

THE
RICHEST MAN

A SHORT STORY
BY COLBY DUNN

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Norman moved to the parlor wall and straightened his newly framed business license. The

paint on the wall was starting to peel and the wood of the floor still needed some patchwork, but those details would have to be tended to later. He had to prioritize. Stepping back to inspect the frame's new position, he smiled and nodded, taking in a deep breath and patting the dust off his hands as he looked around.

Everything in the parlor was in order, his goods sorted strategically with the cheaper, more colorful wares at the front, the luxury items at the back. The first day opening shop in a new town was pivotal, and he had done everything possible to make the most of it. Many in town knew today was the grand opening, and a few children had already taken notice of the painted soldier figurines at the front. They gathered with their faces pressed against the glass of the display window.

Norman waved from the other side, then knelt down and positioned a few of the soldiers as if they were to battle. He breathed onto the glass and drew an angry face in the fog with his finger, and the battle ensued. The soldiers attacked one another as Norman demonstrated the clever mechanics inside the figures that allowed the arms to swivel, winning laughs from the children as the combat grew fierce.

He enjoyed seeing their smiles and amusement, but his show served another purpose: to create images in the children's minds that would send them rushing to their mothers and fathers for coin. Norman's time as a peddler had taught him that people didn't invest in *things*; they invested in the *excitement* of things.

His war ended with one soldier standing victorious atop the other. With another wave to the children, Norman stood to unlock the front door, but all at once, the parents of the children outside rushed in and took their hands. They politely acknowledged Norman and after relating something to the young ones, the children screamed with delight and scurried away with their families.

Peering out into the street, he saw the meager crowd gathered outside of his shop had moved on. In fact, whole clusters of townsfolk were flowing down the street with beaming smiles and springs in their steps, pointing and calling out to one another as they hurried along. Norman raised an eyebrow.

He unlocked the front door and stepped into the street. The excitement in the air was palpable. Norman had only been in town a week and didn't know many people just yet, but when a familiar face passed by, he called out to him.

"Hey there!" he said, causing the man to stumble to a halt, "What's all the commotion? Have the bards come to town?" the man chuckled.

"Bards? No! Didn't you hear? The rich man is back! He's early this year!"

"Rich man?"

"Yes! Wealthier than anyone I've ever known. He comes every year about this time after his travels around the region. For some reason, he passes through our town on route to...well, wherever he goes and always has the best stories to tell!"

Norman scratched his head, a twinge of annoyance pricking at him. If such a man was in town, it would certainly put a damper on his grand opening. But it did sound fascinating. Perhaps the man would be interested in some of his wares.

"Well, that sounds splendid," Norman replied.

"It is! And the stories are just the beginning! He also always brings things from his travels for us. Things from his stories that he gives as keepsakes! How about that?" Now Norman was even more intrigued.

Travel stories? Free keepsakes? He had been through enough business training to know a commerce ploy when he heard one. This rich man was smart. Very smart. And he seemed to have the town wrapped up in some kind of routine which somehow had to pay off. He had to know more. Waving goodbye to his

neighbor as he hurried along, Norman looked back to his shop door and nodded to himself. It was not how he expected to spend his day, but from the sound of it, there was a learning opportunity here. Somehow, he felt this would be a more productive day for his trade than he thought. He locked the door and followed the crowd.

There were little more than a hundred citizens in the town, and it seemed most of them were out following the procession now which quickly crowded the half-dozen narrow dirt roads leading to the front of the settlement.

The townsfolk had already formed lines on either side of the arched gateway leading into town. Indeed, as Norman stood on his toes to look over the shoulders of the crowds, he could see a billowing cloud of dust behind a large cart weighed down by a massing covered heap fastened down with ropes and ties. Two grand horses galloped at its head, and Norman could not look away as they proudly marched through the arched gateway and into the wide section of road the people had cleared. A lone man drove the cart, and he excitedly pulled to a stop.

He stood tall and with a beaming smile, attempted to wave to each person individually as they crowded in close shouting greetings.

“Hello again, everyone! Hello!” he shouted excitedly.

Norman had expected such an accomplished man of industry to wear a fine coat with gold buttons and be carried by a legion of servants on a palanquin, but this was not the case. The man did not fit the image in his head at all. He did look accomplished and elegant, but would not stand out in a crowd were it not for all the fanfare. His attire and cart were nice enough, but not extravagant, and he did not seem to mind the wear and grime of his travels showing on his clothing. This made Norman smile.

“Another sign of a master businessman,” he mumbled to himself. Someone who truly knows money would have a mind not to spend on anything that was not completely necessary; would know the most valuable and profitable things to invest in and leave the rest. Gently, Norman tried to squeeze through the onlookers to get a little closer as the man spoke again.

“Well, it’s marvelous to see you all again,” he said from atop his cart, “just marvelous! I was afraid this year that I would have to be elsewhere, and I would miss you all before the cold season but blessedly I’ve just made it!”

“Won’t you stay with us again?” a middle-aged woman from the front called out, gesturing to her family behind her. Her three children jumped for joy at the suggestion.

“Yes! We can hear more of your adventures!” said the woman’s husband. The rich man laughed.

“I would love nothing more! But I promised the good blacksmith I would stay at his home next. Where are you, my friend?” he said squinting through the assembly, “Ah, there you are!” He laughed as he and the blacksmith exchanged an inside joke of some kind, but soon the rich man stood taller. “I’m so sorry however,” he said, “I regret to say I’m a bit behind schedule and I cannot stay long this time.”

Sounds of disappointment spread through the crowd.

“But don’t worry, I can stay for a bit and of course, I’ve brought all kinds of things to show you! Come! Come!”

He hopped down from his cart and immediately set to unfastening the ties that held his bundle down. Some of the men came and helped which he acknowledged with a nod of thanks and claps on the back. After a moment he pulled the veil from off his pile revealing a highly-stacked trove of boxes, blankets, plants, furniture, and every other variety of goods. Norman’s eyes widened in wonder. The mountain of treasures was certainly impressive.

What line of business was this man in anyway?

The people seemed to be used to this process and did not rush in to grab or inspect anything. Instead, they moved back to allow him room as he began to take each item and explain its significance, origin, and use. He would then call upon a townsman to come take it from him. He knew each man, woman and child present by name, another good peddling practice, and every gift he gave seemed to have a special connection to each.

“For you,” he said to a teenage girl, “a green dress after the fashion of the east!” The young woman’s eyes sparkled as she took it and held it up to herself.

“And for you,” he said, beckoning to another family, “these new blankets made from the finest materials of the plains. Traded straight from the tribes there! I expect your baby has arrived since my last visit. Ah, there’s the little one! Look at him!”

One by one, he distributed his treasures to all, met with hugs and handshakes. A rocking chair of the rarest wood for an elderly woman, dolls for the children, fine tools and utensils for the craftsmen and cooks, and everything else in between.

By now, Norman was beyond intrigued. The man was clearly very wealthy, and there was no doubt he was familiar with a myriad of lines of trade to have so many numerous connections on his routes. Norman grinned knowingly. Yes, and this man was *very* smart. To give so many precious things away to such a small and unimportant town was some sort of tactic, the endgame of which, he could not perceive as of yet. But he was determined now to make this unexpected event pay off for him. He would lose a day of business in his new shop to invest in a lesson from this man that would benefit his own career. He had to speak with him and get any measure of wisdom he could possibly manage.

Norman moved through the crowd strategically as the wares from the cart lessened and the crowds scattered with each exchange, so that he might speak with him once he was finished. This proved to be unnecessary however. It did not take the rich man long to notice him there and he came right to him.

“Now here is a face I don’t know!” he said with a beaming smile.

“He’s just moved into town!” the baker said from behind him. “Opening a wares shop just there down the road, aren’t you, Norman? Norman’s a fine fellow!”

“Is that so?” the rich man asked. Norman nodded and shook his hand. It had a strong grip.

“Well, then! Why don’t you let me meet this new friend,” the rich man said encouraging the townsfolk who had followed to give them some space. “The horses have been excited to see the children again. Go on for a moment would you?”

Those remaining around them happily obeyed. Some shifted back to work, others moved a way off to inspect their new gifts together, and others placed their children up on the horses’ backs as the two of them moved off a short distance.

“What a pleasure it is to meet you,” the rich man said. “This town could use a wares shop after the last moved with their family away north. What a delight you have chosen this place.”

“The vacancy was my luck,” Norman replied, “It’s a good opportunity. This location is far enough from the big cities to make frequent shopping trips difficult for most, but not so far that I can’t drum up an efficient supply stream with much loss of investment. It could be a profitable location if I deal with it rightly.”

He expected this master of industry to have something to say to that, but the old man just smiled and nodded. Norman felt the subject needed to change, but he would not let this opportunity slip.

“Sir, I have a question, if I may.”

“Of course!”

“Exactly what line of business do you deal in? What do you *do* to attain such fortune? Forgive me for being forward, but to be a man of your wealth and reputation is a goal of mine. I am ambitious and educated just as you are, and I must know your secret! Please won’t you give some advice?”

At this, the rich man looked at the ground and scratched his chin in thought. His smile never faded, but it did change somehow. It grew faint and humble but was heavy as though he were flipping through the pages of a vast tome of knowledge in search for the right words. When at last he spoke, his answer surprised Norman.

“I wish I could tell you, but I fear you would be very disappointed. You see, my industry is a difficult one. In fact, there is none harder, and there are few men alive who are capable of doing it. It takes a lifetime of study and more devotion than most are willing to give or it can produce nothing.”

Few men alive who are capable? Norman knew the comment was meant as a deterrent, but it only excited him more. What did the man do, slay dragons? Well, he could learn even that craft if necessary.

“Really?” Norman asked. “Try me! I attended three different schools in two of the largest cities in the land and am fluent in the language of investments, trade, and merchant flow analytics. I finished with top honors and am a very quick learner. I’m good with both my mind and my hands. If you would but tell me, I vow to listen well and learn without preconceptions.”

“I have no doubt you would,” the rich man said, laying a hand on his shoulder. They walked down the road the way Norman had come and stopped at the top of his street.

“I assume you have taken up shop where the last had there?” he asked, pointing, changing the subject again.

“That’s right,” Norman answered.

“And where is your sign?”

“I don’t need one,” Norman answered, proudly. “Not yet. The town will know me quickly on their own, and I can put the money I would use for a sign to other uses with more potential for return. Everything must be done in proper order, you know.”

Again, the rich man did not react to his forward-thinking notion.

“The baker was right,” he replied, “you are a fine fellow, Norman. And a clever one too! I can see you will have much success and happiness here. Is this not good enough?”

“Please sir,” Norman said insistently, “Tell me what it is you do. No challenge is beyond my reach, I assure you.”

With a warm smile, the rich man offered his hand again which Norman took.

“Not this challenge, my friend. I do not wish to disrupt your potential here nor the satisfaction of your labors. For with my trade, once you start down the road,” he looked Norman keenly in the eye, “there is no going back.”

Norman stood in silence for a moment, taking in his words, but before he could respond, a mob of children surrounded him with their new toys, the wake pushing a speechless Norman backward and away.

Norman knew the rich man’s words were sincere. He had done all he could to dissuade Norman seemingly for his own happiness, but the words only amplified his curiosity. What trade would be so difficult that few could do it? If life had taught him anything, it was that you get out of life what you put into it. The man being this wealthy proved the statement to be true and that only motivated Norman more. He had to know.

As the day went on, Norman did not return to open his shop. He stayed behind the townsfolk and watched their dealings with the man for hours with a new eye. Studying him and looking for any sign of the next part of his sales ploy. He had won the loyalty and affection of these people so the next step had to be in motion somewhere.

At length, the men and women gathered around again to say their goodbyes. The children lingered, playing on his wagon and horses but eventually, they departed while several of the townsfolk helped the rich man gather a few supplies for his now empty cart. As the rich man at last climbed upon his vehicle and

sighed, he looked and spotted Norman leaning against the side of a corner house along the road under the shadow of its overhanging roof. The rich man waved goodbye to him.

As soon as he turned his head forward to the horses and the road, Norman moved. He ran as speedily as he could back to his shop but kept the front door locked. Around the back and up the stairs, he ran to his living quarters above. In a whirlwind that took no more than ten minutes, he had packed a saddle bag of food, supplies, and clothing. Soon after, he was readying his own horse for riding.

If the rich man was reluctant to share the nature of his trade in the middle of an excited town, he could respect that. If he wanted to protect his business secrets, he could respect that too. But if one thing got Norman through all his days of schooling in the cities it was determination. He never failed and he never quit until he got what he wanted. There and then, he determined to one day be in the rich man's position, even if he had to put his own business on hold. He would follow him to his estate or wherever he was off to next and beg him to take him as his pupil.

Leaving a 'closed' sign in the front window of his shop, he raced out of town quickly, hoping to not have lost the man by the delay. There were not many roads that split off the main one in this direction but there could be further out depending on where he was going. Carefully, Norman read the ground as he made his way out from town. The mountainous path rose steadily upward and luckily, was damp enough to leave clear signs of the heavy cart's recent path. Fortunately, this small town got few visitors this time of year which made the tracking easy.

On Norman went, being cautious not to give away his presence should the cart suddenly come into view. He was not trying to be deceptive, but rather wanted to keep the advantage of being unnoticed at first so he could plan his approach for maximum effectiveness depending on the circumstances.

A time came when he feared he may have taken a wrong turn after all, but suddenly he spotted the cart and the small cloud of dirt and mud it spawned behind it as it drove steady upward further into the mountains. From here, Norman kept far enough back to only just be able to see him and felt more at ease.

He imagined with no wares left to trade on this journey, the rich man was returning home. If he lived nearby, Norman had certainly never heard of a large castle or property in these parts. Perhaps it was hidden on the side of a cliff or underground? Or maybe he was so wealthy he had the means to hide his location in some other way, which made Norman's pursuit all the more exciting. What would his home look like? How many servants would Norman have to reason with before being allowed to enter? It didn't matter. He would camp outside his walls as long as he needed to.

Night was falling and Norman was worried he would lose the man in the dark if he did not stop to camp soon, but his fears were short-lived. At a certain point, the mountain paths leveled out into a small valley and the rich man's cart took an unexpected turn off the main road and into a divide in the thick trees just wide enough for his cart to fit through. Norman halted in confusion and waited long enough to feel confident that the man would not be coming back out. Fearing he would lose him in the dark, Norman pressed on.

He did not have to go far before finding the man had stopped and was dismounting from atop his cart just off the trail amongst the dense woods. Beside him was a small dwelling tucked against a tall wall of mountain rock. The shack of wood was bigger than a poor man's hut, but not large enough to hold even a family of two comfortably.

Norman smiled at the man's frugality. He was camping for the night at an abandoned shack in the middle of a peaceful forest off the beaten trail rather than an expensive inn. He and this man truly did think alike. A profitable person made his fortune by shortcuts just as much as he did by industry. This he had learned during schooling as well. If these were the kind of difficulties he would need to endure, he was eager

to learn more. Content for the night, Norman retreated from the forest and set camp behind a rock back in the valley, ready to awaken early and continue in his pursuit.

He slept well that night. Too well. For when he awoke, the sun was already well into its ascent. Norman leaped up, throwing his things into his saddle bags hastily and setting off without breakfast.

“Curse you, Norman! You’ve lost him now for sure!”

He raced back to the road, but stopped when he noticed no fresh tracks coming from the forest. A hidden trail within the trees perhaps? The situation was looking more and more like a loss with each passing minute, but he turned and led his horse slower now into the trees.

To his surprise, the cart was still beside the shack, but the man was nowhere to be seen. The horses had been detached and with a little effort, Norman found them wandering and grazing freely within a small fenced-in area which he had failed to see in the dark. The place looked entirely different in the morning light. The mountain wall behind the small shelter was towering but featured a few narrow, well-worn trails around and into it. Nearby, a water wheel spun in a creek, moving mechanisms and ropes that connected into the house. A mountain of firewood was piled beside a huge rack of tools. A clothesline was suspended between two trees with the rich man’s jacket and socks hanging from it. A small stream of smoke was coming from the chimney of the shack. Could he be staying longer than one night?

Tying his horse a good distance away, Norman crept closer as stealthily as he could, stopping every ten steps or so to listen. Before he knew what he was doing, he had covered the entire distance to the shack and was peering into the small window on its side.

No one was within, but the various contents of the room intrigued him. A small mat with a pillow and thin blanket lay in the corner of the floor. Beside it stood a quaint stove with a small burning flame inside and some wooden dishes at its feet with the remains of a simple breakfast. A table only high enough to kneel beside was at the center of the room, littered with hammers and chisels, paper and wax and other odd things. Looms of different sizes and shapes lined the walls and at their feet, lay boxes of threads, strings, beads, dyes and other materials.

Norman quickly jolted from his confusion. Footsteps were crunching through the leaves of the forest floor. He scurried away in a panic and took cover behind a thick trunk just in time to see the rich man emerge from the corner of the shack’s rocky backdrop. He wore only a thin shirt now with cut off pants and sandals upon his feet. He was sweating and carried on his shoulder a heavy basket full of...something. Rocks? On his back was slung an iron pick which he left leaning beside the door as he entered the shack and after a time, a string of rhythmic tinkling sounds rang out.

More fascinated than ever at whatever part of the man’s business this represented and not wanting to be seen, Norman resolved to climb the tree concealing him to a point where he could see down into the shack’s window. He felt bad about his espionage, but he had seen too much to walk away now. The man’s secret method was manifesting right before his eyes!

From his spot in the tree, Norman could see the rich man kneeling at his table and chipping carefully away at the rocks from his basket one by one and carefully extracting something from them.

Ah! Precious stones! This must be one of his secret stopping points along the way of his trade route. Why did he not have servants and workers stationed here? The rocks must be diamonds or some other rare thing to justify this level of secrecy. Well, the secret was safe with him. If anything, the rich man could hire him to manage this station so he could more freely get on his way.

For a long time, Norman watched the man go through each rock, creating a small collection of glittering gems in a cup beside him. He remained at the table still, laboring away, and after another very long while of Norman watching uncomfortably from the boughs, the man stopped his work and stood. Norman had to squint to make out that the man had produced a necklace.

What on earth was he doing? Biding his time before traveling to his mansion? The weather was not poor yet. He could see no reason to delay further.

The discomfort of the tree had run its course, and Norman climbed down on aching joints. But he did not leave. His observations turned from minutes to hours. The rich man went about from task to task, working threads and tools, wood and stone, and then he would disappear for a while in which times Norman snapped to a renewed alertness. He would not want to be spotted and jeopardize their potential business relationship. At one point when the man was gone on some other mystery quest, and the sun was finally starting to set, Norman knew his horse needed tending to, and he himself was tired and sore. He would retire from the woods once more and use the last of his supplies the following day, hoping that the man would at last continue on to his final destination.

In this again, Norman was disappointed. Waking promptly this time, he arrived at the shack when the light was fresh but the man gave no sign of leaving soon. Outside on the far end of the shack, he was chopping down a full-grown tree with an axe. Frowning and confused, Norman spent another dull day in concealment watching the labors of the rich man as he went from one task to the next, never in a hurry, and occasionally humming a soft tune to himself as he worked tirelessly with few breaks. Norman had to resolve to abandon his plan and return home which he did later that same evening. On his way home he could only conclude that the man knew he was being watched and would not continue on until he was sure he was alone again.

When Norman returned to town only a few had noticed his absence and the delay in opening his new shop but even now, Norman was not prompted to do so. The curious rich man at his secret shack plagued his mind and robbed his nights of sleep. What information had he missed? Perhaps he had only one or two royal clients that paid vast amounts of wealth for only a few services. A thousand possibilities ran through his mind, and at length, he was drawn out again on several secret trips to the shack. Over the next few weeks and months, the man never left the place. Each time Norman visited, he found a growing number of goods and wares building in his small shelter. Clothing, furniture, jewelry, blankets, toys...

It all made sense now. The man was a fraud. There was no mansion or castle to which he would retire. There were no servants to which he could delegate. As the winter months came on, Norman's eager infatuation froze into a cold, confused frustration.

Norman did open his business and the patronage was fair. All through the winter he learned the names of the people of the town, and mulled over the so-called rich man's farce.

At last when the snows melted and the spring returned, the day came when shouts of joy rang through the streets again. The rich man was coming. Quietly, Norman closed up shop, walked with the rest of the town to the entrance gate, and awaited the fabulous cart's arrival.

Just as before, the rich man arrived, adorned in his fine coat and boots. Norman understood the wear upon them now. Knew why they were not freshly pressed and sewn. He was a poor man, destitute, even. It was all a ruse. But why?

He would not expose him or destroy the town's fantasy, but he would have a word again with this man and his questions this time would be very different than before.

Norman waited patiently as the man went through the same greetings and gift-givings. He recognized several of the items from the shack including the necklace he had seen that first day from the tree. Again each gift came with an elaborate account of its craftsmanship and historical design origins. As before, each gift came with embraces, handshakes, and conversations of family news and developments. He hadn't noticed the first time the man came to town, but as he spoke with each of them, the gifts and tales seemed to fade as the joy and conversations overtook them.

Eventually, the rich man found Norman in the thinning crowd and smiled as he approached.

“Well if it isn’t Norman!” he said cheerfully, “Glad to see you’re still in town. How has the business been treating you?”

“Just fine, just fine,” Norman replied coolly, “as it seems yours has been yet again.”

“Indeed it has,” replied the rich man with a chuckle. Norman moved in.

“Do you still refuse to teach me of your methods? Do you still insist on leaving a fellow man of the trade out in the dark?”

The rich man’s mood changed suddenly, but his faint smile remained.

“As I said before, it is a trade for very few.” Norman led the man to a quieter part of the street.

“I should say so,” he replied quietly. “You live in a shack in the woods and labor all year. You know no royalty and travel through no palaces. Why do you mislead these people so? Yes, I know your secret. And you were right...it was not one I wished to know.”

The rich man met his eyes, but did not have a look of shock or surprise on his face.

“I thought you might have been too curious, Norman,” he said as he patted him on the shoulder. “You truly are a smart man. But did I lie in what I said? I told you my industry was a difficult one. That there is none harder.”

“You told me it takes a lifetime of study and full devotion or it can produce nothing.” Norman said, impassioned. “You clearly give this little act your every skilled effort, and skilled it truly is, yet what do you have to show for it? Nothing. You have nothing.”

The rich man did not reply, but slowly swept his eyes across the town square. Children ran and played with their new treasures, and the townspeople laughed in the warmth of contented souls. Some noticed his glance their way, and gestured happily toward him, more than one beckoning him over. He brought his gaze deliberately back to Norman’s and placed a hand on his shoulder. “Come with me.”

The man led Norman back to his cart where one last gift lay on the bottom of the wooden bed: A large, narrow shape covered in a purple sheet. Together they lifted at each end and stood it on the ground against the cart. The man removed the sheet to reveal what was beneath: a sign of sanded wood with brightly colored paint that spelled out two words:

Norman’s Wares.

Norman had not considered that he would be included in the rich man’s next round of spoils and he felt a complete loss for words. The sign was of exquisite make and must have taken a lot of time and care. He could tell by its size that it would fit well above the door of his shop. He could picture it there and could not deny it would look grand. He could not help but smile, and a surprised gratitude welled up in his heart.

“Thank you,” he breathed softly, choking just a bit on the words.

“Ah. There is some of my payment,” the rich man said, motioning to Norman’s pleasure. “And what would an old man like me do with riches anyway?”

Norman looked down at the sign once again, but soon shook his head.

“I see now what you mean about full devotion, but...a man cannot be expected to just give it all away. Everything he’s worked for. A man needs to make a living.”

“Of course,” the rich man said, with an understanding tone. “I was also truthful when I said few can do exactly what I do but...” Suddenly, a child ran across the square and tugged at his pant leg. Laughing easily, he lifted the child into his arms.

“Hello, little fellow!” He spoke softly to the lad as the child gazed up at him, softly stroking the old man’s beard. With glistening eyes, he met Norman’s gaze once again.

“...but you’d be surprised how little I’m actually giving up.” He coaxed the child off to his mother and gave Norman a last wink and a smile as he strode away to rejoin the festivities.

The rich man stayed in town through the night this time and echoes of laughter could be heard through the streets into the night as hearths burned within the dark homes. He departed early the next day with a knowing backward wave to Norman. A wave that seemed to say there would always be a place for him in the shack in the mountains.

Norman hung his new sign above the door which looked even grander than he thought it would. When he opened shop the following day, straightening his license on the walls and arranging his wares in a strategic fashion by the window, he found a new child examining the toys in passing as they often did. Norman smiled down at him through the glass and waved. It was one of the young boys that worked the farms a way out of town. Norman paused and thought for a moment then raced to the door and flung it open before the father could pull him along to their business.

“Good morning! It’s Charles, isn’t it?”

The father turned and smiled.

“Yes sir! Fine day, isn’t it?”

“It is. Would you...and your boy like to come in for a moment for some tea? There are some new toys I would like to get a child’s opinion on if it’s alright. Perhaps he can take one home if he can be of help.”

The child’s face brightened as he excitedly looked up to his father. Norman nodded in thought again, then smiled and gave him a small wink.

“Why yes, I’d like that,” Charles said.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Colby Dunn was born in La Mirada, California in 1985 and was soon thereafter moved to Utah. Growing up with four siblings meant there was plenty of imagination in the house and fantasy lured him in at a young age. After serving a proselyting mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Japan and becoming proficient in multiple forms of martial arts, he began writing his first novel, *Crimson Sun*, in 2010. He still resides in Salt Lake City, Utah with his wife and three children.