

The Second Gate

(By Quintaurus Johnson)

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Contact info: The.secondgate45@yahoo.com

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I must first thank my family for their support without them where would I be. This book is dedicated for those who dream of hope; anything is possible with a goal and a deadline.

Chapter 1

It is said that in the last days, there shall be thunder from above and lightning will strike with the intent of killing everyone. The world will be covered with darkness. Evil shall return to take back what is rightfully its own. The second gate known as hell will open up to release Satan himself. Before life itself existed, creatures not of this world inhabited the earth. The outcast Satan had been planning to return from the second gate for millions of years. Pit bulls aggressively guarded the second gate against warriors, fire forever burning and tormenting lost souls each moment. The Second gate has no time. Time stands still forever and forever. Loud screams can be heard from the second gate. Lucifer himself waits, lurking in the heart of hell waiting for the day to return.

"Watch out! Look where you are going Mark!"

"Jennifer I know how to drive, so please just let me drive."

"How much have you been drinking?"

"I just had a couple of drinks, that's it. Stop being so paranoid. I know how to handle my liquor."

"Mark, there's something ahead of us. Slow down! I can't make out what it is. It looks like a dark shadow. Mark I'm begging you to slow down."

"Ok!" Mark began to speed up, disregarding Jennifer's words.

"You jerk! Pull over and let me out now!"

"No!"

A dark figure appeared mysteriously, standing still in the middle of the road. The rain began to pour down and visibility faded very quickly.

"I think I see something."

"How can you see anything? It's raining Jennifer." Jennifer grabbed the wheel.

"What are you doing?"

"Something is in front of us Mark."

"Let go of the wheel!" Mark struggled to pull Jennifer's tightly gripped fingers off of the wheel. Within minutes, the SUV flipped over and over until it finally stopped. Broken bloody pieces of glass covered the highway for miles.

"Jennifer are you ok?"

Mark unbuckled his seatbelt, desperately attempting to get out. "This door handle won't open. Please God, don't let me die."

Mark jiggled the door handle frantically; thoughts of death entered his mind. Mark began to get angry, so angry blood began to drip from his nose. Mark took a deep breath and regained his composure. He noticed that there was a small crack in the window. He began to kick out the window with all his might. He managed to slither out. As he crawled out the window, a large number of abrasions began to cover his body. Mark wasted no time. He ran immediately over to the passenger side

to get his wife out of the vehicle. He opened the passenger door to find his wife still buckled up. He reached over her, grabbing the seatbelt. Her body slowly made its way down.

"Jennifer I smell gasoline. I need to get you out of here. I have to get you out of here Jennifer. Fire is coming our way. Oh my God! Oh, my God!"

The temperature increased rapidly, adding to the tension. Mark had to make a decision very quickly, to save his life, or risk dying with his wife.

"I won't leave you. I promised you baby, until death do us part.

"Leave me Mark. Save yourself before it's too late. Leave me, please!"

"I can't do that. It's my fault this happened. I just can't leave you. When I count to three, I want you to pull yourself out for me. One, two, three . . . give me your hands."

Jennifer reached as far as she could toward Mark's hands.

"Jennifer you've got to pull yourself up for me baby. Dang Jennifer! I can't get you out. You're tangled on the seatbelt."

"Mark hurry up! Get me out of here. The fire is getting closer!"

Mark reached in his pocket and grabbed a knife, cutting the seatbelt. "I got you out baby, just hold on for me. Jennifer stay with me, please stay with me."

Jennifer spoke softly. "Where am I?"

"You are safe with me, baby."

"I can hardly breathe. I need some air."

Mark ran out in the middle of the road desperately trying to flag down someone to help them. Some blew their horns and others just ignored him.

One man finally noticed him. "What can I do for you?"

"Call 911! My wife needs medical treatment immediately!" Mark ran across the traffic to get back to his wife. "Jennifer, help is on the way. Don't you die on me. Just hold on for a few more minutes. God please don't take all I have in this world!"

Jennifer began to cough up blood. Her back was badly burned. She was suffering from third degree burns.

"Hold on just a little bit longer! God, I need you right about now!"

The ambulance arrived on the scene. "Sir, can you please step back so we can do our job?" What is your name sir?

It's Mark! What hospital are you taking her to?"

"She will be at Memorial Hospital off of Sand Lake Road."

Mark dropped down to his knees, confused and in shock. He felt at fault. "Why have I done this? Why? Why?"

"Let's load her on the ambulance," the paramedic said.

The paramedics began to cut her shirt open with a pair of scissors. "We need to get an IV going. I also see that she's suffering from third degree burns."

"We are losing her. She's flat lining. Shock her. Do it, don't just look at her."

The paramedic placed the paddles and administered the shock. Then he stopped for a moment to check her pulse. "There's still no pulse. The defibrillator is not working. Start chest compressions immediately."

The paramedic placed his hand over her sternum, his other hand overlapping it. He began to tilt her head back, pinching her nose and breathing in two breaths.

"Start chest compression."

He gave her about thirty chest compressions and gave up. "It's been about four minutes. We need to call it. The time of death is 10:30 p.m."

"If she'd revived she would most likely be brain dead. The brain can't survive after about four minutes. We did all we could." The paramedics placed sheets over her body.

Jennifer withdrew from her body and found herself floating upward. She noticed there was a light. She looked directly into the light. It blinded her, knocking her down to her knees.

She began to hear a voice calling her name. "Jennifer, follow me. It's time to come home."

"Dad is that you?"

"Yes, it's me Jennifer. I've been waiting for you. Please don't be scared. You are finally at peace. Come my child, follow me. This place is better than earth, no more worries or pain. Everyone's nice in heaven. There is no place like heaven."

"Where are you? I can't see you. The light is so bright."

"I'm here Jennifer. You are torn between two worlds. Fight it, Jennifer, fight it."

"What do you mean? I'm so confused."

Jennifer's body withdrew from the light and her soul landed in the dark within minutes.

"Where am I?"

A voice responded. "That's a great question."

Jennifer could not see her hands in front of her. It was pitch black. Frightening voices could be heard coming from every possible direction.

"I've got a riddle for you. What is the opposite of light, and what is the opposite of heaven?"

"Darkness and the opposite of heaven is hell."

I'm in hell!"

"I am afraid you are right, and the survey says yes, you just earned an eternal life to burn in hell, or should I say the second gate? That sounds better."

"What have I done to deserve this? I went to church every Sunday. I gave an offering every chance I could. Why has God turned his back on me?"

"You don't need God. Speaking of God, we don't use his name down here. That's a no-no."

"Show yourself to me now."

"How dare you challenge me? I am the almighty ruler of mankind."

"This has got to be a dream. Ok, ok, just let me wake up. When I count to three all of this is going to be over."

"Shall I count with you? One, two, and three . . . look at you, you pathetic human being. Open your eyes, mortal. Look closer."

She opened her eyes to discover piles of bodies stacked on top of each other. Several volcanoes existed in the heart of hell, and their lava was flowing freely. Several hands reached out, desperately trying to lift their bodies out of the lava. Pit bulls roamed covering territories for miles and miles, their main course was unclean spirits. Each unclean spirit had to enter this phase to eventually be accepted by Satan himself. The thought of being eaten and reincarnated was terrifying to Jennifer.

"God where are you? Take me away from this place. I promise you I will do right. Just let me out." Jennifer began to cry. She knelt down to her knees and began to pray.

"Don't think about calling on your useless God. He cannot help. You know that."

Satan appeared. His skin was scaly and his eyes glowed in the dark. Maggots crawled over his body.

"Do you want some maggots? They are rather tasty, yummy."

A dark cloud covered her. "Let me introduce myself. Some call me evil, some call me Lucifer, and some call me Satan. Whatever you want to call me, I am that."

Jennifer's body trembled. "What do you want from me?" Jennifer attempted to run away into the darkness.

"There is nowhere to hide. Who do you think built this place? I am the eyes and ears of darkness. I know your weaknesses and your flaws."

Jennifer felt a force dragging her body closer to Satan. She desperately gripped the side of a nearby wall and held on for her life. She felt her fingers slowly breaking away from the sides of the wall.

"Look all around you, Jennifer. What do you see? Death and lost souls feeling their misery. This is what your God did to them. Go ahead, call on God but he won't listen. But I will listen to all of your wishes."

"What do you want from me?"

"Before I discuss what I want, look! Take a closer look."

Jennifer saw her body in the ambulance. Her lifeless body was covered up by a white sheet. She looked the paramedics in the eyes, angry and confused. She attempted to strike the paramedics with her hands.

"Hey, can you hear me? Hey you! You did a lousy job trying to save my life."

"Hey Jim, did you hear something?"

"No, I didn't hear anything."

"Maybe I'm just hearing things. It's just been a long day. Oh, boy."

"I know you heard me," Jennifer said.

The ambulance arrived at the hospital. "We have a death on arrival with the time of death at 10:30 p.m."

They quickly rolled her stiff body down to the morgue. Jennifer followed her body as they took her to the morgue.

The police arrived. "We have to figure out whether she has any family members that can identify her body."

The paramedic spoke up. "Yes, she did have a husband, I recall. He should be on his way to the hospital. His name is Mark."

"Ok, thanks a lot."

Minutes later Mark arrived at the hospital, clearly distraught. "Where is my wife?"

"Calm down, sir."

"What is her name?"

"Jennifer Taylor."

"Wait in the waiting room. I will page a doctor so he can speak with you."

Mark sat down, still upset, but waiting as calmly as he could for the doctor. Moments later the doctor approached him.

"I am so sorry to have to break this news to you. Your wife did not make it. She was dead on arrival. I know it's a hard thing to cope with, but you have to be strong. Her back was severely burned. The paramedics could not resuscitate her within four minutes. She was brain dead shortly after we lost her pulse."

Mark tried to remain calm. A police officer joined them. "Mr. Taylor, I am sorry for your loss. I do need to ask you some questions. My name is Officer Johnson. I know it's hard to recall what happened. Just stay calm and tell me exactly what happened."

"It was raining. My wife thought she saw something on the road. She grabbed the wheel and we flipped over, landing

in the woods. I spotted someone on the highway and told him to call 911."

"Ok, thank you. I'm sorry but you have one more thing to do Mr. Taylor. You must identify your wife's body."

Mark began to cry, "I don't know if I can do this it's my fault."

"I know it's a hard thing to do, but you have to do this, be strong Sir. Follow me to the elevator. She's located on the third floor."

Mark followed the doctor and the officer to a room. A body was lying on a cot. The doctor pulled off the sheet covering the body. "Is this your wife?"

Mark body began to tremble, and his voice became faint. "Yes, this is my wife," Mark said. "May I have a few more minutes with her?"

"Sure, take your time. Just let us know when you are finished. I will be down the hall in room 1B."

"Jennifer, look at your husband," Satan said. "Wouldn't you do anything just to see his face again? How sad. What a shame. He feels so guilty that he was drinking too much. It's your fault too, Jennifer for grabbing that wheel."

"But I saw something in the middle of the road."

"Oh I see, what you saw was me."

"You are evil, pure evil. Why did you do that to me and my husband?"

"You are the chosen one. But let's cut to the chase. Sign the contract and I will give you your life back. I know you want to see your pathetic husband's face once more."

"What's in the contract?"

"I will let you know when the time is right. Don't worry about it now. Just answer the question, do you want to live again? Yes or no?"

"Yes."

"Then sign the contract. Don't ask any questions. Sign with blood, not ink please." Jennifer smeared her blood on a paper that Satan held in front of her.

"Jennifer, why did you have to die baby? I'm sorry, forgive me."

Jennifer's body sat up. She took a deep breath then screamed out, "Mark! Mark!"

Chapter 2

Out of the corner of his eye, Mark noticed a head and arm moving under the sheet. He hesitated to approach the cot.

"Jennifer is that you?"

"Yes, it's me Mark."

"I must be dreaming. Is this for real?"

"Yes it's real." Jennifer's body still had a tag on the toe to identify her body.

Mark rushed out in the hall-way and found the nearest doctors. "We need help now!"

"Where is the person who needs help?"

"She's in the room next to the morgue."

"The morgue! Are you sure she isn't dead?"

"Yes, I am sure. Just follow me, please. Hurry up doctor."

The doctor examined Jennifer. "Wow, you are lucky to be alive. This is a miracle. There is no other explanation for it. All vital signs appear to be normal. Somebody must of have been watching over you. Well, Mrs. Taylor you must spend a couple of days in the hospital. We need to keep you under observation. Just be patient. Before you know it, you will be heading home. Mr. Taylor, follow the nurse. She will take care of you."

"I just need some information from you regarding your wife. Do you have insurance?"

"Yes, we do."

"You need to go to the first floor to the admitting office and give them your information. Your wife will be in room 404."

"Ok, thanks nurse. Where is room 404?"

"Take the elevator to the fourth floor. As soon as you get off the elevator, look to your right. You'll see it."

"Thank you so much, nurse."

"You're welcome."

After taking care of the paperwork in the admitting office, Mark hurried up to Jennifer's room. He found it where the nurse had told him it would be and pulled up a chair to her bedside. "Jennifer, are you awake? Jennifer can you hear me?"

Jennifer softly spoke. "Yes, Mark."

Jennifer's eyes were badly swollen. Her lips were blistered and the doctor had stitched a wound above her left eyebrow.

"Jennifer I am truly sorry. I feel so guilty. I cannot live with what I've done. I should have listened to you."

"Don't worry about it. We survived to live another day. Let's learn from this mistake and move on Mark."

Jennifer's mother entered the room. "I got here as soon as I heard," she said, coming to the other side of Jennifer's bed. "Mark told me what happened. I thought you died on me. Thank God you are ok."

"I am ok Mom."

"Jennifer, I don't want to lose you like I lost your father. You are the only one I have left in this world. Mark you almost killed my daughter! I told her. I warned her not to marry you. This is how you treat my daughter, nearly killing her.

Jennifer I guarantee you he has a life insurance policy out on you. He doesn't care about you. Jennifer, is he still drinking? Be honest with me."

"Mom please, just stop it. This is not the right time to discuss this."

"Jennifer, I just don't want to see you get hurt. You deserve better!"

"Mom everything is ok. If anything was wrong I would let you know."

"Ok, Jenny I believe you. I need to go outside and rest my nerves. I can feel my blood pressure going up. I feel lightheaded and woozy." Jennifer's mother left the room and Mark turned back to Jennifer.

"Your mother is so senile."

"No she isn't. She's just been going through some hard times since Dad died, she's all alone. All she has is me."

"Your mother needs to at least give me a chance for goodness sake. I'm trying Jennifer."

The nurse walks in, "visitation hours are over. You can leave or stay. It's up to you."

"Jennifer I want to be by your side."

"No, Mark. Just go home and get some rest."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah."

"I'll be back in the morning. Good night Jennifer." He kissed Jennifer on the forehead.

"Good night," she responded. The nurse watched as Mark left the room.

"You have a nice family. By the way, my name is Crystal. If you need anything, just hit the button."

"Ok, thanks."

Jennifer tossed and turned but eventually fell asleep. The atmosphere was cold and dead silent. The sound of the heart monitor and IV could be heard. Jennifer felt a presence gripping her sheet and yanking it off. She could see nothing. She did not know what was happening. She reached for the sheet once more, but she felt nothing but her bare skin. Goose bumps were all over her body.

Jennifer was awakened by a mumbling noise.

"Mark is that you? I thought I told you to go home. I'm fine."

"Open your eyes. Look at me Jennifer."

"Mark, go home and stop playing with me."

Jennifer opened her eyes to discover a dark figure standing over her bed. She attempted to push the button to get the nurse, but her hand could not move. She attempted to move, but her body remained motionless and her mouth was zipped tight.

"How does it feel not being able to scream for help? God cannot help you. You feel helpless don't you? I am the creator of evil. Let me reintroduce myself once again. You have a contract to fulfill or else you will spend the rest of your life burning in hell."

The IV cords began wrapping around her neck gripping it tighter and tighter. She held on to her neck but the tighter she held on the tighter the cord squeezed her neck. Blood dripped down the walls spelling out the numbers 666.

The nurse walked in. "Can I help you? I thought I heard you."

Satan raised his hands making the nurse freeze in mid-step. "Now back to you. Look at you, gasping for air. Torture is a beautiful thing. If you believe in God so much why don't you call on him? Let me call him for you. God, God there

you go.” Satan laughed. “Listen, what do you hear? Nothing but stillness. Can you feel death coming? Call my name and surrender to me.”

"I will never surrender to you."

"Shut up! Let me make the cords a little bit tighter around your neck. One more time, call my name and surrender you worthless mortal. You can make this hard or easy for me. I have been watching your every move. Keep that in mind. I am your eyes, ears, dreams, body, and mind. I lurk in the dark corners of the world. I am destined to rule over man.”

"This is a dream, this is a dream,” Jennifer mumbled.

"Why must you be afraid of what is real? Reality frightens you so much, no need to fear me.”

Lights flickered off and on and the bed began to turn into a pool of blood. Jennifer desperately attempted to swim out of the blood, gripping the side of the bed, but thousands of hands pulled her under.

"Having fun Jennifer? I am. All I ask from you is to surrender."

Satan pointed toward the sheet on the floor. The sheet began to levitate, landing on top of Jennifer's head.

"Just stop it, please stop it!"

"No, I'm just getting warmed up."

Jennifer began to see her best friend from childhood. "Hey, Jennifer, why didn't you save me? You didn't call for help! You let me die in the lake. I needed help. I want you to feel what I felt! I was only thirteen years old! I had my whole life ahead of me. You let it slip away from me! Look closer to your left. You failed to throw the life jacket to me."

"I was scared! I did not know what to do! I panicked! No one was around. I couldn't call for help."

Jennifer began to cough up water. She felt the sensation of drowning, and water began to flow in her lungs. Her air circulation cut off instantly.

"I'm sorry, I wish I could turn back the hands of time. I wish I could have done more."

"You sent me to hell Jennifer. I'm stuck with millions of souls. Do you know how that feels, huh?"

Her hands were tightly secured to the hospital bed. Jennifer began to see herself on the cross, nails driven through her hands.

"Satan, why are you taking me through all of this?"

"Do not question my authority! I am ruler of darkness!"

Several voices whispered in her ears at one time. She began to cover her ears with her hands. "Make it stop! Make it stop!"

Blood dripped down her ears slowly, and she could no longer hear anything. She attempted to scream but she could hear nothing, just silence. Her ears began ringing louder and louder. She shook her head left then right continuously with an attempt to make the ringing noise stop.

The heart monitor suddenly showed a flat line. "Jennifer you are dead once again. Now bow down and surrender to me."

"I'm not dead!"

"You are! Let me prove it to you."

Satan snapped his fingers and the nurse started moving toward her once again. She noticed the monitor and quickly brought in the doctor. The doctor shocked her once, then twice.

"Well let's call the time of death, 12:30 a.m." He said sadly.

Satan spoke again. "I want you to get down on your knees and surrender to me. Beg for your life back. This is going to happen if you don't surrender. Look closer."

Jennifer saw her body in a casket in a church. Family members were crying over her body in the casket. The preacher began to say, "Jennifer was a good person. We must not cry but celebrate her life. Life does not stop when death ends. It goes on. She's in a better place."

Jennifer noticed her mother dressed in an all black dress with a black veil. Tears slowly ran down her face. The day of her funeral, it rained and rained. Everyone had umbrellas. The pallbearers moved slowly as though they were never going to put her body down. A sad song played over and over, playing out endlessly.

"Jennifer you have no choice but to surrender. You have no choice."

"I do want to live, I don't want to die."

"Don't you miss that taste of water rolling off of your tongue? Your sexual desires or should I say the finer things in life you cherish? You can still have them. I have the power to give them to you. Just surrender to me. I am getting impatient with you. I will sentence you to burn in hell forever. Surrender you mortal." Fire burned in the devil's eyes. Smoke exited through his nose and his presence grew larger the angrier he became.

Jennifer felt a force dragging her body closer to Satan once more.

"Get on your knees, bow down to me."

"Give me my life back again," Jennifer said.

"Ok, one order of life coming right up."

As quickly as Satan had appeared, he vanished. Jennifer looked around to discover no one was in the room but her.

Chapter 3

Two weeks passed by. "Hey Mark, wake up. It's time to go to work."

"I'm off today sweetheart, it's Friday. You woke me up. I was having a great dream. I was just about to win the lottery."

"Oh, ok, I'm sorry. I lost track of the days. Time flies by when you're having fun I guess."

"I'm going back to sleep. Don't you have to work today or something?"

"Yes I do, you don't have to be so grouchy."

Jennifer headed to the bathroom to brush her teeth and wash her face. She began to apply makeup to her face and sprayed vanilla body splash perfume on her body. The aroma lingered for hours. It was strong enough that anyone could smell it across the room. She wore a traditional skirt and a blouse to go to work.

"Honey I'm leaving. See you in a few hours."

Mark pulled the covers over his face. "Ok just go. See you later."

When Jennifer walked she strutted, turning heads from every direction. She was beautiful. She wore her hair down and when she walked, her hair bounced. She was every man's dream,

his fantasy. Her lip-gloss shone, attracting unwanted attention. Her blouse showed a little cleavage. She knew the right moves, twists, and turns to turn a man on without even picking up a finger. She was very educated but her degree was in communication and political science. Due to the economy, there were no jobs available in her field. She had to settle for work as a secretary.

"It's nice of you to join us, Jennifer," said Jenny's co-worker, Danny. "Here is your paper work for today. Don't worry about anything, Jenny. I covered for you. What took you so long to get here?"

"That traffic! It's a mess out there. I ran across an accident. Traffic was backed up for miles and miles."

"By the way honey, nice pumps, girl. You are working those pumps." Danny snapped his finger in a "z" shape twice. "You go girl! I am so jealous of you honey. You are so gorgeous! Maybe I can get some make up tips from you."

"Well, thank you so much. How nice of you, Danny."

"No problem honey, you just stay beautiful."

"You don't have to worry about that. I am beautiful and always have been beautiful. It runs in the family."

As Jennifer began to walk away, she accidentally bumped into Jake. All of the papers in her hands flew to the ground. "I'm sorry, let me help you pick up the papers. I am truly sorry. I haven't seen you around here. This building is huge. By the way, what's your name?"

"Jennifer."

The janitor walked by them. "I hope you don't expect me to pick up behind you. I really don't get paid that much. These papers are going to sit here. It's almost time for me to get off. The next person will pick them up."

"Don't worry about it, I got it. Ok? What's up with all the attitudes around here guys?" Jennifer bent over, picking up the papers while Jake looked down her blouse.

"You missed a paper over there."

"Ok, thanks."

Two females on the other side began to have a conversation. "She knows what she's doing. I wouldn't be surprised if she was having an affair with the boss."

"She's a whore I can tell by the way she dresses."

"No she's not a whore. More like a prostitute. Her style is so old-fashioned."

Jennifer walked toward her desk and began to work. The phone rang and she answered it. "Hello, how may I help you? Can you hold for a second? I will transfer you over to Mr. Thomas."

"Hey Jennifer it's nice to see you back after the accident and all, I was worried about you," Jennifer turned when she heard her friend Jasmine's voice. Jasmine was standing by her desk.

"Thank you for being so concerned Jasmine."

"You are like my best friend, come on now. I got your back regardless of anything. Nothing can come between the two of us. Anyway, Jennifer, what were you doing bending over picking up papers like that?"

"What do you mean? That man bumped into me and made me drop the papers. I had to pick them up."

"Uh-huh, yeah right! Jake was so down your blouse he could taste your milk."

"I did not notice that he was looking down my blouse. Every dude at this job always approaches me the wrong way. They don't know I do have brains, not just beauty, gees'."

"Well I did come over here for a reason. The boss wants to see you ASAP."

"I hope I'm not getting fired or anything. Do you know why he wants to see me?"

"I don't know for sure Jennifer."

Jennifer knocked on Mr. Thomas' door. "Come in, it's open. Sit down and let's talk for a few minutes."

"Sure."

"Do you want any water or coffee?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Thomas."

"You can relax. You are not getting fired or anything."

"Thank God! I thought you were going to terminate me."

"I just wanted to welcome you back. Is everything going alright with you and your husband?"

"Yes, it couldn't get any better."

"I wanted to offer you a promotion from secretary to assistant marketing coordinator but there's a catch. I want you to do something for me."

"What is that Mr. Thomas?"

Jennifer began hallucinating. She saw blood dripping slowly down her boss' head and the numeral one was tattooed on his forehead. She noticed that his eyes were cut out. Jennifer began to sweat more and more. She attempted to hold herself together. Cold sweat came pouring down her face. She attempted to wipe it off. The more she wiped, the more the sweat came down and it began to turn into blood. Her boss' voice began to slow down. A deep dark demonic voice could be heard.

"Did you hear everything I said Jennifer? Jennifer are you ok?"

Jennifer suddenly snapped out of it. "Jennifer you don't look so good. Did I frighten you?"

"No, you did not frighten me Mr. Thomas."

"So uh do you understand our agreement regarding your promotion?"

"What was the agreement? I'm sorry I got sidetracked."

"The agreement is that I take you out to dinner and we spend some time together."

"I don't think I can do that. I don't think my husband would appreciate that."

"Your husband doesn't have to know about it. It's just between me and you."

"I am afraid the answer is no! I don't want your promotion."

"I hope this won't affect our working relationship. If you ever change your mind here's my number. Call me. I will be waiting for you."

Jennifer marched out of the office angrily. She ripped up the card and threw it on the floor.

Jasmine saw Jennifer and approached her. "Jennifer what's the matter?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"I'm your best friend! We talk about anything and everything!"

"Ok I will tell you. Just meet me downstairs in a couple of minutes. We can talk on our lunch break."

Several minutes later the two friends were leaving the building together. "So uh tell me," Jasmine said.

"First of all before I say anything, where do you want to eat?"

They walked next door to get something to eat. "I want a hamburger from Burger World," Jasmine said.

Jennifer replied, "I don't want a hamburger. I'm trying to eat healthy."

"Jennifer, relax for goodness sake. You need to put on a few pounds. It looks like you're starving yourself."

"Ok, a burger it is."

They reached the order counter where an employee waited behind a cash register. "Can I get a burger with onions, a large milkshake, and large fries?"

"Jennifer, it's your turn to order."

"Uh, I'll just get a salad."

"I knew you were going to get a salad. But anyway, tell me what happened with Mr. Thomas. Give me the 411."

"Oh ok, here it is. The boss tried to hit on me. He told me if I want a promotion I have to go out to dinner with him."

"What's wrong with that? It's just a friendly dinner."

"The catch is he wants to spend a lot of time with me. I have a husband. That would be wrong on my part."

"That snake! No, he just did not, Jennifer, but the thing is he has a wife at home too!"

"I know, what a jerk! I don't know what to do Jasmine!"

"I've got a great idea. How about I punch him in the face for you?"

"No, don't do that Jasmine, you'd get arrested."

"Just give me the word I will go upside his head bang, bang. I cannot stand a man like that abusing his power to gain something. To make it even worse, his wife has cancer! He should be standing by his wife."

"That bastard!"

"How about this Jennifer, let's go out tonight."

"Go where?"

"To a club and party, party all night long."

"I can't do that. Uh did you forget I have a husband?"

"Girl you are twenty-three. Live your life. Get out of the house and give your husband a break."

"Yeah, you're right. Both of us need a break. It wouldn't hurt to go to a club. But I have to discuss this with my husband. I will let you know tonight Jasmine. Well it's time to head back to work."

Night time approached and Jennifer was home with her husband. "Mark I was just thinking maybe I should go out."

"Go where? Without me?"

"I want to go out with my friend Jasmine to a club."

"You should be home with me!" Mark noticed the disappointment on Jennifer's face. He still felt guilty about the accident. "Well, I guess its ok. Nothing is wrong with going to a club."

Jennifer called Jasmine. "Jasmine I decided to go out with you to the club."

"I thought your husband was never going to let you out of the house."

"Ha, ha, ha, that was so funny I forgot to laugh. I am a grown woman. I make my own decisions."

"Whatever. If that is the case, why did you have to ask him about going out? He has you on lock down. You are not going anywhere. But anyway, I will be there in thirty minutes to pick you up."

"Alright see you when you get here."

Jennifer got in the shower. She heard something. "Is that you Mark? Be out in a few minutes."

A voice spoke slowly "Jennifer, Jennifer."

"Mark, stop rushing me. I said I will be out in a second!"

The shower curtain began to wrap around her suffocating her. She wrestled with the curtain, eventually breaking loose. She began to kneel down in the shower. Water splashed her face and shampoo dripped in her eyes.

Jennifer had her eyes closed. She was rinsing the shampoo out of her eyes when she suddenly heard the door open.

"Mark is that you?"

"Yes.

"Can you hand me a towel? I can't see anything. Shampoo is in my eyes."

"Here's the towel."

"Thank you so much Mark."

Jennifer wiped her eyes then grabbed her robe.
"Mark have you seen my earrings?"

"No, I haven't seen them."

"Well, thanks again Mark for giving me the towel. My eyes were really burning."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"Stop being so silly Mark."

"I am so serious. I did not give you a towel."

"If you didn't give me the towel, who did?"

"I don't know. By the way, your friend Jasmine called. She said that she had to stop and get some gas. She's about three minutes away."

Jennifer rushed to put on clothes. "What should I wear? Black or red? Black doesn't look right on me. Mark what do you think I should wear, the black dress or the red one?"

"Wear the black dress. It looks great on you."

"Ok, I guess I will wear the red dress."

"Jennifer, why did you ask for my opinion and then turn around and do the opposite? I don't get you females nowadays."

Jennifer's cell phone started ringing. "Hi Jasmine, I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm walking outside now, ok?"

"Are you ready to get down on the dance floor tonight?"

"Yeah, I guess."

"Stop being so uptight! Loosen up and have fun tonight. Tonight is your night. Let's party."

Fifteen minutes later, they arrived at the club. "Jennifer the flyer said it's free to get in before nine for all females. But look at this long line!"

"How about we just turn around Jasmine? We are never going to get in this club."

"Chill out Jennifer, let me work my magic with these doormen."

Jasmine and Jennifer approached the doorman. "How about you let me and my friend skip? Here's my number. Call me sometime." The doorman pulled the rope back and let them in.

"How did you do that Jasmine?"

"Don't worry about that Jenny, I got skills."

"Ok what did you tell him?"

"I gave him my number. It was a fake number. What a loser. He was fat and disgusting-looking! Yuck! I would never date him in a million years."

Jennifer and Jasmine headed to the bar. "So how are you ladies? Would you like a drink?"

"Yes," Jasmine said.

"Ladies don't worry about it I will buy you a drink, it's on the house", the stranger said. Jasmine and Jennifer waited

for their drinks. Jasmine noticed a good-looking guy sitting beside them.

"Who is this handsome looking guy next to us?"

"Jasmine you said you were looking for a good man. Here is your chance."

"So what is your name?"

"Jasmine."

He looked at Jennifer. "And your name lovely lady?"

"Uh— married."

"I can't hear you, the music is too loud."

"I am married. Can't you see the ring on my finger? But thanks for the drinks."

"Jennifer, I will be back. I've got to go to the ladies room to freshen up." Jasmine said to Jennifer.

"Ok, I will be here."

"What time you got, sir?"

"It's one minute till 10:30."

When the clock struck 10:30, the club changed. Jennifer stepped into a different dimension. She found herself in a gas station.

"Everybody get on the freaking ground. Don't move. You make one sudden move and I will blow your head off."

"What you got in your pocket?" The robber asked Jennifer.

"It's my cell phone," Jennifer said.

"Don't even think about calling the police. Hurry up with the money lady, I don't have all day!"

"How much time do we have Tommy"

"One minute to be exact", Johnny shouted

"Lady, I told you to hurry up."

The robbers shot the clerk two times in the head and then shot all of the customers, killing them. The police arrived on the scene thirty minutes later.

"Well no one survived. What a shame." The officer placed gloves on both of his hands reaching into each of the victims' pockets with an attempt to identify each one.

"We got one. Her name is Jennifer Taylor. She was also shot in the head."

A black cat lay upon Jennifer's body breathing into her mouth. Jennifer's body withdrew from that dimension back to the present time at the club.

"Jennifer, Jennifer are you ok?"

"Where am I?"

"Girl what's wrong with you? We are in the club."

"Jennifer, why do you have a cat in your arms?" A black cat jumped out of her arms and disappeared in the crowd.

Chapter 4

"Jasmine I don't feel good, I think we should go."

But Jasmine was having a good time. "Let's stay for a few more minutes. Girl this is my song."

"Let's go! I'm serious Jasmine, I literally don't feel good."

"Ok Jennifer, just take it easy. Don't jump down my throat. Where did we park?"

"We parked behind the red truck."

"Oh ok, I see it. Jennifer, please don't vomit in my car. Let me know if you get that salty taste in your mouth. Please give me a sign. I will pull over ASAP."

Jennifer pulled her seat back to an incline position, resting her eyes. "Jasmine can you please turn down the music a little bit? My head is hurting me."

"Ok I will, Jenny. But uh you've been acting kind of weird lately. Is everything ok with you?"

"Yes, everything is ok, Jasmine."

"Jennifer I'm tired. I don't think I can make it to your house. Do you mind if you crash at my place? I'm getting sleepy."

"I don't mind. I'm tired myself. It's been a long night and my feet are killing me."

"Jennifer something is wrong with you. I can sense it. Ever since the accident you've changed. Are you sure the accident didn't knock a couple of screws loose in your head?"

"I'm not crazy Jasmine, if that's what you are trying to say."

"If you aren't crazy what is it then?"

"Jasmine it might sound crazy when I tell you this. I sensed that the club used to be an old gas station where some people died."

"You are not crazy! It actually used to be a gas station before they turned it into a club. A couple of my friends robbed the old gas station about eight years ago. I still remember that night when he called me." Jasmine began to reminisce. She told Jennifer the story.

"I got something to tell you, pick up the phone. Come on Jasmine."

"Hello who is this?"

"It's me, Johnny."

"Why are you calling me so late? It's 2:00 in the morning."

"I might be going away for a while. I did something really bad. I don't think I can forgive myself."

"What did you do? Tell me, please."

"I don't want to talk about it. I got to go."

"Don't go baby, you can't leave me now. I need you more than ever."

"Jasmine you don't need me. Don't you get it? I am a killer. I took some innocent people's lives tonight. I never meant for this to happen but it happened."

"Please come over one last time. I want to see you."

"Ok. I'll be there in five minutes."

Johnny arrived within minutes. "Jasmine, it's me. Let me in."

Jasmine looked through the peak hole and proceeded to open the door. "Johnny, but why did you rob a gas station? If you really needed some money you could have come to me."

"I know that Jasmine. It is what it is. I can't change what I've done."

Jasmine noticed that Johnny had on black gloves, black pants, and a silver watch. A nine-millimeter gun was tucked in his pants. "Look at you Johnny, you are hurt."

"I'm not hurt, ok. Don't touch me. It's blood that splattered on me from the victims I killed. Let me take a quick shower and change my clothes. I can't stay that long."

"Jasmine, so uh— what happened after he left your house?" Jennifer asked.

"Well last thing I heard he was surrounded by policemen a few days later. They tried him and convicted him of first degree murder and sentenced him to the death penalty. But the thing about it was he was never executed. One of the inmates heard about it. It turns out that the inmate's mother was the clerk Johnny killed. They found Johnny's body dangling from the ceiling in the laundry room. Life is short. That's why I live my life to the fullest. But I'm over it. It's been eight years. Jennifer we are almost at my house. I have to warn you it's a little messy. I had a party last night."

Jasmine and Jennifer arrived at Jasmine's house. Jasmine took out her keys and let them in. "Ok, we are finally here at my palace."

Jennifer looked around disgusted. Pizza boxes and beer bottles were everywhere, and roaches occupied the food she had left out.

"Do you ever clean up around here?"

"Yes I do, Jennifer."

A dog jumped up on Jennifer.

"Oh yeah, this is Sparky. This is my baby. He's kind of hyper. Sit down boy, sit down boy."

"It's a cute dog. It reminds me of you a little bit."

"Ha, ha, ha, how funny Jennifer. Why don't you have a seat?"

Jennifer was wondering where she could sit. Stuff was everywhere.

"Jasmine, I just sat on something wet. Please don't tell me it's what I think it is!"

"Jennifer, will you relax? Get up for a second. Look jenny, it's a wet sock."

"Oh, ok. I thought it was something else. I'm not even going to say what. I do have to ask you a question though. Do you have sex on this couch?"

"No— well maybe— yes just playing with you. I have a bedroom for that."

"Ok. Where do you want me to sleep?"

"On the couch."

"Oh no, I'm not sleeping on this couch."

"Jennifer it's a pull-out couch with a bed."

"Oh, ok. I was getting nervous for a second there. Jasmine, what's that smell?"

"I forgot to take out my trash today. Give me a sec, I will be right back. I got to go take this stinking trash out."

"Spray some Lysol in here please."

"Jennifer I'm sorry. I can't afford a nice house like you, but uh— I'm making it."

"Jasmine I did not mean to offend you in any way. Chill out."

"Here are some pillows and a blanket. Have a good night Jennifer."

"You have a good night too." Jennifer tossed and turned over and over, unable to sleep. She gazed at the ceiling thinking about Mark. She reached in her pocket to see if Mark had called but there were no missed calls. She finally went to sleep. She dozed off, peacefully looking at the ceiling. Twenty minutes into her deep sleep, she found herself unable to move her body. She

screamed for help, but no sound came out of her mouth. She began to feel the presence of someone standing over her. Jennifer began to speak through her mind. *Jasmine, are you there? Come wake me up.* Jennifer was halfway between sleep and being awake. She continued to speak through her mind. *Who are you? Leave me alone.*

A voice spoke softly. "I am always around. I see everything through your eyes." Jennifer attempted to wiggle her body but her body remained motionless, helpless. She could feel a cool breeze moving through her hair. She could hear a deep voice but she couldn't make out what the unfamiliar voice said. Jennifer made one more attempt to move. She took a deep breath, inhaling then exhaling. In a matter of seconds she found herself on the floor. "Ouch, that hurt."

Jennifer got up slowly and headed toward the refrigerator to get something to drink. Jennifer noticed a rat brushing across her feet. She jumped up, panicking and breathing rather heavily. "Ok, ok I can do this. Let me calm down." Jennifer was determined to overcome her fear.

"The refrigerator is a few steps away. I can do it." Jennifer reached into the refrigerator, grabbing a bottle of water. Jennifer paused for a second. She felt something breathing on the back of her neck. Chills ran through her body. Jennifer looked behind her but there was nothing there. But she saw a picture of Jasmine smiling with beer in her hands. Jennifer ran back quickly to the couch, pulling the covers over her head.

Ten hours had passed by and Jennifer was still asleep. Jennifer began talking in her sleep. "*Leave me alone. Leave me alone. You can't get me.*"

Jasmine attempted to shake Jennifer to wake her up. "Jennifer it's me. Wake up."

"I said leave me alone, you can't take me."

"Jennifer, wake up."

"Huh, Jasmine, is that you?"

"Yes, it's me. Wake up sleepy head."

"What time is it?"

"I think its past 10:00."

Jennifer looked at her cell phone and noticed Mark had called eight times. "Mark is going to kill me! Jasmine will you please take me home right now?"

"Ok give me a second to put on some clothes."

"Jasmine, why didn't you wake me up?"

"I didn't want to disturb you. You seemed like you was in a deep sleep by the way you were snoring. I get that way sometimes too."