

Message from Boo

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*“It’s not what you look at
that matters, it’s what you
see.”*

Henry David Thoreau

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In loving memory of my mother and father, who taught me to stay humble, love God, cherish family, and to never forget that my freedom to live that kind of life exists because of those who sacrificed everything before me.

PROLOGUE

Do paranormal forces really exist? Detective John Williams with the Atlanta Homicide Department had always been a non-believer. His logical explanations had never given credibility to anything unnatural until he was forced to face the terrifying truth. He had been tasked with solving a series of murders that took him on a frightening journey which left him with too many questions and too few answers. The strange twists and turns in his investigations were made even more complicated by his responsibilities as a single parent to his preschool daughter, Boo. And when a passionate love interest and a know-it-all partner straight out of the New York City Police Department were added to the mix, it made matters even more complicated and unnerving.

John Williams ultimately unraveled the truth, and it was far more malevolent than he or anyone else could have imagined.

PART ONE

When you grow up in Central Mississippi, you are born and bred to revere the Almighty, to be rooted deeply in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Weekends in the buckle of the Bible Belt included church every Sunday and prayer that all your needs would be met by a higher power. But after moving to Atlanta and taking the bartending job at the strip club, his faith had been as tenuous as a southern politician's promise to cut your taxes. He had always tended to wander, to get caught by the trap of sin, but he had always returned to the fold when he needed help. He did just that when he realized that no amount of chemo nor brilliant doctors could stop the cancer's deadly march to his lungs and brain.

At that point, his hands reached upward for a miracle. He felt as though he had no other options. But he forgot one thing. His timeline was marked in days while God's calendar was timeless. Nonetheless, he was hopeful, thinking maybe he had built up a little cache when he was a boy, when he handled those snakes at a backwoods church back home. Maybe he had proven that he was worthy of mercy and would receive prompt supernatural intervention. But when faith, hope, and prayer refused to heal his sick body, the man who had been baptized in the Holy Spirit did the unthinkable.

He knew it was a grave mistake when he struck the bargain with the one who hid in the shadows, a life-or-death miscalculation that he couldn't take back. But when you have the Big C and your time is limited with the woman of your dreams, the one you love and want to marry, you are beyond desperate; you are emotionally out of control. Good judgment is reserved for people who aren't looking over their shoulder for the Grim Reaper. As he discovered, however,

the price for being cancer free was more than he was willing to pay. He would rather forfeit his life than be joined to an evil power that would ask him to forever deny his faith and live in a house of deceit, hate and wickedness. So, he refused to do its blasphemous acts and deeds of immorality. But for that, he would pay the ultimate price.

“Roll him over and mark his buttock before we continue with the ceremony,” the deep voice commanded.

He would fight back if he could, but he had been given a witch’s brew of drugs that blocked the nerves in his skeletal muscles. Beyond the daze of immobility, the wicked potion also placed him in a catatonic state that caused mutism, taking away his ability to speak or cry for help. Unfortunately, all his other senses were intact. He could hear the monotone chanting, smell the awful stench, see their contorted faces, and worst of all, feel the excruciating pain. But there was nothing he could do to stop their retribution. This was a ritual of revenge, and he would pay with his life.

“Roll him back over and hand me the knife!” The voice thundered with malevolence. The double-edged instrument reserved for this ceremony was made of molten Damascus steel. One side of the blade had a serrated edge capable of sawing through bone. And the other side was as clean and sharp as a surgeon’s scalpel. It could easily fulfill its purpose of slicing through human flesh. And it did. And he felt the torture and watched in horror.

He felt cold, as though his life drained from his body. And then he looked upon what eyes should never see. Ghastly. Frightening. Fearsome.