

Copyright by S. Leigh Young

The DreamVisioner

a life designed to impact the world

Book One

S. Leigh Young

THE DREAMVISIONER— CHAPTER ONE

by S. Leigh Young

United States Senate staffer Jake Spencer saw the first message appear mysteriously on his laptop screen on a quiet Saturday in February. It was late at night at his home in Washington D. C. He was working on a very important presentation, undeniably the most important of his career. Vermont Senator Jane Weston, Chairman of the Finance Committee, would soon present it to the Majority Leader in a closed meeting. The deadline was only two months away and Jake had been working nearly nonstop for over six months. The senator had given him sole responsibility because she trusted him to maintain confidentiality and because he was extremely inspired to complete it. If word got out the pressure would be unbearable.

It was unlike anything that had ever been done by a sitting senator. Born from frustration and the observance of deep-rooted corruption, the idea was germinated between Senator Weston and Majority Leader Cameron as a way of instigating a transformation in governance; to bring an end to the corruption and put the country back on track. As the project evolved Jake became intimately involved in its creation.

After struggling for a solution to a particular problem, an idea emerged, so he started typing again. He was an excellent typist and always looked at the screen as he worked. This time he stopped short because the words were garbled. Quickly, he deleted the line and started over. Again, the words appeared garbled and made no sense. He assumed he must be so tired that he was seeing things, but tried again with no luck. Finally, he plunged back in his chair and cursed at the computer, “damn technology!” He stood up and stomped around the room, running his fingers through his hair, trying not to forget his idea. Maybe if he took a break, everything would be okay. After checking all the connections, he turned the computer off and left the room.

Twenty minutes later, after a trip to the bathroom and a visit to the kitchen for a soda, he sat down to try once more. After loading the document again, he scrolled to the bottom where he noticed a message slowly appearing on the screen.

YOU EXIST IN A DREAM

“What the hell....?” He cursed aloud, shaking his head to clear the cobwebs. Was he seeing things again? He didn’t feel drained anymore after drinking the soda, so he knew it wasn’t that. There had to be something wrong with the computer. “Okay, buster,” he mumbled, “one more time.”

After erasing the strange message, he began typing again and everything seemed fine. Two hours later the section was finished so he saved the document, turned off the laptop, put it in his safe and went to bed. Just before he fell asleep, he saw the strange message in his mind and wondered what it meant. Was it real? Had someone breached his security? How could that be?

The laptop was never connected to the internet because it was reserved only for this project and he took every precaution to be sure it was secure and safe. Each morning he would encrypt and copy the files onto a flash drive, with a second copy to another flash drive that served as a backup. He would then place the laptop and the second flash drive in his safe and bring the first flash drive to work where he would upload it to the laptop in his office and place the flash drive in the office safe. Before he left his office for any reason, he always put the laptop in the safe. The laptops and flash drives were never out of his sight unless they were in a locked safe and everything was encrypted and required a password. This was the procedure the senator had instructed him to follow. He was not allowed to take a laptop home in case it was stolen or lost. He wasn’t even allowed to upload data to a secured server.

Had someone discovered his security routine? He didn’t see how that could happen. No one except the senator and a few select others knew what he was working on. He and the senator were the only ones who had the combinations to the safes, the encryption data and the passwords. At last, he drifted into a restless sleep.

The next morning, awakened suddenly by the radio alarm blaring in his ear, Jake got out of bed, staggered downstairs and started the coffee. After showering he dressed and went into the kitchen where he poured a cup of the inviting brew. He put some bread in the toaster, punched the lever and turned around to see his daughter bouncing down the stairs.

Carey Spencer was a natural beauty. Her soft chocolate skin gleamed when the light hit it and her eyes were always smiling unless she was upset. On this particular morning he could see she was feeling well.

“Morning, Cupcake,” he said warmly.

“Morning, dad,” she replied, giving him a quick kiss on the cheek as she headed for the refrigerator. “What’s on your schedule today?”

“Same old thing,” he replied. “Still on that big project...stayed up ‘til midnight working on it.”

Carey lovingly chastised her father for working too much, mentioning the bags under his eyes. She swept past and took a seat across the table.

“I have bags?” he asked. “Really?”

“Yes! Really!” she replied. “And I don’t get to spend time with you anymore.”

He knew she was right. For the past several months they hadn’t done anything together -- no movies or bowling or walks in the park, like they use to do. Ever since his wife’s death two years earlier, they had become very close and the project was interfering with that. He explained that it would be finished soon and suggested they take a vacation to Hawaii at that point.

“Cool! I love the islands. Can we stay with aunt Tiki?”

“Who else? Of course, we’ll stay with her. She’d kill us if we didn’t,” he replied.

Carey laughed. “I really miss her. She reminds me so much of mom.”

Jake looked up and noticed a few tears forming in the corner of his daughter’s eyes so he reached across the table and touched her hand. “They were twins, Carey. Of course, she reminds you of mom.”

“I mean...it’s more than just their looks. Tiki has the same laidback philosophy of life that mom had. You know? They never let things get to them.”

“I know what you mean,” Jake replied. “With me working here in Washington, things do get a little stressful sometimes.”

“Sometimes? It seems like it’s never-ending!” Carey exclaimed. “Senator Weston relies on you too much, dad. Can’t you see that? I can hear you late at night cussing and shouting at the computer and stomping around the room.”

Jake worried about that. He often liked to think aloud and he’d walk around the room trying to work out a problem. “Sorry, Cupcake. I’ll try to keep it down.”

“That’s okay,” Carey said. “But I still think you should talk to Senator Weston. She’s too demanding.”

“Well, she has confidence in me. Nothing wrong with that, is there?”

Carey shook her head in frustration, drank the last of her orange juice, grabbed her bag from the back of the chair and stood up. “Well, I better go. I have a big exam this morning.”

After placing a kiss on her father’s cheek Carey swept out of the house leaving Jake to consider their conversation, wondering how he ever ended up working in

Washington. It was the most stressful job he could imagine, and yet he loved it. Large corporations were taking over everything and the average guy didn't stand a chance against them. Most members of the Senate were in the pockets of these big corporations, receiving millions of dollars in political contributions each year. How could a guy earning the medium income compete against that?

He hated the fact that the engine of politics was money, recalling the last big project he'd worked on for Senator Weston -- campaign finance reform. Of course, it didn't go anywhere; didn't even get out of committee. Too many Senators had been paid off. It all stunk to high heaven, but he believed in Senator Weston. He liked her ideology and admired her spunk. She wasn't afraid to take on the big boys and he had immense respect for her.

That afternoon the senator called him to her office for a private meeting to talk about the project. They spent about a half hour discussing it and Jake could see she was pleased. Just before he left, she told him about an odd phone call she'd received from Congressman Rick Belham. It was peculiar because he seemed to be concealing the true reason for the call, beating around the bush and stammering on about a bridge project in his District of which she knew very little.

"I told him I couldn't vote on his bridge amendment since I'm not in the House and I asked why he was mentioning it to me. Finally, he said he heard through the grapevine that I was working on something to do with corruption in government. I stopped him right there and asked him where he'd heard the rumor."

Jake squirmed in the chair, thinking about the strange message on his computer screen. He toyed with the idea of telling her about it, but decided against it. "What did he say?" Jake asked.

"Oh, he said he couldn't remember. Then he made some excuse and said he had to hang up."

"Do you think he knows any details about the presentation?" asked Jake.

“Who knows, Jake? You can’t stop the leaks around here. Are you following all those security procedures we discussed?”

He assured the senator he was following the security protocol exactly, then they discussed the project for a while until the Weston leaned back in her chair and rubbed her forehead, obviously wanting to change the subject. “Say, how’s Carey doing? Did she get accepted at Harvard yet?”

“She’s fine,” replied Jake. “We should be hearing soon. We both have our fingers crossed.”

The senator offered to put in a good word for Carey, but Jake declined, confident his daughter had the grades to be accepted. The Senator stood up, indicating the meeting was over, walked toward Jake and patted him on the shoulder affectionately. “Well, if you change your mind just let me know Jake. I’d be glad to do it.”

He thanked her and walked toward the door. “I’ll think about it.”

As he walked back to his office he considered the strange computer message, but shook his head and tried to forget it. Then he thought about the senator’s offer to call the dean. He had faith that Carey would do well no matter which college she attended. She was bright, enthusiastic and near the top of her class. She and her boyfriend, Mike Harvey, were both excellent students. Mike wanted to become an engineer and Carey was strongly considering constitutional law. She wanted to work for the ACLU fighting for civil rights. He was very proud of her.

After setting up the computer the bizarre message entered his mind again. What if it was just his imagination? The whole thing seemed too weird to even talk about. A shiver ran up his spine at the thought of it, but he shrugged it off and went back to work.

He was beginning to realize that the project in its present form would not be sufficient to get the entire picture across to those who read it. They had plenty of

evidence, but he needed to find a better way to present the affects of corruption on the economy and welfare of the people. His mind began swirling with questions. Should he include some testimonials from citizens with horror stories about the present system? Should he show how much the private companies were skimming off the top just to shuffle money around? And what about Wall Street? He could show how much the stock prices had risen over the last forty years and compare it to the income increases of the average citizen. He found this type of profit-taking to be immoral – making money on nothing more than casino bets so the CEOs could take their big bonuses and the stockholders could make a killing. It disgusted him, but he wasn't sure it was the best way to present the package.

That night, after he and Carey finished dinner, she went up to her room to study and Jake took the laptop and flash drive out of the safe. He set everything up on the desk in his bedroom where he always worked for complete privacy. He was starting a new section that would focus on the average citizen. After typing for about thirty minutes the screen suddenly froze up again. "Damn!" he shouted loudly. "What now?"

Slamming back in his chair he tried to calm down and regain his composure. What the hell was happening? Again, he touched the keyboard and looked at the screen. Nothing. He had written two paragraphs since it was last saved and didn't want to lose them, so he hooked up the printer and tried to print the page in case he had to reboot. The document wouldn't print; the computer was entirely frozen. Remembering what he did last time, he decided to turn it off and lose the last two paragraphs hoping he could remember what he'd written. Just as he was about to touch the power button the same peculiar message appeared on the screen:

YOU EXIST IN A DREAM

He stared at it for a few moments wondering what to do. Should he try to type something? Was the computer still frozen? With that in mind, he touched the keyboard again and punched the W. He watched the screen as the W appeared where it was supposed to. Thinking quickly, he decided to try and save the document before it froze up again and while the message was still on the screen. He clicked the Save button and

watched as the cursor turned into an hour glass, indicating the process was working. Good, he thought, maybe that damned message will be saved and I can trace it some how.

After a few minutes he loaded the document again and watched as it appeared on the screen. Scrolling down to where the message had been, he saw that it wasn't there! The W was still there, but no message. Scratching his head in frustration, he leaned back in the chair and thought about it for a long time. All sorts of fearful possibilities began to fill his mind. Was somebody spying on him? Was his computer being hacked? With no internet connection, he couldn't see how it was possible. He was the only one with the ability to input anything. Why wasn't the message included in the saved document? And what did the message mean? "You exist in a dream." What the hell kind of message was that? It didn't make any sense.

Aggravated and running out of patience, he slammed his fist on the desk and screamed, "What the hell is going on?" A few moments later, Carey walked in.

"What's wrong, dad?" she asked. "Who are you shouting at?"

"Oh, nothing. It's this damned computer. I guess I'll have to get it fixed or buy a new one. Sorry I made so much noise."

Carey laughed. "Yeah, I know what you mean. Sometimes this high-tech stuff can be maddening." She left the room after patting him lovingly on the head. "Good night, dad. I'm going to bed."

Again, Jake sat in silence contemplating the situation. What should he do? Should he tell the senator? How would she react? Questions and more questions filled his mind and then another message appeared.

DO NOT TELL HER

Damn! As his heart skipped a few beats he thought about asking Carey to come in and verify it was really there, but dismissed the idea in case he was hallucinating. He

didn't want her to think he was going nuts. This message scared him more than the other one. Was it a direct reply to his thoughts? Could this thing read his mind? Slowly, he placed his fingers on the keyboard and typed.

Who are you?

He waited for a response, but nothing came, so he typed it again using caps.

WHO ARE YOU?

Finally, an answer appeared.

CALL ME JOE

Joe? He didn't know anyone named Joe! Again, he let his fingers touch the keyboard.

WHERE ARE YOU?

About ten seconds later he saw the answer to his question.

WATCHING YOUR DREAM

Again, full of frustration and anger, Jake responded.

I'M NOT DREAMING! I'M ALIVE HERE IN WASHINGTON DC

He watched the screen closely, waiting for another response, but nothing happened. After about two minutes, when he was about to give up, the response finally appeared.

IF YOU SAY SO

“This is ridiculous,” he said aloud. “I must be out of my mind.” He pinched his arm to be sure he wasn’t asleep and pinched it so hard it caused him to squeal in pain. Surely, he thought, I wouldn’t feel pain if I was dreaming. And if I did, it would sure as hell wake me up! Then another message appeared.

YOU’RE DREAMING BUT YOU DON’T KNOW IT

Right! This is impossible, he thought. *I’m dreaming but I don’t know it?*

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

He waited for a response which finally appeared, and this one was even more baffling.

IT’S NOT THAT IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW. YOU’LL FIND OUT LATER.

Jake stood up and shoved the chair across the room in anger. In a loud whisper, so Carey wouldn’t hear, he began talking to himself.

“I’m not asleep. I’m wide awake. I’m communicating with a god damned computer phantom!” Then another message...

I’M HERE TO HELP. DO NOT BE AFRAID.

As he paced the room in frustration, he looked back at the computer and all of the mysterious messages suddenly disappeared. The only ones that remained were the messages he had typed. He stared at the words in amazement as they stared back at him, mocking him. All of it was so unreal. The words seemed to shout back at him, causing him to feel faint. As he paced around the room, he began to lose his balance and almost fell over, but was able to stop his fall by reaching for the desk. He took a few deep breathes and slowly stood up straight. When he regained his composure, he quickly went through the usual security routine, placed the computer back in the safe and left the room.

He stumbled down the hallway and stopped in front of Carey's room. There was no light under the door so he knew she was asleep. Some how, he made his way downstairs into the living room and fell onto the couch. Obviously, he was working too much. He knew one thing for certain -- there was no way he would share any of this with anyone. He was sure they'd think he was going crazy or having a nervous breakdown. Maybe he WAS going crazy, he thought. Finally, he decided to take the following weekend off and get away from the city. Yes, then he could get some rest and feel better, he thought.

The remainder of the week proceeded as usual with no messages from Joe. Jake was able to complete the section and when Friday arrived, he asked to have a quick meeting with the senator. As he walked into her office she looked up from her desk and shook her head as she glared at him.

"God, Jake. You look exhausted."

He glared at her for a moment and dropped into the chair. "I am," he said. "I'm taking the weekend off and getting the hell out of town."

"Good," she replied. "I'm leaving too. I'm heading back to Vermont."

"Lucky you," he muttered.

Suddenly the senator stood up and waved her arm in the air. "Why don't you come with me? I have a huge place with lots of space and you can bring Carey along. Does she like to ride horses?"

"I don't know. She's never been around horses," Jake replied.

"I know she'd love them. They're great therapy. I ride all the time whenever I'm home."

Jake thought about her offer but finally told her he wanted to be alone.

The senator looked concerned. “Are you sure you’re okay Jake?”

“Yes, I’m okay, just tired. This project is causing me to have sleepless nights. That’s all.”

“Listen, I can’t afford to wear you out! You take as much time as you need. Take a week off if you need it. You hear?”

“I won’t need that much time,” he replied, placing a flash drive on her desk. “Here’s the latest version. When you finish reading it, I’m sure you’ll want to meet with me again.”

They shared a few more pleasantries, then Jake left. As he passed the travel office he stopped, turned around and went inside. A young woman was sitting at the desk so he cleared his throat to get her attention. “Hi Sue.” The young woman who wore a short bob hairstyle and donned way too much jewelry, responded with a smile.

“Oh, hi Jake. Can I help you with something?”

“Uh, yeah. You got any good ideas about where a guy could hide out near the beach for a few days and not be disturbed?”

“You bet I do,” Sue replied, quickly typing on the keyboard. “The Jackson Inn on Chesapeake Bay, it’s wonderful” she said. “I’ve stayed there myself several times. Really quiet and peaceful and great food too. You can take long walks on the beach, and no one will bother you. I promise.”

“Great,” he replied. “Can you reserve a room for me for this weekend?”

“Consider it done.” She replied.

Once the reservation was made and he got directions to the inn Jake went back to his office and shut the door. He picked up the phone and called Carey's cell phone. As usual she answered right away. "Hi Cupcake. How's your day going?"

"Just fine, dad. How about yours?"

"Much better now," he replied. He told her about his plan to escape alone for the weekend and she reacted with joy. She wanted him to take some time off.

"It's not that I don't want to spend time with you Carey..."

"Hush up! I know that," Carey replied. "Just go!"

"Okay. I probably won't see you before I leave so I'll put the phone number of the place I'm staying on the frig door. My cell phone will be turned off so you'll have to call the hotel to reach me."

"Right dad. Have a good weekend, and get some rest."

"Will do Cupcake. You have a good weekend too and stay out of trouble, you hear?"

Carey chuckled. "Do I have to?"

At that, they laughed and said their good-byes. Jake cleared his desk, made sure the computer and flash drives were locked in the safe and left his office. After going home to pack, he left the house, gassed up the car and headed toward the freeway. As he crossed the city limit line he glanced in the rearview mirror, waved good bye and smiled. Hoping to get everything off his mind, he looked forward with great anticipation to the next two days.

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER 2

By S. Leigh Young

James Joshua MacAbee was an unusually large man who stood nearly seven feet tall. Because of his stature he found it extremely easy to intimidate. His voice was gruff and his facial features somewhat chiseled. Macabee believed wearing dark colors added to the persona of authority he tried to present. He used many manipulative tactics to get what he wanted, and what he wanted right now was to put a stop to the rumored exposé Senator Weston was planning to present. His lobbying firm had a lot of large corporate clients who paid him very well and he wasn't about to jeopardize that extremely lucrative arrangement. Millions of dollars were at stake and if Weston was able to pull this off it could cripple him.

JJ, as MacAbee was known, had come to rely on those huge bonuses each year and his lifestyle was testimony to that. He owned three houses, a yacht, two fishing boats and seven classic cars that were his pride and joy, not to mention his wife's healthy appetite for spending. Every time he turned around, she wanted some new toy, a trip to Paris, or something else that cost him a fortune. She had him over a barrel because he knew she only married him for his money. But he was in love with her and nothing was going to put his marriage at risk -- especially not the infamous Senator Weston!

He fumed, just thinking about that conniving bitch. He knew she was doing everything in her power to keep the contents of the presentation secret, just like she did with the campaign finance reform bill. He smiled as he thought about his victory over that piece of garbage. There was no way a majority of elected officials were going to cut their own throats, and without those massive political contributions most of them couldn't be elected county clerk.

At the sound of the buzzer, he quickly came out of his stupor. His receptionist's soothing voice was suddenly heard through the intercom.

"Congressman Belham is here to see you, Mr. MacAbee. Shall I send him in?"

"Yes, send him in," he replied, eagerly.

Congressman Rick Belham's stature was not in any way comparable to that of MacAbee. He stood a foot and a half shorter and walked with a limp; hardly the type who could stand up to the pressures of men like JJ. MacAbee found him extremely easy to manipulate. All he had to do was wave a check in front of his face and Belham would turn into Play Dough.

Belham made his way into the office, shut the door and stood in front of the desk waiting. MacAbee looked up, smiled and said "Good to see you Congressman. Take a seat."

Like a well-trained dog Belham sat down, crossed his legs and quickly uncrossed them. "Why did you want to see me?"

"I want to know if you made that phone call I suggested."

Belham cleared his throat and mumbled "uh, yes, I called Senator Weston and had a little chat with her."

"Well?" MacAbee blurted. "What did she say?"

"She wanted to know where I'd heard the rumors," Belham sheepishly mumbled.

"And? What else did she say?"

“Nothing. I was called away from the phone and had to hang up,” Belham replied nervously.

MacAbee stood up, using the full height of his stature to scare the hell out of Belham, just as he always did. “Remember that contribution I made to your campaign the other day?”

“Of course. It was greatly appreciated,” Belham said quietly.

“Well, I didn’t make that contribution for nothing Congressman. I expect some results. Do you understand?”

Belham stood up and headed toward the door. “Yes, I understand. I’ll try another tactic and be in touch soon.”

“Good! Call me when you get something,” MacAbee roared. He watched as the mousy little man limped out of the office then called his receptionist and told her to put a call through to special contact.

“Janet, get Steve Pennington on the phone for me, will you?”

“Yes sir,” the voice replied.

This was the right man, thought MacAbee. He knew Congress like the back of his own hand -- always attended the social dinners, parties and political events. There was hardly a thing happening in Washington he didn’t know about. A few minutes later the phone rang. It was Steve Pennington, aide to Senator McKenzie, the minority Whip. After initial pleasantries, he got straight to the point.

“I was wondering if you could do me a favor.”

“Sure. What is it?” Pennington asked.

“I need some information about that presentation Weston’s staff is working on. Can you help?”

“I’ll see what I can do. Her office is just down the hall -- shouldn’t be too much of a problem.”

“Great. Get back to me, okay?”

“Will do,” Pennington replied, and the phone call was ended.

MacAbee leaned back in his chair, stroked his chin contemplating the victorious joy he would feel when Weston’s attempts to put him out of business were thwarted. If that little piece of human waste wants to mess with me, she’s got a wakeup call coming, he thought. He wondered if Weston was married so he looked her up in the senate register. Sure enough, she was single, just as he suspected. Who would want to sleep with her? Hell, she’s probably a lesbian! She was more of a turn-off than a worm crawling in the dirt! MacAbee was from the old school of political thought. He didn’t think women should become elected officials. The game was just too brutal and, of course, he was still fuming over her refusal to take a contribution from him. Bitch!

Two days later Pennington arrived at MacAbee’s office smiling from ear to ear.

“What did you find out?”

“She’s got a guy named Spencer working on it. Jake Spencer. He’s a tall, skinny black guy, not much to speak about, although I’ve heard he’s pretty smart.”

“Smart? How so?” asked MacAbee.

“Well, he’s got a list of degrees as long as your arm; specializes in economics and government contracting. Really knows his stuff, from what I’ve heard. Weston nabbed him from Consolidated Insurance about four years ago. He was working there as a financial advisor. One day, he came to her and wanted to spill the beans about something happening over there.”

“Yeah? So, he was a whistleblower?” MacAbee snorted.

Pennington told him Jake was privy to some shenanigans going on with the CEO - something about securities fraud. Weston was unable to obtain enough evidence, but she liked him so she talked him into coming to work for her. MacAbee asked him who else was aware of the project details.

“Not many,” Pennington replied. “I found out by going through the recycle bin. I wasn’t able to verify it, though.”

“What did you find?”

“Just a few scraps of paper, nothing important, but enough to let me know it was from Spencer. His initials were on the bottom.”

“So, there were no details about the presentation?” MacAbee asked, pounding a pen on his desk.

“Nope,” Pennington replied, pulling a few scraps of paper out of his pocket. “Here’s the scraps.”

MacAbee spread them on his desk. One of them had the initials ‘jts’ below the word ‘corruption’. Another one contained a partial sentence that read ‘and this will bring certain parties into compliance....’. It was obvious they had been torn from the same sheet of paper.

“This was all you could find?”

“I’m afraid so,” Pennington replied. “The rest of the sheet was completely shredded. I guess this small section must have gotten stuck in the shredder so someone pulled it out and threw it away.”

“Damn! I wish I knew what she was up to,” MacAbee fumed.

Pennington said he watched Spencer yesterday as he was getting ready to leave his office. “His door was open and I could see inside. It looked like he was taking a lot of precautions to protect whatever he was working on -- even placed his laptop in his office safe.”

“Hmmm,” muttered MacAbee. “Did you see anything else?”

“It looked like he put something in his shirt pocket but I couldn’t see very well. Then he left. He was working pretty late too -- didn’t leave the building ‘til about 9 o’clock”

MacAbee stood up and waved his hand at the ceiling in frustration. “Can you find out what it is he put in his pocket?”

“I don’t know. I’ll try,” Pennington replied. “But it’s going to look kind of suspicious if I hang around Weston’s suite too much. After all, she’s the enemy.”

“Well, do the best you can, will you?”

Pennington said he’d try his best and the meeting ended.

MacAbee told his secretary he didn't want to be disturbed and spent the next hour mulling everything over in his mind. He didn't think of himself as conniving even though his methods were much more devious and underhanded than anything Weston was doing. This thought, however, never crossed his mind. It was just business and it was up to him to make sure the results would make his clients happy. He was taking some of them on a cruise near the Florida Keys soon and spent part of the hour envisioning the glorious victory speech he was going to give. He could see it in his mind and feel it in his bones -- all the delightful accolades that would be drenched upon him after it was finished. He'd be the hero -- again.

After his plotting and daydreaming finally reached its crescendo, MacAbee knew exactly what to do. This guy, Jake Spencer -- he was the key. There had to be a way to get to him and he knew the person who could arrange it, so he picked up his private line and made a call to Duke Brashear, the best private "get things done" man in DC.

"I want everything you can get on a tall, skinny black guy named Jake Spencer. He's a staffer for Senator Weston. Find someone who can get to know him real well -- someone who needs to come into a lot of cash real quick."

"Okay. Then what?"

"This Spencer -- he needs a friend. Understand? He works too hard and he's under a lot of stress. I want you to help him relieve that stress. Got it?"

"Yep," replied Duke. "Got it. Is he married?"

"Hell, I don't know. Find out!" MacAbee barked. "If he is, then his marriage may have to suffer for a little while. Who cares?"

Brashear was quiet for a moment and suddenly knew what was needed. “I know just the person for the job. Gorgeous gal, fantastic skin you wouldn’t believe, great ass. I hope he’s an ass man,” Duke said, laughing.

“Every man’s an ass man,” replied MacAbee. “Listen up. This gal you have in mind – is she smart? She’s got to be smart as a whip, ‘cuz Spencer’s suppose to be some sort of genius.”

Duke assured MacAbee she was very competent. “She beat me at chess the other day and I ain’t no slouch!”

They agreed to meet at MacAbee’s private club the next afternoon and the call was ended. Leaning back in his chair with a deep sigh, MacAbee thought about what a great life he had. And none of his old chums back in Philly would have believed that a big, towering kid like him would ever make it. Little did they know!

End of Chapter 2

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER THREE

By S. Leigh Young

Senator Jane Weston was an attractive woman in her early sixties, with short auburn hair and fair complexion. She possessed an ability to stare a person directly in the eyes, especially if she considered them a political adversary. She learned this from her grandfather who had been a powerful political force in her home state. Her mother always told her she, was just like him; steely-eyed and difficult to manipulate. Jane knew this was one of the reasons she was still single, although she had come close to marriage on two occasions. Thank goodness, she thought, those marriages never took place. The first one was a romance with a young man in college; a great looking guy who swept her off her feet. It didn't work out for various reasons, one of which was her stubborn insistence that she be allowed to have a career. He wouldn't hear of it, insisting his wife stay home, rear the children and keep quiet. Obviously, that was not her cup of tea.

The second serious romance also failed, due to her independent ways. He was a civil engineer who worked with her brother. It happened later in their lives, when Marcus was ready to retire and wanted to travel. Of course, she was expected to give up her career and follow him like an obedient little wife. It must be something about men in my age bracket, she thought. They all want to control their wives! She thought about her niece and the young man she had married. What a treasure he was! He supported her niece's desire to pursue a career, often stayed home with the kids, even did a lot of the cooking. She asked herself, why can't older men be that way? Of course, no answer came to her. It was just the way things were. Fortunately, however, she and Marcus had remained friends and he sometimes came to the farm to spend time with her since they both loved horses.

She had only one regret. Being childless was something that bothered her very much. She tried not to let it get her down and threw herself, almost entirely, into her work to fill the void. Chuckling, she thought it was interesting that the void was caused more by not having children, rather than not having a man in her life.

After eighteen years in the senate, she had lost a lot of respect for the male gender. Many of her male colleagues were either dishonest, paid off, or both! And, much to her chagrin, a lot of her female colleagues were following in their footsteps. Politics was so competitive and there was way too much money involved. Sometimes, she had difficulty keeping her anger in check on the floor of the senate and biting her tongue didn't always work. She recalled the time, a few years earlier, during the campaign finance reform fight, when she stood at the podium and said, "...and it will take a lot of courage to vote 'yes' on this bill. Unfortunately, I doubt if most of you have that much courage!"

This did not make her very popular with a lot of Senators and, for a while, she was shunned by some. Eventually, however, as is always the case in the political realm, the past was forgotten and others began to approach her for support on their pet projects.

There was something else she had learned from her grandfather which had proven very valuable in her career. She would never forget what he told her. "Always look 'em in the eyes, Janie. Look right through 'em. What you see at first is usually not true, but a façade. Always remember that. Follow your gut feelings." When she first got into politics it wasn't always easy to use this technique, since she wanted to give others the benefit of the doubt. But, after a few months on the job, she learned he was right. At night, in bed, she would practice it in her mind, seeing through the other person, as if they weren't real. Eventually, she developed the ability to follow her intuition and learned to rely on it. It didn't always work out, but became easier every day.

She always flew second class to be among the regular passengers on the plane. This trip back to Vermont was no exception. Most people didn't recognize her, so it was easy to become an anonymous observer of human nature. After watching a young family, trying to reign in their small child, she allowed that scene to fade away and stared dreamily out the window at the gray clouds floating by.

Thoughts of Jake entered her mind and she hoped she wasn't pushing him too hard. He was a real gem and she knew it in her gut. In fact, she was surprised at how quickly she had come to trust him. It must have been something about his eagerness to

right a wrong. His genuine goodness had shown through immediately and there was no need to use her grandfather's methods with him. He was real. There was no façade with Jake; none at all. She smiled, realizing she was very fond of him; even loved him like a son. Unfortunately, he was not the type of person who would want to run for office and she didn't think he'd be successful at it. It was a real shame, she thought. The country needed more genuine people like him. But, he was serving his country in a different way. Perhaps he was serving in a more important way than she was. She felt very fortunate to have someone like him on her staff.

Finally, she laid her head back and closed her eyes. Slowly, her mind filled with a hazy vision of a scene that was all too familiar. She could see the floor of the senate, with all the people moving around, greeting one another, their mouths moving and their arms extended as they spoke. It seemed so unreal, as if it was nothing more than an illusion. Suddenly, the scene turned darker and she could hear their thoughts floating past, rapidly, vividly. The thoughts she heard were not those of kindness, but of fear, and it made her shiver. Finally it reached a point where she didn't want to see that vision anymore, so she quickly opened her eyes, shook her head slightly and moved her gaze toward the window again. She was worried about her country. It was quickly becoming an Corporatocracy and there didn't seem to be anything she could do to stop it.

The welfare of the nation was the last thing on the minds of many elected officials and all those thoughts she heard filled her mind again. "I can't vote the way I should or I won't be reelected." "If I vote the right way on this bill, my campaign coffers will suffer and I'll have to lay off a lot of people." "I'll lose my committee chairmanship if I don't vote with the corporations, and there goes my budget for the staff and the offices." "I can't lose the next election. How would I pay for my son's tuition?" On and on, the fearful thoughts replayed in her mind. She knew these were the actual motivating factors that moved or killed legislation and it disgusted her.

The presentation that Jake was working on was vital to the needs of the average person. Over 20 million Americans still didn't have adequate health care because of corruption and the poor state of the economy. Thousands of people died each year because of it. Wages had decreased so much that many people had to hold two or three

jobs just to pay for essentials. The national debt was soaring out of control and other countries were threatening to abandon the dollar. Her colleagues were well aware of this and yet they refused to do the right thing. All they concentrated on was lowering taxes for the wealthy and steering taxpayer dollars to their donors. It was maddening!

Her wandering thoughts were interrupted when she heard the pilot's voice over announcing it was time to fasten the seatbelts. They were about to land, so she allowed her thoughts to move to her farm and her favorite horse. He was a spirited animal, a young bay with a beautiful white streak on his soft mane. She loved to stroke that mane and really believed he understood her better than any human. When she looked into his eyes, she saw nothing but pure love, unlike what she saw in the eyes of most of her colleagues. She called him "Spirit".

A few minutes later, the plane landed and the passengers stood up and filed out, one by one. Because her seat was near the back, she was one of the last to leave. A young woman in front of her turned around and smiled at her, and then, she realized most of the people in the world were not like her colleagues, at all. Most of them were hard working genuine folks who were just trying to survive the best they could. With this slightly renewed faith in humankind, she left the airport and headed home. She didn't want to think about the senate, so she tuned the car radio to a classical music station and allowed herself to become immersed in the soothing sounds of violins and cellos. By the time she reached the farm, she felt as if her mind had been somewhat refreshed.

Early the next morning, Jane donned her riding outfit and grabbed her gear from the closet. She had a quick cup of tea and walked out the back door, toward the barn. Breathing in the fresh, cool air of the Vermont countryside, she thought life didn't get any better than this. Someday she would retire from politics and spend all of her time riding and taking care of her beloved horses. As she approached the door of the tack barn, she heard a sound in the distance. Not sure what it was, she stopped and listened more intently. It had come from the farm next to hers, owned by a young couple with three small children. She glanced in that direction and thought she heard screams, so she ran toward the fence that divided their property from hers.

Dark smoke was pouring from an upstairs window and, at the next window, a young child was poised, screaming. Without a second thought, she grabbed the cell phone out of her pocket and dialed 911, as she climbed the fence and ran through the field toward the house. On a previous visit, she recalled seeing a water hose in the front yard, so she ran toward it, picked up the nozzle and moved, as fast as she could, toward the connection. Quickly, she turned the handle and dragged the hose toward the front door. It was locked! Looking around, trying to think of the next move, she pulled the hose to the right, jammed the nozzle through the front window and reached her hand inside to open it. Finally, after what seemed like hours, the window was open and she crawled through, cutting her leg, as she landed on a small table beneath the window. Struggling, she finally got her balance, pulled the hose inside running toward the stair case. Smoke was beginning to bellow down into the lower floor but she tried not to think about it. Pulling the hose upstairs, she some how managed to reach the landing where two small children were huddled in the corner. She still couldn't see any flames and thought she'd better get the children outside, before she went any further.

She dropped the hose, scooped them up in her arms and ran down the stairs and through the front exit. She told them to stay in the front yard and wait. "I'm going back to get your sister and parents. Don't worry!" she shouted, as she ran back inside.

Just as she was about to climb the stairs again, she heard the sirens outside. Moving her glance, she saw three fire fighters cutting through the door. They told her to leave the house immediately and brushed past her up the stairs, pulling a huge hose along with them. She followed their instructions and ran outside to comfort the two children, who were crying and sobbing for their parents.

A few minutes later the entire family was huddled together on the front lawn, as everyone watched their house go up in flames. First the top floor was engulfed and then the main floor caught fire. Within an hour, the fire was out and what remained of the house was nothing more than part of the bottom floor.

The young couple stared in disbelief as their home was destroyed in front of their eyes. "I don't know what happened," said the young woman. Her husband put his arm

around her and whispered, “at least we’re all okay. That’s the important thing.” Of course, Jane was showered with appreciation. She made a few phone calls to the couple’s relatives and, once she was sure there was nothing more to be done, she left.

The young man’s words rang clearly in her mind, over and over again, as she made her way back home. “At least we’re all okay....” Yes indeed, she thought. That was the important thing. As the day wore on, she kept thinking about the fire and how close the family had come to death. It was a shame, what they had lost, but in truth, the building and its contents were not really important, in the greater scheme of things, were they?

Haunted for the entire weekend, she found it difficult to relax. If that building wasn’t important; if all those memories and things were, indeed, replaceable and really not that crucial, then what was? What in life was truly important? The only answer she could think of was life itself. Life and good health were the only important things in this world. By the time she was on the plane again, heading back to Washington, she was filled with a renewed resolve to complete the project and present it.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER FOUR

By S. Leigh Young

The Jackson Inn was truly a beautiful, peaceful place and Jake spent a very relaxing two days with no interruptions. It was the first time in months he'd had any time without the phone ringing, or the computer humming, or something else that had to get done. Life was much too hectic, he thought.

As he closed his eyes that night, his thoughts wandered to his school days, recalling how he enjoyed the camaraderie and freedom from stress. Studies always came easy, so his public school and college days had been relatively stress-free. His parents had been professionals in the legal field and instilled in him the necessity of a good education, making sure his focus never wavered too far from his goals. Being an only child, he was the object of their constant attention, which didn't bother him at all. Both of them were killed in a train accident, while on a professional tour of Europe, when Jake was five years out of grad school. He missed them enormously.

Suddenly, he awoke in the middle of the night with a bad dream still lingering in his mind. In the dream he was being pressured to finish something and he wanted to scream! He assumed the dream had something to do with his job and the stress caused by the project. Senator Weston was a great boss, but she could be demanding, at times. Obviously, he really needed these few days away.

Surely, there had to be a better way to live, he thought. He enjoyed a challenge, but this project was more than that. It was so important to the country that sometimes he felt he had the welfare of each and every citizen on his shoulders. It was one of his personality traits. If he had something important to do, he always gave it his all. He would pour every ounce of energy into it, and then, if it failed, he was devastated. He hoped that wouldn't happen this time.

The average person had no idea what was going on in the beltway, nor how their taxpayer dollars were being wasted with petty investigations and oppositional tactics, not to mention the back room dealing and purchasing of votes. There were very few real statesmen left in Washington. They were so owned by their donors, many of them didn't dare make a move with permission. Here he was, thinking about all that, when he should be relaxing!

On his second day at the beach, he walked on the sand, bundled up from head to toe with the crisp wind blowing in his face. He watched some people at the other end of the beach playing ball with a huge dog. The man would throw the ball high into the air toward the waves and the dog would crash headlong into the water, splashing and paddling as hard as he could. A few minutes later he'd return to the beach, gleefully showing off the ball in his mouth. Jake thought it must be great to be a well cared for dog -- you always had enough food and shelter, lots of exercise, and owners who loved you -- not a care in the world.

He decided to take a break from walking and found a sheltered area where he could lie back and relax for a while. He didn't want to think about work but was still haunted by those strange messages on his computer screen. He honestly didn't know if it was real or not. He'd never had hallucinations so didn't know how to recognize them. Having a history of a very stable childhood and no mental illness in his family, he couldn't imagine he was going crazy. Was he?

What did the message say? *You exist in a dream.* There must be some special meaning in that message, but what was it? How was Joe communicating with him, or was he? Was there a person named Joe, or was he a figment of his imagination? Maybe he was imagining this Joe to fill some void in his life. Ever since Maggie died, he found it difficult to have a personal conversation with anyone. Even his few visits with the grief counselor had proven a failure at helping him open up. He didn't want to talk about the subject of illness or death.

He remembered something the counselor had said. "Grief is an evolving thing that appears in many different forms including fear, anger, confusion and self-doubt. If

you can't talk about it, it can fester inside. This could lead to other problems in your life." Maybe these strange events were a result of his unresolved grief. Could that be it? He thought he should probably go back to the counselor and see if he was ready to face his fears, but that idea didn't feel right. He realized he should talk about it, but with whom? Maybe Joe was the one. In one of the messages Joe had written that he was there to help, that he shouldn't be afraid. For some unknown reason part of him wanted to believe that. It would be easier if he could vent his fears with a phantom that he didn't have to see.

Finally, he fell asleep on the sand with the filtered sunlight warming his body. He was awakened suddenly by a gust of wind and rolled over. His eyes were still closed but he was partially awake. As he lay there on the beach, soaking it all in, feeling the wind and sand blowing around him, he realized he was seeing something in his mind, as if he was awakened in the middle of a dream. He could sense someone there with him but it was only in his head. There was no sound, just a feeling of not being alone. It brought a sense of calm and peacefulness and he didn't want it to end. It felt good and warm, like in childhood, when his mother wrapped her arms around him when he was frightened.

Suddenly he realized -- that was what he missed most about Maggie. When he was full of doubt, he could always count on her to give him moral support and warmth. Tears started to form as he thought about her. He missed her so much! He only hoped, wherever she was now, she was happy. If there was a heaven, he was sure she was there. Was she the other person in his half-dream? Was it Joe? Or -- maybe it was God.

No, he thought, the idea that God would take Maggie away from him was too painful to think about. He didn't like God very much, if there was one. But he wanted God to be real so he could think about Maggie being with Him; being taken care of and loved. It was so confusing. He wanted God to help Maggie and at the same time he hated him.

Afraid to think about it anymore, he stood up and brushed himself off. After a few stretching exercises he headed back to the hotel for lunch. Maybe there'd be a good movie on TV -- something that would take his mind off all this.

Sue was right. The food at the inn was very good and there was plenty of it. He was sick of fast food and take-out and, since he didn't like to cook, this was a real treat. After lunch he went back to his room and turned on the TV. As luck would have it, there was a movie playing that was just what the doctor ordered. It was full of adventure, intrigue and action, right up his alley! Luckily, it served the purpose of taking his mind off his situation. After the movie he took another nap and had dinner brought up to the room. He didn't feel like dressing up and it was nice to stay there alone. After the meal and another good movie, he crawled into bed and fell into a deep sleep that lasted until daylight the next morning.

He spent the second day wandering around the small village near the inn, visiting some of the shops and talking to a few of the people who worked in them. There weren't many tourists since the weather was still cold and he felt like he had the place almost to himself. The people were very friendly and easy to talk to and by the time dinner was delivered to his room that evening he felt well rested and relaxed. All those problems and fears that had filled his thoughts the previous day seemed to fade away and he decided to stay one more night. He wanted to let Carey know so he picked up the phone and called her cell number.

"Hey, dad", she said cheerfully. "I thought you weren't going to use the phone."

"I'm just calling to let you know I'll be staying another night. Be back by noon tomorrow but I'll probably go straight to the office."

"Okay," she replied. "Then I'll see you tomorrow night when you get home from work."

"Right. What have you been up to the last two days?"

"Mike and I went to a movie Friday night and last night we went to the school play. It was "Annie", and you know how I love that."

He grinned, recalling when she was a little girl, how she had watched the movie “Annie” over and over again until the darn thing was worn out. “Yes, I remember. You must have enjoyed that.”

“Yeah. It was pretty cute and afterwards we went out for pizza with some friends. Other than that, I’ve just been studying and lazing around the house.”

“Good,” he said. “Okay, Cupcake, I’ll see you tomorrow night.”

“Wait...” She said with hesitation in her voice.

“Yeah? What is it?”

“Well, I wasn’t going to say anything because I didn’t want to bother you, but there was a strange phone call yesterday. It was on the land line, not the cell phone.”

“Tell me about it,” he said, with concern.

She explained that it was man who said something she didn’t quite understand. It was something like “...just tell Spencer it’s useless. He hung up before I could get his name.”

Useless? Jake wondered what it was all about. “Did he sound threatening?”

“No, not really. He actually sounded kind of -- nervous.”

“Hmmm,” he muttered. “Okay. Just make sure all the doors and windows are locked, will you?”

“Of course. I always do. Do you think it was a threat of some sort?”

“I don’t think so, Cupcake. Don’t worry about it but keep your cell phone by your bed tonight. I’ll call you first thing in the morning.”

The call was ended after their usual words of endearment. He lay back on the bed and thought about the odd phone call. They couldn't check the phone log because the land line didn't have a memory, nor did it have caller ID. He and Carey relied mostly on their cell phones and, in fact, he was thinking of getting rid of the land line. Then he remembered there was a way to check the number of the last caller so he dialed Carey's cell number again. He instructed her to pick up the land line receiver and dial #69. The recording would then play back the last phone number that had called.

"It says that phone number isn't available, dad."

"Okay, Cupcake. Don't worry about it. See you soon."

Oh well, he thought. It was worth a try. Maybe he should leave now and head back home, just in case that call was something to worry about. Yes, he would do that. Quickly, he packed his bags, checked out and jumped in the car, heading home as fast as the law allowed. He called Carey again to tell her about his change in plans. She was slightly concerned and asked him to explain.

"It's probably nothing," he assured her, "but that phone call kind of worries me. I didn't like the idea of leaving you home alone anyway. It's no big deal. I'm half way there. See you soon."

Who could it have been? A nervous male voice mentioning his name and saying something was useless. All these mysterious messages were beginning to get to him. First the computer phantom, and now this! What the hell was going on? He checked the rearview mirror and, seeing no traffic behind him and very little in front, pushed harder on the accelerator and concentrated on one thing -- getting home as fast as he could.

As he drove on, his mind wandered and he thought about Maggie again. That feeling on the beach had been so strong, as if they had been together in his dream, but he couldn't remember it. It occurred to him that these types of feelings had happened before, ever since her death. Was she alive in some other place? Or, was it just in his

mind? He would sometimes awaken in the middle of the night, with an overwhelming feeling of love in his mind. On occasion, there were bright lights that were warm and caring, surrounding him, but only in his head.

As his thoughts continued to swirl, he suddenly asked himself why. Why do people die? What's the point? We come into the world, live a few years, then we're gone! Was there a reason? Although, he figured he'd probably never know the answer to these haunting questions, he hoped he could, at least, reach a point where he was comfortable with the logic, or lack of logic, behind it all. And that led to even more questions – who or what was behind it all?

It didn't seem that God and traditional religion were for him. It just didn't fit into his way of thinking. He wouldn't call himself an atheist, more an agnostic, he supposed. He didn't like the way religious doctrine could adversely affect a person's life. So many children were raised to follow a certain religious code, they rarely learned to think for themselves. He was glad his upbringing had been relatively free of religious doctrine. He was taught the difference between right and wrong, and was always encouraged to behave in a way that would not harm others. And this was the way he raised Carey. He hoped it was the right way.

THE DREAMVISIONER– CHAPTER FIVE

By S. Leigh Young

After her father's last phone call, Carey lay back on the sofa while she waited for his arrival. She was worried about him. All those long hours of work; the frustration with that huge project; and now, a strange phone call that bothered him enough to call his weekend short. Something was up, but she didn't know what it was. He was acting strangely and lately he seemed more irritable than usual. Then an idea entered her mind. Quickly, she dialed Mike's house and his mother answered.

"Hi Carey! What's up?" Mrs. Harvey asked.

"It's about my dad. I know you're a – a --", Carey stuttered.

"Psychic?"

"Yeah," she replied. "I was hoping -- well, I was hoping you could help him. I don't think he's gotten over my mother's death and I'm worried about him."

Mrs. Harvey offered to see Jake in person and Carey wasn't sure her father would go along with a psychic reading, but Dee explained it would be necessary in order to help him.

"What's involved in a reading?" Carey asked.

"Well, it's kind of involved," Mrs. Harvey replied. "With some people I get these insights about them. Sometimes information comes through and I can see what's going on in their lives. Then I can ask for help to assist them. Does that sound like something you had in mind?"

Carey hesitated, wondering if this was a good idea or not. She didn't think her father believed in that sort of thing.

"Carey?"

"Uh, yeah -- I guess so. I'm not very knowledgeable about this stuff. I just know that he's under a lot of stress and he has a hard time talking about my mom's death. I don't think we've discussed it more than a couple of times."

Mrs. Harvey asked if Jake had seen a counselor and Carey replied he had. "He went for about a month, right after she died, but he quit going. Said he didn't need it, but I'm not so sure about that. Isn't there a grieving process that people are supposed to go through? I know I sure went through it. I cried and screamed and got so angry, I thought I was going to explode for a while. After I got all that grief out, I felt a lot better. But I don't think he's ever gone through that."

Mrs. Harvey fully understood and told Carey it was not uncommon, especially for men. They are not always in touch with their emotions like females usually are. Some are even afraid of emotions, she explained. "Do you think this applies to your dad?"

"Maybe. He's a very affectionate person but he has no social life at all. He's lost contact with his old friends. All he does is work. That's not good for a person, is it?"

"No, it isn't. It sounds like he needs help. I'm not sure if I'm the one to provide that help, but all I can do is try."

"Thanks, Mrs. Harvey. Maybe if he could be convinced that there's something -- you know -- some sort of life after we die, maybe it would make him feel better about mom."

"Yes, that can help in some cases. I've seen it happen. Can you bring him over for dinner this Wednesday at about 7 o'clock?"

“I think I can get him to come. I’ll let you know,” Carey replied. “And thank you again. I really appreciate this.”

“No problem, Carey. It’s what I love to do.”

Dee Harvey was one of those people that everyone immediately adored. Her demeanor was one of undisguised compassion and generosity. Kindness seemed to flow from every part of her being and she had an ability to quickly put people at ease. It was a gift that was very helpful in her vocation. Her psychic abilities had come relatively late in life. She had learned to get in touch with a higher source of intelligence and to see through the illusions. She liked to call it the universal mind but, in reality, she thought it was probably much more than that.

Coupled with her involvement in metaphysics and extra sensory perception, she was also an avid student of the latest discoveries in the science of quantum physics. Her life’s project was centered around her journal that recorded her research and insights into the commonalities between the spiritual and quantum worlds. Some day, perhaps after her death, she hoped it would be published. She wanted very much to help humanity learn its true identity – to realize the vital role it plays in the continuation and quality of existence in the physical realm, and to know there is no such thing as death. She truly believed it could transform the world.

She had faith that one day humans would scientifically prove the connection between the energy of which all things are made and the infinite and obvious love behind it. She hoped to contribute to that understanding and wanted it to happen sooner rather than later. The world was so very much in need of this type of healing.

She and her husband Bill had planned their lives to be in the service of others. Each held a deep faith in the ability of the mind to heal the body and they both understood how powerful the mind is. In his practice of chiropractic medicine Bill also offered massage therapy and hypnosis and Dee was also available if a patient needed further help. However, most of her time was directed toward research and teaching. She was president of the local metaphysical organization and often attended regional

meetings and spoke to large and small groups on various occasions. She loved teaching and helping others.

Carey's phone call was not an unusual one. Dee had received many similar calls for help, especially over the past few years as the economy continued to degrade and so many people were hurting. With this rather collectively bleak outlook in the world, it wasn't difficult to lose one's perspective. Minds were easily confused and this often resulted in harmful decisions. It was always helpful to seek the assistance of someone who had learned to tap into the loving insight offered beyond the illusion. Most people didn't realize it was something they could do on their own – their lives were too full of conflict and stress. Often, it seemed impossible to take a few minutes each day to center oneself and clear the mind of all the mixed messages. She considered it an honor to be of assistance in any way she could, to anyone who was ready to receive her help.

She gathered, from what Carey said, that her father was not exactly open to this and he was probably either an agnostic or very angry with God. The world had become so hectic that most had forgotten about the need to nourish their souls. Many people would go to church every Sunday and spend an hour or so listening to someone else preach to them. But listening to sermons was often not enough to heal past wounds and change harmful ways of thinking. She considered this to be her life's purpose -- to help others see the ways in which their thinking patterns and attitudes were causing unhappiness and illness.

Realizing that teaching was only one way of serving this purpose, she also knew the best way was to live it herself – to be an example to others. This is why she had chosen not to have a mainstream career. She and Bill had decided she could best serve others by taking the necessary time each day to move her thoughts away from the conflicting vibrations of the physical world and focus more on the spiritual side. Each night, before going to sleep Dee and Bill would spend about thirty minutes discussing the day's events. She would explain each new insight while he would share with her the physical and emotional ailments he had confronted in his patients. Bill often learned from Dee and her ability to see things from a different perspective. This, along with his sense of dedication, made him one of the most successful health professionals in the city.

They were also well aware of the tremendous problems in government. Knowing that Carey's father worked for a senator, she decided to use that subject to open up a discussion with him about the welfare of the people. Perhaps this would put him at ease and help him feel more comfortable with her. She knew human nature all too well and, being an extremely intelligent person, she had learned the best ways to approach others who were somewhat skeptical. She could think of only two occasions when she had failed and those had occurred many years earlier before she had gained some of the skills she now possessed.

After talking with Carey, she wanted to prepare herself for the upcoming meeting with her father so she went into her meditation room and closed the door. After a few minutes of deep breathing, she allowed the mental clutter of the day to fade away until she reached a point of complete relaxation. Slowly, she began to receive some information about Jake's life and by the time her meditation was complete she knew more about him than probably anyone else at that point. Of course, having never met him, she couldn't be certain the information was entirely correct, but she knew it would be easy to verify once she met him. The moment she touched his hand she would know.

What she received about Jake was a combination of deep emotional turmoil and confusion about his wife's death. She felt he was trying very hard to avoid dealing with the pain by attempting to cover it up with too much work. There was also a deep sense of denial that came through, as if he refused to fully acknowledge how her death had impacted his life. She felt he was a somewhat stubborn person with a great resolve to be strong for his daughter whom he loved dearly. This was very clear. He had a tendency to worry too much about Carey because he feared what would happen to him if he should lose her too. Dee was certain that Jake was harboring a deep fear of death and felt hopeful she could help him overcome it, if he was willing to accept the help. She also sensed a vague feeling of impending danger around him. It was possible that his fears may be drawing something into his life – something not very pleasant.

Few were aware that, at that moment, a dark blue car was parked near the Spencer residence across the street. A redhaired man was sitting in the passenger seat watching

the house. About an hour later the man saw a light green SUV pulling into the driveway. A tall black man got out, grabbed a suitcase from the back, shut the door and walked toward the house. Quickly, the redhaired man jotted down the license plate number of the SUV. As the front door opened, he could see a teenage girl running up to greet the man. He figured the black guy was Jake Spencer and the girl must be his daughter. It was good to know that Spencer had a family, aware of how simple it can be to use a person's loved ones as leverage, if necessary. Outright threats weren't needed – just the implication. That was usually all that was required to convince someone to cooperate.

Brashear started the engine and drove away, making mental notes of what he'd learned about Mr. Jacob Thomas Spencer. As he sped from the middleclass neighborhood, he dialed MacAbee's private cell phone.

"He's got a daughter. She's about seventeen, tall like him. Nice looking kid," Brashear reported.

"Anything else?"

"I have a make on his car and I know where he lives. He must have been gone for the weekend because he took a suitcase out of the car. I guess he left his daughter home alone. I didn't see anyone else inside."

"Fine. What else have you got?" asked MacAbee.

Brashear reported what he's learned – "no criminal record, clean as a whistle. His wife died about two years earlier from ovarian cancer. Since then, he works all the time – not much of a social life."

"Then he's probably sexually frustrated," MacAbee said, chuckling. "Let's see what we can do to help the poor guy with that."

Brashear laughed. "No problem. Sweet Regina is just what he needs."

“Yeah, she’s sweet all right -- wouldn’t mind spending some time with her myself. “

“Down boy. She has to save her strength for Mr. Spencer, remember?”

“Oh, yeah. Right,” replied MacAbee. “So how are you going to arrange a meeting between little miss “great ass” and Mr. Spencer?”

“That’s being arranged as we speak. Regina’s a very good actress. On Wednesday, just as Mr. Spencer is leaving his office, he’s going to have a minor car accident.”

“Ah. And, of course, Regina will be the driver of the other car,” MacAbee said.

“Of course. Nothing serious, just a little bumper damage.”

MacAbee chuckled. “And a few heart palpitations when he gets a load of Regina!”

“No doubt. Don’t worry about a thing,” Brashear assured him.

“Okay. Good work. Call me on Thursday.”

“Will do,” replied Brashear.

When Brashear arrived back at his apartment Regina was waiting for him. She was a voluptuous beauty of Jamaican heritage, tall with long dark hair that shimmered when she moved her head. Not only was she strikingly beautiful, she was also extremely bright. After a few minutes reading over the instructions that Brashear gave her, she understood exactly what he wanted her to do. It contained the travel route that Jake always used when he left the office along with specific instructions about what to do at the scene of the “accident”.

He wasn't sure exactly what time Jake would leave his office so Regina was instructed to be ready by 4 o'clock in case he left earlier than usual. There was a narrow street leading from the parking lot to the main avenue and Jake had to drive his car in that direction. She was to park parallel to the street next to the curb. Brashear would watch for him to come out of the building and then call Regina and give her a heads up. She was to start her car engine and check the rearview mirror, watching for the light green SUV. Just as Jake's car was adjacent to the back door of hers, she was to pull out and run her bumper into his. It would be a minor incident because he would only be traveling about 20 miles an hour on the narrow street. With this type of event the police were never involved. It was too minor. The parties involved would simply exchange information and be on their way. But in this case Brashear would rely on Regina's extraordinary talent to make sure the "chance encounter" didn't end so quickly.

"Got any questions, baby?"

"It sounds pretty simple," Regina replied.

"Make a big fuss, okay? Tell him you feel horrible and you want to buy him a drink."

"What if he says he can't?"

"Then tell him you'll give him a call," Brashear replied. "You know what to do after that."

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER SIX

by S. Leigh Young

When Jake arrived home from the beach, he and Carey talked for a while and she told him about the invitation to the Harvey's. He'd never met Mike's parents and decided it was about time he did, so he agreed to go. He didn't know much about them -- only that Mike's father was a chiropractor with his own practice and his mother was a teacher of some sort.

That night Jake found it difficult to fall asleep. There was so much on his mind -- the project, the strange phone call, the weird computer messages and he couldn't decide whether to tell the senator about them. He had to find a way to verify if they were real so he decided to take a chance with Carey. If it continued to happen, he'd ask her to look at it. If she could see it then he'd know he wasn't dreaming. If not, well -- he'd cross that bridge at the time.

The following evening, he loaded the document and started on a new section dealing with the financial and economic effects of political corruption. It was one of the most crucial aspects of the presentation and he wanted to get it right. Briefly, he wondered if those strange messages would reappear but soon his thoughts were focused entirely on his writing and everything else was forgotten.

After about two hours his arms were becoming stiff from being in one position for so long, so he leaned back and stretched. For a brief moment he looked away to check the clock. It was nearly midnight -- almost time to wrap it up. When he turned back to the computer a message was there, staring at him.

GREETINGS

Momentarily flustered, he nearly forgot that he wanted Carey to verify it. Quickly, he grabbed the laptop and went to her bedroom door. Before knocking he

checked the screen to be sure it was still there and saw that it was. From inside the room Carey mumbled something and told him to come in, so with the laptop in hand, he approached her bed.

“Sorry to wake you, Cupcake, but I need your help for just a minute.”

“What is it, dad?” she asked sleepily.

He held the laptop in front of Carey’s face, glanced at the screen and gasped. The message was gone!

“Damn!”

“What is it?” she asked, worried.

Jake paced the room in frustration and finally calmed down. “Never mind. It’s nothing. Go back to sleep, Cupcake. Sorry I woke you.”

Carey rolled over and muttered something and was soon back in dreamland so Jake returned to his bedroom. He had no idea what to do. Maybe he should just ignore it. Yes, he thought, he would try that. Then perhaps they’d stop coming.

He placed the computer on the desk and sat down, ready to type and the same message appeared again!

GREETINGS

Determined to ignore it, he kept typing and tried not to look at it. Then another message appeared.

WEDNESDAY EVENING WILL BE GOOD FOR YOU

Wednesday evening? What did that mean? Then it dawned on him – that was the night he was going to meet the Harveys. Whoever was communicating the messages was apparently trying to tell him something. Curiosity finally got the best of him and he asked a question.

WHY WILL IT BE GOOD FOR ME?

SHE CAN HELP YOU

Who was *she*? Mrs. Harvey? How the hell could she help him? What kind of help?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

SHE IS VERY KNOWLEDGABLE

Well, he thought – that's good to know. But exactly what did she have so much knowledge about?

ABOUT WHAT?

ABOUT YOU AND MUCH MORE

She didn't even know him yet! Scratching his head in bewilderment, he was trying to understand this very strange conversation. Since it seemed to be a fairly coherent one, he decided to continue.

WHAT DOES SHE KNOW?

EVERYTHING IMPORTANT ABOUT YOU

ARE YOU REFERRING TO MRS. HARVEY?

INDEED

He couldn't understand how a perfect stranger could possibly know everything important about him. They had never met; never even spoke to one another. Was Mrs. Harvey some kind of wizard or something? He decided to ask Joe.

HOW DOES SHE KNOW?

SHE WILL EXPLAIN IF YOU WILL LISTEN

Confused and bewildered, he wanted to put an end to this nonsense so he typed his final message.

FINE. I'LL LISTEN. GOOD NIGHT.

With that, he saved the document, knowing that only his part of this very bizarre exchange would be saved. Then he put everything in the safe and went to bed. His mind was swirling with a myriad of questions. Not only was he worried about everything else – now he was thinking about Mrs. Harvey! Finally, he turned over, pounded the pillow and tried to clear his mind. After about thirty minutes he finally fell into an exhaustive sleep.

Tuesday and Wednesday were fairly routine -- just the usual mental blocks and he had to take time off from writing for some research on the internet. He put the laptop in the office safe and turned around to use his regular computer which faced his open office door. With his peripheral vision he caught sight of someone standing outside the small office lobby staring at him. It was a blond man he didn't know. When their eyes met the man quickly turned and rushed away so Jake got up and went to the doorway. The man was halfway down the hall and disappeared into Senator McKenzie's suite.

McKenzie was a political adversary to Senator Weston and they were definitely not friends. He decided he should check it out so he locked his office door and went into Weston's office.

“Got a minute?”

“Sure, Jake,” replied the senator. “What’s up?”

He sat down after closing the door and told her about the blond man. “It looked like he was spying or something. Why would he do that?”

“I don’t know,” replied the senator, her brow slightly furled. “I’ve known Brian McKenzie to be somewhat devious, but sending a spy – that’s a new one.”

“I guess I should keep my office door closed, huh?”

“No. I wouldn’t worry too much about it,” she replied. “He can’t see anything from the hall, can he?”

“I don’t think so,” Jake said. “But it’s kind of distracting. Maybe he won’t try it again.”

“Maybe,” she said. “But if he does let me know.”

“Okay.”

When Jake went to lunch in the cafeteria, he happened to spot the blond man on the other side of the room. His co-worker Megan Sparks was in line in front of him so he asked if she knew his name.

“Yeah, that’s Steve Pennington. He’s an aide to Senator McKenzie. Why?”

“Oh, no reason. I just thought he looked familiar, that’s all,” Jake replied.

“If you ask me, he’s a real creep. He’s always hanging around the women trying to get them to go out with him but most of them are smarter than that,” she said, snickering.

Jake smiled and glanced at the man again. “Any official reason he might be hanging around Senator Weston’s office?”

“I doubt it. She and McKenzie are long time enemies,” Megan replied, laughing. “Why? Has Steve been spying again?”

“Again?”

“Yeah,” she replied. “He has a reputation for trying to find out what the opposition is up to. He did that with me not long ago. I thought he learned his lesson when my boss had a little talk with Senator McKenzie. But, apparently not.”

“Very interesting,” said Jake. “Thanks, Megan.”

Jake was somewhat surprised this type of thing took place between professionals, but he had only worked there for a few years. He assumed he’d probably see a lot worse if he stayed on the job much longer. After all, you can never figure a politician, especially those of the other party.

Jake left his office at five o’clock so he could get home in time to change for dinner. It would give him about an hour to get ready since he lived about forty-five minutes from the office. Unfortunately, his timing didn’t exactly work out. It was almost seven o’clock when he finally got home. Carey was pacing the floor, waiting for him.

“Where have you been? And why didn’t you answer your cell phone?” she demanded.

“Sorry Cupcake. I had a little accident and my cell phone was dead.”

“Accident? Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine,” he replied, as he ran up the stairs to change clothes. “Call the Harveys and tell them we’re on our way. I’ll tell you all about it in the car.”

As they sped through the suburbs toward Mike’s house, Jake explained what happened. “This woman pulled away from the curb without looking,” he told her. “Our bumpers had a rather painful introduction.”

“Geez, that’s pretty stupid.”

“Well, everybody makes mistakes. She was really sorry about it.”

“I hope she has insurance,” Carey said.

“The damage wasn’t that much. She’s going to pay for it herself and it looked like she had plenty of money, if you know what I mean.”

“Really? Well, that’s nice of her. What kind of car did she have?”

“A real fancy Mercedes -- beautiful thing, and she wasn’t too shabby either,” he added, beneath his breathe.

“Huh?”

“Oh nothing,” replied Jake. “Anyway, I’m fine and the car still runs okay. I’ll get it fixed soon.”

Even though they were thirty minutes late Dee and Bill were the most congenial hosts. They perfectly understood why he was delayed and Bill even offered to give him a massage after dinner.

“Uh, thanks Bill, that’s okay. Really, I’m just fine,” Jake stuttered shyly.

“Well, you know sometimes these minor accidents can cause problems that don’t always show up right away,” Bill offered.

“Really, she barely bumped my car. I was going very slow so it was really nothing.”

“Okay, but if you change your mind just let me know,” Bill said, leading him to the dining room.

Dinner was terrific and Jake made every effort to be sure Dee knew it. Against his better judgment he accepted her offer of dessert. It was something called black forest cake and it was scrumptious. With over-filled stomachs they went into the family room to visit for a while. During the conversation Dee happened to mention the senate and Jake took the bait. They spent the next hour discussing it and then he looked at his watch.

“Well, it’s getting late. I think we’d better be going. I have an early meeting tomorrow.”

Dee asked “before you leave, Jake, can I speak with you alone for a few minutes?”

“Uh, sure,” Jake replied. He followed her into the dining room and they sat at the table. The strange computer message entered his mind and he decided to listen closely to what Dee had to say. After all, he practically promised Joe.

“Jake, I don’t know if Carey told you about what I do but I’d like to spend a few minutes talking about it, if you don’t mind.”

“She said you were a teacher. Is there something I can help you with?”

“Well, I was thinking more of offering you some help,” she said. “You see, I’m a psychic and I have an ability to see things that most people can’t see.” She was very calm and spoke very deliberately.

Jake straightened up and looked at her with an expression of befuddlement. “So -- you’re a psychic. You don’t fit the image of what I thought a psychic would look like,” he said, awkwardly.

“Well,” she continued, smiling. “I don’t have a dark room with a crystal ball and lit candles, if that’s what you mean.”

Jake was somewhat embarrassed and made matters even worse when he tried to explain himself. “Oh, um, sorry, I didn’t mean it that way.”

“That’s okay, Jake. A lot of people think psychics are all from India and wear flamboyant scarves on their heads. There’s nothing to be embarrassed about. I bet you probably didn’t know there are many of us with psychic abilities – and most of us don’t have a Tarot parlor in a dark alley,” she added, laughing.

“Well, actually....no, I didn’t know that,” Jake sputtered.

For a moment there was silence and then Jake spoke up. “What do you want to help me with?”

“I’d like to meet with you sometime and get to know you a little better. I’ve helped a lot of people in your situation.”

“My situation? Oh – you mean my wife?”

“Yes. Naturally, Carey told me about her mother and she’s also very concerned about you. She loves you very much and she thought, well, she thought maybe I could help.”

“I know Carey’s worried about me, but most of it has to do with this big project I’m working on. The deadline’s coming up in a few weeks and then I’m sure things will get back to normal.”

Dee stood up and offered her hand to him. “Thanks for listening, Jake. I want you to know if you ever need someone to talk with, please give me a call.” She handed him her card and smiled genuinely.

“Okay. I promise I’ll do that Dee. Thanks for your offer – I know it was genuine.”

“Jake – I don’t want to pry into your life. I can see you’re a very private person and I respect that. Anything you say to me will be just between you, me and the universe. I promise.”

Jake laughed, shook her hand and placed her card in his wallet. “I appreciate that. Well, I guess we’d better be heading home now. Thanks a lot for the wonderful dinner.”

“Any time,” said Dee.

Dee walked them to the foyer and as she was about to say good night and close the door, Jake stopped her. “Dee? Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure, Jake. What is it?”

“Well, this is going to sound rather strange, but do you know -- do you know more about me than I think you do?”

Dee smiled slyly. “What made you ask that, Jake?”

“Nothing. It’s not important. Good night.”

“Good night, Jake.”

He now understood what Joe meant – about Mrs. Harvey knowing everything important about him. But how did Joe know that? This entire matter was very bizarre but at least he was beginning to see that it was probably not his imagination. Whoever this mysterious Joe was, he had information that was apparently based on reality, and things of which he, himself, was unaware. Surely, that was good news, wasn't it? Or was it?

On the drive back home, Carey asked him about the private meeting with Dee. “What did she want, dad?”

“Oh, nothing much. We just talked about life. I didn't know she was a psychic.”

“Oh? I thought I told you,” Carey said.

“Maybe you did. I don't remember. Anyway, she and Bill are very nice. Mike has a great set of parents.”

Carey smiled and decided to put her trust in Dee. She wasn't going to push it any further, unless she thought it was necessary.

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER SEVEN

By S. Leigh Young

After his meeting with Senator Weston, Jake headed to his office and heard the phone ringing inside so he fumbled to quickly unlock it. It was Regina Powell, the woman from the car accident. After a very friendly greeting, she repeated her deep regret over what had happened and insisted that she be allowed to buy him a drink that evening. At first Jake said he couldn't make it, but thought about it a little longer and finally relented. After all, she was about the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen and she seemed extremely intelligent. Why not? It couldn't hurt, could it?

He realized he was working too much and needed to think about having a social life again, but wasn't sure he was ready. There had been no women since Maggie and he hadn't even thought about dating. Was his mind clear enough to be in a relationship again? Could he handle all the baggage that other people usually brought with them? Over the past two years he'd found a way to survive by keeping to himself, but hiding in a cave was no way to live. Eventually, he'd have to come out and try again. It might as well be now, he thought.

They met at a cozy little bar downtown called Oozy's. It was a dark, quiet spot where two people could talk in private. At a small table near the back Jake waited as he watched for her arrival. When he saw her approaching, his heart skipped a beat and he stood up to greet her.

"Hello," he said nervously, extending his hand.

"Hi Jake," she said. "I would shake your hand but I had something else in mind."

Before he knew what was happening she was giving him a soft kiss on the cheek. Flushed and embarrassed, he led her to the table and took his seat on the other side.

"Why, Jake," she said coyly, "I think you're shy."

He cleared his throat, swallowed hard, and smiled. “Yeah, I guess you could say that.”

“Do I make you nervous?”

“Uh, no. Not really,” he stuttered. “I...well, I...oh, never mind.”

Regina laughed lightheartedly, causing her dark green eyes to sparkle, placed her hand on his and smiled that smile. “Jake, I’m afraid I wasn’t exactly honest about my reasons for wanting to buy you a drink.”

“Oh?”

“It’s true. I really just wanted to see you again. I find you very attractive,” she told him.

“You do?”

“Of course! Why wouldn’t I?”

“Uh, I don’t know. I guess it just didn’t occur to me,” he muttered. He thought what a jerk he must sound like – stammering and stuttering as if he’d never been with a woman. Inside he felt as if he must be dreaming. He wasn’t a bad looking guy but never dreamed a woman like Regina would give him a second look. He thought of himself as rather average and Regina was definitely not average!

After the waiter took their orders she must have sensed his inability to hold a coherent conversation so she started the ball rolling.

“So, tell me about yourself, Jake. I want to know more about you.”

“Well, there isn’t much to tell,” he replied. “I’m just a pencil-pusher. I work at the Capitol Building as an economics expert. Not very exciting, I’m afraid.”

“Economics expert? Well, that sounds interesting to me. I have a degree in business so we probably have a lot in common.”

“What do you do?” he asked, with genuine interest.

“Let’s talk about you first,” she said. “I want to know everything about you. Do you have a family?”

He told her about Carey and his wife who had died two years earlier, explaining that he and his daughter were very close.

“Now, see? That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

Jake smiled and squirmed a bit. “No. Sorry, I haven’t had much of a social life since my wife’s death.”

“That’s perfectly understandable, Jake,” Regina offered. “Two years is not that long to heal from something like that.”

“You think so? Most people tell me I should get back out there....that I’m living in a cave or something.”

“Everyone’s different, Jake. I’m sure you’re doing the best you can.”

What was it about this woman that intrigued him so much? Was she really so understanding or was she just pretending? But why would she want to pretend with someone like him? He was still having a difficult time figuring out what she saw in him. She obviously wasn’t attracted to him for his money. She probably had a lot more of it than he did! Was his self esteem so low that he didn’t think he was worthy of someone

like her? Suddenly it occurred to him that he really didn't know himself anymore. When a person lives in a cave, how could they?

As the next hour flew by Regina was able to coax more information out of him. She learned more about his work, about his high degree of respect for Senator Weston and his general political attitudes. He was, however, very careful not to mention the project he was working on.

"It's interesting that you work for a politician," Regina said. "I'm quite intrigued with politics. It always fascinated me. All that double talk and maneuvering they're so good at – and pulling the wool over our eyes!"

"Yeah," he said, chuckling. "A lot of them are pretty good at that. But Senator Weston's not like that. She's pretty genuine."

"Is she? Well, that must make it a lot easier to work for her. I can see you're pretty genuine yourself, Jake."

Slightly embarrassed, he stuttered again. "Thanks. I try."

Again, Regina reached for his hand. When she touched him, Jake felt a slight shiver run up his arm. Talking with her seemed so easy and he was actually beginning to feel comfortable with her.

"So, now I want to know more about you," he said.

"What would you like to know?"

"Everything."

"Okay," she replied. "I'm thirty one years old, never been married and have no children. I was born in Jamaica and I moved here when I was five. My father was a

jeweler and he had a little shop before he passed away. I have no brothers or sisters and my mother died many years ago.”

“So you’re all alone?”

“Pretty much,” she replied. “I sold my father’s business and real estate after his death and my only living relative is an aunt in Jamaica that I haven’t seen in years.”

“Well....do you have a job?”

“I did for a while,” she replied. “I worked for a large consulting firm in Boston but I got tired of it and quit. I came back to Washington about two years ago.”

“And how do you spend your time?”

Regina smiled and pulled her hand away, reaching for her glass. She told him she had been engaged to be married until six months earlier, explaining that during that relationship and since she hasn’t worked. “I was too busy trying to keep up with him and I guess I just didn’t feel like working after we broke it off.”

“What happened?”

“Oh, it just didn’t work out. We both decided to go our separate ways. His job involved a lot of travel and I was tired of it. After you’ve seen Europe, Japan and Australia a few times, that’s enough. I guess I just wanted to have some place to call home. I’m still in the transition phase...not sure what I’m going to do next.”

She looked at him and smiled the most beautiful smile he had ever seen -- straight, very white teeth framed by luscious red lips. Was she trying to tell him something?

“Jake. To be very honest, I’d like to settle down. I’m sick of wandering and being alone.”

“Yeah?” He didn’t know what else to say.

“Maybe that’s why I’m so attracted to you,” she said. “You seem so stable and settled down. I really like that.”

“Hmmm,” he muttered. “I suppose it does sound appealing to some. I never thought much about it.”

Reaching for his hand again, she looked directly into his eyes. “Jake. Do you want to take a chance again?”

He didn’t answer right away. His thoughts were somewhat jumbled and confused. He had so much on his plate right now. She was obviously looking for something more than just a fling. Could he handle that?

“I don’t know Regina. I’m so busy with my work and other things, I’m not sure about it.”

“It’s okay, Jake. I understand. But I hope you’ll think about it. I know this is pretty sudden and I don’t want to come on too strong. But I can’t help myself. There’s just something about you – I can’t explain it. I just feel really good when I’m with you or when I think about you.”

“But you barely know me,” he said.

“I feel like I’ve known you forever!”

He had to admit that he felt pretty good with her too. Maybe it was meant to be. Why did he feel this way? Should he take a chance?

After another drink he was beginning to relax and didn't realize that he may not be thinking clearly. For some reason, he heard the words come out of his mouth, but he didn't know why he said them.

“Regina, I think you're the most beautiful, sexy woman I've ever met. I'm very attracted to you too. Maybe it is time to come out of my cave.”

She beamed and grabbed his hands again. “I'm glad, Jake. I think we'd be good for each other, I really do.”

Whether she was right about that or not, he didn't really care at that moment. All he was thinking about was how wonderful he felt being with her. As the evening wore on they talked on a more intimate level and he asked himself if she was the one he could finally open up to. Perhaps she was.

At just before midnight Regina said she was getting sleepy so Jake walked her to the car. She unlocked the door and turned around, facing him. She was so close that he could feel her breathe on his cheek and before he knew it, she was kissing him sensuously. He responded immediately and didn't want to let her go – ever!

Finally, they parted and Regina drove off as Jake stood there staring at her car until it disappeared into the night. Was this really happening? Was Regina for real? Or was she another phantom coming into his life to cause more confusion? Unsure of the answer, he decided the only way to find out was to move forward. He told her he'd phone her the following day and they would make some plans to see each other again soon. When he arrived home Carey was in the kitchen making a lot of noise.

“Well, there you are!” she blurted, as he entered the room.

“How come you're still up?” he asked.

“I couldn't sleep. You've never been out this late before.”

“I’m sorry, Cupcake. I should have called you.”

“Yes, you should have,” she retorted. “Were you with that woman all this time?”

Jake wasn’t sure how to respond so he decided to be somewhat vague for the time being. “Yes, but it wasn’t anything you should worry about. She wasn’t a vampire who sucked all the blood out of me!”

“Dad! Don’t be that way. I was just worried, that’s all.”

“I know, Cupcake. It’s late and I think we should both get some sleep.”

“Not until I know more about this mysterious woman,” Carey prodded. “What’s her name?”

“Regina,” he replied. “What else do you want to know?”

“Who is she? What does she look like?”

He finally relented and gave her a quick summary of his new friend. “She lives here in Washington. She was born in Jamaica and came here as a child. Her parents are dead and she lives alone. Is that enough information for you?”

Taking his hand, she led him into the family room and gently pushed him down on the sofa. “Now just sit there for a minute, dad. What does this Regina look like?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“Because she must be pretty special if she kept you out this late,” Carey replied.

Jake smiled and stared at the ceiling for a moment. “Yeah, she’s pretty special, Cupcake. She just might be the best thing that’s happened to me in a long time.”

Carey gazed at her father with a loving smile. “Good. Finally!”

“What?” Jake was surprised at Carey’s response.

“I’m glad! It’s about time you started dating. I’ve been worried about you.”

“Well, you can stop worrying. I’m gonna’ see her again this weekend. Does that make you feel better?”

“Yes,” she replied as she gave him a kiss on the forehead. “Now you can go to bed. Good night.” She walked off toward the stairs and disappeared before he had a chance to respond.

Mulling the conversation over in his mind, he smiled to himself and realized how lucky he was to have such a caring daughter. Finally he went to bed with luscious thoughts of Regina instead of all the worries that had haunted him for so long. It was his best night’s sleep in months.

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER EIGHT

By S. Leigh Young

Since meeting Regina, Jake didn't work at home nearly as often and to make up for it, he tried to get to the office early so the project wouldn't suffer. They saw each other nearly everyday and communicated by phone, email and text messages several times a day. It seemed ridiculous, but he was sure he was in love with her. In his wildest dreams he had never envisioned meeting such a woman. She was witty, intelligent, understanding, caring, generous and gorgeous! He hadn't thought about Maggie in over a week and when he did, he felt somewhat ashamed that he could have such strong feelings for Regina. He honestly didn't believe he'd ever love another woman after Maggie.

Carey was thrilled with her father's new outlook on life, but she was still miffed about not spending enough time with him. One morning as he walked from the car into the Capitol building, he remembered their conversation from the previous night. He'd arrived home at about eleven o'clock after a fabulous date and Carey was waiting for him. As she always did when she wanted to have a discussion, she guided him into the family room and made him sit down. Sometimes he wondered if Carey felt responsible for his happiness because she often treated him like a child, worried that he was going to be hurt or disappointed if he wasn't careful. For at least ten minutes he listened to a lecture about taking things slowly and not getting carried away. Obviously, she was confused because a few minutes later, he discovered the opposite was true.

"I never see you anymore! And why haven't you brought her over here to meet me yet?"

"Cupcake, I'm sorry. We're just trying to get to know each other. I didn't want to introduce you until I was sure I wanted to keep seeing her, that's all."

"Well – are you sure yet?"

Jake didn't answer immediately. Although he wanted to continue seeing Regina, he wasn't sure if he was ready to make the next big move. If he introduced her to Carey things would be very different. It would put a final stamp of approval on the relationship and even though he thought he was in love he was still apprehensive. Something deep inside told him to keep his home life separate from his love life. Why? He didn't know. At last, he told Carey a complete lie.

"I'm sure you'll meet her soon."

"Are you afraid to introduce us? Do you think I may not approve or something?"

"No! It isn't that," he replied. "I thought about bringing her over the other night, but you were out with Mike."

"Fine. Whatever!" she exclaimed as she marched out of the room.

It was exactly what he was afraid would happen. Now Carey was mad at him and refused to speak to him at breakfast. He realized she would get over it, but it still bothered him. The decision was finally made that he would ask Regina to come to the house for dinner that weekend. Then he'd see if the two most important people in his life were compatible. And what if they were? Could he actually see himself marrying again? Perhaps, but could he ever replace what he had with Maggie?

As he approached the elevator, he noticed Steve Pennington heading in the same direction ahead of him, but Steve didn't notice him. Should he get in the elevator with him? Why not?

They were alone for several minutes in the small space as they were whisked to the top floor. Neither spoke, and the tension was so thick he could almost cut it with a knife. He hadn't noticed any spying lately, so he figured Pennington gave up trying to find out what he was working on. Finally, the elevator door opened and Pennington rushed ahead of him toward his office.

It was Thursday, the day he always met with Senator Weston at nine o'clock, so he spent the next hour finishing up the section he was working on. Then something happened that had not occurred in two weeks, and never at the office. He saw it on the screen when he looked up.

GREETINGS

Momentarily shaken, Jake looked around to be sure no one was nearby and decided he should close the door, then he sat back down and responded.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I WANT TO HELP YOU – AND WARN YOU

Damn! He wondered, now what?

WARN ME ABOUT WHAT?

THE YOUNG WOMAN – SHE IS NOT GOOD FOR YOU

Okay, he thought. That's about enough of this foolishness!

IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

I'M JUST TRYING TO HELP YOU

What! Whoever this damned Joe was, he was certainly not helping!

GO AWAY!!!

SOON

And he was stubborn too! Okay, he thought, he'd play along for a little while.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO HELP ME?

WITH YOUR PROJECT

Right! That's just terrific, he thought. First, he meddles in his private life and now he wants to help write the report! But he was still curious so he kept the peculiar conversation going.

HOW?

YOU NEED A BETTER WAY TO PRESENT IT

This was true, but how did Joe know? For weeks he'd been struggling with the best way to present the project, but was still stumped about it. Apparently, Joe knew more than he did about a lot of things, so he figured it couldn't hurt to learn more.

DO YOU HAVE A SUGGESTION?

HER NAME IS MARKIE. SHE WORKS IN YOUR BUILDING.

Huh? What the hell does that mean? Someone named Markie is supposed to help him?

TELL ME MORE

FIND HER

THEN WHAT?

YOU WILL LEARN TO TRUST ME. GOOD DAY.

Before he could type a response, all of Joe's messages disappeared. That was it? Did Joe just say good bye? He typed a few more questions, but there was no response. Apparently, he was gone. Quickly, he jotted the name Markie on a piece of paper. Baffled and confused, he sat at his desk for a while thinking about the bizarre exchange. Joe was apparently trying to help him with the project and also trying to gain his trust. But why? Who the hell was this guy? Damn!

As the day wore on Jake asked everyone he saw if there was someone named Markie working in the building. He even checked the phone register, but no Markie. At about four o'clock he finally gave up and started to wind up for the day. He was going to meet Regina for a drink at Oozy's. As he was locking the safe, he heard someone enter his office. She was a pretty young woman with long brown hair that framed her youthful face.

"Excuse me," she said. "Are you Jake Spencer?"

"Yes. Can I help you?"

She handed him a document. "I need to get your signature on this."

Jake took the document to his desk, read it over and signed it.

"Here you go," he said, handing it to her.

“Thanks,” she said cheerfully, extending her hand. “I don’t believe we’ve met yet.”

He shook her hand and smiled. “Glad to meet you. I didn’t get your name.”

“Oh, sorry. I’m Jennifer,” she replied. “Jennifer Markie.”

At first, he didn’t put two and two together, but then it hit him. “Did you say your name was Markie?”

“Yes, why?”

“Uh...oh, nothing. I once knew someone by that name”, he feigned. “Did you just start working here?”

“I’ve been here about a week,” she replied. “I work in the computer graphics department.”

“Graphics? I didn’t know there was a graphics department,” Jake said.

“We’ve just moved here from another building,” she mentioned. “They ran out of space over there so they converted part of the basement here for us.”

“Oh? Tell me more about what you do,” Jake asked, motioning for her to sit down.

Over the next few minutes Jake learned about the specific skills Jennifer possessed – skills that would definitely help present the project in a better way. Not only was she a computer whiz, she also had a background in economics, having minored in that field in college. She was the perfect one to help him. They agreed to meet on Friday and present the idea to Senator Weston. He couldn’t believe it, but Joe may be right, and his message about someone named Markie was downright eerie.

As he drove to meet Regina, he realized he was actually not thinking about her for the first time in days. He couldn't get thoughts of Joe out of his mind. How did he know about Jennifer? Joe was either someone on the inside who knew what he was working on or he was a supernatural ghost! And neither possibility was comforting to him.

As he pulled up in front of Oozy's his thoughts immediately turned to Regina. She was waiting for him at their usual table looking ravishing as usual. "Hi," said Jake, as he gave her a quick kiss on the cheek.

"Hello," she replied. "You must have had a busy day today."

"Yeah, as a matter of fact I did," he said, smiling. "How did you know?"

"I tried to call you several times but you were always gone. And you must have had your phone turned off because you didn't answer my texts."

"Oh! Sorry about that," he said quietly, taking her hand. "I was running around all day doing research. Anyway, I'm here now." It briefly occurred to him that he was lying to her, but he had no choice, did he? Because of the deadline, his cell phone was off during the day and he didn't want to answer any questions about the project.

"Yes! You are, and I'm going to dominate your time for the next few hours, Mr. Spencer," she said playfully.

"Are you now?" he responded, smiling slyly. "Well, that sounds good to me!"

Regina beamed as Jake placed their drink order. Later, they decided to go to her apartment for dinner. She promised to prove to him she was a good cook and he was in no mood to decline the offer. He didn't know Regina was hoping to seduce him. The thought of intimacy with her had definitely crossed his mind on more than one occasion, but he wasn't quite ready yet and Regina seemed to understand.

“I’ll call Carey and let her know.” Jake pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and quickly dialed Carey’s number.

“Dad! Did you forget? We’re suppose to go to Mrs. Harvey’s talk tonight!”

“Oh! Sorry Cupcake. I did forget. What time are we supposed to be there?”

“Seven o’clock,” Carey replied. “Why don’t you bring Regina with you?”

“Uh, no...I don’t think that’s a good idea. I’ll be home soon,” he said, and the call was ended.

After five minutes of apologies to Regina, he kissed her goodbye and went home to change clothes. She took it very well, which told him a lot about her. Was she for real? Was she really that understanding? As he drove quickly through the streets, he pinched his arm again to be sure he wasn’t dreaming. Regina didn’t seem to have a possessive bone in her body.

Jake had forgotten the promise he’d made to Carey several days earlier when she was still on speaking terms with him. She begged him to attend the talk Dee was presenting before the local metaphysical group and he reluctantly consented. It wasn’t something that interested him, but he knew it was to Carey. Having spent such little time with her lately, it was his guilt that made him agree to go. And, who knows? Maybe he’d learn something, he thought.

When the presentation ended, he and Carey approached Dee who was standing next to Bill. After the initial greetings, Dee asked him what he thought about the talk.

“Well...it’s definitely something I’ve never heard before,” he said, chuckling. “I’m always interested in new philosophies.”

Bill laughed. “It’s not really a philosophy, Jake, and it’s certainly not new. It’s more a way of life, at least for us.”

“Yes, I can see that,” he replied. “Dee? That part about death...that was very interesting.”

“How so?” Dee asked.

“Well, you said there is no such thing as death – that our bodies are not who we really are. Right?”

“Yes, that’s true.”

“Then who are we – really?”

“The quick answer is -- we’re energy made up of experience and wisdom existing in a magnetic field. Our bodies are nothing more than temporary vessels that we use to gain experience and wisdom. Physical matter, including our bodies, are the result of the vibrational lowering of energy.”

“Uh huh,” he mumbled. “Then where does the energy go when the body dies? For instance, where is Maggie’s energy right now?”

“In reality there is no such thing as space or time. I know it’s difficult to comprehend, but Maggie hasn’t gone anywhere. She’s right here with you. You just can’t see her because you believe in the limitations of the body.”

Jake tried to take it all in, but was having a difficult time with it. “Okay, another question. What’s the point of all this?” He waved his hand in the air as if pointing at the sky. “All this...apparent life?”

“That question requires more than a short answer,” Dee replied. “But basically, the point is to learn and share with others. I tell you what. I’ll send over some books you can read. Maybe they’ll help answer some of your questions. And then, if you want, I’d be glad to meet with you and we can discuss it further some time.”

Jake thought about it for a moment and decided to accept her offer. It was something that had always bewildered him – the purpose of life and death – all the pain and suffering. Was it some sort of punishment? He just didn't know. And then he remembered another question. "Dee, you mentioned something about the subconscious mind being rather dumb."

"Yes, I did say that. You see, the subconscious doesn't do the thinking – it's neutral. It's similar to a computer hard drive where memories, events, habits, emotions and experience are stored. Thinking, judging, choosing – those types of behaviors are performed by the conscious mind.

Jake's interest was peaked when he heard Dee mention the word **habits**. He asked her to elaborate and she graciously obliged, as they all walked toward the parking lot.

"If you do a certain activity or tell yourself something repeatedly, over a period of time, the subconscious mind records it in a special storage section. I call those sections **Pattern Modules**. Our beliefs, actions and thoughts are accepted into the subconscious unfiltered. It doesn't judge them as right or wrong, good or bad. It simply records them. And, as the pattern modules continue to fill up, the more effort is required to reprogram them."

Dee's words began to make some sense. They also explained how some of his bad habits had been formed – by his harmful thinking patterns. *I'm not worthy. It's only because of my race. I'm so lonely. I can't do that.* All these types of detrimental thoughts, that had permeated his life, were just a small example of his limited thinking tendencies.

Suddenly, Dee exclaimed, "Oh! And one more important thing – not only does the subconscious record everything and store patterns, it also organizes the contents similar to a catalog. The patterns are kept in the front of the catalog, so they're easier to access by the conscious mind. As you react to events, perform an action or think a

thought, it instantly compares it to the contents of the **Pattern Modules** first. Our brains are exceedingly intricate and complex machines, processing the data to be stored.”

“Hmmm,” Jake said, rubbing his chin. “So, there’s more to it than just the two minds – there’s also the brain.”

“Yes,” Dee replied, smiling again. “It’s actually a trinity -- brain, subconscious mind and conscious mind.”

He instantly recognized the term **trinity**. It was used throughout religious tradition to represent the father (God), the son (living beings), and the holy spirit (soul). After mentioning this to Dee, he was even more befuddled.

She explained that **God**, in her belief system, represents the higher vibrational levels of thought and ideas; the **holy spirit** represents the collective subconscious to which all individual minds are connected; the **Son** represents the illusion of the physical world and individual conscious minds that judge and filter the experience of the illusion.

She then went on to explain that the subconscious mind, when healthy, maintains a connection to a higher vibrational level of thought and ideas that the conscious mind can access. If one’s thinking patterns are self-destructive it can alter that connection, or even block it, in extreme cases. This is what has often occurred when a person behaves in an antisocial or harmful manner, or when mental illness emerges. Mental illness is exactly how it sounds – disease (dis-ease) of the mind brought about by harmful thought patterns over periods of existence. Thinking patterns also wire the brain synapses as they are recorded. As the brain experiences continuous input, the wiring forms the subconscious blueprint. “It’s similar to DNA,” she explained. “DNA stores the various blueprints of the physical illusion, while the brain stores the blueprints of the psychological responses to it.”

“You said the subconscious mind doesn’t judge, but it seems like it does,” he asked.

Dee explained that organizing the data is not a result of judgment, but only the computer processor doing its job. If something is repeated often enough, it “assumes” it is something important to the conscious mind and to the person (aspect) involved. The filtering and programming are accomplished by the conscious mind.

He mulled all this over for a moment, said his goodbyes to a few others and continued walking with Dee toward her car. “Do you mean I have control over what goes into my subconscious mind?”

“Well, there are certain events and other forces that you don’t control, but you do have the ability to control how you react, and how much emphasis you place on them. If you allow it go in unfiltered, the subconscious picks a place to store it, doing the best it can without more direct guidance from the conscious mind.”

“Wow,” he feigned. “There’s apparently a lot more to the mind than I ever imagined.” Although he found her comments to be thought provoking, he still wasn’t convinced of any of it.

“Jake, most people have no idea.” Dee responded, extending her hand with a heartfelt smile. “We can all learn to guide and reprogram our existence with purpose. It just takes practice.”

“Fascinating. Thanks Dee,” he said. “Great presentation. I really enjoyed it.”

On the way home Carey mentioned something he hadn’t thought about before. She asked him a question with which he was familiar, but had never considered very seriously.

“Okay,” Carey said. “If a tree falls in the forest and there’s no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?”

“I don’t know,” Jake answered, “does it?”

“No, dad. It doesn’t make a sound. If there’s no one or no receiver nearby, there is no sound. Now, think about that. Really think about it. What does it tell you?”

He mulled it over for a moment, but didn’t grasp what she was getting at. “I give up. What does it tell me?”

“It tells us that the sound isn’t real if there is no one or nothing there to receive it. To take it a step further, the tree isn’t real if no one or nothing is there to observe it!”

“Wait a minute,” he interjected. “The tree could still be real, even if there’s no one there.”

“No! You don’t understand,” she exclaimed in a huff. “The physical world seems real because of a collective agreement to manifest it. It’s maintained by a mutual belief that it’s real.”

Jake glared at his daughter with astonishment, chuckled slightly and slid into the driver’s seat. As Carey took her place on the passenger side, he was still chuckling.

“What’s so funny?” she snapped.

After he managed to subdue his amusement and stop his head from shaking in disbelief, he placed his hand lovingly on her shoulder. “Mrs. Harvey tried to explain it to me but I wasn’t sold on it. Convincing me the physical world isn’t real is going to be a very hard sell.”

Carey turned her glance out the window and sighed. “It’s too complicated to explain. I’ll ask her to explain it to you. She explained it to me and it made perfect sense.”

“Okay, Cupcake. Don’t worry about it. It’s not that important.”

“Yes, it is, dad. It’s very important. It’s the whole reason we see the material world. Don’t you get that?”

“No, I guess I don’t,” he replied, wishing the conversation would end, but Carey had one more thing to say.

“Mrs. Harvey isn’t the only way I came to learn this stuff. I also read about it in a book from the school library -- a physics book.”

“A physics book? I thought all this was metaphysics, not physics.”

“Like I said, Mrs. Harvey can explain it better. She says physics and metaphysics are all the same thing.”

Thank goodness, he thought, he could see the driveway just ahead. Hopefully, Carey would drop the subject when they got home. This topic was a little too much to contemplate at the moment, with all the other circumstances in his life.

THE DREAMVISIONER – CHAPTER NINE

By S. Leigh Young

“If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times!” James MacAbee was enraged over Congressman Belham’s incompetence. Three weeks had passed since he made the contribution to his campaign and he hadn’t received one benefit. Now Belham was giving him another excuse.

“I don’t want to hear excuses, Belham,” MacAbee shouted. “I want results!”

“I -- I know. I’m doing the best I can. I’ve been overwhelmed lately.”

“With what? Taking care of your pet cat?” MacAbee bellowed.

Belham turned beet red, but didn’t have the intestinal fortitude to speak in his own defense. “What you’re asking is impossible. I can’t just walk into Weston’s office and demand to know what she’s working on. I tried to reach Jake Spencer by phone, but he wasn’t home.”

“So why didn’t you try again?” MacAbee demanded.

“I left a message but he never called back.”

“Never called back!?! Are you serious Belham?” MacAbee was now furious. Not only was Belham incompetent, he was a downright idiot! “Do you think Spencer’s gonna’ return your call when he probably knows about your failed attempt to get information directly from Weston? You have to catch him unaware!”

“Hmmm, I hadn’t thought about that. Sorry, JJ.”

MacAbee was so infuriated he could barely contain himself. This stupid excuse for a Congressman not only accepted his very generous contribution, but told him he was sure he could help him. If this is what he called ‘help’. Oh, to hell with it!

“Get out of here Belham,” he blared. “And don’t expect any more contributions from me!”

Quickly, Belham scurried through the door and MacAbee pulled out his private cell phone. “Steve. It’s JJ. Have you had any luck with Spencer?”

“Afraid not. I can’t get near him or his office without someone seeing me. I’ve already been in trouble for snooping around too much. I don’t want to get fired.”

“Thanks anyway,” MacAbee said bluntly, and hung up without saying good bye. His patience was wearing thin. Regina was taking her sweet time with Spencer and every other method didn’t seem to work. He had to think of another way to get information. Then an idea came to him. Quickly, he phoned Brashear.

“Duke. Bring Regina to the club tonight. I have an idea I wanna’ discuss with you.”

“Sure Jim. See you about nine o’clock.”

It was a risky plan but well worth it, if it worked. Something in his bones told him he had to uncover what Spencer was working on and he knew he wouldn’t get a good night’s sleep until he did. After another phone call, to make a few arrangements, he stopped by Ken Matthews’ office. He hired Matthews a few weeks earlier because of his special legalese skills. MacAbee told him to meet him at the club, then he left the office and went over there so he could think more clearly.

He had to let Matthews in on it because he understood how to decipher the legalese. MacAbee had a lot of redeeming qualities, at least he thought so, but one of them was not the ability to decipher legislation. Ken Matthews was a smart man and

usually agreed with MacAbee, so he could think of no reason he shouldn't agree to his plan.

The Baldwin Executive Club was the most discrete men's club in the city and that's exactly why MacAbee was a member. He had his own private room where he could discuss certain things no one else should hear. It was a privilege reserved only for a few people and, even though the cost was exorbitant, he didn't care. It had proven its worth on many occasions.

Right on time, Brashear knocked and MacAbee ushered them inside, looked down the hall to be sure no one was watching, and locked the door. The room was decorated in the style MacAbee liked. In fact, it looked very much like his office – dark paneling, several framed photos of his yacht and a few classic cars along with a large portrait of his wife mounted over one end of the small conference table. There was also a brown leather sofa and a small well-stocked bar. Matthews was sitting on the sofa drinking a martini and after a few quick introductions MacAbee started the ball rolling.

“What're ya' drinking Duke?”

“Just a beer,” Duke replied.

“Regina?”

“Just water, thanks.”

MacAbee observed Regina closely. He thought he sensed some nervousness in her and wanted to be sure she could handle this.

“Regina, you look lovely, as usual,” he said. She smiled, but said nothing. “My dear, do you think you could manage to get something from Mr. Spencer for me?”

“I don't know,” she replied. “What is it?”

“Spencer places something in his shirt pocket everyday before leaving his office. I have reason to believe it’s a flash drive. I want you to make a copy of that flash drive for me.”

“I’ve seen something in his shirt pocket,” she offered. “But I’m not sure I can grab it without him knowing.”

“Believe me dear you can. And you will, if you want the rest of your fee.”

Regina squirmed, thinking about the money that she so desperately needed. Although she was beginning to like Jake a lot, she needed the money more than him.

Finally, Brashear spoke up. “What do you have in mind?”

“I just got off the phone with a guy named Mark Albright,” MacAbee replied. “He’s a computer genius – knows all there is to know about computers, software, security, etcetera. He’s got a device that can suck all the data from one flash drive to another in a couple of minutes, and it’s no bigger than a cell phone.”

Duke nodded. “I get it. You want her to use the device, then replace the original flash drive back in his pocket without him knowing.”

“Exactly,” MacAbee said. “And there’s a way she can do it, if she’s careful.”

Over the next hour MacAbee and Brashear plotted while Regina and Matthews listened. She had very little say in the matter, and knew it. She was just a pawn in their little scheme and didn’t even know what it was all about. All she knew was Jake was working on something for a senator and she was supposed to find out as much as she could about it. Up to that point she’d been unable to get him to talk about it. In fact, she was afraid the meeting with MacAbee was being called to fire her. Even though she didn’t like the idea of stealing Jake’s work, it was the only way she could get the rest of the money. She had to have it or the chances were good she wouldn’t live much longer. She owed a fortune to her bookie and he was not known to be the patient type. She had

lied to Jake about Boston and everything else, but that didn't matter. She'd only been in D. C. for a few months, not two years, and she was hiding out. Brashear helped her get an apartment and that was the only thing keeping her alive. Soon, she expected one of those big goons to be knocking on her door in the middle of the night and if she couldn't produce the money, she was sure it would be the last night of her life.

When the plan was well understood by all, Brashear and Regina left the club and went to her apartment to talk about it. He explained it all again to be sure she understood and she assured him that she did. Of course, it meant she'd have to seduce Jake and that was not an idea she was entirely against. She'd actually grown very fond of him. He was kind, sweet and very nice to her, and that was something she hadn't experienced in a long time – ever since she ran away from Jamaica to get away from her madman husband who tried to kill her three times. She came to America illegally and if Jake knew he'd probably dump her immediately. She had to get this job over with as quickly as possible so she could make her way to Mexico where she'd be safe, after she paid off her debt. She kicked herself repeatedly when she thought about her stupidity. It was that job at the night club in Miami where she was paid under the table. They had a back room for illegal gambling and she got hooked. Before she knew it -- well, the rest is history.

MacAbee wanted the information as quickly as possible. She'd have to work fast to gain Jake's complete trust. She knew he was stalling about having sex because of his feelings for his dead wife, but she also knew he wanted her very much. She had a feeling he was falling in love with her and, if he was, she'd have to hurt him. It didn't make her feel very good, but what choice did she have? He was better off without someone like her anyway, she thought.

After Brashear left, she called Jake's cell phone. This time he answered right away.

"Hi there," he said. "I was just going to bed."

"You were?" she asked playfully. "All alone?"

Jake reacted with a smile, immediately getting the message. “Yeah. All alone.”

“Darn. That sounds like me,” she laughed. “Just two lonely people traveling the road of life -- with no one to love.”

“Well, I wouldn’t put it that way,” he said quietly, as he snuggled into bed. “I have a lot of love in my life.”

“Lucky you.”

Oops, that wasn’t the right thing to say, was it? After all, Regina really was alone. At least he had Carey and a few relatives who loved him. She didn’t even have that.

Before he could stop himself, he said, “well, you’ve got me...”

Regina was silent and he hoped he hadn’t said the wrong thing again.

“Do you love me?” she asked in almost a whisper.

“I -- I don’t know,” he replied. “I might.”

“You might?”

There he’d done it again! Couldn’t he get anything right?

“I’m not even sure who I am right now,” he said. “You came into my life so suddenly, just when I thought everything was set in stone. Meeting you has changed everything, but...”

“But what, Jake?”

“I don’t know, Regina. I guess I’m scared it’ll all end -- like it’s some kind of dream or something.”

“Why should it end Jake? I have no intention of going anywhere without you.”

He let her words bounce around in his mind for a while then Joe’s unwanted message rudely appeared. “*She’s not good for you.*” He still didn’t know what that meant. How could something that feels so good be bad for him unless it was going to end?

“Are you sure about that?”

“Look, Jake. I know you’re a little leery of getting close to someone and I truly do understand that. You lost the only woman you ever loved and you don’t want that to happen again.”

He knew she was right. How would he handle it if Regina disappeared from his life like Maggie did? Or what if she changed her mind about him? What if she decided he was too boring, or dull, or -- whatever? He knew if they had sex, that would be it. He’d be a goner. At least, at this point, she wasn’t really a part of his normal life. She was more like a secret that only a few people knew about. A part of him wanted to keep it that way, but he knew that wasn’t possible. And, of course, his hormones were raging after years of celibacy. He’d heard that wasn’t good for a person and maybe it was true.

“Can you come over this Friday and spend the night?”

“Hmm, I don’t know, Regina. It might be a little awkward explaining it to a teenager.”

“She’s seventeen, Jake. I’m sure she’d understand.”

No, he thought. He couldn't do that. He was afraid he'd spoil his relationship with Carey even further. "I'd prefer to just come over for the evening. If I get home by midnight..."

"Otherwise, you'll turn into a pumpkin?" she joked.

"Yeah -- something like that," he replied with levity.

"Okay, Jake. Come over on Friday. I'll cook a wonderful dinner and I'll put the timer on to be sure you leave by midnight. How's that sound?"

He rolled over on the bed and pulled the blanket over his head, with the phone still at his ear. "It sounds deliciously intriguing...."

"Good. Then it's a date, okay?"

"I'll be there. I promise," he said, and the call was reluctantly ended.

As he lay awake, tossing around for a while, he realized his negative self-image was haunting him, as usual. It was just like Dee told him. And all that fear of being hurt again, what was that? So what if he got hurt? He'd live through it just fine, with all the supporting people in his life. Finally, deciding to ignore the negativity, he vowed to try his best to move forward with a social life again.

THE DREAMVISIONER— CHAPTER TEN

By S. Leigh Young

Friday seemed to drag on forever, probably because Jake was eagerly looking forward to his evening with Regina. He was supposed to be at her apartment by six o'clock and wouldn't have time to go home and change clothes. He wasn't too thrilled about arriving in a suit he'd worked in all day, but planned to change there.

With all the recent events in his life, he was having a difficult time concentrating on the project, but that all changed when Jennifer came bouncing in after lunch. Together, they went to Senator Weston's office to present their idea. He wasn't sure of Jennifer's age, but she looked to be about twenty-five or so, very pretty face and trim figure with shining long, brown hair cascading down her back in a slight wave. Thank God, he thought, he was much too old for her. He didn't need any more complications, although he did find her very attractive in an "older brother" sort of way.

The Senator was very keen on their idea to collaborate, but she wanted to be sure Jennifer understood the importance of secrecy. Could she be trusted to keep the project to herself? She would have to pass a background check which shouldn't take long. The FBI always prioritized senate and congressional hires. After explaining all of the security procedures, the senator smiled and extended her hand to Jennifer.

"So, those are the procedures we have to follow," the Senator said. "I know it sounds rather extreme, but unfortunately, there are a lot of spies around here." She winked at Jake and he smiled.

"You can trust me, Senator. I won't mention it to anyone, at least not the details. Of course, I'll have to tell my supervisor that I'm working on something for you."

“Of course,” she said. “In fact, give me your supervisor’s name and I’ll call to explain it. The deadline is about a month away so you can expect to be working on it for at least that long.”

“Okay,” Jennifer replied. “I have a lot of ideas already. I’ve done a lot of graphics presentations, so I’m sure I can help.”

With that, the Senator asked Jennifer to leave the room for a moment so she could speak to Jake in private.

“Do you trust Jennifer?” asked the senator.

“Sure, why not? She’s worked for the government for over three years. I don’t think she’s a spy, if that’s what you mean.”

“No, I don’t either,” Weston said. “Go ahead with it, but don’t give her details until the background check is done.”

Jennifer was waiting at his office door when Jake arrived, so he told her she could start on Monday morning. She was to report to his office at 8 a.m. and they’d work there.

“Thank you so much Jake. I really appreciate this opportunity.”

“Well, if you can do what you say you can do, I’m the one who should be thanking you. I’ve been working on this project for months and it’s really crucial to get it right.”

“Don’t worry about a thing,” she said, grinning widely. “We’ll get it right.” Then she walked off down the hall and Jake couldn’t help noticing her very attractive backside. Damn! Two great females in his life all at once – after two years of nothing!

He glanced at his watch and realized he still had three hours before it was time to leave, so he rolled up his sleeves and began typing again. And then, suddenly Joe appeared.

GREETINGS

Oh great! He thought, not this again!

WHAT DO YOU WANT NOW?

YOU FOUND MARKIE – THAT IS GOOD

He didn't find her. She found him! This was the first time that one of Joe's messages didn't seem correct.

YOU'RE WRONG. SHE FOUND ME

I KNOW. IT WAS ARRANGED.

This was so maddening. Joe not only seemed to read his mind and know what other people were thinking, but he could also arrange for things to happen where he worked. Bizarre!

HOW WAS IT ARRANGED?

USING THOUGHT

Thought? Joe just *THOUGHT* it, so it happened? This was so wild and strange he couldn't believe it.

I SEE

I DON'T THINK SO. NOT YET.

WHATEVER! WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I WANT YOU TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU TRUST ME

He had to admit, the guy knew more than he did and appeared to be right about Jennifer – so far. Feeling his oats, he decided to toy with Joe for a while.

YOU GOT HER NAME WRONG

NO. YOU DID.

OKAY, YOU WIN

NO. YOU WIN.

That was true, he thought. He was certainly the beneficiary of Joe's knowledge thus far. He wondered what else Joe could help him with, but before he could type his question, another message appeared on the screen.

THE TEACHER'S TALK. YOU LIKED IT.

IT WAS DIFFERENT

READ THE BOOKS. THEY WILL HELP YOU.

Suddenly he remembered the two books Dee had sent to the house. He'd placed them on the bookcase and forgotten about them. For some reason, Joe thought they were important, but he didn't see how metaphysics and all that spiritual mumbo jumbo would help him. He felt fine.

OKAY. I'LL READ THEM.

GOOD

He was almost afraid to ask his next question, but he just had to know the answer.

ARE YOU A GHOST?

NO MORE THAN YOU ARE

Geez! If only he could get a straight answer! Was Joe calling him a ghost? Or was he trying to tell him he – Joe - was human? He was more confused now than he was before!

THEN YOU MUST BE HUMAN

I WAS

He was human? What the hell did that mean?

NOT ANYMORE?

NOT AT PRESENT

PLEASE EXPLAIN

ASK THE TEACHER

Apparently, Joe was coaxing him to learn more about the weird science that Dee and Bill were into. He was very resistant to that idea and told Joe so.

I'M NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN IT

YOU SHOULD BE

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT

THAT MAKES ME VERY HAPPY

Wonderful, he thought. He was finally making Joe happy. Suddenly his self control disappeared and he spun around in the chair with his hands in the air. “Whoopie,” he shouted. “I’m talking to a computer and I’m making it happy!”

I must be insane, he thought. That’s the only answer. Maybe he should talk to Dee. She didn’t seem insane.

TALK TO HER

OKAY. NOW I MUST GET BACK TO WORK.

SO YOU TRUST ME NOW?

I THOUGHT YOU KNEW IT ALL

NOT ALL, BUT A LOT. DO YOU TRUST ME?

SORT OF

GOOD DAY

As he watched the screen, he saw all of Joe's messages disappear into thin air, as if they'd never been there. In an instant they were just gone! Only his side of the discussion remained, which he quickly deleted.

It was apparent, Joe was not going away. He had to do something. He couldn't keep this to himself forever, could he? No. If he told anyone about it, it would make at all real. He didn't want it to be real! Finally, he pushed thoughts of Joe from his mind and turned his attention to his writing again, but it still wasn't easy to focus. There were too many things on his mind. Carey, Joe, Regina, Jennifer, Dee....the project! He felt as if his mind was churning like a cement mixer. Maybe a little sexual release would help, he thought. Yes. He wasn't sure if he was ready, but he didn't care at that point. He needed it!

Five o'clock finally arrived so he locked the office door and walked eagerly out of the building to his car. There was not a happier man on earth than Jake Spencer at about eleven o'clock that night. He hadn't realized how his sexual frustration had built up over the last two years. Luckily for him, Regina showed him. And she did it very well. He felt fantastic!

Afterwards, they lay next to each other and talked quietly for a while. He asked himself if he was in love with her. And how did she feel about him? But something kept nagging at the back of his mind. Was she for real? He still wasn't sure.

It was getting close to midnight so Jake playfully asked her where the timer was. She laughed and tossed a pillow at him then sensuously kissed him on the lips.

“You better not do that,” he said mischievously. “You’re too tempting and I have to go soon.”

“Okay Jake, if you must. But I really wish you’d stay the night.”

“I’d love to Regina, but I can’t.”

She gave him a pouting look, then he tossed the pillow back at her.

“Jake? Will you be a sweetheart and go downstairs and get me a soda, please? I’m really dying for one.”

“Sure. That sounds good to me too,” he replied, pulling the blanket around him and heading for the door.

As soon as he left the room Regina grabbed his shirt off the floor and removed the flash drive from the pocket. She jumped out of bed, went into the bathroom and locked the door. Working quickly, she opened the closet door and grabbed the transfer device, plugged the flash drive in, pushed the “transfer” button and waited for the green light. She could hear Jake coming back to the room and started getting nervous. What if he noticed the flash drive missing? Hurry up! She wanted this all to be over with!

Finally, the green light came on, so she removed the flash drive, placed the device back in the linen closet beneath some towels and flushed the toilet, so he wouldn’t be suspicious. Now she had to figure out a way to get it back into his pocket without him noticing. She had the flash drive in the palm of her hand, but it was small and easy to hide. She walked toward the bed and pretended to stumble, falling to her knees. Jake laughed at her and tried to help her up and just as his arm came around her shoulders she slipped the flash drive back in the pocket.

It was easier than she thought it would be and Jake was none the wiser. A short while later he dressed and they said good night. Immediately, she phoned Brashear to tell him.

“It went perfectly,” she told him. “I’ve got the data copy here. Come and get it so I don’t have to think about it anymore.”

“Good. You did a good job, baby. Just stay put and I’ll be right over.”

“Duke?”

“Yeah?”

“Bring the money with you,” she said. “I’m getting out of town first thing in the morning.”

“Sure, baby. I’ll bring it.”

Nefarious energies were stirring the ether near and around Jake, but he was oblivious to them, as he soaked up the marvelous effects of the evening’s loving-making. Breathing a massive sigh as he drove home, he felt like a new man. By the time he snuck into the house Carey was in her room, fast asleep. He still wasn’t sleepy, so he pulled the computer out of the safe to say goodnight to Joe.

GREETINGS

HELLO JOE

YOU SEEM VERY HAPPY

YES I AM

Jake recalled what Joe had told him about Regina and he actually considered throwing it back at him, but decided against it.

I HOPE IT WORKS OUT FOR YOU BOTH

It sounded like Joe was trying to be facetious. Did he have information about Regina that was hidden from him?

DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING BAD ABOUT REGINA?

NOT AT ALL BUT I DO HAVE AN ODD FEELING ABOUT HER.

Obviously, Joe was endowed with certain powers unknown to him, so he decided to consider his concern. Although, he had no intention of ending his relationship with Regina at this point, he would try to keep his emotions in check. As it turned out, that was a sound decision.