

Dispelling Darkness

A Psychic Medium's Mythical
Tale of Awakening

Aerin Kube

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To God, the Angels, my parents in Heaven, my husband, Michael and my children. This book is dedicated to you for your love and support

Chapter One



was slowly making my way up the u-shaped staircase to the second floor of my grandparents' 19th -century farmhouse. I could hear what sounded like the distant whispers of little girls laughing and running. As I neared the landing to head up the next flight of stairs, I listened to the attic door slam. "Who's there?" I asked out loud, but no response came.

"Hello? Is there someone there?" My heart was beating faster, and my breathing was getting shallow as I stood on the landing, looking up at the dark hallway. I couldn't see anyone yet, though something told me that I was being watched. In my mind, I saw two little identical girls, staring at me, that looked like they had just stepped out of a Renoir version of a Stephen King movie. They were cute girls with blond hair, dresses, and bows.

Placing one foot on the first step, I swallowed hard, telling myself it was all in my head. Since I was a child, my family had made it clear that it was nothing but my imagination. Upon taking the next step, I heard a slight tap of a footstep getting closer, followed by another and another until it was directly right in front of me. I could feel their presence,

but I needed my purse that I had left in the upstairs bedroom. I told myself to run and grab it.

Just as I took another step, a gust of wind blew by me, followed by the sound of laughter. “Oh, my God!” I yelled, running the rest of the way up to the bedroom before returning to the staircase. Rushing down the stairs as fast as I could, I tripped, hitting hard against the wooden landing. Everything went black.

“Whoa, what happened?” I felt a sharp pain in my head. Groggy, I realized that the twin girls were now visible. They were scurrying past me as they chased each other down the stairs.

“Come and catch me, Emeline!” one girl yelled, leaving me in shock.

“You’re one of the girls that I saw,” I said, trying to get up slowly. I walked down the stairs to follow her. “Holy Smokes!” I screamed, stopping abruptly. I could barely breathe. “Everything looks completely different!” I walked toward the dining area, to witness four older children setting an antique farm table. What is going on here?

Thinking that I may still be unconscious, I called out. “Hello?” But, to my surprise, nothing happened. I was invisible to them. It was surreal. Everything looked so much different, but I didn’t know how or why.

I stood in the dining area in silence, watching the family gather at the wood table for dinner. “Jeremiah, can you get the girls, please? They are probably running around upstairs. Also, tell your Pa to come in for supper.”

“Okay, Ma. I will,” replied the boy running off.

I walked around briefly, taking it all in. I realized that I must have been witnessing the original family that lived in the house in 1870. Seeing the kitchen, with its original stove and

sink, I felt woozy. Shaking my head in disbelief, I told myself that there was no possible way this could be for real. I knew that I was either dead or unconscious because it was too far out for even my wild imagination.

The father came in the door quickly. He washed up before taking his place at the head of the table next to his twin daughters.

“Wait a minute? I can’t be dead. I’m not seeing angels or white lights. But what if I broke my neck, and this is what the afterlife looks like? Oh My God, No!”

Tears began streaming down my face as I tried to make sense of where I was. While the family of nine continued to enjoy their dinner, unaware of my presence, I continued to talk to myself.

Pa started to rise from the table. He was a larger man and tan from laboring outdoors. You could tell by his hands that he was a hard worker. “I have to do some more in the garden. I want the older ones to come outside and help. Emeline and Noreen, I want you two to help your Ma with the dishes. Then I want you upstairs for the night, you hear?” The sweet little twin girls shook their heads in agreement, as did the older children.

Pondering how much longer I would be stuck here, I walked back up the staircase, noticing how much brighter it was. The 19th-century bedrooms reminded me of what I had seen in pictures and television. “How bizarre?” I sighed.

Wait, there are four bedrooms up here? I was stunned, noticing that the southside room that I knew as a bathroom was a child’s bedroom. “Oh, that’s right!” I said out loud. I remembered that in 1870, the family probably hadn’t put in a bathroom yet. They were still using an outhouse.

Leaving the bedroom, I could hear hard; loud footsteps come up the staircase. It was one of the older boys, with his twin sisters in tow. I watched as the teenager walked into his room to grab something before heading back down the stairs. The young man carried himself well, and you could tell by his presence that he was mindful of his parents. The young girls ran up to the third floor.

I felt like I was watching a cinematic movie play out. I couldn't help but notice directly in front of me was the room that I slept in for a short time as a small girl. It was always frightening to me with its double windows that echoed the sound and vibration of the cars and semi-trucks passing through the night. The bedroom has a closet that gives me a chill. Back then, I never wanted to open it. I swore that there was a terrifying red-eyed monster with spikes and a tail living inside.

As I questioned whether I had the nerve to walk in, I heard the front door open. Suddenly, a man and a woman were talking. Quickly, I made my way down the stairs to see the children's mother chatting with what looked like a peddler in a dark suit. The man had bright bluish eyes and longer dishwater blond hair.

"Evening Ma'am, I'm just out this way, selling some American novels if anyone here is interested?"

"I thank you kindly, sir, but it's gotten rough this year for us. We don't have any extra money," the Ma said. As she began to close the door, the man shifted to see around her.

"What about you, Miss? Are you interested in one? I have some Grimm's Fairytales if scary is your sort of thing."

Looking behind me, I checked to see if any of the other family members were standing close by. I then replied, "Are you referring to me? Can you see me?"

Before he was able to respond, the somber-looking Mother closed the door and walked away. The man appeared to be talking to me, yet, the woman didn't even blink an eye when he spoke out. *That's strange*, I thought.

Confused, I questioned if I should go outside and speak to him since he was evidently the only person that could see me. Just as I started to walk out after him, I heard screams come from the twins upstairs. Letting go of the front door, I ran toward the attic, where I found the girls making all kinds of ruckus. They were giggling in delight and pillow fighting with one another. You could see feathers and dust flying everywhere.

The third floor had always felt unsettled to me, but now it gave off a sense of innocence. It was set up nicely with the two girls sleeping to the left side and a boy on the right. The girls had an aura of subtle femininity with light floral patterns in pink and white.

Listening to the girls' play freely, they created a scene of harmony. I could feel the connection they had with one another.

“Don't open the window, Emeline.”

“But I can see Papa from here, Noreen!” Excited, Emeline opened the large, old, leaded window and stuck her head out to wave.

“Hi, Papa! Can you see me up here?”

“Get out of the window, Emeline!” her concerned father yelled from down below.

“Hi, Susan. Hi Jeremiah!”

As Emeline continued to hang out the window, I saw a glimpse of something dark move past me.

“Emeline, Pa says you should get out of the window!” Noreen yelled, rushing over to her. Suddenly, Ma came up the stairs startling them, causing Noreen to trip and propel forward into her sister’s body. The force sent Emeline out the window where she plunged to her death.

Rushing forward in horror, screaming, I tripped and fell out the window.

Chapter Two

Flummeting headfirst and screaming, I could swear that Tom Petty was serenading, “Free Fallin” in the background. Quickly waking, I realized it was a nightmare, and my husband, Sean’s alarm radio was playing the music.

“Morning, Dear. Did you have another weird dream? You were yelling,” Sean said, dressing professionally for work. He always looked distinguished when he wore his business attire. “Yes, I guess. I was falling again. Only this time, I fell out of the attic window in my grandparents’ farmhouse in Ohio. Since your radio was blasting that damn song, I thought for a second Tom Petty was singing to my demise.”

“Oh, that is weird. It’s kind of funny,” Sean chuckled, with a grin revealing his charming dimples. My husband is 37, well-educated, clean-cut, and fit, with dark auburn hair and hazel green eyes. When I met him in college, he attracted me right away with his witty personality, self-assurance, and eloquent nature. “You did spend a lot of time growing up in the house, right, Dee?”

“Yes, because my mom divorced my birth father early in my life. My grandparents helped us until she got her career going and eventually remarried. Life was different in the

Midwest compared to here in Florida, and I don't miss the snow. Since you are from here in Jacksonville, I know you haven't experienced it too much."

"Right. I think maybe we visited twice in the winter in the last twelve years we have been married," he replied, straightening his navy-blue tie.

Finally, out of bed, I found myself thinking about the dream and how I was getting them more frequently. As a child, I used to have all kinds of strange premonitions in dreams, but as I grew, they had stopped.

Passing me in the kitchen, Sean grabbed his coffee to head off to his job. Before walking out, he came up and stroked my long wavy dark, espresso hair. Gently, Sean kissed me on the cheek. At just 33, he appreciated my chocolate brown eyes, medium build, and quiet, submissive nature.

"Have a good day, Dee. I'll see you after work, and we can talk about the move." My husband called me Dee, as did my friends and family, but my name was Ellen Diane. Sean had put in his notice at the accounting firm he had worked at for the last thirteen years because he had recently accepted a position down south. This new position was requiring us to relocate.

It was June 2013, and the decision to move our family was a big one because of our three children having friendships in the area. Not only that, but our parents were relatively close by, and moving would mean we would see them less.

Luckily, it didn't affect me as much because I hadn't had a full-time job since college. Once the kids were born, Sean wanted me to stay home with the children. Josh was now eleven, Sarah was six, and Jack was five.

Our house had been up for sale for about two weeks when we chose to find a short-term rental near Sean's new job.

By renting first, we could be confident that the position was right for him long-term.

Later that night, I got on my laptop to look for homes. I said to Sean, "I just can't seem to find any houses within our price range. We may have to get an apartment. I know that's not ideal, but we might need to until our house sells. Then, we can purchase another."

Checking another website, I spotted a new advertisement for a lease home, and looking at the description; it said: "Prefer six to nine months." I had a feeling this house might be it. It was a little over our budget, but it appeared the home was bigger and more private. It had a pool and was next to the ocean. It seemed perfect, especially for the short term.

I called the number in the ad and spoke to a lady named Delores, who mentioned that the home was viewable the next day. If we liked it, we could fill out an application. Delores told me that she decided at the last minute to keep her home and rent it out.

She wanted to move back to Virginia to be with her daughter and son-in-law for at least six months so that she could help them with her new grandbaby. Since Delores hoped for a short-term tenant, it seemed perfect and would give us time to search and close on a new home.

The following day when we drove over to view the house, we couldn't believe how we had lucked out. It was indeed perfect, and we felt comfortable establishing a lease with Delores.

It was about three weeks later that we moved our family in. Delores, desiring to keep some belongings, moved her stuff into two out of the five bedrooms. She took off rent for using the rooms as well, which worked out great for us.

On Monday, the first day of our lease, Delores told me the house keys would be underneath the potted plant in the backyard. She would place them there for me since she planned to leave for Virginia before I got there to do my early move-in cleanup. Sean had to work, but he was going to stop by later to help since my parents had the kids. The plan was for the movers to bring our furniture the next day.

It was just after 10 a.m. when I arrived at the house. Turning the key in the front door, I felt apprehension come over me, although I had no idea why. Stepping in, I immediately noticed a draft that felt like a large gust of wind. It was hot and humid outside, so I thought maybe the temperature was set too low. As a result, I figured the air conditioner was blowing hard.

The thermostat was right at the entrance. I noticed it was set to 82 degrees, and the air conditioner wasn't running. "That's odd. I didn't remember the house being cold." Walking a little way further into the home, I had a strange feeling come over me. I felt at first that maybe it was because the house was large and empty. Standing there, though, I couldn't help but feel watched. It was a sense that I had often felt throughout my life, but never entirely understood.

From my perspective, when I looked out into the giant living room, I sensed weird energy. I felt dark and blurry human figures standing within the open space. They were wearing clothing from different periods. Taking a deep breath, I wiped my eyes, "You probably are just imagining this, Ellen. Get a grip on yourself." Shaking it off, I went out to get my cleaning supplies from the van.

I figured I would start in the front parlor, which was a good-sized room, painted in soft sage. It seemed bright from the sun shining in the front windows covered with white sheers. Oddly, it had a dense haze lingering like a cloud that gave off an eerie feeling. Not only that, but it had a wall made

of all mirrors across from the front windows. Delores had done an excellent job with the decorating, but I had to admit the mirrors were horrible and needed to go. With them in there, I felt even more watched, probably because of my self-moving reflection. While I was cleaning, my peripheral vision kept picking up my movements, which creeped me out. It gave me anxiety, thinking someone was in the room or inside the mirror, like a portal.

Though silly, I figured my nerves were getting the best of me. I cleaned quickly to get out of the room.

Taking a moment to collect myself, I walked around the rest of the house to do my cleaning. I noticed that it was dreary pretty much everywhere, contrary to it being a sunny day in Florida.

I had worked for almost six hours that day when I heard a knock at the front door. It was Sean, and boy was I glad to see him.

“Hi Dee, I brought clothes to change into if you need help,” he announced, coming in the house.

“Well, I have a couple of things that need to be moved into the shed, and I need to finish cleaning the sliding doors upstairs to the balcony. Other than that, I’m ready to get out of here because it’s creepy.”

“What do you mean it’s creepy?”

“I don’t know, and I can’t figure it out other than it’s dark and empty.”

Opening the back door, I pointed out to Sean what needed to go into the shed so that he could get started.

“Where do you want to eat dinner after this?” he asked.

“I’m not sure, but it shouldn’t be too fancy as I need a shower.”

I went upstairs to clean the sliding doors when I heard a lady's voice say, "Hello."

Turning around, I saw no one was there. "That's strange!"

I called out to Sean as I walked downstairs, but he didn't respond. As I neared the bottom of the landing, I looked over to the study. It was there that I saw a lady in a pioneer dress with a white bonnet. She was standing in front of me with her head down to where I couldn't see her face. I let out a low shriek and blinked my eyes. I thought maybe that I needed to stop working and leave because I was seeing and hearing things.

Just as I started to run back upstairs, I heard Sean come in and say, "I'm all done. Are you finished?"

"One more second," I replied. "I have to do something else, but it will only take a moment."

Sean followed me up the steps to the master bedroom, where he stopped at the top of the staircase to look out the giant picture window facing the ocean.

"Dee, did you see the view from up here? It's beautiful, and you can see the old lighthouse over in the distance. The history and energy are so strong that you can actually feel it."

"Oh ya, I feel it. I've been feeling it all day, and I'm ready to stop feeling it," I said with slight sarcasm. "I just hope that once our stuff is in here that we can be at home."

"It will be," he whispered assertively.

Chapter Three

Moving day came and went, and the first month flew by. Sean was settling into his new position and coming home earlier than when he was in Jacksonville. It was a blessing as the kids were thrilled to have more time with their dad. He was a good father and made sure to spend time playing with his kids when he could.

We had put Josh in one of the downstairs bedrooms, next to the two rooms occupied by Delores' things. The other two kids shared a room upstairs next to the master bedroom, where Sean and I were. We loved to sit out on our balcony and take in the ocean air and watch the waves. It was so relaxing that we almost thought we didn't want to move. However, that changed when Josh started having issues.

He wasn't sleeping but instead being kept up by the strange voices. Josh also mentioned that his bedroom light was going on and off. He told us that he saw dark shadows roaming the halls and a lady in a white dress with a white bonnet.

His description of her, to my surprise, sounded like the lady that I saw when I was cleaning. Not sure what to make of it, my first thought was to get him to realize that it was

probably his imagination. I mean, he was only 11 years old, and I didn't want him scaring Jack and Sarah since they were doing well. Josh was an overall smart child and loved school. He wasn't the type to seek attention or embellish a story. I knew he was serious about this and scared, which worried me. As a parent, I always had a deep desire to fix and heal everything for my children. That was my nature and how my mother had raised me.

Josh came in one evening, upset. His light brown eyes filled with tears. He said, "I heard sounds from the room across from mine. It sounded like someone was in there moving stuff around. I don't want to be down there by myself. The ghost lady is freaky."

"Now Josh, I admit that some houses have odd things that occur, and I don't know why, but there is nothing here that will hurt us."

Honestly, I knew what Josh was talking about, and I felt for him. Not only could I understand the dark feeling the house gave off vibrationally, but I could remember being like him as a child. I was scared often to sleep by myself, because I could also feel, see, and hear a lot that wasn't supposedly there.

I had hopes that my comforting words would help my son adjust. I also thought I was doing what any reasonable parent would do to calm their child's fears.

Around the second month of being in the house, Josh was now staying in our bedroom nightly. No amount of coaxing or comfort would help him to see that his bedroom was safe to sleep in at night. I assumed that he was going through a stage, so I allowed it until Sean decided that he had enough.

“I’m thinking Dee, that maybe if we get Josh a dog from the animal shelter that it will help him to sleep in his bedroom.”

“Yes, I think that’s a good idea, and I’ve missed having a dog around,” I replied.

I had grown up with dogs and cats and always loved animals, so I was excited that Sean had mentioned adopting. When we told Josh, he was ecstatic and couldn’t wait to go to the shelter to pick out his new buddy.

It was about a week later that we had our new family member, Benny. He was a smaller cream Lab, about two years old and just as cute as can be. Josh bonded with Benny, and right away, he slept next to him on his bed. They made it about three nights before Josh started to experience episodes again, scaring him from his room.

“Mom!!!! Dad!!!!” Josh screamed.

Jumping out of bed, Sean and I ran towards the stairs. Rushing down, we saw Josh running towards us with Benny barking and chasing from behind.

“What in God’s name is wrong, Josh?” asked Sean, almost falling over.

“Dad, there is someone in my room, and it’s not the lady!”

Josh was breathing heavily; he was as white as a sheet.

“What are you talking about? Go to your mom, and I will go look to see what is going on.”

“I don’t want to sleep in there, Dad. I want to be upstairs with you.”

Josh was clinging to me now on the staircase and shaking. It was dark down his bedroom hall from what I could

see, and the light was shining from his room. I noticed it felt odd, but I didn't want anyone to know, assuredly not Josh.

Coming back, Sean announced, "Nothing is in there, and you can go back to bed, man. You probably just had a dream."

"I didn't have a dream. Mom, someone was at the foot of my bed, looking at me with red glowing eyes. It had scary razor teeth. I swore it tried to come at me," he let out, trembling in my arms.

I looked at Sean sympathetically, since Josh seemed shaken from his experience.

"Let's have him stay on the floor with his blankets. Even if it was a dream, he is scared, Sean."

"Whatever Dee, I have to get up in the morning, and this is nonsense."

The next morning over breakfast, I could tell that Josh was trying to make sense of what he had seen the night before. He truly believed someone had come towards him with red eyes and that a pioneer lady was haunting us.

"Mom, tell me you have seen her? She watches us, you know?"

I thought for a moment whether I wanted to admit the truth to him. I hadn't had any issues with the house since our furniture had arrived, although I had seen her, and I did feel watched. As I scrambled the eggs and prepared my morning coffee, I looked at Josh and said, "Listen, I have felt some strange things too in the house. However, it's more than likely because it has a lot of history or something. I can't tell you why, but I can tell you that we shouldn't let it scare us."

I could see from my words that Josh was listening but still concerned.

“Look, Josh, we won’t be here much longer,” I told him. We just closed the sale on our old home. Dad likes his new job, so, therefore, we can start looking for a permanent home now. Hang in there.”

“Okay, Mom, but I want to stay in your room until we move. I’m not sleeping in my bedroom anymore.”

“Fine, Josh, but just so you know, sometimes being young can bring a wild imagination. I did when I was young.”

“Mom, are you telling me that you used to see ghosts?”

“Yes, Josh. I used to think I saw stuff, and even to this day, I still think I see odd things. I promise you, though, that there is nothing there. Sometimes weird things happen, and we can’t make sense of it, but to say there are ghosts is crazy because it can’t be proven.”

Upon hearing my words, Josh nodded in agreement and then finished his breakfast. I felt sort of confident at that moment that I was taking the right steps to help him overcome his fears. *It’s a part of being a child, I thought, and he will grow out of it in time.*

Chapter Four

 Two months had gone by since our two-story home had sold. I had only looked at a couple of houses online before deciding to find a local realtor. My real estate agent, Linda Walsh, for our home in Jacksonville, told me that she would gladly show me houses in my area. I knew, however, it was about two hours from her. As fantastic of a realtor, as she was, I wanted someone closer to make it easier. I informed her I was going to call somewhere local unless she knew someone close to us that she could refer. I had hoped that she would understand because I did feel bad. She was such a professional lady that knew her market well, and I respected her.

Looking through the online directory of local realtors, I called one company and waited for a return call from one of their agents. The next morning, my phone rang, and I answered.

“Hello, I’m Tom Sykes, and I own St. Martin Realty. I understand from Linda Walsh that you are looking for an agent. I would be happy to assist you in buying your next home.”

“Why yes, I am looking, but I did put a call into another place for an agent to call me back. But I haven’t heard from

anyone at that other company yet. You are friends with Linda, and she is a great agent. I do wish she were closer, but if she recommends you, then yes, I would love some help from your agency.”

“Great! Have you seen any houses yet or looked online to know what you would like because I can do a search and send you some listings?”

“That’d be great, Sir. I would certainly appreciate that.”

Later, after Tom sent the email, I glanced through his listings and saved a few addresses. When I provided them, he told me that he would have one of his agents get back to me to set up a showing in the next day or two. I thanked the man for his time, and we hung up. I could tell by talking to Mr. Sykes that he was a sharp and favorable gentleman with a burning desire to help his clients find the best-suited home.

On Thursday morning, I met up with Sharon. She was a lovely woman in her late forties and well-dressed, with platinum blonde hair to her shoulders. I was impressed with her warm spirit. She came up to me quickly as I walked up to the first house.

“Hi Ellen, I’m Sharon! It’s great meeting you. I think you will love this house. The owners will be back in about 30 minutes, but that should give us time to do the walk through.”

I went in and turned on the lights.

“Tom told me that your husband is a C.P.A. and you have three kids, is that right?” Sharon enquired.

“Yes, I do, and it’s nice meeting you as well,” I said. As we entered the brick two-story house near Daytona Beach, I glanced around. Given the state of many areas, I felt the home needed work. I also noticed a series of issues that needed addressing, and she agreed. Sharon was a sweet, professional lady who I felt a connection with because her childhood

sounded similar to mine. Her mother was also a single parent, plus she was from the Midwest. I found her overall to be easy to talk to and funny.

We had multiple listings to view that day, which we did, and I provided her my feedback on each. Pretty soon, I began to wonder if I sounded like a bit of a pain in the ass for being so picky. Finally, Sharon laughed, and said, “Why dear, you should come over and work for us. You seem to have an eye for houses.”

I laughed to even think of myself as a realtor. But then, driving to see the last house, I started to think about the possibility. I knew I was rather good with people and sales. I would need to talk to Sean about it, but it might not be a bad idea. I had never put much thought into real estate.

Sharon and I laughed a lot that day, and we talked each other’s ears off. I could see myself working with her. However, I knew Sean might not be as agreeable. He liked to be the bread-winner in the family and was often old-fashioned in thinking. When we parted ways, I respectfully expressed my gratitude. I mentioned that I would keep a lookout for further houses to come on the market. I told her that I would consider her offer to work as an agent as well, partly because I wanted to see the expression on her face to know if she was serious.

As we parted ways in the driveway of the last house, I yelled, “Thank you so much for today. I loved our chats and seeing all those incredible houses. I think maybe I could do this for a living since I think it’s fun. Sadly, today I didn’t find anything, but I believe when the right one comes along, I will know it.”

“Oh, I am sure you will, and we’ll find you the right one, Dee. Keep an eye out for the new listings. Also, if you want to talk about real estate as a career, I will tell Tom, and he will talk more with you. Have a great night!” We waved goodbye as we drove past each other.

Headed home, I realized I had missed a call from Sean. Calling him back, I found out that he was already off work and had picked up the kids from the sitter's house.

"Did you see any good houses?" Sean asked.

"No, but I did talk to the realtor who is out of St. Martin. She told me that we should consider broadening our search to look there if you wouldn't mind driving just a little further. It will add about twenty more minutes to your drive if you think that would work. I haven't driven into St. Martin or anything, but she says it's a charming historical town where everyone still kinda knows everyone."

"I can't say that I would love that. However, I'm not opposed to it either, especially if we were to find a good deal on a nice house. Go ahead and look, and we can go from there. I'll make the final decision."

"Alright!" I said, somewhat enthusiastic, "I should be home in a bit. I have to stop off at the grocery store for some milk. Oh, before we get off, I want to run something by you, and I hope you won't get worked up. How would you feel or what would you think about me becoming a realtor? I only ask because Sharon mentioned I might be a good fit, and I could set my days and hours. Plus, she said her boss, Tom Sykes, would probably help me get my license and employ me. Sean, he sounds like a super nice guy. I bet you would like him."

"Dee, can we talk about it this weekend? I'm too tired right now and need to get to bed early as I have a big meeting first thing in the morning."

"No problem, I understand, Sean. I haven't thought about what that might look like for us either. I'm about to head into Publix, so I will be home shortly. I love you. Bye."

No sooner had I found a parking space when I looked over to grab my purse and saw my grandfather sitting next to

me. He looked almost holographic as he smiled and waved farewell. Right away, I got a bad feeling that something was wrong. I had just talked to him a couple of days ago, and he was doing well. Stunned for a moment, I decided it was probably best to grab what I needed from Publix and not worry.

Near the back of the store, my phone rang. It was my dad, and he sounded somber, making my heart sink instantly.

“Ellen, I’ve got some bad news for you: Chuck died. Your mom just got a call from your Aunt Evelyn. Apparently, they were all sitting around the house talking when Chuck got a stabbing pain in his chest and said he couldn’t breathe. Unfortunately, by the time the EMS arrived, they couldn’t save him.”

I knew it. Didn’t I?

“What! No, Dad. I don’t know what to say. I can’t believe this. I am in a grocery store, and I will have to call you back when I get home.”

Hanging up, I tried to hold back the tears long enough to check out, while at the same time, process what happened.

Chapter Five

nce services got arranged, we all flew in for about four days to go to the funeral so that we could say good-bye. It was difficult for everyone that day that attended his memorial. So many people had tears in their eyes because he was such a kind and well-loved man who proudly served his country. I held up well through much of the service until the military shots fired off, and “Taps” began to play. Incredible pain and sadness swept over me because I think it was finally setting in. Grandfather spent his life protecting and watching out for us. I hoped that wherever he was, he would still be doing the same.

After the services, my mother announced that she would be staying behind to work out the details for the property. It had finally come time to sell the old house, filled with memories of my youth. I wondered what the family would look like that would soon occupy the home. I questioned who might sleep in that creepy bedroom upstairs. In some weird way, I was sad, but I couldn't tell you why.

Was it because I grew up there that I felt connected, or was there more? The house had a rich history, and I always knew that. It gave it a personality in a sense. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew it had spirits, but acknowledging it as

fact was hard. To believe without question, meant that I would probably need to face some of my darkest fears. That was something I didn't want to do.

“Sean, before we leave to head back to the hotel, would you mind if I went over to my grandparents' house one last time? I have a strange need to say good-bye.”

“Sure. If that is what you need, Dee.”

Arriving, I found that my parents and other family were already there. Sean told the kids to remain in the yard, and out of the way of any adults working inside. My parents had planned for an auction to commence once everything got sorted. They intended to make some tiny improvements before putting it up for sale.

Walking in that last time made Grandpa's death and a part of my childhood so final. Grandma had died fifteen years earlier, and we missed her. Since Grandpa had decided to stay in the house following her passing, it always seemed like she still resided there.

The family was all gathered downstairs, so I made my way upstairs. I wanted to be alone to take in, one last time, the house's essence. Memories floated back to me that felt unsettled as the house felt depressed. Rather than good remembrances, I began to recall some strange and eerie ones.

One memory that came to me was my trip in to see my grandfather, the year after high school, before college. I had wanted to spend one last good summer with him. Since Grandma had died just a few months earlier, I knew that he needed the company. Thinking about him alone in that house made me worry, so it seemed like a good idea.

It was a month in when I realized that as big and empty as the house appeared, it was anything but that. I can remember it being dense, active, and almost wholly alive. It

had an energy that, right after my visit, I questioned the real possibility of ghosts.

Strange happenings occurred throughout my life, but after Grandma died, the house seemed to have taken on aspects of her personality.

To have known my grandmother in life, you would have found her to be a prankster with a short fuse and an eccentric personality. She had soft and gentle moments, but she had another side that radiated something harsher and punitive. You didn't dare get on her wrong side if you wanted to make it out alive. I say that not to make her seem like she was evil, but to acknowledge that you could feel hot energy swirling around. Sometimes it was watching you and making you feel like you were about to break or do something wrong. Other times, it was just the abundant energy that had been there. It echoed the memories of the house's past.

When you opened any doors or windows in that house, you did it with trepidation. The water would turn on, the lights, fans, television, and old radios, would flip on and off and change frequency. I can remember the one time I started to feel intense fear because of the old-fashioned alarm clock that I found to have no batteries or power running to it. The alarm would sound off nightly around the same time. It blinked "12:00" with the alarm set to the "OFF" position. For me to stop it from chiming, I would have to turn it on and then turn it off. The first time it happened, I got freaked out, the second time, even further terrified. However, by the third time, I yelled and threatened the house that if it went off again, I was throwing it in the cow field. Interestingly enough, it didn't happen again.

After a month with Grandpa, I came to realize the man that I always knew to be a disbeliever of anything ghostly or supernatural, had somehow become more open to the possibility. I can't forget the morning when I figured it out

about him. I came downstairs to find him watching the Food Network and engrossed by television chef, Emeril, preparing some sort of new dish.

Taking a seat directly across from him, I said, “Good morning Grandpa, how are you today?”

“Good, did you sleep well?” he responded. Looking at Grandpa, I could see how tired and frail he was. His brown hair had turned completely white. At one time, he was a heavier man, but with his age and health deteriorating, I could see that he was losing weight. The lines on his face and his weathered skin and hands reflected a lifetime of the hard work he did outdoors.

“Honestly, Grandpa, no, but I think it’s because I could hear all kinds of strange sounds or people talking last night in my room. By chance, do you ever hear anything like that?”

Looking at him and patiently waiting for a response, he didn’t answer. He didn’t take his eyes off the television; instead, he started whistling, making me feel uneasy.

“Grandpa, you know, with Grandma gone, this is a large house. Have you considered selling it and moving in with my parents as they offered?”

He continued to whistle and ignore me, which was not like him.

“Aren’t you lonely here, Grandpa?”

He abruptly stopped whistling, took his eyes off the television, and looked directly at me with a crooked half-smile.

“I’m not lonely here. Not even close. You should know that.”

And with that statement, he continued to grin before shifting his eyes back to the television to whistle once more. Had he just acknowledged what was happening in his home?

Walking in each bedroom upstairs, I could hear the kids down below playing and the adults all chatting. I went into each room, taking pictures in my mind so that I could have lasting images. As I made my way up to the attic, I recalled those nights I had heard mysterious noises. The sounds would be a combination of laughter, screaming, and commotion as I was falling asleep. Most sounded like they were coming from the third floor. It often seemed as if it were children. I could never make out what they were saying, except for hearing my name called on occasion.

I tried to figure it out, but I could never come up with an explanation. I would lay there in the dark and sometimes listen, pulling blankets over my head to the point that I couldn't breathe. Obviously, I didn't sleep many nights because of my fear.

In addition to the strange sounds, the lights would go off and on by themselves, and the windows would sometimes open. You would come home, for example, after a long day, you could see from the driveway that the lights were on in the attic. However, once inside the house, you would find the lights off and the door to the attic open.

Taking it in one last time, I felt profound melancholy. I could not determine if it belonged to me or the house because I knew some of its tragic past. Originally, the attic looked utilized as two bedrooms for the family that lived in the house early on. From where I stood on the landing, you could go right or left. A room is on either side with equally placed, large windows. There is a long closet running the full length of the attic.

Household furniture and goods that had got accumulated over the last 143 years were in boxes and scattered around. Soon they would be up for auction. Some items were my grandparents, while others had inexplicably been found within the walls after they had a roof leak back in

the late '80s. The repairs required them to remove a section, revealing the house's history.

By doing so, they uncovered that the room on the right side had once been considerably larger. Why a portion of the room had been walled over was never clear. It was especially alarming, considering there were toys in there dating back from the turn of the century. They found two small beds, ragged dolls, and a music box, along with some other stuff covered in dust and cobwebs. I had sworn on occasion over the years that I heard that music box playing while I was up there. Not only that, but the long closet made my skin crawl because the wails of children could be heard, especially around dusk.

Recalling the endless memories, I looked at my watch as I gave a glance out the window to see the sun begin to set. I took that as my signal to head down to check on Sean and the kids. Turning to leave the attic, I heard a voice say my name.

“Ellie.”

“Hello?” I yelled up with chills going down my spine. I picked up my pace to go down. As I started to close the door to the attic, I heard a child's voice whisper, “See ya later, alligator,” followed by the faintest shrieks of children laughing and a sinister cackle.

Ellie? Is that what I just heard? I hadn't been called Ellie since I was little. *That's odd*, I thought.

“It's all in your imagination Ellen, get over it,” I said out loud.

“What's in your imagination?” Sean asked as he came up the stairs, startling me.

“Oh, my God! You scared the hell out of me!”

“Sorry. We were worried about you because you have been up here for almost 45 minutes. Is everything okay?” Sean asked.

“Yes, I got caught up recalling the last 30 years, I guess. I was just coming down.”

“Okay, but the kids are hungry, and your parents are talking about going out to eat.”

“That’s fine, we can join them before heading back to the hotel.”

“Are you sure you are alright Dee?”

“I’m fine. There are a lot of memories in this old house, but I’m better now that I got to say good-bye.”

“Dee, if you don’t mind me saying, I’m surprised you are taking this so hard. I thought this house troubled you. Lots of people died here, didn’t they? You even have nightmares over it.”

“Yes, it does, but I’m kind of attached, Sean. Plus, I’ve always felt sympathetic and have wanted to help heal it, if that makes any sense? For years, it felt like the house called to me. The family that owned it before my grandparents purchased it supposedly had marital trouble. Some say the husband shot and killed himself shortly after his wife took off with the kids, but who knows.”

“Well, Dee, you know that I have never felt anything unusual here. It’s just an old house to me,” he said, turning to walk down the stairs.

“Sean, go down, and I’ll be there in less than five minutes. There is one room up here that I want to go in but have put off till last.”

Looking at me strangely, Sean asked, “Okay, but why?”

“Call me weirdly sentimental. Do you know that after I stopped sleeping in here 30 years ago that no one else utilized the room? Literally, the door has remained shut except for some storing of Christmas decorations,” I told him.

“Why again, is that?”

“I don’t know why, but when I was young, the room scared the daylights out of me. I told everyone that I saw a red-eyed monster.”

Sean looked perplexed, and I could tell he didn’t understand. Opening the door, I glanced around and then shut the door.

“Wow Sean, that room still gives me chills. I’m ready to leave.”

Chapter Six

 After Grandpa's service, we returned to Florida. A couple of days later, Sharon called to say that she had a new listing for me. She wanted me to view it online, and if I was interested, she had time to show it around seven o'clock that night. Based on her description, it was a well-cared-for mid-size one story newer home in a great, quiet neighborhood. Sharon said that she sold other homes there and was very impressed with how manicured the lawns were and how lush and green of an area it was.

“Great, Sharon, I appreciate that and will go check it out now.”

We hung up, and I went to my laptop to bring up the listing. It looked nice from what I could initially see, and the square footage was perfect at just over 2000. It had four bedrooms, a living room, a dining area, and an entertainment room. It looked like a smaller backyard than we wanted, but it did have a pool with an enclosure around. The schools and neighborhood seemed okay, and the house was on the outskirts of St. Martin, making it easier for Sean to commute. Overall, it was excellent for the price and lower than what we

budgeted. It would give us extra money to pay off some of our additional debts.

I called up Sean, who was already on his way home, and told him that I thought we should see the house together. We could take the kids and see it as a family and even look at the town. Though Sean was hesitant at first, he agreed, and we met up with Sharon around seven o'clock at the house. As we arrived, we found the homeowner standing at the door with a warm smile on her face welcoming us inside. She looked to be a sweet and well-composed woman in her early fifties.

Entering, we noticed that Sharon was right about the neighborhood. The homes were close, but not so tight that they sat on top of each other. What I liked was they didn't all look the same, but each reflected care and grooming. The only thing that I noticed, which felt a little off to me, was how dark and dense the neighborhood seemed.

Perhaps it was the large trees that lined that roadways. The house inside and out was freshly painted and extremely clean. It presented well and looked ready for new ownership. I loved the white roses in the front of the yard, especially by the door. They popped out and spoke, eternal love to me.

“Hi, I'm Olivia Stranton. It's nice to meet you all. Come inside and feel free to look around. I'm going to wait out on the pool deck, so take your time.”

I always feel weird when the homeowners follow you around, so that was nice. We politely thanked her and went about the house. As we meandered through each room of the home, including the garage, we found the space to be meticulously clean and the walls freshly painted. The carpets were not what I would have desired, nor were the kitchen counters, but we knew that could all be changed.

“I like it, and I could see this working well for us,” Sean said, coming from the master bedroom.

“You do? That’s great because I was saying to Sharon how much I love it too.”

“Yep, I’m set to make an offer Dee. What do you think, Sharon, can we make an offer tonight?” Sean asked.

Sharon excitedly nodded and explained the process and that she would email over the documents to sign to make our offer official.

It wasn’t even 10 o’clock the next morning when we had the notice that the Strantons had accepted our offer. We were ecstatic that there wasn’t a counteroffer, so it made us feel like it was supposed to happen. Perhaps the house desired for us to live there as much as we wanted to.

Less than two months later, we moved into our new home in St. Martin, and it had a wonderful hometown feeling. Everything had been working out beautifully until we got a call late one night that my father had passed away while getting ready for bed.

“Ellen, this is Trish, your mom’s neighbor. I’m so sorry to have to call you, but your mother can’t come to the phone right now, and she wanted me to get a hold of you. I’m afraid I have some bad news. Your father passed away tonight.”

“What, how?” I asked in disbelief.

“It was a heart attack; it would seem. We aren’t sure because your dad collapsed in the kitchen, but it appears that was the case. Your mom will call you soon. She is still in shock and dealing with the police.”

“Oh my God, not my daddy!” I wailed out.

“I know. Your dad was a good man, and I’m so sorry for your loss,” Trish offered.

“It will take me a bit to get to the house right now, but I will be over. Tell my mom, please, Trish.”

“No, your mom said it’s best for you to come tomorrow. There is nothing that you can do at this point. She will call you in the morning and you can come over then if you like.”

I sat up in bed, speechless and stunned. Did Trish utter almost the same words my dad did only months earlier when he called to tell me that my grandfather had passed? I just couldn’t fathom what I was going to do. My dad was my world, and now two men in my life had left me. I felt so alone and heartbroken.

“Dee, I’m so, so sorry about your dad. Is there anything I can do?” Sean asked, trying to find a way to comfort me.

“It was supposed to be a happy time for us, Sean. Why did he have to go and die? We were going to have them over, so the kids could show them how well they are swimming. I just went to a funeral service. I can’t do it again! No, it’s too soon, and it isn’t fair!” I wailed out.

Sean, trying to console me by holding me in his arms as I cried, said, “I can’t believe this either. I loved your dad, like my own. He was always kind to me.”

“I feel so cheated like my world is ending. I hate God right now if there even is a God. I mean, how could he do this? My dad should have had more time with us. It’s not right!”

“I don’t know the answer to that Dee, but I believe that God is watching over all of us. He has a reason for everything. Just have faith.”

I wanted to be rational and believe what Sean was saying to me. However, all I ended up doing was getting on an emotional roller coaster. One minute I was up, the next I was numb, angry, and then sad. I was all over the place and a hot mess trying to deal with their deaths. I wanted to be strong for my kids and my mother, but I felt like a failure. I couldn’t help myself, let alone help them.

My dad's death, like my grandfather's, was a shock, and I didn't feel I had time to prepare myself. Not that I think anyone is ever fully ready for a loved one to die. I do realize that healing from grief will not happen quickly. I knew it would happen for me in its own time. I just couldn't help but doubt if I would ever really heal. The people in and out of our lives, I know, all have a purpose, no matter who they are. Some people will leave a more lasting imprint in our hearts. For me, that was my dad.

Chapter Seven

“**M**ore, just think about it. Father is having a grand and lavish celebration. You shouldn’t miss it Sister. It’s going on downstairs in the ballroom this evening. He’s invited so many possible suitors. I know, Sister, that you have been so lonely and wishing for someone to come into your life. I think this would be a fabulous opportunity for you,” declared a beautiful young brunette. She was talking to a lovely older teenage girl with long, vibrant, flowing blond hair. Both ladies, I noticed, had tiny noses, big blue eyes, and ruby red perfect lips.

Okay, Stop! Where am I, and why am I dreaming of these two? The woman with dark hair looks somewhat familiar. She resembles one of my old neighbors in Jacksonville. Why would she be in my vision, though? Why does it look like I am in the tower of a fairy tale bed chamber? I wonder if this is a crazy dream that’s going to consist of many different elements. That used to happen to me, and I had a special journal where I would write down all the details of my dreams. Then, I would search for the dream meaning to see what each thing meant. I usually could figure out some significance in my life. Maybe that is it, but why the fairy tale?

Looking around more, I remembered that I read a story to Sarah before bed from the Greek Mythology book. Evidently, I must have got it stuck in my mind. If that's the case, then I bet I'm in a castle, high up on a mountain. It has to be someplace like Mount Olympus then since these women look like Greek Goddesses. Puzzled, I had to think for a moment. If this is another bizarre dream, then am I destined to free fall from the tower window or watch one of these two broads jump from one? I don't think I want to witness that.

Judging by the view from the tower, I can't see land. It's all white and misty, and from what I can tell, it's for sure an old stone castle. The bedroom I am in is enormous and looks richly decorated. It's impressive and lavish enough that I could easily see myself living here with the gorgeous tapestries, flowers, and gold all around.

"Kore, please! I want you there. Say you will come for a little while. I heard one of the Kings is coming and bringing his sons."

"Athena, Mother said no. She wants me to leave with her soon. She says she doesn't like me being besieged constantly by men. Whatever that means. She feels I should remain pure until the time is right."

"Listen, I agree with her, but I know how lonesome you are. I know you well enough, and she tends to be a little possessive when it comes to you. Be honest with yourself. It won't hurt to come for a little while. Please, don't make me beg. Come downstairs with me."

"Fine, okay. For a bit, I suppose. You are right. I do sometimes wish there were someone out there for me. At some point, my mother is going to have to let go, right?"

"Yes, and you are nearly seventeen. So, I think it is wonderful. I will help you pick out something stylish, and I will do your hair up. You need to make a statement!" Excited,

they began getting ready so merrily with glee. Watching them pirouette, I wondered when they were going to bust out in some fucking fairy tale song or when mice would come out of the corner with jewelry and bows.

Standing back, observing, I realized that I heard the name, Athena. I think that was a name I recognized from one of Sarah's mythology books. It all was making sense. Watching the ladies' bustle around in preparation, they finally finished getting ready. They were both wearing gorgeous flowing white and gold gowns. I followed them to the doorway and down a long hall to a giant double staircase. I could see the room below was filling with people, and they were all dressed elaborately. The decorations and architecture appeared ornate, and I was stunned.

As the ladies proceeded to saunter down the golden stairs, they did so formally to ensure attention. In pursuit of them, I stepped on the first stair and slipped. I must have fallen all the way down as I blacked out. I woke to my husband's alarm radio, playing, *These Dreams* by Heart. Getting up, I shook my head after listening to a little of the lyrics. *Weird*, I thought, when I realized it mentioned something about fairytales.

Funeral services for my dad had come and gone. All I wanted to do was keep busy. My mom and I were spending more time together. She was considering moving closer to us. She decided, however, not to do anything too fast or drastic, and instead take her time.

I wanted her closer to me while she was dealing with her grief, but I understood.

Dad may have died, but I was struggling to let him go. I knew that it had to be doubly hard for her. She had to sit in that house day after day looking at his stuff. Mom told me it was difficult, but the memories were beautiful. Over time, she was learning to concentrate more on that. She was such an

amazing and lovely woman with compassion and a glow. She was always involved in charity work. She was so strong, and the kind that never wanted to show her fear or worry to others.

I had to give her credit for her strength because, for me, everywhere I turned, he was in my thoughts. I even told my mom that on the phone one day. “You know, Mom, I have been trying to decide if I should take a job. I’ve been asking Sean if it’s okay with him. I have been thinking about real estate because I feel a need to put my time into something. Everywhere I turn, I see Dad as if he were standing in front of me. It’s as if he has moved in and won’t leave my thoughts. I don’t know; maybe I need grief counseling because I can’t seem to move on. I don’t know what else to do.”

Mom listened to me pour my heart out. Then she said, “Well, Dee, if that is what you need to do, then do it. You know that I have always stood by you one hundred percent. I know that whatever you do, you will be successful. I’ll be proud, no matter what. If you want my opinion about your dad, I understand because it hasn’t been easy. He was my rock, and we had many good years, so I understand what you are feeling. Unfortunately, Dee, there’s nothing that we can do to bring him back. We can send him love and let him know that we’re thinking of him. If he comes to your mind again, realize that he may be doing the same. Look at it with appreciation. And, also, if you believe that getting a job in real estate is what you need, then do it. I wish you well. I know your father would feel the same way.”

Hearing my mom's words pushed me to set up an appointment with Tom at the realty office. Sean wasn't thrilled but finally agreed to support me. Meeting with Mr. Sykes, I discovered him to be a tall, thin, conservative gentleman in his early forties that was super attentive. His short wavy, light brown hair, deep blue eyes, and gorgeous killer smile really drew me in when he introduced himself. While in his office, Tom went over the steps I needed to take to go into real estate.

He was accommodating, and went over the process for the license thoroughly, even providing the phone numbers. Tom said that he would help pay for a portion of my courses and testing in exchange for working at his office for six months. It seemed like a great deal, and I told him that I would take him up on his offer.

I got the process started as quickly as I could, and I found real estate classes online. It was great because it allowed me to stay home with the kids. I made my way through the courses smoothly, and I set up a time to take my state exam. I was worried, but when I finished the test, they gave me the exciting news that I had passed.

Driving home, I called Sean and Tom to tell them, and they congratulated me. I was now officially a real estate agent and employed by St. Martin Realty.

On my first day, Tom called me into his office. It was an exciting time for me. “Dee, can you come in please to fill out a couple of new hire forms?” I was nervous, but Sharon showed me around the office. It was small, quaint, and housing a handful of realtors. The agency was located inside a small plaza on the corner, next to a cozy little cafe. Sharon’s and my desk were next to each other, which was great since she would be helping me at the beginning.

My first time out, I went with Sharon and watched her in motion. She was superb at selling homes and knew the tricks of the business. Plus, she had a way with her clients that made them feel comfortable. They knew they could trust her, making the home buying process smooth and easy. What I loved was getting out to see the gorgeous houses and different styles of architecture and design. Some were replicas, but the unique ones captivated me, especially the old historical homes. I felt so drawn to their energy.

On the flip side, I was able to see the troubled homes and problems that existed. There was much to glean in this

new job, but I was ready for the challenge. I couldn't wait to get my name out there. As silly as this might sound when my business cards came, I gave a little squeal in excitement. "Dee Dawson, St. Martin Realty."

Naturally, I gave the cards out to everyone I could think of, plus I did some mail outs and door to door. However, some of my clients started to come from word of mouth, which was great. I attended some Chamber of Commerce meetings and even helped a little at some small charitable events. Every bit helped to get my name out there, and I was starting to make friends in the town.

My first house to go on the market wouldn't come until later, but I received some phone call-ins when my time came around. It was nice working part-time at the beginning because I could still be home with the kids for the most part. Sean was helpful usually, and he would put the kids to bed if I had to be out for the evening. He was even trying to make dinner on occasion, although I think ordering carryout or pizza was his favorite thing since it was easiest. Not that I blamed him, as working all day and coming home to kids was exhausting.

Still, we managed, and we were delighted in our new home, and the kids were happier. Josh appeared to be doing better than at the last house. He seemed glad that his bedroom was closer to ours rather than on another floor.

The energy in the new house was not like the one we rented. I couldn't put my finger on it, but it seemed different and quiet. I can recall a few times that the calm was strange. Every so often, I would feel someone lurking close by but look up and see nothing. Sometimes I felt watched, but I figured it was pretty much my imagination.

Working my job, and taking care of the house, was becoming more demanding and exhausting quickly. I was ready to go to bed most nights, even before the kids.

Managing the constant stress of every day and balancing it to find perfect harmony wasn't easy.

The extra-long hours under the demands and pressures of home sales did yield nice paychecks. However, there were moments that I wanted to strangle some of my clients because they would flat out waste my time. I knew it came with the territory because it was sales, but it still wasn't easy. I tried to work through it, but there were instances when it was harder and put undue stress on my family. Sean wasn't pleased about that either since it put more pressure on him.

I realized that I needed to change my thoughts and position because I was slowly becoming bitter. I didn't understand what was wrong with me. I think part of the problem was that I was missing quality time with my family, which Sean pointed out. It felt like we had started to exist rather than live because we were going through the motions every day. I began to question whether my boundaries and balance were sufficiently in place. I think maybe it's a common problem in this country that is causing a great deal of mental and emotional upheaval.

There are self-help books and classes everywhere now trying to help people manage their stress and health. Sean was familiar with them. He read many books designed to assist in finding purpose, balance, and clarity to live better with more focus and positive thinking. I gave him credit for taking the initiative to try to find a way to a healthier lifestyle.

He had made up his mind that he wanted to release his unhealthy habits for a positive change to take place. In my opinion, that may be the first step of the process to unfold, and one that I was missing. Instead, I was allowing my feelings of frustration and anger to depress me further. It was an endless cycle that I wanted to find my way out from so that I could live my life with purpose and more meaning.

Chapter Eight

 Almost a year went by, and the anxiety, fatigue, and depression continued. I didn't understand. I knew that I had a good job, a great husband, and beautiful kids. Still, something was missing in my life. Though I was enjoying my new career, I felt a sense that more was out there.

My part-time job had become more full-time, which wasn't helping my anxiety, nor my marriage. My mom was not coming around as often, and I was missing her. She and I had always been bonded. I knew, however, that she was moving on with her life and becoming much more involved in activities and making friends. Though I missed her, I was happy that she was finding peace and love. She had mentioned that she had been seeing a nice man that she said was widowed. Naturally, I was excited for my mother because I didn't want her living alone. I wanted to see her happy again.

As time passed, Sean and I were seeing less of each other. I was starting to question whether I should stay working since it was proving tough on the relationship with him and the kids. Still, we were managing to get out a little and do things together as a couple and family. It was harder.

I was beginning to feel ashamed of who I was turning into and starting to find fault with everything. It was to the point that I started hating life and became disconnected from who I once was. I felt terrible as a mother, daughter, wife, and co-worker and was desiring to get far away. Whatever changes had taken place, left me questioning if I was going through the beginnings of an early mid-life crisis.

Coming home one night, I had to stop off to the drug store to grab a prescription for Sean. As I got in the checkout line, I looked around and noticed the facial expressions of everyone close to me. I found most of the people looked disgusted, tired, or miserable. I wondered if it was in the air like a contagious virus. If it was, I wanted to know how to get rid of it.

It was at that moment that I made up my mind that I would not let what was getting me down to continue. Whatever was missing in my life, whether I found it or not, wasn't going to be the reason I stopped living or trying to find joy.

I wanted to find an answer, but I didn't know where to begin. I was never a Godly person, nor did I go to church. I did believe He existed, or at least I told myself He did. Honestly, I guess I never thought much about religion. I wasn't against it. I think I had insecurity and a lack of understanding, which made me question whether there was a God. But even besides that, life never made much sense. I had a lot of questions, including its purpose, if there was one.

Nevertheless, that moment in the drug store, while waiting to check out my items, I whispered to myself. "God, if you can hear me and you are there, know that I need a change. I am tired of feeling miserable, unhappy, and lost. Contrary to having a blessed family, I don't know my place anymore or where I belong. I don't want to feel like this, and I could use your help as I want to change and start anew."

Right then, the clerk said, “Nine dollars and fifty-five cents, Ma’am.” He was waving in my face to snap out of it.

I was praying so hard that I didn’t even realize that I had sat my items down. Paying the cashier, I apologized to everyone around me. I grabbed my things and drove home to find Sean with a pizza watching a movie with the kids. Not wanting to interrupt, I said hello, and quietly went in to take a hot bath. I needed to relax and unwind since I knew that we had plans to take the kids to Universal Studios the next day. Finally, we were going to have a family day together. The kids had been eagerly anticipating the trip for weeks.

Filling the tub with water and stepping in, I began going over my day and the prayer I said in the checkout line. I questioned if God heard me or if I needed to work through my issues alone. It was at that moment that I wished I had some of my dad’s advice. He always knew the right thing to say to cheer me up, but he also spoke the truth.

Saturday came, and the kids were excited to head off to Orlando. Getting them up and in the car was a piece of cake. Driving down the road, I took a deep breath preparing myself for the madness of the day. With the anxiety I had been feeling, let alone the crowds that I never felt comfortable around, I was apprehensive about going.

Chapter Nine

Monday morning came quickly, and I headed off to work since it was my day in the office, and I had paperwork to complete. I was still recovering from the weekend, which the kids enjoyed. In all fairness, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. I also felt better mentally. I think it was in part since Sunday, we rested up and spent time by the pool as a family.

Arriving to work, I could see that I was going to be the only one in the office. Tom mentioned being out, and Sharon had said that she might stop in quickly around lunchtime. She had houses to show to a couple that was from out of town. They were moving across state lines from New Jersey. It was quiet in the office and seemed like it was going to be an uneventful day for a change. I figured I might have time to organize and plan my days out to help relieve my stress.

It was after 11 o'clock, and I had been there for a little over an hour when my phone rang. It was Sharon wanting to know if I could show her clients homes later that day around the St. Johns' River, near Jacksonville. She said she had come down with the flu and felt terrible asking me at the last minute, because of the distance from St. Martin. However, her

out-of-state clients had limited time and were flying home the next morning.

I told her it was no problem, and to get well, for which she was grateful. I knew that Sharon would never hesitate to help me out. In the past, she had and on more than one occasion too. I was glad that I could give back to her.

Sharon had arranged for the couple, Lewis and Mary Stetson, to meet me at the first house on Sebring Lane. It was across the street from the St. John's River. They preferred having a home on the water, although they said that having private access to the river might be worthwhile to check out. Lewis was an avid fisherman and loved his boat. They saw the pictures of the home and thought it looked like a lovely ranch because of its new updates and paint.

Honestly, it was a great deal and a well-cared for home at an excellent price. I think they were impressed and considering it, although I could see they didn't care much for the yard. The trees in the front blocked what little view there was of the river.

The Stetsons walked around and commented on what they liked and didn't, while I waited downstairs by the front door.

Not even 10 minutes later, Lewis walked up with his wife, discussing the property. "I had hoped this house was on the banks of the river, Mary, or that it had a better view because the backyard is horrible. I would much rather have the river behind us for the extra money. I think we should keep looking."

Hearing him, I said, "Well, the next house on the list is on the river and in a little town called Green Cove Springs. It might be worthwhile to check out. The only thing I see is that it's been on the market for some time. Sharon heard from the other agent that the house needs some work, but it's a big

piece of property on the banks of the waterway. It's got a pool, and a one-bedroom guest house if you wish to go look at it?"

"Yes, as it doesn't look like we have any more options at this point. I mean, we did see a house further north with Sharon the last time that we considered. However, we knew it probably wouldn't appraise close to what they were asking. We may still consider it, but we aren't in a big hurry to buy. We would prefer to find something sooner to get away from the frigid winters in Connecticut. It's too hard on Mary's arthritis," Lewis explained.

I found them to be a kind and considerate couple, with Mary being the more talkative and carefree one. Her husband, on the other hand, was quieter and more traditional. Pulling up to the home on Dexter Avenue, I noticed the chain-linked gate was closed. The weeds and grass were tall and growing up around the sides, not giving it any curb appeal. I parked on the edge of the street to get out and access the lockbox, which held the key to open the gate.

Pulling our cars into the gravel drive, I could tell that the small, bungalow-style house needed some major repair. The paint was chipping away, and the shutters and front porch steps needed to be fixed and repainted. The bushes along the sides of the home required trimming; however, the grass looked maintained. It was lush, green, and led out to a phenomenal back yard with a fantastic view of the St. John's River. I was impressed with that, and it appeared to be the main selling point.

The owners, I had gotten told, had moved out, but they still had some furnishings and clothing inside. The price had come down substantially, but it wasn't receiving any offers.

Mary and Lewis got out and explored the backyard right away in anticipation of the river. I could see by Lewis's face that he loved the property but not the work to get the house back into shape. It was evident from the outside that repairs

would be costly, and we hadn't even walked in. I gave Mary and Lewis the listing information, and then I told them to wander around freely.

Immediately, Mary joined Lewis near the river to explore and walk through the guest house. I, on the other hand, walked around the house slowly as something was catching my attention. As torn up and unkempt as the house was, there was something about it that captivated me. I didn't understand why, but the energy was powerful. Looking at the home up and down, I noticed the ivy growing along the side of the house. It was next to a window that caught my eye. I thought for a moment that I got a glimpse of a man standing and looking down at me.

"That's odd, Sharon said the agent told her it was vacant."

Was someone here cleaning or showing it, because I didn't see a car if so. Taking my hand to cover my eyes from the sun glare, I looked again. Waiting a moment, I realized no one appeared to be present at the window, at least not any longer. Shaking it off, I started to walk to the front door to go inside. By this time, Lewis and Mary were on their way back from the guest house.

"The pool needs some work, but the location is nice," Lewis stated.

"Yes, but I don't know who in their right mind would stay in that guest house. I wouldn't put my dog in there as it's decrepit," Mary said.

"Well then, it's perfect for your mother to come to visit!" exclaimed Lewis smirking and teasing his wife. Mary rolled her eyes and gave him a playful punch in the arm.

"Not funny."

"Would you like to see inside now?" I asked.

Opening the door, I said, “Hello, knock, knock...is anyone here. Realtor, we are showing the house.”

No one answered, so I told them to roam freely. Mary and Lewis both went off together.

As they made their way around, I searched for lights to turn on for them. I walked into the kitchen and dining area before entering the family room on the back of the house. It had amazing views and plenty of light. It made me feel cheerful and was another excellent highlight of the property. While the Stetson’s continued to chat and discuss the room’s view, I made my way back to the front of the house. I wanted to head towards the hall and bedrooms. I opened the door to the first bedroom and saw a mattress on the floor and someone’s dirty white shirt on the ground. It made me question if someone was actually in the house.

“Hello?” I called out again, making sure that no one was there. I quickly left the room to make my way to the second bedroom. Entering the room, I noticed it was darker, with only a dim light on the ceiling. I thought it gave off an eerie feel with its deep gray-blue walls.

I made my way to the staircase, which went to a loft area. As I walked up, I could hear Mary and Lewis coming towards the bedrooms.

“I don’t know about this house, Mary. In my opinion, there is an awful lot of work here. I do like the view and property, but I think the price is too high. We will need to get them to go down quite a bit so that we can do updates and repairs,” Lewis stated.

I had reached the top stair when they turned the corner to walk into the first bedroom with the mattress.

“Look, Lewis!” Mary pointed and chuckled. “They are even throwing in an old gray mattress! See, there is a savings right there!”

“Ha! Ha! Mare! You’re right. Now we don’t need a bed for your mom either in that guest house. It looks like her needs are taken care of. Hey, did you notice the old painter’s bucket for her to use outside? We wouldn’t have to fix the toilet or plumbing. She could jump in the pool whenever she needs a shower? Think about it,” Lewis joked.

“Have you lost your mind?” Mary exclaimed.

“Yea, you’re right. I wasn’t thinking. Your mom doesn’t seem to shower. We might need to throw her in the pool once a week.”

“Lewis Stetson! Stop it, please,” Mary said, trying not to laugh.

Wow! These two are something else, I thought. I could feel the Stetsons had been married so long that they loved and understood each other’s personality quirks.

Now in the upstairs loft, I was in front of the window where I thought I had seen someone standing. I noticed the room was spacious. Oddly, it reminded me of my grandparents’ attic, because of the windows. Looking down into the yard from one of them, I felt sick to my stomach as I was afraid of heights.

Being in there, it was bright enough; that it didn’t need lights, but the feeling wasn’t as cheery to me. It felt odd, and I noticed when I got up there that I felt watched. Leaving the room, I had a sensation come over me. Turning around, I suddenly saw what looked like a big flash of light. It was similar to a camera flash. I blinked hard, gasped, and then saw what looked like two older people standing in front of me. One was a bald man, wearing a dark suit, with old-fashioned

black sixties glasses. The other was a female with gray hair pulled back into a bun. She was wearing a simple dress that went just beyond her knees. She had heavy black shoes, no makeup, and neither she nor the man smiled. They stared at me a second before they disappeared.

“What was that!” I said out loud.

Puzzled, I tried to regain my composure and rationalize what had occurred. I left the room and cautiously walked down the staircase, holding on to the railing. I felt unsteady and still seeing the flash of light.

I thought maybe I needed air, so I headed for the door. As I made my way down the last step, I passed the Stetsons, who were making their way up to the loft area. Whatever happened had to be my imagination. Quickly realizing I needed to close up, I walked around the house, turning off the lights. Going in to lock the sliding doors in the family room, I saw movement in the yard. Looking closer, I freaked when I saw what was by the riverbank. It looked like Confederate Civil War soldiers. They appeared to be pacing back and forth and had tents set up like an encampment.

“Holy Hell! What in God’s name is happening to me?” I said quietly. Stepping back, I was in shock and disbelief. I wanted to leave. Heading to the front door, I hoped the Stetsons were about through.

I knew I was overworking myself, but seeing things was seriously an issue. I wondered if I should see a doctor or tell Sean? If I did tell my husband, would he think I was crazy?

I left the house, confused, and worried. Thankfully, that was the last house to show Mary and Lewis, so I was able to drive home. The Stetson’s had kindly thanked me for my time. They said they would have to think over the house because it needed some serious work inside and out. I couldn’t have agreed more.

Chapter Ten

Driving back home, I got a call from Sharon, who was feeling better. “Dee, thank you so much for your help today. How did they like the houses?” she asked.

“I’m not exactly sure that either was a fit for the Stetsons. I heard them talking about waiting. Lewis did like the house on Sebring, but disliked its property,” I said, trying to maintain professionalism.

“I was afraid of that. What did the couple think of the house on Dexter?”

“The house on Dexter? What, what about it?” I replied, stumbling on my words.

“Did they like the house? I heard it needed some TLC.”

“Um, they needed to talk about it, but I don’t think it’s the one for them.”

“I see. Well, can I ask what you thought of it? That way, I can tell the agent if they call.”

“It’s okay, Sharon, but I think it needs work. If it were me, I wouldn’t live there. The views are great, but the energy is weird.”

“Alright. I see. Well, I guess I have enough feedback to give the agent. Thanks again, Dee, for your help today. I deeply appreciate it.”

“You are welcome,” I said.

Getting off the phone, I was relieved. I managed to make it through the conversation. Grabbing my cold coffee still sitting from earlier, I took a swig because my throat felt like it had sandpaper in it. I began to question if I was getting sick.

Walking in the front door, I found that Sean was not home yet. I thanked and paid the sitter and then sent her on her way. Not even five minutes later, Sean pulled in the drive.

“How are you, Dee?” he asked, coming up to give me a quick kiss on the cheek.

“Not feeling so well, but I probably need to sleep.”

I quickly scanned the cupboards and realized that I wasn't hungry. I didn't feel like making dinner.

“Sean, before you change, do you think you could take the kids down the street to get some burgers or something? I think I'm going to bed if that's okay?” As soon as I asked him, I noticed the upset expression on his face.

“I'm pretty beat too, but whatever. I will get something and bring it back. It's fine, Dee. Go lie down if you don't feel well.”

Sean got the kids in bed before he came into the bedroom for the night. I had just jumped in bed with my laptop after taking a long bath to soothe my nerves. I was tired, but I wanted to look up Green Cove Springs and the house on Dexter to see what I could find since something wasn't sitting right with me. Even as crazy as I felt, there was something strange telling me I needed to investigate it.

“Sean, did you ever go through Green Cove Springs? Do you know its history?” I asked.

“No, I only know it’s close to St. Augustine, which is the oldest city in the nation or one of them,” he answered, turning on the TV.

“Yes, I know about St. Augustine, but the house I showed today was more west, across the banks of the St. John’s River.”

Sean looked surprised I was out that far, but I told him I did it for Sharon because she was sick. I didn’t want to say what happened, just yet. Still, I wanted to talk about it because it was weighing on my mind. I kept seeing that flash of light in my head and the faces of the older couple. Knowing they weren’t real; I had begun to question whether I had seen ghosts or hallucinated.

Eventually, I told Sean, and he stared at me for a second. I think because he was genuinely trying to make sense of what I said. He could tell I was serious.

“I don’t know, Dee. It’s hard to say what that was? Confederate soldiers to my knowledge weren’t over there then, but I don’t remember the history. As far as I know, it was Spanish that first settled. You remember the Fort, right? You saw the pictures of the soldiers back then when we toured with the kids? They weren’t Confederate to my knowledge, dear.”

As Sean flipped through channels, I continued to scan history records until I found something interesting. “Holy smokes, Sean! Here it is right here!! I found it!! There is a record of Green Cove being an old tourist town and having Confederate soldiers there during the Civil War!” I was mystified and shaken in astonishment.

But why did I see them? That was my big question. Who were those people in the house? Why could I see them in my

head like that? I couldn't explain it, and Sean didn't know either.

The next morning, I stayed home and researched online what it was to have visions within the mind. I was surprised when a psychic medium's page came up. I was a bit skeptical at first as I scrolled through her site, but I found it to be well-written and helpful. She appeared to be professional and educated, which intrigued me. She discussed what a psychic was and explained that everyone was psychic to a degree.

Reading through, she described the difference between psychics and mediums. Until that moment, I didn't know there was one. Psychic information is more about the energy surrounding someone, whereas mediumship can go outside that energy. Mediums will always be psychic, but psychics are not always mediums. When mediums work, they utilize their psychic ability and take it a step further to communicate with souls, for instance, that are crossed over.

She mentioned that what made us all psychic was our senses. They are not ordinary senses, but non-physical ones, which can be learned and developed with practice. They function differently for each person, with some being more reliable than others.

Clairaudience, for example, is hearing that takes place more internally than externally. I wondered what that meant. Reading through, it said that we might hear a voice or sound inside the head telling us something. Sometimes it is a song that pops in and plays.

It was remarkable, and I could recognize having music play. Plus, I did hear a voice often, but I thought it was my own. Now I am left to wonder. The lady described that the senses help us receive info from God, angels, or departed loved ones.

Clairsentience, she explained, is feeling the energy of people, places, and things on a physical or emotional level. It's impressions that will be felt and what most people acknowledge as their gut. I recognized that one for sure, in all those times, I felt watched.

Claircognizance is a knowing of something that suddenly pops in your mind as being valid. Clairgustance is tasting something without eating, where clairalience is smelling without a physical scent present.

It was a lot to take in, but finally, I came across clairvoyance. That one stood out. It's the ability to see using the mind's eye. It's like closing your eyes and visualizing something, only you don't have to close your eyes. Sometimes, visions can project or play out as movie clips. Colors, images, or symbols may get shown to help make sense of past, present, or future events.

Scrolling to the end, I saw where she mentioned that flashes of light with visions could occur. Stunned, I reread it. As I did, I experienced a flash of light. This time the flash brought back a firework of memories. I saw instances in my life where I had seen things but had brushed off as imagination. It was an explosion in my mind with a loud voice in my head saying, "And now, do you get it?"

I leaped up from my computer and paced for a moment over what I had learned. Was I psychic, and have I always been psychic? No, that seems too unbelievable. How could everyone be psychic? If we were, wouldn't everyone's life be so much easier?

I closed the laptop down, as my husband was calling to ask me to lunch.

"Can you go? I have been missing you?" he said.

“I don’t know. I’m not feeling up to it, and I have a lot on my mind.”

“That’s fine, Dee. Is everything okay?”

“I guess so, Sean. I’ve been busy still trying to figure out what happened yesterday because it was so strange. I read some interesting information online, but now I need to sort through it all. I’m not sure what to believe, and I feel like I may be losing my mind.”

“Well, don’t stress over it,” he replied. “There are things out there that we don’t know and won’t always understand.”

“I guess. How about if we talk later, Sean? I am going to take a nap. I love you, Dear.”

“That’s fine. I’ll see you when I get home. I love you too,” he said, hanging up.

I realized he was right about not knowing everything. Perhaps I needed to try to be more open and accepting. I guess I wasn’t sure why I was struggling with that. I wanted to believe more was out there, but it felt hard for me.

People all have different ideas and perceptions about life and what exists in the universe. We see a lot on television and in books about topics that seem far removed from reality. However, culture tells us not to believe everything due to it being fantasy and entertainment. So now, I find myself wondering what is out there that we don’t know exists?

Chapter Eleven

It was noon when I finally went to get dressed so that I could look presentable when Sean got home from work. Turning on the shower, I realized that I needed to get towels from the laundry room because the cabinet was empty.

My closet was inside my bathroom at the far end. I needed to go in there to grab my robe to throw it on. Walking in, I felt a strange breeze brush by me, making me question if the window was open. Pulling back the blinds, I didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. The window was closed, so I ignored it and went to grab my towels from the laundry.

Grabbing them off the dryer, I realized I felt watched. The house felt dense, and I started to experience uneasiness.

Getting back to the shower, I stepped inside. Immediately, my mind went to what I needed to do later. Suddenly, I heard a man's voice, and it startled me. Am I hearing things now?

"Hi Dee, I need to talk to you," came the voice again, while I washed the soap from my hair.

Confused, I looked around. Opening the shower door, I peered out and said, "Who's there?"

“It’s me, your dad.”

“What? Dad, that can’t be you.”

Right as I said that, I had a clear vision of my father in my mind that made me uneasy.

“Dear Lord, I’m hallucinating again,” I shuddered, feeling crazy.

Closing the shower door to finish bathing, I heard a voice again.

“Dee!”

I opened the shower door once more, thinking maybe it was my husband.

‘Hello? Sean? Are you home?’

“No, DeeDee! It’s not Sean. It’s your dad.”

Oh, my God! I heard that loud and clear! Stunned, I realized that it was coming from inside my head too. It was like the psychic medium had discussed. Was I truly hearing him from the other side?

“No, that’s not it,” I said out loud, doing my best to deny it. I began drying myself off.

“DeeDee! I’m talking to you. Can you listen?”

“Shit!” I shouted. Frozen in fear, I could barely breathe because I recognized that the voice called me, DeeDee. He was the only one that called me that, and he hadn’t since my teens. I had forgotten all about that nickname. “Oh, this might not be my imagination,” I said to myself with worry. Taking a moment, I took a deep breath.

“Are you done yet, DeeDee?”

“Holy Shit! Oh My God! Oh My God!” I went running from my bathroom freaking out.

Standing in my room, I was upset and talking to myself. “It’s okay, Dee, you are going to be fine. No one is going to lock you up and take you away. Although you might need to be.”

Taking slow breaths to ease my nerves, I got myself together and got dressed quickly. I knew I didn’t want to be running around in a towel if I had dead people hanging out.

“Shit! Dad, I was in the shower! Don’t you think you could have called first?” I yelled sarcastically. As soon as I said that, I realized how stupid I sounded.

Going into the bathroom to do my hair, I heard my cell phone ringing. Quickly, I ran to grab my phone to answer the call. Reaching to pick it up, I froze when I saw the caller id showed “Dad’s Cell.”

“No, no, that’s impossible,” I said, holding the phone in my hand, almost daring myself to answer.

“H-e-l-lo?” I stammered.

“Oh, sorry, Dee, this is Mom. I didn’t mean to call. It was an accident. I have been taking off some phone numbers from your dad’s old phone before I have it shut off. I’ll let you go, sweetheart.”

Feeling such relief, I said, “Oh, yes, sure, no problem. I’ll talk to you later.”

Hanging up, I couldn’t help but feel I was being watched from across the room. Was it my dad? I wondered if that freaky accidental call was a sign. What were the odds of the phone ringing after I said what I did?

Grabbing my shoes from the closet; I heard the voice speak out again.

“Dee, I know you hear me, and you are not crazy. Please pass a message onto your mom for me.”

“That’s it! I’m leaving,” I shouted after hearing it again.

Running out, I went to the kitchen to grab a glass of water. I thought maybe the shower was too hot and had dehydrated me. Turning on the light, I screamed when I saw my dad’s holographic figure standing in front of me.

“Holy shit! You can’t be here! I have to be losing my freaking mind.”

Stepping backward, I raised my hands in total disbelief, as my father gave a half-smile and a roll of the eyes.

“Yes, that’s right, Dee, but you can still see and hear me.”

“Ummm, nope. I am going to grab my purse and leave. Maybe I’m suffering from some mental disturbance. Who knows? Right now, you are a figment of my imagination. So there! I’m not crazy, and I won’t have to tell anyone this happened!” Feeling dumbfounded, paranoid, and crazy, I backed up out of the kitchen and ran to my room.

No sooner did I turn the corner to my bedroom when I saw my deceased grandfather sitting on the edge of my bed. He was staring with his head cocked. When he waved hello, in terror, I yelled, “Nooo, this isn’t happening! Get out of my head!!!”

Turning to run into my living room, I saw what look like my great aunts and great grandparents walking up. Screaming, I made my way past my grandfather to my closet to grab my purse and keys. Before I would walk in, though, I saw my father in the doorway. Now, more scared than ever, I ran into the adjacent bathroom stall and closed the door. I was terrified, so I took a seat on the toilet and cried. After a few moments, I realized that sitting in the bathroom wasn’t going to work. I had to pick up the kids later.

Carefully, I opened the door to step out. No sooner did I leave the stall, when I saw that my father was still patiently waiting.

“Dee, would you listen for a second,” he pleaded.

Trembling, I considered for a minute if I should surrender to the madness within my mind and play along. I mean, perhaps, once they take the kids far away from me, they will place me in an asylum. Surely, times have changed, and they will let me pick out my straight jacket. They may even have color selections and patterns by now.

“Sure, Dad. They are going to commit me, anyway. So, go ahead and tell me what you need to say.”

“Thank you. Please tell her congratulations and that I am happy for her. You both made my life complete, and I will always be with you because love never dies. Life goes on. You will begin to understand this soon,” he stated with a wink.

“Okay, thanks. That’s great,” I replied, while the other family members gathered behind me.

“Congrats!”

“Congratulations!”

“Tell her best wishes!” said all the voices in harmony. I felt like the world was slowly closing in on me. I knew that I wanted to leave the house, but I felt paralyzed in fear.

“Is that all, Dad?” I asked, grabbing my keys.

“Yes, that’s it for now, Dee. Thank you.”

Walking out, I saw my grandfather was still sitting on my bed.

“Let me guess; you want me to tell her congratulations too?” I asked.

“Yes, and tell her to have the ceremony at the Plaza De Al’ee. She won’t have to worry about rain than. Also, tell her I said the heart-shaped back dress is the best choice.”

“What ceremony?”

Shaking, I grabbed my phone and ran into the living room to dial my mom. “Please pick up! Please pick up!” I said to myself, waiting for her to answer.

“Hello, Dee.”

“Oh my God, Mom! I, I, I don’t know how to tell you this,” I stuttered as I sobbed.

“Dee, what is wrong, are you okay?”

“Mom, I am seeing things right now. I need help!”

“What Dee? What’s happening?” she asked, concerned.

Panicking and pacing at my front door, I told her, “Well, I think I see ghosts. I don’t know what is wrong with me. I might need to go to the hospital. But, I’m not completely sure. I have been reading information about mediums that see dead people. They can get unexpected visions and hear stuff. So, yesterday, I was showing a house, and I saw Civil War soldiers camping in the backyard. Today, I’ve been seeing and hearing my dad, grandpa, and our other family members. It’s like I’m holding an afterlife party that I didn’t know I was hosting. They are all giving me messages to congratulate you.”

“I’m not sure that I follow. You were talking pretty fast, just now, Dee.”

“I can’t get rid of them. Plus, Grandpa says to tell you that you need to have some ceremony at the Plaza De Al’ee because of rain. I have no idea what that means, Mom.”

“Whoa, hold on, Dee, you say you are talking to dead people? Okay, but first, I should probably tell you that last

night, Ron asked me to marry him. We were planning on stopping over to tell you this weekend. I know we haven't dated long, and you don't know him well, but he makes me happy. I would like to spend whatever time I have left with him," she explained.

"I see, and yes, I'm okay with you getting married. I want you to be happy, so that's fine. I wish you the best, but this doesn't explain my situation. What the hell is happening to me!"

"Wait! Dee, did you say my dad told you the Plaza De Al'ee?"

"Yes, or something that sounded like that," I responded.

"I just got off the phone with the lady from there not even twenty minutes ago. I was seriously considering it because of the constant rain we get. I don't know how you knew?"

"I don't know either, but Grandpa told me to tell you to get the heart-shaped back dress."

Waiting a moment for her to respond, she stayed quiet on the other end. "Mom, are you there?"

"Wow, the dress you speak of, I have it pulled up on the website right now. Literally, when you called, I was considering it. Wow, Dee, wow! That's incredible and beautiful," she said as she started to cry. "I can't believe it. Tell them, thank you."

"I'm sorry, Mom, but I don't want to talk to them. I need to get out of this house. I don't know who the hell is here or what is happening, but I feel crazy."

"You know, Dee, God, is amazing, and life is full of mysteries that can't always get answers. I don't think you are crazy. I can remember you having tea parties as a little girl. I

would walk in, and you would be holding a conversation with some imaginary friend. I asked you one time if I could sit down and join you, and you got upset. You told me it was a private meeting. You wouldn't tell me who. Although, one time you drew this blond-haired, blue-eyed boy that you said was your friend. I thought it strange, but I laughed it off, figuring it was your wild imagination."

"Mom, I appreciate you, and I love you. As a matter of fact, I wish you well in your new marriage. However, I'm not ready to do this right now. I don't even know where to turn for help," I explained as I walked out the door to the car.

"Dee, you are going to be fine. You should go over to one of those places that offer readings. I think they are called metaphysical stores. I've never been to one, but I'm sure someone could assist you. Dee, I've had a lot of strange phenomena in the last few years. I am beginning to think that anything is possible if you are simply open to it."

"Okay, Mom, I've got to get going. I appreciate your help, and I will talk to you soon. I love you," I said, hanging up.

Chapter Twelve

Driving down the road, I felt anxious. I tried to wrap my head around what was happening. I agreed with her that maybe I should seek help. I was scared, and not sure if I wanted to walk into some store and talk about it openly. I wouldn't even know how to approach the conversation either.

Part of me considered making an appointment with my doctor to discuss my mental health. I knew that I had a great M.D. who could probably recommend a good psychiatrist.

Wanting to pull over and cry, I saw the entrance to the grocery store and remembered I needed to get dog food. Pulling into a parking spot, next to my car, were two senior citizens. The older woman looked to be about 80, and she was struggling to get her bags into the trunk. Her husband, on the other hand, had a walker and didn't look like he could even assist her. I got out quickly and asked if I could help.

“Ma’am, would you like me to get those for you?”

“Oh, yes, please, Dear,” she replied with such relief as I began unloading her cart. “It’s hard coming here alone now since my Harold died a few months ago. My daughter usually helps me, but my grandson had a school function.”

“You are here alone?” I asked. Looking over at the gentleman standing next to her, I realized that he was holographic-like my dad was.

Knowing that I could see and hear him, Harold spoke out, “Tell her; I like her hair pinned up like that. She looks beautiful, and it reminds me of when we first met after I got out of the service.”

“Thank you, Dear,” the lady voiced as I shut her trunk.

“You’re welcome, Ma’am, and I’ll take the cart since I’m going in.”

Walking away, I could see her husband looking at me with a plea in his eye.

“Excuse me, Ma’am,” I yelled.

“Call me Gertie, sweetheart,” she said with a sincere and heartwarming smile.

“Gertie, I want you to know that I’m sorry about the loss of your husband, Harold. I’m sure that if he were with you right now, he would tell you how lovely you look. Your hair pinned up like that is beautiful. I hope you have a blessed day.”

Gertie’s face lit up, and I could see the delight that hearing that brought to her.

“You have no idea what that means to me, young lady. God Bless you as well, and I hope you have a wonderful day,” she yelled, getting into her car.

Before entering the store, I glanced back at Harold, who was looking at me with appreciation. Not fully accepting of what had happened, I decided to do what my mom suggested after I checked out. I looked at my phone for the nearest metaphysical shop. I figured that I had time to stop in before picking up the kids.

Setting my GPS for a place that was closer to the beach, it was about a thirty-minute drive.

Once I arrived at the store, I found it to be larger than I expected. It was quiet and smelled of incense. The store seemed to be rather welcoming. The lady behind the counter said hello and asked if she could help me find anything. As calm as I could, I said thank you and refused her help. I told her that I wanted to look at the books, which she politely pointed out.

Looking at the selection, I began reading the various titles and topics. Almost everything looked unknown to me. I had no idea so much was out in our universe to explore. In the shop, my head felt overwhelmed. I knew that I was there for answers, but I didn't have a clue where to start.

Whatever messages I was giving off, the lady behind the counter must have picked up on. She began to walk over to me gracefully. "Are you sure that I can't help you? I feel like you might need some suggestions. Please tell me what brings you here today."

"Hi, I'm not entirely sure," I told her.

"Are you looking for information on any special topic?" she asked, smiling.

"Are you a psychic?"

"Yes, I'm a psychic medium," she responded. "Do you need a reading?"

"Um, no. I don't know why I am here," I said before stopping midsentence to start crying.

She walked toward me, put out her arms, and gave me a huge hug.

"It will be okay," she offered.

“No, I don’t think it will because I’m seeing people that are dead. First, it was these people in a house I was showing because I am a realtor. Then it was my dad, my grandpa, my aunts, and my great grandparents. They were there, but they weren’t there. They were visions or whatever you call them. I tried looking it up, but I don’t know what to believe. I guess I’m new to this, and I don’t know what to do,” I let out, frightened.

“Let me tell you first off; you have nothing to fear. It’s all going to be fine. You are a medium. That’s all it is,” she explained.

“No, I’m fairly sure I couldn’t be. I don’t see how this could suddenly start now. Wouldn’t I have known if I was a medium?”

Calmly, she smiled and then explained. “You don’t understand; being a medium is not what most people think. It happens in its own time. People want to believe that it’s like they see on television or in the movies. It’s not always quite the same thing. There is energy always around us that encompasses pure love and comes from our Creator, God. The Universe is vast, and we can pull messages through our intuitive senses. It’s nothing to be feared.”

Feeling better in her presence, she let me know her name was Vicki. She had been a psychic medium her whole life and worked part-time at the metaphysical store. She enjoyed helping and healing people that were lost, confused, and needed guidance like myself.

“I think I have a couple of brochures, Dee, for events coming up that might help. You may do well attending a demonstration of mediumship to see what it is to be a medium. Not all of us see Spirit since we have different abilities and gifts. From what you are describing, it sounds like you are having an awakening, which is wonderful. It’s up to you to learn and embrace it so that you are not fearful.”

“I see Vicki, but don’t know that I quite understand.”

“Well Dee, having an awakening can trigger some latent psychic abilities. So, check out information on that. It could be the reason it is becoming more noticeable. It’s hard to say for sure, but here is a flyer to take with you. It’s for an upcoming psychic fair held in Cassadaga, which is an old town known for Spiritualism. It’s coming up this weekend, and I think you might do well by attending. You can also explore some classes that they offer as well. They may help get you started so that you can better understand it all and how to control it.”

I was appreciative and felt comforted by the warm and loving energy that Vicki had.

“Thank you, Vicki, for all your help today. It means a lot,” I said, leaving the store to go pick up the kids.

Driving to the school, I felt better and thankful that my mom had suggested I talk to someone. I was interested in the psychic fair idea if I could convince Sean to take me. I knew I didn’t want to go alone.

Waiting for the kids at the school to get out, I went over the conversation that I needed to have with Sean. I wasn’t exactly sure how he was going to handle it all, but I figured he would be supportive.

Chapter Thirteen

Seven o'clock came, and Sean arrived home looking exhausted. I had just left out his dinner after feeding the kids. I didn't realize how late he would be, but I knew the traffic could get bad some nights. I was glad to see him because he had a way of making me feel protected. "How was your day, Sean?" I asked as he walked by me.

"It was good for the most part, but I'm glad it's over. I'm pretty beat today, and of course, tomorrow starts another day. Hey, by the way, Dee, do you have anything on your calendar for showings this week? I have a client that needs to work with me later in the evening, and I want to be sure we have the kids covered."

"No, I don't, Sean. I called and talked to Tom today and asked for a week or two off."

"Really?"

"Yes, I need some extra time to figure stuff out."

"Okay, but why?" he asked.

“Well, I should probably tell you what happened. I could use your support on this, and I hope you won’t think I’m crazy.”

“What? What’s up?”

I began to explain my day, and Sean looked slightly intrigued. He seemed ready to help me.

“I’ve always believed that more was out there, Dee. I’m pretty open to there being aliens and ghosts. I don’t think we are alone. If you need to go to the fair this weekend, then I guess we can. It’s not really what I wanted to do, but I have nothing planned for Saturday at this point.”

Hugging him tightly, I said, “Thank you, Sean, for being so supportive.”

Just as we were getting ready for bed, Sarah walked in with fear in her small brown eyes. “Momma, there’s someone in my bedroom, and I’m scared. I don’t want to sleep in there.”

Stooping down, I took her hand. “I’m sure it’s nothing, sweetie, but let’s go check.”

Walking to Jack and Sarah’s room, I wondered if they could see spirits too? Children, they say, don’t have the filter adults get from the conditioning of society. Once we got to her room, however, I found it to be clear. I read them a quick story and put them to bed before returning to my room to get on my laptop. I wanted to research the spiritual and psychic awakening that Vicki had mentioned.

While I searched, Sean grabbed his newest book to finish reading. As I went to different websites, I learned a lot of information about being psychic. It appeared to me that it has become somewhat overlooked since it’s often thought of as common sense and gut intuition. Cave dwellers had to rely on it to find food and shelter. Obviously, they didn’t have maps or the internet. I could see over time how we became more

dependent on other sources and less on our intuition. I had to wonder if the word psychic was the problem because of society's viewpoints and biases.

Clearing my throat, I looked over at my husband, who was deeply involved in his book. "You know, Sean, they say everyone has some psychic ability. Do you think that is true? Are we ignoring our abilities or misunderstanding them? Perhaps we are too consumed in the external world and the glass bubble we live inside even to notice?"

As I pondered, Sean flipped the page, before answering me. I could tell he was a little irritated that I had disturbed his reading.

"You know, I'm not sure, but some religions don't believe in it. Maybe that has created fear surrounding what being psychic is or isn't. I don't know, Dee. There was a time in history that people in power didn't want their disciples to think for themselves. If they did, then the people could have possibly seen through what was happening under their leadership. Instilling fear creates a society of followers in constant agreement.

"Personally, whether we are psychic, is not the issue. It seems to me that we in society are not trusting God, or a Higher Power, or even ourselves for that matter. Thus, we are conceding to who or what is the current driving force. Today, we have people living in the dark. They are trying to find their way through life by watching what other people are saying and doing. They are not trusting what is within themselves. In my opinion, I've never thought about myself as being psychic. However, if I think about it, I have a lot of gut feelings on issues that must come from somewhere. I guess I don't give credit to where that somewhere is, though," Sean responded.

"Wow! Yeah. You are probably right, Sean. I think maybe we need to explore it so that we can learn to understand it better. Perhaps we can learn how to hone in on

it then so that we can use it to live the best possible life we can.”

“Pretty much,” he said with a shrug.

“I want you to know Sean, that I think you are very intuitive. I can see that about you and always have because you seem to know things.”

While Sean continued reading, I went back to researching the awakening process. I found out it is also sometimes referred to as a Kundalini. After visiting various sites, I realized that I had already been experiencing it in stages for a few years. I had been on a quest to live healthier and happier. I had wanted more focus, clarity, and energy.

To summarize awakenings, they are a sudden awareness and stimulation to come into spiritual existence, like enlightenment, and a shift in consciousness. Having one can help the soul move beyond the physical presence and senses. There is a shedding of the old to bring in the new. A transformation takes place for many people. They may have been feeling like they were walking around in a dream state when it begins to change. It may be similar to being in automatic mode. I could certainly understand that. I felt like I had been living in a glass bubble for some time. I wanted to escape because of how I was being affected emotionally.

One thing I read is to surrender and not fight it. If you do, then it makes it harder to clear away what needs to leave so that the soul can elevate and evolve.

I realized for me that it was the beginning of my query into the Higher presence and of needing to know life’s meaning. Standing back, I can see that we can accept or deny the concepts of the universe. However, the soul pushes us to grasp a higher purpose after we step out of the bubble. It’s not an easy process, from what I read, and some people face the darkest nights of their souls. Often, awakening can be

spontaneous, but sometimes it's triggered by stressful, traumatic events, like near-death experiences, illness, or the death of a loved one.

Finishing up my research for the night, I found a list of some common symptoms. The few that stood out to me were, sleep changes, intensified senses, vivid dreams, sensitivities, feeling detached and lonely, increased anxiety and depression, and wanting a change for a better, brighter life.

Chapter Fourteen

“ake up! Wake up!”

I sat up quickly, having been sound asleep.

“Hey, do you hear me? I’m Roger, and I need your help, Miss. You have to talk to my wife Gloria for me! We live down the street, and she’s there by herself. I need you to give her a message.”

“What?!” I whisper shouted as I sat up in bed in the darkness of my room, looking around.

“Hello, I’m here, and I’m talking to you, Miss.”

Rubbing my eyes to wake up, I couldn’t see until suddenly the TV went on and started channel surfing. It provided just enough light for me to realize a small crowd of people was surrounding me. They appeared young and old. It was like something horrible you would see on television.

“Can you please listen to me!” requested Roger. I turned my head and noticed a shorter, plump looking elderly man. He was wearing a dark navy windbreaker, blue jeans, and a hat that said, “Korean War Veteran”. I couldn’t see

perfect, but it read, USS something, appearing he was prior Navy.

“What do you want? What do all of you want?”

“We need you to give messages to our loved ones. Don’t you know how to do that yet? You can hear me, and it looks like you can see me. My wife needs to know that I’m okay and that the insurance paperwork is in a small white shoe box. It was an accident and should have gone into the safe. But now, it’s under the bed, in the same guest bedroom where her damn cocker spaniel constantly shits!”

I was frozen in fear, alarmed, and not sure what the hell was happening.

“Sean, are you awake? Can you wake up? I need you. There are people in here,” I said, shaking him.

“Huh...what? I’m sleeping.”

“Sean, there are people here, and they are all around me. They are everywhere, and I don’t know what to do. Help!”

“I don’t see anyone, Dee.”

“I don’t know what is happening to me, Sean.”

“It’s going to be fine, and you’ll be okay. Go back to bed and try to rest,” he groaned, turning back over to sleep.

Scared, I scooped closer to him, covering my head with the sheet.

“Miss, I need your assistance, please. You need to take this seriously. My name is Roger Morlen, and my address is 4469 Spruce Creek Drive. I had a stroke last summer. You have to understand my wife needs my help, so she doesn’t lose the house.”

“Sorry, I can’t help you. Please leave,” I begged, going farther down into the covers, till I could barely breathe.

Feeling too scared to sleep, I laid in bed for what seemed like hours with my eyes closed tight. Finally, I must have fallen asleep as Sean's alarm radio went off blaring, *Here Comes the Sun*, by the Beatles.

After the darker night that I had, it was sort of comforting. I wondered if God was telling me that I needed sunshine. I decided to take a walk with Benny after I got the kids off to school.

Getting my shoes on and grabbing the dog leash, Benny started dancing in excitement. Making our way down the tree-lined road, he marked and sniffed nearly every tree we walked by. The day was bright and cheerful, and the walk was doing me some good. I was feeling less stressed and more grounded.

About a quarter-mile down, I turned the corner, as a squirrel caught Benny's eye. He leaped forward, tearing the leash out of my hand. Taking off, he went racing down the sidewalk into a neighboring yard, where an older gray-haired woman was planting some perennials. She turned to look at me when I began to walk up to grab Benny's leash. He was barking at the squirrel in the tree, in the middle of her yard.

Rushing up, "I'm so sorry, Ma'am! Benny, get back here!" I yelled, feeling embarrassed.

Smiling, she got up and came over to me. "Don't worry at all. It's no problem. I understand because I have a cocker spaniel that is the same way. I had to put him in the house a little while ago because he was barking at the birds."

"Thank you. I appreciate that. My name is Dee, and I live down the street. This is Benny," I introduced myself, grabbing the dog's leash.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Gloria Morlen," she replied, extending her hand to shake mine.

“Gloria Morlen?” I repeated in question, reaching out to shake her hand. Quickly, I noticed the address on the house was 4469. “Is this Spruce Creek Drive?”

“Yes, it is, are you new here?”

“Umm, well sort of, we moved in maybe a year ago, I guess. Time flies so fast,” I responded. A little surprised, I wondered how Benny had managed to bring us to Roger’s yard.

“That it does,” Gloria replied. “I was planting perennials because I may have to sell the house soon. I’m still trying to settle affairs now that my husband died. He had everything set up, but I swear he hid it all. I tell you what; I wish I could ask him where he put things. I’ve been searching for months for stuff. Anyways, I’m sorry to be going on like this. I guess I have a lot on my mind.”

“It’s okay, Mrs. Morlen. I’m sorry you are dealing with such stress. I imagine that it is hard.”

“Yes, it’s tough because I have lived here for years, so it holds a lot of memories.”

“I see, well, if there is anything that I can do, please don’t hesitate to let me know. I live at 2393 Pinely Court. It’s the house on the corner over a street with the white roses in the front.”

“Oh, yes, Dee, the Stranton’s old place. Roger and I had met them once or twice. It’s a beautiful house. I hope you like it here,” she said with a warm smile.

“Yes, I wish you well, Gloria. It was wonderful meeting you.”

“Same to you, Dee. Take care,” she answered, turning to walk away.

“Umm, Gloria, you know, my husband is kind of strange at where he puts things sometimes. You would never believe where I found the kid’s birth certificates one time. They were in a white shoebox underneath the bed in our guest bedroom. I hope you find what you need,” I replied, waving good-bye.

Getting home, I couldn’t help but think about how extraordinary it was that I ran into Gloria on a casual walk. What were the odds of that since our neighborhood was so big? I hoped that by telling her what I did, that I had helped her. She seemed like such a kind and sweet lady.

Chapter Fifteen

Saturday came quickly, and off to the psychic fair, we headed. When we arrived, we were surprised to see how old the town was. It was not at all what I had imagined. Parking was along the street, and the road was lined with cars for several blocks. There were many vendors selling crystals, incense, candles, cards, clothing, and other stuff. There were some beautiful crystals that I felt fascinated with the energy they gave off. When I touched them, they felt like they almost vibrated in my hand.

“Let’s go over to that big building with the sign for the readers,” Sean pointed.

Crossing the street, we went inside. It was crowded and loud. Immediately, I saw posters advertising services, events, and classes. The store was big, and we followed the signs to the back, where the readers had tables set up.

Gazing around the room, I noticed a lady with an open table doing readings. Her sign said she was charging \$20 for a short fifteen-minute reading. I asked Sean for some money since he had gotten cash from the ATM.

“I am not sure who to go to, but I’m gonna try that lady over there,” I told him. Walking over, I said hello and sat down at her table, handing her the money. The lady was kind and graciously took the cash from my hand.

“Hi there, I’m Tracy, it’s nice to meet you.”

“Same here. I’m Dee.”

“Just so you are aware that, as a medium, I will begin to provide you with information from the Spirit world. I will be presenting you with evidence of your departed loved ones’ existence on the other side. Thus, revealing they are still with you in spirit. I ask that you, please answer yes or no as to what I bring forward so that I know that I am properly connecting. Okay?”

“That would be fine,” I responded.

“Lastly, keep all questions for after. First, let me say that your father tells me that you have been talking to him. You are a medium, he says, yet you struggle with it.” Hearing her tell me that was astonishing.

“Yes, that’s what I found out, and yes, I’m struggling with it.”

“Your father tells me he died of a heart attack. He says that you need to stop running from your fears and your past. You will have to face who you are, sooner or later.”

“Yes, Tracy, he did die that way, and my childhood when I was young, was tough. Maybe that is what he means. I guess I will have to think about it,” I told her.

Tracy was quiet for a moment, then she spoke, “I can’t be sure, but there is someone else around you. He’s younger male energy holding a white flower. His complexion is fair, and he looks to have light-colored hair and eyes. The man appears well-built, I would say. He gives me the feeling he

passed tragically. I feel he was perhaps a husband or a significant other to you.”

Thinking hard, I couldn't remember anyone that fit that description, let alone that I had a relationship with, that died. Then, it came to me that it could have been my friend's old boyfriend who passed a while back. He matched that description. I thought he had died in a motorcycle accident. “I don't know Tracy, that doesn't sound like anyone I knew, but it could be for someone else,” I told her.

“Alan, Al, Alec, perhaps was the name, I think? It seems like some Al sounding name. Whoever he is to you, he seems strongly connected and isn't stepping aside. I'm not sure, so I'm going to disconnect now, especially since you don't know him.”

“Yeah, sorry, Tracy. I don't know anyone by that name. I appreciate the reading, though. Thank you,” I told her, standing up.

“You know, sometimes it comes to us after the reading, Dee. Maybe you will remember or figure it out later. Perhaps it was for your friend. Before you go, your grandpa wants me to tell you, James Dean, and that he loves you and your mom.”

“Wow! Yes, he looked like James Dean when he was young. It was a family joke. It for sure sounds like him. Thank you!” I replied, walking away.

Sean and the kids were by the front door with probing faces as I walked up.

“Well, how did it go?” Sean asked.

“I need more money, please. I want to go over there to that man. His table is empty, and I want to see what he says.” Sean looked at me funny but handed me another twenty-dollar bill.

“Oh, wasn’t she any help?” he asked.

“Maybe, but she stated I was a medium?”

“But wait! Isn’t that what we came here to know?” he yelled as I walked away.

My next reading went well. The man introduced himself as Joseph and said he was a minister. He brought forward my grandmother, who said that I should learn to embrace my abilities. He appeared to me to have a different way of approaching mediumship. His energy was a little lighter and warmer than Tracy. I couldn’t put my finger on the reason why, but it made me understand and appreciate that not all mediums were the same.

“I don’t get it,” I told Sean when I returned. “How could I not have known my whole life I have had this ability? It boggles me.”

“Well, Dee, it’s who you are now, I guess. That’s what is important. Maybe you should take the classes that they offer,” he suggested.

“I don’t know if I want to study the mediumship right now. Honestly, I think that I want to learn more about metaphysics and religion because I feel confused.”

Sean and I took one last walk around the town before heading home. I stopped into one little shop, closer to where our car was parked. There was a nice older gentleman behind the counter. He looked to be in his early seventies and had thinning gray hair and glasses. Looking at all the books he had on display, I asked him which ones he thought were best.

“They are all good in some way or another. It just depends on what you want to learn,” he voiced. “There is no wrong book truly. You can learn something from everything and everyone. If you see any books that call out to you, know that the book wants to be read by you.”

“Thank you, Sir. I’m just starting my journey, and it is sort of confusing. I keep asking God to help me.”

“I understand, and I’ve been doing this for a long time. One thing that I have learned is that you should never tell people what to believe or give anyone a set of conditions. And that’s because we are all so different. You can guide and assist, but it’s important to realize we are all on our path. Just take it slow and surrender. Let your faith blossom, and all will be well. You’ll see. Patience is key, so that time has a chance to unfold what is in store for you. You already told God and the Universe what you wanted. So now, allow it to come to you. You might consider meditating because it helps by opening and quieting the mind.”

“Thank you so much. I have appreciated your time,” I said, purchasing some books.

“No problem. Thanks for stopping in today, my name is David. I’m here most days if you ever need to come back and talk or have any questions. Good luck, and I wish you well,” he stated as I walked out.

Coming out of the store, I could see that my family was sitting at the bench with ice cream. “Wow, that looks good, guys! I appreciate you all being so patient while I was here today.”

“Are we set to go, Dee? Did you get what you needed by coming to this place?” Sean asked as we approached the car to get inside.

“I can’t believe the day I had here. That man in the last place was super helpful. It was a little overwhelming for me, but I’m glad we came. I am grateful for your support.”

“You’re welcome,” Sean replied, driving us home.

Chapter Sixteen

My week off from work was now over, and I had to go back to work the next day. Sharon had called me to ensure that I would be in the office. She was hoping we could have lunch as she had a couple of closings that she wanted to fill me in on. From what she told me, her days were busy, and Tom had hired another agent. Sharon made sure to express just how handsome and hunky he was, which made me laugh.

“Oh My God, Dee! His desk is in front of mine, and I love it. He makes for good eye candy!” she told me, laughing.

“Is that so?” I replied, laughing with her.

“Heck ya! He is about your age and single. I don’t know if he was ever married, but he doesn’t have kids.”

“I see.”

“And Dee, his apartment is less than a mile from my house. I might need to start taking more walks,” she said, laughing. “Can I borrow your dog?”

“Okay.”

“Did I mention that he drives a newer black BMW and goes to the gym every night?”

“Uh, no, I don’t think you got to that yet. Do you follow this man? Did you get his birth date or social security number by any chance?” I teased.

“Ha! Ha! I know what you are thinking, Dee. He’s too young for me, but I don’t mind. I’ll be his cougar.”

“You are a riot, Sharon. Do you know that? I love your humor. I will see you tomorrow.”

“I know. I’ll see you tomorrow. Oh, and by the way, his birth date is in October,” she said with a laugh. “I got it off the employee file.”

Getting off the phone, I realized how much I had missed her and Tom. I was excited for my first day back. However, I was learning a great deal with all the new books I had been reading.

I had started doing what David had suggested and was meditating. I was hoping to open the pineal gland, which is rooted in the center of the brain and quiet my monkey mind. Most of the meditations I did the first couple of days, I found myself sleeping. I read, however, that sometimes that does happen when our bodies need rest. Before long, though, I saw some swirling colors and images. I felt like I was learning to let go, and it was helping me to release anxiety. My mind started to block out the commotion of the external world slowly.

I tried a variety of methods suggested by David to meet my so-called spirit guides. He said they were angelic beings that helped us throughout life. We are usually not even aware of their presence. We all have at least one or two that are always with us for our entire lives. There will be some that come and go assisting us for only a duration.

I remembered asking David if I will ever hear or see them, and he told me it might take time. He said that generally, they would become known when we are ready and

have learned how to quiet the mind. They are subtle, and will sometimes come in dreams, or through a small voice inside the head. Other times, it might be a sudden feeling or knowledge of information that they share with us.

I had to admit, there were times in life where I felt I had been lucky and escaped trouble and even death. I figured that I had a guardian angel. I remember one experience that happened years back when I lived in the Midwest. I was running late for work during a snow and ice storm. I knew I had a four-wheel drive, but the weather was brutal that morning. Right before I got on the expressway, I heard in my head; You should take the side road.

I figured it was because of traffic, and back then, I didn't have navigation. I remember getting on the nearby side street and doubting my decision. I imagined the road would be super deep with snow, possibly even unplowed, leaving me stranded. Running parallel to the expressway, and not even a mile down, I saw the spin outs and accidents. First responders had not yet arrived for some collisions, so I knew many had just taken place. It was then when I realized how fortunate I was to have avoided an accident.

Preparing dinner that evening, while the kids were playing in their rooms, Sean was on his laptop at the table. I could see he was involved, and I wasn't sure if I should bother him. For the last week, I noticed he had been sort of distant. I knew, however, he was busy with work and had been putting in more hours. Hoping to share what I had discovered, since it was exciting for me, I walked over and sat next to him.

“Sean, can we chat for a minute?”

“Can it wait, Dee? Sorry.”

“Well, we haven't been talking much, and I feel like you might be irritated or upset about something.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about, but everything’s fine. I’m just busy.”

“Do you think that we could talk tonight or maybe plan a night out this week for just you and me to get dinner?”

“I have to work late all week, but maybe next weekend.”

“Okay,” I said. Getting up disappointed, I went to finish dinner, right as the doorbell rang.

“Who’s that? Were you expecting someone?” Sean asked.

Opening the front door, I found my mom, Kathy, and her new fiancé, Ron, smiling and holding a bottle of wine. They had glowing faces and appeared dressy causal in attire. They radiated delight.

“Oh, my God! Hi!” I said, asking them in and hugging them. “Sean, it’s my mom and her new fiancé, Ron. Come in and say hello, everyone! Hold on, Mom; I’ll get the kids and bring them in. I know you both want to tell them, and I didn’t say anything.”

I ran off to get the kids, and they each came out to hear the news that Grandma was getting married. They looked pleasantly surprised and happy for her. They had met Ron once before, and he was kind to them.

“We are thrilled for you and wish you only the best,” I assured my mom. I could tell she was happy as she emitted peace and joy. I let her know that I supported her, for which she was thankful.

“We are almost ready to eat dinner, if you would like to join us,” I said. Getting up, I went into the kitchen to check on the lasagna in the oven. While everyone chatted in the living room, I got the dishes out and sat them on the counter. No sooner had I turned to walk back in to join everyone when I

saw a female spirit in my laundry room. She was standing directly across the hall and looking at me. I had never seen her before, but she was smiling and waving at me as if I had. The woman had short brown curly hair, light-colored eyes and stood about 5'4". She was wearing a teal jogging suit.

Unable to move for a moment, I didn't know what to make of her. Why was she in my home? I didn't want to say anything to scare the kids. Carefully, I walked up. "What do you want, and who are you?"

"I'm here for Ron. Let him know that Linda says best wishes Teddy Bear, and to know him, is to love him."

"Who are you?"

"I'm his wife, and I died ten years ago from pneumonia."

As Linda spoke, she showed me a visual of her being in the hospital on a ventilator. Ron was right next to her bedside. I could feel how painful her passing was for Ron, and I felt sad.

"Mom! Grandma has to go!" Sarah yelled. Shaking my head to Linda in agreement, I hurried back to the living room. I got in there just as Ron and my mother were making their way to the door. "I'm sorry you have to go. I'm glad you stopped by though. I appreciate that you told the kids yourselves. I'll walk you out to your car."

"Yes, sorry, sweetheart, but I have to get home. I need to let the dogs outside because Ron and I have been out all day," Mom said, walking to the car to get inside.

"Mom, I don't know if you said anything to Ron about what's been happening to me, but I may have something to share with him. I don't understand this mediumship stuff yet, and it scares me a little. However, I saw someone when I was in the kitchen while you were sitting in my living room."

“You did? No, I didn’t tell him a great deal, but I did tell him a little.” They were both sitting in the car with the window down with Ron looking curious.

“Ron, I don’t know what your beliefs are on mediums, or if I should tell you this. When you were in the house, a lady came to me when I was in the kitchen. She was telling me her name was Linda. She said she was your late wife, who died about ten years ago from pneumonia.” As I was telling him, I was observing his facial expressions to be sure that I wasn’t upsetting him. I didn’t want to step over any lines. To my surprise, Ron’s blue eyes got bigger. He looked stunned, and his mouth dropped open.

“Linda, you say. Yes, she was my wife,” he confirmed.

“Okay, well, Linda wants you to know she sends her best wishes to you, her Teddy Bear. She told me to say, “To know him is to love him” or something like that.”

“Linda said that?” asked Ron, now tearing up. “We were married for a long time, like your mom and dad. She joked with me and called me her Teddy Bear. I used to hate it when we were young. It’s because it came from the song, *To Know Him, Is to Love Him* by the Teddy Bears. That song was special because it was a song, she sent me in high school to get my attention.

“Wow!” I let out, looking at my mom, who was smiling and starting to tear up.

“That’s beautiful, Dee. Thanks for sharing that. It’s a special gift you have received. It can help many people, I imagine,” she said. Ron agreed, and they both thanked me before they left.

Walking back into the house, I had to admit that I felt sort of good at that moment. I knew that I was still feeling

scared and unsure of mediumship, but I hoped that would change as I gained confidence.

Chapter Seventeen

“ hose garden is this?” I asked myself. “How did I get here?” Walking in vivid colors of vibrant blues, yellows, purples, pinks, and reds, I didn’t recognize where I was. I found myself surrounded by the lovely scent of flowers everywhere. Looking up at the sky, I saw the most intense bluish hues with large billowing clouds. They went for as far as I could see. I wondered if I was in Heaven because there was something strangely familiar and magical about the place.

In the far distance, I saw large white Roman looking buildings surrounded by lush green lawns. There were large, beautiful trees of all shapes and sizes. It looked as glorious as it felt. Walking a little further into the garden, I noticed a young female with a lovely fair complexion sitting at a nearby table wearing a white, empire dress. Her long, curly hair was strawberry blond, pulled up loosely. She had a beautiful smile as she nodded and waved me over to talk. Sitting across from her, I wondered who she was. I felt a sense of familiarity, but I just couldn’t place it.

“Who are you, and what is your name, may I ask? I feel like I may know you. Should I? Is this Heaven? Are you an Angel?”

She laughed and said, “Slow down. It’s alright. Right here in this garden is where we used to meet up often. You love it here because it’s so peaceful. As for my name, well, I have had many names. An angel? You could say that, since I’m your spiritual guide. I’ve been with you since birth, but we have known each other since the beginning of dawn.”

“I see, so you don’t have a name exactly?” I asked.

“A name right now is not important, so you can call me whatever you wish,” she said.

“I suppose I could call you Spirit Guide, although I would prefer to come up with something more personal. I think it would help if we are going to get to know one another better. I have to say this is wonderful meeting you, or reuniting?”

“Yes, yes, it is, Ellen.”

“Now that I have officially met you, would it be okay if I asked for some help, please?”

She laughed, then replied, “I will always help you whenever you wish. Perhaps if you must have a name for me, you could use one from a past life we shared.”

“A past life?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, wow! That’s interesting!” I replied, surprised.

I could see she was thinking for a moment. Then she spoke, “How about, France, in the early 1500s? You were my mother, and I was your daughter.”

“That’s amazing! But you know what’s wild? I swear that just as you said that, I could visually see myself back then. How crazy is that? It’s like I can see big dresses with bodices

and corsets. Everything looks like it was so abundant and beautiful.”

“Hmm, yes. Did you, by chance, see that we died of the Black Plague? That wasn’t so beautiful. Although, it was abundant back then,” she said with a chuckle. I could tell she was trying to be funny, and I could feel her personality was a lot like mine in some ways. It was kind of strange because I would have thought my spirit guide would have been some wise old man.

“No, I didn’t see the Plague. It sounds horrible, though.”

“It was Ellen. It killed my two brothers, your sons. Only my father was lucky enough to make it because it was part of his soul contract. He still had quite a bit to accomplish. Although I don’t believe he finished because he chose a different path based on freewill.”

“Freewill?”

“Yep, you always have a choice. Inside those choices will be lessons. So, because of the money left in the family fortune, it left him vulnerable. He made some poor choices that caught up with him.”

“Oh! That’s awful.” I lamented.

“No, it’s life. You are learning where you are. I am too from where I sit, Ellen. I get to go on the journey with you. I just have a better view.”

“So, you were getting to where you were going to tell me your name, I think?”

“Yes, right. Give me a second. I get brain fog sometimes. My memory isn’t what it was 1000 years ago,” she said with a wink and a grin. “Wait! I just remembered. It was Margot. So if you wish, you can call me that. Then it will be more personable for you.”

“Okay, Margot. Thank you.”

Gently clapping her hands together, suddenly, a gentleman appeared with a silver tray. He surprised me because he wasn't there a second ago. Glancing around, I then noticed there was a sudden myriad of tables and people surrounding us. They were all actively engaged in cheerful conversation.

“Yes, Madam. How can I assist you?” he asked.

“I'll have the Chamomile with Lavender tea, please. Would you like anything, Ellen?”

“No, thanks.”

“You used to love the Heavenly Blend they made. That and those tiny cucumber finger sandwiches.”

“I did? I don't remember, sorry,” I replied.

“Oh, no worries. I understand. How could you remember right now? Frankly, I must excuse myself because I forget half the lives I have lived. I have to visit the Akashic Records to keep track, and sometimes it takes days to get a reservation there. You would think they would go automated and make it accessible on Dish-Clowd since it's so busy anymore. Trust me; you practically have to clip a wing and give it to them to get in.

“Dish-Clowd? You have internet here?”

“Sure,” she said.

“So, Margot, what are Akashic Records? I'm lost, I think.”

“Right. Yah. The Akashic Records are where we keep the archives for all the lives, words, thoughts, etc. that every soul has lived. Think of it as a Vital Statistics office, plus so much more.”

“I see, but I’m still a little confused.”

“That’s right, Ellen. You didn’t study the Akashic Records yet. Don’t worry; it’s coming. I’ll see if I can put in a request for someone to take you there soon.”

“Alright, thank you. I appreciate you coming forward so that I could meet you. It’s been a pleasure. Can I ask one question? Can you tell me how I got here because I’m fairly sure I must be dreaming this?”

“Of course! You need to wake up. It’s time to go to work. Adieu, Mon ami.”

Chapter Eighteen

Wakening, I shot up out of bed from a deep sleep, just as the alarm radio sounded off, *Here Comes the Sun*, on the station.

“Of course, it is that song again.” Laughing, I wiped the sleep from my eyes.

“What are you talking about?” Sean asked drowsily.

“It’s okay, never mind. I was talking to myself. I’ve just heard that song so many times in the morning.”

“I can set it to the beep sound if you want,” he suggested.

“No, it’s fine. Let’s get up. I’m good.”

Getting off to work, I was excited and trying to piece together my vivid dream. I had finally met my spirit guide and even learned about another life that I had lived.

Driving into the parking lot of St. Martin Realty, I saw Sharon walking into the office.

“Wait up, Sharon! Good Morning,” I yelled. Running up to the door, she opened it for us to walk in.

“It’s so good to see you. We are glad to have you back!” Sharon exclaimed.

“Thanks, it’s good to be back.”

“Well, let’s get in and put our stuff away. I will introduce you to the new agent,” she said with a wink.

Getting settled, I saw from the glass windows that Tom was on the phone. He waved right away when he saw me walk by. “I hope you are feeling better, Dee?” he called out. Shaking my head, I said yes and then walked over to Sharon. She was standing by the coffee machine in anticipation.

“Derek! Come over here, Darlin. I want you to meet Dee.”

As soon as Derek walked up, I noticed why Sharon had made a big deal. I smiled and extended my hand to Derek for a handshake. He took me by complete surprise, however, when he seized hold of my hand to lean down to kiss it.

“It’s so delightful to meet you in person finally. Sharon talks non-stop about you. I feel like I have known you forever,” he said with a wink of an eye.

“It’s nice to meet you too, Derek.” I took my hand back swiftly because I felt awkward. I didn’t know what to make of it.

Standing there, Derek never took his eyes off me. Suddenly, clearing her throat, Sharon said, “Derek, I’m taking Dee to lunch today. I’m wondering if you would like to join us. If that’s okay with you, Dee? We are probably just going to the little café next door if you are interested.” Sharon looked over at me with an eye of hopefulness that I would agree.

Smiling, Derek replied, “Absolutely, Sharon. I wouldn’t dream of missing an opportunity to be with you two lovely women.” Not caring, I shrugged my shoulders and walked

away. Just then, Tom called Sharon and me into his office for a morning meeting.

“Well, ladies, it’s looking like we may have a busy couple of months. In fact, I may need to hire another agent. I’m glad you are back, Dee, and I hope you are doing better. Before we get into a couple of things I need squared away for the week, what is on your agendas for today?”

“Well, Tom, I have a couple that I will be showing houses later to in the Orlando area. They are flying into MCO this morning and wanting to view homes in Kissimmee,” Sharon answered.

“Okay, that sounds good. Dee, what are you planning?” he asked.

“I’m afraid I don’t know right now. I hate to say that, but coming in, I have to get back to the swing.”

“Well, you can always ride with me. We can team up today,” Sharon interjected with Tom looking agreeable.

“Alright, that sounds great.”

Once we finished the meeting, I made my way to my desk. I wanted to go through my contacts to figure out a plan since I was feeling a little lost after being off. Sitting down with my laptop open, I couldn’t help but notice and feel that I was getting checked out. Looking over to my right, I saw Derek staring at me. I wondered what he wanted. Returning his stare, I had to admit that I felt a little weird. “Can I help you, Derek?” I asked. He shook his head no and smiled before looking back at his paperwork.

It wasn’t even a second later that he startled me by coming over and kneeling by my desk. “I’m sorry, I guess that was impolite of me to stare at you like that. I should tell you that I didn’t expect you to look like this. It caught me completely off guard.”

“Looking like what?” I asked.

“Strikingly beautiful, of course.”

“What? Are you serious?” I responded with a laugh.

“No, I’m not joking. I’m serious. Plus, you remind me of someone that I knew a long time ago. She meant a lot to me.”

“I understand Derek, and truthfully, I’m flattered. However, in case Sharon didn’t tell you, I’m married.”

“Darn! No, she didn’t mention it, but I can appreciate that. Your husband is a fortunate man. I hope he knows that. Does he make you happy?”

“Ah, yes, he does. What a strange question to ask me, Derek.”

“I know. I was making sure you were happy. I had hoped you were. You know if you ever want to come over after work, I don’t live far from here.”

“Are you freaking serious? You are joking, right? Do you know you are being completely inappropriate? You just met me, and I verified I was happily married. Yet, here you are, asking me to your place. What, to sleep with you? Come on, buddy! I don’t care how good-looking you are. You have some big balls. Wait! Did Sharon put you up to this because it’s not funny?”

Looking at Derek, I could see that he was very amused by his grin, which aggravated me even more.

“Who said anything about sleeping with me? I was being nice and hoping to get to know you a little better since we now work together. I’m a good guy; I just don’t know anyone here yet.”

“What? No, that’s not how it came out?”

“So, you think I’m good-looking, huh?” he joked with a chuckle and another smile.

“I’m sorry, but it didn’t come out like you were just trying to be friends.”

“You know what, you are right. I probably came off wrong, and I apologize. I need to get back to my desk.” Derek walked away, leaving me astounded and baffled.

Lunchtime came, and Sharon and I grabbed our things. We planned to go to the showings right from the café. “Are you coming, Derek?” Sharon asked. “We are going over to the restaurant now if you want to join us.”

“Yes, Sharon. I will be right behind you. I will see you, momentarily,” Derek said.

Stepping out of the office, Sharon and I walked down the plaza sidewalk to the café.

“Sharon, did you tell Derek to flirt with me?”

“What on earth are you talking about, Dee?”

“Okay, so obviously by that answer, you didn’t.”

“No, I didn’t tell him to do anything to you. He saw your picture on your business cards and asked who you were. I told him you were one of our agents.”

“What did he say?” I asked.

“I believe he commented on how you looked like someone he knew. That’s it, Dee. Did he make a pass at you or something?”

“Yes, he did,” I confirmed.

“Did you tell him you were married, Dee?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Well, then what’s the problem?” she questioned.

“When I told him I was married, he still asked me over to his place. I thought that was weird. Then, he asked me if I was happy. When I said he was inappropriate, he made me feel like I misunderstood him. I don’t know, but I guarantee, Sean wouldn’t think I misunderstood.”

“I see your point, Dee. Do you think that maybe it came out wrong on his part?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think so,” I replied.

Going inside the restaurant, we were able to seat ourselves. When we got our menus, Derek walked in the door. Immediately, I noticed that half the females in the restaurant took notice. Maybe it was because of his appearance and physique. He had compelling blue eyes. His body reflected that he worked out regularly, and it was damn near perfect. I think, however, what caught my attention was his charisma and confidence. He exuded it in waterfalls.

Seating himself next to Sharon, Derek was now directly across from me. He proceeded to start staring again. It felt like his eyes were going straight into my soul. For a moment, when I matched his gaze, I swore, I saw something that I recognized. He made me feel slightly uncomfortable, yet his interest in me made me feel desired. It was something that I hadn’t felt in a while. Sean and I had been together for so long that I couldn’t deny that we had become comfortable. It wasn’t often that he commented on my looks anymore.

“So, ladies, what’s good to eat here?” Derek asked.

“Personally, I like the Turkey Club,” Sharon responded. Slowly, I watched as she began to scooch her chair and body more toward Derek.

“Great, that’s what I’ll order then. Thanks, Sharon,” he stated.

“Oh, you are such a doll. Call me Shar!” she voiced so flamboyantly that I choked on my water when I took a sip.

For the next five minutes, I watched Sharon continue to bat her eyelashes and toy with Derek. Finally, the waitress came over to take our order. *Hallelujah!* I thought, until she too came over, showing intense interest in him. The waitress looked to be no more than 21 years old. “Hellllloo there, Sugar! Are you ready to order? What can I get you?” she flirted, acting like a schoolgirl in heat.

“I’ll have the Turkey Club, please,” he replied, smiling at the waitress.

“Would you like fries, chips, or salad?”

“Salad.”

“What kind of dressing?”

“What do you have?” he inquired.

Derek was still holding the menu in his hand when the waitress came over to his side. She bent down toward his ear to point out where the salad dressings were listed. I sat there, with my eyebrows raised watching this woman practically nibble on Derek’s neck. I was appalled and wanted to get up and smack the bitch. Sharon, I could tell, was not amused either.

“Thank you, sweetheart. You have been helpful,” Derek said with a wink to the waitress.

Smiling, the waitress asked, “Hey, what’s your name? You are new around, right? I think I have seen you at the gym down the street. You know that’s my gym too.”

Interjecting, I smugly stated, “Funny, I thought the toddler bouncy gym had closed down in St. Martin.” Sharon snorted a laugh, while the waitress looked at me with disdain.

“It’s Derek,” he answered before turning to smirk at me.

“Well, Derek, if you are single, I get off at four today if you want to come by.”

Rolling my eyes to Sharon, who was already rolling hers, we shook our heads.

“Miss, I’m sorry, but Dee and I have an appointment this afternoon. We need to have our order taken, please, if you don’t mind.” I could tell Sharon was as frustrated as I was.

“I’m sorry. What would you like, Ma’am?”

While the waitress took Sharon’s order, I could see from Derek’s face that he was enjoying every second of what was happening.

Once we ordered, the food arrived almost immediately. Thankfully, it left little time for further conversation. When our waitress brought over the check, we were nearly through. Sharon announced she had to walk back over to the office quickly. She said that she had forgotten one of the listings she copied.

“I’ll go with you,” I abruptly shouted.

“Nonsense, stay here and finish your lunch. I’ll be right back.”

Sitting in uneasy silence, Derek finally started up a conversation. Immediately, I began feeling self-conscious.

“You don’t care for me, do you? I offended you back there at the office, didn’t I? You know, if I did, I’m sorry.”

Keeping my head down to avoid eye contact, I began playing with my linguine noodles.

Finally, I slowly managed to bring my head up to see Derek. His riveting charm and baby blue eyes nearly made me

weak in the knees. For a moment, I allowed myself to gaze back at his direct stare.

“Do I make you nervous, Dee?”

“I don’t know what you mean,” I said, reaching for my check. Right as I went to pick it up, he took hold of my hand. His hands were hot, soft, and when he touched me, it sent shivers down my body.

“I believe I know what you are thinking,” he said. He looked at me like he was reading every heated thought I was trying hard to suppress.

“Yea? What’s that?” I replied.

“You like me. I know because I can see it in your eyes. I feel drawn to you too. I bet we were soulmates before.”

Pulling my hand away abruptly, I realized what he was doing. “Look, I don’t know who you think you are, but you can’t go around making passes at women in your office. Especially, to those who are married. I know your type. You like to conquer women because you feel more masculine. So even though you probably slept with a thousand women, deep down, you have no respect! So, what do you think of that?”

“Wow! I think it’s kind of low.”

“That’s right, but it’s the truth, isn’t it, Derek?”

“No, the number of women is probably at least three times that,” he replied, laughing in amusement.

“What!! You’re an asshole! I want you to know that I’m not some kind of lonely woman starving for attention. I have a wonderful husband who loves me and kids that are amazing.”

“I know. I realize that Dee.”

“Please understand, Derek, that working with me means you will need to be professional, and you will need to

maintain your boundaries. I don't know you, and personally, after what has happened today, I don't know if I want to."

I began to get up, as Sharon came walking back in.

"And another thing, Derek, we can have lots of soulmates. If we were anything to each other in another life, perhaps you were a cockroach in my house." Upset, I turned and walked out the door, leaving Sharon with her mouth open.

I waited over by Sharon's car, while they both exited the restaurant. Derek went over to the office looking glum, while Sharon walked over to me at the car.

"So, girl, do you mind telling me what the hell happened back there?" Unlocking the doors to the car, we both got inside.

"I don't want to talk about it. Derek was out of line, and I let him know it."

"What did he do, Dee?"

"I don't know, but I don't care if I never see him again."

"Okay, I hear ya, but damn, I wish he would pull that shit with me. I wouldn't hesitate to mount that man," she said, pulling out of the parking lot.

"Really, Sharon? Then you would make yourself his newest victim to conquer."

"Yea, right. I know. Wouldn't that be exciting! He could conquer me, and I could conquer him. We could conquer all day and night. Think about it, Dee, if you weren't married, you would conquer him too."

"Sharon, please stop. I get it."

"Hey, sorry, it's been a long time since Jerry walked out with that well-inflated, Botox bimbo, Susie Lip Gloss."

“Listen, Sharon; he’s all yours. Go for it. I think, for now, I’m going to stay out of the office to avoid him.”

“That’s fine, Dee. I’ll drop it. I was just having some fun.”

“It’s okay. I need to concentrate on work at this point. I have a lot happening at home currently. Let’s just focus on our clients today.” I hadn’t shown a home since the house on Dexter Avenue. Now that I knew that I had abilities, I questioned how that would shape my future in real estate.

“I apologize, Dee. I want you to know that I am glad to have you back. It’s not the same without you in the office. Tell me, what have you been doing with your time? Tom mentioned that you weren’t feeling well. When I heard, I was worried, but I didn’t want to call and bother you.”

“I had a lot of emotional stuff going on with my family, and I needed time. I appreciate your concern. Feel free to call me anytime, though. You are a lovely friend, and I appreciate you.”

Chapter Nineteen

“Here we are, a few minutes early, 9955 Hemhurst Street. Our clients should be here shortly. It looks like from this text they sent; they are running a few minutes behind. Their flight got delayed,” Sharon explained, looking at her phone messages. “We could go in and turn on the lights because this one is vacant.”

“Sounds good,” I told her, getting out of the car. Walking up, I saw that it was a rather charming home, with a giant palm tree in the yard. Beautiful flowers were growing in the bed along the front of the house. However, I could see the home needed some weeding and cleanup.

Stepping inside the front foyer, I saw that it opened out to the main living space. It had a small gas fireplace in the corner and a sliding door leading to the patio and pool area. The pool was fairly good, but it did show some need for repair and cleaning.

Sharon walked around and turned on the lights in the bedrooms and bathrooms. I strolled into the kitchen, which had a combo eat-in area. It was a long skinny room with an entrance to the garage in the middle.

Turning on the light, I walked over to the garage door. As I placed my hand on the knob, I immediately got a shudder of fear, pain, and anguish. “Not again,” I whispered. “This isn’t happening; I can’t freak out here. Not now.”

Stepping away from the door to get my composure, I abruptly got a terrifying vision. A man was running towards me with a sledgehammer who looked to be in his 20s. He was carrying a great deal of anger and darkness. Before I could make sense of it, I saw a flash of light to the side of me. When I looked, though, there was no one there.

I think I’m losing it! Good Lord, I need to get out of here already, I thought.

Right then, came a loud knock, and I heard Sharon open the door and greet the clients. “I’m Sharon, so great to meet you in person,” I heard her say. “Our other agent, Dee Dawson, is also with me. She is helping to turn on the lights right now. So, feel free to look around. I think based on our phone conversation that you will like this home. It has much of what you said you wanted. Plus, it’s close to where you said you hoped to be, location-wise.”

“Thank you, yes,” I heard a man’s voice reply to Sharon.

I took a deep breath. I reminded myself that it was going to be alright. I walked out into the main living room, smiling as I approached the couple. I could tell right away the couple was well-to-do by the way they dressed and how they carried themselves. “Hi, I’m Dee, so nice to meet you both.” I extended my hand for a handshake.

“Thank you, Dee. I’m Elvin, and this is Myra. We are from Pittsburgh and moving south to be closer to our daughter and son-in-law. We might be snowbirds until we can decide if we will stay down here full-time,” Elvin said.

“I understand as my parents did the same thing when they first came down from the Midwest. They ended up loving it here; I think you will, too.”

“That’s so nice to hear,” Myra stated with a smile as Sharon strolled up. She let us know that she had checked the pool pump to ensure that it was working.

Moving into the master bedroom, Elvin voiced, “Myra and I have always thought about Florida. I must say that I have been the reluctant one. Our daughter and son-in-law moved down here some time ago.”

In the split second that Elvin was speaking, I heard a voice inside my head say that their daughter was expecting a little girl in November. It caught me by surprise.

“But now we are ready to be closer to the kids, and Myra and I have finally agreed.”

“It’s great that you can be closer to them. I’m sure with the new baby coming in the fall that they will be excited to have you nearby.” I had blurted that out without thinking and Elvin and Myra looked at me, puzzled.

“How did you know that our daughter was pregnant and due in the fall?”

Sharon then looked at me, “Yes, how did you know that Dee, did I tell you?”

Trying to cover my mistake, I replied, “Yes, yes, you did.”

As the couple wandered through the rooms of the house, Sharon and I waited in the living room. Right as they returned, my throat started to feel tight. My airway began closing off as if someone were choking me. My head instantly pulsated in agonizing pain, feeling like someone was pounding it in with a hammer. I wanted to leave the house, thinking my

abilities had to be related. However, I didn't want to make a complete fool of myself. Perhaps I wasn't ready to come back to work. Maybe I wasn't cut out for real estate now.

Crazy thoughts and visions were coming faster, and my head felt like it was getting worse. I started to feel dizzy. I began gasping and slowly dropped to the floor.

"Oh, No! Dee, are you okay?" Sharon came over and latched onto me. "She's been ill," she told the couple. I was losing consciousness and beginning to feel like I was entering a tunnel. It was all happening in slow motion.

"I can't breathe," I gasped.

"I think we better call 911."

Not realizing I must have passed out, I discovered that I was standing in the kitchen. I was now able to see a lady in her late thirties visibly. She had a medium build, long brown hair, and was wearing a white blouse and blue jeans. Quickly, shouting and coming in from behind me like I wasn't there, was the same horrifying and angry man. "I'm going to kill you, slut!"

Placing his hands on her throat to strangle her, I could somehow feel it because my throat hurt from the pressure. I couldn't breathe, but I managed to speak out, "Stop! Stoppp!" Before he let go, he forcibly shoved her to the wall. Her skull hit so hard that it knocked her out. I watched in horror as the lady fell to the ground, with her eyes wide open. Letting out the last bit of oxygen in her lungs, he came back in from the garage carrying a sledgehammer. He proceeded to beat her head brutally.

It all happened so dreadfully fast, like a horror movie clip. I wondered how I suddenly saw it so vividly. Stepping back, I noticed in the living room that Sharon, Elvin, and Myra were over my body on the floor and panicking. Elvin looked to

be on his phone. Everything that I could see around me was in slow motion.

Once the horrendous and sickening scene was over, I found my airway beginning to open, where I could breathe again. Letting out a huge gasp of air, I began to come to, slowly. I could then hear Sharon talking to me. “Dee, Dee, hey, wake up? Sweetie, can you hear me? Elvin is calling the ambulance.”

“What’s the address here?” Elvin asked Sharon.

“I’m okay. No, don’t, Sharon!” I shouted. I didn’t want the paramedics. Elvin looked at Sharon, and I continued to shake my head no until he ended the call with 911.

“Phew, Dee! We thought we lost you for a second. I was worried. Are you sure you are okay? I think you might need to go to the emergency room. I can drive you there, and you can see a doctor. You shouldn’t be going down like this. Something could be seriously wrong. I’m going to call Tom or Derek and see if either can cover the rest of the day for us.”

“No, I don’t want that. I’m fine,” I insisted. “Maybe, I need more time off, but I don’t need the hospital.”

Starting to stand up with the help of both Myra and Elvin, I felt embarrassed. “I feel so bad, Sir. I promise you I’m not contagious or anything. I’m under a lot of stress lately.”

“Don’t worry at all. Myra and I will be here for a good week or two. We can see houses some other time.”

“I’m calling Tom now to see if he can come out here,” Sharon said. As she dialed her phone, she walked out of the door to talk privately. Feeling drained and humiliated, I wondered if she was telling Tom that I was having a breakdown. He probably wanted to fire me. Sharon came back in right away. She explained to the couple that Tom was on his way out to finish the showings with them. Elvin and Myra

were appreciative. In the meantime, she was planning to take me back to the office so that I could get my car to go home.

“We are a team at St. Martin Realty. My broker, Tom, will meet you at the next house in about forty minutes,” Sharon informed the couple. As we all walked out of the house, I felt like I had let them down. I wasn’t sure what this would mean for my future at the real estate office. I didn’t want Tom thinking I was an awful, irresponsible employee.

While Sharon finished talking with the clients, I got inside the hot car and waited. Immediately, I searched the house address to see if anything unusual would come up. To my surprise, the first link was for a top story from the Orlando news. It was from three years before describing the horrific homicide of Debra Keganowski. She was a woman of thirty-seven years old and a waitress at a local brewery. She had met a younger man online, and they had started dating. The article said that right after he moved in, the man brutally murdered her. He was convicted and sent to prison. They had a picture of Debra posted. My eyes opened wide, while my heart sank, realizing it was the lady that I saw.

“Holy Mary Mother of God!” I blurted out to myself. Just then, Sharon got in the car.

“Are you doing better now?”

“Yes, I am. Thank you,” I answered as we started to drive away.

The drive back seemed super long, and neither Sharon nor I had much to say. I nodded off a few times because I noticed how drained the house had left me. When we arrived at the office, I told Sharon goodbye. I thanked her for being so caring and understanding.

“No problem, Dee, I want to see that you are well. Please, if you ever need to talk, give me a call. I will listen. I

may not always understand, but I will, for sure, be a listening ear.” As she prepared to drive away, I motioned for her to stop her car, to talk at the window.

“Sharon, did you know that house had a murder a few years ago?”

Sharon looked at me, surprised. “Well, yes, I did. The other realtor had brought it to my attention for disclosure. How did you know? Did you see something in there?”

I looked at her, unable to answer and unsure of what I wanted to say. “Dee, are you sure you are okay? You would tell me if something was wrong, right?” I could see Sharon looked worried.

“Of course, I would. I guess I need to figure it all out first. I appreciate your concern.” I began to walk away before turning back to face her.

“Sharon, I need you to know that I am okay, or at least I think I am. I must say that the house had bad energy. I did feel it, and it made me feel sick. I know that might sound crazy. Things are happening to me lately that are not making sense. I’m trying my darnedest to understand why.”

“I see,” she said, staring at me.

“Listen, I don’t know if you believe in mediums or people that can see or talk to the dead, but that might be me. I have been learning that I might be picking up more than my energy. Of course, I don’t expect you to believe me, but I thought you should know.”

“It’s okay, Dee.”

“Sharon, I won’t blame you if you don’t want to talk to me or you want to talk to Tom and let me go. Hell, I don’t know if I should be doing this work now. I’m so confused.”

“Dee, I said it is okay. Don’t worry.”

Sharon extended her arm to grab my hand, which she tightly clasped. She then stated, “I don’t think you are crazy at all, Dee. I have never had your experiences, but there have been times I have been in homes where I swore that someone was watching me. However, I never see anyone.”

“Sharon, you have?”

“Yes, Dee, I don’t know precisely what being a medium is or isn’t. I can tell you that my grandma used to talk to spirits. She would tell my mom, growing up, that she had visits from our family that had crossed over. So, I believe you. I just don’t have that gift.”

“I don’t know if it’s a gift,” I groaned.

“It is, and in time you will agree. Until then, don’t be afraid of it.”

“Thank you. I will certainly try. I appreciate your understanding.”

“No problem, and don’t worry so much. I will talk to Tom for you and tell him what’s going on if you would like. He will understand better than me, I think. Tom has told me some crazy stories of houses that he has shown, plus ones that he has represented. He’s told of dark energy, with sounds, and stuff that goes bump in the night. I don’t know if he embellishes his stories, but I can tell you he believes in spirits. I think he used to go ghost hunting with a guy named Max, who worked in our office a couple of years ago. He got out of the real estate business, but I think they still keep contact.”

“If you think he will understand, then yes. I would appreciate that. I will call him tomorrow as well and let him know that I am resigning. I think it’s best right now.”

“No, don’t resign, Dee. We need you, just take some more time. When you are ready, we will be here. There is no rush. I know Tom well enough to know that he won’t want to

lose you. He finds this stuff fascinating, so he'll probably want you to explore it. Just be on the lookout for him asking you to go ghost-hunting," she voiced with a smirk.

I couldn't even begin to voice how relieved I was that Sharon had told me that. It made me feel so much better.

"Alright, Sharon. Thanks. I will talk to you soon."

Chapter Twenty

Driving home from work, I had a great deal on my mind. My phone rang, and it was Sean. He wanted to know what time I would be out of work. He said the sitter couldn't pick the kids up from school since she was sick. I told him that I was off and would handle it. I knew that I needed to discuss my job with him after he got home. However, I thought it should wait.

As hard as I was trying to stay positive, I simply couldn't imagine being a medium forever. I wanted the spiritual awakening process to stop because it was becoming too much. Everything was starting to scare me, and I was beginning to feel cursed. I wanted to be normal and healthy again.

Sitting and waiting to turn down the street to head toward the kids' school, a song came on that I recognized. It was Gordon Lightfoot's, *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*. The lyrics were sad and haunting, recalling the shipwreck on Michigan's Lake Superior back in the 70s.

Turning up the song, I drove into the parking lot to wait for the kids in the parent lineup. I was a little early, but it didn't make sense to go home. So, while I sat waiting for the kids, the song continued. As it played, I found myself getting a

surprising vision of a gigantic freighter. It startled me at first. I could see it drifting hard on towering, rough waves of water at night. The sky was dark gray and black with heavy clouds and piercing rain. Massive loud winds were rolling in, and the ship was rocking from side to side. It appeared to be taking on water as the crew fought to hang on to survive. The flag still hanging at the pole was flapping so hard it was nearly ripping off.

The crew appeared to be more in the distance, but I got drawn to the ship's captain. He looked to be wearing a dark, heavy wool jacket with bright gold buttons and a captain's hat. His face displayed not only worry and fear but also tremendous determination. You could feel and see his strong desire to save his crew and ship. He seemed so close to me like I was standing next to him. I literally felt like I was experiencing the horrifying and tragic end to the Edmund Fitzgerald.

As the radio played the end of the song, I felt a sense of relief and release come over me. I realized I was in my car, still waiting for the kids. "Holy Crap! How did that happen?" It was like a dream, only being awake. I felt like I had been there. I tried not to freak out, but it was weird. Right then, the school bell rang.

"Hi, Mom!" Sarah greeted as she and Jack got in the back to go home.

"Hi, you two. Did you have a good day?"

"Turn up the radio, please!" Sarah yelled.

"You know, I've got a little headache right now. I would prefer that we keep it off while we go home."

"Fine. Do you think that Josh is home yet?"

"He should be getting off the bus shortly."

“Mom, you will never guess what we learned today in social studies.”

“I don’t know, Sarah.”

“We learned about my favorite subject, Greek Mythology. You know that I love that. Today we learned how the seasons got formed. Do you know or want me to tell you the story?”

“Sure, Sarah, I don’t remember if we read that story in one of your books. I can’t recall at this moment as I have too much on my mind.”

“Well, Hades is the God of the Underworld if you remember, Mom. He has a brother, Zeus, who is the King of the Gods. He had a daughter with Demeter, the Goddess of Agriculture. Demeter was the one that made everything grow in nature. Their daughter was named Persephone, who Hades kidnapped and married. Demeter got so mad that she killed the crops and everything to where nothing would grow.”

“I see. So, what happened, my little Greek Mythology Guru,” I asked, chuckling. I was so shocked at how much my daughter was fascinated by the legends.

“Well, Zeus begged Hades, to make some type of peace with Demeter. He did that by allowing Persephone to go home to her mother every six months. But, before he did, he made her eat a magical fruit to make her come back.”

“Ok, good story, but why did the seasons happen?”

“Because her mom was happy to see her every six months. She brought out the sun and made everything pretty in spring and summer. Then she killed everything when her daughter left again, causing fall and winter.”

“Yes, that’s an interesting story, Sarah. I’m impressed with how much you know.”

“Mom, we live in Florida, and the weather doesn’t change too much. Do you think Demeter retired to Florida like a snow-bird?”

“That’s funny, Sarah, but I don’t know the answer to that,” I replied, laughing.

Chapter Twenty-One

Coming into the house, we found Josh sitting at the table. He was already working hard on his homework.

“Hey guys!” Josh exclaimed as I walked into the house. I helped Jack and Sarah put away their school stuff, knowing they would raid the cupboards for a snack immediately.

“Don’t forget to wash your hands,” I yelled. I made my way into my bedroom to change out of my work clothes and into loungewear.

“Mom! Mom!” Josh yelled from the kitchen table.

“What do you need, Josh? I will be out in a minute. Hold on.”

“I need you to sign this permission slip for my history class.” Walking into the kitchen, I could see he had his books all spread out doing homework.

“What slip?”

“This one right here,” Josh replied, sliding it over to me.

Sitting down, I grabbed a pen to sign. The permission slip was for Josh to watch a movie that was rated PG-13.

Putting my hand down on the paper to write, I had a sudden feeling of rage come over me. I began to hear a man shouting, "Get me out of this prison!" Momentarily frozen, I yelled at Josh.

"This is ridiculous, Josh! I can't believe I have to sign this goddamn paper!"

"Mom! What is wrong with you?" he asked.

"I don't know, Josh. Honestly, I don't know," I groaned. Immediately, I began to cry. I had no idea why my personality had taken a 180-degree turn.

"Mom, what's up? You aren't yourself."

Looking up at his concerned face, I wiped away the tears from my eyes. I saw the love and worry in his eyes. He wasn't used to seeing me so upset, and I had scared him. Sarah and Jack were in the living room with a bowl of popcorn watching cartoons. Thankfully, they didn't seem to hear me.

"I don't know, Josh. You have always been a tough kid. I know you want to help, but I don't know if you can right now. I didn't mean to go off at you like that. Something happened when I touched that paper from your teacher," I explained.

"Well, Mom. I didn't think it was a big deal to watch the movie even if it was PG-13. You have let me watch R-rated stuff on occasion. If you don't think I should watch it, I won't."

"No, that's not it at all. For some reason, I got angry, but the emotions I felt, didn't seem to be mine. I heard someone say they wanted out of prison."

"That's creepy, Mom."

"Josh, is your teacher mean, or does he not like his job?"

“No, Mom, Mr. Sullivan is great. He started this year. He is funny and nice to us in class, and I like him.”

“I see,” I replied, signing my name to the permission slip.

Josh gathered up his completed schoolwork so that he could play his video games before dinner. Before he left the kitchen, he turned to me with a strange look. “Mom, did you say you heard prison?”

“Yes?”

“Well, Mr. Sullivan used to work at a prison as a guard for years. I know he hated it because he told us. He decided to get out and become a teacher.”

“Seriously, Josh? That’s sort of crazy. I wonder if, by some odd chance, by touching the slip, I picked that up? Some people get psychic information by touching things, you know. It’s called Psychometry.”

“I don’t know, Mom. I can’t help you with that one.”

“I hope you will forgive me. I feel terrible for my behavior.”

“It’s alright, Mom,” he said, walking to his bedroom.

It was after six o'clock when Sean came in the door. I had finished cleaning up and poured myself a glass of wine to sit by the pool. Sean came out after he ate his dinner to talk with me.

“I had a good day today. What about you?” he asked.

“I don't know, Sean, I am not sure that I want to talk about it at this point. It was awful, and weird things happened.”

“What do you mean? Weird psychic stuff again?”

“Yes, but over the top. Do you honestly want to know what happened today? I saw the Edmund Fitzgerald sink. Weird, right?”

Upon hearing that, Sean’s face looked shocked. “You mean the ship that went down in Lake Superior almost forty years ago?”

“Yep, that’d be the one.”

“Alright, whatever,” he said, shaking his head in disbelief.

“Oh, yeah, I also watched a woman get murdered. I went off on Josh about his teacher being a prison guard. Then, the crazy new guy at work wants me to sleep with him. All normal stuff, right?” I watched Sean’s jaw drop, and his eyes open wide. He shook his head from side to side.

“So, when are you planning on getting together with this new guy?”

“Are you serious? I told you that I witnessed a woman get murdered, and you are worried that I’m going to sleep with Derek?”

“His name is Derek? Are you on a first-name basis? Is this the one that you said that Sharon was saying was so good-looking the other day?”

“Stop! Like usual lately, you are not truly listening to me. You don’t care about anything I say anymore. Right now, you are more worried about who I am going to bed with. But, hell, why do you care? You don’t ever want to do it anymore anyway.”

“Dee, whoa! You need to shut the fuck up! I was only kidding. Yes, it sounds like you had an awful day. I’m sorry that I don’t completely understand. I don’t have your ability. It’s hard to put myself in your position. And I don’t want to

fight about our sex life. Give me a goddamn break! From my perspective, you either fall asleep and have kooky fucking dreams or let the kids sleep in our room. You are so self-absorbed lately, that no, I don't feel interested in being intimate. But honestly, fighting about this is stupid, and I just don't fucking care!"

Shocked, I looked at him and didn't know what to say. I started to cry feeling alone and believing that the world was closing in on me. I didn't know who I was becoming or what to do with myself. I had gotten so immersed in my struggles that I forgot about him. He was right to a point.

"Listen, I'm so sorry. I am battling with this, as you can see. I probably am very self-absorbed as I try to find my place. I need your support now more than ever, and I hope you can understand that."

"I don't know, Dee. I guess I need time right now too. I think I will sleep on the sofa in the family room for a while," he fumed, walking away.

Going inside to grab the bottle of wine, I heard my cell phone going off. It was a number I didn't recognize.

"Hello?"

"Hi. My name is Rita and I got your phone number from David in Cassadaga. He owns the store that you visited recently. You left your phone number with him. He said that you were looking for a little help with your mediumship. I teach classes and have been a medium for over 25 years. Perhaps, I can assist you?"

I was utterly taken by surprise at her call, yet I was relieved that someone was reaching out. I was hopeful that I could get some help.

"Rita, thank you so much. I didn't expect anyone to call, but I am appreciative. It's nice to meet you," I told her.

“It's nice to meet you too. What is it that you need help with exactly?”

“Truthfully, I don't know. I'm so new to this, and I am confused and scared. I wish I had someone to help me through it.”

“What can I answer specifically for you?”

I started to tell Rita everything as quickly as I could. We were on the phone for probably a good 35 minutes. She was kind enough not to charge me. She said we could talk longer if I wanted to make an appointment. However, she did provide class information on mediumship.

“I want you to know that you are an extremely gifted and strong psychic medium. This is not your first life exploring and working your gifts in the mystical arts. You are an old soul. You may have some healing and karmic ties to deal with due to your overblown fears.”

Listening to Rita, I wondered if she was talking about reincarnation and past lives.

“Thank you, Rita, I don't know what all that means but I appreciate what you have shared. I wish I had a better understanding because I am struggling. It's been somewhat of a nightmare for me, my family, and my job. I need to be able to live normally. Right now, though, it's overwhelming. Like even as I sit here in my living room talking, I feel like fifty people are gathering around.”

“That's because you probably have that many, and they're trying to get your attention,” she replied. When Rita said that, it caused me to stop breathing for a moment.

“Dee, let me explain to you that souls see your light, which for you, is bright. It attracts them like a mosquito for miles away. You are lit, like a lighthouse along the ocean banks. They will continue to come unless you learn to protect

yourself and shut down. Otherwise, you're going to drain your energy and exhaust yourself. You probably are already experiencing that, and it's causing you undue stress. Am I right?"

"Yes, I am tired and emotionally stressed out. My husband and I just got done fighting over something stupid," I told her.

"I'm sorry, I know what you are going through. It takes time. Consider placing a giant ball of light, or a bubble around you visually. If you can't do that, ask your guides for help. It will give you some layer of protection against a lot of the surrounding energy. You are extra sensitive right now. Do you understand Dee?"

"I think so, Rita. I will try to do that," I said.

"Great, Dee. It should help you. Also, some people envision their third eye as open, and later they see it close. That way you can go about your daily life. One thing to realize is that you must learn how to control it. You don't want to walk around tapping into the energy of everyone all the time. It's not healthy. Talk to God; he will listen. Your guides will support you. You are not as alone as you think you are. I encourage you to go to a class and to learn all you can."

I listened to what Rita was telling me and tried to make sense of it. But honestly, I think that she lost me right after she validated, I had fifty people around. I knew she was right about everything, though.

"Can I tell you, Dee, that in time, you won't be so fearful of your abilities. I believe that you will learn to do good with them to help many lost souls. Although, nothing is ever truly lost. Everything can be saved if God or one's Higher Power is permitted to help. Does that make sense?"

“I think so, Rita. Thank you. Can you tell me what you would advise for classes or teachers?”

“Yes, when seeking a good teacher, try to find multiple. The reason I say that is that no mentor, book, class, or any other informational piece or person will have all the answers. That is something you must find within you. There will be many people at various stages of development with different abilities and experiences. They may not always match your beliefs or feelings. Some people will be helpful, and some will come from a place of ego. It’s not for you to pass judgment on them or allow them to judge you. It’s for you to see the world through your heart to find your truths, values, and core being,” she explained.

“Thank you so much, Rita. This has been helpful.”

“You are welcome. I feel I am being told by your guide to explain that sometimes, our lives, even previous ones, can be rooted in the subconscious. Therefore, reigning fear where energy or experiences were unresolved. Healing will need to take place to break free and detach from whatever it is that is holding you back. Realize, fear is the opposite of love. By facing your fear, you will then begin to make your move towards love, where your soul will blossom in faith.”

“What do you mean exactly?” I asked.

“If you seek to change, you’re going to need to face your inner demons. They are hiding within your closet, sometimes from many lifetimes. They often lie dormant until you get faced with a challenge that triggers something inside. Thus, releasing the subconscious memories where the soul has carried it, waiting for you to accept it with love and grace.”

“Whoa, that is pretty deep, Rita. It’s a lot for me to take in. I’m thankful, of course!” I exclaimed.

“Dee, there is one last thing I feel I should tell you. I kept this till last because I don’t want to scare you more. However, I think you should know.”

“What is it?” I asked with concern.

“I don’t know who or what you will have to face and release, but it feels monumental. I say it, because being on the phone, I feel it. It’s like insidious energy that rests upon you, with enough power to potentially punch a hole in the universe. I see this dark, black abyss that I have never experienced before. I would like for you to do what I said to protect yourself. Can you do that because God will do the rest.”

Taking a giant breath in, I held it for at least five seconds before I could let it out to answer her.

“Yes, of course. Thank you, Rita, for all that you have provided tonight. I will need to process it, of course, but I’m appreciative of your time. Perhaps, we will meet in person one day.”

Hanging up, I had hoped that I could find my way to one of her classes. Preparing myself for bed, I got in and turned off the light.

Chapter Twenty-Two

No sooner had I rolled over and drifted off when I heard crying coming from Sarah and Jack's room. Turning on the light, I got up to check on them. I could see that Sean was still asleep on the sofa.

Walking down the dark hall, I had only the light from the streetlamps scarcely shining in through the front windows. I got a feeling of dense and eerie energy. Opening the door to Jack and Sarah's room, I saw they had the light on. Sarah was sitting with Jack on his bed. They both had wide eyes and frightened expressions.

"Mommy, there's a monster in here! He was in the closet, but then he flew under my bed. He's got big teeth!" Sarah yelled, trembling with fear.

I stepped back for a second because I wasn't sure what to do. I couldn't quite think straight because I was still tired from being woke. "It's okay; there's nothing in your room. I'm sure there are no monsters. You will be fine. You just had a bad dream."

I went over to sit next to the kids to hold them both tight. “It’s going to be alright. The bad dream is over. You both need to get some sleep.”

“No, Mommy, it wasn’t a bad dream. He’s in here!” Sarah said sobbing.

Looking over at Jack, I could tell he was also scared. “Are you alright, Jack?”

“Mommy, we want to sleep in your room tonight,” cried Jack.

Thinking for a moment, I realized that by giving in to them, I was probably not helping my marriage. However, since Sean was already on the couch upset, I figured it wasn’t a big deal.

As the kids got their blankets to bring to my room, I got down on the floor to look under Sarah’s bed. I told them I would check to be sure it was all clear.

No sooner had I gotten down on the floor to peek under the bed, than some horrific-looking creature snarled at me. I had to do a double-take because I thought my eyes and mind were playing a trick on me. Frightened, but not wanting to show that in front of the kids, I tried to back away calmly.

Attempting to figure out what was under there, I glanced again. I saw what looked like a monkey-formed creature with reddish eyes, razor-sharp teeth, and small horns. As it was coming toward me, I noticed it had a long tail, wings, and bat legs.

What in God’s name is that? I had to question my sanity as I backed away from the bed to stand up. Since when do creatures like that exist in real life?

Turning to Jack and Sarah, I stated, “You know what? There is nothing to be afraid of, so let’s get to my room to get

some sleep. I'm sure tomorrow night; you can sleep in your beds again.”

I wasn't sure what more I could do, and nothing was making sense. I hoped that whatever it was would be gone by morning. As the kids went into my room, I decided to wake Sean to tell him quietly what had happened. Of course, he just looked at me with disbelief and went back to sleep.

Climbing in bed, I felt sad and depressed. A part of me was just as frightened as the kids. There was intense energy looming over the house that I could feel. It's not that I could do anything about it, because I felt helpless. At least not until I remembered what Rita had said about asking my angels for help with protection. Before falling asleep that night, I thanked God and prayed for his help.

Chapter Twenty-Three

he morning sun came fast and shone brightly into our room as if nothing had happened. The house, I noticed, still felt thick and odd. Everywhere I walked, I felt watched. Josh got on the bus to school, and Sean dropped off the other two. When he left that morning, he hadn't expressed more than two words to me. I could tell that Sarah hadn't gotten enough sleep because she was grouchy when I tried to wake her. It's not that I blamed her either since I, too, was exhausted. I wasn't sure what my day looked like, but I knew a nap was in order.

I grabbed my coffee and walked into my room with one of the books I had bought at David's shop on soul contracts. I had the events of the night before, however, still weighing on my mind. Laying down on the bed, I opened the book to where I had last left off. I remembered what David had mentioned to me when I showed him the book. He told me that the life I was now living was one that I supposedly chose for myself. Frankly, it made no sense. I couldn't figure out why willingly, I would want to put myself through so much hell in one lifetime. Regardless of any life lessons that needed to be learned by my soul.

The book referenced that we each had a day before our descent into our physical bodies, where we would meet with our spirit guides and angels. Working together, we discuss our future life plans to prepare a soul contract. We make decisions regarding our selected life lessons and purpose. We identify who in our diverse soul group, we wish to get included with. We get assigned roles from the way it seems. The contract might also include different doors, options, obstacles, and opportunities to explore with freewill.

I had to laugh as I read some parts of the book. A soul contract sounded like my spirit was purchasing a physical body. It was much like buying a new car. While God is the manufacturer, our angels are the insurance policy, and past karma is the down payment. When you get the keys at signing, they give you some advice. “We took out the navigation and manual, so be careful and don’t wreck this one.”

Turning the page to begin the next chapter, I suddenly heard the doorbell. Getting up, I went to answer it. I was alarmed to find Derek standing with a bouquet of hyacinths and baby’s breath. He was smiling and exuding his usual charm.

“Hello, Dee.”

“What do you want, Derek. How did you know where I live?”

“Please let me explain before you shut the door. I promise I will only take a minute of your time.”

“Alright. One minute then, I’ll count.”

“Dee, I don’t blame you a bit for being upset with me because of how I acted yesterday.”

“Okay, great. So why are you here?”

“I admit that I made myself look like a creep and a complete ass in front of you. I don’t expect you to forgive me, although I am here hoping that I can apologize.”

“Well, that’s great. You seem sincere; however, you didn’t answer my question? How did you know where I live?”

“Sharon told me.”

“She did, huh?”

“Yes, plus she said that maybe you could use someone to talk to regarding your abilities.”

“Why, Derek? What did she tell you?”

“She mentioned what happened at the house, but only because I was in with Tom when it came up. I want you to know that I don’t see spirits like you, exactly. But I have felt them and heard them.”

“I don’t wish to talk about it with you. I do appreciate your apology,” I replied.

“Is there anything I can do? I feel terrible for how I acted.”

“No, I’m fine. Thank you, though.”

“Well, I should probably get going, I need to grab some lunch before I get back to the office. You know, if you’re free, I’d love for you to join me. Of course, only if you would be comfortable with that?”

“No, I don’t think so. It’s probably not a good idea.”

“Sure, I get it, and no worries. Maybe some other time. Good-bye.” Walking away, I noticed how disappointed and sincere he seemed.

“You know, on second thought, Mr. McAllister, how about if you come in and I make you some lunch? I probably could use someone to talk to right now.”

“Would you do that? You are awesome. Thank you,” Derek expressed happily, stepping inside, and following me to the kitchen.

“Wow, your home is lovely. Did you decorate it?”

“Yes, I did.”

“I love all the deep red drapery. You must be an extremely passionate woman,” he grinned.

“I don’t know about passionate, but maybe fiery-tempered!”

Chuckling at my reply, Derek took a seat at my kitchen table while I prepared him a sandwich. “Whose book is this?” he questioned, pointing to Sarah’s Greek Mythology book. It was lying open next to him.

“That’s my daughter’s book for school. She loves the Greek Gods, especially Zeus and Poseidon. Derek, would you like to sit outside on the patio by the pool?”

“Sure, I could use some sun. That would be wonderful,” he replied.

Sitting outside, while Derek ate his lunch, I noticed that he was a proper gentleman. He was much different than the day before. We talked for a while, and I realized that he was like a walking history book. He knew a great deal about some things that I had been learning, which made me feel understood.

“You know, Derek, I have enjoyed your company today. I’ve appreciated your thoughts on my development. You have an interesting perspective on things that I find fascinating.”

Smiling, Derek winked at me. “So, you find me good-looking and fascinating? Well, Mrs. Dawson, I’m officially flattered.”

“You called me Mrs. Dawson; why is that?”

“Because you are married. Didn’t you tell me that yesterday? Plus, you have wedding pictures on the wall in the living room. I must say you two look happy.”

“Right. Yes, happily married,” I said with a sigh.

It was quiet for a few moments as I started to think about Sean and our argument. I wondered what I was going to say to him later to get us back in good graces.

“Dee, are you okay?” Derek asked, waving his hand to get my attention.

“Yes, I’m fine,” I replied, smiling.

“You know I bet your smile lights up even the darkest of nights.”

Listening to Derek say that, I had the strangest feeling of déjà vu. “Derek, are you quoting something?”

“No, why?”

“I don’t know. I felt like I have heard it before. Anyway, it was nice what you shared. Thank you.”

“No, thank you. I appreciated you giving me a second chance. I have enjoyed myself. I wish I could stay longer, but I need to get back to work. You know how Tom gets.”

Heading inside from the patio, Derek and I both grabbed the door handle at the same time. Laughing, we both stepped back.

“I’m sorry, Dee. Please, let me get that for you,” he said. Opening the door, he held it so that I could go in first.

Stopping in front of him, I smiled, and together we locked eyes. It might have only been a moment, but it felt like forever.

Gazing at me, he voiced the sweetest sentiment. "I wish I could capture the look you are giving me now inside a bottle. I would keep it for all eternity."

"What is it about you, Derek? How do you do that?" I asked.

"Do what? I'm afraid I don't know what you mean?"

"Yes, you do, 'cause you are good at it. It's the way you look at women; we practically wanna fall on your lap."

"Is that right? You want on my lap?" he laughed, grinning in amusement.

"You're real funny, Derek."

"Well, if you want to know the truth, I don't care about it like you think."

"No? You could have fooled me. Did you ever visit the waitress yesterday after she got off work?"

"Maybe, I did. Are you jealous?"

"Me? No, of course not. I do know that I am right."

"You don't know me, Ellen. You believe you have me figured out. The truth is, I'm nothing like that."

"Is that so Mr. McAllister? Tell me something that will surprise me then?"

"Okay. I lost the love of my life a long time ago. I've never gotten over her. I wanted to marry her, but after we met, she ran off and married someone else. It was tough, and my family was pushing me to wed this girl I knew, but that didn't work out. Then down the road, I was seeing another lady. She got pregnant, but she and our son died shortly after birth."

“Oh, my God! I’m so sorry. I had no idea. That’s tragic. Is the one lady still married to the guy?”

“No, she passed too,” he said.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Derek.”

“So, you see. You think you have me figured out when you honestly know nothing about me.”

“Derek, I’m sorry for saying anything. I guess I made a fool of myself.”

“No, you couldn’t do that. You are unbelievably cute, Ellen. I am amused by how easy it is to get your goat. You do have a fiery side, full of passion.”

“Just, me, huh? What about your passionate side?” I voiced suggestively.

“Are you asking if I have one?”

“Maybe,” I replied. Derek slowly leaned closer to where our faces were almost touching. I wanted to kiss him. Hell, I wanted to do more than that. Whatever power he had over me, I could now feel it burning in my soul.

Right amid our lips almost touching, I suddenly thought of Sean. Abruptly, I pulled my head back. “I’m so sorry, Derek. We can’t do this. I’m afraid that you will need to go.”

“My apologies. I don’t know what I was thinking either. I’m going to leave. Thanks again for lunch.” Derek headed toward the front door while I stood motionless and confused.

“Dee, I’m not trying to start anything. If you need me, though, you know where to find me.” Derek smiled then left.

With Derek gone, I headed to my bedroom for a nap. I barely shut my eyes when I noticed I was standing inside a long, white hallway. I was in front of a door with my name on

it. Looking down the hall on both sides, I noticed it went on for as far as I could see. Where was I? I wondered. From inside my head, I heard, “You are in the Akashic Records.”

Stepping inside, I noticed I was in a large oval stateroom. There were many large window openings all the way around with navy curtains. Each of the casements was pulled back with a light at the top. They were all illuminating white displays like paintings in the old script. Each consisted of names and dates and other vital information like the cause of death.

“Wow, is this where past lives are accessible?” I asked out loud. Before I knew it, I was in front of a sizable wooden podium. There was a giant open black book staring me in the face. It had delicate gold-lined pages, filled with details of all that my soul had undergone since its creation. Visibly, this book would take me one hundred lifetimes to finish.

Before I could flip a page, I found myself experiencing a form of tunnel vision. It was like what happened in my car while I listened to the song about the Edmund Fitzgerald. I guess it’s a post-cognitive flashback. My senses told me I was in 1672, near Salem, Massachusetts. I could see a young girl who I had a peculiar feeling was me. She was with her father in the woods in a log cabin. He was a large beastly and fearsome looking man with his black hair and dark coal eyes. I got an instant knowing that my mother had passed in childbirth, and my father was sexually abusive. I finally ran away at age twelve.

Why am I getting shown this? It was awful. Feeling my dream’s energy, it weighed me in my sleep. The year quickly fast-forwarded to 1687. I was in downtown Salem and walking down a street made of brick. I saw people dressed in the Puritan era, and there were horses and buggies around the town.

Looking at myself, I noticed I was wearing a black taffeta laced up, corset-style dress. My scuffed, black boots had thick heels and pointed toes. I stopped on the street to enter a smoke-filled saloon that was dark, loud, and occupied with men and prostitutes. It was apparent; the men were grabbing ale before heading up the staircase to the rooms overhead.

Long rectangle wooden tables were all lined up in rows. There appeared to be a rear door to the back entrance near the office of the Madam, whose name was Maude. She was an obese, red-haired, abusive woman, who no one liked, not even her henchmen. I, however, knew her as Mama.

Before I could see more, I found my dream shifting to a room in a small house. I was with a young man who was getting up and getting dressed. While I laid in bed, with nothing but a sheet covering me, I could feel remorse and pain. It was almost like life had gotten sucked out of me.

Sitting up, I saw the man turn around. *Oh, my God! It can't be*, I thought. Was that Derek or a man that just closely resembled him?

“Aleric, you know, I’m pregnant. Do you even care?” Hearing myself say that, I was shocked.

“Of course, I care. Why wouldn’t I? I just don’t understand how it happened,” he said, rather upset.

“Maybe it was meant to be.”

“Yes, keep telling yourself that. Maude will never let you keep it,” he groaned.

“What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that you know what you have to do.”

“You want me to abort it?” I asked.

“Not really. I would like nothing more than to be with you. However, you know they would find out, and it would mean the end.”

Listening to the conversation play out, I was in total shock. Could this dream be a real past life, and that be Derek? Surely there was an explanation. Thinking, I wondered if that was why we had a powerful draw to one another? That might make sense, especially when he even admitted to feeling a soulmate connection.

I was ready for the dream to end, but unfortunately, the worst had not revealed itself. Visions were coming in quickly of my involvement with dark magic. I could feel something sinister take hold of me to where I saw myself partaking in sacrifice and voodoo. I began engaging in what appeared to be a disturbing erogenous relationship with one of the scariest, darkest demonic entities that I had ever seen.

“Are you kidding me? Disgusting! I’m ready to awaken now!” I yelled in my dream.

Before I could say more, I found myself in a black cloak, standing inside a hexagram in a dark forest. It appeared the hexagram was made of candles, rocks, and bones. I was staring down at an infant and preparing to impale it with the dagger I was holding. “Noooo!” I yelled inside my head as I witnessed the horrific scene take place. Within moments of the sacrifice, black shadows started popping up all around the hexagram. Suddenly, a large, black mass with red eyes emerged from the ground growing to some fifty stories high. Scaring the hell out of me, I awoke gasping for air. I could hear Sean’s alarm radio playing, Elvis Presley’s, *You’re the Devil, In Disguise*.

Thank you, Lord, for waking me from that horrific nightmare! With the song still playing, I leaned over to shut it off. I wondered how the alarm had gotten set in the first place. I didn’t remember setting it. Grabbing my phone off the side of the bureau, I searched the meaning of the hexagram. To my

surprise, I found out that it was a potent symbol in dark magic to summon Satan and conjure demons. It was all so unreal and hard to believe. It had to be a nightmare.

Walking toward the door to go out to the living room, I heard Derek's voice. It sounded like he was in my house on the phone. "Yes, I know, Sharon. I will; she is in her room lying down. I wasn't sure if I should call her husband or wait for her to get up. Sure, I will check and then call you back. Okay. Thanks. Bye."

"What's going on? Why are you here?" I asked, coming around the corner.

"You don't remember? Oh boy! Maybe we should get you checked out. Sharon and Tom are worried. I told them what happened."

"What did happen exactly?"

"You said you were feeling nauseous and dizzy. You were going in to lie down for a few minutes. You told me to leave, but I thought maybe I should stay for a minute. I wanted to be sure you were fine. I called Sharon to see what she thought I should do. I don't have your husband's number, or I would have called him."

"No, I am okay. You can leave. Thanks for staying. I must have been sleeping hard. How long was I out?"

"Maybe fifteen minutes."

"Seriously? That's all?"

"Yes. I'll go, but please keep us updated," he requested, walking to the door.

"Thanks, Derek. I will. Goodbye."

Closing the door, I heard my phone ring in the bedroom.

Running to get it, I fell out of bed and landed flat on the floor. “Ouuccch!” I screamed.

In pain with total confusion, I tried to get up. I could still hear the phone ringing on the dresser. Reaching up, I grabbed it to answer.

“Hello?”

“Dee, hey, it’s Sharon. Did I wake you?”

“I think so. I don’t know what happened?”

“Girl, are you okay?”

“I think so. I am not sure what’s going on. I don’t remember much after Derek left.”

“Derek? When was he there?”

“I don’t know; just now. Earlier? I can’t make sense of it. What time is it?” I asked.

“It’s almost 10 a.m.”

“What? I don’t understand. It’s not afternoon?”

“Wow, Dee, you must have been sleeping. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you. I was calling to check on you, but also to tell you about Derek.”

“What about him?” I asked.

“He died early this morning on his way to the office. He was in a car accident,” she said.

“What? How?”

Sharon explained that he was on I-4, when a semi-truck had turned over, and he couldn’t stop.

In shock I replied, “I don’t understand, Sharon. I swear he was just here, but now you’re telling me he’s dead, and it’s

still morning. Dear God, this is awful. I'm sorry, I have to get off the phone. Nothing is making any sense."

"Dee, I'm sorry. I wish there were a way that I could help. Let me know if I can do anything. In the meantime, get some rest."

Thanking Sharon, I hung up and slowly walked out to the kitchen to grab a glass of water. Filling my cup at the sink, I looked over to the counter to see a vase of hyacinths and baby's breath.

"I'm going crazy! No, I'm going mad! That's what it is," I shouted. Walking back to my bedroom, I thought maybe I needed more sleep.

Seconds later, I heard a sound come from my kitchen to which I turned around. Walking back, I saw that Benny was standing in the hall in front of Jack and Sarah's room barking. For a moment, I wondered if that creature was still there. They say animals have a sixth sense.

Not knowing what was happening, I was feeling frightened. My heart inside my chest was pounding so hard that I could hear it in my ears. A million things were going through my mind, and none of them had logic. I was scared and becoming more so by the second. The dog started growling and backing up from where he was standing at the door. He looked like he was watching someone. Whoever it was, he didn't like them.

Getting the courage, I moved closer to the door of the kids' bedroom. It was there that I caught a glimpse of a dark shadow. Stepping inside, I felt the chilliest breeze come over me. It sent waves of intense chills throughout my body, giving me a sense that something was wrong. The energy was dark and intense, even with the sun shining in through the window.

Glancing all around, I looked up into the corners of the room. I didn't see anything. At least not until I looked over my head, just above the doorway. There it was, the nasty entity spread out like a bat. It was glaring and smirking at me with its evil red glowing eyes. Looking up, I told it to leave, but it didn't move. Frightened, I started to recite the Psalm 23 that I had memorized. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not....." and with every word that I uttered, I had massive chills come over my body. Instantly, the entity flew to the opposite side of the room, to glare and hiss at me. Freaking out, I turned to leave.

Running down the hallway, I noticed a small, white female with golden-brown hair in an old-fashioned bun. She was wearing an antiquated white, bloodstained dress. Her eyes looked glazed over as she came toward me. Scared, I ran around the corner into the kitchen to go the other way to my bedroom. I wondered who she was or what she wanted. If she were a spirit wanting help, why did she think I would be the one?

I needed everything to end because I couldn't take it anymore. The woman, still coming toward me, showed torment and confusion. My senses conveyed that she had been shot down on a big plantation, next to what looked like two small children.

"What do you want?" I yelled. Trying to skirt into my bedroom, I shouted, "What are you doing here? I can't help you. I'm sorry, but you are dead and need to go to the Light. Please leave because you are scaring me!"

Wanting my car keys and purse, from my closet, I needed to leave the house. No sooner did I get to it when I saw a dark being in the corner next to Sean's work attire. This entity looked to be much larger and very terrifying. He had the appearance of a demon with yellow and black-eyes, holding a pitchfork. While I froze with fear, my mouth dropped open. I

didn't know if I should move. Whatever it was, it was staring me directly in the eyes. "What are you?" I asked.

"You know exactly who I am."

"What do you want? You need to leave."

"No, this is my house and my land, and you need to go. Unless, of course, you want to make a deal." Looking at me, it was fearsome with a sneer.

Trembling, I spoke up, "I don't make deals with things like you."

"That's too bad. You have a nice family. I would hate to see anything happen to any of them."

"You are not real, and you don't exist!" I exclaimed.

"You don't remember anything, do you?"

"I don't know what you mean."

Smirking, he said, "I find this particularly humorous. Just so you know, Dee or whatever your fucking name is, you and I go way back. The last time we spoke, you told me never to show my face again. But now, here you are on the land that I claimed. Now you want me to leave here too. Bitch! It's not happening!"

"Well, I don't have a clue what you mean, but I think you still need to leave." Looking at the entity was terrifying me, but I was determined to stand my ground.

"Or what? What will you do if I don't?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, I will sing, *Amazing Grace*, or recite the 23rd Psalm! I will do whatever it takes to make you go," I blurted out in panic.

"Ha, Ha!" The entity cackled loudly. "Go ahead, sing your *Amazing Grace*, I surely want to hear it, bitch. I'll let you

know that it won't do you any good. You don't get this high in the hierarchy, to not be able to withstand the bullshit you call grace or God or whatever the fuck it is!" Hissing as he spoke, he showed just how evil he was.

I started to back out of the closet when I realized the demon's expression changed. He suddenly became fearful of something he saw standing behind me. I turned to glance because I could feel a presence, but I didn't see anything. However, when I looked back into my closet, I noticed the demon was gone.

Chapter Twenty-Four

What in the hell was that? I wondered as I ran to my car. Honestly, I didn't want to go back to that house again, but I knew that wasn't an option. What would I tell Sean about all of this? I couldn't. Backing my car out of the drive, I saw Tom's car pulling up.

Putting my car in park, I stepped out and walked over to Tom.

"Hi, Dee!"

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Sharon told me what was going on, but I wanted to check on you for myself?"

"Thank you, I am okay, I think. I was on my way out. I was sorry to hear about Derek this morning."

"Yes, that was awful. I heard the accident was bad. It was unfortunate. He seemed to be a pretty good guy."

Looking back at the house, I couldn't help but get drawn to the windows in the front that appeared very dark and ominous in the sun.

“Dee, I want you to know that you don’t have to be scared. I heard from Sharon that you got pretty upset yesterday. You have a lot of support with all of us.” I could tell Tom was trying to be supportive, and I appreciated it.

“I don’t know, Tom. Strange things are happening, and I’m not myself. I can’t make sense of much of it.”

“Like what?” he asked.

I told him some of what I saw, like the woman in my kitchen, and the dark entities. I also mentioned the visions of fires I was starting to get and the strange dreams. I added that the day before, I was out at night, grabbing my mail when I noticed holographic people wandering the streets. Looking as far down as I could see under the streetlamps, they were roaming.

Tom seemed plagued but interested and wanted me to show him around the house. I was hesitant, but I did. He walked through every room, quietly taking it all in.

“There is hefty, darker energy in the back corner of the house, and your closet Dee. I don’t want to scare you if I tell you this, but there was a war on this property. You should know that this subdivision got erected on top of an old plantation that burned down in the 1800s. You can do a history check on it because it happened during the Seminole War period. There were problems with the white man, taking the land from the Indians. I believe the war left a big energetic ripple in time. Therefore, as a psychic medium, you are feeling, seeing, and receiving all kinds of messages and information I would gather.

“I don’t know if Sharon told you, but my father was into a lot of spiritual work as I grew up. It led me to learn and develop a strong interest in this. I do occasionally go ghost hunting, and I have the equipment. However, since you are already aware that there is unsettled energy here, perhaps I

can ask him for help. I will see if he will share with me a ceremony to bless and cleanse the home. It's up to you, Dee, but we could try it in hopes of helping you and your family." When Tom finished talking, we were walking out to the driveway.

I was shocked. There was history on my land, and I couldn't believe it. Why hadn't I known?

"Dee, do you know if any of your neighbors have ever experienced anything unusual?"

"I don't know Tom; everyone seems fine. I can't go knocking door to door, asking if anyone sees demons and ghosts. It's not like looking for a lost dog."

Chuckling, Tom replied, "No, I guess you can't. I will tell you that we have sold homes here, and I haven't heard anything unusual."

"Yes, that figures. Leave it to me to be the crazy one."

"No, you are not crazy. You know what? I do remember something. About ten years ago, there was a family who called Max, my buddy that used to do paranormal work. They said they wanted us to come with our equipment. I can't remember why, but they were having a series of problems. If I remember, they had a teenage daughter that they said had abilities."

"Were they close by?"

"I can't remember, but I think the reason we didn't end up going to their house was that the girl died. Don't quote me, as I would have to call Max. He knew the details. I'm wondering something, though, so see if you can follow me. You are a family of mediums awakening. What if it also awakened the land? This might sound a little ridiculous, but some have said there is a curse here. Personally, I think curses are only in the mind of those who believe in them, but I'm telling you anyway."

After listening to Tom's story, I felt even more desire to move, which I knew Sean would never go along with. I agreed to allow Tom to come in and help.

"I could come this weekend if you want. It shouldn't take long," he said.

"Yes, that would be appreciated. I don't know how much more I can take."

Thanking him for his offer, I felt better knowing that someone was coming to help. I realized that I was now a full-blown medium. This was going to be my new life. I knew that I would eventually have to learn to overcome my fear. I didn't know how to do that because I was still lost and questioning my sanity.

Driving down the road, I turned to go the back way toward the school. I thought maybe that I would stop into the metaphysical store first to see if Vicki was working. Not even a ¼ mile down the tree-covered roadway, I felt a sickening sensation in my stomach. It was like a knot, and I wanted to vomit. Taking a couple of deep breaths, I told myself that I would get through it. I turned on the radio, and I listened to the broadcaster giving the last of the local news update. My mind was racing, and I started to recall the entity in my closet. I wondered how we were going to sleep in the house. With the news endings, the disc jockey came on announcing the name of the next song. It was *Demons* by Imagine Dragons.

"Holy Hell!" I said, pulling over to the side of the road. I entered the nearby park that Sean sometimes took the children to. I didn't like it because it was dark, wooded, and gave me the creeps. Today, however, I needed a moment to catch my breath and get myself in order. Sitting in the car, I noticed the name of the playground was "Plantation Parke." Looking off to the far-right side was a roped-off area with a path leading to what appeared to be the ruins of an old, burnt

down stone house. I wondered if this was the plantation that I saw burning and the cause of my troubles.

Unsure of what to do, I drove to the store and asked the clerk if Vicki was around. He told me no, but he sent me to the back to meet one of their other mediums. The medium who greeted me did so with some disregard. He was unlike Vicki, who was very accommodating. Talking with the man, he informed me that I needed to have more faith and that nothing evil existed in the world. He said there was no Hell. He basically made me feel stupid and crazy. I don't think that was his intention, but it was hard getting told that something didn't exist when my entire family was experiencing it.

I didn't want to argue with him, but I allowed him to share his beliefs. He was entitled to that, like everyone.

Before leaving the store, I bought some cross necklaces and thanked the man for his time. I knew that he gave me what he felt was his best advice based on his personal beliefs. Driving to pick up the kids, I started to think about Heaven and Hell.

I questioned if Hell really existed or if it did only inside the human mind. I wondered, too, if there were other parts to the universe, like dimensions, and realities that weren't always seen by everyone. I began to think that maybe I should do my best to pray and tell myself repeatedly positive thoughts. Perhaps, I needed to break whatever negative conditioning I was placing upon myself.

Pulling into the driveway as I got home, I saw that Josh was outside waiting for me. "I forgot my key," he moaned.

"It's okay, let's get inside."

"Mom, can I talk to you a minute?" he asked.

"Sure, let me tell the others to wash their hands and put their stuff away first. I will be in momentarily." Walking

toward Sarah, as she came out of the bathroom, I noticed she stopped dead in her tracks. Her eyes widened, and teeth clenched as she pointed behind me.

“Mommy, a scary man is standing behind you.” I could see that she was trembling in fear. “He’s got big yellow and black eyes.”

I didn’t want to turn around because I feared it was the entity. I asked Sarah if she could describe what she saw in more detail.

Sarah was quiet before she finally got up the courage to say anything. She told me the monster had a dark gray face, horns, animal feet, a long tail and was in all black with a pole in his hand.

She was describing him precisely as I had seen him. I didn’t know what to tell her at that point because I was scared. I knew that by telling her it wasn’t there, that I would be lying.

“Isn’t she precious, Dee?” said the entity with a cackle.

“Sarah, I want you to go in and watch TV. I will handle the situation and ask God to tell it to leave.”

“Heh! Sure, bring in God again! While you’re at it, tell that little bitch of yours whatever you want. Just know that I am in charge here,” said the demon with scorn.

Turning around to stand my ground, I looked the entity in the eye. “What is your name?”

“Bitch, please! I don’t need to share my name! You know who I am! Get the fuck out of my face before I devour your soul!” Stepping forward, he hissed to show his power.

Looking over at Sarah, she was sitting on the couch, watching television with Jack. I could tell she still looked scared. My body got tense, and I felt sick to my stomach. Fear was spreading throughout me. Remembering my faith, I began

to pray. I didn't get out a complete sentence before I heard the entity start to mock me. He continued, while I prayed for almost a minute. Then suddenly, his face changed, and he abruptly shouted to something behind me.

“Fine, take her, but know that this is my land the bitch is on!”

Spinning around fast, I didn't see anyone or anything. I noticed that the entity took off again. Continuing to judder with fear, I made my way to Josh's room.

“Josh, I'm sorry, what do you need dear?” I asked, trying to forget what just happened.

“Mom, I don't know how to say this, but there is something weird happening in my room. Last night it kept me awake. I heard sounds coming from under my bed all night. It was a scratching sound. I thought it was Benny, but then I saw he was asleep on the lower half of my bed. I didn't want to look down there,” Josh explained. He went on to describe how his closets were continually opening, and he could hear knocking.

“I know you probably don't believe me, Mom, but I know you are seeing stuff now. I hoped by telling you that maybe you would understand.”

“I don't know what to say, Josh. There are things here that I don't understand at all. My boss said that he might be able to help clear the house. For now, all we can do is pray. I think this Sunday; we will start going back to church.”

Handing Josh a cross necklace to wear, I told him that it might help. I also placed one each on the other kids.

What had started to occur in our home was frightening, but it was only the beginning. None of us had any clue what was coming. That entire week, we had sleepless nights, while entities walked the halls. There were horrid smells, sounds, and chills. The kids were having nightmares.

We were starting to look sickly, so I tried blessing the house with sage, cedar, and sweetgrass. It was a blend that David in Cassadaga had recommended. I used crystals, feathers, you name it, and nothing seemed to be working. If anything, it made it worse.

Tom called me on Thursday and told me that he and his friend Bryce would be over on Sunday. They hoped it would bring us some relief. I prayed that whatever Tom was going to do, it would be successful. It was scary times for sure. It didn't help that Josh and I were continuing to see the same spirits. We had undeniable matching descriptions of them.

I knew my oldest son was a strong psychic medium and an old soul. Now that I was accepting of the spirit world, I was no longer denying what he was receiving. This allowed his abilities to open further.

By Saturday night, the house's energy was out of hand, and we were exhausted. When Tom showed up on Sunday morning with Bryce, he explained to us the process. He said that his dad told him that we would need to write down on paper, all the negative things we wanted to stop. He said to focus on the positive. We were setting our intentions that way. He wanted us to crumble it up lightly and light it on fire with a prayer of purpose.

Tom had brought with him a pair of white candles and a blend of sage. I grabbed my large white ceramic bowl to burn the paper inside.

"While it burns, concentrate on peace and serenity," Tom explained. He then proceeded to light the smudge sticks to go around the house.

"Work from front to back," Tom told Bryce. "I will meet you back here at the front door, and we will do the attic and garage together."

While Josh and I continued to pray over the burning paper, the men moved around the house. Standing over the bowl with the paper burning, we lost count of how many times we had to relight it. The paper continued to go out. Never in my life had I ever witnessed a piece of paper that refused to burn. It was frightening to the point that even Sean deemed it wild and bizarre.

The home was thick, dense, and dark. It took over 45 minutes for the paper to burn away completely. As it finished off, it began popping loudly until it finally caused a small explosion. The thick ceramic bowl broke straight in half. Standing in awe, we looked at each other and then at the broken pieces.

The house had gotten covered in heavy smoke from the sage. When we were through, however, we had high hopes that we had gotten it all out. Sean and I thanked the men for their time and assistance and sent them on their way. No sooner had the guys left when Josh told me that the demon was hiding in the corner rafters of the attic. He said that he could see him there in his mind's eye. Hearing Josh made me uneasy, but I told him to stay positive to allow the house the opportunity to heal.

Later that night, Jack and Sarah returned to their room. Sometime in the early morning hours, Sarah came in and said she was frightened. Jack, she told me, was still in bed sleeping. Not thinking much of it, I let her sleep in the bed between Sean and me.

Chapter Twenty-Five

 The next morning, the alarm went off, and I went to wake Jack. He was incredibly irritable and almost downright nasty. It was unlike my sweet, shy, and gentle boy who smiled all the time. I couldn't get him to do anything without a fight that morning. He even admitted to me that he was tired. His light brown eyes appeared black and had circles from lack of sleep, and his skin was cold to the touch. I noticed his face was white and ghost-like. I was worried that he was coming down with something, so I decided to keep him home from school.

The whole day, he acted very weird and wasn't himself. He played a little on the floor, but he refused to eat breakfast or lunch. Around midday, he came into my room, and he stood at the door. He stared at me with a blank look. I asked him to come in, but he continued to stand in the door frame. "What's wrong with you, Jack," I asked.

Slowly, he crept up to me and looked at my cross. He went to grab at it, but then he smirked and spit at me before running away.

"Jack, what is wrong with you!" I yelled. Running after him to his bedroom, I saw that he was hiding in the back corner. He jumped up and came at me with full speed.

Catching him in my arms at the door, I noticed he wasn't wearing his cross.

I was worried since I knew he had slept in the bedroom. As much as I wanted the house to feel different and bright, it didn't. In fact, it felt worse. Standing in Jack's room trying to hold him down, he was hissing and spitting. "Where's your cross I gave you?" Suddenly, Jack lunged at me and grabbed mine, ripping it from my neck. He began laughing hysterically. Scared, I let him go. His strength, I couldn't help but notice, had magnified. That was not my son, and that frightened me! Jack had made a full night and day change.

I ran to my bedroom, fearful. I was worried that Jack was suffering from possession like I had heard of with the Catholic Church. At the time, I had no idea if possession truly existed. I was reading and hoping for anything that would help me find answers to bring peace.

In my room, I called Sean and told him what was happening. I said that I wanted to move out immediately and have Sharon put the house up for sale. Naturally, he thought I was insane and didn't want to go along. However, Sean knew that I was serious. The idea that Jack was acting out worried him, especially after what he had witnessed the day before.

I didn't care if the furniture stayed or not because I wanted out of the house that night. We could stay with my mom or stay in an Airbnb. Sean said he preferred keeping the family together and staying at a short-term rental. I knew that I was packing our clothes and not looking back.

I peeked in carefully on Jack while he laid on the couch watching television. I called out, "Are you doing better?" He looked at me and then looked back to the TV. I walked in and sat down and started reciting the 23rd Psalm because I wanted to see what he would do.

“The Lord is my...” Immediately, Jack placed his hands over his ears and started flipping out on the couch. He was kicking, spitting, and screaming.

“Stop it! Stop it!” he screamed, running out of the room.

At that point, I was sure that was not Jack. I searched for the number to call Rita, and I was fortunate, she answered. I told her what was happening. Rita said that it wasn’t something she could help with since it wasn’t an area she understood or wanted to mess with. She didn’t want to make things worse.

She did comprehend my concern for Jack and thought it best to call a pastor or priest, which we did without success. My pastor didn’t have answers, nor did he know how to handle the situation. He said to pray. The Catholic Church told us that since we were not Catholic, they couldn’t help us, which I understood. Hanging up the phone, I cried. I wondered what I was missing through all of this. I prayed to God for help for my little boy. “Please, God, help me send away whatever is trying to harm my child.”

While I waited for Sean to get off early with Sarah, I looked online for last-minute homes for rent. I found a small house, decently priced, close to town. I reserved it quickly by telling the owner that I had family coming in for an emergency. I didn’t want to tell the truth, of course. Children getting possessed by demons wasn’t exactly a common reason to vacation.

Once home, Sean asked me what we were going to do long term. He was extremely upset and said that we couldn’t live in a high-priced Airbnb forever. He knew it would take a while for our home to sell. I had to admit that I didn’t think that far ahead, but I knew we had some savings to use. Sean wasn’t thrilled with that idea at all and made sure I understood.

Packing our clothes, I heard Sarah shriek for help. Sean and I ran towards the screams, and Josh came out of his room to witness Jack punching and kicking Sarah. Sean yelled, and Jack laughed as I came up from behind to grab him.

“Jack, stop and calm down, now!” I shrieked. Flipping him over to hold him tightly in my arms down on the floor, he began flailing, screaming, and spitting. I didn’t know what to do since no one would help us, and I was scared. I knew that something needed to happen. I shouted for whatever it was to leave, and then I began reciting the Lord’s Prayer over and over. As Jack tried to escape, I held tight. Sean bent down to try to help grab his legs to stop them from kicking wildly. I kept praying for God to come and help us. Everything happened so quickly when Josh and Sarah cried out, “Oh my God! His eyes turned yellow and black!” They looked exactly like the demon’s eyes that had been in the house.

It was a moment of transformation that I will never forget. I can remember feeling a massive release, right before Jack’s body went limp. He then returned to his usual smiling self.

Right after it ended, Sean looked at me and said, “Alright, let’s go. I agree.” Later that night, we left. We only came back for necessary items until we finally sold the house. We did take a loss, but we found it better than losing our sanity inside the home.

Chapter Twenty-Six

 Oh shit! Here we go again. Another crazy fucking dream inside some faraway castle,” I complained. I thought I was getting a break from these weird dreams.

“Where the hell am I?” I was standing in a long corridor. I could hear music faintly playing in the background. Following the sound, it got louder as I neared the same double staircase I had seen before in another dream. “I need to stop reading Sarah's books before bed. That way, they're not on my mind,” I muttered.

While I pondered why I was having the dream again, I noticed the same two beautiful girls from the last time. They were strolling toward me at the staircase. It was like *déjà vu*.

“Sister, come on! Let's go down and join the party. I want you to go have some fun and meet some young men,” Athena said excitedly.

“I'm coming! I'm not used to wearing this type of slipper. You told me to wear it, and I'm afraid that I will fall,” Kore said.

“Well, make sure you fall in the arms of a handsome prince, my sweet sister.”

Kore and Athena giggled with glee as they got to the staircase. I watched as they did their same attention-seeking stroll down the stairs.

I wondered if I dare follow them this time. At least if I do, I know the dream will be over. Then I would be free of this goddamn fairytale.

The girls got to the last step and began to disappear from my view. They blended into the crowd of people gathered for the celebration. Going over to the top of the landing, I looked down. Suddenly, I spotted the sisters. They were mingling and making their way through a small huddle of young men. I could see Athena was the flirtatious one. Kore, however, appeared more shy and innocent. Clearly, the two girls were close, and Kore looked up to Athena. As the young men were bowing and kissing their dainty hands, the girls were blushing with delight.

As I was watching them, I suddenly realized that Kore's attention got pulled toward me. Asking myself, I said, "Wait! Is Kore looking up at me right now?" I could see that she was standing amongst the crowd, but she appeared to be staring at me. "Okay, that's bizarre. Wait a minute. Can she see me?" I turned to look around me to see if she was staring up at someone else. Not seeing anyone, I spun back around, but she was gone.

"Well, here goes nothing," I whispered as I took the first step down the stairs. Steadying myself, I took the next step and then the next one. Pretty soon, I was near the bottom. It was crazy, but I had made it this time. I noticed the party was loud with chatter and laughter. Looking at the gathering of people, I stood for a moment to take it all in. I wondered which way the girls went, and if I should go and explore. It didn't seem to me that I was visible to any of them, so I didn't know what to make of Kore looking at me. Maybe she wasn't, and I only thought she was.

I decided to go toward the sound of the music, in search of the main ballroom. Perhaps the girls were there. Walking amongst the people proved to be a bit hard. I wasn't sure if I could walk through them. Since they couldn't see me, I had to maneuver my way around carefully.

Getting to the grand ballroom, I was in complete awe. It was magnificent and looked like I had always imagined it when I read to Sarah. Stepping in, I felt such intense and vibrant energy. I could see the excitement from the families and citizens that gathered. They showed deep, intimate bonding. For a moment, I didn't mind being there. I was intrigued and entertained.

Looking up at the cathedral ceiling of the grand ballroom, it was massive and appeared made of solid gold or bronze. The walls were heavily constructed and had superb designs. Glancing down at the golden floor, it was most extraordinary. The entire room was breathtaking. For a dream, this wasn't half bad. Still, I questioned what I was supposed to do with myself and when it would end.

Walking up to the girls, I could see that they were around a group of other young women. They appeared to all be goddesses and perhaps sisters even. Athena was standing in the center of the circle, speaking to a man of grand stature and poise. I noticed she slightly curtsied. Kore looked to be beside her and only slightly behind from where I was standing.

“Father! I've brought Kore down with me. I want to make sure she gets introduced to King Neleus's sons. You did say they were coming tonight, correct?” Athena asked.

Knowing some stories, I could only assume that it was Zeus, the King of the Gods. “Whoa! Would Sarah be jealous right now.” I chuckled.

“Well, well, I'm proud to have you join us tonight. I think you will enjoy yourself. Your mother wants to keep you

locked away all the time. I do not agree as you are seventeen. It has reached the proper time for sure. You should be coming out,” said Zeus in a commanding voice.

“Yes, Father. I understand,” said Kore. I could now see that she had stepped up and lightly curtsied next to Athena.

“Athena, yes, I have invited King Neleus and his sons. It’s in all your best interest to find and marry a nobleman. I do not want you running off with mortal men. I will arrange your marriages first before that will be allowed in my kingdom. I hope I have made myself clear,” commanded Zeus.

“Yes, Father,” said Athena and Kore.

Geez, Louise, that was a little over the top, I thought. Standing there, I could see everyone seemed to be going about their affairs with one another. It was quieter as the orchestra had taken a break. Feeling bored, I wandered over to a large ornamental fountain. I noticed it was a sculpted statue of what appeared to be Zeus, naked. “Oh, boy! This guy is not only inflated and chauvinistic but also full of himself,” I noted.

Staring at the statue, I wondered if he was really that well-endowed? Turning my head to look at him in the crowd, I nodded in agreement. “So that’s why nobody wants to leave home,” I said with a laugh. It was dark humor, and I knew it. But, hell, I read the stories. I knew sisters were also aunts to each other. They were either seriously twisted or total bullshit.

I can remember reading that Athena was born full-grown out of Zeus’ cracked skull. From where I was standing, his skull looked perfectly fine to me.

Glancing around the room again, I wanted to wake up. Looking back at the fountain, I contemplated if I could drown myself right out of my dream. Leaning down, I closed my eyes and put my head in the water.

Abruptly, I found myself at the front entrance of the castle doors leading into the party. “Wait a minute; I’m still here?” It looks like I have moved outside onto the front steps. Standing at the door, I was next to two of the ugliest doormen I have ever seen. “This makes no sense,” I said.

“Sister come outside with me. I heard they arrived at the gate. They should be pulling up momentarily,” Athena stated. Kore walked out behind her sister. They were both standing to the far right of me, down a few steps.

“Where are they? I don’t see them,” Kore informed her sister.

“Give them a second to get up the hill.”

Moments later, seven elaborate stagecoaches pulled up. The first was carrying the king and queen, while the others looked to be bringing his sons. Ladies appeared to be accompanying a few of them. I watched as they got out to come inside. Unexpectedly, I was startled by the loud voice of Zeus. “Welcome, my good friends. Please come in. We are so delighted to have you join us.”

The first to walk up and go inside appeared to be King Neleus and his wife. As the coaches unloaded, three of the king’s younger and single sons got out. They took notice of Athena and Kore right away and introduced themselves. Joyfully, the girls went inside with them, leaving me standing there.

Right when I was thinking of going back into the party, I saw a carriage was pulling up. It looked to have two younger men inside. As the door to the stagecoach opened, I saw the first man get out. He quickly ran up the stairs and went inside.

The second man, I could see as he was coming out, was looking up at me with a smile.

“No, not this shit again,” I murmured, checking to see if someone was around me. Not seeing anyone, I turned back around to see him standing in front of me.

“Oh, my fucking God!! Derek!!! Is that you? There’s no way!” I exclaimed.

“Actually, yes, because you are dreaming. You wanted me here. So here I am,” he spoke with his usual charming smile.

“But, you died, Derek?”

“Not really, Dee. You see, nobody ever really dies. Only our body does,” he declared, stepping up to the stair in front of me.

“I’m afraid this is too crazy.”

“Listen, Dee; there is something I have to tell you.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“Wait a minute, Dee. Why do you look so wet?”

“It’s because I tried to drown myself in the fountain inside, to wake up.”

Grinning, Derek said, “Looks like it didn’t work for you.”

“No, it didn’t,” I said, chuckling.

“I’ve missed you, Dee. I’ve missed you a lot.”

“Really, Derek? I have missed you too. I was so upset when I heard about your accident.”

“I’m okay. I’m glad to have gotten this opportunity to see you.”

Gazing at each other, I could feel the intensity of the connection between us. It seemed stronger than when he was

alive. I noticed his eyes were so compelling as he came in close to kiss me. No sooner had our lips touched when a loud male voice shouted from the door.

“Alastor! Son! Come inside. I want you to meet someone.”

Startling me, I spun around to see who it was. It was King Neleus.

“I must go, Dee, but I’m glad that I got to see you again. Thanks for putting me in your dream.”

“Sure, Derek. Same here,” I replied with a huge smile.

“There it is again. It’s that same timeless look and the smile that you give me so freely. You have no idea how much I wish to bottle it up. Farewell, Ellen.”

Watching Derek walk away, I wanted to follow him in. “Wait up! I’m stuck in this dream!” I shouted. Turning to rush inside, I slipped and lost my balance. I went tumbling down headfirst.

Falling off the side of the bed, I hit my knees so hard when I landed, that I let out a tiny scream. “Shit!” Getting up, I could see Sean in bed, looking at me funny.

“Are you okay, Dee?”

“Yes, Sean, but I’m thinking of putting down gym mats on my side of the bed.”

“Another one of your kooky dreams?” Sean asked, sitting up.

“Yep, you know it. I was in a land far, far away. Only I didn’t see Shrek.”

“No, but Derek was there. Am I right?” he asked.

“Umm, yes, actually why?”

“Because you were calling out his name in your sleep,” he replied, looking irritated.

“I don’t know what to say, Sean.”

“Well, I think I get it. Derek dies, and you are a medium. Now, he visits you in your dreams.”

“Okay, what is your point?” I questioned.

“Should I be worried, Dee?”

“What? No, of course not Sean!”

“Okay, I’m only checking because it’s not the first time you have said his name in your sleep.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, for a guy that you didn’t know, he must have made an impression on you. I’ve lost count of how many times his name comes out of your mouth in your sleep.”

I didn’t know what to say to Sean at that moment. I was shocked, and I felt terrible.

“Dee, you also call out other men’s names.”

“I do? Like who?”

“Let me see; I have heard, Tom, Aleric, and Alastor. And I think you said Sharon too.”

“Well, Sean, obviously, I was dreaming. I’m not having an affair with Sharon.”

“And Tom? What about him? And then who are the others?”

I could tell that Sean was serious and upset with me for something that I felt I had no control over. It was all shocking news to me.

“Are we fighting about this too, Sean? Because I don’t want to fight with you. Lately, that is all you want to do. I’m tired of it as it saddens me. I feel like you are looking for things sometimes. Granted, I get that you are upset and concerned over this.”

“Whatever Dee, I just wanted an answer as to what’s going on.”

“I’m honest. Nothing is going on. I just have these crazy dreams. I don’t quite understand them.”

“Okay, fine. I’m sorry, I got a little jealous for a second.”

“It’s okay. I completely understand why.”

“I better get up now, the alarm is gonna go off any second. I have to get to work.”

No sooner had Sean got up when his alarm radio went off in the middle of Jim Croce’s, *Time in a Bottle*. I stood there a moment, thinking about my odd dream with Derek as I listened to the lyrics play. I felt the music was haunting with the song’s word choice sounding similar to what Derek had expressed.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

It had been nearly six months since we left our home. We were living in an apartment in St. Martin near my office. I was working part-time, answering phones, and handling paperwork. I wasn't ready to do showings. During that time, I grew closer to Tom and Sharon because they were both such lovely supportive people. I did keep my real estate license current, although I wasn't sure if I would ever use it again.

Having the extra paycheck was allowing us to recoup some financial loss. Plus, it helped to pay for the metaphysical and spiritual classes I enrolled in. Most of them were online, which was helpful. I focused on a variety of subjects, especially religion. Sean wanted me to concentrate on learning to use my abilities to understand my mediumship. He thought I needed to stop running from my fears. Because of his push, I did join some circles and started psychic and mediumship development classes.

My biggest struggle was finding my faith. I felt confused and didn't quite know where I belonged, since different religions, held different beliefs. I felt shameful and guilty for not fitting into any mold. It created fear and seemed to be holding me back. I quickly discovered that I didn't need to

define or limit myself to just one belief system that society had created. I realized if I couldn't accept myself, then I wasn't leaving room for God or any higher divine power. Plus, I started to see that I had been closing myself off and had little trust. It was a tough road to navigate down, but I slowly started to transform and grow in faith.

Going forward, I knew that I had many fears to overcome still. It was a necessary part of my journey that I would have to face. Everything was unfolding in the way it needed to, and it was happening quickly. I felt good about that.

The school I attended firmly believed in mind, body, and soul wellness. Quite a few of the courses I was taking were more challenging than I would have thought. I had to do inner healing from my childhood and early adult life. The focus was to release and forgive myself and others.

I realized by going through the spiritual healing process that there is a real dedicated effort that goes into working on oneself on different levels. There would be times I thought I was making progress, but then I would move backward. Sometimes too, I felt my pace was being halted and blocked. What I learned, however, was my subconscious was usually interfering. I would forget to surrender to the process. When the soul is ready to move forward, it will, I learned.

I was getting constant signs and synchronicities, giving me the knowledge that I was on the right path. This grew my faith more.

Moving from the apartment, we found a small house to rent right outside St. Martin. It worked out better for Sean as it was closer to his work. He seemed a little better, although I could tell that our move and my transformation was hard on him. Our relationship issues were building. I couldn't help but feel guilty and responsible at times.

The house was nice, but I wouldn't necessarily say it was always quiet. There were times we still heard strange noises. But, of course, some spirits would pop in. Occasionally, I interacted with them. It was becoming a part of life, although I still wasn't comfortable.

Josh was improving overall. There were times, however, that he would tell me to sage the house because the energy seemed thick to him. There were moments I felt watched, but for the most part, I tried to avoid thinking about it. Jack and Sarah were in their new bedroom, and they didn't seem to be as scared. Life was quieting down in that sense, which was a blessing.

I gave Sarah some angel statues and made her a room spray that I called "Angel Spray." It was made of essential oils like Cedar, Sage, Frankincense, and Myrrh. I taught her a small prayer and how to ask God and her angels to watch over her. I used it in my room and throughout the house from time to time. I felt it provided an extra layer of protection, but I think it was more of a ritual of intention than anything.

Eventually, I began to see that when it comes to fear, the mind can get consumed. When we focus on what we don't want, we bring more of the same to us. This reasoning is why it's essential to focus on what we do want. Our minds are immensely powerful. Therefore, when we tell ourselves something, we will start to believe it and become it. Whatever we learn to do or perform to help us, is more for purpose and intention. We are setting ourselves up for what we desire and letting God, and the Universe know how to help.

While I understood all of that, my subconscious felt different. My past was still influencing me, and I had a lack of complete faith and trust. I prayed for the day that I would no longer have the struggles with fear. The day, when I would finally accept that wholeheartedly. I know it is a part of life

because we are human. We have to face fears and not let them control us.

Everything seemed to be going well, until one day when I was doing the laundry. From somewhere behind me, came a dark, creepy voice. I got scared immediately and told the entity to leave. Slowly, I turned around and saw it was the demon from our St. Martin house.

“You thought you were rid of me. You thought by moving that I couldn’t go with you. Wrong!”

Scared, I yelled, “You need to go now! We are not doing this again!”

“Oh, I wasn’t planning on it. I wanted to fuck with you. It’s fun, and you deserve it.” The entity stepped closer and stuck his disgusting tongue out. Hissing, he said, “I want to devour you. What do you think?”

Before I had a chance to respond, once again, something rose from behind me. It scared the demon as it had in the past.

“Fine, I’ll go. You got me! I was just having fun,” the demon sneered before disappearing.

Turning around as quickly as I could, I caught a glimpse of a very dark, demonic entity that towered above me. He was far more prominent and had spikes covering his head. He appeared to have deep red eyes, black and red skin, and a long reptile tail with claw feet.

Terrified, I tried to keep it together as I said, “You are only in my mind, and you are not real. Leave now! Go back to wherever you came from. Neither of you has any power over me.”

Trying to control the thoughts in my mind, I was determined not to go down that road again. I knew that I was

stronger and smarter. Looking around, I realized both entities were gone. I questioned why they were even coming to me in the first place.

I didn't know what was coming next, but I knew I had to confront the closet of my past that I had hidden and rooted deep in my subconscious memory. It was causing me torment.

It was time that I claimed my God-given power rather than believing that something else had control of it. I decided to make an appointment with someone that specialized in past life regressions and hypnosis. It was time to finally open and face Pandora's Box.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

I had to wait a few weeks to get in to see reputable hypnotherapist, Shyla Barone. Today was the day, though, and I was nervous and anxious. Shyla was known for her past life regressions, and I felt pulled to her for help.

Leaving work, I made my way to Shyla's office. She was an agreeable, older lady, but very straight to the point and specialized in demeanor. Immediately, she discussed her role and put me at ease as she led me through the process. I wasn't sure what would happen during hypnosis. But I found out that it wasn't what most people thought it was. I never lost consciousness, and no one controlled me. My body felt like it had separated to the point that I was able to watch myself from the sidelines. It was bizarre, and my body trembled. I could see and feel like I was reliving the memories that came forward.

Initially, she had me go through recollections of my present life as a small child. Some things came forward that I needed to address and release. She helped me to do so. As she continued the regression, I felt a loss of control over my thoughts. My body continued to vibrate while I laid on her couch, feeling like I couldn't move. I could merely talk and

answer her questions based on the visions and emotions I was receiving. She asked me questions about where I was, what I was seeing, and how I felt. She recorded our session as she jotted down details.

Beginning right away, I noticed that I was getting taken back to Salem, Massachusetts. The year, I heard it was 1680.

“Sarah, I will love you for eternity.” Crying out in the dark, cold street, I saw Aleric dying in my lap. He had gunshots in his chest, and blood was coming from his mouth. He closed his eyes, and his head went to the side as he passed.

“NOOOO!!” I wailed. Looking over at the saloon, I knew full well what Maude had done. She didn’t want me happy, and she never truly cared. She was a dreadful abusive woman who had been using me. She was no different from my father, and I hated her. I felt such pain and rage building inside of me like I wanted to kill someone.

“Dee, you are doing good. Keep going. What are you seeing? What is she feeling?” Shyla asked, interjecting.

“I don’t know. I think the time has moved on. My vision is changing to me walking inside the saloon,” I replied.

“Get in here, Sarah! Maude wants you!” I heard a male voice shout.

Walking in, I went straight to the back. There, I saw a man with blood covering his apron. When he turned to me, I realized he was the bartender I had seen in my dream earlier. He was older, bald, had glasses, and looked nervous. Maude, the madam, was standing over a young woman with long, black hair who was crying out in pain from labor. She had tears in her eyes, with both hands bound together. I watched in horror as Maude smacked her across the face. She then forced a wooden stick in her mouth.

“Shut up, you filthy, bitch! Get over here, Sarah! Hold this wench down why he gets it out,” Maude yelled.

Just as the baby was born, Maude took it and placed it inside a dirty wooden crate.

“Take it to the woods and bury it alive like the rest,” she screamed to me.

Running deep into the woods, I appeared to be headed straight to the hexagram. It was already set up and lit, waiting for the apparent sacrifice I was about to make.

“No, no!” I yelled during hypnosis.

“What is she doing, Dee? Or I should say, what did you do?” Shyla asked forcibly.

“I don’t want to say.”

“No, Dee, what happened. You need to face what you did.”

“I killed the baby. I sacrificed it,” I said sobbing. I had tears streaming down my face. I couldn’t wipe them away either because I still felt like I couldn’t move.

“It’s alright, Dee. You are doing good. Just keep going,” Shyla insisted.

“I’m somewhere else now. I’m in a dark room. I’m on a bed, and I’m naked.”

The room I noticed was the same one that Aleric and I had been in when I had my dream of him and me together. I can only surmise that it must have been my house. There were candles lit all around the room from what I could see. It was incredibly eerie looking.

“Oh, my God!” I yelled out, my body shaking in fear on the couch.

“What are you seeing, Dee? Tell me,” Shyla probed.

“It’s him.”

“Who is him, Dee?”

“It’s the demon that I had in my house. Oh, My God!!” I screamed. My body shook, and I wanted the hypnosis to end, yet the visions just kept coming.

“My love, you and I will travel through time together. We can make this work. I promise you,” said the demon. It was a terrible vision, and I could see that he was coming up on the bed. From what I was getting shown, I was engaging in a very disturbing relationship with this thing.

“Oh, I don’t want to see any more of this!” I cried out.

“It’s alright, Dee. Keep going. Why don’t you tell me how it ends. Can you see that yet?” Shyla persisted.

No sooner did Shyla finish talking when my vision changed. I saw myself in the darkness of my house, in dim candlelight. I looked and felt possessed as I walked to the door. Opening it, I saw Maude standing outside. She had two of her henchmen with her.

“What did you do with it, Sarah?” she challenged, marching inside.

Standing by the fireplace, I looked at Maude. I could feel intense anger and a burning desire to shred her into a million pieces.

“Answer me, girl!” Maude shouted.

“Why do you care? I did what you wanted,” I voiced in a sinister tone.

Noticing Maude’s two henchmen were gradually coming toward me, I put up my hand as if to stop them.

Slowly, sauntering up to Maude, I proudly said, “I suggest you get the fuck out, Maude. Otherwise, you know what I will do.”

Maude backed away. I could see the fear in the men’s faces standing behind her.

“Don’t talk to me like that girl. I raised you when you came to me. I never made you do any of that stuff. You chose to. What you are into, God couldn’t save you now!” she said.

Maude was making every effort to show her authority; but, I could smell the fear on her. I looked over to the dark demon standing in the back-corner, smiling. His red eyes glowed as I told Maude loudly, “Leave my place now, or you won’t see the light of day.”

With no feeling of remorse, I turned to the fire to gaze upon it. My eyes changed to a reddish color. Putting up my hand, I waved and then watched as the blaze grew in intensity. Turning back towards Maude, I shrieked, “Get out, Mama.” Just then, with another effortless wave of my hand, the front door blew open behind them.

Maude and her henchmen immediately started backing away to leave.

“Wait!” I yelled. “I want to say one last thing to you. Then I never want to see you again.”

As I walked toward Maude, her henchmen were backing up to the door. Waving my hand, I slammed it shut.

“What do you want, Sarah?” Maude replied, looking frightened.

“What do I want? Well, to be clear, you are the reason I am like this. You are the wicked wench that deserves to die! You made me kill my baby! You murdered my love! You

started this, you evil hag. Don't talk to me about God! Don't ever say that name," I retorted.

Stepping forward, I looked at the entity. "Now!" I ordered. Suddenly, by some supernatural force, Maude was picked up and thrown against the wall.

Getting up from the floor, Maude warned, "I saved you, Sarah, and I took you in. I protected you from him. I did you a favor. Did you think I would let you keep that spawn of hell? You are crazy! We saw the hexagram! The town knows you are a witch. You will burn!" She and her henchmen ran to the door.

I chased them out of the house and into the dark street. No sooner did I get outside when I saw about fifty townspeople holding sticks of fire. They were coming closer and beginning to encircle me. I knew they wanted to capture and burn me to death. Maude's visit was a trick. Seeing the town gather around, I got nervous. I tried to maneuver my way out, but they captured me. As I was getting carried away, I heard the entity call out, "Redemption!"

Hearing him, I couldn't believe it. I shouted, "What? Why would I do that?"

Everything seemed to be playing out fast. My visions were so vivid. Suddenly, I heard Shyla's voice. "Where are they taking you, Dee?"

"I'm tied to some long pole or tree stump with two other ladies next to me. It's dark, and townspeople are gathering to light us on fire. I'm yelling to God to please forgive me!"

"So, you are asking God for forgiveness, Dee?"

"Yes!"

"Do you think you got God's forgiveness?"

“Yes,” I told her as I started crying. I felt such remorse and sadness. I couldn’t believe what was happening.

Trying to help me release and move on, Shyla asked, “Do you think you can forgive yourself, Dee? There was a lifetime of terror and abuse that you endured. It seems it started at a young age. This was a tragic life you lived. Not always will you be the good guy in every life. You must learn to forgive yourself and know that God saved you. He felt you were worthy of that. So tell yourself to let go. Say, “I am forgiven. God forgave me. I am well, and I release this life.”

Trying to comprehend it all, I could hear Shyla. I felt the pain trying to release.

“Yes. I am forgiven. God has forgiven me. All is well, and I release this life.”

Leaving Shyla’s house, I gave her a great big hug as she handed me the notes and recording. “Thank you. I feel lighter and free. It’s such a strange feeling that I can’t put into words.”

“You have quite a story there. I wish you well,” Shyla stated as I left.

Driving home, I had more than enough to digest in the back of my mind. I was pleased, though. I had freed a part of my soul from a significant burden that I had carried for so long. I had healed my heart that held remorse and hatred for centuries. Moving forward, I was optimistic that I could now explore my spirituality in an entirely different and evolved way.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

⚡ screamed so loudly from Mount Olympus. I must have registered at least a 7.0 on the Richter Scale. “I cannot freaking believe this!” I shouted from Zeus’s grand ballroom. I was standing inside a circle of people dancing to an orchestra. “No! No! No! I don’t want to do this again! This is insane. I can’t take it anymore!”

Shrieking, I took off and rushed towards the staircase. Running up the stairs, I passed Kore and Athena doing their slut-seeking stroll. “Get out of the way, Bitches!”

Now, at the top, I looked down over the balcony stairs. It had to be at least a fifty-foot drop. Taking a deep breath, I backed up and then jumped over the balcony. I dropped quickly, only to wind up back in the middle of the ballroom.

“Shit! Shit! Shit!” I shouted, stomping my feet. It was another failed attempt to commit a dream suicide.

“Persephone! Come here, girl. King Neleus would like to formally introduce you to his son, Prince Alastor of Pylos.” Looking up, I could see Zeus’s demanding presence. He was standing next to the King.

“Hello, Father. I’m right here,” said Kore.

“Wait! That’s Persephone? That can’t be. I thought she was Kore in my other dreams. I don’t get it!” I said, confused. Then, I remembered that some Greek Gods and Goddesses had alias names.

“Wait, hold up! Is that Derek over there by the King? What the hell is he doing in my dream again?” Now I felt even more confused. I shook my head, trying to wrap my mind around what was going on.

“Prince Alastor, this is my daughter Persephone. Persephone, this is Prince Alastor of Pylos,” Zeus said.

“It’s so lovely to meet you, Persephone. I must tell you that I have never seen such beauty. You are magnificent,” said Derek, who was standing next to her. I could see that he was bowing and kissing her hand, making her blush. It was apparent that Derek was love-struck. They appeared to be flirting and touching one another from what I could see amongst the crowd. It was making me sick to watch them.

“Why am I in the middle of this goddamn ballroom anyway?” I yelled. What was the point of this dream? Was it to make me jealous? If that was the case, then it sure as hell was working!

Stuck in a circle around dancing couples, I felt nauseous and dizzy. “Why do I keep coming back here? Can anyone even hear me?” I shouted. Of course, there was no response. I was invisible again. This time not even Derek was acknowledging me.

Looking over at Derek and Persephone, I could see them leaning up against the wall. Derek looked ready to kiss her. I could tell because I knew the look. Shaking my head, I was disgusted with his behavior.

Madder than hell, I screamed, “Derek, you may not be able to hear me, but you are a first-class asshole! I better never

see you again, and that goes for my dreams. I knew that I was right about you. I should have trusted my gut from the beginning! And another thing, watching you fall in love with this mythological harlot is fucked up!”

Once again, my outburst left me unnoticed and ignored. I was shouting like I was in mute as I watched Derek pursue his new sexual conquest. Cupping my hands over my mouth, like I was at a Laker’s game, I yelled. “Get her a room! You, filthy fucking man-whore!”

Just when I thought things couldn’t get any worse, Derek led Persephone out onto the dance floor. As they took hold of each other, I noticed the passion in their eyes. Angry and bored, I went over to the long food table. I figured I might as well drown my sorrows in sweets rather than the stupid ass fountain again. Glancing over, I saw the bottles of wine were left out. Grabbing one, I started to drink fast and heavy. I watched as Derek and Persephone continued their revolting dance of seduction.

Halfway into my second bottle of wine, I was bored and drunk. I decided to jump onto the serving table to start my very own strip show party. It seemed like a good idea. I figured, what the hell, these people can’t see me anyway.

Nearly naked and drunk, I shouted out, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please!”

“It’s amateur strip night, right here at Zeus’s Palace! You are hereby invited to join in and get naked!” Using the open bottle of wine, I was chugging as a microphone; I carried on like a lunatic. Losing my balance, I fell sideways off the table. Picking myself up off the floor, I realized that I should probably slow my drinking. “Yes, thank you, everyone! I appreciate you all for coming this evening. You have been an amazing audience. If you enjoyed the show, then please leave your dollar bills over there under the roasted pig’s snout!”

“Dah dat, dah, dah, dah,” I sang as I glided my way through the crowd in only my underwear. As the night went on, the band stopped playing, and the people left. Needing air, I made my way outside. Sitting on the front steps, I looked over and saw Derek and Persephone on the castle lawn. They were engrossed with one another and appeared to be making out.

Wondering when I would wake up, I sat there alone. I was starting to feel nauseous from the wine. Pulling my hair back, I stood up and leaned over the stair rails to vomit. As I sat back down, I saw Persephone walking up and saying goodnight to Derek.

“Alastor, I have never met anyone as dashing and as chivalrous as you,” Persephone said.

“You have stolen my heart tonight, my lovely princess. I wish to come back and ask your father for your hand in marriage,” he told her.

Listening to the two of them, I got sick again, and projectile vomited on the steps.

“I want to spend eternity with you, Persephone.”

Wiping my mouth, I looked up and said, “Don’t get that excited bitch. It’s just this motherfucker’s tag line.”

As they kissed one final time on the steps in front of me, I rolled my eyes and screeched. “Ooh Derek, I think you need more tongue action next time. That wasn’t nearly enough to swallow her!”

“Goodnight, my beloved prince,” Persephone sweetly voiced. She blew him a final kiss and then went inside.

Clapping my hands, I yelled, “He shoots, he scores! And the crowd goes wild!”

“Are you through yet, Ellen?” Derek abruptly inquired, looking down at me. Startled, I turned my head to see Derek taking a seat next to me on the steps. I was still too drunk and sick to care that he could see and hear me.

“Watch where you are sitting, I puked right about there,” I told him.

“I should have told you to avoid Zeus’s wine. It can be pretty stiff.”

“No, Derek, because you would much rather watch as I marinate myself in my vomit,” I mocked.

Taking off his jacket, Derek placed it around me. “Dee, it’s cold out here. We should get you inside.”

Looking down at myself, I felt humiliated and self-conscious. “Shit, that’s right. My clothes are by the punch bowl. I can’t believe I did that tonight. Look at me, I am appalling, and I look disgusting,” I lamented in shame.

“Whatever! You look perfect. You are perfect. I’ve never met anyone like you, Ellen.”

Snapping at him, I said, “Except for her, though, of course!”

“Love, it’s not like that. You aren’t seeing this clearly. It’s a dream.” As soon as Derek said that, I wondered if it was just a mysterious fantasy that my mind had created. It wouldn’t have been the first time, and I knew that I missed Derek. Perhaps I added in another woman because deep down, I realized that Derek and I could never be together. I was married, and he had died.

“Oh, Ellen, before I forget, here’s a dollar for you. I didn’t have a chance to place it under the pig’s snout.” Looking at Derek, I noticed the huge grin on his face.

Grabbing the dollar, I sneered, “No, sure, I get it. You looked way too busy.”

Letting out a big sigh, Derek replied, “My love, try to look at this differently. We are sitting out on the front steps of your dream, next to your vomit. You are wearing what appears to be an incredibly sexy black bralette set. And if I am not mistaken, you just got done doing a peep show for all of Mount Olympus. Do you see my point yet?”

“Oh my gosh, Derek. How could I be so stupid, even in my dreams? You say I am perfect, but I am far from that.”

“Ellen, honestly, it’s okay. Everyone has their moments in life. That’s what it’s for. You are going to be fine. Let go of the part of you that thinks you are not special or perfect. Accept that you are beautiful because you are. Stop doubting yourself. I promise you that I will always be watching over you, even if we can’t be together. You don’t ever have to worry,” he stated reassuringly. Getting up, Derek placed his hand out to help me off the stairs. “Let’s go inside.”

Holding my hand, he walked me to the ballroom. Grabbing the rest of my clothes, I got dressed. I was still feeling embarrassed, but I could see the look of amusement in his baby blue eyes. Smiling, he gave me the deepest look of affection that I had ever seen. Then, he motioned for me to come closer. As I walked toward him, I felt surrounded by his love. I knew it was only a dream, yet I wanted this part of it to go on forever.

“Ellen, I don’t know how much time we have left, but I wish for it to be special. So, my darling, would you care to dance with a prince?” he asked, taking a sweet bow.

Taking his hand, I felt my whole-body quiver as we began to dance. We were alone in the massive empty ballroom, but I felt like a real fairy tale princess. Just as I thought my

dream was ending, music began playing. It was the song, *Perfect* by Ed Sheeran.

“Wow! However, did you do that? I love this song,” I told him.

Laughing, he said, “Because it’s your dream, silly.”

Laying my head upon his shoulder, I must have fallen asleep. Everything was so perfect for once.

Waking up, I looked over at the clock to see that it was after midnight. I noticed Sean was asleep with his book in his hands. Turning over, smiling, I said, “Goodnight, Derek.”

Chapter Thirty

Life was getting better day by day as I had felt that I had taken my power back. I knew that I would never again give it away, nor would I become prey to the darker side. I had a new outlook and a desire to help others overcome their fears. Not only could I stand up and help souls heal, but I could help to defend them. It was part of my mission, and I now realized that. I wouldn't be alone because I knew that God would be there every step of the way. Having this new outlook, I was able to finally further my education in areas that I had feared to explore.

As the months went by, I grew fast. I made giant leaps in my progress. My abilities were unfolding in new ways that I had not expected. The peers I had practiced with, including mentors, I was now surpassing and beginning to teach. I became busy giving readings, and I had even started a side business. The doors to the other side were opening more than ever as I was no longer afraid.

It was all so incredible. I had finally become acclimated to my new life. A life that was normal now for both my family and me. I felt peaceful, and my children could see that I had let

go of my fear. This allowed them to let go of theirs. It was a blessing, and I was ready for the next chapter.

It was a beautiful, warm, and sunny day in April, and I was on my way into the office. It was early, so I knew that I would be one of the first ones in the door. Tom had told me that he would be in the office later because he had a dental visit scheduled.

Pulling up to the plaza, I went into the office and turned on the lights. I wasn't there long before a couple of other agents walked in the door. Sharon, I knew, was supposed to be in later. She had to be in Jacksonville for an early morning closing.

I had some work I needed to do in the stock room. It required major organizing after all the agents continued to go in there. They would often grab and go and leave a mess. I went into the back and started to work when I heard the phone ring. I quickly ran up to the front to answer the phone. It was Tom, and he was calling from his car. He was letting me know that he was on his way into the office.

No sooner had I hung up when I noticed a young, short-haired brunette sitting in Tom's office waiting.

"Hello, may I help you?" I asked from the doorway. Seeing her sitting there, I wondered who she was. Had Tom forgotten an appointment?

"Why, hello, I'm Mara. I'm Tom's sister. How are you?" she asked with a warm and lovely smile. I noticed her eyes were the same as Tom's. They were vibrant blue, like the deep sea.

"Hi! I'm good. My name is Ellen, but everyone calls me Dee. It's nice meeting you, Mara. Tom didn't mention you were stopping by. Have you talked with him, or is this more of a surprise visit? He's on his way in now," I explained.

“No, I didn’t tell him. It’s our mother’s birthday tomorrow. I wanted to make sure that he knew that she has been thinking of him a lot lately. I hoped that he wouldn’t forget the daisies this year, either. They mean so much to her. I don’t even think he has any clue. Trust me. I know my brother well,” she stated with a smile.

Feeling her warm and bubbly personality, I could tell that she was a devoted sister to Tom. “Can I get you some coffee or anything, Mara? I know Tom will be in any second. I’m sure that he will be thrilled to see you. It’s so nice that you are dropping by like this,” I said.

“Where are you from, by the way, Mara? I didn’t know you were close by?” I asked.

“Oh, well, I’ve been around. I lived in the Midwest for a while before coming down here to be closer to Tom.”

“Seriously, Mara? I’m from the Midwest. I’m from Ohio. I moved down here to go to college and then met my husband. After that, well, here I am.”

“That’s so nice, Dee. I was in Indiana with my partner, Olivia, for about five years. She and I had a great relationship. I would have loved to have spent the rest of my life with her, but unfortunately, it didn’t work out. Sometimes fate has different ideas,” she voiced sadly.

“I’m sorry. It’s great that you have your brother. He’s such a wonderful man. I love working for him. He’s been a fantastic support for my family and me,” I told her.

“Yes, Tom is that for sure. I always thought of him as the one that would settle down and have a ton of kids. But again, fate, you know? Somehow, God always has a plan. We might not always like it. I don’t know if he told you about his ex-wife, Tiffany. She did a number on him when she took off with his best friend. They were all really good friends, ya know.

My brother and Tiffany dated all through high school. They were the prom king and queen if you know what I am saying. My brother was an amazing football star. He could have gone so far, but he got into a bad car accident, right after he got scouted to play for Notre Dame. He was lucky to live, honestly,” Mara explained.

“Wow! Can I say that I am speechless? I had no idea, Mara. It sounds like Tom has been through a lot.”

“That he has, but somehow he always manages to come out on top. I’m pretty proud of him for that,” she replied as my cell phone rang.

“Excuse me, Mara. I will be right back.”

Grabbing the phone at my desk, I noticed that Mara was at the door about to leave.

“You know, Dee, I have to run out now. But it was good chatting with you. Please tell my brother that I will be back in to check on him soon. I have to head back to Pensacola now. Tell him I love him and remind him about those daisies. Thank you, Dee,” Mara told me as she was leaving.

Answering the phone, I noticed it was Tom’s number on the caller ID. Running out the door with my phone in hand, I yelled, “Hey, wait, Mara!” Getting outside, however, she was nowhere to be found.

“Dee? Who are you talking to?” Tom asked over the phone.

“Your sister, Mara. She stopped in, but she insisted she had to leave to go back to Pensacola for something.”

Tom was quiet, and then he cleared his throat. “Dee, my sister, Mara, died when she was twenty-eight in a car accident. We buried her up near Pensacola.”

“Tom, what?” I questioned in complete and utter shock.

“Yes, it’s been almost 25 years. She came in to visit me from Indiana. We were out celebrating the fact I was going to play football for Notre Dame. It was late, and my buddy, Randy was driving, when a drunk driver crossed the line and hit our car. My sister was sitting in the front passenger seat and died before the paramedics could even arrive. I was unconscious in the backseat and had suffered numerous injuries, but I was lucky, I guess. At least that’s what they tell me,” he explained, getting choked up.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Tom. I had no idea. I feel terrible like I should have known.”

“Dee, I will be in the office in a moment. I need to let you go right now,” he said, hanging up.

Once off the phone, I felt sick to my stomach. I wondered how I didn’t realize that Mara was a spirit. I knew that they didn’t look real to me because they always had a more holographic appearance. Mara was different. She seemed to me, like any other person. I wondered if this was something new developing. Will I no longer be able to separate the living from the deceased from now on?

When Tom got in, he wanted me to sit with him in his office to discuss Mara. He wanted to know everything that she told me. I could tell by the way he was acting that they were extremely close to each other. A few times, I saw Tom’s eyes water up. It was apparent to me at that moment, how much emotion that Tom suppresses. I questioned if he had been raised under the false belief that real men didn’t cry when he was growing up. I felt for him and wanted nothing more than to help in any way that I could.

“Dee, didn’t you mention something about getting daisies for my mom?” he inquired, sniffing.

“Yes, that is what she brought to my attention, Tom.”

“You see, Dee. I have my mom’s ashes. They are on my fireplace mantle. Every year, I purchase daisies and set them next to her. They were her favorite. It’s my way of celebrating. It will be nine years this June since I lost her. She meant a lot,” he explained, trying to hold himself back from crying in front of me.

“I want to tell you Mara mentioned that she would be checking in on you from time to time. She loves you, and she is incredibly proud of you. I think this is important, Tom. I can sense that you feel the loss of a lot of things in your life. A part of you seems to tell yourself that you are a failure. Let me say you are none of those things.”

Getting up from the chair in his office, I walked over to hug him. I thought he looked like he could use it. I knew what grief felt like. Extending my arms, he got up from his chair and hugged me back. Pulling away, I noticed that he wouldn’t let go. He just looked at me. I knew what it meant. I had seen a similar look in Derek’s eyes.

“Tom, don’t do this. It’s your emotions right now. They need to heal. You are swept up in them and feeling extra sensitive and vulnerable. I understand this better than you know. I think it best if you can take the rest of the day off,” I told him.

Letting go of me, he replied, “I’m so sorry. You are absolutely right. I probably do need to take some time right now. I didn’t realize how much I was keeping locked inside. Between you and me only, I stopped going to my therapist a long time ago. Maybe it’s time I start thinking about going back.”

“I understand, and that’s no problem. It might be a good idea for you. Anyway, Tom, it’s time for me to get going. I have some stuff I need to attend to this afternoon. I will see you in a couple of days,” I told him, walking to the door.

“Wait! Dee, are you busy tomorrow during the day?”

“I have something in the morning around nine, but I should be free after one. Why?”

“I’ve got a listing that I could use some of your psychic help on. Of course, only if you are up to doing that? I know you have been through a lot. But it seems like you have come a long way, Dee.”

“Maybe, I guess it depends on what you need, Tom.”

“Great. I appreciate it, Dee. How about if we meet here around 2 p.m. tomorrow and head over to the house? It’s vacant, and I’ve had nothing but trouble selling it. The homeowner went back to New Hampshire to stay with her kids after her husband died. She is in a senior living home, and her kids want the house sold as soon as possible.”

“I see. It’s been on the market for about fourteen months now, correct?” I asked.

“Yes, Dee. That’s about right for the time. Have I talked about it before? I probably have, and I just don’t remember.”

“No, I heard it in my head, but go on, Tom.”

“So, the problem I am getting faced with is that people don’t seem to want to spend more than five minutes inside. I can tell you that I have gotten strange vibes sometimes. I took my meter a little while back and picked up some strong EMF readings.”

As Tom finished explaining to me the situation, I realized that I could already see the house vividly in my mind’s eye.

“Tom, I will go tomorrow. However, just so that you know, the house is fine. It’s the property it sits on. However, to be certain that I see this house correctly, let me tell you what I am receiving. It appears to be an older white ranch with black

shudders that need repainting. The aluminum siding on the house also could use a good power wash. It appears rust-stained on the side that faces west. The storm door looks cracked near the upper right corner where their grandson threw a baseball. The inside of the home needs updating. The last time I checked, “Saturday Night Fever” was still big at the box office when avocado green appliances were the thing. And are those genuine parquet floors I see? I have to say the carpet in the main room looks better with the low pile tan than the burnt orange shag they had in there. So, assuming I am seeing this house correctly, I think I might know the solution,” I offered.

Tom was now staring at me with his jaw dropped. His eyes, nearly popping out of his head.

“How in the hell did you just do that, Dee? You have never been there, have you? I haven’t shown you the pictures, right?”

I explained to Tom that my visions were developing at a faster rate than I had anticipated. I could sometimes see things relating to the past and present remotely.

“Dee, you say it’s the property and not the house? Is there dark stuff or spirits on the land? Obviously, I’m aware that they need to do updates inside and out. I will discuss that with them.”

“Not exactly, Tom. The property has ley lines, which some people can feel. We have a lot more sensitive and empathic people walking around now. There have been a lot of awakenings. It’s hard to say, but ley lines are considered by some to be supernatural energy. Grab some dowsing rods and go over there, and you will see what I mean. I will help you cleanse out the old energy that I see inside tomorrow. That can get done remotely as well. It’s sort of a bizarre astral travel kind of thing. It works, just don’t ask me to explain.”

“Sure, yeah. Whatever you say. About the ley lines, I don’t think I’m real familiar with them. I will try to look them up,” Tom replied.

“Okay, sounds good.”

“No, wait a minute. I think I know what the lines are. They are the grid of earth energies that connect ancient landmarks across the globe. They are latitude and longitude lines, right?” Tom inquired.

“That’s them,” I responded, walking out the door. “I will set an intention, say a cleansing prayer, and you should be good to go. Take care, Tom, and don’t forget to take some time for you.”

Chapter Thirty-One

The next morning, I cleared the house for Tom by setting the intention of what I wanted to release in terms of energy. I said a prayer, and within my mind, I took myself to the property. Visually, I walked through it and cleansed using the white light of the Creator. I called upon loving angels to surround and bless the house.

It wasn't even two weeks later when Tom got notified that an agent was submitting to him an offer. It was lower than the family wanted. However, Tom discussed the improvements that were needed with them, and they agreed to the sale.

"I don't know how you did it, Dee, but thank you," Tom said over lunch. It was about a week after the offer got accepted that Tom took Sharon and me to the café.

"It's pretty wild if you ask me," Sharon voiced, taking a sip of her iced tea.

"Well, I can be candid with you both. When I set an intention now, I don't question whether something will work or not. I maintain my faith and trust that God will always ensure the best outcome." I explained.

“I see. Well. That’s pretty neat. Can you see futures too?” Sharon asked.

“I’m not working with my abilities in that manner, but I have had premonitions. For me, the truth lies in free will. Every little choice or thought can impact you. The outcome may take shape in many ways, like traveling down the street. One fork in the road can change the entire path. Of course, different outcomes may exist in other realities throughout the universe and in different times. Plus, time is non-linear, so there is no time.”

Looking at Sharon’s eyes after my little spiel, I could see they were glazed over.

“Ah, huh. Sure, Dee,” said Sharon taking a bite of her sandwich.

Laughing, I replied, “Sorry, I’ve done so much research and learning that I get a little excited and weird. There is so much out there that I have explored, and so much I hope to explore. I don’t have all the answers. If you were to go out looking for your truths, you might see it differently. There doesn’t seem to be an exact science, so it’s open to interpretation. That’s only my belief that I shared with you.”

“Ah, huh. Sure, Dee,” Sharon responded, giving me another strange look.

Returning to my lunch, I realized that I should probably stop talking. I didn’t feel like seeing Sharon’s head spin around and pop off. I knew that with all my newfound knowledge, that I could get pretty woo, woo in my conversations.

Grinning, Tom interjected, “Well, Dee, you know that I find it fascinating. I love hearing the stories. I wish you would come along on one of our ghost hunting expeditions. I know you say that you can see it from home, but I would love for you to go. Sometimes I swear that I can see something in my

mind. Then, other times, I swear that I can hear things. It's all usually happening right before my equipment goes off. It's odd," Tom explained.

"I'll think about it, Tom, and let you know. You know how Sean can get," I told him, getting my wallet out to pay.

"No, I understand, Dee."

"Are things going better for you too?" Sharon asked.

"I guess. Sean is who he always has been. He goes through moods, and we have been married a while. I'm used to his highs and lows. Besides, he works late all the time now. Most nights, he doesn't get home until dark. He works more weekends now, too," I told her.

I could see the look in Sharon's eyes, but I didn't want to talk more about it. I knew what she was thinking. I could see it written all over Tom's face too. I was starting to question his late nights myself. I figured since we were not fighting, it was better between us.

Getting up to leave, I gave them a hug good-bye. Walking to my car, Tom followed me. "Honestly, Dee, please think about what I said. It would be fun to take you with me."

"Tom, start to trust in what you are picking up. You don't need me. I know you question yourself but stop doing that."

Tom shrugged and shook his head and then smiled.

"Alright, Dee. Have a good night. I'll talk to you soon."

Getting in my car, I was waiting to back out just as my cell phone brought in a social media text message. I quickly glanced to see the name Joan that I recognized as an old college acquaintance. We had lost touch over the years. I had a feeling I knew what she wanted, but I didn't want to answer

right away. I had given many readings to family and friends, and my name had spread.

The chime to the message came in again. As the cars cleared behind me, I started to back up my van. Looking in my rearview mirror, I could see a woman sitting behind the passenger seat.

“Let me guess. This text message has to do with you,” I said.

“Please, it’s my sister, and she needs to know that I am okay. She wasn’t there when I passed. We lived too far from one another. She didn’t have enough time to make it to the hospital. She needs your help.” I could see the sadness in the woman’s eyes. She was a lovely dark blond and appeared to be in her mid-forties.

Feeling my heartstrings getting pulled, I asked, “What is your name?”

“It’s Emily.”

“Well, Emily, I’m about to go pick up my kids. Then I need to go home and make dinner. I’m afraid that I will have little time to reach out to your sister today. I’m sorry,” I explained.

“No, please, you need to text her now. Let her know that I’m okay,” Emily insisted.

“Listen, I don’t have time to pull over and text her. Also, I’m not about to text and drive. First, because it’s unsafe and second because I don’t want to get pulled over. Can you understand that? Imagine me having to tell a cop that I had to reach out to the sister of the dead lady that I had in the back of my van.”

“Okay, I see your point. Just please, do it tonight. Let my sister know that Emily says it’s okay that she didn’t get to

the hospital in time. I can still hear her, and I know that she loves me. I love her too. I'm not gone. I've been watching her and her family more now than ever. Let her know that I am aware that she is talking to me every night before bed. Tell her; I know that she still wears the necklace with her half of the heart that says, "Little Sister." Mom is emptying my apartment and will be bringing her my half. Tell her I want her to bury it under our favorite tree in Mom and Dad's yard."

Listening to Emily, I felt for them. I agreed to help, and that evening, I kept my word.

Getting Joan on the phone, I could tell how heavy her heart was. Once hearing her sister's words, she broke down. She got tears of joy, knowing her sister was close by.

Joan thanked me, and we said good-bye to Emily. They were both delighted to have gotten the connection. Joan told me that she would now begin to watch for Emily's signs from heaven. It was a beautiful moment, and I thanked the Spirit for allowing me to be a part of it.

Chapter Thirty-Two

“**M**orning, Dee,” said Tom as I answered the phone. I was preparing breakfast for Sean and the kids.

“Hey, what’s going on, Tom?”

“You busy today?” he asked.

“Yes, why?”

“Are you busy tonight, Dee? We are planning to check out a home in Edgewater. I was hoping that you could come along.”

“You know, I can’t, sorry. Sean’s great-aunt died, and we have her funeral to attend. I don’t know what will happen after that, but we will be in Jacksonville all day. I doubt that I will have time to make it back to go with you. Thanks for asking me and hopefully next time,” I explained.

“Sure, no problem. I understand. I’m sorry for your family’s loss,” Tom replied right before we ended the call.

“Who was that on the phone, Dee?” Sean asked insistently.

“It’s just Tom.”

“Why does he need you tonight? You don’t work nights anymore. I thought we agreed on that, Dee.”

“Don’t worry. I’m not going,” I responded, trying to avoid the conversation.

“Where did he want you to go?”

“Don’t worry, it’s no big deal, Sean.”

“I disagree, Dee. It must be, or you would tell me.”

“He wants me to go ghost hunting with his crew. Okay?”

“No, it’s not okay. I would appreciate you being home at night,” Sean angrily noted.

“Why, so that you can stay out and come home late? I could ask you where you are half the time anymore, Sean.”

“Dee, you must be joking. I’m working, and it’s a busy season for me. We took on new clients as well.”

“Fine, whatever, Sean. Let’s just drop it and get ready to leave.”

Driving up to Jacksonville, I started thinking about the funeral. I remembered what I had discovered about our transition to the other side. When souls cross, it is a celebration for them. It is an emotional, loving, and joyful moment of going home, contrary to the sadness felt by those left behind.

When we arrived, I walked in to see the funeral service of another family was in progress. They were across from Sean’s aunt.

Right away, I noticed the gathering was large. The name on the sign read, Jennifer. I could see from her picture that she was a cute little darker skinned brunette with big chocolate brown eyes. She was seventeen and, in my opinion, much too young to have crossed.

Walking into Aunt Gretchen's funeral, something told me that Jennifer had been a well-liked girl. I sensed the intense grief from Jennifer's family, knowing that her death must have felt senseless to them. I knew that Sean's aunt had enjoyed a long, beautiful life. She had passed peacefully in her sleep and crossed right away to be with Sean's great uncle. They had been married for a lifetime. Neither wanted to live without each other, but of course, fate had its way. Sean's uncle passed approximately ten years before her. Unlike the heartbreak felt by the young lady's family, there was peace around Aunt Gretchen.

What life was Jennifer able to live? I had to ask myself. She didn't even get to experience much of it. Obviously, I understood soul contracts, but it still didn't stop me from feeling incredible sadness for the family.

I sat, waiting for the services to begin. I remembered that the answers are not always clear, but the emotions will always be real, no matter the belief.

I knew Sean's aunt would probably be close by for her funeral. Many souls will stick around for the memorial. They like to surround the family with love and support.

Looking at Sean's family, I could feel the love and see the legacy that she left behind. That made me smile, knowing that she probably noticed that too.

"We will be starting the service in 15 minutes. If anyone would like to use the restroom or needs refreshments, they are in the lower level. Please help yourself," said a well-dressed older gentleman. Thinking I should probably visit the lady's room, I informed Sean.

As I walked down the staircase, it opened to a large room with a few round tables and chairs. There was a long countertop, with a coffee maker, cappuccino machine, and tea offerings. It was a cute little lounge, and bathrooms were at

the farther end in the back. I could see that no one was there, yet the room felt occupied. I made my way to the restroom door when I realized that someone was standing next to me.

“It was my time, you know. My mom doesn’t understand,” said a young female.

Jumping back, I saw a cute teenage girl, who I immediately recognized as Jennifer.

“I drowned accidentally,” she whispered.

Looking around, I uttered softly, “I gathered that, Jennifer.”

“You do see and hear me then?”

“Yes, I do. I’m sorry about your passing.”

“You know they are all so sad, but I’m free, and done. I accomplished what I was supposed to.”

“Yes, but you didn’t even get to graduate, right? You were still in high school, weren’t you?”

Jennifer quickly replied, “Oh no, I graduated. Only in a different way. The challenge is going to be for those left behind, as they will need to work through their feelings. There will be times that they won’t understand. My passing will seem senseless, but it wasn’t. It was my time. I know my parents and my boyfriend don’t feel or see it that way. One day, they will, though.”

I pondered for a second what she was telling me.

“I guess I can understand that, Jennifer. Grief is tough, though,” I stated.

“You know we think it’s the end, but it’s not. It’s the part we play, the lessons we learn, and the challenges we face. I wish they knew I will always be close and not to worry about me. I knew it was my time,” she voiced calmly.

“I see. Thank you for sharing your story, Jennifer.”

In a pleading tone, Jennifer asked me if I would pass on a message to her parents. She wanted to let them know how much she loved them. “Please tell my mom that when she looks up in the sky at night, that I will be there looking too. Say to her, Jennifer Rose, says goodnight moon and goodnight stars. She will understand. Let her know that the journal she searched for, fell in between my bed and night table.”

“I don’t know, Jennifer. I can’t make any promises. You see, I have a strict policy that I don’t go around delivering messages. I have found that not everyone wishes to engage with mediums. There are boundaries I have learned to respect,” I explained.

Feeling her disappointment, I added, “Jennifer, I will try, but only if you help me find the right time to make it possible.”

Jennifer knew what I meant, and she said, “Well, she is in there right now.”

“In where?” I asked.

“My mom is in the lady’s room.”

I nodded as I pushed the door inward to walk in. At the sink was a lady fixing her makeup. Her eyes were puffy and red, and her mascara was running.

“Hello,” I said as I walked up to the sink. “You look like you could use a hug. Are you okay?”

Jennifer’s mother was doing her best to hold it together. I could see that by asking her, though, created a fountain of new tears. “I’m not okay,” she cried, “My little girl is gone, and I’ll never be okay ever again.” Sobbing, she started to fall to her knees. She nearly dropped to the floor until I managed to

grab her. Helping her up, I placed my arms around her tightly. She wept powerful tears onto my shoulder.

Pulling back, she apologized, “I’m so sorry. I don’t know you, but I thank you. I’m so lost that I don’t know what to do. My daughter was my everything, and now I can’t imagine life without her. Our children shouldn’t go first.”

From inside my head, I heard Jennifer say, “Mom, it’s going to be all right. I’m fine. Tell her, please. I can’t bear to see her like this.”

I stood there thinking about how to deliver the message in a way that was healing and helpful. I nervously replied, “Ma’am, I’m so sorry for your loss. I know that your daughter is in a good place, and you must realize that she wouldn’t want you to be sad.”

The woman got instantly angry and snapped back. “What do you know about her not wanting me to be sad. She wouldn’t have wanted to die. She and Jeremy planned on getting married after college. They even planned to attend the same school next year with one another. How can I not be sad? Do you know what it’s like to lose a child? Because if not, then how dare you to come in here and say that!”

Silence ensued for a moment as I paused to think about what to say next. I felt terrible for how that came out. I knew how important it was for a medium to be careful with their choice of words. People are vulnerable during their grief. I should have known that before, I said what I did. I showed insensitivity to her feelings. I wasn’t sure if I would be able to deliver the message.

“I apologize. I didn’t mean to seem apathetic or uncaring,” I voiced to Jennifer’s mother.

“No, no, I’m sorry, I’m a mess right now. I know you were only trying to help, and I know everyone upstairs is

trying to as well. I guess that's why I came down here. I couldn't keep it together. You know, I wish I could talk to her one last time. I would tell her how much I love her. Sometimes, I was too hard on her, but I could see how much potential she had."

"What is your name, Ma'am," I asked.

She looked up from her makeup bag and smiled. "It's Jean."

"Well, Jean, I'm going to step out on a ledge here and tell you that I am a medium. And from my experience with the spirit world, they want us to heal. They do not wish to see us remain in a place of darkness. They are now with God and with our departed loved ones. They are rejoicing in celebration together. However, they realize our pain and know we are not feeling rejoice. That's okay. No one should tell you how to feel right now. You will heal in the time that's right for you. The deep sadness and pain are real but know it's an illusion that Jennifer Rose is gone forever. She will always be close and watching over you. She hears you when you talk to her," I explained.

I looked away momentarily from Jean. I was beginning to get visions that Jennifer was sending. When I glanced back at Jean's face, I saw an expression of shock.

"How do you know about Jennifer Rose? Only my husband and I called her that. Did she tell you? That was an endearing nickname for her because of how much she loved her Grandma Rose."

Jean turned around to look directly at me. Smiling, I replied, "She knows you visit her room at night. You hold tightly to the yellow crescent moon pillow that you bought her for Christmas. Sometimes you spray her favorite perfume on it because you feel like you are hugging her. She knows you wish to be closer, and she tells me she loves you," I informed her.

Jean was crying again, but it was different. I could feel her energy get lighter. There seemed to be a small glimmer of hope that wasn't there before.

“Jennifer says one last thing, Jean. She feels you will understand. When you look up at the sky at night, she will be there looking with you. She says to say, ‘Goodnight moon and goodnight stars.’”

Now smiling, Jean said, “I don't know what to say or how to thank you. I'm so grateful. Tell her that I love her so much. You have given me hope that my daughter is still around. Thank you!”

Jean hugged me and then headed to the door. I felt so blessed and humbled.

As Jean opened the door to walk out, I suddenly remembered the journal. I called out to her. “Jean, she knows you love her because she can hear you. She wants you to know the journal is in between the bed and nightstand.”

Jean's eyes widened. “Wow! Thank you so much,” she said, leaving.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Going inside the realty office, I walked by Tom's door. I could see that he was anxiously waiting for me.

"Hey, boss, what's up?" I joked.

"Morning. Who says anything is up?" he grinned. "Okay, fine, you got me. I might need some of your help today."

"Well, that's what I work here for."

"No, not office help. I need your ghost help," he replied.

"What do you need, Tom?"

"There's a house over on beachside. It's a rental that I was a buyer's agent for six months ago. The owner insists that it's haunted. She says she can't rent it out for more than a night or two. People do not want to stay there. They say that the lights and television are going on and off all night long."

"Okay, Tom, so what do you need?"

"Dee, do you think that we could go there now or later? Perhaps you could help clear it. It would mean a lot to me."

This lady has purchased other rental properties using me as her agent, and she refers us.”

“Alright, we could go now, I guess. I have to leave a little earlier today to take Jack to the pediatrician,” I told him.

“Great, we can take my car then. Let’s go,” Tom rushed, grabbing his car keys.

Driving down the road, Tom asked me how the funeral had gone. I told him it was quiet, but that it was a real celebration of life that ended well for Sean’s aunt.

“That’s good. Have you had any new experiences?”

“I’ve been having a lot of strange dreams. More than normal lately. I can’t make heads or tails of them. They seem so vivid, yet they are so far-fetched that I don’t know what to think. Can I tell you a secret, Tom?”

“Sure.”

“I’ve been dreaming about Derek again.”

“Again? I didn’t know that you had been dreaming of him, Dee. What is he doing in your dreams?”

“He shows up differently each time, Tom. He’s always so charming, though. And he sweeps me off my feet. It’s hard to explain. I don’t understand it honestly.”

“I see, so that’s the kind of guy that you are attracted to,” he responded, laughing.

“What? Tom, give me a break!”

“No, don’t deny it! He wasn’t exactly ugly,” he said, still chuckling. “You know I wasn’t blind to how the ladies in the office were taking a shine to him, especially Sharon.”

“So not funny, Tom. You know I am with Sean.”

“But that’s it. You aren’t happy, though, are you?” Tom replied, showing concern.

“That’s between Sean and me, and I would prefer to keep it that way if you don’t mind.”

“Dee, I wasn’t trying to interfere. You were talking about Derek being in your dreams. I was thinking about the possibility. Maybe because of the issues with your marriage, you may be using Derek to have your emotional needs met.”

“Are you serious, Tom? You sound like my freaking husband now. You both seem to think I have control over my dreams. I don’t understand how I could do that.”

“Look, Dee, I know it’s none of my business, but maybe consider marriage counseling.”

“Oh, no way. That’s not Sean. Truly, he is a good man, but he can be stubborn, and he hates that kind of stuff. I do love him. It’s not like I’m perfect either, but we both have changed a lot since we got married. I have especially. I knew when I married him, what he wanted. He likes submissive women. And now, I’ve gone through this transformation process, and I’m different. I can’t blame him for pushing away when I’ve pulled away. Some days, I think we will make it. Some nights, I’m lonely and feel the distance between us. Yet, other nights he isn’t home at all,” I admitted. I began looking out the window, feeling the heaviness of the conversation weigh on me. I knew that Sean and I needed to face reality or find a way to get help. I wasn’t sure if our marriage could be saved, but I hoped so.

“Dee, I’m going to say one last thing, and then I’m gonna shut my mouth. I believe you deserve happiness, and so does Sean. I particularly believe your children deserve it. No one wants to tear their family apart. However, the slow destruction and hurt of a relationship can make waves through a family, especially the longer it’s allowed to go on. Consider

getting help, or talking with him to hopefully resolve things,” Tom voiced with concern.

“Why do you care so much about my relationship with my husband, Tom?”

“Because I’m your friend and I’ve been there. Divorce is ugly and painful. If you can find a way to fix it before it gets to a place where it can’t be fixed, I would advise it. I see your heavy heart and sometimes the things you tell me, remind me of Tiffany.”

I was puzzled. “In what way, Tom?”

“Well, she began acting differently and then started becoming withdrawn. She would stay out with girlfriends or go to her parents at first. Eventually, she moved on to my friend’s place. It seemed like she did everything to avoid coming home to me. I can’t blame her. I was too busy feeling sorry for myself during our marriage. I was so mad over what I felt went wrong in my life that I missed what was wonderful about it. I held on to the grief over what I thought were missed opportunities. I failed to see that whenever one door closes, another one opens. Anyway, I placed my anger and frustration into our marriage. She felt it. She wanted us to get counseling, and I was the stubborn one. So, I’m telling you, if you can convince him to go, I believe it’s in your best interest.”

“Thank you, Tom. I appreciate your concern,” I said as we pulled up to the tiny beachside rental. Stepping up on the porch, I sensed a feeling of melancholy come over me. Immediately, the front door opened even before Tom had a chance to knock. A short lady in her sixties answered.

“Hi, Tom. Thank you both for coming so quickly. I’m glad you had the time today. I’m supposed to have a family stay here tomorrow for a week. I don’t want to lose their business by having unusual stuff drive them out,” the woman quietly explained.

“No problem, Ma’am. Dee, let me introduce you to Mrs. Newton. I’ve known her for many years. We met when I worked for another agency near Orlando,” he stated.

“Hello, Mrs. Newton. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Please call me Lydia. I hope you can help me figure out what is going on,” she said, inviting us into the house.

Almost immediately, I felt a breeze of cold air rush across the back of my neck. It sent shivers up and down my spine. Shaking it off, I replied, “Well, whoever it is Tom; they certainly don’t want us here.” Right away, I knew that we were being monitored. It felt like intense and angry energy was surrounding us.

“Dee, do you think that you can help Mrs. Newton? So you are aware, Lydia, Dee works in my office but is an amazing psychic medium. I trust her to walk in here today to see what she might be able to pick up,” Tom asserted.

“Thank you, Tom. Please let me know how I can help,” she replied.

“Mrs. Newton, excuse me, Lydia, can you tell me if you have experienced anything in the house?”

“Yes, from day one, essentially. When I was in here painting with my brother Earl and husband Joe, the fans were going on and off. Later that evening, the lights and water started. Earl used to work with an electrician, and he checked out the wiring. However, he found nothing to be wrong. Then, with the water, Joe looked at the pipes and didn’t see anything. We are at a loss,” Lydia exclaimed.

“I see, well do you mind if I have a look around. If it’s not too much to ask, I would prefer to roam alone.”

“Sure, we can stay in the kitchen and wait for you unless you want us to go outside,” she said.

“Yes, that’s fine by me,” Tom replied.

“I would prefer then that you both leave. Wait out on the front porch if you don’t mind.”

“No problem,” they both voiced, walking outside.

The home was small, maybe only 800 square feet with two small bedrooms and a bathroom. Attached was a one-car garage. From the front door, it appeared to be a large rectangle room. It had a kitchen table, a couch, and a recliner, with a super tiny kitchen off to the far end. It was decorated tastefully and had a cute beach motif.

Initially, I walked around slowly. I could feel the burning eyes of someone watching me. “Hello,” I said out loud. “I know you can see and hear me. I don’t feel you are as evil and mean as you are trying to make me think you are. If I didn’t know better, I would say you used to live here. Am I right?” I asked as I walked into the living room to sit down.

Waiting for an answer, I didn’t receive one. “You know you can come and talk with me. I won’t judge you.” Picking up the television remote, I turned on the TV. No sooner did I get it onto a channel to watch when it went off.

Turning the television back on, it immediately started flipping channels. I noticed the fanlight above me began to circulate. “Well, I know you are here, and I’ll be honest with you. I’m a good enough medium that I saw who you were before I ever pulled up to your house. Why won’t you come and talk to me? I promise I don’t bite.”

“GET OUT NOW!” shouted a young woman, who looked about nineteen. She had long straight dark brown hair parted down the center. She was wearing what appeared to be a nightgown featuring the old television show, “Starsky and Hutch.”

“Well, hello there. I’m glad you came out. Maybe I can help you?” I responded with a smile.

“I don’t want you here, lady! I don’t want anyone in my house,” she shouted, coming up quickly. Staring at me for a moment, she shrieked, “What do you want here, and why do you want to help me? I don’t need your help! I need you and everyone to leave. My mother is going to come back from the store soon. She will be mad if she finds out that people are in our house.”

“What is your name, dear?” I asked.

“Why should I tell you? You need to go!” she yelled again, pointing to the door forcefully.

“You know, I have never seen that television show. You know the one on your clothes. Was it any good? Because if it was, then maybe, I should watch it online. It’s been a long time since it was on television,” I told her.

“What do you mean online? Lady, it’s still on television!” she asserted adamantly.

“No, it’s been off for about forty years.”

“Impossible!” she bellowed. “I watched it with Mama the other day.”

“Dear, please tell me your name. I’m Dee. Well, actually, my name is Ellen, but my friends call me Dee.”

“It’s Jeannie, but my friends call me Jeannie,” she said, slightly chuckling.

Laughing, I replied, “Alright, it’s nice to meet you, Jeannie. I’m sorry for barging into your home like this. I have something to ask you. Can you tell me the very last thing that you remember?”

“What do you mean? Why? I got home from work, and Mama was at the store. Then, my boyfriend, Peter, called me.” As Jeannie spoke, I could see that she began struggling to remember. I noticed after a moment that her facial expression changed to one of sorrow.

“I remember now. Peter called to tell me that he was going to dump me and go out with that phony, freaky-deaky Susie Watermoth.”

“Watermoth was her last name?” I questioned with a laugh.

As she snickered back, I could see that she got a little more comfortable with me. “No, it was Watermont, but I thought it funny to call her that. She thought she was slick for stealing other chick’s dudes. I mean, who did she think she was!”

I listened as Jeannie carried on. She must have talked ten minutes straight. She kept me amused with her seventies slang.

“You dig what all I’m telling you, don’t you?” she asked.

“Oh, yea! Right on! I’m hip!” I replied, trying to follow her conversation.

“Well, that’s cool. Thank you for listening. I guess I didn’t realize how much I missed talkin’ to people,” she said with a smile.

“You know it sounds like Peter hurt you. Do you remember what happened after you got off the phone?”

As soon as I said that, I saw her expression get pained.

“Umm, yes. I got mad and went a little crazy. I started breaking stuff in my room. Then I sat down and cried. I couldn’t stop crying. I loved him, you know. I shouldn’t have done it, but I did. I didn’t want to, not really. At first, I was

scared to do it. It was so fast, I guess, I didn't have time to change my mind," she explained teary-eyed.

"Oh, Jeannie. It sounds like you were hurting badly. No one was there for you, and you felt alone. What did you do?"

"Not wanting to feel the pain, I went to the garage."

"What did you do there? Can we go to the garage?" I asked.

"Okay, but we have to go outside to go in the back. Follow me," she instructed.

Inside the garage, I felt my stomach drop. I knew it was her feeling that way. "So, Jeannie, this is where you went. What happened? Do you remember?"

Quietly, she looked all around the garage. Suddenly, she raised her head to look at the rafters above us. "I hung myself," she muttered, turning her head toward me. I could see the anguish in her face, and I could feel her fear.

"Oh, my Jeannie. I'm sorry," I replied as she began to break down and weep.

"I'm really dead, aren't I? I know I am. I have tried to forget." Using her hands to cover her face as the tears flowed, I felt so much sadness for her. "I took my life, and now I will burn in hell like Mama always said."

"Jeannie, No. That's not true!"

"Yes, it is. God won't want me in heaven."

"Jeannie, I don't have all the answers to life and death. However, I am a medium with deep faith. I can tell you that I have had clear messages of love and peace from souls that have committed suicide. God and their angels helped them. I believe if you go to the Light, you will find serenity and loving

comfort. You have some family and friends over there. I'm sure of it."

"NO! That light is a trap! I know that it's bad, and that's why I have refused to go into it. I am not going to get taken to Hell!" she yelled.

"Listen to me; you will be happier when you let go of this fear-based thought that God won't forgive you. You need to cross over fully. Here you remain stuck and lonely. And you are alone, aren't you? Your mom hasn't come back, has she?"

"No, she hasn't, and I miss her. And yes, I am lonely," she stated. Quietly she pondered. "Dee, do you think that my mom is there?"

"I don't know, but I imagine that you must have grandparents or someone there. Let's see if we can quietly pray and ask for someone to step forward. You know, Jesus and the Archangel Gabriel could help," I explained.

"Yes, but Mama and I went to church every Sunday, and I know what the pastor said. Are you sure that I will be okay?"

"I feel good about this," I told her.

As we began to pray, suddenly, a beautiful, white golden light appeared. It shined down radiating warmth and love.

"Ellen, I think I see my Grandma and Grandpa Brady. They are waving to me!" she exclaimed with excitement. "You think I should go with them?"

"I absolutely do."

"Alright, I'll go then," she replied, stepping forward. Stopping, she turned back to look at me to smile and wave goodbye. "Thank you, Ellen. I mean, Dee. I hope we will meet again."

Tears for her were streaming down my cheeks as I wished her well. “I’m sure that we will, Jeannie.”

As she walked into the light, it disappeared almost instantly. Immediately, the house felt lighter and brighter. I stepped outside to find Tom and Lydia talking.

“We were afraid that you might not come out. Is everything all right?” Tom asked.

“Everything is great. The house is clear, and you shouldn’t have any further trouble. The young lady that was in there had tragically committed suicide, but she found her way to the Light.”

“Seriously, Dee!” Tom looked astonished and excited. “That’s awesome and great news, isn’t it, Lydia?”

“Thank you, Dee. It most certainly is Tom. I don’t know how I can repay you. Expect a big Christmas basket to be delivered this year to your office. Thank you both so much,” she said as Tom and I got in the car to leave.

Chapter Thirty-Four

Rolling over and opening my eyes, I'm suddenly startled. "What! Who is that?" Panicking, I said, "Where's Sean? Where am I?" Sitting up in the bed, I rubbed my eyes to look closer at the spooky black-haired gentleman lying next to me. I didn't recognize him. He looked tall and muscular, with hair touching his shoulders. He looked strange and ghostly. Glancing around, I was in an enormous, intricately decorated room nearly shrouded in darkness.

The room, however, had an eerie yellowish-orange glow. It was coming from the inferno in the massive fireplace across from the gigantic bed I was on. The hearth was quite possibly bigger than my closet. I looked around to see that the walls, ceilings, and floors were all made of gold. This made the flames of the fire reflect around the room even more. It nearly reminded me of Mount Olympus only with more gold.

From the glow of the room, I noticed that the bed had monstrous mahogany pillars with skull carvings. Diamonds and rubies were used as eyes in some heads, making it look creepier. It was so terrifying. I knew I had to be dreaming again.

Rising from the bed, I was careful not to awaken the ghostly man.

Scared and unsure of where I was, I walked toward the huge doors to leave. Going out to the hallway, I could hear faint but distant sounds of screams and echoes. Walking the hall felt as if I was wandering a vast gold passage. It was lit up every twenty feet with wall torches that had a disturbing haunting presence.

Whoosh! Something flew by me fast and dark. “What the hell was that?” I asked, spinning around to look. This place was frightening me. My heart was racing as I continued down the hall, looking over my shoulders. I felt someone watching me, but I couldn’t see who it was. They were hiding. I could feel it with every ounce of my soul. “Who’s there? I know someone is there. Show yourself,” I said, frightened.

“Mwahahaha!” came a sinister cackle from somewhere close by. Breathing heavily in fear, I took off running down the dimly lit corridor. I ran for what felt like forever. I made several turns before nearing the end, where I could see large double doors. There were two incredibly creepy looking ghouls with hoods and sickles guarding it. They appeared tall, motionless, and menacing. I wondered what they were guarding and if I should turn around. I was afraid, however, to go back because of the evil that lurked behind me.

Cautiously, I approached the doors and stood in between the ghostly creatures. They slowly turned their heads to look at me. Terrified, I was trembling. I didn’t know if they would hurt me. Their hoods covered their faces to where I could only see red glowing eyes. Putting my hand on the doorknob, I didn’t know if I should go in or if they would even allow me to pass. I wondered if I were safe or if what was chasing me would be inside.

Petrified, I stammered, “Can I go in there?” The heads on both ghouls nodded in agreement. Right when I went to

turn the knob, the doors swung open for me to walk inside. Letting out a huge gasp, I couldn't believe my eyes. I was now in a room filled with white roses, with baby's breath and hyacinth everywhere. There was a young woman's body lying dead on a long gold table. It was resting on top of a platform. The room reminded me of a chilling mortuary without the casket. Who was that? I wondered.

Slowly, I moved closer to get a better look at who it was. Jumping back, I gasped in horror. It was Persephone, and she looked lavishly dressed in a black flowing lace dress. Her tiara was black with precious black diamonds that shimmered on her long wavy blond hair. Her lips were red, while her skin was gray.

Immediately, I wondered why someone had her body. She was on display like a creepy fairy tale princess. While I felt sad for her, I questioned why she was dead. I thought that Goddesses were immortal.

"Well, well. What do we have here? It's so nice to see you again," said a sinister voice. Frozen, I was afraid to turn around. Whoever it was, must have been the one who chased me. I could feel the entity coming up on my right side. His eyes felt wrathful and cold as he stared. I was too afraid to turn my head to see him.

"A real royal beauty, isn't she? It's too, too bad that she had to take a nap forever. But the fucking bitch deserved it!" he spoke vehemently, pointing his vile looking long nail. Turning ever so slowly, I saw it was the demon from my house in St. Martin.

"It's so nice to see you again. I was wretched and forlorn when you left me as fast as you did. I was only getting started, and I was having so much fun. Your little boy was supposed to be my appetizer. Your other two were supposed to be the entrée. You, however, I was saving for the tasty dessert," the demon jeered.

“What do you want with me? Why can’t you leave me alone? We left like you wanted,” I voiced in fright.

“No, you miss the point entirely, bitch!” he replied scornfully.

“I don’t know why you are doing this to me. I don’t understand.”

Hissing, the demon replied, “Go ahead, pretend you don’t know. I’m not fucking stupid!”

But you know, I am feeling inspired by your amnesia. How about if we walk down memory lane. I’ll go first.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about. Please go away!” I yelled, running for the door. Grabbing me from behind the demon threw me down on the floor. Hitting my head on the golden tile, I started to lose consciousness. My vision was blurry, but I could see his horrifying face coming closer to mine. Trying to regain strength, I tried to fight him off. However, he held me down and forced himself upon me.

I tried to yell, but the words wouldn’t come out. “Come on, bitch! Stop trying to fight me. Otherwise, I’ll knock you out and still take you!” the demon shouted.

No longer able to fight, I surrendered. In agonizing pain, I felt the demon fly off my body. I couldn’t see, and I felt paralyzed. I laid there on the cold ground, trying to keep my eyes open. I felt like I was slowly losing consciousness.

Chapter Thirty-Five

he next morning, I woke early to find that Sean was gone. He had an early morning meeting again. I wasn't sure why he had so many lately. I had wanted to make him some breakfast. I thought maybe it would help if I tried to put more effort into our marriage. I wanted to talk to him about marital counseling to help us through this time, as Tom had suggested. I did still love Sean, and I did want to try to work through our troubles.

Getting up, I went into the kitchen. It was summer break, so the kids were all doing their own thing. I grabbed my coffee and my cell phone. Walking back to my room, I remembered my nightmare and got chills. It was terrifying, and I didn't understand it. I knew I had so much on my mind and worries about Sean that I wondered if that had a connection.

Dialing Sean's number, he didn't answer. It went straight to voicemail. "Hey, Sean. I'm calling to see if you might want to meet for lunch today. I was hoping we could talk. Call me when you get this message. I love you," I said, hanging up. A few moments later, Sean responded by text. He stated that he couldn't make lunch and would be home late again.

Sad, and feeling depressed, I decided to try to focus on a project around the house. It was early afternoon when Tom called me to ask if I could go to a house out in Orlando with him.

“Tom, I’m so sorry. I can’t. I got a text that Sean will be home late again.”

“Dee, did you do what I said and talk to him?”

“I tried to, but he came home late last night, and I was already asleep.”

“Well, I’m sorry, Dee. I will see you tomorrow at the office, won’t I?”

“Absolutely, Tom. Have a good night.”

As the day progressed, it seemed to rush by. I sat up and watched television, waiting for Sean to get home. I noticed it was after ten p.m. when I heard his truck pull up.

“Hi, Sean. I waited for you to get home. It’s another late night for you. I thought maybe when you said late that it would be seven or something.”

“Dee, I’m tired. I’m going to bed,” Sean voiced brazenly, taking his shoes off and walking past me to the bedroom.

Watching him, I felt my stomach drop, because I felt for sure at that moment, what was going on.

“Sean, please don’t ignore me and tell me the truth. What’s going on with us? You have been distant. I know I haven’t been as open and devoted as I once was. I’ve had a lot of changes in my life. However, I do love you, and I want us to work through whatever it is that is tearing us farther apart.”

“It’s nothing, Dee. I have to work, and it’s taking me a lot longer these days.”

“Sean, that’s not true, and you are lying to me. Where have you been at?”

“Fine! I worked until about seven o’clock tonight. I went out with Bob to the bar after,” he said, angry.

“Why didn’t you call? What’s going on with us?” I asked.

“Nothing, Dee. I don’t want to talk about it right now. I got to get up early. I have a meeting.”

“I want to talk about this, Sean. I think we might need to consider marital counseling.”

“Dee, I don’t know. Maybe. I don’t want to talk about this. For now, do your thing, and I will do mine. We have the kids to think about here. I’m most concerned with that.”

“I’m concerned with our children too. That’s why I want to talk.”

“No, Dee. Fucking quit before you really piss me off. I have a lot on my mind, and I don’t want to talk to you.”

Starting to cry, I said, “Are you seeing someone, Sean? Can you at least tell me that?”

“Dee, let’s not talk about this right now. Stop trying to control everything. I’m done with your shit, and this complete change in who you are. You are not the woman I married.”

“That’s not true, and it’s not fair. I may get a little self-absorbed or louder sometimes when my life brings me a lot to work through. However, I’m good to you. I cook, clean, and take care of the kids. I still do the things you want. I quit working nights for you. I work from home and hardly at all because you said I had to. Do you know what your problem is? You want me to continue to cater to you hand and foot and keep my mouth closed. I can’t do that. Not anymore. I’m not that person.

“I did change Sean, but I feel it was for the better of my soul. I don’t ignore my problems like I used to. I want to go out and experience life. You have resisted me having one. You want a woman that pulls her weight, but also does what you want when you want it. Provided she does it by staying beneath you and keeping you on a pedestal. I say this, and yet, I still love you! Now, I don’t even see you anymore. I’m so confused. I thought things were getting better, and then suddenly, you have all this work that requires lots of overtime. You have changed too. I don’t know you right now.”

“That’s it, Dee! I’m leaving. I’m out of here!” Sean shouted, getting out of bed to get his clothes on.

“No! No! If anyone is leaving. It’s me! I’m tired of this, and I refuse to try to save a marriage to a man that doesn’t want it saved. Screw you, Sean!” I said, grabbing my shoes, purse, and keys.

Screaming from the door, Sean said, “Bitch! Don’t come back! And yes! I’m seeing someone! Fuck You!”

Crying, I got in my van only to drive less than a mile down the street. I pulled over to sob. What had I done wrong? I didn’t mean for everything to go out of control. I loved him, yet he didn’t love me.

Through my tears, I screamed and then cried some more. It hurt so bad. Picking up the phone to call my mom, I thought twice. I didn’t want her to worry about me. She was happy with her new life, and the last thing she needed was my problems. Going through my contacts, I called Tom.

“Tom, I need your...” I stopped abruptly to cry.

“Dee? What’s going on, honey?”

Not able to talk, I could only sob into the phone.

“Dee, where are you? Do you need me?”

“No, I’m sorry, Tom. I shouldn’t have called. I’m going to hang up. I’ll go to the office. I’m sorry to call and wake you,” I cried.

“I’m up. I’m watching a game on television. Why do you need to go to the office now? Dee, what’s going on? Did you and Sean get into a fight?”

“Yes, but I don’t want to discuss this. You are my boss. It’s not right. If you don’t mind, I would like to go into the office and see if I can get away for a bit. Then I will go home.”

“Don’t be silly, Dee. Come over here. I’ll text you my address.”

“Are you sure you don’t mind. I won’t stay long. I need to get away for a bit. I can’t go home right now,” I replied.

“Come over, Dee and drive safe,” he said as we hung up.

Stopping off at the liquor store right around the corner from Tom’s house, I chugged down almost half a bottle of vodka straight. Arriving at Tom’s, I could already feel the alcohol slowly starting to hit my bloodstream. I pressed the doorbell for him to answer. His home appeared dark with only the light from the television.

“Come on in, Dee.”

“Thanks, Tom,” I responded, walking in carrying the bottle of vodka.

“Dee, did you just buy that?” He grabbed the bottle from my hand. “Holy shit! Tell me you didn’t drink all that?”

“Yep! I sure did, Tom. I intend to drink as much as the dreaming version of me does when she is in fucking Mount Olympus land,” I said with drunken sarcasm.

Walking over to his couch, I could see that Tom had been drinking by the empty beer bottles. “So, you are drinking

too? Shame on you, Mr. Sykes, for getting upset with me,” I joshed as he sat down next to me.

“Hey, thanks for letting me come over. Tonight, has been horrendous. My husband hates me. In fact, he doesn’t love me and finally admitted to cheating. Isn’t that fanfuckintastic!”

“Dee, I’m so sorry, honey. I wish I could say something that would take away your pain. I know how it feels. Know that it’s gonna be all right,” he voiced warmly, putting his arm around me.

Looking at him through tears, I could see what a kind and tender soul he was. Mara was right. Tom had such a sweet and compassionate heart. He cared for everyone and went out of his way.

“Tom, can I tell you something? You are such a likable guy. Why haven’t you found someone else since Tiffany? You are gentle and good-looking and an all-around good guy.”

Smiling, Tom responded, “Dee, that is one of the nicest things anyone has said in a long time to me. I guess to answer your question, it’s for many reasons.”

“Yea? What reasons, Tom?”

“I’m sort of a perfectionist, so I look for someone like that. Truly, there isn’t anyone perfect. My problem stems from wanting perfect so that I never find it.”

“Tom, that doesn’t make sense. Why would you do that?”

“So that I can’t find her and get hurt again,” he replied.

“Awe, I’m sad to hear you say that. Any woman would be lucky to have you. I hope that one day you find her, and she treats you the way you should be treated,” I told him.

After ten minutes of being in the house, I felt the alcohol hitting hard. I couldn't tell if I wanted to cry, dance, or screw Tom.

"Let's have sex!" I announced abruptly, jumping from the couch.

"What Dee? No! I know you are drunk and upset, but I refuse to do that for many reasons."

"What, you don't believe in hot, meaningless one-night stands? Tonight, after what I found out, I sure as hell do! Sean deserves it! I'm tired of being the good girl. I'm tired of being taken advantage of!" I shouted. I began to take off my clothes.

"NO! Dee, stop it! You need to stop this! I'm not going to do that. You need to go in and lay down on my bed."

"You're right! We should do it in the bedroom, Tom."

"Dee, stop, please. You are better than this, and I won't let you degrade yourself."

"No, I'm not better, or Sean wouldn't have found another woman!" I screamed before breaking down into tears and falling to the floor. Tom rushed over to help me up. "Why doesn't he love me? Why Tom? What is so wrong with me? I can't help what happened to me," I said, sobbing on his shoulder.

Helping me to his bedroom, he put me on the bed and covered me up. Handing me tissues, he said, "Here, I know you might need some of these. Try to get some sleep."

Not even an hour later, I found myself getting up from Tom's dark bedroom. I was feeling incredibly sick. Tom was on the couch, sleeping. "Tom, I don't feel so well. Where's your bathroom?" I uttered as I projectile vomited onto his living room carpet.

The next morning, I woke to my cell phone ringing. As I grabbed it, I noticed it was Sean. “Dee, I don’t know where in the hell you are, but I have to go to work. Josh is old enough to stay with the kids for a short time, but I want to know that you are coming home. I don’t want to worry about them tonight,” Sean said.

“Sean, wait! We need to talk. This isn’t how it should end. There must be something that we can do to save this marriage. I love you. I can’t believe that you don’t love me too.”

“Dee, I have to go to work,” he said, hanging up.

Setting my phone down, I got up and walked out to the kitchen, trying to hold back tears. Tom was up and sitting at the table drinking coffee. “Do you want some?” he asked. “Here’s some Tylenol for your headache.”

“Oh Lord, Tom! I’m so embarrassed. I can’t even remember much of what happened last night. I want you to know that I don’t usually drink, except for maybe in my dreams, of course. I seem to get wasted there,” I said.

“Yes, I know. I’m glad to hear that. I would hate to think that you make a habit of going over to men’s homes drunk, demanding to sleep with them, and then puking on their new Berber carpet.”

“Oh, no! Tell me I didn’t do that!” I cried, feeling humiliated and angry with myself.

“You did, I’m afraid,” he replied, standing, and putting his jacket on. “Hey, Dee, I’ve got to get to the office. You can make it a sick day and go back and lay down if you wish. You are welcome to stay for as long as you need,” Tom said, walking toward the door.

“Tom, no, I need to get home to the kids. I may not be a good wife, but I refuse to be a shitty mother. Thank you, though, for everything.”

Stepping away from the door, Tom walked over with a look of empathy. Taking hold of both of my shoulders, he sighed, “Look at me, Dee. You are not a bad person. Stop trying to tell yourself that. You are too hard on yourself. You worry about others, more than anyone I know. Sure, you might have some issues that you need to address. We all do.”

“Tom, I have to go home and change, but I will be in the office in about two hours. I won’t be able to stay long today, but I’m coming in.”

“How about if you stay home today, Dee.”

“No, I won’t be a crappy employee, too,” I snapped.

“Honey, if you want to come in, then fine. I think you need to take care of yourself, though. I fully support you. I won’t let you go down any rabbit holes.”

Hugging him, he gave me a key. “The coffee pot shuts off on its own. Go drink some. Get yourself together at home, and then I will see you shortly.”

Smiling, “Thank you, Tom.”

“You are welcome, Dee.”

Chapter Thirty-Six

Checking in with my kids, I could see that they were doing well. Thankfully, they didn't seem to know what was going on. I worried about that, and I wanted to cry for them. Getting ready to go to the office, the neighbor came over to stay with the kids for a few hours.

Walking into work, I could see Sharon and Tom talking in his office. Passing by, Sharon stood up and walked to the doorway. "Dee, can you come in for a moment?"

"Sure, give me a second to set my things down, Sharon."

Going into Tom's office, I noticed the look on his face. I could tell he was trying to hide what happened in front of Sharon. "Dee, Sharon, and I want to talk to you about something, and it may not be easy. We don't know if you can even help us with this right now," he said.

Looking at both Tom and Sharon's faces, I could see they appeared somewhat concerned. "What do you need?" I asked.

Immediately, Sharon said, "Your old house in St. Martin is going up for sale."

Instantly, I could feel my body tense up. “Really? It hasn’t been that long since we sold it to them. It’s not been even fourteen full months. Why are they selling?”

“Truthfully, Dee, they are saying that it has a bad vibe. They think it's evil and haunted. They said that they are finding dishes broken on the floor, and lights and sounds are occurring in the middle of the night. The sad and worst part that finally made them call was because their Yorkie died. The owner said the dog was out on the lanai with her while she was sitting out. Her phone rang, and she went inside to talk. When she came back out, her dog was in the pool. He had drowned. They are distraught and heartbroken, but I don’t blame them,” Sharon explained. “He was a cute little fella. I saw him when I was over there after they bought the house.”

Staring at Sharon in shock, I didn’t know what to say. I was bitter and sad for the family. I knew who it was.

Clearing his throat, Tom said, “Dee, I am hoping that before we place it up for sale, you could clear it. That may be asking too much of you right now. If so, it’s okay to say no. I already explained that to Sharon. However, I know you have faced a great deal and have come out on top. Think about it and let me know.”

Sighing, I replied, “You know, I want to, but I have a lot going on at home. So, you might be right. I don’t know if I should tackle it. Can I think about it first? Believe me, I want to. I really do. I want to see that land at peace and that entity far away. I believe that home is a big reason for some of my issues with my husband. What happened there seemed to drive a wedge between us.”

“No problem, Dee. It doesn’t need to get done today,” Tom said. “I know you need to take care of yourself and your family first.”

Heading back to my desk, I stopped off at the bathroom.

“Tom, what’s going on with Dee? Why does she look so miserable? What do you know?” Sharon inquired.

“It’s not my place to say or get into it. It’s something that Dee must handle. I am only doing my best to support her.”

“Well, then, do you mind filling me in on something here. I feel clueless, but I could see the look you were giving her Tom.”

“Okay, fine. She came over last night and stayed. But before you get your panties all in a bunch. It wasn’t what you think.”

“Uh, huh, sure. I know you, Tom Sykes. I’ve worked for you for ten years now. I can tell when there is more.”

“Sharon, there is nothing to hide. I’m a decent guy. You know some of us still exist.”

“And that look you just gave Tom, said the opposite. There’s more. Tell me.”

“Fine, Sharon. You really won’t stop, will you? She called me upset because she and Sean argued. He finally admitted to cheating on her. She came in drunk, cried her eyes out, and threw up on my floor. I scrubbed until about three this morning. So then, I made her some coffee, and she went home. Do you need more details still?” Tom asked.

“Ah, that poor dear. I can’t believe Sean. You know, maybe I can. When I first met him, I didn’t care for him. I thought he was rather controlling. He seemed to put her down on occasion. It wasn’t that he was mean. Some days he was nice. He seemed supportive one minute and then the next he wasn’t. I got the feeling that if he got what he wanted, he was

fine. But I noticed one thing I didn't care for. If she had an opinion that contradicted him, he didn't want to hear it. I feel so bad for her."

"I understand Sharon, but I'm staying out of it. Like I said before, I'm supporting her, but I'm her boss. That's it. I can't have any opinions or feelings about her life. She needs to concentrate on what's best for her and those kids right now."

"Thomas Sykes, it's too late for that. I can see in your eyes that you care. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to see you already have feelings for her. They have been there for a while. So, try that fib with someone else, but I know you too well."

Tom remained quiet as he looked at Sharon. "I think it's time we get back to work, Sharon. I have a couple of calls I need to make."

Standing at the sink in the ladies' room, I washed my hands. Reaching for the paper towels to dry off with, I caught a glimpse of something dark standing behind me. Turning to look, I didn't see anything. Then suddenly, I turned back to the mirror. It was there I saw the demon from St. Martin. He looked enraged and frightening.

Staring at each other in the mirror for a good five seconds, he crept up behind me. Slowing, he cocked his head to talk into my ear. In his most sinister deep voice, he stated, "If you dare even think about trying to clear my land or me, it won't just be your husband sticking it to you."

Alarmed and jolted, I shouted, "Get out of my face and leave now!"

"Or what? You are gonna sing "Kumbaya," and pray? Let me say this. I feel like I need to go back and finish my entrée like I originally planned," he cackled.

Turning myself to look directly into his red glowing eyes, I said, "That's it! How dare you threaten my family. I will, for sure, come for you now. I may not remember or understand what you are saying, but I'm coming for you! I don't know how, but I will find a way to shred what's left of that disgusting, evil soul of yours in two!"

Opening the door to the bathroom, I walked out to the hall and down to Tom's office. Knocking on the door, I walked in. "Let's go do this. I want to clear that damn house and get rid of that evil that lurks there. It's about to get dispelled!"

Tom stood up with a look of astonishment. "Are you sure, Dee? You don't have to do this. It can wait. It not that big of a deal." he responded.

"Nope, it can't wait," I replied with certainty.

"Alright, we can go tomorrow morning if you want? I can even call in a few of the guys from the team to come out with us. I might be able to get at least one or two of them. I don't know if they can help, but they can try."

"No, be at my house by five tonight. Sean won't be home. Sharon, can you come over and watch my kids? That would help in case my sitter can't stay. But, Tom, I want to go tonight. I want him to know that I am not afraid. I refuse to let him try to crack me."

"If you say so, Dee. Okay. I will get on the phone now. Do we need anything? Like sage?" Tom asked.

"I don't know. Maybe. I just know that we have to do this. It can't wait any longer. Since it's 1:30 now, I'd like to go home and spend time with my kids, but I will see you soon."

"Sounds good, Dee. Sharon, does that work for you?" Tom asked.

"Yes, certainly. I can help with the kids."

Looking at both, I replied, “Good. I’ll see you soon then.”

Chapter Thirty-Seven

Arriving home, I got in and thanked the neighbor for help. “Hi, guys! How was your day? I was thinking of ordering pizza for you, and you can rent a movie of your choice tonight. Perhaps this weekend, we can figure out a place to go and visit. Maybe even one of the theme parks. Does that sound good?” Cheering with excitement, I could see the light shining bright around each of them. I didn’t want to have to separate the family, but I knew the truth. It saddened me.

Starting to feel depressed, I walked into my room. I grabbed some tissues since I was beginning to cry again. I prayed to God for his love, support, and protection. I asked him to please find a way to help me discover more of my purpose to understand better. I prayed to him to help me with Sean and to watch over my children.

Laying down on my bed, I decided to take a quick nap. I wanted to rest up for later.

“Alright, why am I here again?” I grumbled. I could see I was back at my grandparent’s farmhouse. I knew I was about to relive the sick and twisted adventures of Noreen and Emeline. “Damn it! These dreams are driving me mad. I need

to start finding a way to get out of them sooner because they are awful.”

Passing the twin girls on the staircase, I ran up to the attic. I thought that if I jumped out the window, I would bypass the dream.

“Ellen! Wait! Stop! Don’t go yet.” Startled by a man’s voice, I turned around swiftly. I jumped when I saw who it was.

“Derek? What the hell are you doing here in this dream? And why are you dressed like that peddler that was at the door?”

Looking at him more closely, it suddenly occurred to me. “Wait a minute. It was you from the beginning at the door, wasn’t it? What’s going on here?”

“I know you don’t remember. Try not to get upset and let me explain. I’ve been trying to figure out a way to tell you something. You need to know the truth,” he said, stepping closer.

“What are you talking about, Derek, and why have you been in all of my dreams?”

“They’re not dreams, Dee. They are your memories.”

“No, I don’t understand. This was my grandparent’s house. This dream that keeps occurring is of two little girls that lived here in 1870.”

“Yes, Dee, I know that. You were one of those girls.”

“I don’t understand, Derek. That doesn’t make any sense.”

Stepping closer to me, I saw his face soften. Giving me his usual charming smile, I began to feel my body temperature rise.

“It’s good seeing you,” he said, sweeping the hair away from my face gently.

“I know. I don’t know what it is about you, Derek. There is something that I can’t let go of. You seem to know my soul and thoughts. How is that?”

Derek let out a big sigh, “I’ll tell you, but first, though, I think you should know the truth about the house. You were Noreen in 1870, and you killed your sister.”

“What? No! That’s not possible. I find that extremely hard to believe.” Stepping away from Derek, I had to think for a moment. I needed to try to comprehend it all. “Derek, I can’t fathom how my dreams are actually memories. Also, Emeline’s death was an accident. I saw it. Noreen tried to save her sister.”

Derek shook his head no. “That is what you want to see, Dee. The truth, though, is that you were pushed to do it by the dark shadow. You saw it in the room. Look again; you will see it’s there.”

Standing by Derek, suddenly, the girls appeared. They began repeating the events that took place right before Emeline went out of the window.

“Hi, Susan, Hi, Jeremiah!” Emeline squealed. As Emeline continued to wave, I saw a dark shadow move toward Noreen. It formed a misty black cloud around her, and rage came over her face.

“Emeline, you never listen, and you are so stupid!”

Noreen screamed as she rushed over to her sister to force her body out the window.

Upset, and shaken, I said, “I don’t remember that. I couldn’t have done it. Why was that black shadow there?”

“It was sent on a mission, along with two others. Their job was to claim your soul Ellen.”

“What are you talking about? Derek, that’s crazy!”

“This will be hard to hear, but I will try to explain it to you, Ellen. For over two thousand years, you have been followed by a dark army from the Underworld. Hades, deployed troops to claim your soul.”

“What?! Why?”

“Because Ellen, a demon, named Rocqueel, attacked you one day. He was the demon that you bumped into at your old house. A long time ago, he tried to kill you before he got caught and ran from the Underworld. He had stabbed you so many times, that your soul ejected long enough for you to go to the Light to be with God. You wanted out of the Underworld and sought the opportunity to evolve by having human experiences. You got your wish but have suffered lives of turmoil because of the dark forces constantly searching you out. Since there’s free will, and you wanted to stay in the Light, God has always taken care of you.”

“Derek, that’s absolutely crazy! Do you hear yourself? Hades? Are you for real? A little girl killing her sister for her soul?”

“Yes, Ellen, because the idea was to consume Noreen with guilt and grief. In doing so, she would grow up with hate for herself and those around her. She would then commit a life of sin and upon death retreat to the Underworld. Once there, her soul would be ceremoniously placed back into her body. Persephone’s body. Your soul’s first body. However, none of that happened because God took your soul six months later from the fever. He saved you.”

“Uh, huh. So, you are telling me that I’m Persephone, and I’m supposed to believe that?”

“Yes, that is correct,” he replied.

“No, it’s bullshit, Derek. It’s totally nuts, and I must be completely insane for having this dream. This was my grandparent’s house. That’s it!”

“Ellen, I know that you don’t remember. It’s buried deep in your subconscious memories. When you are dreaming, you are bringing some of that up. It doesn’t always make sense.”

Shaking my head in disbelief, I responded, “I don’t know. Something about this isn’t sitting right. There may be aspects that my subconscious is trying to work through; however, the story is a bit much. I can say that my dreams of you have become a problem in my waking life. I do know that. I don’t know if you are a ghost or someone, I’ve created in my mind to help me work through my troubles. I’m so confused, and my life is turning upside down. I may not be able to stop dreaming, but I can tell you to leave me alone. My marriage is suffering, and I need to concentrate on that right now.”

“Dee, I want to tell you one more thing.”

“No, Derek. Let me go. I’m letting you go. I’m sorry that you died. I’m sorry that I somehow pulled you into my fantasy world. With my life such a shamble, I can only believe that this has been my way of escape.” Walking back to the open window, I placed half of my body out to jump.

“Ellen, wait! I know this is hard.”

“Goodbye, Derek,” I said, letting go of the window to fall below.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

“**M**om, Sharon’s at the door,” I heard Josh yell to me. Waking up, I looked over to see that I had been sleeping for almost two hours. It was nearly 4:30 p.m.

“Hi Sharon, I just woke up. Thank you for coming.”

“Sure, Dee. It’s no problem. I am always glad to help. I do hope something can be done to help that land. Are you sure you are up to it today?” Sharon asked.

Looking outside, I could see that Sean was coming into the drive.

“What’s he doing home so early?” I muttered, looking out.

Walking inside, Sean had a look of solid intent. When he glanced over at Sharon, he nodded and said hello to her. “What’s going on, Dee?”

“Nothing. You said that you were going to be late and Tom and Sharon wanted me to help with something. Sharon volunteered to watch the kids.”

Snapping, Sean said. “So, you could go out with Tom?”

“No, it’s not like that at all. It’s our old house. The new people started having problems with it too.”

“Whatever, I don’t care anymore, Dee. Do what you want. I’m getting my stuff tonight anyway and moving out.”

Looking over at Sharon, she noticed I was panicking. “Dee, how about if I take the kids right now and go get pizza. Maybe that will help, and you two can talk.”

“Thank you, Sharon, yes. I would appreciate that. I’ll go tell them.”

Getting the kids out the door, I went into the bedroom to find Sean packing his suitcase.

“Where are you going?” I asked.

“Anywhere but here, Dee.”

“Sean, you can’t be serious. You won’t even talk with me. It’s not fair to walk out like this and not do anything to try to save our marriage.”

Sean stopped packing and looked at me. “Dee, this is hard telling you this, but I have been seeing someone. I didn’t mean for it to happen. It’s just that you and I have changed.”

Crying, I said, “You don’t love me anymore, do you?”

As Sean let out an exhale, I could see in his eyes that he felt terrible. “I don’t want to hurt you any more than I have to. I feel that we both will be better going our separate ways. Can you understand that?”

“What about our kids though Sean? I mean, shouldn’t we at least try to work through this for them?” Pleading, I begged him to stay, but he said that he had already made up his mind. He apologized as I sobbed. With his suitcase in hand, he headed for the door and walked out to his car. I ran

after him and grabbed the side of his elbow. I tried to take the suitcase from his hands.

As Sean and I argued in the driveway, Tom's SUV pulled up.

"No, Dee. Stop and let go!" Sean shouted.

"Sean, NO! Please don't do this right now!" Fighting over the suitcase, I lost my grip. My body flew back, and my head hit the truck window so hard it knocked me unconscious.

Dropping to the ground, I saw the white light overhead. I began getting flashes of memories from many lifetimes. They became mixed with ferocious flames of fire within the walls of the House of Hades. I started to see my life growing up in Mount Olympus, with Zeus and Demeter. Visions came of my being taken into the Underworld and made Queen, against my will. I saw the tender moments with Prince Alastor. Everything was happening so fast, yet it all made sense. I felt such pain, loss, love, and even fear, especially for Hades. Somewhere, inside my head, told me that this flooding of memories was somehow alerting him in the Underworld. I could feel him trying to call me home.

With so many memories surfaced, I realized what Derek had told me was the truth. It was like a thick blanket of fog lifted. I could see and feel now that I was Persephone.

"Dee? Are you okay?" Opening my eyes, I could see Sean and Tom. They were standing over me. As I stared at them, I was still processing the flood of memories that had come in like a tidal wave. With everything at the surface now, I realized that I felt different. I knew that I was me, yet, I was Persephone too, and I had her feelings and thoughts.

Slowly, I stood up with Tom's help. Looking at Sean's expression of guilt and shame, I realized that his soul had a clear purpose in my life. Whatever his future lessons were,

they were going to be his to face. He had come into my life to bring me the initial support and love that I needed. Not only that, but the most important value that he had added was the three beautiful souls of our children.

Wherever he went, I knew it was his journey. For me, I recognized that my life was supposed to change. My current path was leading me to new soul lessons.

“Are you sure you are okay, Dee?” Tom voiced with worry.

“Yes, I am. Everything’s fine. In fact, Sean, please go ahead and leave. It’s all right. I’ll be okay. Do me a favor, and let’s try to get through this as amicably as possible for the kids. I know it won’t be easy. They are going to be upset, so please be sure you are there for them.”

Sean shook his head in agreement. As he did, I could still see in his eyes, the Sean, that I had always known and loved. I could even sense more strongly how he was feeling inside, because of my obvious connection to the other worlds.

He did still love me, and I felt it. However, our time together must have been through. Suddenly, I realized that it wasn’t necessarily awful even though it hurt. There was a reason. I had to believe that. Perhaps he didn’t understand why he wanted to leave. Maybe he felt a subconscious push to move on for the betterment for both of us. I believe his soul knew it was part of our journey and time together. I had to trust that.

Sean looked over at Tom and then said, “Tom, may I have a moment with Dee alone?” “Sure, I’ll wait in my car.”

Taking a deep sigh, I saw Sean’s eyes welling with tears. I could tell that he was trying to hold back from crying. “Dee, I’m not sure what to say to you to help this situation. I take most of the blame. I’ve been angry for reasons that I don’t

understand. I've been trying to figure it out for a while now. If I had to guess, I think part of me is jealous of you. You're getting the chance to go through something that few people get to experience. I haven't felt like I am the one that you should be with. That saddens me, yet here we are, and I'm the one leaving. I can't shake this feeling that I'm holding you back from something bigger. And something meant for you.

"You've been a rich blessing in my life. I have loved you, and I still do. I know this isn't easy for both of us. I know that I said that I was with someone else. The truth, though, is that I'm not serious about her. I have too much on my plate right now. I want you to know that I'm sorry. This separation isn't going to make it any easier. I know that, and I am concerned about our kids too. I will do everything that I can to help, and I want you to know that."

"I understand, Sean. It's okay, and I'm glad you are trying to talk. I wish we would have done this much sooner, but I understand how life works."

"Dee, they say it takes two people to break a relationship, and I know that you have pulled away. But I'm not blaming you. I think often; I pushed you away because I didn't want to listen to how you felt. I couldn't always identify with your experiences. Sometimes it was too much for me, especially all at once. I guess I should have stepped up sooner. I could tell you to wait for me, and that we should try to work through this. But, that's not fair to you or the kids. At least that's how I see it based on what I am feeling. Maybe I am wrong, but I hope you will forgive me one day, Dee," Sean said, opening his car door.

"Sean, I forgive you. I'm hurt, but I will get through it. I don't know where we are both headed, but I believe we can work together. Besides, Tom has pointed out to me that when one door closes, another one always opens. I have to trust that," I voiced with sadness.

Sean nodded and then looked over at Tom in the distance. “He’s a good guy Dee. I hope you can see that. He would be good for you because he understands you and seems supportive.”

“Oh, Tom is only a good friend.”

“Yes, but it’s friends like him that you need in your life. They are supportive and trustworthy. They love you for who you are, and they don’t doubt you. I see that in him. I wish I were him. Anyway, I better go. It’s getting late, and I’m probably going to Tim and Sheila’s for a while. At least until we can figure out what we are going to do with the house and the kids. We can talk more later. Maybe this weekend would be a good time for me to come over to talk to the kids with you. For now, let them know that I got taken out of town on business.”

Getting into the truck, Sean shut the door and smiled before he backed up and drove away. Part of me wanted to cry. However, part of me felt sure that I was on a new path and one that would take me closer to my true purpose.

Looking over at Tom, I could see the worry on his face. I walked over to him. “Dee, hey there. Are you all right? You know we can forget about tonight. We’ll reschedule. It’s probably not that big of a deal, and who knows if it would work anyway.”

“I do, and I want to go, Tom. Let’s do this. I’m good,” I replied.

Shocked, Tom responded, “Alrighty then. Let’s go. I’ll drive, especially after the bump you got on your head. I’m not sure what the plan is, but I’ve got Bryce, Ted, and Liz going in now. I gave them the lockbox code to get the key.”

“Okay then, Tom,” I said, placing my index finger softly on his lips to quiet him. “Stop talking and let’s go.”

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Driving down the road, Tom suddenly interjected, “I know you are upset over your marriage.”

From deep in prayer, I looked up and mumbled, “What?”

“Dee, I want you to know that I am here for you. I will help you in whatever way I can.”

“Don’t worry; I’ll be okay, Tom. I know I am strong, and for some reason, I feel I’m where I am supposed to be. I can’t explain it to you. Maybe I feel a purpose and an understanding of who I am. So, don’t worry about me. Everything is going to be fine. I will get by. My kids love me, and I love them. No matter what, they are what is most important,” I explained, smiling.

Driving into the neighborhood, I could hear Rocqueel’s voice screaming inside my head, while Tom’s cell phone went off.

“You fuckin bitch! How dare you come? Evidently, I didn’t make myself fucking clear enough. I’m gonna cut you now, and I’m gonna enjoy it!”

“Hey, what’s up? What?! You’re kidding,” Tom answered, looking at me. He was talking to Bryce over his cell and found out that Liz had gotten scratched by something in one of the back bedrooms. Immediately, I knew which bedroom.

Getting off the phone, Tom said, “Bryce just told me that something came up from behind Liz and forced her down. She came screaming into the living room with red scratch marks on her arms and stomach. I don’t know Dee; this sounds serious. Maybe we shouldn’t do this.”

“Are they all in the house right now, Tom?”

“No, they are sitting inside Ted’s car.”

As we pulled up to the house, I got out and took a deep breath. I could see from the dark front window, that something was there watching me. It wasn’t pleasant. The whole house and even the subdivision felt gloomy. The energy of the trapped souls I could feel more than ever. I knew it was Rocqueel holding most of them there. They needed to move on and be with their loved ones and at peace.

Grounding myself, I visualized deep roots growing from my feet far into the Earth’s core. I looked over at the team and told Tom to keep them safe by not allowing them back inside the house.

“I’ll go with you, Dee.”

“No, he knows what we want to do. This isn’t about you. I need to take care of what’s happening here. Please stay by the door. If anything goes wrong, call Sean.”

“Dee, I don’t know that we should mess with this. There are things out there that go beyond Casper. I think this might be one of those times. Look at what happened. Whatever is in there also drove your family out. I don’t want anything to happen to you.”

Looking over at Tom, I could see his concern.

“Tom, I know you care. But let me do this. Okay?”

“Alright, Dee. Let’s go inside.”

“No, Tom, I will go inside. You wait here.”

The sun was going down, and it was getting dark. There were gray clouds in the sky rolling over the top of the land. It looked like a storm was brewing because the wind was picking up.

Walking up, Tom grabbed my arm. Turning to look at him, I replied, “What Tom?”

“Dee, I was going to say something, but...”

Cutting him off, “Save it for later, Tom. I need to go do this right now.”

As we approached the door, Tom tried to open it for me. He couldn’t seem to get the knob to turn. Glancing over at the window, I could see shadow after shadow walking by. It was as if a thousand eyes were on us. I could feel the temperature in my body rising. Chills were starting to move up my back. Shaking it off, I took a deep breath and then closed my eyes to say a prayer. “God, please hear me now and walk with me to help heal this land. Ensure I have with me, all those angelic beings from near and far as I go inside. May they accompany me and surround me with their love and protection. Help me to help all of those that need peace and comfort.”

“Tom, move to the side, please,” I whispered, placing my hand on the doorknob. Closing my eyes, I mouthed another silent prayer. I could feel the light from within me, shining brighter as God’s energy got closer. Turning the knob once more, the door opened. Stepping in, I could feel the extreme hot energy. Tom turned on the entrance light.

From the foyer where I was standing, I noticed a considerable number of dark shadows coming toward us. They were protecting Rocqueel. Everywhere I looked, I saw red gleaming eyes. Glancing down the hall, I could see into Jack and Sarah's old bedroom. The energy was intense and felt furious. There was a portal in there, leading to darker dimensions. I could see the spiraling black hole in the corner of the room. Next to it stood Rocqueel with a horrible sinister grin holding some type of ancient dagger. He and his army were using the portal to come and go quickly. They had made the house their base.

"Tom, please wait here. I'm going to the back bedroom. I'm going to shut the door. I don't want you to come in. Give me some time. Tom's face looked worried. "If that's what you want, but I don't think you should be by yourself. Come out immediately if you see anything."

Walking gradually toward the room, I felt my stomach tensing. Feeling fright come over me, I got scared. From inside my head, I saw my dad's face. I heard him say, "That's not your fear. Let it go. You know who you are and what you came to do. So, do it because you aren't alone."

Closing the door, I turned toward where I had seen Rocqueel standing from my mind's eye. "Come out, Rocqueel. I remember who you are now. Everything came back to me. Show yourself. If you intend to kill me, don't be a coward and do it from behind my back." I stood in the middle of the room, patiently waiting. I knew he was hiding close by.

While I was scanning the room with my mind's eye, I heard Tom's voice coming down the hallway. Startling me, I turned my head to the door, "Dee, is everything okay in there?" Feeling a breeze brush by, I turned to look back and jumped. I saw Rocqueel holding the dagger up to the side of my face.

“Hello, Persephone! I’m excited that you can finally remember me. So, now that you are in my domain, what do you want to do first, bitch? Because I plan to cut you like a chopped onion when we are through.” As I stood there, Rocqueel started to circle to try to frighten me. The look on his face was of disgusting amusement. With my eyes closed, to avoid seeing him, I began reciting a clearing prayer to start the healing process for the land.

“Make me fuckin sick! I should have known you would involve God in this. That’s cheating! Don’t you know that? This is between you and me, or I will call in everyone you saw standing guard.”

Opening my eyes, I looked at Rocqueel. I could see that he was standing in front of me playing with the sharp knife in his hand. He looked ominous and horrifying, but I tried to see past that to keep my fears at bay.

“You know, Persephone, I feel kind of sad right now. I hate to think that we have come to this. We used to be such good friends. Don’t look so shocked. Granted, it’s been a long time, but here we are.” Standing there, I didn’t move, and Rocqueel kept talking. I could tell he was having fun. Cackling, he said, “What were the odds that you would move your family onto the land that I claimed after I left the Underworld? It somehow took your ass 2700 years, but you found me. That’s impressive, and I’m spellbound. Of course, you always did make an impression.

“You know, we could have made a good couple. I bet you find that hard to believe. I know you got men chasing after you. They are practically fuckin lined up. Although this version of you, I could surely pass on. I prefer the bitch that’s lying out in the House of Hades. She’s much better looking. She and I could have ruled the Underworld together. But, like you and you being here, she was stupid. She should have never decided to interfere with my plans of killing Hades. I would have given

you everything. I might have even allowed you to go back with your sweetheart. But sadly, here we are. Just know that you deserved every cut that I placed upon your filthy body, and you deserve every cut I will make today.”

“Rocqueel, I intend to see that this land and whatever souls you have collected get put to eternal rest. You won’t hold them, hostage, any longer. They deserve peace!” I demanded.

“Noo, that’s not gonna happen. It is sweet, like you,” he said, sticking his long tongue out and licking my face. “Oh, bitch, you sure taste good. Maybe we should have some fun together. What da ya think?”

Knowing that Tom was on the other side of the door, I locked it. Taking a deep breath, I regrouped myself and remembered who I was. Turning, I shoved past Rocqueel and sat down on the floor. I immediately began praying and chanting a small clearing request. “Oh no, you don’t, bitch!” Rocqueel screamed.

As I prayed, he came up beside me with speed. I felt a strange supernatural force throw me to the wall. It was so surprising and weird. Picking myself up, he threw me to the other side. Trying to figure out what was happening, I saw my actual body was not moving from the middle of the floor. It felt and looked like it was taking place through a form of astral projection, where my spiritual self was outside of my body. Before I had another chance to get up, I saw from the corner of my eye, something to the other side of me. The deep dark swirling black abyss became very visible. It immediately started to get larger. I could tell someone, or something was trying to come through.

Getting nervous, I wondered who the hell it was. What if it was Hades?

As Rocqueel and I watched the portal opening, there was a loud, “Boom!” It was a jolt of lightning hitting close to

the house. The storm was starting, and the rain began to pour down. While the portal spun and got larger, Rocqueel looked over to me and snarled. Just before he came barreling at me, something massively evil and dark, grabbed him and threw him. It looked beastly, with horns, spikes, and a tail.

“What the hell is that?” I yelled.

“GET OUT! Leave now and don’t come back!” voiced the enormous ugly demon now out of the portal.

“Oh, Goddamn it! Not again! Alastorres, you are a pain in my ass! I was having fun. Know that if you let her clear this land, you will have to watch her and everyone that she loves for eternity. I will fuck her life up! Then I will fuck up her next one. Got it! Because it’s a promise, I intend to keep!” No sooner had Rocqueel stated that, then he’d flown out the window.

Looking at the giant dark evil demon in front of me, I was terrified. Who was he and why was he being told he would need to watch over me? I intended to clear the land, but I wasn’t sure if this giant demon was going to let me. Did he also have a claim to the property?

“Who are you?” I questioned in fear. I felt back in my body to where I could look up to see the monster more clearly. Staring at the demon, I realized he seemed familiar. “Wait a minute! I’ve seen you before, haven’t I? You are the one that keeps scaring him away. Why is that?”

Coming toward me, without saying a word, the demon towered over my body. “What the hell are you? Why won’t you talk to me?”

In a deep, chilling voice, with red and black piercing eyes, he responded. “I’m what they call an Archdemon. Also known as the Torturer of Hell. I agreed to become this for you. I’ve protected you for thousands of years.”

“What? Why would I ask you to do that?” I questioned in shock.

“You didn’t. Satan offered me a deal after Hades sent me to Hell. It was Rocqueel that had attacked you, but I heard your screams and ran to you. When I went in, I pulled Rocqueel from you, and he fled. When Hades came in, I was the one standing over your body. He immediately damned me. Once in Hell, I heard about his plan to get you back. I knew that you didn’t want to go back. I offered my pledge to serve for the capabilities of being an Archdemon. We have certain privileges, but only because we must serve for eternity. I gave my soul to save yours.”

“Why would you do that for me?”

The demon paced for a moment, then turned and transformed himself before my eyes.

“Oh, my God! No!” I wailed running over to him. “Derek! Why?”

“It’s Alastor actually, but you know that. You’ve known me each life in some way or another. I’ve always been there. Sometimes close by, other times, I’ve hidden. I served in whatever way you needed me to.”

Staring at Alastor, I could see a mixed emotion of profound misery and love. Feeling his pain, I started to cry. “Alastor, tell me why you did this for me? Did you really do it because you love me?”

“Persephone, I’ve loved you for a long time. The day I met you, I wanted to marry you. You saw it in your dream. Unfortunately, when I asked Zeus for your hand in marriage, Hades had already made you his wife. I took it extremely hard and asked your father to help me. He refused and told me he wouldn’t go against his brother. He said you were a queen, and he wanted that for you. Still, I begged him. Finally, he said that

if I wanted you back, that I would have to deal with Hades. I had to get to the Underworld on my own. Which I did, by killing one of the guards at Zeus's door on my way out. I knew the moment I killed one that the other one would slay me. I got sent to the Underworld, where I found myself face to face with Hades. Right away, he realized what I had done and my reason why. He wouldn't let me near you. However, he didn't lock me up or send me away immediately, and I don't know why."

Crying, I wiped my tears. "Derek, I'm speechless. I can't believe you did this for me. Have I known this in other lives before?"

"Yes, but only a couple," he replied as a knock came from the door. Tom was trying to open it.

"Tom, I will be out in a moment. Everything is okay."

"Alright, Dee. The rain is finally slowing down. Let me know if you need anything."

"Sure, Tom," I said, turning myself back toward Derek. Seeing him standing in front of me, he had a look of sorrow and shame. Smiling, I said, "I love you. I wish for you to let go of this life, though. It's not fair for you to suffer and give so much up for my freedom. If I haven't ever said it in any other life, I'm saying it now. Ask God to help take your soul home. You don't deserve this. I can't let you do this for me. I won't. I'll go home first."

"Ellen, no. I wouldn't even think of it. You have a life to live here yet, and judging by Rocqueel's hatred, you have a true enemy. You need me now, more than ever. If you don't mind some advice, I would avoid clearing this land."

"No, Derek. I won't do that. It's not who I am, and I refuse to run from fear. I won't let others live inside of it either."

“Then, you need me, Ellen. They will be coming. I guarantee Rocqueel will find some way to let Hades know where you are.”

Closing my eyes, I began to pray to God and the Diva of the Land. I called the Light Spirits that I knew would help clear all the negative energy from the depressed area. I asked for them to shine down loving light and to bring in angels that could show the lost soul’s home.

Feeling peace starting to move in, I saw soul upon soul going into the Light. It was beautiful, and the land began to feel bright. Glancing out the window, I could see the storm had ended.

“Derek, tell me something. How is it that you came to be mortal and alive recently? You suddenly died in a car accident?”

“I can’t live long. There is a window of time, and then I must return to serve him. It’s very draining. I came back when I did because I had missed you so much. I wanted to touch you. Like actually touch you, and I knew you were awakening. I had a feeling something big was going to happen for you in this life. And now, here you are.”

“How often can you do that?” I asked.

“Not often. Hardly ever. It’s better that way. You need a real love in your life and not a monster like me.”

“No, Derek, I need you.”

“I’m sorry, Ellen, but reach into your soul and see the truth of who you are and what you stand for. I’m only the shadow protecting you when I am able.”

Taking Derek’s hand, I squeezed it as he leaned in to kiss me. “Good-bye, Dee. I have to go now.”

“Good-bye, Derek,” I said with tears in my eyes.

I watched with anguish as he got back into the portal and left. As it closed, I put out my hand and prayed, shutting it for good. Opening the door, I saw Tom anxiously waiting for me. Grabbing me, he gave me a huge hug.

“What’s wrong, Tom?”

“I don’t know. You had that door shut, and I could hear muffled voices. I couldn’t make out what you were saying. I was just worried, I guess. Do you think it’s better here now? Were you able to accomplish anything?” Tom asked.

“Yes, I believe so, and it’s important to keep your faith that what I did here today, worked. Faith and trust are so important when combined with the power of prayer.”

Chapter Forty

Leaving the house, I realized that it felt welcoming. Driving by Plantation Parke, I could feel that the intense dark energy had released. It was more peaceful.

“Dee, I want to tell you something. I don’t know if it’s the right time or not. I don’t think it is. Perhaps I should shut up. I know that if I don’t say something, I may not ever. I should probably be respectful and wait.”

“What is it, Tom? You are babbling.”

“I don’t know how to say this. I’m not exactly the type of guy that does this easily. As a matter-of-fact, I tend to stick my foot in my mouth more often. I uh...gosh, this is tough.”

Smiling, I replied, “I’ve never seen you like this. Will you please just say it.”

“It’s been a really long time since anyone has really...meant anything to me. I really...close myself off for fear of being really hurt...or really hurting someone else. I am really...really bad at this,” Tom stuttered. I could see sweat budding upon his forehead.

“Tom, you are sweating and turning a little red. Not only that, I think you said the word “really” over a half dozen times. Are you okay?”

Turning down my street, Tom sighed. “Dee, I think I’m starting to feel..”

Cutting Tom off, I interjected, “Why the heck is Sean’s truck in the driveway. What is he doing back?”

No sooner did Tom stop the car, than I’d opened my door. “Gosh, Tom, I’m sorry. I saw his truck and cut you off.”

“It’s nothing. I was going to mention that I think I’m starting to feel like you need a raise. Just ignore me. It’s been a long day, and I tend to stutter when I’m tired, and I don’t make any sense.”

While Tom was talking, Sean walked out to the car with red roses. “Dee, I got down the road, and I said to myself, what the fuck are you doing, Sean? She is the best thing that has ever happened to you, and you are stupid if you don’t at least try to work things out. I love you, Dee. I don’t want us to end like this. I understand if you are upset and don’t want me. I called her. I told her it was over. I’m ready to go to counseling. Whatever it takes. I love you. If anything, I want to talk now.”

Shocked, I responded, “I am not sure... I don’t know what to say. Yes, I want to work things out, too, if we can. But, I don’t know if that’s possible. I’m willing to try, I guess.” Sean beamed, and as I glanced over to Tom, I saw the look on his face.

“Sean, can I have a moment alone with Tom for a second. We cleared the house, and I want to tell him something.”

“That’s great!” Sean exclaimed. I wasn’t used to seeing him so happy, but it felt good to see he cared. “I’ll be over here,” Sean said.

Still in the car, I shut the door. Turning to Tom, I sighed, “Tom, I’m sorry. I think I know what you were going to say.”

“No, you don’t. It’s nothing. I’m tired.”

“Tom, I know. I care a great deal for you. You have been an amazing friend. I have a home here, though. This is awkward for me too. I have a long way to go, and you know that. I don’t know what to think or how to feel about Sean’s same-day change or his cheating. However, I owe it to God for the vows I took with him. I owe it to my children. Someday, and I hope soon, you will find the right woman. One that loves you with as much passion as you have locked away inside of you. You can’t be afraid to step out there because you are worthy of love.”

Smiling softly, Tom said, “Good-night, Dee. I’m happy for you. I hope things work out. Will I see you Monday?”

“Absolutely! I’m not quitting. I think we are just getting started. We make a good team house healing together!” Getting out, I shut the door and smiled.

Running up to Sean, I waved good-bye to Tom.

About the Author

Aerin Kube earned a Ph.D. in Parapsychology & Metaphysics from the Univ. of Metaphysical Sciences, a non-secular college in CA, accredited by the American Alternative Medical Assoc. and the American Assoc. Of Drugless Practitioners. Before the unfoldment of her spiritual journey, she had attended secular colleges and universities. She received degrees in business from which she utilized when she worked in corporate America.

She is an Ordained Minister and has certifications in areas such as Reiki, IET, and Life Coaching. Her passion is psychical studies and philosophy. Currently, she is an International Psychic Medium, Spiritual Coach, and Remote Viewer.

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