

# Miss Mitchell's Comet

by Kristi Holl



Illustrations by Giuliano Aloisi

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## Chapter 1

October 1, 1847

Lucas sat with his parents in the Mitchells' home. Their neighbors had invited his family over for dinner.

Lucas grinned at Maria Mitchell. Their parents were talking about the beautiful weather they'd been having on Nantucket Island. But Maria and Lucas were more interested in the stars that lit up the night sky. As darkness fell, Maria slipped away and climbed the winding staircase to the observatory her father had built to study the stars. Moments later, Lucas followed Maria.



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Level P

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Maria was looking through the telescope when Lucas walked in. “Lucas, come and tell me what you observe here,” she said in an excited voice.

Lucas looked through the telescope and said, “I see a small star.”

“I don’t think it’s a star,” said Maria. She ran to the stairs and shouted down, “Father, come quickly. I think I’ve discovered a new comet!”

Mr. Mitchell raced up to the observatory. He peered through the telescope and said, “I think you are correct, Maria.”

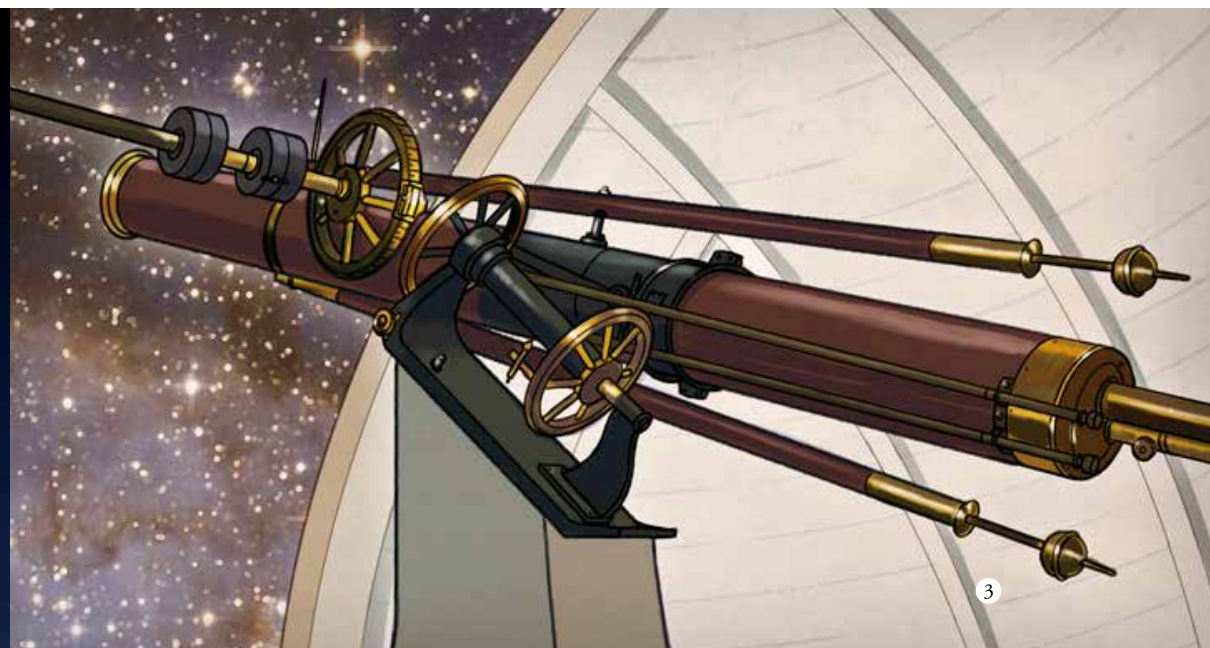
## Chapter 2

“I’ll write a letter,” Mr. Mitchell said, “to my friend at the Harvard observatory. He says there’s a prize for people who discover comets.”

Maria’s smile faded. “Father, you know the scientific community won’t welcome a woman astronomer.”

“But your discovery *must* be recognized!” Lucas said.

Maria looked at the telescope pointing to the sky and finally said, “You’re right, Lucas. In fact, I’d like you to help me check the position of the object tomorrow night. If it has moved, I’ll know for sure it’s a comet.”



## Chapter 3

October 2, 1847

Maria spotted the new comet again the next night. Sure enough, it had moved since the night before.

“Now what?” Lucas asked.

“I’ve made up my mind,” Maria said. “I will try to win that prize.”

Lucas grinned. “You’ll be famous, Maria!”

And she was. Maria Mitchell’s discovery won her a gold medal from the King of Denmark. She became the first woman member of an important group of American scientists and writers. Today, we remember her as the first American woman astronomer.



**Level P**

Literary

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