

# THE SUMMONING SKY

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A ten-minute drama by  
Marshall N. Opie

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

RUTHIE, a caring, concerned mom.

LUCY, Ruthie's mother-in-law.

SAM, Ruthie's 14-year-old son.

## SETTING

A large, open-spaced living room/den/library area.

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*(LUCY dusts framed family photos. RUTHIE and SAM enter the front door of the house. Ruthie is carrying a package wrapped in brown parcel paper.)*

*(Sam walks to a space in the room that is all his own. There are lots of books in his space that he has systematically organized.)*

*(Ruthie removes an urn from the package.)*

**LUCY:** *(Pointing to the urn in Ruthie's hands:)* So how much, Ruthie? How much did you pay for that – that –

**RUTHIE:** It's an urn, Lucy. Isn't it handsome? And it was cheaper than a casket.

**LUCY:** And smaller than a bread basket. Whoop de doo. I still don't want the ashes in the house. They give me the heebie-jeebies. *(Handing Ruthie an envelope:)* You have mail here from Sam's school –

**RUTHIE:** *(Opening and reading the letter:)* I wonder what now.

**SAM:** Where's my book?

**RUTHIE:** Which book?

**SAM:** My book that was here.

**LUCY:** Don't get upset, Sam. I borrowed it.

*(She picks up the book from the table and gives it to Sam.)*

I'm sorry.

*(Sam becomes lost in the book.)*

**RUTHIE:** Why would you touch his book? You know how he is about people messing with his stuff.

**SAM:** That's okay, Grandma.

**LUCY:** I wanted to know what he was reading. What was in the envelope?

**RUTHIE:** Sam's progress report. The grades aren't looking good.

**LUCY:** How can that be? He's always studying.

**RUTHIE:** Yeah, reading and studying everything but his school work. I'm going to have him tested.

**LUCY:** Tested? His father died not even a month ago. Give him time.

**RUTHIE:** "Give him time," you've been saying that for quite a while. I'm concerned. I'd like Sam to make at least one good friend.

**LUCY:** Sam has plenty of friends. Look at all his friends that came to the funeral. Right, Sam?

**SAM:** I want to go for a walk.

**RUTHIE:** A walk? No. You have school work to do.

**SAM:** I just want to walk in the woods and peer through the branches of the trees and look at the sky.

**RUTHIE:** Not now, Sam.

**SAM:** Dad was my friend. If he were here, he would say, "Let's go for a walk, Bud," and he and I would just go out back and walk in the woods. Why can't I go for a walk?

**LUCY:** You miss those walks, don't you?

**SAM:** I went for a walk yesterday.

**RUTHIE:** And that's why you're not going for a walk today.

**SAM:** I'm talking to Grandma.

**LUCY:** Don't talk to your mother that way.

**SAM:** The trees didn't seem to be happy.

**RUTHIE:** That's all right. He won't be going for a walk for a while.

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**LUCY:** Maybe the trees weren't happy because they miss your father.

**SAM:** They didn't seem as tall as they used to.

*(Ruthie opens a box containing ashes and begins transferring the ashes from the box to the urn.)*

**LUCY:** Be careful, Ruthie. Can't you do that outside? I don't want any of those ashes falling on the floor.

**RUTHIE:** They're falling right into the urn, see?

**LUCY:** Maybe the trees aren't as tall because you're not as short as you used to be.

**SAM:** I guess. Dad and I called the woods our avatar jungle.

**RUTHIE:** Avatar jungle?

**LUCY:** It's in the book.

**RUTHIE:** Oh—

**LUCY:** Please be careful.

**RUTHIE:** I've got this.

**LUCY:** I'm curious, Sam. What did you and your dad talk about when you went on your walks?

**SAM:** Different things.

**LUCY:** Did you talk about the book?

**SAM:** Sometimes we did, and other books. Sometimes I didn't want to talk at all, and neither did he. We had a special way of communicating to each other without talking. I knew when he was happy, and I knew when he was sad. Our walks always made us happy.

**LUCY:** What are you doing now, Ruthie?

**SAM:** Are you listening, Grandma?

**RUTHIE:** Finding a place for Tom's ashes.

**LUCY:** Yes, I'm listening. I'm sorry. One second, Sam. Now, Ruthie, I wish you would listen to me. I'd really prefer that we purchase a place to put those ashes in the cemetery.

**RUTHIE:** We can't afford it, and I prefer to have them here.

**SAM:** When I was walking in the woods yesterday, I heard his voice.

**LUCY:** Whose voice?

**SAM:** Dad's voice. I looked up at the sky, and it was summoning me...

**RUTHIE:** What are you talking about?

**LUCY:** Shh. Listen. That's where I went wrong as a parent. The sky was summoning you?

**SAM:** Yes, in a voice like Dad's, calling me to fly like an avatar.

**RUTHIE:** Avatars don't fly; they leap.

**SAM:** How would you know that?

**RUTHIE:** I read it in your book.

**SAM:** (*Angry:*) My book?

**RUTHIE:** I can't read your book, but it's okay with you if your grandmother does?

**SAM:** No.

*(Sam begins to hum, "I'll Fly Away.")*

**RUTHIE:** Please don't hum that.

**SAM:** It's Dad's song.

**RUTHIE:** No. That's your grandmother's song that she insisted be sung at the funeral.

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**SAM:** I like it.

**LUCY:** I do too.

*(Lucy begins singing, "I'll Fly Away.")*

**RUTHIE:** Well I don't.

*(Sam joins in singing with Lucy.)*

Stop it. The both of you stop. They are going to hold you back a year in school!

*(Beat.)*

Stop it!

*(After a moment of awkward silence, Lucy walks and picks up a photograph of a man – it's her son. Ruthie returns to searching for a place for the urn.)*

**SAM:** Hold me back?

**RUTHIE:** Yes, if your grades don't improve.

**SAM:** I want to move on with my class.

**RUTHIE:** You're going to have to stop your daydreaming.

*(Again, awkward silence. Sam picks up his book. Lucy embraces the photograph.)*

**SAM:** I'll try.

**RUTHIE:** You're going to have to do better than try.

*(Ruthie places the urn down.)*

**LUCY:** Not there.

**RUTHIE:** Then where?

**LUCY:** I don't know. Why must you hold on to them?

**RUTHIE:** If you can hold on to old photographs, why can't I hold on to my husband's ashes?

**SAM:** Dad wouldn't take me to see the movie unless I read the novel first.

**RUTHIE:** What are you talking about now?

**SAM:** I thought the movie, *Avatar*, was inspired by the cartoon, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, but Dad thought it was inspired by this novel, *Songs from the Stars*. I think he was right.

**RUTHIE:** Focus, Sam. You can't help yourself, can you?

**SAM:** I am focused. Can't you hear him?

**LUCY:** Hear who?

**SAM:** Dad.

**RUTHIE:** No.

**SAM:** It's like the book. Humans can receive messages from other worlds with advanced civilizations through songs. I can hear him, singing "I'll Fly Away." And now he's saying he's leaving, but he'll always be here for us, and he's sorry. He's very sorry. He does love us all, and he's sorry.

**RUTHIE:** Sam, come here, baby. Please. Can I hold you?

**SAM:** You don't believe me, do you? Do you? You think it's all my imagination.

**RUTHIE:** No—

**SAM:** I'm not crazy, and neither was Dad. You don't understand us.

**RUTHIE:** I'm trying to understand.

**SAM:** You think I'm sick like you thought Dad was sick.

**RUTHIE:** Sick? You're not sick.

**SAM:** Then what am I?

**RUTHIE:** You are brilliant.

**SAM:** Brilliant?

**RUTHIE:** Yes. Like your father, like Mozart, and like Einstein: you are brilliant.

**SAM:** *(Beat.)* You don't believe me that I can hear him, do you?

**RUTHIE:** It doesn't matter if I believe.

**SAM:** Do you believe me, Grandma?

**LUCY:** I believe in you, baby.

**SAM:** But you don't believe me.

**LUCY:** I want to believe—

*(Sam walks towards his father's urn and picks it up.)*

**RUTHIE:** What are you doing?

**SAM:** In the movie, the humans thought that the aliens were primitive and ignorant.

**LUCY:** Sam—

**SAM:** The aliens came from an ancient, rich culture that honored nature and the creator of life.

*(Sam turns to take the urn out the front door.)*

**RUTHIE:** Sam, what are you doing?

**SAM:** I'm listening to Dad. You don't hear him.

**RUTHIE:** Sam, give me that—!

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