

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.