

## Prologue

It was a beautiful spring day and not a cloud in the sky. Though winter had made its exit a few days earlier, a slight chill in the morning air lingered. The sun had been up for a couple of hours. The small creatures of the night had scurried into their holes. Now the ones of the day were just coming out in search of food.

Kelly was up with the first crow of the rooster, something her country life had trained her over the years. She was born and raised on this little piece of land--in this very house. She spent a brief stretch of her life in New York, only to come back, due to the death of her father and illness of her mother.

Now she owned the property and had debated whether to sell it or not. But the choice became easily once she saw how well her daughter Jasmine, took to this simple life.

It's weird, how one generation could take what they have for granted. And another comes along, showing how good the life left behind actually is. Jasmine did that for Kelly.

She never could get into this life and swore when she came of age, she would leave it--she did. And seven years later, she was right back where she started with an addition-Jasmine.

At the time her mother called to tell her about her father's illness, she was not in a good place. It was a welcome invite. She came as soon as possible.

She met Jasmine's father a few days after arriving in the Big Apple. They had a whirlwind courtship and moved in together. Something she never thought she would do. Due to her upbringing, living with someone without marriage, wasn't something that was done.

Then to complicate the situation, soon afterwards she became pregnant. This was not anything he had planned or wanted. He stuck around for some time while watching her grow bigger. Then one day he said he was going for some cigarettes and never returned. If it hadn't been for their landlady, she would have been out on the streets.

Mrs. Barnes took pity on her, and brought her in to stay with her. She helped with Jasmine while Kelly went to work. The pay of the jobs she acquired wasn't much. She had no level of education pass high school, nor technical skills for the high paying jobs. She did her the best to provide for her daughter and herself. Mrs. Barnes assistance was a tremendous help, but this was not the life she had planned or wanted for her child.

So yeah when the call came, she left and went home in time to say goodbye to her dad. She

didn't know in a year she would be doing the same for her mother. Now here she was living the life she ran away from and seeing her daughter embracing it.

She was busy preparing breakfast and called up stairs for Jasmine to come down to eat. They had to make a trip into town for supplies, something she did twice a month.

She hardly ventured into town due to the old fashion ways of the townspeople. A child born out of wedlock was a taboo. She didn't want her daughter to have to bear the ignorant people of the town. Or have to hear the awful things they would say, when they didn't think she was listening. They were not kind and had zero class. So she stayed away unless necessary. Enjoying the beautiful country home her parents left her.

After breakfast, Jasmine would grab her doll and go down to a small stream that pass through the land--her favorite place to be. She liked to pick the daisies and toss them into the water, then watch them float away. She would take a seat under the large old oak tree, and play with her doll. She loved to watch the animals come to the water's edge, and get a drink or two. For some reason, they weren't afraid of her.

Kelly finished up with the dishes and rechecked her list of supplies. She came out the house and walked over to the edge of the porch, calling for

Jasmine. She never answered her Mother, even though she heard her. She quietly left the stream and made her way towards the house. "Jasmine, why didn't you answer when I called?" Kelly came off the porch and walked to her.

"My voice isn't big enough for you to hear if I answer," said Jasmine. Kelly only laugh, then buckled her into the backseat. Her birthday was in a few days, she would be turning six.

Kelly drove through town, ignoring the stares of the people. It was a small community but was growing. It had one long road of stores and two hotels. One elegant and the other shady, located at the far end of town. Beyond the town was the residential streets, most lived there. But some as Kelly, owned land out in the countryside. Some were enormous ranches or farms. While others were semi-large, but most were like that of Kelly, small.

She got out and unbuckled Jasmine. Then headed for the General store, to get what she needed. She was just entering it when a familiar voice called to her. It was her childhood friend. She too had left and come back. It was hard living beyond these boundaries. Only a few survived it.

They were extremely happy to see each other. She informed Kelly she worked at the new restaurant that had opened a few months ago.

She asked if they could have lunch together while she was in town, to catch up on things. Kelly agreed. It was good to see a friendly face. Little clouds slowly moved in.

She handed the list to the storekeeper. He was always kind to her and watched out for her. He was a good friend to her father. This was done for his absence.

Kelly came inside the stylish restaurant and saw it was lovely. Her friend immediately came over and led her to a corner table. She knew how things were. She too was getting the cold shoulder but didn't care.

They caught up on old times and new ones also. They both agreed to spend more time together, now that they were back. By now darker clouds were rolling in and Jasmine watched them amused.

After about an hour, they finished up eating and catching up. They made plans to see each other again. The wind was slightly blowing, and Kelly felt it was a good time to leave.

She left the restaurant and went to get her supplies, then headed home. Now the winds had picked up and in the distance thunder could be heard. She turned the radio on to see the forecast. A storm was coming in quickly and unexpectedly.

Kelly sped down the road as fast as she was able. She was trying to make it back home before the rain prediction came rolling in. She drove and listened to the radio. She turned her head slightly to check on her young daughter, whom she loved more than anything in this world. The child sat quietly, playing with the doll she had just brought her. Kelly continued driving and singing along with a song on the radio.

She briefly paused from singing, as she could hear the rumbling of the distance thunder, coming closer. Now she wished she hadn't stayed as long as she had in town. But it was good to see her old friend once again.

She jumped at the flash of lightning just missing the car and striking frightfully close to them. Jasmine languidly glanced up towards her mother, seeing her sudden movement. The thunder gave a deafening roar as the sky opened up. The floods of water poured down on the earth. Kelly turned and looked back at her daughter, giving her a reassuring smile. Let her know everything will be alright.

Her eyes returned to the road ahead, unable to see no more than inches in front of her. The wind had begun to revolve around them, and whistling a horrible sound, as if it was calling someone.

Kelly was getting very nervous but continued to smile in case her daughter was watching her. She didn't like her getting nervous, but this was an extraordinary evening. Like none she had ever experienced. The car rocked with every gust of wind that blew over it.

Suddenly without any warning, one gust of wind hit the car with full force and sent it sliding from one side of the road to the other. It headed in the direction of the trees along the side of the road. She struggled hard to regain control of the car. Jasmine let out a scream feeling the motion of the car, and seeing the fear on her mother's face. That's when she knew something wasn't right.

Just when Kelly felt she had finally gotten the car under control, another gust hit from the side and the car went straight into the trees. She screamed in terror and turned to reach for Jasmine. They rolled over multiple times. She never was unable to get to her daughter. Then the car barreled into something and everything went black.

Sometime later she doesn't know, Kelly woke in a lot of pain. She was disoriented and confused, not able to recognize her surroundings. When the fog slowly lifted, and things became clearer, the realization hit like a ton of bricks. She searched around as if she had lost something and couldn't find it. Her feet felt numb, but she

was able to free herself from the wreckage. She withstood the pain, and made a gallant attempt to pull herself up, giving herself a wider range of the area. She couldn't see anything from where she stood. So she moved around to the other side of the wreckage, in hopes of finding what she had lost. Again nothing in sight!

She became hysterical when she looked at the windshield, and hurried to the front of the car. She screamed in agony, staring down at the open gape in it, and became hysterical. She began to sob uncontrollably.

"JASMINE!!" She screamed for her lost daughter.

## Chapter Two

One Year Later.....

"So where's this new home ya' bought?" Parker asked his brother.

"In the country, a very nice and beautiful home with plenty of land. The town is a little small. Ya' know!" Cliff shrugged as he talked proudly of his new home.



"Yea I know! Small town, small minds." He grumbled and turned to his side with his head resting on his arm.

"I don't understand why Mom couldn't take us on her cruise?" Cliff's his teenage daughter asked, chewing on her gum and staring out the window. He looked up into the rearview mirror and gave her a look. It was enough to have to deal with his brother and her too.

"Parker look! You're on vacation relieving some of the stress, you're experiencing. So please be civil! We're coming into the town now. I'm hungry! We can stop at this little restaurant I ate at when I was here clearing the transaction." Cliff looked over at his brother, pleading with him.

Parker just grunted and turned to look out the window as they came into town. Cliff shook his head as they came up to the little restaurant.

Parker reluctantly stepped out of the truck, and stretched as he looked around the town. He gave a devilish grin. He could see they were the subject of the townspeople as they walked by, staring at the strangers arriving. Some sat in front of a small business gawking and talking. A group of men noticeably came out of the barber shop, to take a glimpse at them.

“Dad, why are all the people looking at us?” Cliff nine year old son had just jumped out and observe all eyes were on them.

“Oh they don’t know us yet, so they’re just curious, that’s all.” Cliff tried to ease the rudeness over.

“That’s not it Vincent! Dad just don’t want you to know, how stupid these back woods people are,” she blurted out. “So get used to it!” Her father shot another angry stare at her. She just turned away smiling, her deed for the day had been done.

On the other hand, Parker felt he would have some fun during the time he would be there. He hated small minded people, and these folks fitted that description exactly. Cliff looked at his brother and knew he was thinking of nothing good. He just hoped whatever he was planning wouldn’t cost him his place.

The four entered the small restaurant, causing heads to turn and whisper. They stood in the entrance door and waited to be seated. A young waitress came over and beckoned for them to follow her. She led them to a nice corner for some privacy. She was extremely aware of how unpleasant these people could be.

Cliff thought she seemed like a real sweet person, who gave him a warm smile. He returned the gesture. He had the keen gift to let

things go over his head. He didn't show ignorance much attention, but not Parker!

He was looking over his menu, and noticed some older women staring at him with such disdain. He glanced up at them and made a gesture, but Cliff grabbed his arm.

"Parker no! I don't want my first day in my new home to start out on the wrong foot. So puhleeaassee refrain from any of your antics." Cliff asked. Parker could see for the first time he was totally excited about this new house. He just looked away and thought to himself, 'Another day.'

"Wow Dad! You're so passive! Is this how it's going to be? These people are beyond ignorant! Uncle Parker had every right to express to those old biddies something." Livvie was terribly disappointed in her father, he always allows people to run over him. Not her Uncle Parker! Sometimes she secretly wished he was her father.

"No Livvie! Your father is right, we don't get down to their level. We rise above it." He said to her, then gave her this secret look they share. She smiled and nodded her head. Cliff caught it but said nothing. Livvie was so much like Parker sometimes he wondered.

"Do they have hamburgers and fries?" Vincent was looking over the menu but wasn't seeing anything he wanted.

"I'll ask the nice waitress when she come back," he told his son. At that moment, the hostess was making her way over with some water.

"If you don't think I'm being a little pushy now, your brother is right! They ain't worth the energy." The young waitress injected her thoughts as she sat the glasses of water down. She had saw what happened and overheard Cliff.

"Is that so? But ain't you one of them?" Parker reminded her of where she lived as he eyed her.

"Yes and no! I left a few years ago, and when my father died, I came back to clear some things. I didn't want to sell the place, so I stayed on. I live just on the outskirts of town. They do and don't accept me," she explained and gave more of a look towards Cliff.

"So you decided to stay where you ain't wanted? That don't make no sense to me." Parker stated then began giving her his order.

"So you're livin' on the outskirts of town, huh?" Cliff tried to open up a conversation.

"Yes and I hear you bought the Johnson's place," she wrote down Parker's order while conversing with Cliff!

"Do you have hamburgers and fries?" Vincent asked, seeing all this talking was making him hungry. No one else seemed concerned his stomach was growling but him.

"I don't know anything about the previous owner's. But I know it's a beaut!! So, what's your name?" Cliff leaned on the table towards the young woman.

"Oh for crying out loud! How gross!" Livvie glared. She was embarrassed to see her dad flirting.

"Paula, and yours?" He was delighted that she was responding to him. Maybe something new in the horizon.

"Cliff! This is my brother Parker. My two kids, Livvie and Vincent. He's kinda on vacation," he grinned from ear to ear. Parker sat back in his chair, glaring at his brother and crossing his arms over his chest.

"Oh vacation, huh? That's nice, I hope you enjoy it," she was blushing from Cliff's smile.

"Can I get a hamburger and fries?" Vincent shouted out once again.

"Well I will if you will kinda show me around!" Cliff continued, it had been a long time since he had been out on a date. He had been divorced for two years now, and it took that long to get

over the failure of his marriage. He gazed into her eyes.

"Ohhhh brother!" Parker yelled, snapping them out of their trance. "Your son is over here starving, and you're embarrassing your daughter with your mackin'," he ranted.

"Oh my! I'll get your orders!" She looked around, trying to regain her composure.

"Man, you need to take a chill pill!" Cliff looked over at his brother, then gave Paula their orders. He watched as she walked away.

"I can't believe you! In town a few minutes and already picking up a 'country bunkin'" Parker admonished him, shaking his head and wishing he was anywhere but there.

"That's not how you say that Uncle Parker. It's 'Bumpkin'," Vincent corrected him and began looking around nonchalantly. He had no clue his Uncle was staring intently at him. Livvie he got along with very well, but this one he just couldn't understand.

"Thank you so much Sir Vincent! I honestly appreciate the spelling lesson," he said sarcastically. Cliff let out a long breath, knowing this was going to be a long month with his brother about.

"So Paula, who's those gorgeous giants out there?" Samy the cook asked, eyeing the hulking men from the moment they walked in.

"They're brothers! Cliff is the curly headed one, and those are his two kids. The red head is Parker! He's a bit of a grouch. Cliff is quite sweet though. Cliff bought the Johnson's house. His brother is only here for a visit," she explained as Samy handed her an order.

"What? That is impossible! Don't they know about the house?" She asked, looking from Paula then to their table.

"What about the house?" She inquired, it was news to her. She hadn't been back that long.

"Well about a year ago....." She was interrupted.

"Okay you two! Get back to work and stop the gossiping. I pay you to work not talk," a man on the cash register hollered at them.

Paula and Samy gave each other a look, then began to giggle. He was always trying to do this big bad wolf part, but was as easy as a lamb.

Paula went about her work, forgetting what had been told to her. It would have been good for her to have remembered. It would have explained the happenings over the next few days.

## Chapter Two

The four made it to the beautiful country home that made Cliff so proud. It was a nice piece of land with a small wooded area near. In the midst of it was a stream leading into a pond.

Cliff got out of the truck, then turned to see how his brother and children were taking it in. Parker gave a nod of his approval. Vincent was already running down to the stream. Livvie was being Livvie! She just slowly walked towards the house and took a seat on the porch. Cliff smiled, then ran to the door to show his older brother what the inside looked like.

Parker was very appreciative of his brother's taste. It was actually a beautiful home, and he had got it at a deal. Which made Parker wonder why this gem came so cheap? Livvie got up from the steps and followed her father and uncle inside.

"Not trying to rain on your parade! But why so cheap?" he was walking around, looking in closets and every room. He could see his brother got this at a steal.

"Parker why do ya' always have to find something in everything? This is a small community. Who wants to stay here anyway?"



It's a good spot, that's why they sold it so cheap. Now let's do what we planned for you to do. RELAX!!" Cliff showed Parker where he be sleeping.

"Livvie come see your room, you're going to love it!" He went to a door and opened it. Livvie took her time to get there then peered into the room. She liked it, but dare not to let on. She went in and sat on the bed, looking around. Then she went over to the window and could see Vincent down by the water, he seemed to be talking to someone. She shrugged her shoulders, he's always been strange to her.

Cliff left her to explore her room and went to make a phone call to Paula. He was able to get her number before he left the restaurant. He informed Parker he would be picking Paula up from work, and they were going out. Parker just looked and said he was going to take a nice shower, then take a nap.

Cliff told Livvie he was going out, and to keep an eye on her brother. Then he left and stood near the truck, watching Vincent down by the stream. He called for him.

"Stay close by. Your Uncle will no doubt be taking a nap. Livvie will be in her room. I'm not very familiar with things around here so maybe you should go in and watch some television until your Uncle Parker get up. It is getting a

little late," he told him. Vincent looked up at him curious.

"Where are you going?" He asked, Cliff smiled at him

"You know the nice waitress that served us? I'm picking her up and she's going to take me around." Cliff smiled brightly. Vincent crinkled his nose. He wasn't sure about the grown up stuff yet.

"Can't I stay out for a little while? I was playing with the little girl down by the stream," he looked towards it. Cliff turned his head in the same direction to see her.

"Who is she? Does she live near? I'm not sure if there is another farm nearby," he walked a little ways to see if he could see the girl.

"I think so. She said she's waiting for her mother to call her, then she'll have to leave." Vincent explained. Cliff couldn't anyone.

"She must have went in. I don't see her down there," he turned and walked back to the car.

"She's probably behind the tree," he told his father.

"Ok! Just get in before sundown," he commanded, then got in and drove off. Vincent was already on his way down to the stream.

Parker had slept for a few hours, then heard the front door open and close. He turned over to see what time it was. Ten o'clock! 'Hmmm,' he thought. Cliff must have struck out! He turned over and drifted off to sleep. The country air has a way of relaxing, even if it's fought.

~~~Parker was walking in the road leading out from the house. He noticed about a mile away there was something going on. He walked up to see, and there were skid marks leading into the trees. A woman was frantically trying to get up and seemed to be searching for something. As he went to assist her as she began calling a name. 'Jasmine! Jasmine!' She called, looking around~~~

Suddenly he was jolted out of his dream, hearing the front door open again. He looked at the clock and saw that it was now one o'clock in the morning. He rolled out of the bed, and walked into the hallway towards Cliff's room. He opened his door and saw the bed was made. It hadn't been slept in. Then in the distance he could hear a voice calling for someone.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" It was a woman's voice! He ran to the front door and went out onto the porch. He tried to see if he could pinpoint

where it was coming. But he could make out nothing in the dense dark of the countryside. It continued on until it eventually faded away.

"What's wrong Uncle Parker?" A sleepy Livvie was standing inside the doorway. She had heard her Uncle running and woke up. He jumped and turned to her, startled by her voice.

"Nothing! I thought I heard your father come in. My mistake!" He grumbled, scratching the top of his head. This was very confusing. He walked passed her into the house, and into the kitchen to get a glass of water.

"Dad's not back yet? It's one in the morning," she followed him. They heard the truck drive up and waited for him to come into the house. The front door opened and he walked in. He started towards the hall and to his room, not seeing the two standing in the kitchen. They came out of the kitchen.

"So what happened?" Parker called to him, curious to why he had come back earlier and then left. Cliff stopped in his tracks, then came back towards them. He seemed in a very good mood.

"Well, a gentleman never discuss these things," he smiled then looked at his daughter. "Livvie, why are you up so late?" He asked, puzzled.

"I heard Uncle Parker running. I didn't know what was going on, so I came to check. He was out on the porch staring at something," she explained. "I'm going to bed. Goodnight you two," she kissed her father, then her uncle and left them to discuss her father's date night. Cliff watched her disappear down the hall, then turn to his brother.

"What is she talkin' about?" Cliff asked.

"Nothing important. I thought I heard something. That's not what I'm talking about. I want to know why you came back at ten o'clock and then leave again?!" Parker leaned against the wall. Cliff looked very confused at his brother.

"I didn't come back here tonight. We were at a movie in the next town, and man you should see it. So much better than this little town with more to do!" He was all hyped up by his evening. Parker just smiled and told him he would listen for details in the morning.

He went to his room and felt maybe one of the kids had went out, then come back in. He won't tell his brother, they know better than to be out that time of night. Especially Vincent!

But there was something that still troubled him. Who was this person calling someone by the name of Jasmine? Well he can deal with that in

the morning. Right now he wanted to get a nice night of sleep.

He jumped back in bed and got comfortable, snuggling in. In the distance, he could hear the calling as he drifted off to sleep.

### Chapter Three

Parker woke early in the morning just lying in bed. It had been a long time since he has had this opportunity. He could smell the scent of breakfast being cooked in the kitchen. ‘Hmm,’ he thought. This country living must be agreeing with Cliff if he’s up this early, cooking breakfast. Oh well, he wasn’t the type to turn down any food, no matter who’s cooking.

Parker got up and sat on the side of the bed for a moment. His thoughts plagued by the events of the night before. Maybe he could carefully ease it in to the conversation, during breakfast. If any of the kids had gone out, he didn’t want any of them to get in trouble. Cliff did say it wasn’t him, so that would leave one of them. But what actually was getting to him, was his dream and then hearing this woman while he was awake.

“Now that was really weird,” he said out loud. ‘This lovely woman was crying out for someone

named Jasmine! It appears they were in an accident of some kind,' he remembered hearing her again just before dozing off.

Parker left the bed and made his way to the bathroom. He turned on the water and got it nice and hot. He stared into the mirror, and he saw he looked a little gruff. So he trimmed his goatee, then into the shower. Soon his mind drifted to the woman of his dream.

She was an exceedingly beautiful young woman. Full head of raven colored long silky hair. The clearest gray eyes. Tanned nice and even. Her lips were small but full, just right for kissing. She was average height, with a swanlike neck. Full round breasts, a small waist attached to wide curvy hips, with long shapely legs.

He was so engrossed in his thoughts of the description of the woman. He never noticed how aroused he had become when he held himself in his hand. 'Whoa!!' He thought. Glad no one saw this woody. He laughed and promptly relieved himself.

After his shower, he proceeded to brush his teeth. He took a swig of mouthwash, gargled and bent down to discard the wash. As he came up and looked up in the mirror, was pleased with his handiwork. But he froze as he caught a glimpse of someone passing by the bathroom door.

He ran out of the bathroom, into the bedroom to see whom it was. He just caught the bedroom door closing. He ran to the door and swung it opened to see Cliff going into the kitchen. "Oh!" he thought. Maybe he was just in to borrow something, and seeing him in the shower didn't want to disturb him. He took one whiff of the smell of food emanating from the kitchen and immediately put his clothes on. His belly was ready for some gorging.

"Hey lil' bro'? How was last night? Ya' can tell me. I won't tell a soul. I promise," He said slyly as he entered the kitchen. Cliff let out a chuckle. Seeing how his brother didn't know many souls to tell, with his sweet disposition.

Okay! I'll tell ya' one thing. She is someone I don't want to leave behind. Parker Man, she is a delightful lady!" Cliff was moonstruck

"Are we going to have to sit through breakfast and hear about the date night? I thought you two, did that after I went back to bed," Livvie looked from one to the other. Cliff looked at her then noticed something. Vincent wasn't at the table.

"No! We aren't going to discuss my date night. Now or never! And where is your brother?" Cliff poured himself a cup of coffee while Parker took a seat at the table.



"I don't know! He ate then ran out the house," she informed him, then continued to eat.

"Oh! Maybe he's down at the stream. He said he met some little girl yesterday," Cliff took a peek out the kitchen window to see if he could find him. He spotted him down by the small stream, and it appeared her was talking with someone, but he couldn't see who.

"She made that big of an impression on ya', hey?" Parker could see his brother was already hooked on this girl.

Cliff sat down and began filling his plate. Parker looked at him and felt he was the oldest and wisest, he needed to have a serious talk with him. It was his duty to instruct him on how to go about with this relationship.

"Look lil' bro'! Ya' got to be careful with the country bunkins! They are truly wily! They know every trick in the book to trap a man," he nodded to his brother, throwing a large spoon full of food in his mouth and chewing quick.

"And your knowledge of these things, comes from where? Dear older and wiser brother," Cliff didn't want to hurt his brother, but when it came to the relationship department, he knew zilch.

"Well, ya' know. I've been around the block a few times." He said gulping down another

helping. He gave Parker a smile at another attempt of him trying to wise him up about the ways of the world. Little did he know, he could tell him a few things, but he let him think, he was giving him advice. It saved a lot of headaches.

"Okay big bro'! We'll leave it at that! So what are ya' planning on doing today?" He finished his food and started to get some more.

"Boy Cliff! I didn't know ya' could cook this good," he reached for a refill. Cliff looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"What do ya' mean? I didn't fix this. I thought you did! Livvie! Was it you?" He turned to his daughter, who had an equally bewildered look on her face.

"It wasn't me!" She protested, then watched her father and uncle's jaws drop.

"Parker what's wrong?" Cliff followed Parker out of the kitchen and could see he was beside himself.

"Cliff the food! That's what's wrong!" He gesture for him to come out onto the porch, he didn't want to upset Livvie anymore than she was.

"What about it?" He was confused.

"You just said ya' didn't make it, right? Livvie said she didn't! I know it wasn't me, and we all know it sure in the hell wasn't Vincent!" He walked to the edge of the porch and looked over towards the stream and watch Vincent throwing flowers into the water. He seemed to be speaking to someone, they must have been hidden behind the gigantic tree there.

"Yeah, I thought you did!" He looked to his brother more confused than ever. Parker turned back to Cliff and gave him a look to help him to put two and two together. Then the lights came on. Cliff suddenly understood why his brother was trying to say.

"You didn't prepare the breakfast and Livvie didn't, nor did me. And you're right, Vincent would have set the house on fire." He slowly walked off the porch so Livvie couldn't hear.

"NO!" Parker to the point. The two brothers stared at each other.

"Umm I think I it would be a good time to bring up what happened last night." Parker moved further away from the house from prying ears. Livvie was notorious for listening in on conversations of interest. And this one fit the bill.

"What happened? Are you talking about what went on between Paula and me?" He wasn't sure what he was getting at.

"NO! About when you came home about ten o'clock and left out again!" Parker told him.

"Sorry Park! It wasn't me! I was with Paula until almost 1 am! It must have been one of the kids! They no better than to be out that time of night." Cliff turned to look down at the stream as Livvie came out of the house and stared at them.

"Livvie! Did you go out the house last night about 10?" He stared at her.

"No! I was in my room all night." She answered. His eyes went back to the stream and Vincent.

"It must have been your brother. I told him not to be out pass sundown. Do you know when he came in?" He looked back up to her.

"Yeah as you told him, just before the sun set. You know Vinny dad, he wouldn't disobey you if his life depended on it. She reminded him of her brother's character. He slowly turned to Parker.

"She's right! It wasn't any of us," he concluded.

"You didn't come back to the house last night? All of us were in bed, and none of us cook breakfast. Did ya' come into my room this morning, while I was in the shower?" Parker looked at his brother and hoping he would say yes. But before he could answer in the distance a small motor bike came zooming down

towards the house. All eyes turned to watch it come nearer.

“Oh yeah! I just remembered.” Cliff walked passed Parker to meet the biker, as he came to a halt.

He shut off the bike and removed the helmet he was wearing, revealing a young man around Livvie’s aged. She eyed him carefully. Maybe this country life won’t be so terrible after all.

He was tall and on the slender side. Long blond hair he braided down his back just beyond the shoulders. He had dark blue eyes, and a thin goatee surrounding his mouth.

“Livvie come meet Jasper! He is a brother to one of Paula’s friends.” Cliff called to her. He didn’t have to ask twice as she had made it over to them in record time.

“Hello Livvie, nice to meet you,” he offered his hand to her. She took it in response.

“Hi nice meeting you also,” she was blushing. He was even cuter up close. Parker made his way over and gave him an eye, warning him he better be careful how he treated his niece. Jasper smiled nervously. Cliff caught this.

“Jasper is the brother of the cook at the restaurant we ate yesterday. She is seriously interested in meeting you, Parker!” He put emphasis on his name to get his attention. He

didn't want to scare the boy off before he got to know Livvie. She needed to have kids her age around and hoped Jasper could help her to join in.

"Parker turned his head to this brother, and registered what he had said about some woman's interest in him. A smile crossed his face.

"Her name is Samy, and she's my sister!" Jasper gave him a look, letting him know he better be good to her. Or else he will have to deal with him. Parker just grinned. He liked this kid!

## Chapter Four

While the kids were busy, Parker and Cliff came back into the house and looked over the food on the table.

"OOKKAAYY!!! Let's not get panicky around here. There's a logical reason for everything." Parker began to pace the floor and rubbed his beard.

"Like what? I wasn't here last night. I didn't fix this food! None of us did! And to answer your question before, no I wasn't in your room. So that means someone is coming in and out, who shouldn't be!" Cliff surmised the situation.

"Then they must still....." He never finished, as they both turned at the sound of the back door opening.

In walked the beautiful woman Parker had dreamed about. She was humming a tune and carrying flowers she had just picked. She went about the house as if it was the normal thing to do.

The two men stood in the doorway of the kitchen, watching her putting the flowers into a vase. She never noticed she was being watched until she turned around to carry the vase with her towards them. She jumped with a start, dropping the vase full of flowers. She stood face to face with the two men towering over her.

"Hello! May I ask, why are you in my house?"  
He was trying to be calm.

"Yeah! Why are you in my brother's house?"  
Parker felt he had to support his brother. A united front for the situation at hand.

"You men are trespassing. Now I don't know how you got in here! But I will call the local Sheriff if you don't leave my home, now!" She said as she walked towards the phone.

Parker cut her off with one of his long strides and held her hand down on the phone with his. She looked up at him with terror in her eyes. His heart softened as he gazed into the beautiful

gray eyes, staring back at him with fear in them. Parker quickly took her hand into his and gave them a gentle squeeze as a reassuring measure. It worked as he felt her had relaxed in his.

"Okay, everybody. Let's sit down and figure out what just happened here. We both can't own the same house." Cliff interjected. Parker smiled at her, then extending his other hand to gesture for her to have a seat.

"I have lived in this house most of my life. I left for a while, then my mother passed. I came back here to live with my daughter. I never put my home up for sale," she looked at them with disbelief.

"Wait! I can show ya' the papers." Cliff left to go retrieve his paperwork. Parker continued to smile at her to keep her at ease. He took in her beauty.

"I know my brother. He wouldn't lie about something like this." Parker said composed. She had calmed down and saw the two men were no threat to her. This was just a colossal misunderstanding.

"Here they are!" Cliff reentered the room and handed the papers to her.

"Yes I know this person. But where did she get the idea I wanted to sell my home. I never



spoke to her about this," she stood up holding the papers with tears forming in her eyes.

"Okay! I have an idea. Why don't we wait until Monday, when the office opens? Then we all can go and have a talk with the realtor. In the meantime, if it's alright with you. We all just stay here. It's a large enough house." Parker looked from one to the other.

She looked at the men and then shrugged her shoulders. She it wouldn't hurt to wait two days. And besides, she couldn't throw them out if he has been scammed. He felt this was as much his home as hers.

"Okay! On Monday, we confront her. Well I have to go find my daughter. She seems to get herself lost from time to time," she left the two men and headed out the front door. She went in the direction of the road. And In the distance she could be heard.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" Parker felt a chill go up and down his spine. Something wasn't holding right. He couldn't put his finger on it, but everything seemed eerie.

Cliff studied the look on his face. He knew Parker was able to sense things, and even he felt some dread about this situation. But he let it go, and told him he was going to explore the wooded area out back. Parker went into the kitchen, to clean up.

Cliff walked into the woods, admiring the scenery. It was magnificent. He was watching some of the wildlife at play, when he heard the laughter of a child. Curious, he went towards the sound. In the clearing was the most beautiful child he had ever seen. She seemed almost angelic. She was playing by the stream with a little Raggedy Ann doll. He figured this was the little girl Vincent had spoken about.

He noticed Vincent was nowhere to be seen. He approached her slow and quietly, not to frighten her. She must have sense him near, because she stopped her play and turned up to him. He smiled to reassure her she was in no danger.

"Hi, my name is Jasmine! What's yours?" She asked.

"Well now, ain't you about the cutest little thing. Jasmine huh? That's a pretty name. Mine is Cliff! You must be Vincent's little friend?" He came to sit near her. She smiled at him and let out the sweetest giggle.

"So Jasmine, where's ya' mom?" He looked around to see if he could see any adult.

"My mommy is lost, and I can't find her," she exclaimed sadly, looking up to him with the saddest crystal blue eyes.

"No I know where she is, I just spoke with her in the house. She's certainly looking for you now. Maybe ya should come with me," he suggested. She looked over towards the road.

"No, I should wait for her here. We use to come here often. She should be coming down from the road soon, if I'm gone she won't find me. But thanks for your help anyway!" She said, continuing to play with her doll.

"But Jasmine, I can't leave ya here alone! It'll be getting dark soon." Cliff told her, but she continued playing with her doll as if she didn't hear a word he said.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" The woman's voice came from the road!

Cliff looked to see if he could see her, but no one was in sight. He turned to say something to Jasmine, but the child was gone. He looked up and down the stream. Nothing! She was nowhere.

He scratched his head and started back towards the house. Looking back with each step, just case he would get a glimpse of her running in the woods. He walked on the porch and saw Vincent was with Livvie and Jasper. He was admiring Jasper's bike.

He went in the house and saw Parker stretched out on the couch. He decided to let him get

some rest. After all, he was the one who had convinced him to take a break. His stress level was high. He went back out and told the kids he would be back later, and to let their uncle rest. He was going to go see Paula.

## Chapter Five

Parker woke it was late afternoon, and saw the truck was gone. He assumed Cliff had gone to pick up Paula. He stood up stretching his arms high above his head as his muscles loosen. He went out onto the porch and looked around at the area, taken in the beauty. Yes, he felt his brother had made a good choice. Now if only they can get this all cleared up.

He wasn't sure how and why the woman's property was sold. But some answers were going to be given if he had anything to do with it. He was startled for a moment, when he thought he saw a child run through the woods. But on second glance, there were nothing. He figured it had to be the woman's little girl.

He turned and walked into the house, and immediately met with the aroma of some good cooking going on in the kitchen. It was no doubt in his mind who was cooking this time. He went to the kitchen and saw the woman busy preparing dinner. She looked up when she saw him enter and gave a smile.

"Hi!" He said, and took a seat at the table watching her every move.

"Hello! I see you're finished with your nap!" She continued with her task.

"Yeah, a much needed one. So, I hate to be calling ya' ma'am or miss! What is your name?" He asked. She turned to him with another smile.

"My name is Kelly! Kelly Johnson," she replied.

"They call me Parker," he told her.

"Well it's a pleasure meeting you, Parker. I just wish it had been under more pleasant circumstances," said she.

"Yeah, but come Monday morning! We will have this taken care of." He sat back in the chair thinking about how pleasant it would be to feel her next to him in his bed.

Parker was still thinking about the things he would love to do to Kelly's body. She continued about preparing their meal. She began humming a song, moving about the kitchen. She moved with such expertise. He felt she had been taught well from her mother. He thought maybe Cliff had the right idea about a country girl.

Parker sat comfortably back in the chair. Legs outstretched and arms folded across his chest, watching Kelly. She didn't seem to mind, nor

seem to notice the way he looked at her. As if he weren't there, and he found that strange.

Parker was deep in one of his exotic thoughts. About Kelly and him, when without any warning, she froze up. Suddenly she brought her hands up to her heart, clutching it as if she were in enormous pain. Her body began convulse as if she were in an epileptic seizure. Parker freaked, seeing her eyes rolling back into her head, exposing only the whites.

As quickly as she started the jerking, she stopped. She turned and looked at him. He had jumped to his feet, wondering what was going on with her. He started towards her, to see if he could aid her, but before he could reach her. She darted pass him and out of the kitchen and ran through the living room out onto the porch. Once he had gathered his senses and made it to the door. She had left the porch and was heading towards the road.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" She was calling as she continued towards the road.

Parker was curious to why she seemed to be always calling this child. He had assumed the child was in one of the rooms napping, evidently she wasn't. Yet he did think saw a child running back behind the house in the woods. He left the porch and to tell Kelly.

"Kelly, wait up! I think I know where she is!" He called after her. But she kept calling and walking towards the road. It was like she wasn't aware of him being there. He continued to call and follow after her. In the distance, he heard the roar of thunder.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" She continued calling, heading out onto the road, with Parker close behind. The evening was setting in.

Parker watched as Kelly continued on down the road in a dreamlike state. Finally, she came to a certain spot and stopped abruptly. Parker watched to see what she was going to do next. She never moved, as she stood poised on the spot.

The thunder sounded a low rumble as a storm seemed to be approaching. He didn't know if there were a forecast of one or not. And hadn't turned on the TV or radio since her arrival. A gentle breeze flowed around his body, sending goose bumps racing up his arms.

Kelly started down the road, calling for her daughter. He kept his distance as he could see she wasn't with him anymore, but in her own little world. She looked one way and then the other, and made a choice in which direction to go.

Kelly she stopped in a spot, standing poised as the rain began to fall. She didn't seem to notice

it. Parker went to get her out of the downpour. Suddenly there came a flash of light from out of the corner of his eye. He turned quickly, thinking the flash of lightning had struck near them. But he was staring in the headlights of a car heading in their direction. But before he could grab Kelly, and fling them off the road. It was upon them. He braced himself for the impact.

“Parker! What are you doing out here on the road?” Cliff brought the car to a halt. Inside sat Paula and her friend Samy. Parker looked down the road where Kelly had been standing and saw she had vanished. He stood dumfounded, wondering if he had been sleep walking. Or something in that manner. He stared up into his brother’s eyes. Cliff knew then something out of the extraordinary had occurred, and knew things would need to be smooth over before the girls became alarmed.

“Look Parker, I brought Samy the lady I was telling you about.” Cliff had to troubleshoot here and defuse this situation. Parker looked up into the dark brown eyes. She was pretty with a nice tan. Red hair curled about her hair.

“Hello Samy! Nice to meet ya.” Parker took in a deep breath.

“Where’s the kids?” Cliff asked, looking in the direction of the house. The sun was setting.



"I don't know. When I woke they weren't anywhere to be seen. I thought they were with you." Parker looked back at the house then to Cliff. Suddenly headlights came down the road and stopped down the road. Livvie and Vincent jumped out and the lights went dim, revealing Jasper behind the wheels of a truck. Livvie came over with Vincent behind them.

"Where you two been?" Cliff looked at Livvie, then towards where Jasper sat.

"Jasper rode home and got his truck. Then we went to hang out with some of his friends." Livvie explained. Cliff nodded his head. He did ask him to introduce her to the younger generation.

"I met a real cool girl, name Crystal. I was wondering if she and Jasper could come over tomorrow night and hang out a little bit?" She gave him these pleading eyes.

"Well Paula and I were going to go out," he started. "I guess we could postpone it," he said this a little sadder. They may not be able to spend some time together. But such is the sacrifices of parenthood.

"No you two keep your date. I'll chaperone." Parker interjected.

“But Samy was hoping to spend some time with you too.” Paula added. Parker looked over at Samy and smile.

“Ok! We have to figure something out so everyone can be happy. Cliff you keep your date with Paula. I’ll stay here with the kids. Pick up Samy on your way here, then we can go out while you watch the kids. How does that work out?” He looked at each for confirmation it was a plan.

“Well it works for me,” Cliff looked at Paula who was full of smile. Parker turned towards Samy, and made sure she’s alright with the arrangements. She nodded it was a go.

“Since Jasper is here, Cliff. He can take us home. No need of you driving all the way to my house then back,” Paula suggested. He hesitated for a moment then reluctantly agreed. He didn’t want to seem pushy.

“If you’re okay with it, I’m ok,” His voice had a hint of disappointment. She leaned over and kissed him deeply. Samy jumped from the car and stood in front of Parker. He was even taller than she had suspected.

“Lookin’ forward to our date tomorrow,” he told her, causing her to grin.

“Me too!” She then headed for the truck her brother sat in. Livvie was at his window talking. No one noticed Vincent had disappeared.

Parker Cliff and Livvie watch the three drive away in the truck. Cliff turned around and started for the house. The aroma from the kitchen came through, as they entered the house. He looked back at Parker who gave him a look.

“Did are guest prepare dinner too?” He asked and headed for the kitchen. Parker was reluctant to say anything in front of Livvie.

“What guest?” Livvie looked at her Father then Uncle. Cliff turned to her.

“We discovered who had made breakfast. A young woman who lives here,” he started. Livvie looked at him confused.

“But I thought we lived here,” she looked at him then her uncle.

“You do, Livvie. It’s a big mistake that will have to be straighten out on Monday morning. But for now, her daughter, and her will be staying here.” Parker informed her. She shot a look at her father.

“What? A daughter too? There’s enough people living here now, then to have to deal with two more.” Livvie snorted. She left them and went into the kitchen, to prepare herself a plate of

food. The two men looked at her then each other.

“You are really funny. She’s a problem until you feast on her cuisine.” Her father joked. Then he realized something. “Where’s your brother? I thought he was with you,” he walked towards the hallway and stared down towards his room.

“He was! Didn’t you see him get out with me?” She stuck some food in her mouth. Cliff looked over at her and glared.

“Vincent!” He called and waited for an answer. Parker went out onto the porch and stared down towards the stream. He couldn’t see a thing it was so dark, but he could hear Cliff call him once again. He knew then he wasn’t in the house. He left the porch and started down towards the stream. He heard Cliff come out the house calling for Vincent, as he came close to the stream he heard voices. He moved around it and saw Vincent sitting alone. He heard footsteps coming up from behind him.

“Is he there Parker? Is my son there?!” Cliff’s voice was beyond frantic. He turned to him and held up a hand.

“Yes he’s here! And he’s just fine!” Parker wanted to calm him down before he got there.

“What are you doing out here alone?” Cliff grabbed him and pulled him close to his heart. He loved his children more than life itself.

“I wasn’t alone Dad! I was talking to Jasmine. She’s was waiting for her mom to call her.” He said. Cliff stared him in his face and then pass him looking around. There was no one but the three of them.

“When I came up Vinny! Was that, whom you were talking to?” He asked. Vincent turned to look at his Uncle.

“Yes, she was here, but now she’s gone,” he seemed at a loss. Parker stiffen and looked over at his brother. Cliff knew that look, but what Parker didn’t know is that they both had things to talk about.

Day two of their stay at this house.

## Chapter Six

Cliff made sure the children were sleep before he talk with Parker. They went out on the porch for some privacy. Cliff sat on the top step to peer into the house in case he saw one up and coming their way. Parker sat on the banister, looking out.

“There’s something you want to tell me. I got that feeling all evening. It must not be good if you don’t want the kids to hear.” Parker started.

“Yeah! And the fact I’m wondering why you were out on the road when we drove up. You never did say why.” Cliff studied his brother and could see he had something to tell.

“When I woke she was here cooking. We talked. She told me her name. Kelly! Then all of a sudden she went into this crazy jerking motion, straighten up and looked passed me like I wasn’t even there. She took off running towards the road calling for her daughter- Jasmine,” he paused for a moment, reliving the night. “Then she came to the road and started to walk like she was in some kind of trance. I followed her. She came to this spot and stood there. It was lightning and thundering. The wind was blowing and rain pouring down. That’s when you came, straight for us like you didn’t see us. I tried to grab her, but you were on us and then I waited for you to hit me. It never came. You were to the side calling to me. When you call me I looked where she had been standing and she was gone,” he shook his head not believing what he had just relayed. Cliff took in a deep breath.

“It wasn’t raining Parker and I saw you only in the road. No one else.” He informed him.

“Yeah I know, because as you can see when I looked up she wasn’t there.” Parker stood up and moved from the porch and stared down to the road.

“I might as well tell you what happened before I left.” Cliff started. Parker turned to listen.

“When I went back into the woods I saw the little girl Jasmine. She was playing with one of those old dolls, the raggedy thing. I told her to come with me, but she said she had to wait for her mother. I heard her call for her, and when I looked to the road and back, the little girl was gone. What is going on with these two? Her mother calls her, we saw that. Why doesn’t she come to her?” Cliff was dumbfounded to all of this.

“Not to mention Kelly’s gone now and Jasmine has yet to set foot in that house. I’m not liking this at all. I heard Vincent talking with someone and they were answering him. But when I got there he was alone.” Parker summarized.

“Yeah, but something else. Why would this house be up for sale if someone lives here?” Cliff added. Parker shook his head.

“Well we will know for sure Monday. This is really spooky.” Parker stared into the night. Cliff looked down to the ground. Were they in any danger? Could this all be a scam after all and Kelly was a part of it? He would speak to Paula

and Samy tomorrow. They know everyone and thing about this place. He didn't want to give Parker anymore cause to stress. He was here to lower that.

The next morning they woke with the aroma of breakfast flowing throughout the house. Cliff and Parker jumped from their bed and ran down to the kitchen. They wanted to confront Kelly before the kids got a whiff of the food. But to their surprise there wasn't any Kelly to challenge. Livvie was up and about preparing their meal.

The two brother's jaws nearly dropped to the floor as they watched her like a pro moving about. She looked up to see them standing there in their pajamas. Well her father was, her uncle only slept in his bottoms.

"Good morning Gentlemen," she said, placing dishes of food on the table.

"Umm, good morning. Where is my daughter and what have you done with her?" Cliff came over to check on her, and see if this wasn't another phenomena that was occurring.

"Dad! What is wrong with you? You know I can cook! Mom taught me how," she reminded him.

"I know honey, it's just that you know but don't," he shrugged. She stood there shaking her head.



“Well being out here is different. Life is not like the city. It’s much easier. It’s slow but there’s this city next door where there’s a lot of cool things to do,” she turned and took some plates out of the cabinet.

“I’m hungry! What’s to eat?” Vincent came in from the back door. Cliff eyes narrowed. He had been out by the stream. He would have to explain to him he would not be permitted to go down there alone anymore. He went back to his room to shower and dress. Parker did the same.

Livvie clean up after breakfast. Vincent had planned on going down by the stream, but was stopped by his father. He pulled him out onto the porch.

“Vincent there have been some very strange things going on around here, and I’m not sure how to handle it. But one thing for sure, I will always assure your sister and your safety. I don’t want you to be down at the stream without anyone being there with you.” Cliff observed his facial expression. He didn’t understand.

“I can’t play with Jasmine anymore?” He was near to heartbroken. She had been the first real friend he had who didn’t poke fun at him for being a nerd.

“No son, that’s not what I’m saying. You can go but this going out early in the morning, and

everyone else is sleep has to stop. And staying late until the sun goes down, that will stop too. We aren't familiar with this life, so we need to live here a little longer before we can freely live. Ok?" He tried to explain as best he could without going into details.

"Alright Dad," he didn't really understand, but he always did what his father told him to do. He looked down by the stream then went back into the house. He knew he would not be able to see Jasmine today, because of the little party Livvie will be having, everyone will be busy.

Cliff watched him go into the house and knew he was hurting. Vincent didn't make friends very easily. He was a very gifted child and kids his age felt like he was a freak or something. So to have him so into someone was a good thing. But with the way things were, his safety came first. He looked up to see Parker coming out.

"I gather you told Vincent he couldn't go down to the stream anymore," he surmise from the expression on his nephew's face.

"Well I told him he could go, but someone had to be with him. Not sure he's liking that. Especially with Livvie planning her little get together and we doing are date things tonight. He knows it's a bust for the stream and Jasmine," Cliff looked towards the stream and the vacant area. Parker's eyes were fixed on the road.

"Isn't it weird after last night we haven't seen Kelly?" He stated.

"Yeah, very weird." Cliff got this foreboding feeling come over him. He wasn't sure if he wanted to keep his date or not. But he knew it would disappoint Paula if he broke it. They were growing closer by the day. She was all he would want in a woman.

## Chapter Seven

Cliff picked Paula and Samy up from work. They made a quick stop at Paula's house so she could get ready, then they would drop Samy off at home. Cliff and Samy sat in the living room waiting for Paula.

He decided this would be the best time to ask about Kelly. "So Samy what can you tell me about the previous owners." He was hoping she could clarify Kelly and this whole house mix up.

"Well, I knew Kelly! We grew up together, but she shortly left after we graduated from high school. She came back after her father got sick. She stayed on after he died to help her mother, but she became sick and passed away a year later. She was sure if she would sell the place or not, but her daughter loved being there so well she choose to stay. The community of people has been so evil to her because she had the

child out of wedlock. I was the only one she would deal with. She was my friend," she said this with some sadness.

Cliff thought so far the woman had been truthful. She did grow up here, left for a few years then came back. Paula walked in at that moment to join them. Cliff seemed so engrossed in the information Samy was given him, she didn't disturb them. She sat next to him and listen.

"So you do know her. You confirmed everything she told me was true. Hmmmmm!" He said as he went into deep thought.

"Wait a minute! You spoke with Kelly?" Samy had this confused expression across her face. He looked over at her.

"Yeah! We need to see the realtor on Monday about the mix up on the selling of her house," he explained. She looked from him to Paula, then back at him. Cliff suddenly got this feeling again.

"You spoke to Kelly and actually saw her?" She wanted to make sure her ears weren't deceiving her. He nodded

"Yes just yesterday morning, she came in and prepared breakfast for us. We were confused at who fixed it. My brother and I hadn't, nor my daughter or son. Then Kelly came in walking

through the back door holding flowers. At first she didn't seem to notice us, but looked up and saw us there. She was frightened at first, but we assured her we meant no harm. We discovered, they had sold her home to me. We're going Monday to get this taken care of." He explained the situation.

"No, this isn't right! She is not supposed to be here, after what happened!" She became terribly nervous.

"I don't get it! Why shouldn't she be here and what happened?" Cliff was now highly interested in the story. If she is pulling some kind of scam on him. He knew this woman would be the one to help him. He leaned further in to hear what she had to say.

It was evening time when Jasper and Crystal arrive to the little party. Livvie had prepared everything. They all sat around, listening to music and playing games. They were so busy in their activities, no one paid much attention as Vincent stole away. He quietly went out the back door and ran down to the stream. He had to see Jasmine and explain he couldn't see her anymore, unless someone was with him.

"Hi Jasmine!" He came upon her sitting at the water's edge tossing daisies into it. She looked up at him and smile.

"Hi Vincent I thought I wouldn't see you again before I left," she stood up and looked at him sadly. This struck something in him.

"You're going somewhere?" He asked, looking at her strangely. She nodded her head in reply, then looked into the water.

"As soon as my mommy finds me, we will be leaving," she tossed another flower into the water. Vincent felt his little heart breaking. He was going to lose his friend.

"Okay about a year ago, Kelly and I had lunch together to catch up on things. We both had just gotten back into the community. At first the weather was just ok, then all of a sudden it blew in without warning. She left in a hurry, wanting to get her and her daughter home. I tried to get her to stay in town, but she wouldn't listen. She was head strong that way. She hardly got a chance to come into town because how the townspeople would treat her. And when she did come in, this is what happened," she paused as she seemed to drift back to that day.

"She loved her daughter so much! She was the prettiest thing you ever laid eyes on. And how could they mistreat her for having such an angel? The most beautiful crystal clear blue eyes, blonde curly hair, and the cutest giggle!" She seemed to be daydreaming as she described the little girl.

"What did you just say? Curly blonde hair? Blue eyes??" Cliff looked at her intense!

"Yes Jasmine had curly blonde hair and blue eyes!" She was seriously confused with his question and his action.

"I saw her in the wooded area out back by the stream playing with her doll. She wouldn't come with me, saying her mother was lost and if she moved she wouldn't find her. I think she is the same little girl my son befriended," he stared at Samy who seemed more nervous than before.

"What??" She stood and began to pace, raking her fingers through her hair. She had heard tales over the last year of travelers seeing a woman walking in the road, only to vanish from their sight once they came upon her. Not to mention always the thunder and lightning, with a downpour accompanying the phenomena.

"Yeah! Then I thought I heard her mother calling her from the road. But when I looked no one was there. I turned back to the child, and she was gone also.

"OMIGOSH!" Samy yelled, beginning to wring her hands and becoming extremely hysterical.

"What!?" Cliff had become extremely alarmed, jumped up and grabbed her by her arms. He

gave her one good shake to calm her down. She needed to reveal anything that he should know.

Parker was out on the porch smoking a cigarette and giving the kids some privacy. He was reflecting back over the past two days, when he noticed in the distance a figure walking. It was no mistaking them. Kelly by the road and it seemed as if she were in a daze. It was a repeat from the day before.

He called out to her, but she seemed not to hear him. Though something within was telling him not to, he came off the porch and ran towards her. She turned and looked at him, but as if not seeing him. And once again, before he could reach her, she darted off down the road.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" She began calling her daughter and going towards the road.

"Kelly wait up! Let me help ya'!" He called after her once again without any response. She kept onwards as if oblivious to his presence. Parker continued to follow and call to her, hoping this time will have a different outcome.

"Livvie! You hear that?" Jasper said, standing to his feet and walking towards the front door. She looked at him a little confused.

"I don't hear anything. You hear anything Crystal?" She turned to her, but she just shook her head.



"No, I didn't," she replied. Jasper waved his hand to them and went to the door, peering out.

"No, listen!" He moved out the door and onto the porch, his eyes searching the land. The girls stood to their feet and stared at each other, wondering what was going on. Then it came again in the distance.

"Jasmine! Jasmine!" She called out once gain. Parker was in close pursuit.

"Livvie look! Your Uncle is chasing someone," he moved off the porch. Livvie ran quickly through the door, just in time to see her Uncle running onto the road. She didn't see who, he chased after.

"Do you know who your Uncle is running behind? And whom she is calling?" Jasper turned to her. She looked up in his eyes and could see something there that alarmed her.

"I think she is the lady my Father and Uncle spoke with yesterday. It was something about her home being sold without her permission," she told him. He had a look of bewilderment.

"Wait! Your father and uncle spoke with her?" Jasper's voice had a hint of surprise in it.

"Yes, they were supposed to stay here until Monday, and all of them were going to speak with the realtor. To get this straighten out. She

hasn't been around all day." Livvie informed him, then Jasper eyes, enlarged.

"No way!" He said shaking his head. Livvie gave him a weird look.

"Yes! She cooked breakfast, and lunch yesterday. That's how they met each other. Although I have never seen her," she told him, but he continued to shake his head. She wasn't getting it.

"Livvie that's impossible! That lady is Kelly, my sister's friend. And she is calling her daughter." Jasper explained.

"So! What is wrong with that? She's probably down by the stream where Vincent plays with her. By the way, where is Vincent?" She began to look around.

"I haven't seen him for some time now." Crystal injected.

"Me either!" Jasper added. Livvie became frantic. He isn't supposed to be out without someone being with him.

"Maybe he's down at the stream," Crystal suggested.

"He wouldn't! My Father told him not to go there alone," she said, then looked down at the stream and saw some movement.

## Chapter Eight

Livvie quickly ran towards the stream. The sun was descending beyond the horizon, and she just could make out Vincent. And for a moment she thought she could see a little girl.

“Vincent!” She called to him desperate to get to him for fear of what would happen. Jasper and Crystal were right behind her.

Then from the road, the voice called once again. Livvie and friends came upon Vincent, and the little girl called jasmine.

“Jasmine! Jasmine!” The haunting voice came. Jasmine rose from the edge of the water, gathering up her doll. Then as if they weren’t there, she started walking away, but, not in the direction of the voice. She went in another direction near to the area. Vincent looked at his sister and her friends, then ran after her.

“Vincent no get back here!” She screamed and took off after him. Jasper and Crystal had stopped in their tracks, after seeing Jasmine. They had heard about this, but now they were a witness to it.

Cliff stared into Samy’s eyes encouraging her to tell him what is going on. She looked back into

his eyes and saw the anxiety that was forming behind them. He was right! She had to tell him the truth of the matter.

"Jasmine is DEAD!!" Samy informed Cliff and began to cry. His only reaction, was to pull her into him and wrapped his arms around her tightly. His need to comfort her was to help ease what she had told him. Or he didn't know what else to do. Considering he was now in shock!

Paula stood amazed with all she heard. She also had grown up with her. Kelly, Samy and her, were known as the three musketeers. But unlike them, Samy never moved away from the boorish town. And like Kelly, she had returned due to the death of parents. She had also decided not to sell her home, she was raised in.

She didn't come back until a few months ago. So she never knew that Kelly had returned. Nor that she had a young daughter. She hadn't seen Kelly since she came back, so she just assumed she was still gone. No one talked about her.

At least not until tonight, as Samy had explained she certainly had come home, and more than that with a young child. And now she finds out her daughter is dead. Now she wanted more than ever to go to Cliff's, hoping to see Kelly. She needed her to know how sorry she was that she had to endure so much pain.

"Wait Samy! Kelly is back, and she has a daughter who you now say is dead! Why didn't you ever tell me about this? Kelly was just as much my friend as yours." Paula was extremely upset.

"Okay! Let's calm down now! We won't get anywhere getting hysterical. Come sit down and calm yourself! Can you get her some water?" He said as he led Samy to her seat.

"Paula! Could you make that a bourbon? Straight up! I think you two, better get something also. You're going to need it!" She said as she sat down, trying to regain her composure.

Paula asked Cliff what he would like, and he declined. He was extremely interested in knowing what Samy had to say about the death of Jasmine and if so, how did he see the same girl?

"Well, it couldn't possibly be the same child as she was very much alive." Cliff said as Paula returned with the drink handing it to Samy.

Samy took it down with one gulp and requested more. She sat for a moment trying to determine how to tell them what happened a year ago. She looked over at Cliff, trying to get some reasonable response to what she told him and what he knew he saw.

She reached into her purse and pulled out her wallet. Opening it up and came to the place which held her pictures. She handed the wallet to Cliff as Paula came back with her drink and gave it to her.

"Now tell me Cliff! Is that Kelly and Jasmine? The two people you say you saw!" Samy took the glass from Paula and downed it with another gulp, handing the glass back as a request for more.

Cliff shook his head at Paula as an observation he felt Samy's had enough. Then seeing Paula nodding her agreement, looked down at the pictures he had just received from Samy. Cliff froze, stiff as a board. He looked up at Samy dumbfounded.

"Yes! This is Kelly! And this is the same little girl I saw in the woods waiting for her mother," He paused as he began to remember something. Jumping to his feet and shaking his finger at Samy.

"Wait! Kelly said she was looking for her daughter. She said she was always getting lost. She doesn't realize her daughter is dead! She was institutionalize! Kelly ran away from an institution. Didn't she? And that's why she shouldn't be here! That's why her house was up for sale. She doesn't own it anymore." Cliff stared into Samy's eyes as if he figured it all out. Samy shook her head as a negative.

"You are partly right and partly wrong, Cliff! I will finish telling you what actually happened that night a year ago!" Samy beckoned to Cliff to take a seat. He sat down next to Paula who pulled close to him as an eerie feeling shot through her body. Samy begins to tell them the story. "And so that's what happened! So what you're saying, is so impossible!" She finished.

Cliff didn't say a word as he thought of his kids and Parker back at the house. He jumped to his feet and headed towards the front door. Paula sensing what was going through his head followed him. Samy came behind them. The trio jumped into the truck as Cliff bore down on the pedal and headed for his home.

He drove on towards his home as he thought about what he had been told. Was it possible? There had to be some truth to it. How else could he explain seeing the child and knowing her name? He had undoubtedly seen her, and she had told him her name.

Chills course through his body. Samy wasn't lying with her reaction to him telling her he had seen the child. It made him shudder to think, he had actually spoken to a ghost.

"I can't believe this SH@T!!!" Cliff yelled out. He hit the steering wheel with one of his massive fists." Paula and Samy, looked at him out of the corner of their eyes and then at each other, before turning their gaze back towards the

road. Silence is golden, it is said. If that is true, the girls would have been loaded.

"We were on a stress free vacation for my brother and now this, not to mention my young son has been conversing with a ghost. Who knows what could have happened. Parker is going to freak, when I tell him what ya told me. Who'd think, buyin' a house in a quiet small town woulda' been so much trouble?" He snapped once again. The girls kept their eyes pinned to the road ahead.

## Chapter Nine

*Cliff looked up to the sky as the lightning flashed across it. He remembered how Parker had told him it was storming when he chased after Kelly. Little did he know, the thunder's rumbling was coming closer, and the storm with it.*

*"Was there a storm forecast today?" Paula turned to Samy.*

*"I don't remember any predicted." Samy shook her head as she looked at the rain drops beginning to fall on the windshield.*

*Cliff turned on the windshield wipers. The rain beginning to pour down. He barely could make out inches ahead of them.*



*Kelly made it to the road. She looked one way and then the other as she continued to call her daughter. Making a choice in which direction to go, she started down the road. Parker continued to follow as he could sense she was not with him anymore. She had drifted in her own little world. So he followed as her watcher, in case anything would go wrong.*

*Livvie was searching for Vincent when she heard the first rumbling. "Vincent! Where are you?" She called to him. In the distance, she could hear Kelly calling for Jasmine. Now the rain drops were falling.*

*"Livvie, listen to me!" Jasper gently grabbed her arm and turned her to face him. She stared at him blankly. "Kelly and her daughter were killed in a car accident one year to this day. If your father and uncle or talking to her. And Vincent is playing with Jasmine. They're encountering ghosts." Jasper laid it out for her clearly. Livvie backed away from him in horror, hands over her mouth. Staggering the scream that begged to be released. Her family had been consorting with spirits.*

*"Jasmine, come back!" Vincents voice came through all the chaos surrounding her. Livvie's head snapped in its direction, he was going towards the road. She took off as fast as her legs would take her. Her friends right behind her.*

*Parker continued watching Kelly down the road in her dreamlike state. She seemed to be pulled to a specific destination. He stayed his distance as not to spook her. Finally, she came to a certain spot and stopped abruptly. He looked to see what she was going to do next. She never moved, as she remained steadfast, poised in the spot. Encore of the day before.*

*In the distance, the lightning sent out its warning as the sky lit up with flashes of light. The thunder sounded a low rumble. Parker looked in the direction of the storm. It was the same as yesterday. But Cliff said it wasn't raining. A gentle breeze flowed around his body, sending goose bumps racing up his arms. He wasn't quite sure it was the chill from the wind or the situation standing before him. Everything was playing out as the day before.*

*Kelly was oblivious to the rain that had begun to fall. Parker walked up to her and placed his arm around her to move her into shelter, but she was unmovable. He hadn't pulled her hard enough, so he thought. He made another attempt, but she stood glued. He was amazed at the strength of such a petite woman.*

*Livvie and her fiends continued to seek her brother. The storm was strong now, and the winds were gale-like. The rain was pouring down, blinding their way.*

*The wind was at a strong gust now, and Parker was just able to keep his balance. Suddenly there came a flash of light from out of the corner of his eye. He turned quickly, thinking the lightning had flashed near them. It's happening again. The only difference is he is holding Kelly in his arms. He stared in the headlights, hoping it will play out like before when Cliff called out to him from the roadside. But this time it didn't. The car headed in their direction. Parker grabbed Kelly still not responding to anything as he braced himself for the impact.*

*Cliff wiped the inside of the windshield as it began to fog up. He had turned to say something to Samy about the story she had told him. He needed to make sure she wasn't going to change it.*

*"CLIFF look out!" Paula screamed, his head snapped around and immediately he put on brakes. The car slid to the side of the road.*

*At that moment, Livvie, walked onto the road, with Jasper and Crystal at her side. They were still searching for Vincent. She saw him standing off the road, frozen in a particular area. She ran over grabbing him as she watched a car come towards them, sliding from one side of the road to the other. It seemed to have been hit by a fierce gust of wind. It slid towards the trees and toppled over onto its side. Then it began to roll*

*over and over until it went into the ditch and hit a tree.*

*The truck Cliff, Paula and Samy were in came to a grinding halt. They gasped at the scene before them jumping out. They saw the car rolling over and over into the trees, and coming to rest in a ditch by a tree. Cliff looked up to see Parker with Kelly. Livvie, Vincent, Jasper and Crystal, were on the roadside watching everything. The trio began to walk towards them, when they heard a woman's voice.*

*"Jasmine! Jasmine!" They turned to look over at the wreckage and watch Kelly struggling to free herself. She took hold of the door knob and pulled herself up. Once she stood up, she went around the other side of the car looking for Jasmine. And unable to see her, she started walking away from the wreckage, and disappeared down the road. Ignoring the injuries, she had sustained.*

*The trio slowed down as they looked off the roadside where the four kids stood. There in the bushes was the small body of Jasmine. Vincent broke loose from Livvie and ran to her.*

*"Jasmine! Jasmine!" He cried staring down at her lifeless body. Livvie came to his side! Cliff ran and pulled him into his arms to console him. Paula and Samy came over and joined them.*

*At that moment, Kelly came out of her trancelike state and looked over to where they stood about, looking at a small figure that Kelly couldn't mistake for her daughter. She ran to her and picked her up into her arms, weeping for her lost child who was now found.*

*Paula and Samy were in total shock, seeing the friend they loved for so many years once again. They held each other close, trembling from the impact of the situation at hand. Samy thought to herself, Cliff had seen them as he said. Paula pinched herself making sure she wasn't dreaming. The winds and rain had almost ceased.*

*"So this is why, I couldn't find you! You were thrown from the car and landed on the roadside. I didn't think to look here. I left you my darling baby. And you died all alone and lost. Why didn't I remember that?" She cried, holding her daughter close.*

*The two men stood dumbfounded. Parker walked over to where the others stood. His eyes fixed on Kelly and the body of her daughter.*

*"Tell me I didn't see what I just saw!" He spoke to his brother, looking at Kelly.*

*"Tell me I didn't just see her come out of that wrecked car and walk away, calling for her daughter while I was still holding her in my arms!" Parker yelled, looking at the wreckage.*

*His breathing had become deep and slow. His heart pounding against the inside of his chest.*

*Cliff looked at his brother, not knowing how to explain it to him while Livvie, Jasper and Crystal were speechless.*

*"Cliff what the HELL is going on here??" He yelled. Livvie took Vincent to her. She could see her Uncle was in shock. Parker's eyes narrowed as he grabbed his brother arms, slightly shaking him. His angry eyes met those of his brother's.*

*"Uncle Parker no!" Vincent cried out. He darted his eyes in his direction, realizing what he was doing.*

*Paula eased her way between the brothers and slowly parted them. Samy assistance by grabbing Parker's large arm and pulled him back. Cliff looked to the ground feeling he had failed at his job, to keep his brother stress free.*

*It had been him who bought the house and convinced Parker to come out for some relaxation. This was not going to relax him at all! Parker wasn't going to believe what they were going to tell him.*

*"Park, I have to tell you something. And you wouldn't believe if ya hadn't seen it with your own eyes." Cliff began. Parker could feel his patience exhausting, but for the kid's sake he will try to stay calm.*

*"Get to the damn point Cliff! You know I don't like beatin' around the damn bush!" Parker snapped.*

*"Kelly and her daughter, Jasmine or dead!!" Samy blurted out! Parker looked down at the fiery red head standing next to him, with her light green eyes. He turned to face her full on. She made a step backwards, not knowing what his reaction to the news would be.*

*He looked at her for a few moments, then turned to look at Cliff and Paula. They nodded their heads in unison. Parker then turned his gaze on Kelly, who was sitting and holding her daughter. She continued to weep uncontrollably.*

*Then suddenly a thought hit him! He let out a thunderous laugh hardly able to contain himself. He laughed holding his side, barely able to hold back the tears forming in his eyes.*

*All watched aghast. Cliff knew his brother wouldn't take it well, but he never expected him to go off the deep end. He approached Parker with his hands out to his side, wondering what had gotten into him.*

*"Parker, stop!" He grabbed his shoulder, and swirled him around to look him in his eyes once again. His laughing stopped abruptly.*

*"What Cliff? Your little joke didn't work!" He asked, trying not to laugh.*

*"Joke? What are you talkin' about? This is no joke, man!" Cliff glared into his brother's eyes. Now he was angry at him, for thinking he would play a cruel joke as this on him. Especially after bringing him out there to rest.*

*Parker looked in his brother's eyes and saw the truth. No, this wasn't a joke. He turned to look in the eyes of the girls and saw the tears in them. They nodded in confirmation, sending a coldness taking him over as the truth kicked in.*

*"What? Did I hear right? I'm dead also?" Kelly looked up from holding her daughter. Everyone had almost forgotten she was there. So all jumped into a heap when they heard her asked them the question.*

*Suddenly, Jasmine slowly faded away from her mother's arms. Kelly stood with opened arms, looking around for her daughter she was just holding.*

*They all huddled closer together, when they saw the body of little Jasmine fade away. Samy let out a yelp, pointing to the vacant area the wreckage once occupied.*

*"Oh my God, Jasmine! What is happening? Where did she go?" Kelly was frantic! She*



*looked where the wreckage once stood. She was so confused.*

*She turned to her two friends for the first time and saw the fear in their eyes. Then she knew it was all true. Then a flash went through her mind as she went back to the day of the accident. She began to remember exactly what happened.*

*~~~She staggered away from the wreckage, dazed and confused. She was on the brink of unconsciousness. The pain was excruciating, and she was losing a lot of blood. She went deeper and deeper into the forest, searching for her daughter. Finally, unable to go any further, she fell at the base of a tree--succumbing to total blackness.~~~*

*"Now I remember! There was a light at the end of the road! I would not go in. I felt something wasn't right. I was missing something. The light beckon for me to come to it. I shook my head backing up. I needed to do something. I felt incomplete. So I ran away from the light, and then everything went blank." She paused, looking up at them standing in total shock.*

*"Next I remember walking to my house and onto the porch, and came in the house seeking*

*Jasmine. But she wasn't in her room. I became frantic. I left the house calling for her. It seemed to me I was always looking for her, but she could never be found." She turned towards where the wrecked car once laid.*

*"Next I found myself sleep on the couch. I went to prepare breakfast, thinking she was outside playing. I finish with breakfast and went outside to pick flowers. It didn't dawned on me, I never saw my daughter," she shook her head in disbelief. None of them were able to move from the spot they were frozen.*

*"I always thought she was somewhere playing and I would go looking for her. Or I would find myself doing something else just to resume looking for her. And then the confrontation with you two, about my house being sold. No wonder. Oh my! What's next?" She looked at them pleadingly.*

*"Mommy! Mommy! I found you!!" Kelly instinctively turned in the direction of the tiny voice, which couldn't be mistaken. There she stood in the spot they had found her small body. They jumped when they heard the voice. The child flew into her mother's arms.*

*"You left me all alone Mommy? I was looking for you. I went to the car, then home. You were gone! I went to the stream. You never came for me. Why did you leave me over there by myself? Huh Mommy?" Jasmine pointed to where her*

*little body had been found by paramedics. Kelly held her daughter close as they kissed and hugged each other, finally united.*

*"Oh it was you I needed! Now I'm complete! We can go my darling. It was you I was searching." Now Kelly became totally aware of her plight. She couldn't leave this earth without her daughter. And Jasmine wouldn't leave without her mother. Serenity settled over her as she held onto Jasmine.*

*"By Vincent!" Jasmine looked at him. He waved, beginning to understand what was going on.*

*Soon a funnel of a blue/violet light emanated from the sky. It shone brightly on the two holding each other. Small golden/white starlets drifted down dancing about them. Then their bodies slowly faded away and burst into starlets, mingling with the others. Then all were pulled up into the sky, through the funnel.*

*And as quickly as the light came, it disappeared. Both mother and daughter with it. The storm had ceased and silence covered the land. All stood in awe and motionlessly. Total silence for moments, with mouths and eyes wide opened. They were like statues.*

*Parker was the first to move. He slowly walked over to where the woman and her small child had been. He investigated the area closely. Then*

*turned to his brother. Cliff's eyes were still glued on the spot.*

*"That was awesome!" Jasper yelled out causing everyone to jump.*

*"Jasper!" Samy punched him in the arm.*

*"Okay, what just happened here?" Parker was still trying to wrap his brain around this ordeal.*

*"Let me get this right! Kelly and her daughter were ghosts? I've been lusting after a GHOST?" He asked, hands spread apart. Cliff remained in shock as he nodded his head, staring at the spot.*

*"Yes Uncle Parker. You were chasing after and holding a spirit." Livvie added. He looked at her then Vincent.*

*"Vincent, you ok?" He more than anyone understood what his nephew was feeling.*

*"I'm okay Uncle Parker. I'm glad Jasmine is with her mother." He said, the sadness was evident in his voice.*

*Paula leaned into Cliff and felt herself about to go faint. Samy had taken a brave gesture and followed Parker. But soon reality hit, and she fainted. Parker saw her body falling to the ground. Jasper started towards her but Parker waved him down.*

*"Oh Gawd, woman! Get a grip!" He hollered and picked her up.*

*"I think leaving would be a good idea." Paula suggested, watching Parker carrying Samy, as he approached them. Cliff was speechless and allowed himself to be escorted by Paula as they followed Parker towards the truck. The kids said they would walk home and retrieve Jasper's truck.*

*Later.....*

*"Someone came along and found poor little Jasmine by the road side. Kelly was in the forest under a tree. Neither could be revived. It took me a while to stop blaming myself for not insisting she leave earlier than she did. Or at least convince her to come stay the night with me. But she was stubborn like that." Samy sipped her hot tea as she told the story over to Parker.*

*"Well don't blame yourself for your friend's death. She chose to go home." Parker smiled and patted her hand softly. He thought she was kinda cute and full of spunk.*

*"Thanks! I just hope Jasmine and her Mother can now find some peace!" She leaned into him. He smiled and placed his arm about her shoulder, comforting her. He thought, "Boy I should have ghosts around all the time! If it's this easy to get someone'.*

*Paula sat on the banister of her house, with Cliff! He had decided it would be a better choice not to go back to home tonight. Jasper had drove Crystal home then Livvie and Vincent to Paula's.*

*Cliff stood beside Paula as they stared at the beautiful moon out on this strange night. Paula sighed at the events of the night, her thoughts drifted to her dear friend and her child. One year ago they had lost each other, and came back to reclaim the other.*

*"Penny for ya" thoughts!" Cliff asked.*

*"I was just thinking about Kelly and Jasmine, that's all." She answered.*

*"What about them?" He took her hand into his and brushing her dark hair from her eyes, revealing her gray eyes.*

*"To have that much love to overcome the odds of death and find each other. No one will ever believe this! Not even your brother believed it and he was standing right there seeing everything," she let out a small chuckle.*

*"Hell, I still don't believe it! Just think of it this way. They're happy now, and nothing can take that away from them," he wanted to console her and gazed into her eyes.*

*"You're right. They are!" She smiled and leaned in to kiss him on the mouth. The two embrace as all thoughts for a moment was put aside.*

*"Livvie do you think she's happy now?" Vincent looked up into the sky. His sister came to sit next to him and looked up too.*

*"I think they're both happy, Vincent. You were a good friend to her." She brushed his hair back. He smiled, then they hugged. This had brought them closer. It seems turmoil has a way of doing that.*

*Two unheard voices road the wind, and soon faded into another realm.*

*"I love you, Mommy!*

*"And I love you, my sweet Jasmine!*

*The End*