NAME: Alexia

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GENDER: female

AGE: 18

Country: United Kingdom

NAME OF THE EBU NATIONAL MEMBER PROCESSING THE ENTRY: RNIB

NUMBER OF WORDS IN THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE: 876

# Louis

Ever since we moved into that house, I heard strange noises very late at night. They were so faint and indistinct that for several weeks, I thought I was dreaming. Tap tap tap tap tap tap click. A noise that reminded me of the noise the measuring machine makes at the hospital. More clicks and tap; the measuring machine again. I'd had enough. "Must be the wind rattling in the roof," I told myself firmly. And yet, I took up a torch and followed the sound. Down the stairs to the ground floor and then down again to the basement. As soon as I put my foot on the first step, the noise stopped. Silence. I continued down. A scuffle. Then silence again. I entered the basement. Darkness, cracked only by a sliver of moonlight that winked through the tiny window.

The basement was small and we only really used it for storage. Mainly for books and papers. And we rarely went there. Why should we? It was nothing special. The walls were lined with shelves tightly packed with books. There were more in stacks on the floor. I don't quite know who or what I was expecting. My mother with her sewing machine? My father doing some sort of DIY? There was no one there. I was just about to turn and go back up to my bedroom, putting it all down to the wind or some sort of illusion when the tallest pile of books came tumbling down. And sitting in the middle of all the books was a child. He was about my age, although small. He had thick black hair, longer than you'd expect a boy to have. He was wearing jeans and a t-shirt and although his eyes were open, I knew at once that he couldn't see me. On his lap, there lay an amazing machine: no bigger than an average-sized modern mobile phone, it was golden metal with three buttons or keys arranged in a row on each short side of the rectangle. Another lay slightly separate from the three, again on each side, and in the middle, there was a slightly longer button.

"I- I'm so sorry," he stuttered. "I didn't mean to... you know..." He trailed off.

"Now, listen," I said, trying to control my amazement, "what's your name? How did you get in? Where is your family? What are you doing here? And what does that thing DO?" Without thinking, I pointed at his strange device.

"This?" He fingered it lovingly.

"Yeah."

"It's a writing instrument. Haven't you ever seen anything for writing Braille?"

"Yeah, but not like that."

"It will be a life saver."

"So what's your name?"

"My name? Guess."

"What?"

"Guess what my name is."

"But there are MILLIONS of names you could be called!" A mysterious smile passed across his face.

"Go on."

I thought for a moment. Then, all of a sudden, I knew. "Louis," I said. "Your name's Louis."

"Correct," he said.

"Why did I know that?"

"Because," he replied, "you know of Louis Braille. And so you associate the name Louis with Braille. A blind boy comes into your house with a Braille device and you automatically think of the name Louis." There was more to it than that, but I decided to get him to answer a few of my other questions first.

"How did you get in?" I asked again.

"My secret," he said.

"No, seriously. All the doors are locked. It's physically IMPOSSIBLE."

"Nothing is impossible," he grinned.

"Right," I said. "In that case, let me ask a slightly different question: WHY did you get in? I mean, why did you come here?"

"I've been coming here," he said, "for a while." He smiled again.

"But WHY? And how?"

"Why? because I knew that I would be safe here to carry out my inventing. The streets aren't fit for it. I chose this house because I could feel as I passed, looking for a place to work, that it was comfortable. And how? I have my methods."

"You’re inventing?"

"This," he said, holding up his device.

"You didn't invent that."

"I did," he said. "That's the noise you heard at night. It was me working."

"Where are the tools?" I tested. He spread his hands.

"These are my tools. And now I've finished, I can go and leave you to sleep in peace." He rose.

"Wait!" I still don't know why I said what I said after that. "Keep in touch."

"Oh, don't worry. I will." One last time, he smiled. Then, he was gone. Gone through the door. I followed him as silently as possible to see how he got out. But he heard me and turned back. "You need some sleep," he whispered. "Go back to bed, Celia." And I did.

When I got back to my room, I lay in bed and thought. How on Earth did he know my name? Had I mentioned it? No. And then I knew that I had recognised him. He had disclosed his identity plainly, and I hadn't even understood at the time! Of course! Louis. I had just been speaking to a boy my age who was one of history's most important figures: Louis Braille.