

Ghosts of the Past

Part 2

The following events begin 10 years prior to “The Box Journey Home”

“For I have seen things in the shadows and soon they will come for you too”

It had been a little over a week since David’s death. Thanks to the hard work of Thomas, Mona and Wes, David’s death had been ruled a suicide. Bryson would have helped himself if he hadn’t taken almost four hours to wipe David’s hard drive. At the funeral he expressed his condolences to David’s wife and son. He even made a small contribution to help them with their new life in Chicago. Yet he still felt that he had accomplished nothing in the last week.

Even after all of the investigation at the house they had found no evidence of the murderer. Whoever had killed David knew what they were doing and how to cover their tracks. That says something of killer or killers as Thomas was a brilliant detective, although Bryson would never tell him that.

Bryson had spent the last two days reviewing all of David’s files and what he found sickened him. There were notes on every single one of the “prodigals”. People Bryson had known for more than thirty years and had given up so much to protect his family. The notes were extremely specific and listed where people were, what they were doing, every person that his friends cared about and, worst of all, any secrets that they may have. As he read the files he felt guilty, as if he was trespassing on their lives. Everything he read though sounded nothing like David. The David he had known was not a thinker and never really observant. Whenever they went to a Bronco’s game, Bryson had to constantly explain to David what had just happened after a play. It got to the point where Bryson just stopped taking David to the games.

“Bryson, why are you still up?” Sara asked as she leaned on the doorframe. She looked as if she had just woken-up. Her long brown hair fell over her face and shoulders. Her nightshirt was crumpled and twisted around her hips.

Bryson looked at the clock above his desk and was surprised to see that it was already 2 AM. He had been so lost in the files he had totally lost track of time. “Sorry, Luv, I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“You know how rare it is to get the house to ourselves?” Sara asked as she played with the top button on her night shirt. “So it’s a little weird to rollover and not find you in bed next to me, you’re awesomely gorgeous wife.”

Bryson rolled his desk chair across the hardwood floor and crashed into his wife. He placed his hands on her hips and gave her the most charming smile he had. “You’re right, Sara, I’m sorry. I hope you can forgive me.”

“Maybe we can work something out,” Sara twisted his long reddish-brown hair with her fingertips. She looked over at Bryson’s desk and grimaced. “You still reviewing all of David’s files?”

“Yeah,” Bryson said placing his head on her stomach. “For the eighteenth time.”

Sara kissed the top of Bryson’s head then spun his desk chair around. She then pushed him back to the desk. “So tell me what are you seeing?”

"It's what I'm not seeing." Bryson opened up the main file directory and ran his finger down the list of names. "David has the names of each of our friends and their family members but only up to the last three years. Felnor died four years ago and is not on the list. Neither is Mikel Grace or Melicent Moore."

"Mikel and Mel died what? Eleven years ago," Sara asked. She scanned the list. "So out of the twenty-two people who came here with us only eighteen are listed."

"Right." Bryson rubbed his eyes and looked up at his wife. "So if this was a list of all of us they should still have a file. The only way they wouldn't is if the list is only three years old. However, the main file director dates back six years. It looks like it may have been transferred over from one computer to another. Possibly during an upgrade as there are a few files written in *Plain Text* and others in *MS Word*. I think that whoever wrote this has been writing this for more than ten years."

Sara collapsed into cushy seat across from Bryson's desk and swung her long legs over the side. "So you still don't think David wrote these documents?"

"You knew David as well as I did. Do you think he would have had the patience or observation skills to build these files?"

"No, I think if he wrote these they would read like a *Cliffnotes* version of the Bourne Supremacy," Sara replied with a groan. "But if David didn't write them then what are they doing on his computer. Do you think Melissa wrote them?"

The thought had crossed Bryson's mind. Everything else in the room had been David's wife Melissa's. Yet every person that any of the prodigals had dated, much less married, had been background checked thoroughly. Nothing in her background pointed to her being so duplicitous. The level of detail would have taken someone who could easily manipulate people to tell them what he or she wants to hear.

"I don't believe Melissa knew anything about who we are," Bryson said as he looked over one of the documents. "Thomas grilled here pretty well and came to the same conclusion."

"So where does that leave your investigation?" Sara asked with a yawn.

"I think someone has been watching us for a long time," Bryson replied. "I believe that whoever that person is killed David then planted the files on his computer knowing that we would find them."

"Then made it look like a suicide so that we would think that David felt guilty for what he was doing and killed himself," Sara quickly interjected.

Bryson shook his head no. "You're partly right. The files were planted but whoever killed David knew we would cover it up. They left him as a message to us."

Sara swung her legs back around and Bryson could see her nostrils flare in anger. "Someone killed our friend just to leave us a message? What the hell is the message then?"

"Whoever killed David wanted us to find the list. They wanted us to know what they have on us and our families. They wanted us to be afraid that what happened to David is going to happen to us."

"I'd love to give them a message." Sara stood up from her chair and placed her hands on the desk. She looked at Bryson in a way that always sent a shiver up his spine. "They may think they know us but they have no freaking idea who the hell they are messing with."

Bryson always admired Sara's fearlessness even when he was shaking inside. He knew that she was right and all this killer did was poke the bear. He smiled and gave her a nod. "Yeah, you're right."

Sara reached over the desk and pulled Bryson to his feet. He forgot how strong she was. "That's enough for the night. Alex is back in the morning and in about fourteen months we will have a teenager and a baby keeping us up all night."

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GAVELSTON, TX – 11 YEARS AGO

Mikel Grace sat on the beach outside of his rental home a cold Corona in one hand and a cigar in the other. The waves were crashing on the beach in front of him and he wondered if the coming storm was going to be a bigger problem than the weatherman had said. The upside to the storm front was the cool breeze that washed over his dark brown skin and blew back the beads of sweat off his bald head. He didn't mind a storm. Where he was from it rained more than seventy percent of the year. Some storms were so strong that whole villages would disappear overnight. He had spent the last four summers and two tropical storms in Galveston and city was still standing.

"Looks like the storm is moving up the gulf," came a mousy voice behind him.

Mikel turned his head and flashed a pearly-white grin. Melicent Moore was the exact opposite of him. She was about a foot and a half shorter and had milky-white skin. Her chest and face were freckly from the long exposure to the sun and her orange-red hair fell in curls down her shoulders and back. While he preferred cargo shirts and a Hawaiian shirt, Mel loved fashion. As usual she was dressed to the nines in a flowing sundress and crocheted top.

"Oh, it's going to hit us pretty hard but we'll be okay," Mikel replied in his deep booming voice.

"Should we batten down the hatches?" Mel asked as she looked over the roiling ocean.

"Batten down the hatches, huh?" Mikel laughed as he rose from his chair. He handed Mel the Corona and placed an arm around her shoulder. "If it makes you feel any better I'll close the storm shutters."

Out just beyond the breakers, Mikel could see a sailboat moving towards the shoreline a few miles to the north. He reflected back on his days on the ocean and smiled. That being said he was glad that he didn't have to bring a boat in to the docks with how rough the ocean was becoming.

Lightning flashed over the water and eight seconds later the rumble of thunder washed over them. Mel shivered in his arms as the temperature began to drop.

"I think the gumbo is almost ready," Mikel said as he gave Mel's forehead a kiss. "Why don't you go inside and I'll close the shutters?"

Mel stood up on her tippy-toes and gave Mikel a long kiss. The wind blew and wrapped her hair around his shoulders and face. With relative ease he lifted her up and pulled her close.

Another flash of lightning lit up the darkening sky and the crack of thunder shook apart their passionate embrace.

“Alright, don’t take too long or you’ll get your clothes wet.” Melicent patted Mikel playfully on the chest. “They may accidentally fall into the fire when if I have to dry them out.”

Mikel knew Mel wasn’t kidding. She would happily burn his Hawaiian shirts if given the chance. He laughed anyway though. “Alright, I’ll hurry up.”

Mikel watched Mel run for the house as the wind began to pick-up whipping her sundress around. He didn’t rush to close the shutters. The wind broke against him like waves against the rocky shore. As he walked towards the last of the shutters he looked back at the ocean and small sailboat. It hadn’t moved too much to the north and looked as if the tides were bringing it closer to the beach. Even at this distance he could see a man on the deck standing against the crashing waves. For a second it seemed to Mikel that man may have been looking his direction, a black shadow against the darkening sky. He felt a chill up his spine that he wished he could blame on the weather.

Mikel slammed the last shutter closed and marched towards the house. Rain began to splatter against his skin and ping against the side of the house. He walked up the porch steps to the door and gave one last look back at the boat. The captain of the small vessel had turned his attention back on the docks. If the storm worsened, Mikel was sure the ship would roll over in the waves and sink.

The door flew open when Mikel turned the knob. It took some strength to shut the door and keep the blowing rain out. As soon as he entered the house he was greeted by the smell of his gumbo cooking on the stove.

Mel was quickly stirring the gumbo and getting it ready to serve. She looked back at him and saw the worry on his face. “Mikel, what is it?”

“There’s a boat heading for the docks. I don’t think it’s going to make it.” Mike crossed the beachfront themed living room and into the kitchen. “I’m going to make a quick call to the Coast Guard and let them know. See if they can help him out.”

Mikel picked up the phone and scanned the refrigerator for the list of emergency contacts he had posted there. He found the Coast Guard’s number and dialed. As Mel filled the soup bowls, Mikel told the young woman who answered the phone about the sailboat, its current location and the issues it was having getting to the docks. The Coast Guard was already busy with a few other storm related issues but Mikel was told that the operator would contact local rescue teams to go to the docks and assist. When Mikel hung up he felt better about the sailboat’s chances of survival.

After the call, Mikel had put the boat out of his mind. Instead he filled his belly with delicious gumbo and a few more Coronas. He laughed and told Mel stories that he was sure he had told her a few times already. Stories about his childhood, his father and a few of his time fighting alongside Bryson Rikes. Mel for her part entertained him with a few of her stories of adventure and exploration. Of growing up in the White Mountains and sleeping under the stars. They lost track of time and the sound of the constant pounding of rain was making them sleepy.

They moved to the couch and turned on the TV, their heads beginning to swim from full bellies and rhythmic sound of the rain. Mel yawned first and curled up on the couch, her head on Mikel’s shoulder. He wasn’t sure if he was going to make it through “Must See TV” and let out his own big yawn. He closed his eyes for a moment just to rest them.

BOOM! The house rocked from the explosion of thunder and shook Mikel awake. When he opened his eyes he couldn’t see a thing. The TV was off and all of the lights were out. He searched the pitch black room for some sign of light but there was none to be seen. Another BOOM caused Mikel to jump to his feet.

“What’s going on?” Mel asked her voice soft and sleepy.

“Storm knocked the power out,” Mikel replied as he looked around the room. “Do you know where the candles are?”

He felt Mel bump into him as she rose from the couch. It was so dark both of them had their hands out searching the shadows.

“The candles are in the hall closet,” Mel said as she pushed by him. “The lighter is in the kitchen.”

“I’ll get the lighter,” Mikel replied as he carefully maneuvered across the living room.

He heard Mel walk down the hallway and only bang into a wall once. “Try the drawer near the dishwasher.”

Mikel felt around the counter and found the dishwasher he slid the drawer open. He was angry with himself for not getting a few candles out earlier. He should have known something like this could happen. He had dismissed the storm too easily, it didn’t look like much but the worse storms never do.

With the storm shutters closed it was impossible to see his hand in front of his face much less a lighter. He poked his fingers a couple times on a few of the other items in the junk drawer. Finally his index finger caught the side of the lighter. “Found it!”

Mikel flicked the lighter and dimly lit the kitchen. “How are you coming with those candles?”

There was a thump from the hallway and Mikel laughed. The hallway closet was the equivalent of a junk drawer and he was sure Mel was having her own problems finding the candles. “Stay where you are, I’ll bring the lighter and we can find the candles together.”

Mikel held the lighter out as he left the kitchen in order to light his way. He carefully made his way to the living room. The last thing he wanted to do was bump into something combustible. After all it wasn’t his beach house and was sure burning it down would cost him his deposit.

Mikel turned towards the hallway. Just beyond the light he could make out the open hallway door. He heard another thump from the other side of the closet door. “I said to wait. Don’t hurt yourself, Mel.”

Mikel felt it in his spine. What little hair he still had rose up and his skin become riddled with goosebumps. He felt a rush of fear replace his anger. Something wasn’t right. When he spoke his voice cracked in a way that he had never heard it before, “Mel?”

There was another thump and Mikel picked up his pace. He banged his knee on a bar stool then stumbled into the lamp sending it smashing to the floor. His mind was going ten-million miles a second. He willed Mel to say something back to him. To yell at him to stop being his usual clumsy self. To be careful not to set the house on fire. At that second he longed to hear her soft voice.

“MEL!” Mikel yelled as he approached the closet door. The lighter was getting hot and he smelled his thumbnail starting to burn but he felt no pain.

He reached out and grabbed the door and pulled it farther open so that it didn’t block his view. He waved the lighter around slowly and searched the area around the closet. His heart sank as he realized Melicent was not there. He was able to find a tapered candle on the second shelf from the top and grabbed it. He lit the candle but kept the lighter in his other hand so he could quickly flick it back on if he needed it.

“Mel, answer me!” Mikel yelled again. As he looked down the hall he searched for any sign of Mel. The beach house was small. It was only meant for a couple of people with a large bedroom and bathroom. It was a bungalow in every sense of the word. Hardly big enough to lose someone in.

As he moved the candle to the left he could see that the door to the bedroom was open. Instinct took over and Mikel moved quickly to the left wall. He slid down the wall, the candle held out towards the middle of the hallway. If there was anyone in the house with him and Mel they would see the candle first. It would buy enough time for Mikel to fight off any attacker.

Mikel reached the door and took a deep breath. He lowered his body down so that he was shorter than Mel. If there was an armed intruder on the other side of the door he would be looking for someone to enter the room at full height. It was a good stance when attacking anyone with a projectile weapon.

Mike turned his head and peaked inside the door. Like the rest of the house it was pitch black. The only light was the dim light of the candle which barely illuminated the doorway. He heard a whimper from inside of the room and immediately forgot his training. He let his emotions drive him into the room the candle swinging slowly behind him.

There was another whimper just a little louder than the pounding rain. It was fainter than the last. Mikel searched the large room. He cast light on the wicker chair on the right corner of the room and found it empty except for Mel’s travel guide to Texas. He moved the candle to the bed and found it empty. However, the sheets were disheveled and pulled to the opposite side of the bed. He moved the candle down the bed and towards the floor. Just beyond the bed he could see a pale foot.

Mikel rushed across the room and fell to the floor at the end of the bed. Filled with horror and trepidation, he moved the candle up to illuminate the prone figure in front of him. It was Mel and his heart stopped. She was lying flat on her back. Her left leg was twisted in a way that was unnatural. Both of her arms were broken at the elbow with bones sticking out of the skin. Blood was flowing from the wounds and onto the wood floor in a too large of a puddle. Mikel moved the candle up and saw that Mel’s beautiful face had been broken in. The center of her face was nothing but a black spot. Still he could see her chest move slightly and a gurgling moan.

He slid across the floor, Mel’s hot blood greased his legs as he made his way towards her head. He had seen enough of death to know what it looked like. As he looked down into her pale blue eyes he could see the light begin to fade. She blinked back tears as she looked up at him and at that moment Mikel realized that Mel was stronger than him. He unleashed a river of tears that blinded his eyes.

Mel smiled through the blood and blinked at him as if trying to relay a message. She coughed a word through the blood and Mikel leaned in to cradle her head. Her words were labored, “It...found us....warn...others.”

“Don’t speak, Mel” Mikel whispered.

Mel’s eyes grew wide as she looked up at him. She shook slightly and coughed. It rose like a roar from the last breath in her lungs and was louder than the thunder outside, “RUN!”

A pain hit his right shoulder like a sledgehammer and he heard bones shatter. The impact sent his body spinning forward and it was all he could do not to fall on Mel’s lifeless body. He caught the bed with his forehead and the candle slid from his hand and rolled under the bed.

He turned in order to avoid another hit and kicked his body onto the bed. He looked back at where his attack came from but saw nothing but shadow. In the blackness though he thought he saw something move.

Fear was replaced by hate and anger. He wasn't sure who had killed Mel and attacked him but he wanted to bring a world of pain to their world. He swung his legs off the bed and noticed the curls of smoke rising up from under the bed. Within seconds orange flames flickered and lit up the room. The light illuminated the shadow on the other side of the bed. It looked like a man, tall and covered in a rain slicker. However, as the flames grew he seemed to be giving off his own smoke. Mikel hoped that the man had caught fire and was in the process of burning alive but there were no flames rising from his body. The man leaned down to Mel and there was another wet pop.

"GET AWAY FROM HER!" Mikel yelled as he backed away from the burning bed.

The killer looked up from Mel as if he had forgotten about Mikel. The smoke around the man's body obscured his face but Mikel could feel the hate coming off of him. Mikel looked for the hammer that had hit him, the murder weapon of the only woman he had ever loved. The man's large gloved hands were empty.

Mikel felt a pain in his shoulder as he realized that the damage that this intruder had done was with his own hands. Mikel had fought many men and foes that were even bigger than him. Never had he been hit so hard in his life. He couldn't face this man without a weapon. Mel forbid weapons in the bedroom, matter of fact, she asked him not to bring anything on the trip. He had ignored her though but wished he hadn't left it in the car.

Mike backed up to the door as Mel's killer stepped up to the burning bed. The man leaned down and reached through the flame to grab the metal frame. Without even a grunt flipped the bed, frame, headboard and all, towards Mikel. Mikel dived out of the room and slammed into the wall as the bed crashed into the door.

He looked back at the flames and fiery ash that erupted from the doorway. He hoped that the man was trapped but in his heart he knew not to hold onto false hope. He didn't wait to find out if he was right. Instead he slid down the wall and out into the living room. The light from the hallway was enough for him to maneuver around the furniture. The kitchen though was still too dark to see. He didn't want to waste the time to find a knife, instead, he made his way to the door.

When he reached the door he turned the knob and was shocked to see that it was still locked. He quickly unlocked it as a *CRASH* came from the bedroom. He turned the knob and was almost knocked out by the door as the wind blew it open. He was immediately hit with a wall of hard rain.

He stumbled through the door and onto the porch. The lights in the houses farther down the beach were also out. The only light came from the emergency floodlights from the docks a couple miles away. It wasn't much but it was enough for Mikel to find his way down the steps. He rushed down the sidewalk towards his car. As he approached he noticed that the car's tires had been flattened. Whoever, attacked Mel and him was trying to make sure that they had nowhere to go.

The closest home was about a half-mile away and he was sure if he ran he could make it. He knew that that is what Mel would have wanted. Her last words were a plea for his safety. Still he was so full of anger that all he could think about was killing the man who stole his life away. In the dark blue night all Mikel saw was red.

He tried to open the door and found it locked. He looked back at the house and realized that the keys were on the kitchen counter. Given no other choice he smashed the window with his left elbow sending glass flying across the passenger seat. He immediately felt blood trickling from his elbow and arm. He ignored the new pain and unlocked the door. He kept one eye on the house as he opened the door and leaned down to pop the trunk.

Mikel ran to the back of the car and felt along the inside of trunk lid. He felt a little latch and popped it. The panel fell down and Mikel reached up again. His fingers felt the cool dry wood of his weapon. He gave the handle a yank and pulled the weapon free. He looked over the crescent shaped blade and raised it to his lips. He kissed the blade, as

was the custom of his people, then swung it through the air. The silver blade split the rain drops into a fine mist as it had split so many of his enemies. He hoped the sword had one more death in it.

He stepped away from the car and backed his way to the beach. He kept an eye on the house through the pouring rain. He expected Mel's killer to come through the door any second and steadied himself for the attack. He could see the glow of the fire through the door but didn't see any sign of the intruder.

There was an earth shaking *BOOM* and Mikel stumbled backwards. At first he thought it was a close lightning strike but he felt intense heat on skin. He blinked through the suddenly brilliant light of the burning beach house. The fire must have reached the gas of the stove. No one would be able to survive the explosion. Suddenly, Mikel felt robbed of his vengeance. His grip on the sword slackened as intense grief washed over him ten times colder than the rain. He dropped to his knees and wept.

As he sat in the wet sand, the rain pouring down around him. He heard the sizzle of water on flame and the loud crackling of the fire. He blinked the tears out of his eyes and looked up at fiery remains of the beach house. What he saw caused him to fall backwards into something solid. On the burning porch stood the black figure in rain slicker. The fire didn't touch him and the smoke from the flame merged with his own.

Mikel used the object behind him to help him to his feet and felt the object give a little as he rose. He looked back thinking that it was debris from the storm and was shocked to see that it was a sailboat. The realization hit him in the gut, it was the same sailboat he had seen a few hours earlier. He shot a look back up at the porch and the killer who had captained the boat.

"I don't know who you are but you were better off drowning!" Mikel yelled. He took a step forward, his foot sinking in the wet sand.

His attacker was fast, faster than Mikel expected him to be for his size. Within a few seconds Mel's killer was a few feet away. Mikel swung his blade in an upward arc. It was a move he had used a hundred times and had caught many of his enemies off guard leaving them dead before the fight even started.

This time the sword did not contact flesh. The tip of the blade caught the side of the killer's rain slicker but missed the man underneath. For his trouble Mikel was met with a bone cracking smack to his right arm. Already useless the arm swung like a rag doll as he tumbled to his left.

Mikel hit the wet sand, his sword slipping from his cold fingers. He looked back at his attacker and caught something dark and boat shape flying at him. He rolled back towards his attacker with a scream of pain. As he turned he felt the crash of the boat inches from his body.

Already out of breath, Mikel used his hate to fuel him and quickly jumped back up to his feet. He looked for his sword and saw a glint of silver on the other side of the boat. He rushed towards the flipped sailboat and dived over it. He reached down for his sword and got a handful of sand.

He looked up and saw the glint of silver again this time in the air just a foot away. Through the rain he saw the smoking hand that held it and the hooded figure staring down on him. It was impossible, no one was that fast. He tried to rise but was stopped by a sharp pain in his chest. He looked down at his owned curved blade sticking out of his chest and thought how odd that was.

Mel's killer...his killer stood over him and for a second Mikel could see past the hood. He could see the cold steel eyes and the white of a toothy smile. He collapsed back to his knees and hung his head. The cold rain around him felt warmer as the fire grew brighter. He felt as if he was being pulled towards it and felt the heat of the flames.

“There is nowhere to run now,” came a voice like broken glass from the shadows just beyond the light. “Soon I will come for you all.”

Mikel heard it and for a second feared for his friends, but even that fear was washed away by light and heat. His last vision as he slipped into the light was Mel smiling at him with outstretched hands.

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Bryson looked at the clock and it was almost 5 AM. He had slept for a little while off and on but something had woken him. He rolled over to look at the ceiling. He hoped the sound of Sara’s snoring would be enough to lull him back to sleep. As he closed his eyes he heard it again outside of his bedroom. It sounded as if someone was in his office. At first he almost ignored it. There was no way that Sara and he could be in danger, he had taken precautions to ensure his families safety. Of course it wouldn’t be the first time that one of his friends had snuck into his house.

He thought that maybe it was Thomas stopping by before going into work. He had promised to call Thomas in the morning but the detective wasn’t exactly patient. He quietly got out of bed and slipped on his robe. He made sure Sara was still fast asleep and made his way to the door.

The door creaked a little so Bryson just opened it enough to slip through. He then carefully closed the door behind him. The noise was a little louder from his office and he really wished Thomas would be a little more considerate. As he approached the room he heard typing on his computer. He was getting angry as Thomas was really crossing the line of personal space. He sped up but when he reached his office the typing stopped. He expected to see the light on from under the door but there was none. He expected to hear Thomas moving in the room and he heard nothing. Suddenly, he was feeling a little uneasy. He thought he may have put too much trust in his “security” system.

He slowly opened the door and prepared himself for anything within the room. He remembered when he left he had turned everything off including the computer, yet the bright screen lit up one section of the room. As his eyes were already adjusted to the night, he could easily see the rest of the room. He looked around but saw no one in the room. He stepped into the room and flipped the light switch on but nothing happened. He flipped it a few more times then left it in the on position.

Even though he couldn’t see anyone he still felt as if someone was in the room with him. He had had that feeling before at David’s house. The difference was this time he didn’t feel like he was in danger. Matter of fact, he felt comforted by whatever was in the room.

“I know you’re here,” Bryson whispered as he crossed the room to his desk. “Just save us both the trouble and show yourself.”

Although he thought he had asked nicely, nothing appeared. “Alright, suit yourself.”

He was about to leave when he noticed something on the monitor. Someone had turned on the computer and opened the “Prodigal” file. One of the documents was open and Bryson realized it was his. He quickly read the file looking for anything new and then he saw it at the end of the file one line below the other paragraphs.

NOWHERETORUNHELLCOMEFORUSALL

Bryson had to re-read three times until he was able to figure out that it said “NO WHERE TO RUN. HE’LL COME FOR US ALL”.

He heard the office chair in front of his desk creak and he quickly looked up. It wasn’t the first time he had seen a ghost. Matter of fact he was sure it wasn’t even the hundredth time he had seen a ghost. So it wasn’t fear that he felt when he looked across the desk. It was the intense sadness in seeing two friends that he hadn’t seen in eleven years.

As he looked at Mikel and Melicent it was if they were really there. They weren’t see-through or missing limbs. Unlike some of the ghosts he had seen, they weren’t bearing their death wounds. No they looked as if they stepped out of one of Sara’s photo albums. Mikel was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and Mel was wearing a sun dress with a crocheted top. They did not smile, in fact they looked as sad as he felt.

“It...found us...warn...others” Mel said in a mousy voiced.

“Who found you?” Bryson asked as he stared at his friends. “Tell me and I’ll stop him!”

The lights popped on bathing the room in light and temporarily blinding Bryson. He held his eyes close to allow them to adjust but when he opened them his friends were gone. He sat in the room staring at the computer screen for another hour. While seeing Mikel and Mel had answered a couple questions it also brought up a dozen more.

As he heard Sara waking up he reached for his phone and made a call. “Thomas? It’s Bryson. I hope you have some time off. We need to head to Galveston.”