

# THE DOORWAY

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John Boston

Nick owned a bar in Bocas Town, Panama. It had been given to him by his late Uncle who had married a prominent Panamanian family from the area. He had never owned a bar or restaurant in his life. He could barely pour a beer or speak Spanish, but anything was better than being a debt slave in America, so he decided to give it a try. He had a wonderful staff and had made many friends in the area. He could now speak Spanish as effortlessly as English, something that took several years to accomplish. His fiancé was from Panama also. It had become his new home. Why not, so far Panama had been very good to him.

The beauty about living in a resort town is the sheer number of international visitors you meet on a daily basis. German, French, Chinese, Japanese. They all came here with one goal in mind and that was simply to have the time of their lives. Nick was more than happy to assist. All he had to do was pay off some local officials every year and his business went off without so much as a hiccup. Still, as wonderful as this country was, he missed the states. Most of his closest friends were American expats who had served in the military or worked on the canal. Many were retirement age, some were not. He never missed an opportunity to meet an American. Most just wanted to come down here and have a good time. Some were on the run. Everything was for sale in this country, as long as the price was right.

Over the past month, an American had come into the bar not really looking to mingle....just not to be alone. He was semi-fluent in Spanish and certainly seemed to be able to hold his own with the ladies, but Nick knew he didn't really come to the bar for female companionship. Some nights he would just sit by himself in the corner and not say a word. He was always polite to the waitresses and tipped well. He seemed to have plenty of money, something that would make him an easy target for some of the undesirable elements here in Bocas Town. If you stayed here longer than a month and had money, you were bound to attract the wrong kind of attention. He also knew that this guy was definitely ex-military, just by the way he conducted himself. He put out a very subtle, yet unmistakable *stay the hell out of my way* type vibe. He and Nick had made small talk over the past month. Nothing very substantial. One night, during a torrential rainstorm, he pulled up a chair and sat down next to him. Nick didn't want to try and scare him, but Panama sure as hell wasn't Orange County, that was for certain. One wrong move in this country and you could wind up in a world of shit....*unless you had the money to buy your way out of it*. It was going to be one of those types of conversations.

"Hell of a night. I hope the duct tape holding the roof together doesn't come off."

Nick said nothing and just drank his beer.

"I'm Nick Price, from Orange County California. I own this wonderful establishment."

"Jake. I went to boot camp in Orange County."

"Camp Lejune huh? Spent a little time there myself."

"Really? Semper Fi," said Jake shaking his hand.

The ice had officially been broken. *Once a Marine, always a Marine* wasn't just a sales pitch. It was a way of life for millions of ex-marines. Nick and Jake spent the next few hours reminiscing about their time in the Corps. By the end of the night, you'd have thought they had known one another for years.

Nick was about ten years older than Jake. He had been to Bosnia and several other hot spots around the world. Jake had done two tours in Iraq.

"It was so freggin hot in Baghdad, I thought I was going to melt. I had to guard the green zone for ten hours a day in the middle of summer. I specifically asked to go to the coldest spot the Marines had after my tour was done."

"Jake, what brings you down to Panama if you don't mind me asking?"

"I guess I just needed a break from life for a while. I figured this was as good a place as any."

"Down here, the ladies come with the drinks."

"My kind of bar."

"Jake, I just want you to be careful down here, Trust the wrong people and you can wind up in a world of shit. Don't let the fancy houses around town fool you, this country is poor as shit. A lot of desperate people that do desperate things just to stay alive."

"I can handle myself."

"You're no greenhorn, I can see that, but the cops like to shake down Yanks like us for money. Everything in this country is for sale, especially the cops."

"Not any different than the states."

"True, but at least in the states, we pretend we have a fair system, down here, they don't even do that. You don't want to end up in one of their jails. You might not come out alive."

"Thanks, Nick. I've got plenty of contacts down here to help me out if I get in trouble.....like you said, everything and everybody is for sale. I gotta run, I've got a hot date tomorrow." he said getting up from the bar.

"Don't be a stranger," said Nick as Jake put his hand on his shoulder.

Jake walked out in the pouring rain. It didn't even seem to bother him.

"Semper Fi, buddy," said Nick as he raised his glass in honor of his new friend.

Over the course of the next month, Jake would occasionally pop into his bar. Each time he did, he seemed to look worse and worse. Nick had seen this before. Panama wasn't a tourist destination for some, for people like Jake it was simply the end of the road, the last stop before the cemetery. Something was clearly eating away at him.

*It was chewing a hole in his soul type bad.*

He sat down one night next to him right before closing. He wasn't sure if it were drugs, but he certainly didn't look like a drug user. He was a drinker, but nothing out of the ordinary. He was always sober enough to see himself home. He knew getting him to talk would be difficult. Two years ago, he befriended an Army vet who had also been to Iraq. Seemed like a perfectly normal guy. He and Nick even went out fishing one afternoon in his boat. Cops found him a week later in his apartment, dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, along with a suicide note. It detailed some horrible events in Iraq, which resulted in the deaths of several Iraqi children. He blamed himself. It was the last line in the note, which really hit home.

*Thanks for being a good friend Nick.*

Nick read about it in the local newspaper. He was so upset, he had to leave work for a few days. He didn't care if he violated someone's personal life. He would never let that happen again. Not on his watch. If he saw a veteran who needed help, Nick was going to help them.....*or die trying*. Jake wasn't just reaching out for help....he was pretty much screaming for it.

He just didn't know how to reach him. They had conversations, but it was mainly about their time in the Marines. He knew nothing about him beyond that. Didn't know if he was married or had any children. He didn't even know why Jake was here, but he knew if he didn't do something soon, Jake was going to leave here in a body bag. He even tried using one of the prostitutes that spoke English to get to know him, but Jake didn't seem interested.

"I don't pay for sex lady, that's what losers do," he told her.

The girl didn't have much going for her besides a great body, so he figured Jake wouldn't really open up to her either.

They didn't say anything to one another. Finally, Nick got fed up.

"Jake, I'm no good at this type of thing. If you don't want to talk, fine. I just hate to see a fellow Marine end up like this."

"Like what?"

"You look like ten pounds of shit in a five-pound bag. You could get any girl in here, but you just ignore them. You could be running this damn town if you really wanted to, but all you do is come in here and drink yourself to death every night. I'm not your father but, Jesus, why are you doing this to yourself?"

"I'm just trying to figure some things out."

"I can see that, but you're not doing a very good job of it."

Jake got up to leave, Nick put his hand on Jake's shoulder and forced him back down in his seat."

"You aren't the only one who's gotten their hands dirty working for Uncle Sam, Jake. I saw some pretty nasty shot too."

Jake just laughed.

"Is that what you think this is about?"

"I don't know, but something's eating away at you here. It's obviously too much to bear, so talk to me. Never once in my life have I ever felt any worse for the wear after talking to someone."

"If I talk about it, then you become a part of it. Is that really what you want?"

"So, make me a part of it. Jesus, I just can't stand to see a winner turn into a total loser. Breaks what little heart I have left."

"Nick....you have no idea what the hell you're getting yourself into here, believe me. This is some very serious shit."

"I can see that."

"You still want to be part of it?"

"Yeah, I do. I know anybody who can go through Marine Boot Camp and spend six years in the Marines is no regular, run-of-the-mill piece of garbage. It takes a pretty tough bastard to do that. Whatever it is you're going through, you stand a much better chance of beating it, when you involve more than just yourself. You need help, Jake. Don't be so damn proud not to ask."

Jake took out his phone. He pulled up several videos showing what was going on in the United States. It was all over the international news. Even the local TV stations in Panama were showing it.

*Something truly horrifying was happening in the United States....like something right out of a horror movie.*

Several towns in the suburbs of New York were being terrorized by a large group of unknown assailants. The village of Bowden, New York had over a dozen murders committed in just one night. The village was a war zone. The citizens had put up a hell of a fight, but whatever attacked them was too powerful. Several people were taken from their homes. Just vanished into thin air. Their bodies were never recovered. Westchester County was the epicenter. The police were now engaged in an all out war to try to stop their attackers. Several had been killed or disappeared as well. The scary thing about all of this, the really horrifying part was that:

*Their attackers didn't even use guns.*

The attacks seemed to be spreading in an outward, circular pattern. New York City was too close for comfort.

"It's spreading. It's spreading fast and I'm the one who caused all of it," he said with tears in his eyes.

"It's like you're stuck in this really bad dream or nightmare. The kind that scares you so bad, you can't fall back to sleep. I did it. I caused all of this."

Nick wasn't sure if Jake was crazy or not. He needed more information before he knew.

"What do you mean you're responsible for all of this? How the hell could you be responsible for all of this?"

"Because.....I unleashed them. I opened the doorway."

"What doorway?"

"Inside Cameron Frost's house. There's a doorway that leads to another world. I opened the doorway by mistake. All of these people are dead because of me."

"Cameron Frost? The Wall Street guy?"

"Yup, that Cameron Frost."

Nick was now unsure of exactly what the hell was happening. The internet was on fire with these types of stories. Everyone in the world wanted to know what the hell was happening. He wasn't sure if Jake had anything to do with it or not, but he figured he should at least hear him out. What harm could it do?

*Might even make the old boy get over it.*

"I got out of the Marines and started working security. Not just your typical security guard, I was a contractor for KDR. It is run by two former FBI Agents and a bunch of high-ranking ex-military types from the U.S. and England. A very professional bunch. I made more money in a week than I did the whole time I was in the Marines. I was a mercenary, going anywhere they told me to. I guarded VIPs, blew up bad guys, your basic mercenary type stuff. I worked for them for two years, then left over a pay dispute. I made a lot of contacts while working for KDR. Some of them started working for me. I was kind of an 'off the books' type of soldier. The kind who took missions no one else would even touch. Did a lot of very fucked up things....things I shouldn't have done. I had the same team. We worked as a group and always split the money four ways. I don't know how he found me, but he did. I knew I should have just walked away, but his offer was too good to refuse. I should have known he was full of shit.....four million dollars is four million reasons to say yes."

"What did he want you to do?"

"He meets me in this coffee shop one day. He looked like a skateboarder. Just this wiry little dude in a nice suit. He says he has an offer. All we have to do is break into Cameron Frost's house and um.....well that's where it gets interesting." said Jake

"Did he want you to kill anyone?"

"No, he was very clear about that. No one is to get hurt. All we had to do was get into his mansion and secure his office study. There was something in there extremely valuable. Something that would make a man go to extreme lengths to get."

"What was it?" asked Nick

"He wouldn't say. Our orders were to secure the study and then call him and the man in charge would arrive and take what he wanted. We were high-priced burglars."

"A guy like Cameron Frost is bound to have priceless items in his house."

"I figured that much. I got the impression it wasn't money or diamonds he was after, it was something else. Something you can't buy on the open market."

"So, what did you do?"

"I took the job. We were to get four million dollars and new passports with different names. I made it very clear to this kid what would happen if they didn't pay up. He assured me that money was not going to be an issue. He also kind of sweetened the pot a little by throwing in something extra. I guess whoever was bankrolling this thing knew everything about me. He knew about my brother."

"Your brother?"

"He was arrested two years ago in Mexico for running drugs over the border. He's been in a Mexican prison ever since. I don't know how much longer he's going to be able to survive. The kid assures me that if we complete this job, his boss will ensure my brother gets released from prison the next day. I figure with the million dollars, I can just buy him out anyway. Clearly, his boss was somebody very high up on the food chain, with a lot of very powerful contacts."

"I'm not clear what this has to do with what is happening back in the states."

"I'm getting to that, I just want to give the full story, don't want to leave anything out, because someone has to know. Someone has to know the truth," said Jake.

"Fair enough."

"So, I mull it over with my team. We always vote on whether or not to take a job before we accept. It was a unanimous vote of four to zero. The vote was in favor of doing the job. I met the kid the next day and told him we accept. He gives me a package with instructions and some kind of weird cell phone with a charger. He says all I have to do is turn it on and hit the send button and it will automatically connect me. It's like a giant walkie-talkie. He then gives me a

breakdown of the timeline we are expected to follow. It was down to the last minute. I didn't like that part."

"Why not?"

"In my experience, you just can't plan something like this without taking into account the unknown. We had no idea what was going to happen when we entered that house. The staff could have been waiting for us with AR-15s. Too many unknowns. But, his boss was footing the bill for this whole thing, so we had to do it his way...or her way."

"What happened next?"

"The job was to go down in four days. We had building plans of Frost's mansion, the code for the security alarm, even knew where all the security cameras were. This had been planned right down to the very last detail."

"How were you supposed to get paid?"

"They would have four million dollars in suitcases just waiting for us as soon as the job was complete," said Jake.

"You didn't smell a rat?"

"Of course I did. It felt like we were walking right into a trap. A very expensive trap. See, the way we figured it: whoever had put this thing together was rich and powerful enough to get the information necessary to do the job, just not powerful enough to escape the wrath of someone like Cameron Frost. It was a middle-level player who wanted to move up to the big leagues."

"Four million dollars in cash? Not many people could pull something like that off."

"No, they couldn't. Some of my team expressed reluctance but, even if we were caught, all we had to do was give ourselves up. We take a plea deal, roll over on whoever set this up and move on to the next job. The kid in the coffee shop had given us a hundred thousand dollar down payment for our services. Just slid it to me under the table in a shopping bag. I looked around the coffee shop and knew he would never have come in here alone, but I just couldn't make out any spooks. That bothered me. So, we meet at our clubhouse, which was just an old, abandoned machine shop. We planned every last little detail to match the timeline. One of my boys, Miguel, suggested that we hire a driver. That would give us another man on the inside if things went south."

"I got a dude. I spent time with him in Iraq," he said.

None of us were too pleased with the thought of bringing in a rookie for a job like this, but Miguel did have a point. I did not want to leave our van unattended and four is a hell of a lot better than three, so I told him to give his boy a call. He would get fifty thousand for his services."

"Not too bad for one night's work."

"Not at all. Miguel vouched for this guy and said he was good in a pinch, so I said ok."

"Jake.....I realize the prospect of four million dollars in cold cash is tempting, but you had to know there were so many things that could have gone wrong in all this."

"Of course, there always is. Mercenaries don't have a union. There's always a risk you won't come back alive. That's why we're paid so well. I just couldn't let my brother die down there in that shit hole. He made a mistake. He never hurt anyone or killed anyone. He needed money and that was the easiest way to do it. If I didn't get him out of there, he was as good as dead. I guess I was doing this all for him. Even if it was all bullshit, with the money I had, I could buy his freedom. It always boils down to money. Everything in life just comes down to how much money you have in your pocket. If you're rich, life is great. If you're poor, it's a nightmare. I wish it wasn't like this, but that's the way it is."

"Always has been, always will be."

"I came from a poor family in Iowa. My dad wasn't much to write home about. My mom passed away a few years ago from cancer. She died because she didn't have health insurance and the state did pretty much nothing to help her. My brother is the only family I have left. The last time I went to see him, he could barely speak. He had been beaten by one of the prison gangs. They said unless he paid them protection money, he would get beaten every day until he paid up. Not much of a life."

"So, the day of the break-in. Tell me about that," said Nick.

"We show up exactly where we are supposed to. We meet the kid from the coffee shop, no names were ever given. We followed the timeline exactly. He asks us if we are totally committed to the success of this operation."

"What did you say?"

"I told him if he fucks us over or sells us out, every member of my team will track him down and kill him. I ask him if he's committed to fulfilling his end of the deal. He says stabbing people in the back is very bad business and he doesn't want to burn any bridges or something like that, so I figure it's a go. Miguel's new boy went by the name of 'Slick'. He knew exactly what his role in all this was and that not to screw up. He assured me he had been in several firefights in Iraq and would not buckle under pressure. I told him, for his sake, he better not. He does what is asked and he walks away from here with fifty thousand dollars in his pocket. Miguel vouched for me also. I am a very fair businessman. You come through for me, I come through for you. I don't tolerate failure."

"Smart people never do."

"We pull up to the house. We get out of the van and run up to the back door. Sure enough, the security code he gave us worked. I see a green light and open the back door. We enter the house and let me tell you, this is some house. Like something out of a fairy tale. The kitchen was bigger than my condo. We go room by room, clearing them out. I find some old guy in one of the rooms watching TV. He nearly shit himself when he sees me. I ask him if he wants to die. Of course, he



says no. I tell him he will not be hurt as long as he does exactly what he is told. He's an old man, I didn't want to put him in zip ties. I ask him where the rest of the staff is and he says it is just he and one of the maids. The cook is away for the weekend. We find the maid upstairs. They both tell us they are the only ones in the house. I tell both of them we are not here to harm them, we only need something in the house and then we are out. If they were to do something stupid, then all bets were off."

"Do you worry they might recognize your voice?"

"I wear a synthesizer over my voice box to disguise my voice."

"Jesus, you really do think of everything."

"The old man tells me he has never, not once in twenty-two years ever been inside Mr. Frost's study. He shows me where it is. The maid said the same thing. Mr. Frost doesn't have many rules, but there is one rule that he enforces with an iron fist and that is: *to stay the hell out of his study*. He had fired some of the staff when they were caught trying to get inside. The doors were some kind of composite metal I had never seen before. No way were we going to force our way inside. Not without explosives. I put the C4 charges on the hinges and lock and once everyone was clear, I detonated it. We managed to force one of the doors open after about ten minutes. I have never seen doors like that before. Frost really didn't want anyone to get inside. Once we were inside the study and the house had been secured, I made the call. Someone on the other end picked up and said they would be there in fifteen minutes. We were to hold our position and wait for them to arrive. About ten minutes later, someone did show up. Slick calls us on the radio and says there is a single car approaching the house. He pulls up to the front door and gets out. Slick says there is no one else with him, just one guy. We have everyone in the study, including the two staff. As soon as the front door opens, he is detained and led upstairs. I'm sitting there at his desk, when Wade, one of my team says: *Boss....I think we may have a problem*.

Miguel brings in none other than Mr. Frost himself. I nearly shit myself. There I am, face to face with the owner of this house. The guy we were supposed to rip off. He's standing right in front of me."

"What do you want?" he said

"Mr. Frost?"

"Yes."

"We were paid to do a job. You showing up here was not part of the plan. Whoever bankrolled this job will be here shortly. You two can hash it out." I said.

"I see. Do you gentleman know who I am? Do you have any idea what you've done?"

"Like I said, this was just supposed to be a simple robbery. No one was supposed to get hurt. We didn't harm any of your staff." I said.

"Jesus. You must have sweating bullets," said Nick

"Frost takes out a 9mm from his suit. He walks over to the two staff members and shoots them both. Kills them right in front of us. Guy didn't even flinch."

"*Now it's a homicide gentlemen,*" he says.

"Boss, let's get the hell out of here," said Miguel.

"You would be wise to listen to your comrade Mr. Jake," said Frost.

"Just like that, I knew we had been set up. I knew we were done. Our only choices were to surrender or shoot our way out. Neither of which sounded very appealing."

"If you and your team leave right now, I can fix this. I know what he wants in this study and he's not going to get it. Not as long as I am still breathing. You aren't stupid. You know you can't kill me and get away with it, so put your damn guns down and let's try to fix this fucking mess you made." said Frost.

"I call the team together. Frost just sat down in his desk chair and waited for us to finish. I ask them what they want to do."

"Jake, we're in way over our heads here. We need to get out of here before the cops arrive," said Wade.

"We got two dead bodies in here, we can't just walk away now. I think our only chance is to help Frost," said Miguel.

"We still don't even know what the hell is going on here. I think we should just bail. We didn't kill anyone." I said.

"Doesn't matter, no one will believe us anyway. This isn't South America. We aren't going to buy our way out of this one." said Wade.

"We have three vehicles approaching. Vans. Several men with guns getting out. Hope you guys are ready." said Slick over the radio.

"He's brought in another team to take you out. Your only way out of this is with me," said Frost.

Nick was now enthralled. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. If this story were true, it was incredible. He just couldn't imagine being in a situation like this. He would have just cut and run, which is exactly what Jake wanted to do, but it was far too late. He knew the story would only get better. If this were being told by anyone except Jake, he would just have written it off, but Jake didn't strike him as a liar. A guy like Jake didn't have to lie to impress people.

"So, what's it going to be boys?"

"Frost, I don't care how rich you are. You burn us, I'll kill you." I said

"I'm sure you will. Now, give me a gun and let's stop them before this goes any further," said Frost.

"No way am I giving you a gun."

"You're outnumbered, Jake. These are professional killers just like you. You're going to need all the help you can get."

"He was right. We were going to need all the help we could get."

"I doubt you want to involve the police," said Frost.

"It might be our only chance."

"I won't be able to help you once that call is made. You're on your own and there are two dead bodies in the house already," said Frost.

"There it was. We were toast. For the first time in my life, I was scared. I mean really scared. I had completely lost control of the situation. Like, completely, lost control. I have been in dozens of firefights, lost friends. Done some pretty horrible things, yet none of that scared me like this. We were dead men walking at this point. I walk downstairs and this guy in a suit gets out. I see the guy from the coffee shop, only now he's dressed in full combat gear with an AR. I have no idea who this guy is. Everyone is just one fart away from shooting. At this point, I was trying to do damage control."

"What's the problem?" asks the old man

"He's here," I said.

"Who's here?"

"Cameron Frost. He's upstairs in the study."

Everyone just looked at one another, totally unsure as to how to proceed. The old man just smiles.

"Well, we can't control everything, now can we?"

"There's more. Frost killed two of his staff members. Shot them dead right in front of us. This is not what we signed up for."

"Jake, what's done is done. After tonight, it won't really matter. With Frost out of the way, you don't have anything to worry about." said the old man.

"You brought along a hell of a lot of firepower," I added.

"You have to hope for the best and prepare for the worst."

"Just give us our money and we're out of here."

"Of course. Mr. Torres, will you be so kind as to pay the man?"

Wade never gave the guy a chance to pull out his machine gun. He killed him as soon as he turned around. We all just started shooting. I shot the old man right in the chest, but he was wearing a vest. I sent him backward, then I get hit. I saw Wade go down, but he managed to take out two of them before he was hit again. I don't know how we managed to get back into the house. We slammed the door shut. The rifle plate had saved my life. My chest hurt like hell. Miguel had been hit also. He could barely walk. We were on the stairs, just about to head into the study when I see a bullet hit Miguel, I drop him and he falls down the stairs. Some of them had managed to get inside the house. It was just me and Bobby left. We were shooting the shit out of anything that moved. We managed to get into Frost's study. I throw Frost a gun, but he already has two of them. I have never seen a gun like this. The doors on the study were blown off, so we didn't have much to protect us. One of them jumps through and starts shooting. Frost fires his gun and this beam of light shoots out and just vaporizes him. Bobby and I both froze. It was like something out of a movie. Frost continued to fire at anyone that came through the door. The group trying to kill us must have gotten the picture, cause they stopped shooting. At least for the moment."

"Jake, our only way out of this is to call the cops. We won't be able to stop all of them from getting in here."

"What in the hell is that thing?" I ask.

"A little souvenir from home. he says and looks out the window. Seconds later, the windows are blown in and bullets are flying. Bobby is hit and falls to the ground. Frost pulls out some kind of weird shield. The bullets are hitting the shield. I can hear them hitting the shield. It was glowing every time it was hit. Weirdest goddamn thing I have ever seen."

Nick didn't say anything, he just let Jake continue. He ordered them another beer and gave Jake a cigarette.

The bullets stopped for a minute. The entire office had been cut to pieces. I knew we weren't going to last much longer, so did Frost. He looked like he was in rough shape. I could see he had been shot. We were in a serious deep shit situation.

"Jake.....there's only one way out of this. I hope he goes for it."

"What are you going to do?"

"He has to go through the wrong doorway."

"What? What doorway?"

"The one that leads to the other world, not mine."

"The hell are you talking about?"

"Jake, you really fucked up here. The problem is, once the door is opened, I'm not sure I can close it again. It's been closed for thousands of years. That's why they've never come back."

"Frost, do you want to tell me what's going on here?" I ask

"Yes, Cameron, why don't you tell him?" said the old man from outside his study.

"You.....I should have known. Nothing will sink you faster than trusting the wrong people. I should have killed you when I had the chance." shouted Frost.

"Come on Cam. It's time you shared your little secret with the rest of the world. You and the rest of your little group. Your reign has come to end." said the old man.

"Jake, just play along with me like your life depends on it cause it does. I'm going for a hail Mary and I'm not much of an athlete." said Frost.

"Fine.....you win. Just stop shooting, God this hurts".

"He got up and I could see he had been shot. Don't know how the old man was still holding on."

Five of his group came in with their weapons pointed right at us. Bobby and I knew this was the end of the road. I still had my failsafe with me. In case things got to this point."

"What was that?" asked Nick

"A fragmentation grenade. I pulled the pin on it. I release it just an eighth of an inch and we all meet Jesus."

"Drop the grenade." shouted one of them.

"I do and we're all dead," I shouted.

"Put the pin back in you idiot. Let me handle this," said Frost.

I did as Frost ordered and a minute later, the old man walked into the study.

He looked at all of the dead bodies, then walked over to Frost. He picked up his laser gun and held it in his hand.

"My father knew. I wonder how many others have known and you've simply bought them off," said the old man.

"So, you figured it out. Congratulations. What do you want old boy?"

"You know exactly what I want."

"You ready for that?"

"I want to see your world. You won't be able to hide it any longer. Your secret is out my boy."

Frost stood up. I stood up a second later. I wasn't scared now, not anymore. I was just angry. I have never been angry like that before in my life. I wanted to shoot everyone in that room. My

team was gone. My life was gone. I just wanted some goddamn answers. I just wanted to know what was going on here. I figured all these people died for it, so I at least deserve to know the truth."

"Would somebody fill me in on just what in the fuck is going on here?" I said politely.

"Jake. Take a good look at Cameron here. Does he look seventy-two years old to you?" asked the old man.

"No, he doesn't look any older than I am."

"That's because he isn't. I don't even know which Frost this is. It could be Cameron or Theodore, or his great-great-grandfather James. See, they aren't really from this world. They come from another world. Another plane of existence. The doorway to that world is right here in this office. Now Cam, if you would please be so kind." said the old man.

"You guys are really serious? You're not kidding?" I asked.

"I wouldn't have done all of this for nothing, Jake. It's the biggest secret in the world and now you know too. Oh, by the way." said the old man as he kicked me right in the stomach.

"That's for shooting me.....alright, let's go. Come on Cam, open up, we don't have all night." said the old man.

"You have no idea what you're doing. You can't just go through the doorway without consequences old boy. It doesn't work that way." said Frost.

"I don't have all night Cameron." the old man said as he pointed the gun at him.

"Do you want to be responsible for what happens next? Do you have any idea what you're doing?"

The old man didn't say a word. Frost went over to a bookcase and pulled out a book exposing a hidden lever. He pulled it and another bookcase moved to the side, exposing a very large metal door. It looked very old and very solid....like something you would see on a battleship. He pulled out another book and it held a set of large keys. He unlocked the door and opened it."

"So, what did you see?" asked Nick, almost spellbound.

"There was this weird, kind of bluish light. It was that sound, that weird sound, and how it made every hair on your body stand almost straight up. Even the spooks in the room were thrown off by it. I very slowly moved away from it and towards the front of the room. It was the strangest thing I had ever seen. It was then, at that exact moment that it all made sense to me. The setup, the money, you name it. If this really was a doorway to another world, then I guess what was done was worth it. Frost had this look on his face. He mentioned something earlier about a hail Mary. I had no idea what he was talking about. I didn't say a word and just moved away from the door. The old man looked like he had gotten his favorite toy on Christmas.

"I've been waiting for this day for nearly fifty years. Alright, everyone knows what to do." said the old man. They pulled out oxygen tanks and these white suits, the kind you would see a scientist wear. About five of them. They all had weapons. As soon as they started coming in, I left. I just slipped out in all of the commotion. I know it's hard to believe, but I did. I waited until there was no one watching me and I just bolted out the blown-off doorway and ran down the other hallway. There was another set of stairs. I could hear someone downstairs, so I just waited for two minutes. They got some kind of all-clear sign and they took off. I didn't hear any gunshots or anything. I didn't know what happened to Frost. I could have just bolted out of there. I should have. It was dumb to go back. I guess I just had to know if all of this was real. Was I just imagining it? All these people were dead because of that doorway. I had to know....I had to. So I went back upstairs into the room.

"You went back in there?" asked Nick

"Yes. I tip-toed back into the room. The blue light was very bright now. I stepped into the room and as God as my witness, Nick.....I saw one of them."

"One of who?"

"Them.....the beings who live in that other world with the blue light. I don't really know how to describe them. It was a woman. She was tall and beautiful. Her skin was this weird gold color. Her hair was gold color as well. Not blonde, but gold. I looked at the two spooks left in the room. They both looked at me and we were all thinking the same thing."

"What's that?" asked Nick

"We were thinking that we were in way, way over our heads. I knew then if the only way out of this way was to make sure Frost survived. He was the only one who could fix what was done. He had all the answers. I had none. I watched her take one of the spooks by the hand and lead him through the doorway. It was like he was in some kind of trance or something. As soon as they were through, Frost shut the door and locked it. He closed the bookcase and sat down at his desk. He was obviously very upset.

"Idiots.....they don't know what they've done." he kept mumbling.

"Frost.....what in God's name is going on here?" I asked looking at the bad guy holding a machine gun on me.

"Yes, we got greedy. Yes, we were not the best leaders. We made many mistakes over the years but we never let them in. We always kept them out. That was our job and we blew it." he said softly.

"I had no idea what he was talking about. I just hoped he would talk and fill in some of the blanks."

"Was that like an alien or something?" said the spook.

"It was more of a *something*. Well, this night has been fun boys, but I have to and try to do some serious damage control here. I don't know if I can fix this."

"Frost gets up and goes down the hallway. Me and the spook just followed him. He unlocks another door and steps inside. He turned on the light. The room looked dusty like no one had been inside for years. He goes into another room and pulls a book from the bookcase. It slides to the left and exposes another strange-looking metal door. There was more bluish light coming from underneath. He puts his hand on the door and it slides open.

I grab him and spin him around."

"Take your hands off me."

"Just tell me what the hell is going on here? Please, just tell me what is happening!"

"The stupid fool forgot to kill me before he went through. Guess it just slipped his mind," said Frost.

"We both looked at the other spook who still had his gun trained on us. He put it down and just ran out of the room. Guess he had seen enough."

"I tricked him."

"Tricked who?"

"The old fart who did all of this. He wanted to see my world so badly, he never even thought twice," said Frost cracking a smile.

"How did you trick him."

"I sent him to *their world.....not mine*."

"What do you mean their world. How many worlds are in this house?"

"My family was put here many generations ago to make sure they never come back through. Cause if they do Jake, well.....things are not going to end very well for planet Earth. I should know. They nearly destroyed mine."

"You're an alien?"

"In a manner of speaking yes. In other ways, I am no different than you or anyone else. I come from another plane. There are many planes surrounding this planet. Once you discover them, then the entire universe is at your fingertips. Problem is.....not everyone who inhabits these planes is friendly. Some of them are pure evil. Right about now, the old man probably wishes he was dead. You really made a mess of things here Jake. I hope you realize what you've done."

"Jesus Frost, we didn't know any of this would happen. How the hell could we?"



"You play with fire.....you're going to get burned. In this case.....the entire planet is going to get burned," he said.

"He pushed me aside and stepped through the doorway. As soon as he was through the doorway just vanished, like it had never existed. I went back into his study. The other doorway had vanished as well. I put my hand on the exact spot where it was and all I could feel was concrete. I knew I had to get out of there. Can you believe I just walked out the back door? Just walked out the back door. Went back to our van of course Slick was deader than a doornail. I put him in the back of the van and just drove away. No cops, no nothing. Went home, sat up for several hours, and just tried to take everything in. I felt like I had done something horrible. Something truly horrible and pretty soon, everyone was going to know about it. I wanted to call somebody, to tell them about it, but I realized there was no one to call except my brother. The one bright spot in this is that he was released. I don't know how, but the parole board decided to review his case. A week later, he walked out of there a free man."

"Did you find him?" asked Nick

"I tried. Went to Mexico, but there was no trace of him. I'm not sure if he's back in the states or what. There is a warrant out for his arrest in Florida. He might just want to lay low for a while. I have no way of getting in contact with him, but at least I know he's alive.....*for now*."

"Jesus Jake. That's one hell of a story."

"I know you don't believe me. Hell, I wouldn't believe me either. It's too crazy to be crazy."

"I never said I didn't believe you."

"You're eyes do Nick. They never lie."

"Come on Jake, this is just a lot to take in. It's the craziest thing I've ever heard in my life."

"I realize that. Do you see why I drink every night? The cross I'm carrying on my shoulders? I just screwed the rest of the planet."

"Jake, they caught some of the people doing this yesterday. Those ANTIFA whackos. I guess they decided to take their game to a new level. I guess they're going to try the whole *mass murder thing* and see how well that works out."

"It's not ANTIFA. They are just using this for cover. It's only beginning Nick. Pretty soon the darkness will be everywhere. Unless somehow, Frost's people can manage to help us. I opened the doorway to hell for a million dollars. That's what I think about every night. That's what I think about as soon as I wake up in the morning. Every time I see a news story about them, I die a little bit on the inside. I guess I'm not that tough after all."

"Jake. Did you ever stop to think that maybe all of this is just in your head? Yes, maybe you did see all of these things, I'm not saying you didn't. That doesn't mean Frost was right. Maybe they won't come back."

"It's too late Nick. We won't stop them."

"The governor has declared martial law. He's using the Army and National Guard. He knows this is serious."

"Won't make any difference. You can't kill them with bullets or bombs. There has to be another way. I have to find the doorway they're using and destroy it before it's too late."

"Maybe you should tell somebody what happened? Somebody higher up on the food chain than me," said Nick.

"I tried. I called the FBI. I called Homeland Security. I even tried calling the governor of New York and the President. No one wants to hear from me. No one would believe me anyway. You don't even believe me."

"I'm not saying I don't believe you, this is just.....well it sounds ridiculous," said Nick

"Our species has come very close to being extinct several times. It was only because a handful of people survived that we are here today, having this conversation. They didn't wipe out all of us. We got lucky. I'm not sure we'll be so lucky this time." he said and got up from the table.

"Don't be a stranger Jake."

"Thanks for listening Nick. It meant a lot to me," he said and left the bar.

Nick just thumbed through the news on his phone. The internet was on fire with stories about what was happening back in America. An entire platoon of National Guardsmen was now missing. The whole country was on the verge of panic. No one had any real answers. It was as if no one wanted to know the truth. Nick made himself another drink. It was closing time and there were just two of his waitresses counting their tips from this evening. He pulled them aside. They both spoke fluent English. One of them had grown up in Florida. He had to tell them what Nick had just told him. He didn't care if he betrayed his trust. This was some super scary shit. Maybe if more people knew, they might find a way to stop them. Nick didn't want to believe Jake.....*but from this moment on, he was going to devote his entire existence on the assumption that Jake's story was true.....and God help us all.*