



The DreamVisioner

a life designed to impact the world

Book One

S. Leigh Young

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

By S. Leigh Young

MacAbee didn't usually tip off his competition, but in this case, he decided to give Garrison Yoshida a call and let him know what Weston was up to. Yoshida was very influential in the beltway, with the largest lobbying firm in the city. A lot of his clients were foreign interests and included global corporations and governments, along with a few domestic business groups. He and MacAbee had started their careers at the same firm so they occasionally helped one another. Of course, MacAbee wouldn't mention his access to the report and, since the phone call may be monitored, he was very careful with his language.

"I just got wind of something brewing in the senate," MacAbee told him. "I consider it to be extremely important to our – interests."

"Is that so?"

"Yes...very important," Macabee stressed.

"Say, how's that beautiful wife of yours? Maybe you should bring her to dinner at my place. How about tonight?"

"What time?"

"Seven o'clock sound okay?"

"Fine, we'd love to come," MacAbee replied. "See you tonight."

MacAbee knew the dinner invitation would probably never be offered, if Yoshida didn't think it was worth hearing what he had to say. No matter, he didn't care that Yoshida sometimes acted as if he was better than everyone else. MacAbee phoned his

wife, to let her know. “Wear that blue dress...the one I like so much,” he told her, loving to show her off.

Since the subject matter was rather sensitive, MacAbee waited until after the meal to discuss it. He followed Yoshida into his private office, near the back of the house and closed the door.

“So what’s up?” Yoshida asked.

“It’s Weston. She’s on the war path again.”

“Should I prepare for battle?”

“I think you’ll want to, after you hear this,” MacAbee replied, lighting the cigar Yoshida offered.

MacAbee explained Weston’s plan, leaving out names and specific details. He did, however, make it clear that both of them were targeted.

“Does she have proof?” Yoshida asked, taking a long drag off the expensive Cuban cigar.

“From what I hear, yes.” MacAbee lied. He knew for certain she had proof, but kept that to himself.

They were both silent for a while, contemplating the best way to handle the situation. Aware that Yoshida was not known to use violence, MacAbee didn’t want to divulge his own theories about the best approach, so he waited for Yoshida to speak first.

“So, you think this has the potential to put us out of business?”

“I don’t know,” MacAbee replied, “but it’ll sure as hell put a dent in the clientele list.”

Yoshida nodded and stood up. He took a sip of brandy and walked toward the window. MacAbee remained seated, watching him.

“What do you plan to do?” Yoshida asked.

MacAbee squirmed and watched the smoke rise from the cigar. “I’m not sure,” he replied. “Are you open to some creative thinking?”

“Maybe,” Yoshida replied. “What do you have in mind?”

They tossed around a few possibilities and finally settled on one that MacAbee suggested. Yoshida wasn’t comfortable with it, but what choice did he have? It was either that, or he could sit back and let twenty years of hard work go down the drain, and of course, there was the possibility of prison, which neither of them mentioned. Both men were confident they could stop the report and keep their reputations intact. They’d managed to survive this long and it wasn’t because they were stupid.

The following morning, Jake and Jennifer set up the equipment in the conference room and awaited the arrival of Senators Weston and Cameron. A few minutes before nine, Senator Weston’s secretary entered the room and informed them that the presentation would have to be postponed.

“Is anything wrong?” Jake asked.

“The senator went out to her car this morning, at her house, and all her tires had been slashed. They also spray-painted some very foul words all over the car,” she replied, shaking her head in disgust. “She thinks it was probably just some kids, but hers was the only car with damage, so I’m kind of worried.”

They discussed the possibility that it might be a warning of some sort, but she told him the senator was adamant about not reporting it to the police. She didn’t want it in the papers.

They went back to Jake's office and worked for a while, but the events with Senator Weston's car weighed on his mind. It was obvious that certain people had suspicions about the project, including Steve Pennington and probably his boss, Senator McKenzie. There was also Rick Belham in the House. Who else? What did they know? He thought, perhaps, Joe might have some advice, so he sent Jennifer on some errands, locked the door and contacted Joe in the usual manner.

DOES THE OPPOSITION KNOW ABOUT MY PROJECT?

INDEED

HOW MANY?

SEVERAL

WHO?

THEIR IDENTITIES ARE UNKNOWN TO ME

THEN HOW DO YOU KNOW?

I SENSE THEIR FEAR

Jake considered this for a moment, wondering what kind of fear Joe was referring to.

WHAT KIND OF FEAR?

ANGER AND WORRY

WHAT WORRIES THEM?

INPRISONMENT

Ah! If they were afraid of prison, then they were probably guilty of something mentioned in the report. He decided to be sure.

ARE THEY MENTIONED IN THE REPORT?

INDEED

BUT YOU DON'T KNOW NAMES?

NO

HOW DO THEY KNOW ABOUT THE REPORT?

THEY ABSORBED THE INFORMATION

What? Absorbed the information? What the hell did that mean?

HOW?

THAT IS NOT KNOWN TO ME

WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM?

THEY ARE PLOTTING

Plotting to do what? Was he in danger? Was Weston in danger? Suddenly, he felt a shiver shoot up his arm and his imagination was almost carried away, but Joe cautioned him against that.

DO NOT THINK FEARFUL THOUGHTS

Of course Jake knew what he meant. Fearful thoughts could draw more fear, so he shook his head and tried to forget it.

OKAY. WHAT ARE THEY PLOTTING TO DO?

THAT IS NOT KNOWN TO ME

Apparently, Joe could sense certain thoughts and emotions, but couldn't grasp a lot of details. Even so, Jake was glad to verify the opposition was up to something.

AM I OR SENATOR WESTON IN DANGER?

I DO NOT SENSE THAT PRESENTLY

ARE JENNIFER OR CAREY IN DANGER?

I DO NOT SENSE THAT PRESENTLY

ARE THE PLOTTERS DESPARATE?

I DO NOT KNOW

ANYTHING ELSE?

YES. REMEMBER IT IS A DREAM.

If only he could! After thanking Joe for his insights, he signed off, trying to sort it all out. What was the best approach? Maybe he should stop worrying and ask for the truth to be revealed, like Dee was always suggesting. He closed his eyes and tried to see the black wall, but static was in the way. He figured the static was there because his mind was still full of confusion and anxiety. How could he clear his mind? Quickly, he dialed Dee's number and explained the exchange with Joe.

"So you're worried about being in danger?" Dee asked.

"Yes, wouldn't you be?"

"I'd clear my thoughts and command the fear to recede," she replied.

"I tried that, but it didn't work," he said. "Can you help?"

"Why don't you stop by on your way home? I'll meditate in the meantime and see what comes to me."

Jake agreed, put everything in the safe and left the building early. As he approached his car in the dark garage, he noticed an edgy feeling. Did they send a warning to him too? Checking the car over carefully, and finding nothing out of the ordinary, he jumped inside and drove to Dee's house.

"Did anything come into your mind?" he asked her.

“I saw a hazy vision,” she replied. “There was a similar one the other day, but I wasn’t sure what it meant.”

“What kind of vision?”

“I saw three people, but no details, just their energies and emotions. I felt a lot of fear surrounding them, but I can’t pinpoint it.”

“That sounds a lot like Joe’s comment,” said Jake. “Can you tell if they’re male or female? Anything at all about who they might be?”

“I’m afraid not,” Dee replied, “but I did feel it was connected to you.”

Great, he thought. Now what? He figured, he should let the senator know, but he’d have to explain how he learned about it and that would be rather awkward. No, he couldn’t do that. All of this was too bizarre to mention. As if Dee was reading his mind, she offered a suggestion.

“I don’t think you should mention this to Senator Weston or the others.”

“I was just thinking about that,” Jake replied, amazed at her cognitive abilities. “She’d probably think I’m going off the deep end.”

“That’s not why I mentioned it. It’s important not to introduce more fear into this. If you tell her, she might be afraid and that could be dangerous.”

“Senator Weston? I don’t think she knows the meaning of fear,” he said with a snicker. “She’s about the most fearless person I know.”

Dee sat down and closed her eyes for a few minutes, as Jake waited in silence. He envied her ability to clear her mind so quickly, wishing he could do the same.

“I sense some apprehension around the Senator,” Dee reported after opening her eyes. “I don’t think she’s extremely afraid, but I have a feeling there is the potential for it.”

Jake agreed to follow Dee’s advice and keep the information away from anyone who may be a target of the plotters. He also wondered what Dee thought about the idea of a body guard.

“Body guards are for fearful people,” she said calmly. “If you feel you can’t control the fear, then I suppose it would make sense.”

“I was thinking about the senator, not me,” Jake told her. “But if I suggested it she’d wonder why, wouldn’t she?”

“If you continue to think about potential danger, it could draw fearful events to the situation. I really urge you, Jake...try to work on dissolving that fear. It’s very important. Remember, it’s an illusion and concentrate on peaceful thoughts.”

He stroked his chin, as he walked around the room, attempting to understand. “Are you sure this method works?”

“Yes, I’m sure,” she said. “But, like I said, if you can’t dissolve the fear....do what you have to do.”

On the drive home, he continued to intellectualize, not entirely comprehending Dee’s message. How could he concentrate on peaceful thoughts at a time like this? He should be taking precautions, shouldn’t he? The notion that he could project fear onto himself by his thinking, was so foreign that he found it incredible, but he also trusted Dee. And, it had worked with getting over Regina and dealing with Carey, so maybe it was worth a try, even though, this was a much more serious situation.

He spent the rest of the day in a battle with his thoughts. Reaching a point of peace, he’d feel much better, but gradually the fearful thoughts would creep in again.

How did they absorb the information in the report? What were they plotting to do? Who were they? What steps should he take to protect himself and the senator? At times, he was consciously unaware of his thoughts, until they reached a point of extreme discomfort. Then, he would force himself to think of something else. He tried to think about the upcoming trip to Hawaii and the way Jennifer's tiny hands would move when she talked. Finally, realizing that his efforts were failing, he went to his bedroom, closed the door and lay on the bed with his eyes closed. He tried to see the black wall, waiting, patiently, for the static to go away. Eventually, he fell asleep and awoke in the middle of the night, with the remnants of an emotional dream in his mind.

He continued to observe the dream and sense the emotions, half asleep but lucid. There was a great deal of fear and apprehension surrounding those in the dream, but he could not see their faces. He didn't sense any fear for himself, but rather for those in the dream. Suddenly, for just an instant, he saw the face of Regina and bolted upright, eyes wide open and reeling. He sat on the edge of the bed, reviewing the experience over and over, so he wouldn't forget. Why did he see Regina? Was she connected to the plotters? Or, was he simply having a nightmare about his own life?

Quickly he got up and went to the safe, pulled out the computer and loaded a blank document. This time he wanted to take notes, so he grabbed a pad of paper and a pen. A few minutes later Joe arrived.

GREETINGS

I NEED YOUR HELP

YOU HAD A DREAM

COULD YOU SEE IT?

I OBSERVED IT

CAN YOU EXPLAIN IT?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

WHAT ARE THE NAMES OF THOSE IN THE DREAM?

I AM NOT AWARE OF THAT INFORMATION

Damn! How could he get a straight answer? He'd learned, over the past few weeks, that he could receive a clearer answer, if the question was formed in a certain way.

DO I KNOW THEM?

ONE

THE WOMAN?

YES

WHAT IS SHE AFRAID OF?

PHYSICAL DEATH

Regina was afraid of death, but so were most people, he thought.

IMMINENT DEATH?

YES

At least this was something more specific. Regina was afraid of imminent death, but why?

WHO IS SHE AFRAID OF?

A MAN

WHERE IS REGINA NOW?

SPACE AND TIME DO NOT EXIST

Of course, he knew that answer was coming! He must think of another way to form the question. Regina must have been a spy!

DOES THE WOMAN KNOW ABOUT MY PROJECT?

I AM UNAWARE OF THAT INFORMATION

DOES SHE KNOW THE OTHER PEOPLE IN THE DREAM?

TWO

Okay, Regina knows two of the people in the dream...at least that was something. But who were the others? They were unknown to him, but two of them were known to Regina. Jake could feel his fear rising again and Joe must have sensed it.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

I'M TRYING

YOU MAKE THINGS APPEAR BY DWELLING ON THEM

LIKE WHAT?

EVERYTHING YOU THINK YOU SEE

The conversation was getting off track. He wanted to know more about the dream...the life lesson could wait.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE DREAM?

IT IS PART OF THE ILLUSION

Right! Regina's in trouble and afraid she's going to die, and it's just an illusion? He couldn't buy that. Jake signed off and placed the computer back in the safe. He took the pad of notes and read them several times, thinking there may be some important clues he wasn't seeing. He made a list of what he'd learned so far:

Three men are afraid of imprisonment

The three men are unknown to me

One or more of the men knows about the report

Regina knows two of the men – she's afraid of imminent death by a man

If only he'd followed up on that suitcase right away, he lamented. Maybe, he could have tracked Regina down. Why did he listen to Dee? Damn! He should have

followed his initial instincts. Obviously, Regina was in some sort of danger. Finally, he went back to sleep, vowing to learn more about Regina's mysterious exit, but when he awoke the next morning, the intensity had waned. Something had happened, but he couldn't figure it out. He no longer felt the strong desire to search for Regina, but why? What the hell was going on?

It was only six o'clock, but he picked up the phone and dialed Dee's number. Fortunately, she was already awake.

"I know," she said, before he had a chance to explain. "You had a dream."

"Yes! How did you know?"

"I just woke up and sensed it," she replied. "It was the same as my vision, except there were four people."

"Yes. One was Regina," he told her.

"I know," she said quietly.

"What should I do?"

"Will you take my advice?"

"I'll consider it," he replied.

"Remember, your fear will bring more fear into your life. Is that what you want?"

"If I can help Regina," he replied.

"Only you can know what's best. If I were in your position, I wouldn't do that."

"What would you do?"

“I would release the fear, remember the illusion and ask for the truth.”

“But someone is plotting to do something – something to do with my project. I can’t let that happen,” he said frantically.

“It won’t happen, if you don’t draw it to the situation.”

Was she right? Was it really an illusion he was creating in his mind? Why had it seemed so real in the dream? If only he could think clearly!

“I don’t know, Dee,” he said. “I think I should follow my instincts and try and help Regina. If something happened to her I’d feel terrible.”

“Why?”

“Because maybe I can do something to stop it!”

“And why is that important?”

“Because...I should help another in need, shouldn’t I?”

“Should you?”

“Stop answering my questions with more questions!”

“But only you can know the answers, Jake,” she said calmly. “I can’t give you the truth. Only you can receive that for yourself.”

“I’m so confused Dee. Last night after the dream, I vowed to find Regina and help her. When I woke up this morning, I wasn’t sure. Why is this happening to me?”

“Because the truth is starting to become part of your belief system. It’s not always easy to push the ego away. It’s very strong and it wants to be in control.”

The ego. The fear. The intense confusion! Was it his ego telling him to find Regina? Was it the truth telling him to forget it? He just didn’t know.

“I’ll see how I feel later in the day,” he said. “Thanks for helping.”

Attempting to reason it out, he wondered if Dee was right. If he pursued Regina, he would probably bring more conflict into his life. Did he want that? Would it put him or someone else in danger? Maybe. He should think this out carefully.

The next day at the office, his mind was reeling with questions. It was apparent that Regina was involved with trying to stop the report, but how? He couldn’t imagine she may have been spying on him. Was she feigning her feelings for him? Had he said anything to her about the project? He didn’t think so, at least no details. She was, apparently, in some kind of danger. Did it have anything to do with the report?

As the day went on, Jennifer noticed something different about him. He seemed preoccupied and unable to focus.

“Is anything wrong Jake?” she asked.

“Uh, no. It’s nothing,” he said.

“You seem distracted. Are you sure nothing’s wrong?”

“There’s a little snag. I’m not sure when this thing’s going to be published. After all these months of work, it’s a little disconcerting, that’s all.”

“I can understand that,” she said calmly. “Do you want to talk about it?”

Yes, he did, but he knew he shouldn't mention it to her. As Dee had said, it could bring more conflict and he didn't need that. But perhaps he should talk to Jennifer – in confidence. Maybe she could help him sort things out. After considering it for a while, he turned to her and she could see the strain on his face.

“Please Jake. Tell me what's going on.”

“Did you finish that book yet?” he asked.

“Almost,” she replied. “Why?”

“I'll tell you what's happened on two conditions. I don't want you to project any fear, and I don't want you to mention this to anyone, understand?”

“I understand,” she replied. “What is it?”

“You have to promise – no fear, no worry, no anxiety, okay?”

“Okay, I promise.”

Jake proceeded to tell her about Dee's visions and about the suitcase and his dream. He didn't mention Joe, but told her some of what he'd learned from him. Jennifer listened quietly and appeared to be calmly taking it all in. When he finished, she sat quietly, saying nothing for a while.

“I'm not worried Jake. It's going to be okay.”

“You think so?”

“Yes, I do. I don't feel any fear or anxiety over it. I'm not afraid of being harmed or anything. Are you?”

“I’m concerned,” he replied. “I’m trying like hell not to project fear, but it’s not easy. I keep thinking about Regina and those men. Who the hell are they? Part of me wants to search for her, but another part of me wants to forget about it. It’s driving me nuts.”

“What did Dee say?”

“She told me, if she were in my position, she’d do nothing and stop projecting fear, but I can’t.”

“Obviously, things are a little different for me,” Jennifer said. “I’m not as emotionally involved as you are. I can see you still have feelings for Regina, and that’s understandable. You’re worried about her wellbeing. There’s nothing wrong with that, is there?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “I’m so confused. I was raised to believe that I should help people in need, but all this metaphysical stuff is backwards to the way I’ve thought, all my life. I’m not supposed to dwell on things I don’t want. If I do, it’ll make them more real.”

“The book also said we can do things to affect the outcome of certain events, without becoming emotionally involved. Maybe you should follow your instincts, but not place too much expectation on them.”

Jake wasn’t sure he was capable of that. He was already emotionally involved and didn’t think he could change that quickly. If only he understood the way the universe works, then he’d know what to do. Maybe Jennifer was right. Should he try?

“There’s also something else to consider,” Jennifer said. “If Regina is projecting fear, she’s going to bring it onto herself, no matter what you do.”

That was probably true, he thought. “Maybe I could help her by taking her away from the danger,” he told her.

“Maybe, but if her fear came back, she might bring it on anyway and then you’d be involved too.”

He still didn’t know what to do, but talking with Jennifer helped. With her, he was able to better reason things out.

“Dee acted as if my worry about Regina wasn’t necessary...as if I shouldn’t worry about her imminent death. I find that so hard to understand.”

“Well, the book says death isn’t real. Dee probably believes that. Do you?”

“I don’t know. I’d like to believe it, but I’m not sure. Do you?”

“I believe there might be an afterlife,” Jennifer replied. “If so, then I guess death is just a transition.”

His thoughts were still swimming in circles. He didn’t want anything to happen to Regina, and yet he suspected her of spying on him, which he still found hard to believe.

“That car accident...” he said, thinking out loud. “When she pulled away from the curb and ran into me. What if it was all planned? What if she was working for those men?”

Jennifer didn’t know how to answer, but tried. “If that’s the way it happened, it doesn’t mean you have to buy in to it. I get the feeling that you’re dwelling on it too much.”

Yes, he knew that’s what he was doing, but how could he do any different? “Maybe I am,” he said quietly. “Maybe I should just forget about Regina. Whatever happens – it’s her illusion, not mine.”

Jennifer touched him gently on the arm, indicating she knew how difficult it was for him. “Can you do that?”

“I guess, I have to,” he replied. “I don’t want to bring any more conflict to this situation, or any harm to the senator or anyone else. There’s a possibility these men could find out and do something to harm Carey, or Dee or.....Damn! I’ve got to stop projecting fear!”

Everything was becoming much too complicated, he thought. There was so much on his mind he couldn’t think clearly. Not only was he concerned about the ramifications of the report, he was also trying to learn a new way of thinking and worried about the safety of Regina, the senator and himself. If only he was certain it was all an illusion, it would make things so much easier. But he wasn’t convinced, even though he was communicating with a phantom and a physic, not to mention having visionary dreams – all of which he never imagined. Suddenly, he thought about Maggie, wishing she was still alive and wondering if her spirit was nearby. Was she aware of him at all? He felt entirely alone, and yet a part of him knew that wasn’t true.

His thoughts were interrupted when the phone rang. The senator wanted to see him in her office.

“I guess you heard about my car,” she said, wrinkling her brow.

“Yeah. That must have been an awful feeling.”

“It was a shock, that’s for sure. It was probably just some kids, trying to get their kicks.”

“You think that’s all it was?”

“That’s what I’m telling myself, anyway,” she replied. He could see a bit of strain on her face.

“Well, just be careful,” he said, hoping he wasn’t projecting too much fear.

She asked him about the status of the report and wanted to know if he had any questions about the new items. “Not so far,” he replied. “Jennifer’s adding them to the video right now.”

“Good. I’m planning to publish it late this summer,” she told him. “I was going to do it earlier, but I’ve reconsidered.”

“You still want us to finish it right away?”

“Yes. There will probably be more things to add before it’s done,” she replied.

“Understood,” he said.

“Jake, there’s something else on my mind,” she said quietly. “Don’t say anything to anyone, but I’m thinking of not running for reelection.”

“May I ask why?”

“I think you already know,” she replied, running her hand over her face. “This report is going to make it very difficult to do my job. I’ll be bombarded from all sides. The media will be hounding me and I don’t think it’s fair to the people of my state or the country.”

For the first time since he’d known her, the senator seemed almost depressed, or was it sadness? He felt as if she’d lost faith in herself, or was too tired to go forward -- or both.

“I recall what you said to me not long ago,” he offered, “something about the country needing me. If you leave the senate, who’ll be there to keep it on the straight and narrow?”

She smiled weakly and leaned on the desk. “I don’t have to be in the senate to do that. I’m starting a new watchdog organization.”

“Well, I’m glad to hear that. I can’t think of anyone better to do it,” he told her, realizing it would mean the end of his job also.

“I was hoping you’d be interested in becoming my assistant. The office will be here in Washington, so you wouldn’t have to move.”

“Hmmm, that’s a great offer,” he replied. “I think I’d like that.”

“Wonderful,” she said with outstretched hand. “You and I work so well together, I think we can accomplish a lot of good out there.”

“I’m honored, senator.”

“By the way, when I’m no longer in the senate, please start calling me Jane, okay?”

Jake agreed and they shook hands, confirming the new arrangement. As he walked back to his office, he realized he was feeling pretty good for the first time in a long while. Without realizing it, he had been concerned that his job might end and now he didn’t have to be concerned about that any more. Thankfully, there was one less thing to worry about.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER NINETEEN

By S. Leigh Young

It was time to come up with a plan, MacAbee muttered to himself, sitting alone in his office. The report was damning and he had to stop it! But how? Obviously, there was more than one copy in existence, so stealing it wouldn't do any good. He could think of only one way to approach the problem, so he called Duke Brashear and asked him to meet him at the club in an hour.

“In your notes you mention Weston lives on a farm in Vermont,” MacAbee said. “I want you to go out there, right away, and take a look around. Take photos and draw a map of the place and all the nearby homes. Can you go today?”

“Okay,” Brashear replied. “I'll catch a flight this afternoon.”

“Meet me here tomorrow night. I'm not sure when that meeting with Cameron's going to be rescheduled, so we have to work fast.”

MacAbee gave him a new cell phone for communicating with him. It was registered in a false name and he also had one for himself. They would be destroyed after the job was done. Brashear did as he was told, taking an early afternoon flight. He got a motel room, rented a car and by early evening was driving toward the farm. The place was situated in a small valley, with a large empty field to the right and another mini-farm to the left, with some sort of construction going on at the house. It looked like the building had been partially destroyed, maybe by fire. He parked on the road and drew a map of the area, noting the location of the construction crew's trucks and equipment. He sketched the trees and fence that separated it from Weston's acreage, then pulled the car forward a few feet, to get a better view of her place. It was entirely surrounded by a four-foot-high chain link fence, a large house near the front and several barns on the back portion of the property. A corral was visible, connected to the barn and two horses were

meandering nearby. He made a sketch of the property, took some photos and jotted down a few notes.

Obviously, someone must be taking care of the horses when Weston was gone, but he didn't see anyone. Just then, he saw a truck pulling away from the construction area. It appeared to be one of the workers. Quickly, he put the car in reverse and backed up to meet the truck when it pulled onto the road. As it passed him, he honked the horn and waved his hand to get the driver's attention. Luckily, the driver saw him and stopped, so Brashear got out and went up to the driver's window.

"Excuse me," Brashear said to the burly man. "I wondered if you could help me out. I'm looking for the owner of that house," he said, pointing to Weston's farm. "I was supposed to look at a horse earlier today, but I was delayed. Did you see anyone there earlier?"

"There was a man in the barn at about three o'clock," the man replied, "but he didn't stay long. I think he was feeding the horses. Whoever lives there isn't home."

"Darn," said Brashear. "That must be the man I was supposed to meet. Well, I'll come back tomorrow. Thanks for your trouble."

"No problem," the man said and drove off down the road.

So he was right, Weston had a man taking care of the horses. He probably came by every afternoon to feed and exercise them. Looking around he saw no one nearby, so he got out of the car and walked toward the front gate. He noted the location of the alarm box next to the gate and added it to the sketch. From that angle, it wasn't easy to see the barn, but he was able to see the horses. One was dark brown with a white mane and was walking slowly around the corral. He grabbed the digital camera from his pocket and took a few snapshots of the house, the barn, the horse and the place next door and then he went back to the motel, where he gave MacAbee a call. They had agreed in advance to carry on phone conversations in generic-speak, in case they were monitored.

“I’ve seen it,” Brashear said, careful not to say anything incriminating.

“Good,” MacAbee asked.

“And I talked to a guy next door. The man I was supposed to meet was there this afternoon at about three o’clock.”

By that time, MacAbee had his strategy all planned out, but Brashear didn’t know it yet. “I want you to stay another night and do something tomorrow,” MacAbee told him. “Buy a rig and trailer and call me when you’re all set.”

“For that big item you wanted to purchase?” Brashear feigned.

“Yes. I just made arrangements. I’ll be storing it for a while.”

“There’s a potential problem that may alarm you,” Brashear told him, knowing MacAbee would understand the reference.

“Then, buy some tools,” MacAbee said. “Bring a flashlight.” Brashear got the message, loud and clear. He would have to do the job tomorrow night.

“Got it,” said Brashear. “Anything else?”

“That’s it, for now,” MacAbee replied, ending the call.

Brashear knew exactly what MacAbee wanted. Early the next morning, he donned the disguise he’d been wearing since he left Washington. It was a brown long-haired wig and a mustache. With his red hair, he’d be easy to remember, so he always carried the disguise with him. After a quick breakfast, he drove up the road to the right of the farm and turned left at the next intersection, following the road around until he reached the back of Weston’s property. Parking near a grove of trees, he got out and walked toward the chain link fence. There were no houses nearby and lots of trees to hide what he was planning to do. He figured it wouldn’t take long to cut through the

wire, if he had the right tools, so he made a few notes and some observations of the surrounding terrain. He'd have to be sure all the construction workers were gone, but assumed they all left by dusk. Later in the morning, he went to a hardware store, bought the necessary tools and checked the want ads for a truck and trailer. Fortunately, there were a lot of them for sale and by noon he was the new owner of a used, beige pickup truck and a dark green horse trailer. Since he couldn't drive both vehicles, he asked the man who sold him the truck and trailer to return the rented car for him, which he happily agreed to do, as he stuffed the wad of cash into his pocket. Once he had everything he needed, Brashear drove back to the motel and called MacAbee.

"It's all set," he said.

"Fine. When you get back, you'll find a message from me," MacAbee said.

Again, Brashear understood everything. They had a prearranged place where MacAbee could leave messages. It was a neutral location, nowhere near his apartment or MacAbee's office. If the trailer was spotted, there could be trouble, so they planned everything carefully.

MacAbee was the type of person who thought about every possible angle. He was not going to hide the horse anywhere that was linked to him. He learned about a boarding service in Maryland and arrangements had been made by a third party to bring the horse there. Of course, Brashear would be wearing a disguise, using a false name, and paying in cash. And he would change the license plates on the truck and trailer. The horse would be well cared for and Weston would have no idea where it was. He hoped this would provide the leverage he needed. Rarely did he think about getting caught in one of his illegal schemes, but with a United States senator involved, the situation was more risky. But, after all, horse thieves were no longer given the death penalty.

Brashear proceeded with the task of earning the rest of his money. After a quick dinner he got some sleep and at about eleven o'clock he drove to the back of Weston's property, cut the wire fence and formed an opening large enough for the truck to pass through. The tricky part was getting the horse inside. It was not very cooperative, but he

finally managed to get the trailer door closed. He left the farm, unseen, and headed toward Washington just after midnight. While on the road, he considered the rest of his plan. Once the horse was off-loaded, he'd take the truck and trailer to his buddy's place and have them crushed. He assumed MacAbee would leave instructions about what else to do.

Brashear was more nervous than usual. Weston was a high-profile person and if he got caught, it would surely bring some prison time. In all the years of his so-called career he always managed to cover his ass, but this job was a bit different. As he got closer to the drop-off point, he could feel the sweat inside his shirt. Fairly certain he hadn't been seen, he shrugged it off and kept going.

Earlier the same evening Jake met with Dee at her house again. They discussed the situation and went over everything learned from the dream and Joe's messages. Dee was not too eager to talk about it, knowing it would make everything more real, but she finally gave in to Jake's call for help. He was still having problems pushing back the fear, so Dee tried to help him relax and see the black wall, as he called it. When it was evident he was not going to be successful, she decided to meditate and see if anything came to her. When she opened her eyes she reported what she received.

"I feel that Regina will be coming back into your life," she reported. "I'm not sure when, but the feeling is very strong. I also have the feeling that it won't be good for you, if you pursue it."

"Why not?"

"I'm not sure," she replied. "I sense that she's very afraid and might seek your help in some way."

"Is there anything I can do to avoid it?" he asked.

"Yes, but it will require a lot of concentration on your part."

“Oh well, I can forget about that,” he said, snickering. “I can’t even meditate!”

“Then you’ll have to wait until it happens and face it then.”

Great! Something else to worry about. When would this all end? He was very tired of all the stress and anxiety and it was starting to wear on his body. Aches and pains were beginning to appear in places they had never been before. At least he was somewhat prepared for Regina’s possible return. Maybe he could figure out a way to deal with it before it happened.

While Jake was concerned about Regina, the tall bald man from Miami, Danny Sanchez, was talking on the phone to his boss. “I think I spotted her at a hotel by the beach, but I’m not sure.”

“Why aren’t you sure?” asked his boss, who went by the name of Pudge.

“She was blonde, but looked a lot like Regina and she was pretty nervous when she saw me.”

“Yeah? Is she still at that hotel?”

“I think so. I tried to follow her to the room, but she kept looking back. I was afraid I’d be spotted so I stayed away. But she took the elevator to the third floor.”

“Can you pay off someone at the hotel to talk?”

“Yeah, I’ll give that a try,” Danny replied. “Call you later.”

Danny was unaware that Regina had left the hotel that morning and was now sitting at the airport waiting for her flight to Brazil. About an hour after the phone call to Pudge, he learned about it from one of the housekeepers, so he grabbed a taxi and told the driver to get to the airport – fast. When he walked into the waiting area, he looked around and spotted her across the room. Was it her? He wasn’t sure, but it sure looked

like her. Then he noticed something odd. Her face was light skinned, but there was a brown smudge on her neck. It was all he needed to see.

Slowly he made his way across the room toward her and when he was about thirty feet away, she saw him. Panicking, she grabbed her overnight bag and ran toward a hallway on her right. Before he could catch up, she turned the corner and ran into the ladies' restroom and locked the door. There she was again – surrounded by toilets! She pulled out her cell phone and quickly called Brashear, but there was no answer. Where was he? He always carried his cell phone! Damn! What was she going to do now? She tried his number one more time and still, there was no answer, so thinking quickly, she punched in the only other number that came to mind. When she heard Jake's voice at the other end, she didn't know what to say.

"Who is this?" he asked into the silence. "Who's calling?"

Dee was sitting next to him listening and watching.

"Regina! What's wrong? Why are you crying?"

"I'm in big trouble Jake. I need your help!"

"Where are you?"

"I'm in Mexico, at an airport," she replied frantically. "There's a man following me and I think he wants to kill me."

"Kill you? Why?"

"Never mind that now. What should I do?"

A thought ran through his mind in the form of a question. How the hell should he know what to do? She was thousands of miles away!

“Are you hiding?”

“Yes, I’m in the bathroom,” she replied. “I don’t think he saw me come in.”

“Okay, stay calm,” he told her. “There must be an emergency number you can call, or maybe the operator. Tell them to send the police or something.”

“I don’t speak the language very well,” she muttered.

“Great. Tell me exactly where you are and I’ll call the airport from here. What airline are you using?”

“Pan Air,” she replied, “but I’m using a different name. They won’t know me by the name Regina Powell.”

“What name are you using?”

“I...I can’t say,” she said in tears.

“Why not?”

“Jake! I can’t explain now. Please call the airport and call me back, okay?”

Quickly he told Dee what was happening and she made a suggestion.

“Why don’t you give Regina’s phone number to airport security and let them handle it?”

“Good idea,” he said, putting the phone to his ear again. “Regina. I’ll give your number to the airport and then I’m out of the picture. Understand?”

“Okay Jake. Thanks,” said Regina softly.

The call was ended and they went into the other room to Dee's computer to find the number of the airline. A few minutes later, he finally got through to Pan Air and told them about the emergency. They said they would let security know and took Regina's number, after which he hung up, mentally exhausted.

He now realized that his dream had been right. And all of Dee's visions and Joe's warnings – they'd all been verified. A few minutes later, he realized he was shivering slightly, so he rubbed his arms and tried to focus. Dee was watching him closely and talking to him, but he couldn't hear what she was saying.

"Huh? What did you say?"

"I asked how you're feeling," she repeated. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah...I'm okay. Its just so.....weird...everything is coming true..."

"You handled it well Jake. I'm proud of you."

"Thanks to you," he said with a weak smile. "No telling what I would have done, if you weren't with me."

"You would have been fine," she assured him. "You have more control over your thoughts and emotions than you think."

He wasn't sure about that. He still felt weak and shaky, but was also happy that part of the drama was over...at least for now. He wanted Regina to be safe, but he still didn't know why. She had hurt him a great deal and was, apparently, being paid to spy on him. Why should he care so much?

"Jake, you care about her because you're a good person," Dee said, as if she read his mind.

"Do you know everything I'm thinking?" he asked.

“No, of course not,” she replied, chuckling. “But your emotions are right there on the surface and I can’t help sensing it.”

He nodded and pulled the cell phone out again. After punching a few buttons he looked up at Dee. “I’ve got her number in the memory,” he said. “I feel like I should call later, to be sure she’s okay. I suppose that’s not a good idea, is it?”

“It’s entirely up to you Jake,” Dee answered. “You can end it all now or drag it out as long as you want.”

He wasn’t sure what he wanted, so he decided to leave it alone, for the time being. At least for now, it was over and he could only hope it would turn out for the best. As he drove home from Dee’s house, he thought of something else. If Regina was working for the men in the dream, he might be able to learn more about them from her. He knew Dee wouldn’t recommend it, but she didn’t have to know everything. Or, would she find out anyway? Would it manifest into something he didn’t want? He filed the idea away in the back of his mind for future consideration.

The next morning, he learned from the senator that she was waiting for them to add the new items to the video. When it was finished, she wanted to reschedule the meeting with the Leader. She hoped he could have it done before he left for Hawaii at the end of the week. Jake told Jennifer about it and they dug in their heels, working late for the next three days. During that time he’d been tempted to call Regina and find out if she was okay, but wasn’t sure if it would backfire on him. Thankfully, he was too busy to think much about it, until he and Carey reached Hawaii and he had a chance to relax.

Tiki and her husband Doug were always glad to see them. They had a nice house near the beach in Maui, with extra bedrooms. Jake couldn’t believe he was actually out of Washington for a while. The first two days were a whirlwind of activity and catching up. There was little time to be alone and rest, but on the third day, he told everyone he wanted to spend the day lying in the sun alone. After lunch, he took a beach blanket and found a secluded place on the sand, where he could see the waves and soak it all in. Of

course, he took his cell phone in case Carey needed him, but it turned out he didn't use it for that. He couldn't stand the suspense any longer. He wanted to know about Regina, so he dialed the number and let it ring. No one answered, so he tried once more. After the fifth ring she finally answered.

"Jake?"

"Yeah," he replied. "I...I just wanted to make sure you're okay."

"Yes, I'm fine – thanks to you," she replied. "I'm very grateful for what you did."

"You're welcome," he said soberly. How should he approach the other questions he had in mind? He couldn't say he had a dream, could he?

"How come your suitcase was sent to my house?"

"Oh, the airline lost it. I used your address when I left town, because I gave up my apartment," she answered nervously.

"Someone came in and took it out of my bedroom closet," he said. "Was that you?"

"Uh...no, it wasn't me," she responded. "It was a....a friend of mine. I asked him to pick it up for me."

"Yeah? Well, he picked it up alright! He walked in and took it while I wasn't there."

"He did? I'm sorry, I had no idea."

For some reason he wanted to believe her, but logic told him she was lying. Hearing her voice again, he could feel the old yearnings stirring inside, but vowed he wouldn't get emotionally involved with her again.

"So why did you disappear? You didn't even have the common courtesy to say good bye."

"I'm really sorry Jake," she lied again. "I had to leave quickly. Something came up and I didn't have time to call you."

If only she was telling the truth, he thought, fighting the old feelings again. He still hadn't mentioned the real reason for his call, and wasn't quite sure how to do it. Finally, he decided the best way was to just ask her, straight out.

"Were you spying on me Regina?"

"What?"

"All those feelings you said you had for me. Was it all a lie?"

"I don't know what you mean Jake," she feigned.

"I think you do," he replied coldly. "Who are you working for?"

"No one," she replied. "I don't have a job right now."

"That's not what I mean and you know it," he said, becoming angrier. "Who sent you to spy on me?"

"Honest Jake. I don't know what you're talking about. I do have feelings for you and I hated leaving, but I had no choice."

Again, he didn't believe her. "So where are you now?"

“I’m out of the country,” she replied.

Figuring he might want to turn the tables on her and do some spying for himself, he asked, “Can I see you?”

“Now?”

“Soon,” he said. “I’m on vacation and I can catch a flight to wherever you are.”

“Why would you want to see me again? I thought you were mad at me.”

Was he a good enough actor to pull it off? He assumed he’d find out soon, if he went through with it. Part of him knew it was the wrong thing to do, but he had to know who sent her.

“I still care about you Regina. Sure, I was hurt when you disappeared, but I still want to be with you,” he lied.

While Jake was performing, Regina was conniving. If he came into her life again, maybe she could get rid of Brashear. She didn’t want anything more to do with him and certainly didn’t want to live with him at some villa. After all, she was very fond of Jake and could learn to love him after a while. He wasn’t a bad lover either. There was only one snag – Brashear had the rest of her money. She’d have to figure out a way to get it back and maybe Jake could help with that.

“I’m in Brazil,” she stated. “I’m living here now.”

“I’ll be there tomorrow,” he said, trying to sound genuine. “I’ll call you when I get the flight information. Can you pick me up at the airport?”

“Yes, I can do that,” she replied.

The arrangements were quickly made and Jake called her back that evening. He told Carey and Tiki he was called back to Washington and wanted Carey to stay the rest of the week. That would give him four days to be with Regina. Some how, he would find out who she worked for.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER TWENTY

By S. Leigh Young

Two days before Jake went to Hawaii, Mr. Crenshaw came by to feed Weston's horses and noticed that Spirit was not in the corral or the barn. He searched the property and found an opening in the back fence. Immediately, he knew what had happened. At four o'clock, Senator Weston was in a meeting and her secretary interrupted to inform her.

Instantly, Weston panicked. That horse was her only link to emotional sanity and if anything happened to him, she'd be devastated. Excusing herself from the meeting, she phoned Mr. Crenshaw to learn the details and immediately suspected it was not a random theft. It was probably meant as a warning to stop the report. To keep it out of the newspapers, she told him not to call the police. She also kept it quiet around the office. If Jake knew about it, he'd probably cancel his trip to Hawaii and she knew he desperately needed the break.

After the conversation with Crenshaw, she called a friend in Vermont, a private investigator who might be able to help. John Kinsley was a retired FBI agent who started his own business after thirty two years of service to his country. He specialized in missing persons and marital investigations. Locating a missing horse was something he'd never been asked to do. He probably wouldn't accept such a job, if it wasn't for the fact that a friend was involved. He admired Senator Weston a great deal and agreed to help.

Two days later, his phone call to the senator interrupted her thoughts. "Hello John. Any news?"

"Not much," Kinsley replied. "But I talked to the construction crew next door and one of them remembered talking to a man the day before the horse disappeared."

“A man near my farm?”

“Yeah, he was parked out front and stopped the worker when he was leaving. Said he was supposed to look at a horse at your place, but he’d been delayed. Were you planning to sell a horse?”

“No,” she replied. “What did he look like?”

“He drove a silver sedan with Vermont plates and had long, brown hair and a mustache,” Kinsley reported. “You know anyone who fits that description?”

“No, I’m afraid I don’t.”

He went on to explain that the construction crew had several security cameras and he had reviewed the tapes. He was able to make out a beige pickup truck and a green trailer, but the camera was too far away to see the license numbers or the man’s face, however he did have long brown hair.

“So, we know it was a beige truck, a green trailer and a guy with long, brown hair who stole the horse at about midnight,” he told her. “I checked with the Department of Motor Vehicles, to see if anyone recently registered a truck and trailer, but no luck there. There are a few other things I can pursue, if you want me to keep going.”

“Yes,” she replied. “Please keep looking and keep me posted.”

The following day Kinsley called her back and informed her he had made a photo print of the truck and trailer from the video tape. He checked with some of the gas stations around the area, to see if anyone remembered it.

“I finally hit pay dirt a few hours ago,” he said. “It’s a Union station over on Third Avenue. They said the guy came in to gas up the day the horse was stolen and he matched the description of the long haired man. Unfortunately, he paid cash.”

“So how does that help?” she asked.

“They also have cameras,” he replied. “I went through the tapes and got the license number of the truck. It was registered to a man named Jarvis Westler out on Packard Road. I gave him a call and he told me he sold the truck and trailer the same day to a long haired man with a mustache. He was paid cash and the guy asked him to return his rented car for him.”

“Did you get his name?”

“Yeah, but it’s phony. Looks like this guy really covered his tracks.”

“So now what?” she asked, disheartened.

“Well, the guy probably wore gloves, but I can check for fingerprints on the fence,” he replied. “I can talk with some of the neighbors, but most of them were probably asleep at that hour.”

“John, I should let you know that this may not be a random thing,” she said. “I’m working on something very sensitive and it might have something to do with that.”

“Can you elaborate?”

“Not on the phone,” she replied. “Can you come to my office?”

“Sure, I’ll fly down tomorrow. See you then,” he replied and the call was ended.

While Weston was on the phone with Kinsley, Duke Brashear was at the wrecking yard, making sure the truck, trailer, tools and cell phones had been destroyed. His buddy informed him the job had been done the previous day and there was nothing left that could be identified. Brashear handed him a wad of money and went back to his apartment. All the way home, he thought about his upcoming meeting with MacAbee

and the final installment he was about to receive. Soon he'd be able to join Regina in Brazil.

MacAbee was quite happy with the way things were proceeding. He heard from the senate insider that Weston hadn't mentioned anything about her horse being stolen, so, apparently, she was keeping it quiet -- exactly what he expected her to do. Spencer was on vacation and the report to Cameron had been postponed again. MacAbee had made sure of it. This time it was a snag in Cameron's schedule.

The horse had been dropped off at the stables in Maryland and was safe and sound. There were no immediate plans to get rid of it, however things could change, if necessary. He was letting Weston stew for a while and soon, he would send her a message. He was working on it at his desk when Brashear called.

"I got rid of those items we discussed," said Brashear. "When do I get paid?"

"It's not over yet," MacAbee said. "Meet me at the club tonight."

Brashear agreed, but his patience was wearing thin, wondering when the job would ever end. Regina wouldn't wait forever. He had spoken to her a few days earlier and learned that she barely escaped the man from Miami. When airport security arrived, he ran out of the building and got away and Regina was hidden away in Brazil, waiting for him. Of course, she didn't tell him about her phone call to Jake.

That night Brashear learned the rest of MacAbee's plan and he wasn't too happy about it. He wanted him to participate in an act of extortion with a United States senator. If they were caught, it would mean the Federal penitentiary -- not exactly the place he wanted to retire. MacAbee's fate was already on the line, having spent the last fifteen years blackmailing senators, so stealing a horse didn't seem all that serious to him.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Brashear asked.

“I have no choice,” MacAbee replied. “That report has to be stopped, or I’m out of business...the gravy train will come to a screeching halt. Besides, this is easier than asking for a ransom -- there won’t be any money changing hands. If she involves the cops, it won’t do her a damn bit of good. There’s no way anyone will know who did it.”

“I’m not too sure about this,” Brashear said. “It sounds a little too risky to me. At this point, all we’ve done is steal a damned horse. Now you want to make demands – not a good idea.”

“You want the rest of your money?” MacAbee asked coldly.

Of course, he wanted the money. He needed it to start his new life with Regina. With that much money, he’d never have to work again. Reluctantly, he agreed to go along with it, but only if extreme caution was exercised. Brashear also knew there was little choice in the matter. If he didn’t agree, MacAbee would have him killed -- there was no doubt about that.

“We have to cover all our tracks – backwards and forwards, or you can count me out,” Brashear blurted, knowing it was an empty argument.

“Don’t worry,” MacAbee said. “The plan will be foolproof, or we’ll find another way.”

MacAbee wanted to make sure Weston got the message loud and clear and he showed Brashear the extortion note that did just that. If the report wasn’t canceled within three days after the note was delivered, the horse would be killed and Brashear would be the one to make sure she got the message.

The next day, John Kinsley reported to Weston’s office, as agreed. She explained, in generic terms, about the report, while Kinsley took notes and asked questions.

“I know you can’t divulge what’s in the report, but can you give me some names?” he quizzed.

“I’d rather not,” she replied. “If they found out I hired you, I’m afraid they’d kill my horse.”

“It’s just a horse,” Kinsley said, staring at her.

“He’s more than just a horse, John,” she replied. “I can’t explain it, but he’s my best friend. I know that sounds silly, but it’s true. If anything happens to him, it’ll be the last straw and the bad guys will win. I can’t let that happen.”

She was right. He didn’t understand how she could place the wellbeing of a horse above her position in the senate, but then he never liked horses. She was paying him to do a job and it wasn’t his role to play moralist. “Well, give me something to work with here. Who else knows about the report?”

“One of my staffers, Jake Spencer is doing most of the work. He’s on vacation in Hawaii until next week. Jennifer Mackie, in the graphics department is helping him.”

“This Spencer – is he trustworthy?”

“Very,” she replied. “I’m sure neither of them had anything to do with this.”

“Can Jennifer tell me anything useful?”

“I doubt it, but I can call her in, if you want.”

“Yeah, please do that,” he said, shuffling some notes on this lap.

Jennifer was summoned to her office and after explaining that she wasn’t to reveal any details about the report, Kinsley interviewed her for about a half hour. Unfortunately, she wasn’t able to provide any useful information. Neither of them was

aware that she knew about Regina. She had promised Jake not to say anything, and she kept her word, reluctantly. Later, however, she was worried that she'd done the wrong thing, so she tried to reach Jake by phone. He didn't answer, so she called his emergency number that evening – Tiki's home number.

"I'm sorry, he's not here," Tiki told her. "He was called back to Washington yesterday."

Confused and worried, Jennifer thanked her for the information and ended the call. If Jake was called back to Washington, why wasn't he in the office? She decided to wait until the next day. Maybe he'd show up at work. Just before she went to bed, her cell phone rang. It was Jake.

"Hi, my sister-in-law said you called."

"Oh, hi Jake. Where are you?"

"I wanted some alone, time so I told everyone I was called back to work."

"Oh, well I was a little worried about you. Anyway, I called to let you know that Senator Weston hired a private investigator. He interviewed me today and I had to lie to him."

"Why did she do that?" he asked.

"Her horse was stolen and this guy, John Kinsley, is trying to find it."

"What's that got to do with you?"

"He thinks it was stolen by someone mentioned in the report," she said. "I promised you I wouldn't tell anyone about Regina and about your dream, so I lied to him. Did I do the right thing?"

Jake was sitting in the airport in Brazil, waiting for Regina. He wasn't sure what to make of the stolen horse, but the senator's suspicions may be correct. Should he ask Jennifer to stay quiet? Should he phone the senator himself? Closing his eyes he could see the static flying everywhere. Soon, he would be with Regina, but he wasn't sure how quickly he could get the information he wanted. Finally, his decision was made.

"Just keep quiet for now," he told Jennifer. "I'll call the senator."

Jake's mind was spinning. He knew there were three men who were plotting to stop the report and two of them were known by Regina. He'd better call the senator right away, he thought, so he punched in her private number.

"Senator Weston, this is Jake. I just got a call from Jennifer."

"I'm sorry she called you, Jake. I didn't want to bother you on vacation."

"No, it's fine. I'm glad she called. So someone stole your horse?"

"Yes, I have a private investigator working on it," Weston replied. "This morning there was a note on my apartment door. It's a message from the guy who took my horse."

"What's it say?"

"He says my horse will be killed within three days, if the report isn't canceled. I'm sick about this, Jake."

"Okay, don't worry," he tried to assure her. "We've got three days. I'm on my way right now to get some information that may help. I'll call you back soon."

Before she could ask any questions, he ended the call and noticed a blonde woman approaching. At first, he didn't recognize her, but, as she came closer, he realized it was Regina.

“Hello, Jake,” she said, smiling, arms extended.

“You look....different,” he said. “What’s the disguise for?”

“I’ll tell you about it later. I have a taxi waiting out front,” she replied.

After a quick hug, Jake followed her and got into the taxi. They didn’t speak until they reached her apartment. “Okay,” he said. “Now, can you, please, tell me what’s going on with you?”

Over the next hour, she concocted an elaborate story by telling him she had lied to him earlier. She wasn’t the person he thought she was. Of course, he already knew that and wanted more details.

“I was married for ten years,” she said. “My husband was an abuser. I went to Washington to get away from him and when he found out where I lived, he threatened to kill me if I didn’t come back to him.”

“Was he the man in the airport?”

“Yes,” she lied. “He doesn’t know where I am now, so I think I’m safe. But I’m still using the disguise, just in case.”

Did her story add up? He wasn’t sure and it still didn’t explain Dee’s visions and his dream. Why had he seen three men and felt that she was connected to the report? He needed to find out, but didn’t want to let on that he knew more than she thought.

“Was he alone when he came after you?”

“Yes,” she replied. “Why do you ask?”

“I just want to know what we’re up against,” Jake replied. “Tell me more about him.”

She proceeded to describe the man from Miami, as if he was her former husband. She explained that he was over six feet tall, bald and very violent. She also told him about the incidents in Mexico, but didn’t mention anything about Brashear, or what she’d done for him.

“When we had that accident, you were driving a very expensive Mercedes,” he said. “Was that his car?”

“Yes,” she replied. “I got rid of it after the accident.”

“So, this guy must have a lot of money,” he said, thinking aloud.

“He’s a wealthy man,” she told him, “but he gets most of his money by playing the horses, not from his job.”

“Where does he live?”

“In Miami,” she replied. “His name is Danny Sanchez and he works for a man named Pudge Hernandez. They’re bad Jake – very bad.”

For the time being, he decided to pretend that he believed her story, even though it wasn’t convincing. He wanted to gain her trust again, but he also had to find a way to learn more. With three days to go, he felt confident he could do it in time. That night he slept on the couch, wanting nothing intimate to take place. She was somewhat confused about that, so he told her he was worn out and just wanted to get some sleep. The next morning she placed a briefcase on the kitchen table, as he was eating breakfast.

“What’s that?” he asked.

“Look inside,” she told him, grinning and running her arms over his shoulders.

He opened the lid and saw that it was full of hundred dollar bills. There must have been thousands of dollars! He looked at her, baffled, and asked for an explanation.

“I stole it from Danny,” she lied. “That’s one reason he’s looking for me. And I know where there’s more.”

“More? You mean you want to steal more money from him?”

“Why not? I’ve earned it, the way he treated me all those years. He used to beat me up, Jake. I had to go to the hospital four times – broken bones, broken nose. He hurt me bad, Jake.”

Could he believe anything she said? Suddenly it occurred to him that she was asking him to help her steal from this guy, Danny. Of course, he would never get involved in anything like that, but it might help to lead her on for a while.

“So where’s this money now?”

“It’s in a suitcase in D.C,” she told him. “Danny’s got a friend holding it for him...twenty five thousand dollars. The friend felt sorry for me, so he called to tell me about it.”

“A suitcase? It wouldn’t happen to be the one that was taken out of my closet would it?”

Slowly she nodded and put her hand on his shoulder, tenderly. “Yes, I already took that money once, but the airline lost the suitcase on the way to Mexico. The money, here in the briefcase, was in two other suitcases that didn’t get lost.”

“So how did Danny know find out it was in my house?”

“I don’t know. I’ve been trying to figure that out,” she replied.

Believing that Sanchez already knew about him, he stood up and walked around the room, trying to think. Was there any truth to any of this? If her story was correct, he was definitely in danger. Thankfully, Carey was safe in Hawaii. Was any of this connected to the report? For some reason, he wasn't sure. A part of him wanted to believe Regina, but another part told him to be cautious. Dee had also warned him about her and so had Joe.

Later in the day Regina, wanted to do some shopping and asked if he wanted to come along, but he said no. He lied, saying he was tired and wanted to take a nap. After she left, he searched the apartment for clues that might help him learn who the three men were. In one of the dresser drawers, he noticed a cell phone, hidden beneath some clothing. It wasn't the one she used to phone him, because she had that in her purse. He saw her put it there, before she left.

He brought up the phone menu and clicked on the icon, for the list of calls. There were at least a dozen calls, over a span of ten days, all to the same number, so he wrote the phone number on a piece of paper, put it in his pocket and placed the phone back in the drawer. A further search for clues turned up nothing, but he had a feeling the phone number was important. He formed a plan to call it from a phone booth, so his cell number couldn't be traced. Later that evening, he made an excuse and left the apartment to make the call. A man answered.

“How ya’ doing baby? Is everything okay?”

Obviously, he couldn't answer, or the man would know something was wrong, so he quickly ended the call. That was a stupid move, he thought. He should never have made that call. Now the man was alerted that something might be wrong. Was he in over his head? He thought, he probably was. He had no experience at this type of thing, so he tried to clear his mind and think of what to do next. Of course, the man would probably try to call Regina back so, he ran back to the apartment and walked inside. She wasn't in the living room, or the kitchen and her bedroom door was closed. He put his ear to the door and could barely hear her talking.

“I didn’t call you Duke,” she said.

“But it was on my special phone,” he replied. “The one I use only to talk to you.”

“Well, it must have been a wrong number,” she suggested. “The phone’s been in my drawer for two days. I have to go now,” she said, ending the call.

Jake wondered if she would suspect him of making the call. He hoped not. When the call ended, he walked outside on the balcony and lay back in the lounge chair, trying to appear casually disinterested. A few minutes later, she joined him, but said nothing about the call. The tension in the air was thick as molasses, but both of them pretended nothing was wrong.

So now, he had one bit of new information. She was involved with a guy named Duke and Jake had his phone number, but what good would it be? Apparently, in order to learn more about the three men, he’d have to pretend to help Regina steal that money. It was the only way he could get her to provide a name.

“I’ll help you get the money, if that’s what you want,” he told her. “You’ll have to tell me where it is. When I get back to D.C, I’ll find it and get it back to you.”

“You’ll do that for me?” she asked, feigning appreciation.

“I told you, I care about you,” he lied again. “But, if I’m going to do this, I better leave tonight. There’s a flight out at midnight.”

Together they worked out a plan for Jake to get the suitcase back. She gave him Brashear’s name and address and told him where he was hiding it. “It’s in the spare bedroom under the bed,” she told him.

From the airport, he called the senator and told her he’d be in D.C. the next day and he may have some information. By midnight, he was boarding the plane, with

Brashear's address in his pocket. Realizing he needed to get some rest, he asked the flight attendant for a pillow and went to sleep, thinking about what to do when he arrived home.

Brashear had a bad feeling about the hang-up call and Regina sounded a little distracted on the phone, as if she was under pressure. The next morning, he called a contact who worked for the phone company and asked her to find the location of the phone where the call originated. It was a phone booth in Rio de Janeiro, located a few blocks from Regina's apartment. Someone had his private number and they probably got it from her. Had she given the number willingly? Did the man from Miami find her? Would he come after the rest of her money? Something was very wrong and he had to think quickly.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

By S. Leigh Young

While Brashear was figuring out what to do about the mysterious phone call from Brazil, Kinsley was trying to pry information out of Senator Weston, again. He needed names, but she still refused to divulge them. She informed him about Jake's phone call and asked him to wait until he arrived.

"He may have some information," Weston reported. "He'll be here this evening. I'll ask him to call you at the hotel when he arrives."

In the meantime, Kinsley made a few phone calls and learned more about the incident with Weston's car. The police still had no leads and they assumed it was a random act by some wayward kids in the neighborhood. It happened all the time, so they weren't too concerned, even though a senator was the only one involved. Finally he gave up and went back to the hotel to wait for Jake's call.

Dee Harvey was still receiving hazy visions connected, in some way, to Jake, but the scenes were in constant flux. There was a great deal of fear in all the visions, but the first one had only two men and one woman, and the woman was Regina. Sensing the third man had been murdered, she saw his energy surrounded by flames. On the day that Jake was to arrive back in D.C., another vision appeared with three men, again, but the third man was not the one who was killed....it was Jake! Apparently, he had been unable to resist the temptation to help Regina, or was it something else? She couldn't exactly pinpoint her feelings. She could see him with Regina, but his attitude toward her was not a condescending one. Slowly the scene transformed into something different. He was on an airplane and saturated with fearful thoughts. Knowing she might possibly have a limited affect on the situation, she envisioned a white light, surrounding him for protection. She also felt a strong urge to contact him, so she punched in his cell number.

"Jake? Are you okay? I've been receiving some odd visions," she said.

“I’m okay, Dee,” he replied. “I’m on my way back to D.C. I should be there in a few hours.”

“I saw you with Regina,” she told him. “I don’t want to inject more fear into the situation, but I feel you should know. One of the men in the earlier visions is dead – I think he was murdered.”

“Did you say murdered?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“How do you know he was murdered?”

“The feeling was very strong, and I don’t question my feelings,” she replied. “He was killed in a fire of some sort – maybe a car accident, I’m not sure. I could see flames and spinning tires.”

“Any idea who did it?”

“No, but I had the feeling it was one of the other men, or maybe both of them.”

“It wasn’t Regina, was it?”

“No, I didn’t get that feeling,” she replied, “in fact, I don’t think she knows about it.”

Her news didn’t help him feel much better, but he was glad to know Regina hadn’t murdered anyone. After the call was ended, he was unable to get back to sleep, thinking about the man connected to the report dying in a fiery crash. Obviously, this whole matter was more dangerous than he imagined.

After arriving home, he immediately called the senator at her apartment and asked for the name and number of the investigator. He made the call right away.

“Is this John Kinsley?”

“Yes, are you Jake?”

“Yes, Jake Spencer. Senator Weston gave me your number. I have some information that might bear on her case. Can I meet you somewhere right away?”

Although it was late, Kinsley invited him to his hotel and they met about an hour later. Jake handed over Duke Brashear’s name and address and told him there might be a connection to Senator Weston’s horse, but he wasn’t certain.

“Can you fill me on why you think it might be connected?” asked Kinsley.

“Well....it’s kind of complicated,” Jake replied. “I’m afraid you’ll have to trust me for now.”

“Okay, I guess I can do that. The senator has a lot of faith in you, so why shouldn’t I?”

“Thanks. I’d like to go with you to Brashear’s apartment. I assume you’ll be going there tomorrow.”

“Do you think this guy’s dangerous?” Kinsley asked.

“Uh, yeah. He probably is,” Jake replied, recalling Dee’s phone call.

“But, you’re not sure?”

“I’ll just put it this way – assume that he’s dangerous and probably owns a weapon.”

Kinsley nodded. “Well, you can come along if you want, but I’m not sure it’s a good idea.”

“I really need to go with you,” Jake pleaded.

“Is there something important you’re not telling me?” Kinsley asked, wondering why Jake was so eager to put himself in danger.

Jake nodded. “You probably won’t believe most of it.”

Kinsley scratched his forehead and walked slowly around the room. Jake seemed like a genuine fellow and yet there was something odd about his demeanor. He seemed anxious about something.

“Try me,” Kinsley said.

Jake told him about Regina and all that had happened in recent days. He also mentioned Dee and her visions of the three men and the fiery crash, about the suitcase and his hang-up call to Brashear. “I’m not sure if Brashear has anything to do with the report,” Jake told him, “but if he’s one of the three men in Dee’s vision, then he’s definitely connected in some way. At this point, I just don’t know for sure. He may just be a friend of Regina’s ex-husband.”

“So let me get this straight,” Kinsley said. “There’s a suitcase under the bed in Brashear’s spare room and it contains twenty five thousand dollars that your girlfriend wants you to bring to her in Brazil, right?”

“Yes, but she’s not my girlfriend anymore. I pretended to go along with it, so I could get the guy’s name and address,” Jake told him, noticing that he didn’t seem convinced.

“And the psychic saw three men and your ex-girlfriend together in a vision, and they were connected to the report?”

“Yes,” Jake replied. “I didn’t know Regina very long. I guess she was being paid to spy on me.”

“Well, there’s our lead right there,” Kinsley stated. “All we have to do is contact the girl and question her. Do you think she’ll cooperate?”

“I don’t know,” Jake replied. “If her story is true, she’s got her ex-husband trying to kill her and this guy Brashear who is apparently trying to help her. Neither one of them are exactly upright citizens.”

“But she trusts you, right?” asked Kinsley.

“Yeah, I think so.”

“So, give her a call and ask her to fly back to D.C. Call her right now.”

“Now?”

“Yeah, use your cell phone,” Kinsley nudged.

“If she suspects I’m working with an investigator, she’ll disappear again.”

“Then, tell her you miss her – I don’t care! Find a way to get her back here.”

Jake punched in Regina’s number and let it ring for about a minute, but there was no answer. “What now?”

“Try again in half an hour. Keep trying until she answers.”

“We’ve only got two days left,” Jake lamented. “She’s not going to pick up and leave Brazil that fast.”

“Then, I’ll have to go down there and talk to her,” Kinsley said. “I’ll call the airline now.”

“Before you do, I’ll call the manager of her apartment building and make sure she’s still there.”

“Fine. You do that,” Kinsley retorted.

Jake didn’t think they had time to pursue Regina. With only two days left, he felt they should stay in D.C. and try to find Brashear.

Kinsley thought about the long and complicated story and wasn’t sure if it was believable. A psychic supposedly told Jake there were three men plotting to stop the report and they were connected to his ex-girlfriend, Regina, who was linked to Brashear. Something didn’t add up. He still wasn’t sure Jake was on the up and up, but why would he concoct such a weird story, if it wasn’t true? And there was another haunting question – why didn’t he inform the senator about all this? He decided to ask.

“I wanted to tell her,” Jake replied, “but it seemed so far-fetched. I wasn’t even sure if I believed it myself.”

The explanation was somewhat plausible, but Kinsley decided to keep Jake close by, so he agreed to allow him to go with him the following day, but first, he wanted to meet with the senator and fill her in on Jake’s very strange story.

“Meet me at the senator’s office at noon tomorrow,” Kinsley told him, hoping he could meet privately with the senator before Jake arrived.

After Jake left the hotel, Kinsley gave Senator Weston a call at home. She was awakened out of a restless sleep, but wasn’t at all concerned about it. “I need to see you first thing in the morning,” he told her. “Jake was just here and told me some things I find hard to believe. I want your input before I proceed.”

“Did he have anything helpful to give you?” she asked.

“I’m not sure – that’s why I want to talk to you first,” he replied. “I’m gonna’ get some sleep now and I’ll see you in the morning.”

Before he went to bed, Kinsley called Jake to see if he’d been able to get any information about Regina.

“I was just going to call you,” Jake replied. “I talked to the apartment manager and he said she moved out. Apparently, Brashear told her to leave.”

“And I bet it’s all because of that stupid hang-up call you made,” Kinsley shouted. “Let’s hope Brashear hasn’t disappeared too.”

Jake knew he was right. It was a stupid thing to do, but it was done now and he couldn’t change it.

Early the following morning, Kinsley and Weston met in her office, as agreed. After hearing Jake’s wild story, the senator was baffled. She didn’t understand why he hadn’t mentioned any of this to her. Had she been wrong about Jake? No, it wasn’t possible, she thought, but this woman, Regina, concerned her. Just before Jake arrived, Kinsley listened to her emphatic opinion.

“There’s no way Jake has anything but the best of intentions,” she declared adamantly. “He’s the most dedicated person I know. He’s been working, night and day, on this report, for months now.”

“Then why didn’t he tell you about the woman?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” she replied, rubbing her brow. “Maybe he was afraid I wouldn’t believe it.”

“And why did he make that call to Brashear? He says he hung up, but that could be a lie. They could be working together.”

“I’m sure it was an innocent mistake,” Weston replied.

“Yeah, that’s the explanation he gave me,” Kinsley stated. “So, you don’t think he’s working undercover for the opposition?”

“Absolutely not,” she said adamantly. “Jake isn’t capable of something like that. He just wouldn’t do it.”

Kinsley still wasn’t convinced but, for the time being, he agreed to give him the benefit of the doubt. Jake showed up just before noon and, when he learned Kinsley had told the senator about Regina and the visions, he felt the need to explain it to her, but Kinsley had other plans. “You can explain it later,” he said gruffly. “If you’re coming with me, let’s get going.”

A short while later, they pulled up in front of Brashear’s apartment building and Kinsley informed Jake he was planning to approach him face on. He took his pistol out of the glove box and stuck it inside his jacket. “Are you sure you want to go with me?”

Jake nodded. “Yeah. I’m sure.”

“Fine. Then let’s go,” Kinsley said, getting out of the car. They proceeded to the third floor and located Brashear’s apartment. It faced the center of the complex and was open to the outside, overlooking a grungy swimming pool, in the central area below. Kinsley pulled out his weapon and motioned for Jake to stand back. He knocked three times, but there was no answer. After the fourth attempt, Kinsley was ready to give up and told Jake there was nothing he could do without a search warrant.

“I’m going to talk to the apartment manager,” Jake said, heading for the staircase. Kinsley followed and knocked on the manager’s door on the ground floor. An obese, older woman opened the door and asked them what they wanted.

“Is there a tenant named Duke Brashear living in apartment 301?” Kinsley asked.

“There was, but he moved out this morning,” she replied. “There was a moving van here at six o’clock – woke everybody up, the idiot.”

“Did he leave a forwarding address?”

“Hell no,” she replied. “I was barely able to get him to pay the back rent.”

“Did he pay in cash?” Kinsley asked.

“Yep, just like he always did. Say, who are you anyway, the cops?”

Kinsley explained that he was a private investigator, seeking information about a case he was working on. He showed his identification and she agreed to let them inside.

“I had a feeling that guy was up to no good,” she told them. “He was always coming and going at all hours of the day and night. He wasn’t selling drugs was he?”

“Uh, no, at least not that I’m aware of,” Kinsley replied. “Did the moving van have a company logo on it?”

“No, it was just a white van....big thing, with some Asian guy driving it.”

“Can you tell us anything about the people who visited him?”

“Never saw no visitors,” she replied, and then she added, “expect one. There was this real funny looking fella, who came over everyday for about a week. He’d stay in Duke’s apartment all day and leave late at night, then come back the next morning. Then, suddenly, he just stopped coming.”

“How long ago was that?” Kinsley asked.

“The last time I saw him was a few days ago.”

“Can you describe him?”

“Long, brown pony tail, wire-rim glasses, probably about five-six, skinny,” she said. “He looked like a hippy, or something. That’s what made me think of drugs.”

“Did he have a mustache?” Kinsley asked.

“No, I don’t think so,” she replied.

“Can you describe what Brashear looks like?” Kinsley asked, taking notes.

“Duke? Oh, you can’t miss him! He’s tall, with curly red hair and freckles,” she added, chuckling. “He’s got a tattoo on his right upper arm – a black widow spider.”

“Do you know what kind of car he drives?”

“It’s a dark blue sedan, not sure what model it is,” she replied, scratching her ear, as her greasy hair hung over her cheek. “I’ve got the license plate number – you want it?”

“Yes, that would be very helpful,” Kinsley replied. After she gave him the license number, he asked another question. “Do you think you could let me take a look around his apartment?”

“Uh, no, I couldn’t do that,” she replied, “not without a warrant. Besides, I went in there before he left and it’s empty. You wouldn’t find anything.”

“When are you planning to have the apartment cleaned?”

“Tomorrow,” she replied. “I already got someone who wants to move in.”

Pulling out a hundred dollar bill and placing it on his knee, he asked if she'd be willing to wait a few days to have the apartment cleaned.

"Uh, well, sure, I guess I can do that," she said, taking the money and shoving it into her blouse. "But you can't get in without a key."

Kinsley put another bill on his knee and looked at her. "I'm sure you can loan me the key in the morning, can't you?"

She nodded and grabbed the money. "Sure, mister. Whatever you say."

In the car, Kinsley told Jake he'd come back in the morning to gather DNA evidence and fingerprints. "Maybe this Brashear has a record. I'm sure it's not his real name and it wouldn't hurt to look through some mug shots. I'll stop at the police precinct. I have a friend there who can run a report on his car. Maybe I can track it down and find him that way, but I doubt it. This guy is pretty crafty. He must be a professional. He knows how to cover his tracks."

"A professional? You mean....a hit man?"

"Maybe, I'm not sure, but he sure knows his way around."

"Maybe he's the one who murdered the third man," Jake suggested. "Dee said he died in a crash. Should I go through the newspapers for the last couple weeks -- see if I can find anything about a death from a fiery crash?"

"Good idea," Kinsley said, grinning. "You're smarter than you look."

"Gee, thanks," Jake replied, sarcastically.

Kinsley looked at him again and asked, "Say, do you think that psychic can describe any of these men?"

“I don’t know,” Jake replied. “Do you want to meet her?”

“Yeah, give her a call,” Kinsley replied. “You can do that while I check on this license number.” Kinsley pulled up in front of the police precinct and got out, leaving Jake alone to make the call to Dee. She agreed to talk to Kinsley, but didn’t think she could give him anything useful. When they arrived at her house, she greeted Jake with a hug and was obviously very glad to see he was safe. After she was introduced to Kinsley, she invited them into the living room. She was home alone, so they had plenty of privacy.

“Jake told me what you need,” she said to Kinsley. “I’m afraid the visions are very hazy. I can’t see details, just energy fields, and a few thoughts and emotions.”

“But you think these three men and Regina are connected to Senator Weston’s report, right?”

“Yes, that came through very clearly,” she replied.

“Is there anything else that might be important?”

“Like I told Jake, there’s a lot of fear surrounding them. I think they’re trying to stop the report and they’re afraid of getting caught.”

“Yeah,” Jake said. “They’re afraid of prison.” Dee looked at him with confusion and Jake winked at her, then she remembered that he’d learned it from Joe. He, apparently, didn’t want Kinsley to know about Joe, so she didn’t mention him. “Yes, prison is definitely on their minds,” she added.

“Have you had any visions about the senator?”

“Just one,” she replied. “I didn’t sense imminent danger around her, but I felt she was very worried about something.”

Kinsley thanked Dee for her help and asked her to call him if anything else came through. Jake was somewhat surprised that Kinsley was so open to working with a psychic, but he was later informed that it was not that unusual. Kinsley told him he'd worked with several of them in the past and they'd been very helpful. On the way to the hotel, Kinsley's cell phone rang, so he switched it to the speaker.

"Kinsley here."

"Hi John, it's Margie. I got that license information you wanted."

"Oh yeah, just a minute," he said, handing Jake a piece of paper. "Write this down, will ya? Go ahead Margie."

"The plates belong to a 2009 green Toyota. Your guy must've stolen them. They belong to Celia McPherson, 1233 West Humphrey Avenue. She's listed in the phone book. You want her number?"

"Sure, why not?" Kinsley replied, cussing under his breathe. Jake wrote down the phone number, while Kinsley thanked Margie and ended the call.

"So, I guess that's a dead end, huh?" Jake asked.

"Pretty much," Kinsley replied. "She probably doesn't even realize the plates are missing or changed out. Damn, this guy is good."

"Sounds like you almost admire him," Jake snickered.

"Well, in a way I do – not because he's a criminal, but because he's a damned smart criminal. It makes the hunt more interesting."

They drove on in silence for a while, until Kinsley spoke again, thinking out loud.

“There’s another little problem. He doesn’t match the description of the guy who took the horse.” He told Jake about the long-haired man with the mustache, as Jake listened carefully.

“What about a disguise?” Jake asked, recalling the way Regina had used one.

“It’s possible – probably likely,” Kinsley replied. “Like I said, he knows what he’s doing – probably planned it very carefully. I’ll make a few calls when I get back to the hotel – see if any of my old buddies at the Agency might have any ideas.”

“What Agency?” Jake asked.

“The FBI,” Kinsley replied. “I’m a retired agent.”

“Well, that’s helpful,” Jake said. “Does the FBI condone paying off someone to enter an apartment without a warrant?”

Kinsley gave him a sideways glance and looked back at the road again. “You didn’t see that happen, did you?” When Jake didn’t answer, he asked again. “Did you?”

“Uh, no, I didn’t see a thing,” Jake replied, shaking his head.

“Besides, I didn’t pay her off. I simply put some money on my knee. When we left, I forgot to put it back in my pocket. Darn! It must’ve fallen on the floor.” There was a stoplight just ahead and Kinsley pushed hard on the brakes, coming to an abrupt stop. Jake snickered again, glared at him then looked away. “So that’s how you justify it?”

“Look, I’m not an agent anymore,” Kinsley said, “and even if I was, I can’t get a search warrant for a nonexistent case. The senator wants to keep it private, remember?”

“True,” Jake relented. “Okay, I see your point.”

“It’s good you asked the question though,” Kinsley remarked.

“Why?”

“Because it shows me you’re probably a decent guy,” he replied. “At least I think you’re a decent guy. I still haven’t made up my mind.”

“What do you mean?” Jake asked, squirming.

“How the hell do I know if that story you gave me was the truth? For all I know, you, Brashear and Regina might be working together to squash the report.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Jake roared. “I’ve been hoping to get it published for weeks!”

“What the hell’s in it, anyway? It must be pretty important for all this fuss,” asked Kinsley.

“It’s confidential,” Jake replied. “If you want to know about it you’ll have to ask Senator Weston.”

“I already did. She wouldn’t tell me anything – just that it’s very sensitive.”

“Yeah, it’s sensitive all right,” Jake mumbled. “If it’s ever published you’ll find out.”

“If?” Kinsley asked. “Are you saying it might not be published?”

“If we can’t find the senator’s horse – alive – I don’t know what’s going to happen,” he replied.

“Man! That must be some horse!”

Realizing that Kinsley probably had no understanding of such things, he didn't even bother to reply.

"So, you really think she'd call it off, if the horse is killed?" asked Kinsley.

"I'm not sure, but I know that horse is really special to her. And knowing her, she's probably afraid the next victim would not be a horse, if you know what I mean."

"Uh huh, got it," Kinsley said. "So the psychic sees a murdered man in a fiery crash and you think something like that might happen to her?"

"I hope to God not," Jake replied. "But it does seem possible, doesn't it?"

"Anything's possible," Kinsley said, snickering slightly. "Does this kind of thing happen often in the senate?"

"Not that I know of," Jake replied. "Hey, wait a minute. I forgot about something. There's a guy named Steve Pennington who works for the minority leader. His office is just down the hall from mine. I caught him spying on me outside my office a while back. I wonder if he's connected to all this."

"Great! Now you tell me! I could've checked him out this morning, when I was twiddling my thumbs," he said, snorting.

"You're not going to talk to him are you?"

"Why not?"

"You better talk to the senator first. She might not like it," Jake warned.

"Geez, you people are so damned secretive," Kinsley said impatiently. "How does she expect me to investigate, if I can't ask questions?"

“She and the minority leader are arch enemies. That’s all I’m saying,” Jake explained. “I’m sure she’d appreciate it if you talked to her first.”

“Oh, I get it. I guess I don’t have much experience kissing the ass of a United States Senator.”

Jake stared at him, seething. “What’s your problem, Kinsley? You act like you have a chip on your shoulder.”

“Who me? No, nothing like that. I just love bureaucrats and red tape. It makes things so much more interesting,” he snorted sarcastically.

“Is that why you left the FBI?” Jake asked, suspecting the truth implied in his question.

“I retired,” Kinsley replied flatly. “People do that after a while, you know?”

“I bet you didn’t get along with your superiors, did you?”

“I got along just fine,” Kinsley replied. “And I still get along with them. That’s why I’m gonna’ give ‘em a call here, pretty soon.”

“Can I make a suggestion, before you do that?”

“Sure.....why not?”

“Let the senator know about anyone you mention this to,” Jake suggested. “She may not want you to talk to the FBI.”

“Why not? Is the Commissioner’s name in the damned report?”

“No comment,” Jake relied quietly. “Just ask her, first.”

“Fine! I’ll get the lady’s permission!”

At last, they reached the hotel, Jake jumped in his car and headed home, and it was not too soon to be getting away from Kinsley. He was a bitter old man and he couldn’t understand why the senator wanted his help. Surely, she could have found someone with a little more civility. But apparently, they were stuck with him, so he decided to help, in any way he could. He stopped off at the library and looked through the newspapers for the past two weeks. Finally he came across something that might be important. A man named Kenneth Matthews had recently died in a crash near his home in Georgetown, and the most interesting part of the story included the name of his employer.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

By S. Leigh Young

Brashear phoned Regina again, after Jake left Brazil. “Something’s wrong,” he told her. “That hang-up call came from a phone booth near your apartment. Did you give the number to anyone?”

“No, of course not,” she lied. “Why would I do that?”

“Well, I don’t like this,” Brashear said. “I think you better get the hell out of there. I’m moving out tomorrow just in case someone’s on to me.”

“Where will you go?” she asked, eager to keep track of the money.

“I’ll stay with my sister,” he replied. “I should be getting that inheritance pretty soon.”

“Don’t lose my suitcase,” she warned.

“I won’t,” he replied impatiently. “You just get out of there. I’ll take care of everything else.”

“Damn, I really like it here,” she whined, but she agreed to leave, realizing the hang-up call must have come from Jake. Why would he do that? She couldn’t understand why he would jeopardize the money. Brashear still didn’t know about Jake and she wasn’t about to tell him.

“And get rid of your phones,” Brashear told her. “Take the batteries out and throw ‘em somewhere they won’t be found, like a river or a lake.”

“How will I communicate with you?”

“I got a new number you can use,” he replied. “Call me when you get settled.” He gave her the new private number and Regina told him of her decision to stay in Rio and move to another apartment. She didn’t think Jake was aware of the false name she was using, so staying there seemed safe enough. Knowing Jake wouldn’t be able to find the suitcase and the money, she realized her plan to get away from Brashear seemed hopeless, but she promised herself to find the money and get him out of her life. Of course, it would be more difficult, since she didn’t know where Brashear was going and wasn’t sure if Jake was trustworthy anymore.

Kinsley made an early visit to Brashear’s apartment, alone, and checked for anything that might contain DNA or fingerprints, but found nothing. Again, he told himself he was chasing someone who was very thorough. After he obtained the senator’s permission, he called an old friend at the Agency and asked if he knew of anyone matching Brashear’s description.

“He’s got a tattoo on his upper right arm – a black widow spider,” Kinsley said.

“You know how many guys have a tattoo like that?” his friend, Ray, asked.

“Yeah, that’s what I thought you’d say. This guy’s a professional. He’s probably been around a long time. You know of any red-haired, freckled-faced jobbers in the D. C. area?”

“Not off the top of my head. You want me to go through the files?”

“Yeah, can you do that for me? I’ll owe you a beer.”

“Gee, a whole beer. I better get busy,” his friend joked.

“It’s important, Ray. I need to find this guy soon – like now.”

“Got it,” Ray replied, ending the call.

Time was running out and Kinsley knew it. He'd already checked the extortion note for clues, but of course, there was nothing. It was just a cheap sheet of copy paper printed out by computer. It contained no fingerprints or other evidence, but he didn't expect it would. The note had been taped to the senator's apartment door during the night and the neighbors had seen nothing. Everywhere he turned he faced nothing but dead ends.

He still wasn't sure whether to trust Jake, but there was little choice in the matter. The senator insisted investigation of him was off limits. This entire case was very bizarre and he was running out of leads. Later in the day, he made another visit to Weston's office and spoke with her. "Spencer mentioned a guy named Steve Pennington. He suggested I talk to you about him."

"What do you want to know?" the senator asked.

"He said he was spying on him. Maybe he's involved in this. I'd like to question him."

Kinsley could see that Weston wasn't exactly eager about it, and was still baffled by her resistance. If only she'd give him something to work with!

"I...I'd rather you didn't," she replied. "My relationship with Senator McKenzie is rather strained right now. I don't need any more problems with him."

"Well, who all knows what's in the report?"

"Only Senator Cameron, Jake, Jennifer and myself," she replied.

"Well, obviously, someone else knows or you wouldn't be having all these problems...unless my suspicions about Jake are true."

Again, she emphasized that Jake had nothing to do with it and explained that there were a lot of rumors about the report and there were probably several people who knew it existed, but she was certain no one else knew the contents.

“We’ve only got a little over a day left, senator. Do you want your horse back?”

“Of course,” she replied. “But there must be a way to find him without questioning Steve.”

Kinsley stood up and walked toward the door. “I’m running out of leads. I’ve got one more I can follow up on. Spencer found a newspaper article about a guy who died in a crash. He thinks it might be the one in the psychic’s vision. I’ll check that out and let you know what I find.”

Kinsley left Weston’s office and drove to the library. He wanted to know more about Kenneth Matthews. He sat down at one of the public computers to perform a name search and was surprised to find quite a bit of information about Mr. Matthews. When he died he was employed by a lobbying firm called Jensen Enterprises, so he did a search on the company too. It was located near the Capitol building and appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary – just the usual, run of the mill, company with a wide range of clients. Most of them were banks and insurance companies, but the client names weren’t listed. He checked the phone directory and there were fourteen Kenneth Matthews listed. He printed it out and went back to the hotel to make some calls. Maybe Mrs. Matthews could shed some light on her husband.

After calling twelve of the phone numbers, he finally reached the one he was looking for. Mrs. Matthews agreed to talk to him, so he drove across town and found the house. It was situated near the top of a steep hill and he could see where the car had gone over the cliff. The guard rail was still damaged, but he didn’t see any skid marks. Strange!

Mrs. Matthews invited him inside and offered him some tea, but he declined. Tea was not his thing. Finally he got down to business and began the interview.

“Can you tell me about your husband’s job? What did he do for the lobbying firm?”

“He was Vice President of Legislative Relations,” she replied. “He’d only been in that position for two months. Before that, he worked for another firm in town.”

“Did he mention any problems at work?”

“He was under a lot of stress, that’s all I really know,” she replied. “He was working on something very important, but he wouldn’t talk about it.”

“Who was his boss?”

“James MacAbee, the President of the company. He’s the one who hired Ken.”

Kinsley jotted down the name and continued his questioning. “This thing he was working on – did it have anything to do with the senate?”

“I don’t know,” she replied, “but I’m sure it must have had something to do with the house or senate because that was his specialty.”

“And what, exactly, was his specialty?”

“He had a lot of experience reading and writing legislation. With a law degree, he understood the legalese they always used and that’s why Mr. MacAbee hired him.”

“I see,” Kinsley replied, scribbling a few more notes. “Can you tell me more about this MacAbee?”

“I don’t know him very well,” she replied. “I only met him once – at the funeral. He was very generous; paid for all the burial expenses and gave me a lifetime pension.”

“A lifetime pension? After only two months on the job? That is generous.”

“Yes, I thought so too,” she said. “I’m very grateful to him for that. I’m afraid my husband lost a lot of money in the stock market and I would’ve lost this house without his help.”

“Do you know where MacAbee lives?”

“No,” she replied, “but I think he lives in Alexandria. I’m not sure.”

After a few more questions, Kinsley thanked her and left. He called the senator but she was in a meeting, so he drove to the Capitol building. By the time he arrived, the meeting had ended, so he went to her office and found her talking with Jake.

“You know a guy named James MacAbee with Jenson Enterprises?” Kinsley asked Weston.

“Yes,” she replied. “Why?”

“Is his name in your report?”

“How did you know?”

“He was the boss of the guy who was killed in that car crash,” Kinsley replied. “I think we found our man.”

“But what does he have to do with Brashear?” Jake asked.

“I don’t know yet, but I’ll find out,” replied Kinsley. “I’m heading over to MacAbee’s office. I’ll try to see him. If you need to reach me there, I’ll be using the name Conner...George Conner.”

Kinsley told Jake to meet with Dee and see if she could receive anything about Matthews or MacAbee. She may be able to link them to the vision. In the meantime, Kinsley would pay a visit to MacAbee's office.

When Jake arrived at Dee's house, she had just come out of the meditation room. "When I got your call, I concentrated on the vision again and I think MacAbee is connected some how," she told Jake.

"Great," Jake said. "I'll call Kinsley and let him know." He punched in Kinsley's number and reported what Dee had said. Kinsley told him he was in the waiting room of MacAbee's office and his secretary was checking to see if he would meet with him.

Jake was very anxious to find the senator's horse and hoped they were getting close. He asked Dee to help him. Maybe she could receive something, if she concentrated on the horse. They went into the meditation room and closed the door. She sat down and closed her eyes, but a short while later she opened them. "Sorry Jake, I'm not getting anything. Why don't you try?"

"Me?"

"Yes," she replied. "That dream you had indicates that you're beginning to develop psychic abilities. Give it a try."

He closed his eyes and waited for the static to disappear and, to his surprise, he was able to see the black wall. He sat quietly for about ten minutes, concentrating on the horse, when gradually he began to notice something. When he opened his eyes he told Dee what happened.

"Believe it or not, I saw the horse. He was in a stall and a woman was brushing his mane."

"Could you see any details?" Dee asked.

Jake said he could see a woman's face. She was young, probably in her mid-twenties, with long auburn hair and a pug nose. There was a door in the barn behind her, with a white pickup truck parked in front.

"Do you think you can get that vision back?"

"I don't know," he replied. "I'm amazed I even got it at all."

Dee coaxed him to try again and see if he could read the license plate number of the white pickup. Again, he closed his eyes and the vision returned. In his mind, he looked around the scene and moved his focus to the pickup truck. Then he saw the license plate, read it aloud and Dee wrote it down. When he opened his eyes, he was almost in shock. He couldn't believe he was able to do that.

Quickly, he phoned Kinsley back, but he didn't answer. Jake figured he was in the meeting with MacAbee, so he looked up the phone number of Jenson Enterprises and asked to speak to his secretary.

"I'm afraid Mr. MacAbee is in a meeting now. Can I take a message?"

"Is he meeting with a Mr. Conner?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact he is," she replied.

"It's very important that I speak with Mr. Conner right away. Can you please call him to the phone?"

"Certainly," she replied. A few minutes later he heard Kinsley's gruff voice.

"Hello. Who's this?"

“It’s Jake. I have a license plate number where the horse is located. I saw him in a vision, just now!”

“You...you saw him?” Kinsley asked, with surprise.

“Yeah, I’m as shocked as you are,” he said, chuckling. Jake gave the license plate number to Kinsley, who said he’d follow up on it right away. He made no indication of the how the meeting with MacAbee was going.

About two hours later, Jake was back in Senator Weston’s office when she received a call from Kinsley. He wanted to speak to Jake.

“I traced that license plate number. It’s registered to a Maryland woman. Meet me in ten minutes in front of the Capitol Building. Bring the senator with you,” he ordered, blurting instructions, then abruptly ending the call.

Jake and Weston rushed to meet him, as instructed, and they drove to Maryland, while Jake kept an eye on the GPS. “It’s up ahead, about two miles,” he said.

They pulled into a graveled parking area and Jake immediately saw the white pickup, parked near a large red barn. The senator got out and ran toward the barn door, while Jake and Kinsley followed. Before they could catch up, she ran outside shouting. “It’s my horse! He’s here, and he’s okay!”

Jake noticed an office sign over one of the doors, so he went inside and found a young woman sitting at the desk. She looked exactly the way she did in his vision. He introduced himself and learned her name was Judy Pancoast. Kinsley joined him and immediately began questioning her.

“Tell me about the brown bay with the white mane,” he ordered, in his usual gruff manner.

“Excuse me?” she asked. “Who are you people?”

Jake pushed Kinsley aside and took over the questioning. “The horse belongs to Senator Jane Weston. It was stolen from her farm in Vermont five days ago. We need to know who brought it here.”

“Senator Weston?”

“Yes, she just identified it. It’s definitely her horse.”

The young woman walked through the entrance, into the stables and watched the senator as she stroked the horse’s mane. She could hear her talking gently to him and then, Weston looked up at the woman. “He’s been well cared for,” she said, smiling.

“He was brought here several days ago by a man named Joseph Phillips,” Judy said. “Are the police involved in this?”

“No,” Kinsley replied. “I’m a private investigator. We’d like to keep this out of the papers.”

Judy went to the cabinet, pulled out a file and handed it to Kinsley. “Everything’s in the file,” she said, “I’m going to need proof, before I can release the horse to anyone other than Mr. Phillips.”

Kinsley’s eyes lit up when he looked through the folder. “Was Mr. Phillips wearing gloves when he filled out these forms?”

“No, I don’t think so,” she replied.

Kinsley asked her to call the phone number Phillips had given her. “Ask him something about the horse – don’t mention any of this to him. I just want to know if the number is valid.”

Judy followed his instructions and dialed the number, but it was disconnected. “Why would he give me a disconnected phone number?”

“Because he’s not the owner of the damned horse!” Kinsley shouted.

Again, Jake stepped in and apologized for Kinsley’s rudeness. He turned to the senator and asked if she had any proof of ownership. Quickly, Weston ran to the car, pulled out her purse and gave him two photographs. Both were pictures of Spirit taken in the corral at her farm – she was standing next to him. Jake handed them to Judy. “Does this convince you?”

“Hmmm, it sure looks like him. But I still can’t release him without documentation or a court order,” she said, adding “and if Mr. Phillips comes back I’d have to release the horse to him.”

Kinsley was fuming and pulled out his wallet. “Maybe this’ll help,” he said, holding out a wad of cash. Judy looked at it and shook her head. “I don’t operate that way.”

It was obvious to all concerned that Judy was not involved in the crime. She had simply agreed to take care of the horse for a paying client. It was her business. Amidst all the confusion and fuss, Senator Weston finally spoke up.

“What if I gave you an official letter from the Senate Majority Leader? Would you release him to me?”

“I don’t think so,” Judy replied. “How would I know it’s authentic?”

At last, it was agreed that Weston would call a friend, a justice on the Maryland Supreme Court. She would explain what happened and ask him to sign a court order. Although there would be an official record, she hoped it wouldn’t make the newspapers. By then, it was early evening and court wasn’t in session, but she managed to locate the

justice at his home and he agreed to see her. Kinsley also told her to ask him to order Judy to give him the file on Joseph Phillips.

Borrowing Kinsley's rented car, Weston drove to the justice's home, while Jake and Kinsley remained at the stable, in case Phillips showed up for the horse. The senator returned several hours later, but she wasn't alone. A young man was with her.

"This is Jason," she told everyone. "He's agreed to help. Tomorrow, he'll move Spirit to another stable and tonight he's going to stay with him in the barn." She gave Judy the court order and asked Jake to help Jason unload his cot and duffle bag from the trunk.

Before they left, Kinsley gave his business card to Judy and asked her to call him if Mr. Phillips phoned or showed up. He also asked if she'd be willing to give him her fingerprints. She finally agreed, but at first, didn't understand why he wanted them. He explained he was going to check the file and needed to know whose fingerprints he was looking at.

On the way back to D.C., Weston explained how she met Jason. "He's Judge Hargrave's son," she told them. "He has a friend who owns a stable in Virginia and he's arranged to have Spirit moved there in the morning."

Kinsley laughed. "Man, it sure helps to have clout, don't it? It's all about who you know!"

Jake was embarrassed for Kinsley and glanced at Weston. She smiled and looked away, apparently not insulted by Kinsley's demeanor at all. Later, Jake learned she and Kinsley had been friends for a long time and she was accustomed to his gruff manners. He also recognized the truth in Kinsley's statement. It did help to have the clout of a U. S. senator.

During the drive, Kinsley reported his short meeting with MacAbee. "I told him I was a life insurance agent and I was checking on the death of Mr. Matthews. He was

very cordial and said he'd help any way he could. He answered a few mundane questions and then his secretary interrupted the meeting."

"So you ended the meeting right after my call?" Jake asked.

"Yeah, I told him I had an emergency and I'd come back another day," Kinsley replied.

"You don't think he suspected anything, do you?" asked Weston.

"No, I wasn't there long enough to make him suspicious," Kinsley replied. "Besides, I told him it was just a routine follow-up thing that most insurance companies do."

"What if Matthews didn't have life insurance, or what if his company already interviewed MacAbee?" Jake asked. "It doesn't sound like you thought it out very well."

"I'm glad you have so much faith in me," Kinsley snorted. "Mrs. Matthews told me her husband had insurance, but it wasn't enough to pay his debts. She also said MacAbee didn't know about it. She didn't think it was any of his business."

"Oh, sorry," Jake said.

"Apology accepted. Of course, I'm sure the real reason she didn't tell MacAbee was so he wouldn't change his mind about the pension he gave her. I'm an expert at reading between the lines," Kinsley boasted. Jake laughed under his breathe, still holding the opinion that Kinsley was a bitter old man, trying to convince himself he was still relevant. It was Dee's encouragement that allowed the horse to be found, and it was his own idea to check into Matthews' accident. Even with all that, Jake assumed Kinsley still didn't trust him. He was just that kind of guy.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

By S. Leigh Young

Kinsley found two sets of fingerprints in Judy Pancoast's file. One of them matched hers and the other was given to his friend Ray, at the FBI. He was also informed by Ray that he couldn't find any mug shots matching the description of Brashear. Later, Kinsley received a similar reply about the fingerprints. Apparently, Brashear didn't have a criminal record, which was very odd, considering the degree of skill he possessed. Usually, these jobbers were well known to the authorities.

There was also a long, brown hair stuck between two sheets of paper in the file. It was not from Judy, since her hair was auburn. He asked Ray to do an analysis and, later in the afternoon, he heard from him.

"It's Asian," Ray told him. "Doesn't your guy have curly red hair?"

"Yeah, I guess it's a wig. I figured it was, but I wanted to be sure."

"Why didn't you mention that? I could have looked for a guy with long brown hair and freckles," he laughed.

"Oh shut up, Cargile. You want that I beer I owe you?"

"Forget it," Ray replied. "Just go find your bad guy."

He punched the button to end the call, muttering to himself. Ray seemed to forget that he once saved his life, the ingrate. He decided to stop by the senator's office and see how far she wanted to take the investigation.

"I'd like to find the people responsible," she replied. "We've managed to stall them for now, but what if they decide to do something worse?"

“Excellent question,” Kinsley replied, thinking of the billing hours he was accumulating. Of course, Weston would pay him out of her campaign coffers and write it off as consulting or security, like everyone else did.

“Okay. I’ll check out MacAbee. Before I talk to him again, I think I’ll follow him around for a few days....see who he hangs out with. Who knows? Maybe his best friend has curly red hair or long brown hair and freckles – Oh! And a horse hair stuck under his fingernails!” She chuckled as she watched Kinsley walk out the door. He was a very colorful guy, she thought. But, before she could finish her thought, he came back in. “By the way, can you tell me where to find Steve Pennington? I won’t say anything to him. I just wanna’ see what he looks like, in case I see him with MacAbee, I’ll know who the hell I’m looking at.”

“Of course,” she replied, rather amused. She showed him where Pennington’s office was and closed the door behind him, hoping to have some peace and quiet for a while. Unfortunately, her hopes were dashed, when Jake knocked on her door.

“Jake, thank you so much for what you did,” she said. “I’ve got Spirit back and it was all because of you. I didn’t know you had psychic abilities.”

“Neither did I,” he replied, snickering. “I’m just glad it’s all over.”

“I’m not so sure it’s over yet,” she told him. “John’s going to follow James MacAbee for a few days and see what he can learn about him.”

“Oh, that creep,” Jake said. “He’s one of the worst cases we’ve got in the report. It wouldn’t surprise me if he was involved in this. Of course, he’ll probably end up in prison anyway, after the report is published.”

“And, if he’s the one who stole my horse he can add a few more years behind bars,” she remarked, looking at him thoughtfully. “You know, I’ve been thinking -- I might not release the report until after I leave the senate. How would you feel about that?”

“Another year? That’s a long time. These rats can do a lot more harm between now and then.”

“I know, but I’m not sure this is the right time. If I put out the word that I’m canceling the project, maybe they’ll back off. Then I can release it later, on my own. I’m worried they might hurt someone.”

“Will it have the same impact, if you wait that long?”

“Probably not,” she replied. “A sitting senator draws a lot more media time.”

“Then why don’t you release it a few weeks before you retire?”

Weston considered his suggestion and agreed it was a good idea. Since he would have the report completed soon, he asked what she wanted him to work on next.

She suggested he take a month off while she came up with a new assignment, which sounded very good to him.

“A whole month?” he asked, grinning broadly. “Gosh, I won’t know what to do with myself.”

She laughed and offered a suggestion. “Why don’t you work on those psychic abilities you seem to have? They might come in handy in your next job.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” he said. “I think it was just a fluke.” He still didn’t feel comfortable talking about it and was intent that she not learn about Joe, whom he hadn’t heard from in several days.

When he left her office, Regina entered his thoughts again and he wondered what he should do. Should he try to locate her? When he mentioned the idea to Dee her reaction was typical. She asked him to look at it from a different perspective. Did he

really want that much conflict in his life? Regina was obviously a very troubled person, but he wasn't sure. Within him, there was still a latent feeling of concern for her. It wasn't love, but perhaps sympathy. Her life seemed so full of problems, but how much of it was actually true? If she was guilty of spying on him, shouldn't she be punished for that? Dee's opinion made a lot of sense too. Regina was punishing herself.

Two days later Kinsley barged into Jake's office, unannounced. He and Jennifer were busy working on the report and Kinsley didn't even bother to knock first.

"Sorry, you're not supposed to be in here," Jake told him. "Do you want to talk to me?"

"Yeah," Kinsley replied. "Can we go somewhere private?"

Jake agreed and followed him to the parking garage, where they sat in Kinsley's car. "I thought you might like to know what I've learned."

"Anything interesting?"

"Very interesting. MacAbee's got a private room at a men's club downtown. I haven't been able to get inside, but I paid off one of the cooks and he told me about it. Says he always meets there with a guy who just happens to have red hair."

"Brashear?"

"I'd bet my last dollar on it," Kinsley replied. "Last night I watched the front entrance and, at about nine o'clock, I saw a red-haired guy go inside. I contacted the cook by cell phone and described him. He said it was MacAbee's friend."

"I wonder what they're doing in there," Jake said. "I hope they're not making new plans to stop the report. Senator Weston told me she's planning to put out the word that it's been canceled."

“Canceled? How come? We got her horse back,” Kinsley said, scratching his forehead.

“Like I told you, she’s worried they’ll hurt somebody. She won’t actually cancel it, just postpone it for a few months,” Jake explained.

“Ah,” Kinsley noted before going on the attack. “I haven’t finished telling you everything. Keep your yap shut ‘til I’m done, will ya?”

“Excuse me?” Jake retorted sarcastically, glaring at him. “So... go ahead – finish it.”

“Anyway, I waited until the red-haired guy left the club and followed him. He went to a sleazy bar on the east side, so I went inside and took a look around, but didn’t see him. I asked the bartender if he saw a red-hair man come in. Well, his eyebrows took a leap off his forehead and, the next thing I knew, he was telling me to get the hell out.”

“He kicked you out?”

“No! No way! Nobody kicks me out of any place,” Kinsley barked, shaking his fist in disgust. “I stood my ground with the guy, naturally.”

“So what happened?”

“Nothing. He wouldn’t give me any information, so I left.”

“That’s it? That’s the rest of your story?” Jake asked, laughing.

“Hey! At least, we know where the guy hangs out. That’s more than you got from your stupid vision,” Kinsley retorted.

“My vision helped us find the horse, if you recall,” Jake responded, folding his arms across his chest.

“True, but this is even better. If we can prove this Brashear was the one who stole the horse, it’ll be great. We can link him to MacAbee and find out who else was in on it. It’ll be a fantastic addition to my case list.”

“Terrific! Not to mention the other benefits, like maybe saving someone’s life, or keeping them out of danger – and saving the damned country!”

“Whoa! Calm down,” Kinsley said, holding his hands in the air. “What d’ya mean – saving the country?”

“Oh, never mind, I’ve got to get back to work. Thanks for the update,” Jake muttered, opening the car door and escaping as quickly as he could. Kinsley leaned out the window and shouted, “hey, there’s more. Don’t you want to hear it?”

“Call me tonight!” yelled Jake as he rushed toward the exit.

That evening, Jake’s cell phone rang at home. It was Kinsley. Jake wanted to hear the rest of his report, but really didn’t want to hear it from him. Why couldn’t he just write it down and send it to him? The man was an ogre!

“Spencer? You want the rest of what I learned?”

“Sure,” he replied, flopping onto the sofa. “Go ahead.”

“I ran a check on Brashear’s car. Of course, it was a dead end, so I waited until two in the morning, watching the bar, but he never came out. I went back, early the next morning and his car was still there. What does that tell ya?”

“He lives in a bar?”

“Either that, or he knew he was being followed and took off out the back,” Kinsley replied. I went back there later and the car was gone.”

“So, he might know you’re on to him?”

“Maybe,” Kinsley replied. “And, whoever owns that bar is probably closely connected to him, so I checked it out. It’s owned by a guy named Claude Perkins. He’s a small-time crook who’s, apparently, been out of trouble for several years...at least he hasn’t been caught doing anything illegal lately.”

“Can you question him?”

“I can’t get near the place. They all know I’m looking for Brashear. I think we should turn this over to the Agency. They have a lot more resources than I do.”

“I don’t know,” Jake replied. “Have you mentioned it to the senator?”

“I wanted your input first. If you agree, she’ll probably go along with it.”

The next morning, Jake went to Weston’s office and mentioned Kinsley’s suggestion. She reacted exactly as Jake had predicted -- no FBI until the report was released. They discussed the fact that, whoever took the horse, probably didn’t know she had him back and the rumors about canceling the report hadn’t begun yet. She was planning to tell the Leader that morning. In order to make the rumors sound credible, it was important that Jennifer not be seen working with him, so she suggested they finish it somewhere away from the office and Jake agreed, but where could they work without being seen?

“Can you leave town for a few days and finish it away from Washington?” the senator asked. “How long do you think it’ll take?”

“About a week,” he replied. “I guess we could go to a hotel somewhere and finish it there. I know of one we could use. It’s down on the Chesapeake.”

“Good. If Jennifer agrees, go ahead and make the reservations, but do it on your own. Don’t ask Sue. Give me the bill and I’ll pay you back.”

Jennifer agreed to the plan, so reservations were made at the Jackson Inn. They were to travel separately and meet there in two days. After Jennifer packed up her stuff and went back to the basement office, Jake felt odd, being in his office alone. He’d grown rather accustomed to having her there. He missed their meals together and the conversations about Dee’s books and other topics, so he turned on the computer and loaded a blank document, hoping to hear from Joe.

GREETINGS

HELLO

YOUR REPORT IS ALMOST FINISHED

YES, AND I’M VERY HAPPY ABOUT IT

YOU ARE BACK ON YOUR PATH

AM I?

CAN’T YOU TELL?

HOW CAN I KNOW?

BY THE WAY YOU FEEL

He thought about it for a while and realized, he was feeling pretty good. Is that what Joe meant?

I FEEL GOOD, BUT I STILL WORRY

YES, BUT YOU ARE THINKING MORE CLEARLY

It was true, wasn't it? No longer was he feeling as lost and confused.

DO YOU KNOW THE RED-HAIRED MAN?

I KNOW OF HIM

IS HE STILL PLOTTING?

YOU CAN SEE HIM IN YOUR MIND IF YOU ASK

AM I PSYCHIC?

YES, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE

As always, Joe knew the truth about him. He realized something miraculous had occurred, when he found the horse, but was still in denial.

IS THAT PART OF MY PATH?

YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT

YES, I GUESS SO

INDEED

He signed off and recalled his exchange with Joe, considering the notion that he might possess psychic abilities. Should he pursue it? For some reason, he was apprehensive, but Joe seemed to believe he should. Perhaps it could prove beneficial.

He closed his eyes and was able to see the black wall, almost immediately. At first, he resisted it and opened his eyes again. Where was all the static? Closing them again, he focused, once more, on the black wall and allowed the clutter of the day to fade away. Gradually, he was able to see a vision of two men. One was very tall and the other had red hair. He couldn't hear what they were saying, but he could sense their fear. The red-haired man appeared rather agitated and the tall one was very angry. It was almost like watching a movie with the sound turned down. What were they talking about?

Soon the scene changed and he could see Regina's face. She had a phone to her ear and he sensed that she was talking to Brashear. Again, there was no sound, but he could sense her emotions. She was anxious about something. It was the money. She wanted the suitcase with the money in it and she wasn't happy about it. Gradually the scene melted away and he saw nothing, except the black wall.

For the first time, he had a clear vision of the red-haired man's face. He recalled the abundance of freckles that covered his nose and cheeks, and the crow's feet around his eyes. His upper teeth were slightly crooked and his curly hair was brushed behind his rather large ears. It was a vision indelibly etched in his memory. He wasn't an ugly man, but was certainly sinister-looking, in the way he dressed and carried himself.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

By S. Leigh Young

As usual, MacAbee was furious when he learned someone had been following Brashear. Brashear didn't want to tell him, but MacAbee was already suspicious when he was told that he had to get a new phone number. He figured it was better to let MacAbee know. There were only a few people he was afraid of and MacAbee was one of them. He was ruthless and it was obvious he wouldn't let anything stand in his way. Of course, he didn't mention the problem with Regina. He wanted to keep her out of the picture, fearing how MacAbee might react.

"Maybe I should lay low for a while and get out of town," Brashear suggested, thinking it would be an opportunity to go to Brazil and find Regina. Of course he wouldn't have all his money, but maybe it wasn't worth it.

"Like hell!" MacAbee shouted. "We have to finish this, and soon. I heard a rumor that Weston was canceling the report, but I don't believe it."

"The only way you can be sure it will never be published is to eliminate everyone involved! And, even then, you can't be sure someone else won't publish the damned thing! I think we should skip the country."

"Do you think it was the FBI following me?" asked MacAbee.

"I don't know," Brashear replied. "I got the guy's license plate number. You can check it out." He handed MacAbee a piece of paper and chugged the beer.

"You check it out! That's what I'm paying you for," MacAbee yelled, stomping around the small room.

"Speaking of paying me – when do I get the second installment?"

“Like I told you before – when the job’s done.”

Brashear realized the job would never be done, unless they both left the country. Someone had obviously linked them to the report and he couldn’t see any way of making sure it was never published. It could turn into an endless problem. MacAbee couldn’t kill everyone!

“We’ve got to pull off the biggest extortion job in history,” MacAbee stated. “Some how, we have to think of something to hold over Weston’s head – something that will cause her to destroy the damned report and never think of publishing it.”

“We’ve already got her horse. What else do you want to do?” Brashear was almost afraid to hear the answer.

“You said she has a niece, right?”

“Yeah.”

“We let Weston know that something bad will happen to her niece if that report is ever published. She’ll have to back off. She wouldn’t put her niece’s life on the line.”

“What if she doesn’t take the bait? You want me to kill the niece?”

“We’ll cross that bridge if the time comes,” MacAbee blurted.

“All she has to do is tell her niece to move where we can’t find her,” said Brashear. “It doesn’t sound like it would work. Besides, if we make that threat, she’ll probably call the FBI for sure.”

“I’m not afraid of the FBI,” MacAbee muttered. “They’re a bunch of idiots.”

“Idiots with a lot of fire power,” Brashear mumbled.

“We can tell her something bad will happen to her niece, or Spencer or someone else she knows. We don’t have to be specific,” MacAbee suggested.

By the time the meeting ended, their plan was decided -- Brashear would deliver another note to Weston. MacAbee would print it up and have it for him the next day. The note would list the names of people who could be targeted if the report wasn’t destroyed. They would include her niece, Jake Spencer, Spencer’s daughter, Jennifer Markie, Mr. Crenshaw, her secretary, and several others who were close to her at the Capitol Building. MacAbee figured, if that wasn’t enough to stop the report, he’d have to follow Brashear’s advice and leave the country. This was their last hope.

It was two o’clock in the morning when Jake left the house and drove toward the Jackson Inn. Dee offered to loan him her car in case anyone followed him, so his SUV was sitting in the driveway for all to see. He’d be gone for five days and Carey was staying with Dee and Bill. The previous evening hadn’t been easy, when Carey learned he was leaving. The real shame was, his news followed a dinner celebration in her honor. She’d been accepted at Harvard and it was only natural, she wanted to be with him to discuss plans for the coming term. It wasn’t easy for him either. He couldn’t believe his daughter would soon be leaving the nest.

Over the past several weeks, she had shown a keen interest in Dee’s books and often attended her group meetings. As he drove through the night he recalled Carey’s announcement at dinner.

“I’m not sure if I want to major in law,” she said. “I’m thinking about psychology or physics. There’s this physics professor at Harvard. His name is Professor Norman and, from what I’ve heard, his classes are really awesome. He has a unique way of getting you to think about life and how the universe works.”

“That’s wonderful,” Dee remarked. “If I was just starting out, I’d probably do the same.”

“Mrs. Harvey, you could write the text books!” Carey exclaimed. “I’m hoping to use some of your ideas in my studies. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Of course not,” Dee replied, smiling. “They’re not copyrighted – they’re available to anyone who asks.” The response reflected her views about her life’s work. Dee wasn’t concerned about copyrights or profiting from her writings or teaching. She simply wanted to spread the ideas, because she believed they could help the world. Carey was impressed by this, but wasn’t certain she could follow in her footsteps, realizing that Dee was able to do it, because she had Bill to support her. She also wasn’t sure if she and Mike would ever marry. His goals were very different from hers, but she knew they’d always be friends.

Thinking he’d better check with Jennifer, Jake pulled off the road and called her cell phone. She was just leaving and assured him she could find the Jackson Inn with no problem. Two rooms had been reserved, one for each of them. He figured they’d work in his room since it was larger. The owner of the inn remembered him and when he asked for the same room, it was all arranged. He looked forward to being near the beach again and hoped Jennifer would enjoy it too. Late spring was a great time of year to be on the Chesapeake. He hoped they’d have time to do a little sightseeing and was confident they could finish the report by the time the week was over.

Since he arrived too early to check in, he stopped at a nearby diner for some breakfast and coffee and as he was about to leave, he was surprised to see Jennifer walk in.

“Hi,” she said cheerfully. “I saw Dee’s car outside and figured you must’ve been hungry.”

“Good morning,” he replied warmly. “Want some breakfast?”

“Ummm, sounds good.” They took seats at the counter and she ordered some eggs and toast with orange juice. While she ate, they went over plans for the week, discussing what they needed to accomplish and Jennifer agreed it should be no problem

to complete the report before they left. He couldn't hold it in any longer, so he mentioned Carey's acceptance at Harvard and Jennifer was elated.

"That's terrific," she said. "She's majoring in law, right?"

"Well, she's not sure. She might major in psychology or physics," he replied.

"Physics? Wow, that's pretty challenging."

"She'll do fine," he replied confidently. "Thankfully, she takes after her mother and not me. I can barely add without a calculator."

Jennifer laughed. "Your strengths lie in other areas."

"Yeah, right. At least that's what I'm told," he joked.

It was good to be with her again. There was something about Jennifer that brought a feeling of ease and familiarity. She was aware of his vision about Weston's horse and changed the topic of conversation.

"Did you know you were psychic?"

"No," he replied, forgetting his computer friend, Joe. "I had no idea."

"How do you feel about it?" she asked.

"I'm not sure. Did you know that I used your idea about the black wall?"

"No!"

"Yes, and it works great, once I get rid of all the static."

"So you've been practicing, huh?"

“Sort of,” he replied. “I saw Regina in a vision.”

She looked up to get a glimpse of his facial expression. It was a sad one and she knew why. “It’s a shame about her. She’s had a hard life, if what she says is true.”

“I think some of its true,” he responded. “I can tell she’s probably been abused. It’s fairly obvious now, but I couldn’t see it before. Yes, it is a shame.”

“Have you talked to her?”

“No, her phone’s been disconnected and she moved out of her apartment. I have no idea where she is.”

“Maybe it’s for the best,” Jennifer offered, and he agreed.

By nine o’clock the computers and other equipment were set up on the table in Jake’s room and they were busy working. At noon they took a lunch break and went downstairs to the dining room. The inn offered a tasty luncheon buffet and they both loaded up their plates and filled their stomachs, heading back upstairs about 45 minutes later. They worked on the project diligently for several hours, until Jake announced he wanted to show her the village and a great little Italian restaurant he found on his last visit.

He knew Jennifer was enjoying herself and he thought he sensed something new in her demeanor. Was she actually flirting with him? Every so often, she would make a remark that reminded him of Maggie. Was that why he liked her so much?

After dinner they drove to the beach and Jennifer took off her shoes and ran across the sand like a playful child. It looked like fun, so he joined in. After a while they grew tired of running so they dropped onto the sand and watched the water. It was calm and peaceful and a beautiful night with the half moon shining on the bay.

“So, are you looking forward to Carey being gone, or does it make you sad?” she asked.

He looked dreamily at the sky, laying his head back on his cupped hands. “I’m going to miss her,” he said quietly. “It’ll be strange having the house to myself most of the year.”

“I know what you mean,” Jennifer lamented. “I’ve got the same situation coming up soon. Sheri’s getting married soon and its sure going to be different without her there.”

They lay in silence for a while, watching the stars and the moonlight then Jennifer turned toward him. “I really like you Jake. You’re a good person.”

His gaze moved in her direction and he smiled. “Thanks, Jennifer. I like you too.”

Gently, she touched his fingertips with her own and then pulled away. “Have you ever thought about me as anything other than a coworker?”

Again, he looked at the dark sky and before he could reply, something caught his eye. “Oh, look!” he said. “A shooting star!”

She looked up just in time to see the bright tail disappearing over the horizon. “I’ve been seeing a lot of those lately,” he said quietly, turning his attention back to her. “Are you saying you have a personal interest in me?”

“Yeah, I think I do,” she replied. “We have so much in common and we get along so well.”

“Are those the only reasons?” he asked coyly.

“No. But maybe I shouldn’t be talking about it. I’m sorry if I spoke out of turn. I don’t want to be guilty of sexual harassment,” she joked.

He chuckled, then rolled over on his side and lifted his head, resting it on his arm. “No, it’s okay. I promise, I won’t file a complaint.” They both laughed and, quickly, she sat up and crossed her legs, facing him. “It’s just that we seem to have this...sort of chemistry between us. At least, I think we do.”

He wasn’t sure how to respond at first, although his heart felt lighter and he noticed a tingling sensation in his chest. “Yeah, I feel it too.”

She smiled and touched his hand briefly. “Well, let’s think about it for a while. If it’s meant to be, it’ll happen.” Jake agreed and they walked slowly back to the car. Neither of them spoke on the short drive to the inn, but they both knew something significant had just happened between them.

On the second morning, Jake’s cell phone rang. It was Kinsley. Jennifer listened to his end of the conversation and noticed his mood changing dramatically.

“The senator got another extortion note,” Kinsley reported, “and it ain’t good.”

“Damn! What’s it say?”

“I’ll read it to you,” Kinsley replied. “If you value the wellbeing of your family and friends you will follow the instructions below. Number 1: collect all copies of the special report and place them in a suitcase. This includes all discs, flash drives and computers. Do not keep any copies. Number 2: At five p. m. on Wednesday, the 24th, catch the #122 bus at the corner of Wichita and 23rd. Bring the suitcase with you. If it’s too heavy to carry, use a suitcase stroller. Get off the bus five stops later at Market Street. Walk North on Market about thirty feet, until you see a small dark red door on the right. Open the door, but do not pass through. Place the suitcase inside, to the right of the door. Close the door and leave the area immediately and go straight to your apartment. Remain there until morning. Number 3: Don’t even think about calling the

authorities. You will be watched. Number 4: Forget about ever publishing such a report. At least one of those on the list below will be targeted if you do, or if you don't follow these instructions exactly."

"Give me the names," Jake said quickly.

"There's seven," Kinsley replied. "Four of them are family and personal friends of the senator. The other three are Jennifer, Carey and you."

Jake sank into the chair and shot a concerned glance toward Jennifer. His next thought was Carey. Hopefully they didn't know where she was, or where he and Jennifer were.

"Tell the senator not to make any decisions until I get there. I'll leave right away," he instructed, quickly ending the call. After a hurried explanation to Jennifer he told her to leave the room.

"Why?" she asked.

"I need to do something – alone," he replied, waiting as she closed the door behind her. He sat down and breathed deeply for a few minutes to regain his composure, then closed his eyes, hoping to see the black wall. After about five minutes the static finally disappeared and he could see it. Concentrating on the red-haired man, a scene began forming in front of the black wall. He saw him sitting in a parked car smoking a cigarette and looking out the driver's window. He continued to watch, as the man got out of the car, walked up a narrow walkway and entered a small white house. Soon the scene faded and was replaced by another. The red-haired man was now seated at a table eating a meal. Seated across from him was a woman who bore an uncanny resemblance to him. Her hair was dark red and her face was covered with freckles just like his. They were talking, but he couldn't hear them. Concentrating even more, he was able to receive some of their conversation in the form of thoughts. After several minutes the scene faded and he opened his eyes.

Quickly, he made a phone call to Carey, packed his suitcase and the computer equipment and loaded them into the car. When he was ready to leave he knocked on Jennifer's door and she let him inside, closing the door behind him.

"I'm going back to Washington," he told her, "but I want you to stay here. They don't know where we are. You'll be safe here."

"What about Carey?"

"She's safe at Dee's house," he replied. "I just called and told her not to leave. Dee is with her."

Jennifer couldn't help but be concerned. What if something happened to Jake? They were just starting to become close and the thought of it brought tears to her eyes. Standing close to her, he wiped the tear from her face and smiled. "Don't worry, I'll be okay," he said softly. She looked into his eyes and tried to smile, but it wouldn't come. Suddenly, she wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged him tightly. "I'm scared, Jake."

"Try not to be," he replied. "Remember the power of fear." She pulled back and looked at him once more and, as if each of them knew it was time, they shared a warm and deep kiss before parting. "I'll call you later," he said, leaving the room.

The drive back to Washington took forever. By the time he reached the city, rush hour had started and he got stuck in a traffic jam that lasted twenty minutes, but seemed like decades. He called Dee and spoke to her again, making sure Carey was okay. "Keep your eye on her. Don't let her leave the house." He asked her to go with him that evening to see the senator. Dee said she'd be ready and told him Bill would be home to watch Carey. A second call was made to Kinsley, asking him to arrange a meeting at the senator's apartment that evening. "I'm bringing Dee with me," he said.

"Fine, bring her along, but I can tell you what my recommendation is right now. I want to call the Agency."

“No, not yet,” Jake pleaded. “Just wait until we have a chance to talk things out with Senator Weston.” Kinsley reluctantly agreed and the call was ended.

He finally pulled into his driveway and moved the computer and gear inside, locking it in the safe. After making a quick sandwich to quell the hunger pains, he left to pick up Dee. Carey was waiting for him and was frantic. “What’s going on dad? Mrs. Harvey wouldn’t tell me anything.”

“It’s okay, Cupcake. Don’t worry. Just be sure you stay inside until I tell you, okay?”

Carey relented and gave him a hug just before he and Dee left. When they reached the senator’s apartment, Kinsley was already there. The gathering was not a pleasant one. The normal cordialities were skipped and Kinsley took over, telling everyone where to sit. “Okay. Now we need to make a decision fast,” he said with authority. “Senator, have you thought about what you want to do?”

“Yes. There’s no question in my mind, I’m going to follow the instructions in the note.”

“Are you sure?” Jake asked.

“Yes, I’m sure,” she replied defiantly. “And I want all copies of the report in my office tomorrow by noon, including both of your laptops Jake. And don’t make any copies. It’s not worth the risk.”

“I think I should call in the FBI,” Kinsley said. “They can catch these guys when the suitcase is picked up.”

“No!” the senator retorted loudly. “No authorities. I’m going to follow the instructions exactly.”

Kinsley stood up and ran his fingers through his thinning hair, spinning around to face her. “Look, it’s the only way we can put a stop to this insanity.”

“I said no,” she repeated. “No FBI, no authorities.”

“Well, I’m not the authorities!” Kinsley shouted. “I’ll hide out near the door and wait for you to put the suitcase inside. Then I’ll grab the bastard!”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” the senator replied. “I don’t want anyone to get hurt.”

“I can take care of myself,” he muttered, wandering to the other side of the room. “There’s nothing you can do to stop me.”

Although it wasn’t apparent to the others, Jake thought he sensed an uncommon feeling emanating from Kinsley, toward the senator. Did he have more than fondness for her? Yes, he definitely sensed it, and it surprised him. He wondered if the senator was aware of it.

Jake asked for Dee’s opinion and she responded with her usual thoughtfulness. “I think the senator is right. If we call the FBI, things might get more complicated. Earlier, I tried to get something on the person who wrote the note. It wasn’t exactly clear, but maybe Jake can get something,” she said, looking at him.

“Now?” he asked, fidgeting slightly.

“You can use my bedroom, Jake,” the senator offered, pointing in the direction of the hallway. “It’s the second door on the right.”

He shrugged his shoulders and stood up. “I’m not sure if I can get anything, but I’ll try.” About twenty minutes later he walked slowly out of the bedroom and sat down. Every eye in the room was on him. “Well? Did you get anything?” Kinsley blurted.

“Yes,” he replied. “I saw the same man I saw the other night. He was with the red-haired man and they were arguing. He’s very tall and he’s the one who wrote the note.”

“That’s got to be MacAbee!” Kinsley shouted. “He’s almost seven feet tall...huge!”

“Yes,” the senator offered. “He’s very tall. He’s got dark hair and a narrow face.”

“It sounds like the man I saw,” Jake said. “And I also received something else.” He hesitated and again everyone waited for him to continue. “He found out we got the horse back.”

“So what?” Kinsley asked.

“He sent someone over there to have a little talk with Judy Pancoast,” Jake continued. “She’s in the hospital.”

“Oh my God!” the senator exclaimed, covering her mouth. “This is the kind of thing I was worried about. Now I know I’ve made the right decision. Was she badly hurt?”

“I don’t think so,” Jake replied, “just some cuts and bruises.”

“I’ll call over there and find out first thing in the morning,” the senator said. “I feel horrible about this.”

“It’s not your fault,” said Dee, “but I understand how you must feel.”

Their meeting ended after another hour of discussion and Jake asked Dee if Carey could remain at her house until this was over and she agreed it was for the best. When Jake and Dee were ready to leave, Kinsley was sitting on the sofa running his fingers

through his hair. “So, you’re going to be there when the suitcase is picked up?” Jake asked him.

“You bet I am,” he replied, glancing at the senator. She shook her head in defeat, knowing it was useless to try to talk him out of it. Kinsley left a few minutes later, unaware that he was being watched by a man sitting in a car across the street.

After he got home, Jake phoned Jennifer and told her about the senator’s decision. He asked her to remain in the hotel and not go outside, promising to call her in the morning.

As Jake learned how to use his special abilities, his confidence level increased as well. No longer did he feel the same degree of confusion and hesitation as in the past. When he got home, he turned on the computer to contact Joe. After their usual greetings, Joe wrote something very intriguing.

YOU CAN HEAR THEM

HEAR WHO?

THE PLOTTERS

HOW?

ATTAIN A DEEPER LEVEL OF CONCENTRATION

HOW DO I DO THAT?

ASK THE TEACHER

Apparently, Joe was telling him that he could learn to hear the conversations taking place in his visions. It would certainly make it easier to decipher them. Before going to sleep, he made a mental note to ask Dee to teach him.

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

By S. Leigh Young

After he left the senator's apartment, John Kinsley followed the route outlined in the note and found the building, located in an industrial area, surrounded by old warehouses and crumbling brick buildings. The red door was easy to spot, situated in the middle of a long wall that spanned the length of the block. The building appeared to be vacant, so he opened the door and stepped into a narrow hallway leading to a staircase. It was dark and damp, and he could smell the rotting odor of chemicals. Looking around, he saw a ceiling vent above the door and made his way up the stairs, to see what was above it. The flashlight created eerie shadows on the walls and he jumped when a rat scurried in front of him. He entered a small room that contained a furnace, with vent pipes extending in several directions. Quickly, he pulled some tools out of his bag and dislodged the pipe from the vent above the door, installed a camera and the rest of the equipment. When everything was set, he laid the pipe loosely back in place and went outside.

The street was narrow and there were several old cars parked near the curb. He noticed a large trash container on the corner, about forty feet from the door, so he approached it, looking for a place to hide. It was perfect. He could easily crouch behind it and wait for the senator to drop off the suitcase. Thinking he was the only one around, Kinsley didn't know that someone had driven past and noticed his car on the street.

Brashear wasn't worried about the old man. He'd already done a thorough check and knew he was a private investigator, nearly twice his own age and resisting the idea of retirement. As long as he was the only one trying to stop him, he wasn't concerned.

He knew the old warehouse like the back of his hand and figured it would take about two minutes to reach the other side of the building and escape through the North exit. If anyone followed him, he felt confident he could evade them by planning his escape route carefully. He drove past the warehouse again and noticed the old man's car

was gone, so he pulled over and went inside. It didn't take long to find the camera and remove it.

MacAbee was sure the senator would follow the instructions and leave the authorities out of it, but Brashear couldn't count on his assurances. If the authorities were involved, he'd know it, the plan would be abandoned and he'd skip the country right away, taking his chances with MacAbee.

When Brashear got to his sister's house his phone rang. It was Regina calling to give him her new phone number. "I got a new apartment across town," she said. "It's not as nice as the other one, but its okay."

"Notice anyone following you?" he asked.

"No. I think I'm safe here, but when are you going to bring the rest of my money?"

"Soon. I should be finished here in a couple of days."

"It's about time! Will MacAbee leave us alone?"

"He won't know where we are, I'll make sure of that," Brashear replied. "Believe me, I'm never doing another job for him. He's crazy."

"Well, I've got enough to worry about," she told him. "Just make sure he's out of the picture."

The following morning Jake gathered the laptops and flash drives and carried them to the senator's office. She pointed to a green suitcase on the table, so he placed the items inside. "What about your laptop?" he asked her.

"I'm keeping it," she replied. "I already erased everything."

“So this is it?” he asked. “Five months of work down the tubes....”

“Senator Cameron wasn’t too happy about it,” she said, “but he’s the one who made the decision. I’m afraid it’s final, difficult as it is.”

“So what reason did he give for the decision?”

“It’s too risky to keep copies,” she replied. “We thought about it, believe me. But these guys seem to know every move we make. We can’t take the chance someone might get hurt.”

How could they so easily abandon months of work on a project that was so important? Didn’t she realize this decision was in direct opposition to her goals? The tendency of her party to give in to pressure always amazed him. It was almost as if they had no backbone at all, and they’d just keep on going, as if nothing had happened. Why couldn’t they see, it only gave the opposition more power? If it was up to him, he’d keep copies of the report for possible future publication, but the decision wasn’t his to make.

He went back to his office and phoned Jennifer to fill her in and make sure she was okay. Although she was extremely anxious, she was trying to be patient. “Hopefully, it’ll be over tonight,” he told her. “Then you can come home.”

After lunch Kinsley called and told him to meet him in the parking garage. When the elevator door opened the old man was waiting for him. “We have to talk,” he said, leading him to the car.

“I put a camera in the air vent above the door,” he said. “Its motion activated. We’ll get a video of the guy picking up the suitcase and I’ll try and grab him before he gets out of the building. I’m gonna’ need your help.”

Kinsley explained that he wanted Jake to park near the exit door on the other side of the building and watch for anyone who comes out. “Only problem is, I’m not sure

which door he'll use. There's three of 'em, but I found a place you can park with a view of two, and I'll be watching the third one."

"Then what?" asked Jake. "You want me to follow him?"

"No, that's too dangerous," Kinsley replied. "Just let me know which direction he went. Hopefully, I'll nab him before it gets to that point."

"Do you think he'll be inside when the suitcase is dropped off?"

"I don't know – probably. If I had some help, I could search the damn thing ahead of time, but working alone ain't easy. That warehouse is huge and covers three stories."

Jake agreed to meet him near the warehouse at four o'clock. "Make sure you're not followed," Kinsley said. "You know how to evade someone on your tail?"

"Just from what I've seen in the movies," Jake replied. "I'll leave early and follow my instincts."

Kinsley mumbled something he couldn't hear and added, "just be careful, and don't do anything stupid. Leave all the risky stuff to me." There was no argument of that point by Jake.

By noon, Brashear was already set up inside the warehouse. He was sitting behind an old desk on the second floor with a good view of the street below. He stood up and made a thorough search of each floor, checking all the nooks and crannies and the streets, just in case the authorities had been notified. Using his high powered binoculars he scoured the entire area and the surrounding buildings, checking every vehicle and window with a view of the warehouse. If anyone was watching the building, he'd see them. Every precaution had been taken and he was wearing two pairs of rubber gloves so no fingerprints would be found. He performed the same search several times until he glanced at his watch. It was five o'clock and the senator would be arriving soon, so he

took his place in the stairwell near the red door and waited, making sure his weapon was ready to fire.

Jake was parked on an adjacent street, waiting for Kinsley's call to inform him that Weston was on the sidewalk approaching the red door. When the phone rang it startled him and he jumped. "She just got out off the bus," Kinsley blurted. "Move the car forward now."

Jake followed his instructions, keeping the phone line open. "I can see the exits," he reported. "Has she reached the door yet?"

"Almost," Kinsley replied. "I'm hanging up now and I'll call you back if I lose him."

Kinsley was crouched behind the dumpster watching Senator Weston as she approached the door. When she reached it, she stopped and looked around, then opened the door and pushed the suitcase inside. After closing the door, she turned around and walked briskly in the other direction. Immediately, Kinsley moved away from the dumpster, weapon drawn, and ran to the door. It was locked, so he pointed the pistol at the door handle and pulled the trigger. There was very little sound because he was using a silencer. He poked his head inside and looked to the right. The suitcase was gone, so he stepped inside and crept up the stairs, slowly, listening for any noises. When he reached the landing, he heard a sound to his right, so he ran down the hallway and stopped when he reached an open area. Holding his weapon front of him, he swept the area with his eyes and ears and noticed some movement on the other side of the large room. Creeping low behind boxes and pieces of old machinery, he made his way to the other side. There was a door, so he went through and listened again, but heard nothing. Realizing the man was probably heading for the exit where Jake was waiting, he quickly punched in Jake's number and told him to be prepared, while he headed in that direction, keeping the phone line open.

Jake was ready, watching the exit closely. About a minute later, he saw the door open and a man ran out heading east. “He just came out,” Jake reported. “He’s heading east on the sidewalk and he just crossed the street.”

“Got it,” Kinsley replied. “I’m almost at the exit. Keep your eye on him.”

Jake pulled the car closer to the corner and saw the man enter a building about a block away. “He just went inside an old bakery,” Jake said. “It’s a brick building facing south on the adjacent street.”

Kinsley bolted through the door with the phone to his ear and ran in the direction of the bakery. Jake could see everything from his vantage point. A few seconds later, Kinsley disappeared into the bakery building and kept talking.

“It’s another vacant building,” Kinsley reported. “I think I see him! He just ran out the back door! I’m following him.”

About a minute later, Jake heard a loud sound from the phone speaker and asked Kinsley what was going on, but there was no answer. Then came the sounds of two gunshots and a few minutes later Kinsley was yelling. “Down on the floor, hands behind your back!” More muffled noises were heard and he figured Kinsley had the man handcuffed.

Jake continued to watch the bakery door and it wasn’t long before he saw the two men emerge. Kinsley was pointing his weapon and pushing the man, whose red hair was showing beneath his brown wig. They walked up to Jake’s car and Kinsley bellowed some quick instructions, opened the back door and shoved the man inside. Holding the weapon on him, he opened the front door and got inside. “Drive,” he told Jake, holding the weapon on the man and keeping his eyes on him.

“Where should I go?”

“I got a motel room around the corner,” Kinsley told him. “It’s over there, on the right. Pull up in front of number twelve and stop the engine.” Jake followed his instructions and all three got out of the car and went into the room. It was a sleazy dive, furnished with third-hand items that looked like they’d been salvaged from a dump. Kinsley pushed the man onto the bed, face down and tied his hands and feet to the bed frame. He told Jake to take a seat, walked to the other side of the bed and squatted down, pointing the gun at the man’s face.

Jake was quite impressed as he watched Kinsley work. Over the next hour he managed to get Brashear to tell him everything. He was working for MacAbee and it was all his idea – he was just following orders. When the questioning ended, Kinsley picked up his cell phone and punched in the senator’s number. “I got him,” he told her. “He’s admitted everything and he’s working for MacAbee, just like I thought.”

“Did you get the suitcase back?” she asked.

“Yeah, it’s in Jake’s car.”

“So what should we do now?” the senator asked.

“I’m leaving this scumbag here for a while and I’m gonna’ pay a little visit to MacAbee. He’s probably at home by now, so it might take a little while. I’ll call you back later.”

Kinsley checked the ropes securing the man to the bed frame, asked him if he needed a drink of water and the man said yes. He went into the bathroom and filled a small glass with water and pulled a straw out of his pocket. He stuck the straw into the glass and held it under the man’s face as he sucked on it. “There, that’ll have to last you for a while,” he said, then began barking instructions to Jake. “Stay here and watch him ‘til I get back.”

“But I don’t have a weapon,” Jake replied. Kinsley stooped down and raised his pant leg, pulled a small pistol out and handed it to him. “You know how to use this?”

Jake took the pistol and stared at it. “No...”

Kinsley showed him how to unlock the safety and pull the trigger. “But don’t use it unless it’s absolutely necessary. I don’t want you to hurt yourself,” he said, chuckling. “I’ll call you in about an hour.”

Jake sat down again after Kinsley left and laid the weapon on the table. The man was mumbling something he couldn’t hear so he told him to be quiet. An hour later his phone rang. It was Kinsley.

“I’m at MacAbee’s house,” Kinsley said. “I just saw him go in. I’m going in through the back door, surprise him and let him talk to Brashear, just so he knows we got him. Stay on the line.”

About fifteen minutes later, Kinsley finally spoke again. “Put the phone up to Brashear’s face, but don’t let him talk long,” he ordered. Jake did as he was told and Brashear spoke into the phone. “Yeah, it’s me,” he said. “I’m tied up in some ratty motel room.” Jake pulled the phone away, put it to his ear again and Kinsley was talking in the background.

“It’s all over MacAbee. Turn around.”

Jake continued to wait until he heard Kinsley speaking to him. “I’ve got him,” he said. “I’m gonna’ call the Agency. They’ll come and pick him up soon. Just stay there and I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

By nine o’clock it was all over. Brashear and MacAbee were in custody being held by the FBI. The senator filed charges against them and it was only a matter of time before they’d be in a Federal penitentiary. The FBI agreed to keep the case quiet until the report was released.

When Jake finally got home, he was exhausted, but found the energy to phone Jennifer and let her know it was okay to leave the inn. The next day she learned about his escapade with Kinsley and both of them gained a new respect for the old man.

MacAbee's house had been searched and the flash drive was located in his safe. Over the following days, Kinsley and Jake had a chance to talk directly to Brashear and were surprised at his openness. They learned that Regina was still in Rio, but he wasn't sure where. He also told them she helped him steal a copy of the report and explained how it had happened. He gave Jake her new phone number, although he wasn't sure what to do with it. Brashear and MacAbee hadn't mentioned her name in their official story. The senator was told about Regina's role, but said it was up to Jake whether he told the FBI. After discussing it with Dee, he finally decided he should tell them.

Kinsley also learned the entire story about Ken Matthews and the fiery crash. For that, he was certain they'd be facing a long prison sentence, or worse. MacAbee, being the rat he was, told the investigators about his discussion with his competitor, Garrison Miller. He wasn't about to go down alone. Mr. Miller was picked up the following day, admitted he knew about the plan and was arrested. Leader Cameron's scheduler, Forrest Manning, was also arrested, along with Albright and Stoeller. When it came down to the nitty gritty, these guys were nothing but cowards, Kinsley told Jake.

After he brought Carey home and things got back to normal, Jake and Jennifer finished the report and handed it over to the senator. Although there had been some publicity about the arrests and the events at the warehouse, they managed to keep Weston's name out of the news, and for that she was thankful. Her plans to release the report changed again and she informed Jake she was going to wait until the day after she left the senate. He was tired of arguing the point, so decided to leave it up to her. When his vacation finally arrived, he was more than ready.

Jennifer had a few days off too so they made plans to spend some time together with Carey. They drove to the campus and took a tour of the available housing, made some arrangements for Carey's apartment and went back to the house. Jennifer had to meet with the wedding planners, so she left and Jake had Carey all to himself.

“I’m really excited dad,” she said. “My friend Julia told me how to get into Professor Norman’s class, but I need to go up there next month and talk to him. Can I go?”

“Sure, you want me to drive you?”

“No, Julia can take me. She knows him.”

“So what’s so special about him?” Jake asked.

“He has a cool way of teaching – really gets you to think. He’s also kind of a clown and it makes the class a lot more fun.”

“A clown? That’s what I’m paying all this money for? So you can clown around?”

“No! I didn’t mean it that way,” she exclaimed. “He’s not really a clown – but he uses humor and other methods to keep your attention.”

“I see,” Jake said. “So what are you hoping to learn from him?”

“About the way the world is made up, you know -- the way matter is formed and the energy behind it. It’s a lot like some of Mrs. Harvey’s workshops. That stuff fascinates me.”

Jake wasn’t sure where she got her curiosity about the formation of matter. It seemed a little strange for a teenager to be interested in, but he wasn’t complaining. “So what would you do with a degree in physics?”

“I don’t know, research, or teaching, I’m not sure. I’m not even sure it’s what I want to major in.”

He figured it was time to tell her, so he mentioned the fact that the senator would not be running for reelection.

“She offered you a job?” Carey asked.

“Yeah, as her assistant. It’s a new government watchdog organization. She’s forming it after she leaves the senate.”

“It isn’t dangerous, is it?”

“Noooo, nothing like that,” he assured her. “It won’t be like what just happened, at least I don’t think it will.”

Carey was glad to hear that and told him how frightened she had been, waiting for news at Dee’s house. “Are those men in prison now?” she asked.

“Yes, and they’re going to stay there a long time,” he replied.

“What about that man who died in the car crash? That’s pretty scary, to think there’s people out there who could that.”

“Well, one of the men was a pretty bad guy,” he explained. “I don’t think we need to worry about that happening again. It was a terrible thing, for sure.” Jake didn’t mention that her name was listed in the second extortion note and hoped she’d never find out.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

by S. Leigh Young

As Senator Weston's term of office neared the end, rumors began to spread about the report. The savvy media, acting more like gossip columnists, questioned her about it at every opportunity and connections were finally made with the arrests of James MacAbee and his cohorts. At his trial she, would have to testify and could no longer remain anonymous. Occasionally, Jake also found himself with microphones shoved in his face, but always refused to comment and the media finally gave up.

During a Sunday morning interview on a mainstream news channel, Weston was asked about the rumors linking MacAbee with the report.

"It will all come out in court," Weston replied. "I can't comment on it now. I was going to release the report shortly after my term of office expired, but I've been asked to postpone it because of the trial."

"Are there others in the report that may surprise us?" the interviewer asked.

"I'm sorry, I really can't talk about it."

The questions finally focused on her future plans and she announced the formation of the new corruption-fighting foundation. "We wanted to give it a clever acronym, since all of you media types seem to love that," she said, chuckling. "The acronym is FACT. It stands for Fight Against Corruption Today, but the official name is FACT, Incorporated."

"Ah, very clever senator," the interviewer replied, grinning into the camera.

As Jake watched the show, he realized he would miss working at the senate, but hopefully, his new job would offer greater latitude with fewer restrictions. In government there

were so many rules and regulations that one could hardly make a move without legal advice. Attorneys were involved in everything. Of course, in his new position there would also be legal concerns and he had recently been introduced to one of the attorneys who would be working with him. Her name was Janice Chavez, but she preferred to be called by her initials – J.C. Her background was quite interesting, having worked with the ACLU for several years, and before that, in her own small practice in the Northwest. Her husband was running for Congress in Virginia. She would be the lead advisor for all legal matters, but would serve only on a part time basis, until the organization grew larger.

Ironically, the new FACT headquarters was located in MacAbee's old office suite. His firm had been forced to close after his arrest and it seemed more than appropriate to convert it into something more productive. Jennifer was also onboard as the new creative advisor in charge of the web site, publicity and promotion. She would present the public face of the organization. Jake chuckled to himself when he recalled her reaction to the offer. She nearly jumped out of the chair when the senator asked her. She resigned from her position with the senate and was working diligently to get the web site up and running.

Jake's new position would be extremely important, second in charge, reporting directly to Weston. In two days, he would no longer be a senate staffer and would move into the new office in about a week. His new title was somewhat ambiguous, but sounded good...Chief Governmental Coordinator. Weston was unwilling to tell him exactly what his duties would be, or more accurately, she wasn't sure yet. But they both knew he would be very busy, once the complaints started coming in.

They were setting up a toll-free number for reporting government corruption on the National level. There would also be a secured method of submitting reports from the web site. Realizing that retaliation was a big problem that inhibited a lot of workers, a promise was made to maintain complete confidentiality for the whistleblowers. In this way, the informers could keep their jobs and report the abuse on an ongoing basis. Obviously, secrecy was an important consideration and Jake assumed this would be one of his most important tasks – to determine the best methods for maintaining confidentiality. Toward this goal, he turned to the one person with

whom he never imagined to be formally associated. John Kinsley was hired as an investigator and consultant. Actually, Jake had grown rather fond of the old goat, especially after seeing the way he handled the MacAbee case. Before Jake offered him the job, he asked Kinsley how many years he planned to keep working.

“What d’ya mean?” Kinsley asked. “You think I should go on Social Security?”

“It’s entirely up to you John,” Jake replied. “You’re getting ‘up there’ and I just thought I’d ask.”

“Up where?”

“Oh, you know...up in years,” Jake replied, smiling.

“Bull crap!” Kinsley barked. “I’ll be working ‘til the day these legs won’t support me anymore!”

“You want to work for me?” Jake asked, expecting him to say ‘hell no’.

“Doin’ what? Did you lose a dog or something?”

Jake laughed and slapped him on the shoulder, “no, but you’re close.”

Kinsley pretended he was doing him a big favor, but Jake could tell he was eager to take on the establishment and work for Senator Weston. “I got a few complaints I can report already,” Kinsley told him. “And believe me, they’ll surprise the hell out of you.”

“Great! As soon as we get the report forms printed, I’ll put a stack on your desk.”

“Desk?”

“Yes, John. You’ll have a desk. Your office will be next to mine.”

Kinsley turned and slumped slightly. “I don’t know...I’m not really a desk guy.”

“I think we can let you out once in a while,” Jake said, laughing, “Kinda’ like a watchdog...” Kinsley glared at him, but when he saw Jake’s smile, his facial expression changed and extended his hand. “Okay, I guess I can do it, if you really need me.”

A few days later Kinsley called him, very excited. “Guess what? They got Regina.”

“When? Where?”

“Two days ago,” Kinsley blurted, “right here, in D.C.”

He subsequently learned that Regina turned herself in. She was tired of running and hiding after experiencing several more close-calls with the man from Miami. “She tried to call you four times, but you didn’t answer.” Kinsley remarked.

“She did? I probably thought it was one of those media hounds,” Jake said.

“Yeah. Anyway, she’s in custody and they want you to come down and talk to them.”

“Why?”

“Her story doesn’t exactly match yours,” Kinsley replied.

“What’s different?”

“She says you agreed to steal some money for her. Is that true?”

“I told you all about that!” Jake exclaimed.

“Well, I don’t remember all the details. Meet me in an hour and I’ll go with you.”

Over the following two days, Jake managed to convince the authorities of what had really happened and Regina signed a statement letting him off the hook. It was a close call, but he used his new way of thinking to quell the fear. He now knew what it felt like to be accused of something by the FBI and it was not a pleasant experience.

On the morning before Regina agreed to sign the statement, Joe appeared in his usual manner.

YOU ARE HANDLING THE PRESSURE WELL MY FRIEND

AM I?

VERY WELL INDEED

**I WON’T ASK WHAT’S GOING TO HAPPEN BECAUSE I KNOW HOW
YOU’LL RESPOND**

YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER

Yes, he was right. He knew everything would be okay. After asking Joe about his new job, he was startled by the response.

IT WILL CHANGE

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? MY TITLE WILL CHANGE?

YES, BUT MORE WILL CHANGE

HOW?

ASK YOURSELF

There he went again, telling him to ask his inner voice. He had learned from Dee that thought processes were quite different where Joe existed. There were fewer restrictions on what he could see and learn. Because of the limitations of the physical brain and eyes, humans could only focus on one thing at a time, but Joe could think on multiple levels at once and probably had 360 degree vision. Jake found this impossible to imagine and asked Dee, “wouldn’t it be overwhelming?”

“With our restrictions, yes,” she replied. “But in his world, everything is much more expansive, including the ability to see, hear and think.”

“Where do you think he exists?” Jake asked, for the third time.

“I don’t know,” she replied. “Would you like me to see if I can communicate with him?”

“Yeah! That’s a great idea,” Jake responded.

Dee went through her usual methods of clearing her mind and a short while later, opened her eyes. “Oh my,” she said quietly.

“What?”

“Sorry, I can’t tell you what came through,” she replied.

“Tell me!” Jake insisted.

“I think you should find out for yourself. I’m sure you already know, at some level.”

No matter what he said, he couldn’t coax her into telling him, however, she did offer one small clue.

“It has to do with something you worked on several years ago. That’s all I’m going to say.”

He searched his memory trying to recall what he was doing several years back, but came up with nothing significant. “How long ago?”

“I don’t know,” she replied, quickly changing the subject. “How’s the senator’s new organization coming along?”

“It’s moving right along,” he replied. “I hired John Kinsley, did you hear?”

“No, I hadn’t heard. That’s wonderful,” she offered. “He’s a good person.”

“He’s okay, but we don’t always get along,” Jake commented. “Sometimes my patience runs a little thin with him.”

“Yes, but it keeps you on your toes,” she replied, grinning, and Jake had to agree. There was something almost lovable about the old guy and he was glad Kinsley accepted the offer.

Carey had recently moved to her new apartment in Boston and was already attending classes. After the morning talk shows ended, he gave her a call to see how she was doing.

“I’m doing fine, dad. School is great!”

“Well, I’m glad to hear it,” he said and added, mumbling, “considering the cost.”

“Huh?”

“Oh, nothing. How’re you and the new roommate getting along?”

“I’m not really sure,” she replied. “Cathy’s hardly ever home.”

“She not?”

“No, she’s in the orchestra and they practice late, almost every night.”

“Oh, well, at least you can focus on your studies without interruptions,” he offered.

“Yeah, and there’s plenty of it! I stayed up until midnight last night, studying for an English exam.”

“I know it’s a lot of work Cupcake, but it’ll be well worth it, believe me.”

“Say, dad...I was wondering if you’d do me a favor.”

“What’s that?”

“Can you not call me Cupcake anymore? It’s okay at home, but...”

“Oh, sure...I understand,” he replied. “It’s just weird to think, my little girl isn’t so little anymore.”

“Thanks,” she said warmly. “I do miss you though.”

“I miss you too Cup...oops, Carey.”

Carey went on to tell him how much she loved Professor Norman's class, especially his teaching methods, explaining that uses a tennis ball to get some of his points across.

"A tennis ball?"

"Yes! I'll tell you all about it next time I see you and I want to tell Mrs. Harvey about him too. She would absolutely love him."

After the call, he relaxed on the sofa and realized what a wonderful life he had, and even with Maggie gone, the future was looking much brighter. First thing in the morning he planned to go to his new office and get things organized. There was an afternoon meeting scheduled for the new staff and he spent the remainder of the morning preparing the agenda. That evening he took Jennifer to dinner and she filled him on the progress of the web site.

"It's going to be fabulous, Jake," she remarked happily. "This guy who's doing most of the work is the best in the business. He's using a lot of my graphic designs and ideas and I know you're going to love it."

As she told him about the web site and all the new projects she was involved in, Jake barely heard a word. He was too caught up with the way she moved her hands and how her eyes would light up with childlike excitement. Remembering how things had proceeded with Regina, he was taking things slow and easy with Jennifer. They'd been dating casually for several months, but hadn't yet been intimate, and he was pleased that she seemed to be leaving it up to him. The subject had not even been discussed.

As he watched her, Jennifer mentioned something that caused him to come out of his stupor and pay closer attention. "Sorry, what did you just say?" he asked.

"I said I placed an ad for a new housemate and I think I found one. He's a staffer for Congresswoman Jenkins."

“He?” Jake asked, leaning forward. “You’re getting a male housemate?”

Jennifer leaned back and gave him a strange look. “Sure. Why not?”

He wasn’t sure how to react, so he raised his eyebrows and continued to stare at her. “I don’t know...are you sure that’s the right thing to do?”

“Like I just asked, why not?”

“And like I just said, I don’t know....!”

Apparently, they were about to have their first disagreement and Jake was rather curious to see how it turned out. It’s not that he didn’t trust her and he realized he had no hold over her, but...something just didn’t feel right.

“Why Jake, are you jealous?” she asked, smiling slyly.

“No! Of course not...I’m just a little concerned, that’s all. How do you know this guy isn’t some kind of leech or something?”

“I checked out his background and he’s pure as the driven snow,” she replied, shaking her head. “I thought you’d be a little more open minded.”

Was he closed-minded? No, that’s one quality he’d always resisted, but maybe she was right. Was he being an old fuddy duddy? By the time he took her home, he was resolved to the idea, although not entirely happy about it. She asked him inside and this time he agreed. The house looked the same, but several items were missing and he assumed they had belonged to Sheri. Jennifer asked if he wanted to watch a movie and he said okay, so she went through her stack of DVDs and found one she thought he’d like. “How about Robin Williams?”

“Sure,” he replied. “Which movie?”

“Patch Adams,” she replied. “I just love that movie.”

“Good. I haven’t seen it yet.”

As they watched the movie, he realized why she loved it so much. The story line was very similar to what Dee was trying to teach him. After it was over they talked about it for a while and Jake felt an overwhelming desire to kiss her. He placed his arm on the sofa behind her and moved a little closer. Jennifer realized what he was up to, so she moved closer to him. “Remember when we kissed at the Jackson Inn?” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “I think about it a lot.”

“Well, I was thinking you might have the wrong idea – that maybe you think I’m not interested in you in that way. I just want you to know, it’s not that at all. I guess I’m a little over-cautious because of what happened with Regina, but I know you’re nothing at all like her.”

“I know you care about me,” she said. “I thought, maybe you felt more like a father figure, or something.”

“No, it’s nothing like that,” he replied, turning to face her. “There something else that concerns me a little bit.”

“What’s that?”

“We’re not of the same race. I know it’s never been a problem for us, working together, but a close relationship isn’t the same thing. There’s a lot to consider here.”

She turned toward him and smiled. “Well, as far as I’m concerned, it doesn’t even enter the picture. Of course, you might feel differently, I don’t know.”

“I know things have changed a lot, but some people still don’t accept interracial couples. I don’t care what other people think, but I’m not sure about Carey – or how you might feel the first time someone says something hurtful.”

“To hell with ‘em,” she said, moving her arm in the air. “It won’t bother me, but I can see why you might be concerned about Carey.”

“Maybe I should have a talk with her about it,” he suggested. “Right now, she thinks of you like an older sister.”

“She does?”

“Yeah, she told me that the other day.”

“I suppose it makes sense,” Jennifer offered. “I’m ten years younger than you and eleven years older than her. That kinda’ puts me in the middle, doesn’t it?”

Jake nodded and stared blankly across the room. He laid his head on the back of the sofa and put his feet on the coffee table. Suddenly, Jennifer leaned forward and gently kissed him on the lips, then pulled away. “It doesn’t feel wrong to me,” she said cheerfully.

“Me either,” he replied, pulling her closer. “It feels damn good.”

Beyond the veneer, the universe was working, as always, processing the energy required by life to flourish in the form of matter. Constantly, on a minuscule level, billions of subatomic particles were being generated, electrified, appearing and disappearing back into the unseen realm to gain more spark, and then reappearing with renewed vigor. In the next chapter of Jake Spencer’s life, he will surely seize those sparks to steer him into the future.