

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 somehow 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.