

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.