

PRAISE FOR BRETT ARMSTRONG

"An intriguing masterpiece of character relationships, marked by deception and betrayal, displays authentic human interactions and motivations on the story's canvas."

LOREHAVEN MAGAZINE

"This book is an enjoyable mystery with a unique plot and engaging characters."

LYNN-ALEXANDRIA MCKENDRICK FOR
IND'TALE MAGAZINE

"Day Moon grabs the reader by the imagination and doesn't let go! I daresay it's a classic in the making."

ROBERT W. WALKER, AUTHOR OF
RANDOM VIOLENCE, KILLER INSTINCT

"One word, Masterstroke. Brett Armstrong's novel Day Moon is the work of a master at the top of his game, a novel that weaves the human condition into a futuristic world filled with mystery and suspense."

MIRANDA PHILIPS WALKER, AUTHOR OF
*THE WELL-MEANING KILLER, GHOSTS IN
THE ER*

"Armstrong's expertise as a computer programming analyst provides a unique backdrop to his masterful storytelling... Elliot and Lara are likeable, realistic protagonists, and supporting characters are complex enough to keep you guessing for most of the book ... Clues and plot twists made the book even more compelling.

ERIN HAWLEY CRONIN FOR LANDS
UNCHARTED

"Day Moon: Tomorrow's Edge Book One by Brett Armstrong is exciting. It is thoughtful, and very well written. The plot makes sense and I didn't feel preached at or that I was being taught. And yet, I did get the point. That is great writing. But no novel will be good if you don't have a hero that you can relate to. I related to Elliott. He is from the future, but he could have been born any time and I think he still would have been likable. His love and respect for his grandfather really spoke to me. Brett Armstrong paints his characters with bold strokes. If you like science fiction and love God, you will like Day Moon."

RAY SIMMONS FOR READERS' FAVORITE

*“O God! Thy arm was here, and not to us, but to Thy arm alone,
ascribe we all.” —William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act IV, scene 8,
line 111*

*This book is dedicated the glory of God without Whom there are no
words worthy of writing and to the incredible father given to me, who
taught me by example what an honorable and godly man is like.*

Tomorrow's Edge Trilogy One

DAY MOON

BRETT ARMSTRONG



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Second Edition

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is the second edition of *Day Moon* and I would be remiss to not mention my incredible thanks to all of the readers over the years who have shown such love and support for this book and the *Tomorrow's Edge* series. When this released, I was still very new to publishing and their encouragement made navigating that sometimes bewildering and frustrating frontier a far better journey.

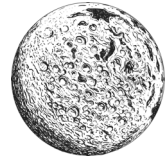
I have to thank the original publisher, Stephanie Griffin, for first taking a chance on this story. Likewise, I cannot begin to express sufficient gratitude to my publisher, Linda Fulkerson and Expanse Books, for stepping in and taking on the *Tomorrow's Edge* series when Clean Reads had to close. This series is dear to my heart and it brings me so much happiness to be able to see it continue to reach readers.

I'd like to thank my editors for putting up with my wordiness and helping me tame a manuscript that needed a firm hand and fresh look. *Day Moon* had enormous potential as a story and your efforts have helped shape it into what I always knew it could be.

My family's limitless support and patience and encouragement make every writing endeavor possible.

Most of all the grace of God daily to have the phenomenal privilege to write the words He places on my heart, however imperfectly, and give glimpses through them of the Way, the Truth, and the Life and His unfailing love and wisdom.

CHAPTER 1 OUT TO LUNCH



“Buy—and do not sell—truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding.”

—Proverbs 23:23, HCSB

RAIN FELL IN A STEADY RHYTHM, light. Just enough to soak one’s clothes, so that the cool, autumn breeze cutting across the mountain campus found its way straight to the bone. Elliott had done his best to avoid this effect by waiting under the portico of Estonbury, the English hall.

She’s late.

Glancing down at his mobile, he let it read his thumbprint and was greeted by an NC Wyeth painting of Robinson Crusoe. The courageous castaway was pointing with an instructive eye to the emerald-plumed parrot beside him. Elliott slid this screen aside and frowned at what he saw. No new messages and she was already ten minutes late. Elliott braced himself against a marble column and slid to the ground.

Come on Lara, where are you?

From his seat at the base of the broad column, he could see down the numerous steps to the street. There was a faint shimmer as a car passed over the magnetic surface. Beyond

loomed the imposing form of the library. Elliott worked in an annex there, a programmer for Project Alexandria. The vaunted global initiative that created a single repository of all human knowledge, from the beginning of recorded history to the present.

Working in the basement was far from the picturesque affair he had imagined when he started. Even now he could see through the library's great glass windows and watch the patrons spread about the impressive upper levels, warm and seated on couches as they were engaged by one digital tome or another.

He told himself he would only forgive Lara's lateness if she arrived in the next ten minutes, so as to not waste his lunch break. Truthfully, he would wait as long as it took to see her.

Running his hand through the long, dark strands of his hair, Elliott sighed. Producing his mobile again, he mumbled, "Time."

The mobile's display lit up again, processing his voice command. A smooth, feminine voice responded, "Elliott, it is 11:25 AM on Tuesday, October 4, 2039."

Standing, Elliott looked around the campus one more time. A few cars hovered past on the road separating the library's side of the campus from where he stood. The cars, brightly colored and of makes and models he couldn't name, made little to no sound as they cut through the rain. Each vehicle followed the road's sudden curve down the hill with flawless precision.

Elliott remembered his grandfather telling him about a time when cars had wrecks and even hit pedestrians from time to time. They used rubber tires and combustion engines, needed fuel refills constantly and rarely traveled over speeds of seventy miles per hour. Those were the uncivilized times, when roads were asphalt and driving left at the discretion of people. Such things were near impossible now. Occasionally cars would have design failures, like the one that had killed Elliott's grandfather. His grandfather had once told him the odds of such a thing were approximately 1:570,080,025; or one in the entire population of the nation.

He couldn't wait any longer. Holding up his mobile, he said, "Call Lara." The virtual screen changed to display a picture of him in the bottom right and in the center a swirl of cerulean rotated as it attempted to reach Lara. Seconds later Lara appeared before him, her mouth set.

"Hello?" she intoned; a hint of anxiety evident in her warm cocoa eyes. Her dark hair was also a bit wavier than normal, but she was, without question, as lovely as ever.

"Hey, how are you?" Elliott answered, careful to avoid the question he really wanted to ask.

"Good," she replied from the other end of the line, a little static interrupting. "Are you ready?"

"Of course, class let out early," he answered. "I'll see you in ten minutes?"

Lara cocked her head to the side. "Of course."

"Okay, well, I guess I'll see you soon."

"That's the plan," she answered and then cut the call off.

Closing his eyes, Elliott took in a deep breath and exhaled slowly. He tried not to read anything into what Lara had said, but he couldn't help wondering.

Sticking his hand out into the rain, he let the cool spears of the drops send chills through his arm. When that wasn't a sufficient distraction for his overactive imagination, he took to watching the few students trekking across campus. A pair with umbrellas stopped at the crosswalk. There were no cars coming, but they had to wait.

It was faint, yet present: the blue lights indicating the magnetic field that both propelled and powered the cars—through induction Elliott had been taught—was active. Those at the crosswalk waited for the strip of road to power down to keep from electrocuting them and stop traffic on approach. Each vehicle was managed by a centralized city operating system which controlled every vehicle within city limits and passed them from city to county and county to state and state to national.

Drivers now had all their travel time to enjoy the scenery, nap, watch the news or a video. Every moment of travel was restored to the user's discretion. Even if his grandfather hadn't related the stories, it got taught in schools. The improvements to civilization which had occurred since the harder times, when Elliott's grandfather was a boy.

In the distance, Elliott could see the reflective silver form of Lara's car approaching. She was stopped at the crossing as expected. The man and woman sauntered at a gingerly pace, absorbed in their own affairs.

Elliott hoisted his backpack over his shoulder. For a few moments, he stretched, feeling his back pop and his muscles strain in a pleasantly pained way. A yawn escaped his lips as he trotted down the steps to stand alongside the crosswalk. The rain pelted him with light persistence, but he didn't mind. Chilly as it was, it felt kind of refreshing. It would wake him from his introspective stupor.

Any time with Lara is worth being awake for.

As the car hovered to a stop beside the walk, the door slid open with a faint whir and inside Lara turned in her seat to face him. A coy smile was his welcome. Her eyes seemed to brighten as they found their way to him. She patted the seat beside her and said, "Come on, get in. We don't want to miss the lunch specials."

Grinning more than he ought to, Elliott hopped into the vehicle, slinging his backpack around into his lap and shutting his door in a pair of what he thought were smooth movements.

"How was your day?" he asked as the vehicle received the command from the system to proceed to the pre-programmed destination.

"Mm, it was fine. How about yours?" she answered as she tinkered with the car's display panel, changing the channel from the talk show she had been watching.

"Mm, the same," he answered mimicking the pitch and tone

of her voice. He shot her a smug glance to defuse any annoyance and added, "It's better now though."

Lara continued working the panel, her fingers moving nimbly over the various options of the interface. At length, she paused her video display and looked directly at Elliott. "So, what did you want to show me? You said it is 'the coolest thing working in that abysmal computer lab has ever offered.'"

"Wow, was I that dorky when I said it?"

"Uh, pretty much, yeah." They both laughed and the silence quickly resumed.

Elliott was genuinely excited. As the library finally followed Project Alexandria's directives, it made the move to all digital materials. But he had encountered an anomaly in the library's collections. A single volume had not been entered into the system. A book of Shakespeare's works, a book his grandfather had left him. One of the last printed copies of such a group of poems and plays left in the country, maybe the world. The Appalachians were not known for being progressive so far as technology was concerned and hesitated to turn over the last hardcopies in favor of the ubiquitous digital versions.

"I have it right here," he said, as he rummaged through his backpack and produced the book. It was hardbound with a faded blue cover showing signs of use. Once stiff, the cover was now soft and pliable and tearing in spots. The gilded circlet around a prominently positioned portrait of Shakespeare had flaked away until only a few specks of gold remained. A faint mustiness clung to the yellowing pages, but Elliott relished the scent. It was a rarity now. Like an exotic spice. As Lara took the book, he jumped straight to the most exciting aspect of the find sooner than intended. "It was my grandfather's."

"No way," she replied as she turned it over in her hands, feeling the worn cover and the rolled spine's willingness to open and bare its contents. A few of the age-softened pages tried to drift out.

“What are these?” she asked, eyeing a particular page that was loose from the binding.

“Oh, it was apparently my grandfather’s favorite sonnet. It’s called, ‘Day Moon’.”

“Hm, I’ve never heard of it,” she mulled, scanning the poem’s lines. “The collections of sonnets I’ve seen have never included that one. Your grandfather had a pretty rare copy.”

Elliott flashed an approving smile. Lara seemed duly impressed.

“Have you told the university yet?”

“No, not yet,” he said, as he retrieved the tome from her.

She remained quiet for a moment before saying, “You know, it’s going to be pretty hard to keep secret. You are the grandson of one of Project Alexandria’s designers.”

“Don’t remind me,” Elliott said, harsher than he intended.

He stared down at the floor of the car. Lingering at the edges of each day was the pain of his grandfather’s absence. Less acute, but no less real was the feeling daily, in spite of being “honored” by participating in this important global effort, it was devastatingly boring and perhaps even a bit unethical in his opinion.

It may have been absurd trying to keep the book a secret to save it from being recycled as the rest of the hard copies of books continued to be. That phase of the project was meant to be a good faith gesture, showing sincerity in the project’s mission to make all human knowledge equally and universally accessible to all mankind. To “hoard” a copy, as it was termed, undermined the project’s ideals and ignored the earth renewal policy which dovetailed with them.

Saving the planet one book at a time ...

“Well, let me have a read when you finish,” Lara said, softly.

Before he could respond, the car’s audio system chimed twice and informed them they were preparing to dock at their destination. The vehicle made a final sharp, but smoothly actuated turn, rotated 360 degrees, and slid back into a docking

slot. The doors opened and the car's synthesized voice, with its thick British accent, bade them, "Enjoy your stay at ... Rosa's Cafe."

Stepping out, the lot looked peculiarly empty for the hour. A small eatery, Rosa's was hardly one of the chain spots or the student union, but it usually had more people than this. The pair jogged over to the front door, with Elliott unzipping his hooded sweatshirt and holding it over them in an attempt to keep Lara's hair covered so it wouldn't get too wet and frizzy.

The chivalry went unnoticed, however, lost in the surprise of the moment. On the door was a small, plain text sign with bold, auburn lettering: "CLOSED."

No elaboration or explanation.

"Well," Lara started and then paused. Elliott quickly tried to mask his disappointment. He doubted he was very successful.

"Why don't we head back to the campus and grab something to eat there?" Lara suggested. "We can take a look at your grandpa's book."

"Sounds great," Elliott replied. As they walked back to the car, he couldn't help but look back on the restaurant and wonder what caused the sudden closure.

"Elliott?" Lara inquired from half inside her car, a faint furrow in her brows.

"Hm, oh, sorry," he said and offered a quick grin as assurance he was okay. But on a certain level he wasn't okay. The closure of the diner was a small thing, but when he had glanced back, he felt the strangest feeling of *déjà vu*. As though he'd seen the old-fashioned sign already. It was like a half-remembered dream, and he had the oddest sensation that the part following had not been a pleasant one.