and Brin’s newfound understanding of her role gave them hope. They loaded up a rugged off-road vehicle with supplies and set out, the mountain road stretching before them, a path to temporary safety.

Brin, now very determined, glanced at TJ. “We’ll make it through this.”

TJ nodded. “We have to. The fate of many depends on it.”

They drove into the rising sun, ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead, united by a shared mission and the hope for a future free from the shadows of the past.