

“Another Secret
Tell the World, Hell Does Exist”
by James Leesley

Chapter One

It is 7:35 a.m. when Kevin Christenson drives into the parking lot of Darrius Corporation in Denver, Colorado, or D.C., as all the employees call it. Kevin feels like he hasn't completely awakened yet, last night's conversation with Brian about the company's rumors had made it difficult to fall asleep. Today, however, everything looked just like the gossiping it was.

Kevin is proud of his work as the safety director at D.C., the fifth largest gold mining company in the world; they have nine mines in the UK, four in the US and two in Canada. Kevin's responsibility is to all fifteen mines.

Kevin is a thirty-six-year-old bachelor who doesn't take much care of his appearance, but is attractive. Six feet tall and his body is fit. He has short brown hair and small, lively green eyes.

The D.C. building Kevin works at is a two-story, rather large building. The front of it is all glass windows, including the second floor. It has tight security, with at least four security guards on duty at any given time. The guard office is just inside the front doors of the building, to the right of the main forum. Everyone that enters the building must have a security card that they swipe on a card reader inside the first set of doors.

Kevin uses his card to walk in. The main forum has an elevator that leads to the upstairs. The only door in the forum, besides the door for the stairs and the security room, leads to a hallway that goes to the back of the building. It has multiple

offices on both sides before the hallway ends a thousand feet back.

Before three years ago, security wasn't of much importance to D.C., but they had a break-in in which nearly three-quarters of their documents were stolen. The documents contained information about D.C. customers, maps of all the mines D.C. has, and above all, billing documents to customers they mine gold for.

D.C. now holds all that information on computers and hard drives. It's stored at both the Denver branch, and the main branch in Topeka, Kansas. D.C. and the Denver police never understood, and still don't, why the computers were left behind in the robbery, and why the four petty cash boxes were, too. The robbers even closed the file cabinet doors and desk drawers when they were done with them. They also left the security camera tapes behind. From those tapes, police counted twelve robbers; they all wore similar black pants, black shirts, and black ski masks.

The police were never able to solve the case. To this day, no one knows what happened to the documents, or why they were stolen. D.C. did its own investigation and found nothing.

A few minutes after Kevin got to his office, took off his coat, and laid it on his office chair, the loud phone rings. It's Tom Brice, his supervisor. A few seconds later, Kevin tells Brice he's on his way. Kevin leaves and goes to Brice's office.

“Morning. Sorry to bother you so early, but there’s something important that came up,” Brice says after Kevin enters his office.

“No problem,” says Kevin.

“We’ve been having a lot of problems with the Riley mine in Canada, the one next to the Colonial mine. I need you to head a team and clear the mine so we can go back to work there.”

“I haven’t been there,” Kevin begins to explain, “but I read the journals about it yesterday. Miners refuse to go back into the mine, temperatures reaching two hundred and twenty degrees, and one miner suffering third-degree burns.”

“I need you to do a complete investigation on it and clear it for more mining.”

“Anyone specific you want on my team?” Kevin asks.

“Not yet. Is there anyone you have in mind?” Brice asks.

“A geologist, I’m thinking. Somebody from the United States Geological Survey, the USGS,” Kevin answers.

“Ok, I’ll call you tonight.”

Kevin stands up and leaves Brice’s office. He held back from Brice the little bit of fear he has about Riley after what he’s heard and read about it, but he’s optimistic. “Perhaps the rumors aren’t all true,” he thinks to himself, and he brushes the dark thoughts away.

At the end of that day, just before six p.m., Kevin was making his way to his truck in the D.C. parking lot when he heard Brian calling, “Hold on!”

Brian is in charge of associate support; he provides the equipment that the miners need. He travels almost on a regular basis for the company. He is thirty-four years old, five feet eleven inches tall, with short blond hair. He's usually ready for a chat, and always seems to be very well informed about the Darrius Corporation.

Before working for D.C., he was a warehouse supervisor for a food service company that went out of business. When the company shut down, Kevin helped Brian get the associate support position at D.C. They've been best friends for seven years, since they met at church.

He catches up with Kevin in the parking lot. Kevin puts his briefcase on the driver's seat in his truck and leans his arms on the top of the driver's door.

"Is it true? You're going to the Riley mine?" Brian asks.

"Yeah."

"Am I going too?" Brian asks.

"You know I'm going to Riley but you don't know if you're going with me or not? Probably. Brice is going to call me tonight. I would pick my own team, but I don't know who's doing what and who's available, Brice is figuring that out for me. Would you be ready to go up there?"

"Well," Brian says with a low voice, "what about those rumors we talked about last night? I'm a little nervous, it's only been a few months since the California mine."

"I know, I think about what happened there all of the time."

"I couldn't even tell my wife what we saw," Brian explains.

“Look,” Kevin begins to explain, also in a quiet voice, “all we know about Riley is that the miners, when they’re in there, hear people talking, and sometimes screaming. Two workers are missing, the rest of them won’t go back into the mine, and some of them quit. We’ll just take one step at a time. We’ll be careful like we always are, and if it gets too dangerous, we’ll report that the mine has to be shut down for good. We’ll keep it simple.”

“Three people were being dragged away by invisible spirits,” Brian begins to explain. “The temperature in there was jumping from a hundred and ten to two hundred degrees. All that D.C. had to say was ‘Close the mine down and don’t tell anybody.’”

“I don’t know why the Riley mine is doing what it’s doing. I don’t know what was going on in the California mine, but we’re not alone on this, that’s something I know for sure. And you know that too, don’t you?”

“Alright,” Brian says with a voice of little comfort.

“Sometimes I miss my old job.”

“Would you rather have someone else go through what we went through at the California mine? Kevin asks.

Brian agrees and shakes his head *no*. “I’ll see you tonight,” Brian says, reminding Kevin that he, his wife, and kids are going to Kevin’s place for dinner.

“I’ll see you tonight,” Kevin says as he gets in his truck.

Unbeknownst to Kevin and Brian, from afar, somebody was looking at them, spying on them with binoculars.

Kevin starts his truck, puts it in reverse, but then stops, puts it back into park and turns the engine off. He stares towards the car in front of him, but looking at nothing specific. He thinks back to four months ago, when he got a call from the retirement home saying that his mother had just passed away. Kevin was really close to his mom, and especially missed her because he doesn't have any brothers or sisters. He had to deal with the news alone: Evelyn Christenson-Runnel, at eighty-seven years old, stricken with Alzheimer's disease, died in her sleep.

Kevin's dad, Russell Dave Christenson, died when Kevin was eight years old. He was driving home from work in a snowstorm and the roads were iced over. When he was on Highway 13, a two-lane narrow road, he lost control of his car and it went off a cliff. Evelyn remarried a few years later, and her new husband passed away one year ago.

Kevin restarts the truck and goes to a department store to buy a few personal things for the trip. On the way to the checkout line, as he is thinking if he has everything he needs, he stops for a second to consider buying cigarettes, even though he quit smoking a year ago. He doesn't buy any and feels a little frustrated at himself for even thinking about having a cigarette, and knows that whenever he's tempted to smoke, he's under a lot of stress. Even though he didn't show it to Brian, he is a little nervous about the Riley mine as well.

Chapter Two

And the top story tonight at ten: Trooper Carl Bartlett remains in critical condition after being shot on Interstate 31, after pulling over a motorist for a traffic violation. The suspect is still at large. Godnight,” Karen says shortly before she takes the microphone off her shirt.

“Good job, Karen,” Chris the meteorologist says.

“Thanks, guys, but I think I’m going to tell James to give me a better warning next time that I’ll be on my own.”

“Karen, James just called for you,” producer Ron in the control room says over the intercom.

“Well, that was fast!” she says as she gets out of the chair.

“Oh no! Not even two minutes and the big boss man wants to talk to you,” Chris says.

“Hey, maybe he’ll give me a raise!” Karen says jokingly.

“Does he want to see me too?” Chris asks Ron.

The newsroom is quiet. Chris shakes his head *no*.

Karen walks up to the director’s office and knocks.

“Come in,” the director responds with a raised voice.

“Yeah, James,” Karen says as she walks in while leaving the door open behind her.

“Hey, have a seat.”

Karen sits down on the chair in front of the desk.

“How ya doing?” the director asks.

“Good.”

“You did great tonight. Sorry to put you alone up there, but I knew you could do it.”

“Thanks,” Karen replies.

“I also don’t send an anchorwoman, or man for that matter, to investigate what might be a rumor, especially one that is a long way away, but we got a call this morning from Roger Wilcox, a retired producer from here at Channel 8, who’s vacationing in Canada on a fishing trip. When he was hiking to a lake up there, he walked past a mining site and saw people pulling a dead body out of a mine. None of Canada’s news stations covered the story, so something doesn’t sound right. You’re from Canada yourself ...”

Karen interrupts, “When do you want me to leave?”

“Tomorrow,” the director says. “Take Will as your cameraman and keep me up to date, I’d appreciate it.”

“Okay, thanks,” she excitedly says as she walks out of his office. Her face lit up on the other side of the office door. She loves leaving for an out-of-town assignment, especially one closer to where she grew up.

Later that night at home, Karen answers her cell phone as she takes off her coat in her living room, “Hello?”

“Hi, Mom. What’s up?” She pauses for several seconds, then says, “I just got home.”

As she listens to her mom, she walks into the kitchen and looks in the refrigerator but doesn’t see anything she wants to eat. “I’m okay. I was the lead anchor for the six o’clock news tonight, Rod was sick. I was nervous, but...” After listening to her mom for a moment, she smiles and says, “Yeah, I was nervous, but I liked it. I also got a new assignment tonight. I’m

headed for Canada in the morning. Longlac. No, I won't get a chance to stop by; I don't even know how long I'll be there." She sits down on the recliner in the living room. "Tell Dad I love him." She pauses. "I love you, too. Bye."

Karen's been living in the two-story, three-bedroom house for seven months now. She moved to Minneapolis for the reporter job at Channel 8. When she moved in, the house needed some work. She repainted the large living room, the hallway that leads upstairs, and the bathroom. In the living room and kitchen, she has several pictures of angels, something she's had an infatuation with since she was a child. The three bedrooms are upstairs. In the hallway, she decorated the walls with photos of her family she left back at home.

She was born and raised in Winnipeg, Canada, where she lived with four older brothers and both of her parents before going to college and earning a degree in journalism. She considers herself headstrong; she doesn't let her work and the things she might see while she's reporting get her down.

Her first assignment came one day after she started working for Channel 8. There was a fire in an abandoned warehouse and while reporting on the case, she saw the police put a badly burned suspect in a body bag. It was the one who started the fire using gasoline; he accidentally caught himself on fire.

She has just turned twenty-nine and has never been married. Her beauty is remarkable. Her curly brown hair falls below her shoulders, and her big and interested brown eyes seem to be always searching for something.

She opens her eyes from a light sleep on the couch at eleven o'clock. As she gets up to turn the lamp off that was sitting on the end table, a cold December breeze from the kitchen chills her.

There's no door separating the kitchen and the living room, but it is a little too far to see inside the kitchen in the dark.

"There must be a window open," she thinks. Not fully awake yet, she walks into the kitchen to see where the breeze was coming from.

The small window above the kitchen sink is open almost all the way. She quickly closes it and doesn't think anything of it. She walks back into the living room, turns off the lamp, and goes to her bedroom upstairs.

As she lies down, she decides to call her friend Kerrie. She picks up the house phone and starts to dial the number but stops midway because she hears a noise from downstairs. She doesn't move for a few seconds as she listens for any other noises. Then she hears a second sound. She doesn't recognize what it is. She walks down the stairs, in her shorts and a T-shirt, and over to the table sitting by the entryway that leads to the kitchen. A ceramic candle holder and the candle itself are on the floor, along with a picture in its frame. She immediately gets frightened, grabs her cell phone off the coffee table, rushes out of the house out of the front door and calls the police. A minute later, she hangs up the phone after the 911 dispatcher tells her the police will be there in a few minutes.

Being curious, she walks back to the front door and slowly walks inside. She walks into the kitchen and turns on the light. She checks the pantry but doesn't find anything out of the ordinary. She walks back into the living room but realizes she left the light on in the kitchen, so she turns around and goes back and turns it off. She stands in the living room wondering where anyone could be hiding in her house. She walks back up the stairs but does it slowly. The moment she reaches the bathroom door, though, a person with a bright yellow ski mask and black coveralls grabs Karen and pushes her towards the stairs. She takes one step farther back and falls down the stairs. She stands up and quickly leaves out the front door again to wait for the police who are pulling up.

Karen explains to the police what happened and, with guns drawn, they search the house for anybody, but find the house empty.

“Well, everything seems in order in your house,” the officer says. “This is the second break-in we've had tonight; another one happened about a mile from here. We did find your kitchen window and backdoor unlocked, and we locked them for you along with all your other windows in the house.

“Okay, thanks,” Karen says.

The police take a report from Karen and tell her they'll search the neighborhood for anybody suspicious.

Karen stays outside, talking to a neighbor from across the street as the police drive away.

A few minutes later, she walks back into her house and locks the front door. She then sits on the couch and tries to relax. While sitting there, she feels another breeze coming from the kitchen. She quickly looks at the front door, as running out of it and getting the police comes to her mind, but the police have already left.

She races to the front door, unlocks it and opens it, but the person in the bright yellow ski mask and black coveralls is standing outside her front door. She tries to shut it but the intruder pushes the door open, knocking her down. He walks inside her house and shuts the door behind him. Karen quickly stands up to fight him, but he simply pushes her back to the floor.

As he stands above her, Karen crawls to the stairs. As she stands up, another intruder, wearing a similar outfit, comes from the kitchen and grabs her right arm at the time the other intruder grabs her left. They made her stand between them.

Not giving up, Karen breaks her right arm away and hits the intruder on her left in the face. As he lets go of Karen and grabs his face, she punches the intruder on her right in the stomach with her elbow.

Karen then quickly starts to run up the stairs, but a third intruder standing on top of the stairs points a handgun towards her. "Back," the stern male voice tells her as he waves and points the gun towards the bottom of the stairs. Karen walks back down the stairs and the two intruders grab her arms once again.

The third intruder gets to the bottom of the stairs and stands in front of Karen while holding the gun to her.

Then, at last, the third intruder talks, “We were never here, and you were never leaving Minneapolis.”

Karen immediately realizes why the intruders were there. She makes the connection. “Longlac.”

“You’re not going to Canada.” Karen gets mad and wants to say something but doesn’t.

“Do you understand?”

Karen forces herself to say “Okay,” but she knows she is on to something and knows she is still going to Canada. The intruders let go of her and quickly exit the front door. Karen sits on the couch, this time finding it harder to relax.

Her neighbor knocked on the front door and walked in. He knows something is wrong, as he has just seen the masked men. She tells him what has just happened; he insists on calling the police, which she did. The police write another report and tell her it would be best to go spend the night somewhere other than at her house.

Her neighbor offers to let her sleep at his place in a spare bedroom. She accepts the offer. Before falling asleep, she considers whether to inform James about the happenings of the night but decides not to, as she has the hunch that this may well be the opportunity every journalist waits for: a big story.

Chapter Three

Earlier that night, Kevin parks in his driveway. His house is a four-bedroom ranch home.

When he moved to Denver, eighty miles from where he grew up, he only wanted to rent a house, but as he was driving to see a house four blocks away, he drove past this blue ranch home and immediately wanted it after seeing the for sale sign. What interested him at first was the size of the house, and that there were a lot of windows just on the front of the house. The two-acre backyard was a nice touch, too.

As he first walked through the front door with the real estate agent, he right away noticed something he was hoping for – the place needed some work. He knew he could get the house at a good price because of all the work that it needed, and Kevin wanted something to do in his spare time when he wasn't at D.C. This house was perfect for him.

Where the refrigerator was, yellow paint was on the wall; it needed a new paint job, along with all the other walls upstairs. The cabinets in the kitchen were half missing, and one cabinet was being held onto the wall by just two screws. The sink was missing. No dishwasher. The basement was half-finished, and the plumbing in the laundry room downstairs needed to be replaced or fixed; all the walls downstairs needed a new paint job, too.

It took Kevin several months to get the place fixed to how he wanted it, working on it here and there when he had time, but he couldn't have been happier. By the time he finished, he had

done so much work to it, it felt like he had built the house from scratch.

Soon after he finished with the house, his friend Tammy called him one day. She had been living with her boyfriend and after a bad argument, they split up for good.

Kevin offered to let her live with him until she found a place to live. She took him up on the offer. After she had been living with Kevin for several months, he decided she could stay as long as she wanted. She's five feet nine inches tall, with short brown hair, and very attractive.

"Hey," Kevin says as he walks into the kitchen and grabs a bottle of water from the refrigerator.

"Hey," answers Tammy as she turns her head around while standing at the counter.

Kevin walks to the living room and sits down. Tammy follows shortly after, already sensing he has a lot on his mind. "What's on your mind? she asks.

"Fishing."

"It's a little too cold to do that, don't ya think?"

"I'm thinking about the time when I was seven years old or so and went fishing with my dad. I'm going to visit his grave tomorrow. I've been thinking about him."

"Is it a good memory or bad?" Tammy asks.

"A good one. I was just getting ready to go to bed; it was probably about ten o'clock on a Saturday night. He asked me if I wanted to go fishing. I think I was in the car ready to go before he was.

“We went to Simon Creek, twenty miles from where we lived. On the way there, my dad talked to me about all the times him and his father went fishing at that creek.”

“What’s the biggest fish you ever caught here at this place?” Kevin asks his dad.

“A big flathead catfish, It was thirty-eight inches long, I could barely hold it in my hands.”

“Wow! Did you keep it?” Kevin asks.

“Yup!”

“That’s cool.”

“I used to fish at this lake up here all the time, but I never caught anything. It’s a nice lake but I barely ever had a bite. Before you were born, your mom and I came to Simon Creek fishing this one time and I caught two blue catfish, and...” Then Russell interrupts himself as they cross the bridge, “Here it is! You see it?”

“Yeah. You never caught anything there?” Kevin asks as he turns to his father after looking out of the window.

“No, only bites”

“Can we go there? Maybe we have to use different bait.”

“We’ll come here next weekend if nothing is going on back at home. I put my initials under that railroad track bridge when I was really young. I’ve been fishing Simon Creek and that lake since your grandma and I moved to Ashland. She took me fishing for the first time when I was eight years old. When I got older, your grandma used to drop me off. I was there all day by myself every summer.”

“Where was Grandpa?” Kevin asks.

“We moved to Ashland after your grandpa died. You know, my initials are still on that bridge. You can barely read it, but they’re still on there.

A few minutes later, they arrive at Simon Creek. There are no roads that lead to Russell’s fishing spot, so he parks at a concrete mixing plant parking lot several hundred feet from the creek. Water drips from the tree leaves from a heavy downpour earlier that evening. The moon is shining like a nightlight. It’s around seventy degrees on this night in July.

As the two get their fishing gear out of the car, Russell says, “I just thought of something: if that big concrete slab that was here before is gone, we’ll have to get back in the car and go a mile upstream to the sandbanks and fish.”

“Why’s that?”

“If it’s gone, I don’t think we can fish from the bank because it’ll probably be all weeds and too muddy.”

They start the walk to the creek.

“When you were just four days old, your mom and I brought you here. You slept all night long in your baby seat.”

“I was just born and we came here?”

“It was fun. Being with you and your mom that night is something that I’ll never forget, because you were just born.”

“Why didn’t Mom come tonight?” Kevin asks.

“Because she was tired. Plus, I wanted tonight just to be you and I.”

A couple of minutes later, they make it to the slab of rock. “It’s still here!” a surprised Russell says.

“This is so big!”

Russell lays the fishing gear on the ground and climbs on the rock that was once part of a street; it sits a foot high.

“Hand me the stuff you’re carrying.”

A short while later, they sit in separate chairs behind their fishing poles.

Kevin shines his flashlight downstream. “What’s that noise?”

“Bullfrogs.”

“Sounds like a bunch of them.”

As Russell says that, Kevin’s pole suddenly disappears into the water.

“What the heck!” Kevin says really loud. “That was my new fishing pole!”

As Tammy lets out a small laugh, Kevin says, “We had a great time that night, except for the fact that we didn’t do any more fishing. Me and my dad had only brought two fishing poles, one each.”

“What did you do the rest of the night?”

“We stayed there on the rock for a little longer as my dad was trying to find my pole. We never found it.

“We went back home that night, but the next morning, we went to the lake we passed going to the creek. There was a name for that lake, come to think about it.” Kevin stops for a few seconds, thinking. “The ‘Northern Hole,’ that’s what it was

called. You know, that rock is still there. I went back there when we had the funeral for my mom.

“But anyway, we were at the lake and my dad said...”

“Watch your step, some railroad ties are laying on the ground right there. Hold it,” Russell says as he stops walking.

“What?”

“We’re going to need that big knife we brought. Can you walk back to the car and get it? It’s in the back.”

“What do we need it for?” Kevin asks. Russell moves out of the way so Kevin can see the five-foot high brush in their path.

“I’ll be back.” Kevin starts walking back to the car to get the machete.

“Make sure you keep it in the case. Don’t take it out, it’s sharp.

“Okay.”

A short time later, after chopping down the tall weeds, they make it to the railroad tracks.

Kevin stands next to his dad as his dad makes sure there are no trains coming. “If a train comes when we’re under the bridge, we’ll have to stay under it until the train goes by.”

“Cool!” Kevin says excitedly before Russell lets out a laugh.

“Did a train come when you were there?” Tammy asks.

“Three of them.”

“Did that scare you?”

“A little, but I didn’t let my dad know that. We did find his initials.”

“You miss him, don’t you?” Tammy says.

“Before my mom passed away, at least I had some time to get used to her possibly not being around anymore because she was getting more sick, but when my dad died, it was sudden. Later after that story of us going fishing, he died in the accident. When the police arrived, there was nothing left of the car; it apparently exploded when it hit the bottom of the cliff.”

“How deep was the cliff where the car exploded?”

“I don’t know, but it was a sharp drop off.”

Tammy stares at Kevin as he stares at the wall thinking.

“You have a lot of unfinished business, don’t you?”

“What do you mean by that?” Kevin asks.

“I just saw you staring at the wall, obviously thinking of something. Thinking of your dad.”

“Do you mean I have a lot of unfinished business with my dad?”

“Yeah, something like that. You’re hanging on to things.”

“Yeah, I guess I am,” Kevin replies.

“That isn’t good.”

“I know it.”

The doorbell rings. Kevin stands up off of the chair and walks to the front door.

“Hey, guys,” Kevin says after he opens the front door.

“Hey,” Brian says to Kevin.

“Hi,” Brian’s wife says.

“Hi, girls.” Kevin greets Katelyn and Lisa, Brian and Joan’s two young daughters.

Ten minutes later, Kevin and Brian step outside and onto the porch. “Have you heard anything yet?” Brian asks Kevin as Kevin sits on the porch swing.

“About the Riley trip?”

“Yeah.”

“No. They said they’ll call me and tell me who’s going. They’ll call anytime now, I’m assuming.

Kevin and Brian talk a little more about other things. After a while, the pizza delivery guy shows up and delivers dinner.

“How did you know what my favorite dinner was?” Brian asked.

“I’ve known you too long not to know, brother,” Kevin answered.

After dinner, Tammy stands up and clears the dishes from the table. The two young girls make their way to the basement to play video games on the TV. For the next forty-five minutes Joan and Tammy put pictures in a new photo album for Joan, and when they finish, they play cards. Kevin and Brian spend some time in the garage working on Kevin’s dirt bike that doesn’t run.

Brian’s cell phone rings. It’s D.C.

“Hello. Ya, what’s happening?” Brian listens for several seconds, and the phone call ends. Brian says to Kevin, “They’d better give me my own room again.”

“That’s weird, they usually call me first,” Kevin remarks.

“That *is* weird.” Brian agrees.

“Are you leaving when I do?”

“Yeah,” Brian answers.

Kevin’s cell phone rings this time. The call lasts for a minute while Kevin says some yesses and okays. He pushes the end button on his cell phone and explains to Brian, “The team is Ross Bentley, a D.C. mining supervisor who will be pulled off from a mine in California; Jon Sheppard from the US Geological Survey in Washington; and Chat.”

Chapter Four

The following Sunday, Kevin and Tammy attend the morning church service at Denver Center, as do Brian and his family.

When they walk in the front door, Kevin immediately recognizes the smell as the door shuts behind them. It's the same smell every Sunday. Wooden pews, old stomped-on carpet throughout the upstairs of the church, and the smell of several perfumes after the teenagers spiced up their wrists before coming to service.

After the members of the congregation meet and greet each other, the sermon starts as Rick speaks, "Because we're all eating lunch together here today," he begins to explain, "we only have a few minutes, so the message will be short.

Everyone, please turn to Matthew 10:26 if you have your Bibles." After several seconds, Rick starts to read the Scriptures. "So do not be afraid, there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Rick then looks at the congregation and says, "Why is it that people believe this world is worth going to Hell for? The center of earth is estimated to be eleven thousand degrees. I have often wondered: how long does it take for someone being in Hell to finally change their heart if it wasn't changed when they looked

at the face of Jesus Christ in judgment? Or, how long after being in Hell does it take for that person to finally repent, as if it mattered. One minute, one second, ten seconds?

“God’s word tells us that Hell is a place of torment. Is anything in this world worth an eternity in Hell? Hell was originally made for the eternal punishment of Lucifer and his demons, not human beings. If such a place will torment fallen angels that God hated so much because they rebelled against him and were kicked out of Heaven, then imagine what it does to human beings. It will even punish the most evil that are among us; that is how bad such a place is. Let’s pray.”

The congregation bow their heads before he begins to pray. “Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit will work in everybody’s heart that’s in here right now. I pray that you would stir people’s hearts and minds like they’ve never known before. Amen.”

Chapter Five

The next day at D.C. in the survey room, a place where all the maps and information to every mine is stored, Kevin is studying the Colonial journals. He is sitting at a large desk with a light above the paperwork belonging to each site. He opens an envelope and takes the journal of the Colonial mine out and skims through it. It says on page twelve:

September 4th 1106 hrs Logger Will Chang

Associate Prenter called in sick this morning. Kevin turns to page nineteen.

September 7th 1330 hrs Logger Will Chang

Associate Chims works 2 shifts tonight, says he can stay to cover for Lester.

September 7th 1938 hrs Logger Jon Schilling

Chims came on top for a minor hand injury and brought several pieces of clothing with him, said he found it near the elevator. Nobody claims possession.

2157 hrs p.m. Logger Jon Schilling 3rd shift starting.

Kevin flips through some more pages, and notices most of the papers about Riley are missing. At that moment, Brice walks into the room. Kevin asks, "Where are the Riley logs?"

"They're at the main office, supervisors are looking at 'em."

"Couldn't you just fax them?"

"Headquarters said they wanted the originals. When we shipped the logs to them, they shipped us something. Come on,

I've got to show you something." They leave the room and walk to Brice's office.

Kevin stands inside Brice's office next to the door. Brice uses his office phone. "Chat, meet us in the conference room." Brice hangs up the phone and calls Brian to do the same thing. He then unlocks a desk drawer and grabs a USB flash drive.

Kevin and Brice walk down the hallway and into the conference room. The room has a wooden oval table in the middle of it. On top of the table is a laptop. A few seconds later, Brian and Chat walk in.

"We got this video from the Riley mine; it's from the last investigation we just had." Brice then puts the flash drive into the laptop and walks over to the light switches and dims the lights in the room. He goes back to the laptop and puts the video on the screen on the wall through a projector and pushes play. It is footage that is being taped by Scott Wilson as he is being lowered into the mine on the elevator. It is very dark, with the exception of the light on the video camera and the light coming off of Scott's safety helmet.

Kevin and Brian look at each other surprised; they didn't know there was another investigation, let alone a video of it.

Brice presses the spacebar on the computer to pause the video, "We sent three people up there two weeks ago to look at the mine and record everything, but there's only two people on this video; we don't know what happened to the third person."

"Who was the third person?" Kevin asks.

“John Lee.” It shows on Kevin that he doesn’t know the person. Brice pushes play again.

“Can you hear me?” Scott asks.

“I hear you loud and clear,” Mike answers. The four cannot see Mike because he is aboveground, recording Scott’s video and both of their audio onto a computer.

“Hold it,” Kevin says. Brice pushes the space bar on the laptop. “That’s a mile deep mine and you had WiFi set up?”

“Yeah, it’s what the foreman wanted because the mine was a mile deep.”

“Who *is* the foreman? Or was the foreman?” Kevin asks.

“Larry Seymour.”

“Ok,” Kevin replies while shaking his head *yes*.

Brice pushes play on the laptop again.

Six minutes and one mile later, Scott reaches the bottom. He grabs a spare flashlight that is attached to the elevator and puts it in his pocket.

Chapter Six

“One hundred and forty degrees, Mike, and I’ve reached the bottom.”

“I hear ya loud and clear. That’s pretty hot, are you going to be alright?” Mike asks.

Scott looks around in the mine before answering. “It’s a dry heat,” he answers.

“That’s weird.”

“Yeah, it is,” Scott replies. “I wish we could’ve gotten the mine lights to work, though.”

Scott puts the heat resistant suit helmet down on his head and face, walks through the mine fifteen feet and approaches something on the ground and picks it up. “Looks like an employee’s shirt.” He drops it on the ground and continues to walk through.

“From none of our employees,” Mike replies.

A minute later and a hundred feet in, Scott focuses the camera farther into the mine. He says, “Mike.”

“Go ahead,”

“I hear somebody.”

“No one else is down there.”

“Well, I’m hearing them. I can’t tell what they’re saying, but they’re definitely voices.”

Scott walks farther into the mine and focuses the camera on something that is on the ground again. “I see something.”

“I see it, too,” Mike says as he continuously looks at the monitor on top.

Scott walks up to a tennis shoe. “Mike, are you looking at this?” he says as he focuses on the shoe. “It’s an old tennis shoe. I mean, really old. What’s it doing down here?”

Scott looks at his temperature box attached to his belt and says, “The temperature just rose thirty degrees.” Scott turns his head and says, “I hear someone again.”

“Everyone has deserted the mine, Scott.”

“I think they’re yelling for help.”

“Scott, did you hear me? Everybody has evacuated this mine. Maybe it’s time for you to come back up.”

“I heard you, hold on. Somebody is yelling for me; I think they’re calling my name.”

“That’s impossible,” Mike says as he turns his head around, hearing what sounds like somebody walking behind him, stepping on fallen leaves.

“Hold on.” Scott walks farther into the mine. “I smell something burning.”

“Somebody else is up here.” Scott stops walking. “What?”

“I said, somebody else is up here, too,” Mike answers, “but I don’t see anybody.”

“I’m on my way.” Scott turns around and quickly starts walking back to the elevator when he hears somebody behind him. He stops, turns his head, and sees a body lying on the ground. It wasn’t there a moment ago. “Mike, somebody’s down here!”

“Well, somebody is up here!” Mike continues to scope the area around him with the flashlight. He walks a few yards away

from the monitor, but he doesn't know that behind him, something that was standing in a tree, is now floating down to the ground. It's nine feet tall with wings spreading from side to side. It's standing right behind Mike. It says to him with a growly voice, "Mike."

Scott hears the deep and coarse voice on his headphones while he is kneeling down to the being that is laying face down to the ground. "Mike, are you there?"

Scott doesn't receive an answer. He turns the body around that's laying on the ground and sees that he's alive.

"Are you okay?" the man who has very dark skin and no hair asks Scott.

"Yeah, I'm alright. Are you?" Scott thought the question was a little unusual.

"No, help me, I can't move," he tells Scott.

Then, while looking straight at Scott, he starts to laugh. Scott stands up and takes a step back while staring at him in the beam of his flashlight. "Help me! Help me!" The being continues to laugh and say, but while he is saying it over and over, the voice keeps getting louder and louder, loud enough that Scott must put his hands over his ears. He sprints towards the elevator.

"Mike, I'm coming up," Scott frantically says.

By this time, Scott is running as fast as he can. With the elevator in his sight, he accidentally trips and falls. As he lies there face down trying to catch his breath to get back up, a crack opens up in the ground underneath him that's just small enough

for his body to remain there above it. He raises his head, looking at the crack that has light coming out of it. Then, Scott's head slowly lowers as his soul visibly leaves his body and goes into the crack. The crack then closes back up.

Brice pushes the space bar on the laptop. "That was the last we heard of 'em. We found this recording a short time later," Brice explains as he stands in front of everybody. "Once you get to the town of Longlac, you'll be staying at the North Inn hotel, twenty-one miles from Riley and Colonial. A rental car will be waiting for you at the Longlac regional airport. You already have reservations at the hotel. Thursday night, you'll be meeting Ross Bentley and Jon Sheppard at a reserved banquet room at seven p.m. You will also be using the banquet room for your home base. All of the equipment you order, Kevin, will be waiting for you in there. We've used the North Inn hotel before; they should have the banquet room set up for you when you get there."

Brice gives the crew their airline tickets, saying, "You're scheduled to leave next Monday." Brian and Chat look at the airline tickets. "You'll arrive at Winnipeg, Manitoba just after eight p.m. Then from there, Dennis Landers, a local, will fly you to Longlac. That's it."

Brice opens the door and leaves the room. The three stand up, but only Chat leaves. Kevin tells Brian, "I was looking at the inventory sheet of Riley this morning. Miners there have been pulling more than double the amount of gold D.C. expected

they'd pull out. I think they're going to have a problem if I tell them to shut the mine down." Brian responds with a sigh.

Later that day, following work, Kevin drives to the graveyard where his father is buried. Two large, tall gray pillars are on each side of the graveyard entrance. He parks his truck next to the grave.

The gravestone says: Russell Dave Christenson Born October 30, 1950 Died December 20, 1976.

The two memories that stand out the most with Kevin about his father are of their last fishing trip together and, of course, the night he died in the car accident.

After a few minutes of standing at the grave, Kevin gets back in his truck and drives away.

Chapter Seven

The following Monday, Kevin, Brian and Chat leave for Winnipeg. At the airport in Winnipeg, Canada, they have to wait two hours for Dennis Landers to arrive. When he does, they get into a small six-seat Piper airplane. Kevin is sitting in the front with Dennis.

“So, how long have you been doing this?” Brian asks the pilot while they are in the air.

“Doing what?”

“Flying an airplane,” Brian answers with a little frustration.

“Sixteen years,” the pilot answers. “So, what brings you guys here? Mining?”

“Sort of,” Kevin replies.

“When I fly for DC, I usually haul miners.

“We’re investigating one of their mines. We’re from DC, though.”

“Why? What kinds of problems have you been having?”

Kevin turns his head and looks at Brian. “I’m not at liberty,” Kevin answers.

Dennis interrupts Kevin, “Ok, fair enough.”

It shows on Kevin that he’s not happy with the pilot’s demeanor.

“Are you from Longlac?” Kevin asks.

“Yeah, grew up there. Again, sorry I was late. I wanted to wait for a storm to pass. I was beginning to wonder if I was even going to make it tonight or not.”

Kevin notices something underneath the dash of the airplane on the pilot's side. He stares at it, trying to figure out what it is. The pilot turns on the overhead lamp and changes the directions on the airplane's autopilot. Kevin is able to tell after the light was turned on that the object under the dash is a butt of a handgun.

“Can you get into the brown bag back there and grab me my water?” Dennis asks Brian.

“Sure.” Brian finds the brown bag, gets the bottle out of it and hands it to Dennis.

The pilot notices Kevin staring at the butt of the gun under the dash.

“You never know who you're going to fly with; I don't always work for DC.” Kevin looks at Dennis agreeing, and shakes his head up and down. Two hours later, they arrive in Longlac. The three get their rented vehicle, a Jeep Cherokee, and make their way to their hotel, six miles from the airport. After checking in, they go to the banquet room and find along the wall on the floor six extra-large cardboard boxes, containing the equipment D.C. shipped. Kevin and his team brought some things with them, but most of the equipment they needed was at the main office. They open the boxes and find inside two laptop computers, five headphones with microphones attached, one video camera, three locators used to find people in case of a collapse in a mine, several stationary spotlights, flashlights, five extra long-range walkie-talkies, six gas sensors, three temperature sensors used for mining. And last, four

heat-resistant suits. “Everyone,” Kevin says to get the team’s attention, “Ross and Jon will be here any moment. Ross is our assistant, and Jon is from the USGS; I had him come out here to make sure the mine isn’t acting the way it is because of some volcanic activity under the ground somewhere. It’s the only thing I could think of about the situation.”

A minute later, Ross Bentley and Jon Sheppard walk in. The six greet each other before everyone except Kevin sits down on the chairs that surround several tables making a rectangle in the middle of the banquet room. Kevin pulls out a folder from his bag, opens it, and puts it on the table in front of him. “Two-man teams in the mine as usual, but only one team in there at once. Everybody will have the chance to go to the bottom. We’ll make our first descent tomorrow night when it stops raining, as the forecast is predicting heavy rain starting tomorrow morning into the evening. With all of the problems we’ve had at the mine, we’ll only be there at night; there’s less of a chance that eyes will be watching us. We have two generators right over there for lighting and computers, one is for backup.” Kevin points to the corner of the room where the generators are. “Jon and I will make the first descent, and then Brian and I will go the next night, and so on. Everyone that goes into the mine will wear everything that they have to wear, and remember to immediately check the air when you reach the bottom on every descent. Everyone has to wear heat-resistant suits.”

After the meeting, everyone except Kevin makes their way to the hotel rooms for the night, as Kevin goes to a local

department store and buys a camcorder to use personally for the investigation. He decided back in Denver to leave the one he already has, thinking he wouldn't need it, but has since changed his mind.

Chapter Eight

The next morning about three a.m., Kevin, unable to sleep, lies awake in his bed. He gets up and walks to the bathroom. While standing in front of the mirror, he looks around for a cup and finds one. He takes the plastic off of it, puts water in the cup and drinks it.

Since it's still dark out, he decides to drive to Riley and look around. He puts on his coat and grabs his raincoat, then drives to the site. Thirty minutes later, he pulls up and parks a couple of hundred feet from the mine. He turns off the engine and the headlights. Then he reaches over to the passenger seat and grabs his flashlight and the new camcorder, gets out, and shuts the door behind him. He turns the camera on and the light on the camera and starts recording.

He looks up into the dark gray, cloudy sky as he is walking, and notices the air is calm with rain sprinkling. He looks to his left and right and doesn't see any houses around from his eye's view. On his right are some trees, and a small hill behind them. Immediately to the left is an open field used for farming.

Before he reaches the mine, he walks by a small building that stores the engine that controls the elevator to the mine.

Kevin arrives at the opening of the ground, the mine, and stands on the edge of it while recording it with the camera.

He points his flashlight in all directions, determining where the equipment will be placed Thursday morning. He then grabs a tape measure from his coat pocket, kneels down, and measures the width of the opening; it's a nine-foot, seven-inch-wide circle.

Kevin wonders why it's so wide. He measures it again and comes up with the same width. "Why is it so wide? Kevin wonders out loud to himself.

He decides to start walking back to the Jeep, but when he gets to it, he stops and turns around because he hears people behind him. "It sounds like kids playing," he says to himself. Thinking nothing of it, Kevin gets into the truck, starts it up, and turns his head around to back up, then stops. At first it didn't dawn on him that kids wouldn't normally be outside playing this early in the morning.

He puts the truck back into park, turns it off and gets out, but doesn't hear anything anymore. Dismissing it, he gets back into the truck and drives back to the hotel. He falls asleep this time. bruno

At midnight the day after, the alarm clock goes off and Kevin awakens. He looks outside and sees that the rain has stopped. After taking a shower and getting ready, he leaves his hotel room and goes to the banquet room. In the room, he meets Brian and Chat who are waiting for him. "You guys are fast!" Kevin says.

"Kevin, I am so done staying here," Chat starts to explain. "Yesterday, the housekeepers came and woke me up to clean my room!"

"So?" Brian says.

"It was ten-thirty last night," Chat answers. An obviously confused Kevin and Brian don't say anything back. Soon afterwards, Jon and Ross show up. From there, Kevin, Brian and

Chat pack the Jeep up with all of the equipment, but first, they check some of the equipment again to make sure it's working correctly.

They ride in the Jeep with Kevin driving, and Jon and Ross follow in their rented minivan. Thirty minutes later, they arrive at Riley. It's very calm out, and twenty-seven degrees.

"This feels good," Brian tells Kevin as they get out of the truck. "What? Getting out of the hotel and doing something?" Kevin asks.

"You know it," Brian answers.

"I agree," Kevin replies.

Chapter Nine

Kevin grabs his work bag, another bag containing the camcorder he bought, and the microphone headsets, and walks to the mine. The rest of the team gets the rest of the equipment, including the generator. Brian checks the amount of gas in it, then turns it on. They lay out all of the equipment along the side of the mine.

Brian and Chat run extension cords from the generator to a table that the equipment will sit on. Brian gets two laptops and places them on the table; one is for telling Brian the temperature of the mine from a sensor Kevin will be wearing, the other is for locators that Kevin and Jon will wear.

Chat will run the monitor, recording the video camera Jon will use. Ross will be working communications with Kevin and Jon, he will be the only one speaking to them through their headsets.

Kevin walks to the small one-story building and unlocks a padlock on the elevator building's door. He starts the engine that powers the elevator. He walks back out of the elevator building with a rectangle box with a cord attached to it that controls the elevator. He brings the steel elevator above the surface of the ground.

Chat and Ross plug in stationary spotlights and lay them on the ground around the mine for lighting.

It takes a minute for Kevin and Jon to put the heat-resistant suits on, and all of the equipment.

“Are you ready?” Kevin asks everyone.

“We’re ready,” Chat answers.

Kevin and Jon walk onto the elevator. They put on hard hats after they turn on the flashlights attached to them. Kevin pushes the green button on the elevator and they start to lower. After the elevator gets to 20 feet, Kevin calls Ross, “Can you hear me, Ross?”

Ross answers, “Copy.

A couple of minutes later, Kevin says as he moves the microphone closer to his mouth, “Ross, you still copy?”

“Copy. You’re at fifteen hundred feet. We have good video.”

“Copy,” Kevin replies.

Jon leans over the elevator with the camera and zooms down deep into the mine.

“The temperature just went up eighteen degrees, Kevin,” Ross explains.

“Yeah, I know,” Kevin says. “I feel it.”

Several minutes later, they reach the bottom. They get off the elevator, and Kevin gets the gas sensor out of his pocket and turns it on. Ten seconds later, he turns it off and puts it back in his pocket. Kevin begins to explain to Jon, “If there were more than four of us down here at one time, we’d have to turn the ventilation system on.

“I know,” Jon replies.

Kevin walks over to two engines that run the conveyor belt system and the lighting in the mine, and turns the power switches on to both of them. Nothing happens, so he spends a

minute checking the engines, but can't find anything wrong with them. "Both engines aren't working. We'll go ahead and keep going, though," Kevin tells Ross.

"Ok," Ross replies.

The elevator is in the center of the mine. Hanging from the ceiling on both sides are light bulbs with cords attached to them. Throughout the mine, there are several floor jacks that help hold up the ceiling. The mine is nine feet wide at most places, and nine feet high; it goes in all directions except north.

"We're going to start making our way to the east end of the mine, Ross," Kevin explains.

"Copy that."

"You smell that?" Jon asks.

"Yeah! Smells like sulfur burning," Kevin says.

As they walk through, Kevin looks ahead of him as he points the camera on the wall to his left.

"Hold it," Ross tells Kevin as he looks at the monitor above. "Go back."

"Where?" Kevin asks.

"Walk back a few feet," Ross tells him. Kevin and Jon take a few steps back while looking around them. Kevin shines his flashlight on something red in color, but high, near the ceiling of the mine.

"Can you hold this? Kevin asks Jon.

"Yeah."

Kevin hands the camera to Jon before he points the camera to Kevin.

Kevin empties a five-gallon bucket that has rocks in it, and stands on it to reach the red object.

He takes a pocket knife out from his back pocket and stabs the dirt and rock, freeing the red object. "It's just a part of a shirt," Kevin explains. For the next hour, Kevin and Jon walk through the entire Riley mine but don't find anything unusual except for the part of the red t-shirt.

For the next couple of days, the crew continues to investigate the mine, but still finding nothing abnormal. Kevin and Brian descend again on Saturday night. "A day or two more of this and we can go home," Brian explains as they walk off the elevator.

"I talked to Brice and told him we'll stay a few more days and if we don't find anything by Tuesday, we'll head back to Denver," Kevin replies.

A few minutes later, in the mine that leads to the east, Kevin sees something a few feet ahead of them. "What's this?" Kevin says out loud. He kneels down, gets his pocket knife out once more, and breaks up the dirt and rock around a small white piece of paper sticking out of the ground. "I can't believe we missed this before, we've been walking right through here."

He holds the piece of paper in front of him. Kevin says to Brian, "It's a receipt from a grocery store. Dated March twelfth..." He pauses for a second, trying to read the faded print. "Nineteen fifty-two. I can barely read it, it's really faded."

“God, please don’t let this be another California mine,” Brian says. “How did it get down here? And why is it so old?” he says.

“That doesn’t make any sense to me either, unless someone else has been down here,” Kevin explains before he looks up at Brian. He stands up and says, “We’ve been stomping the ground a lot, maybe it was just us.”

“Maybe. Maybe not,” Brian responds.

After a few seconds of silence between the two, as Brian looks at the receipt and Kevin looks around, Kevin says to Jon, “We’re coming up.”

“Alright,” Jon answers.

When Kevin and Brian reach the top of the mine on the elevator, they remove their heat-resistant suits once more, and the rest of the crew gets the area ready to leave for the night. “Chat, do you have your binoculars?” Kevin asks. “Yeah.” Chat gives Kevin his binoculars.

“What’s up?” Brian asks as he stands next to Kevin.

“I see people at the Colonial with flashlights,” he replies.

Kevin and Brian walk towards the direction of the Colonial, stopping after they walk past their vehicles. “There’s people over there, at least two,” Kevin says as he still looks through the binoculars. “Pack up the rest of the stuff, we’re going over there.”

“You got it.” Brian turns around and goes back to the mine as Kevin still looks at the Colonial with the binoculars.

A short time later, as the sun is starting to light up the area, the crew drives over to Colonial, parking several hundred feet behind a parked car. Everyone gets out of the vehicles.

“Everyone stay here except for Brian,” Kevin tells them.

“You got it, boss,” Ross replies.

As they start walking without using flashlights because the sun is bright enough not to, Brian asks Kevin, “How long has this mine been shut down?”

“Since they shut down the Riley mine.” “Why did they...”

Kevin interrupts and answers Brian, “The miners refused to go in Colonial because of what’s happened in the Riley mine.”

“Oh, that makes sense.”

“It’s about the only thing around here that does make sense.”

“No joke there.”

As they get closer, Kevin and Brian see somebody standing next to the mine. He’s wearing a black leather coat, blue jeans, and a blue baseball cap. Then, as Kevin and Brian each stand partly behind a tree a hundred feet from the mine, the person starts walking towards them.

“How ya doing?” Kevin asks the stranger as him and Brian walk out from behind the tree.

“You scared me,” she says.

“We work for the Darrius Corporation; they own this mine,” Kevin begins to explain. “What are you doing here?”

“I’m Karen Lockner, a reporter for Channel 8 in Minneapolis. Are you two miners?”

“No,” Kevin answers.

Karen continues, “A while back, someone saw a body being pulled out of the mine; that’s why we’re here.”

Then a man walks up and says, “I’m Will.”

“You come this far north because of a mine?” Kevin asks Karen.

“None of the local TV news stations covered the story,” Karen replies.

“Then how did you know what happened?” Kevin asks.

“Someone who saw it happen called us.”

Kevin points to Karen’s car, before they all walk in that direction. Kevin begins to explain, “My crew and I have been here for a week and haven’t seen anything. I’m Kevin, the safety director at the Darrius Corporation; this is Brian.”

They arrive at Karen’s car. Kevin continues, “This is the Colonial. The mine you’re talking about is the Riley mine.” Kevin points at the Riley mine. “That’s the one we’re looking at.” He adds, “But this is private property, you’re not allowed to be here.”

“Kevin,” Brian says, “can you come over here for a minute?” The two walk far enough that Karen and Will can’t hear them talk. He explains to Kevin, “If we let them do their report and they see nothing is going on here, they’d go back to Minneapolis and that would be it.”

Kevin stands there for a moment thinking, and then walks back to Karen. “Alright, you can stay.”

“Thanks!” Karen excitedly responds while smiling.

“Follow us,” Kevin tells Karen and Will as he smiles, too.

As the crew, including Karen and Will, drive to Riley, Brian says to Kevin, “Are you going to call D.C. and tell them about the reporter being here?”

“No, not yet,” Kevin answers. I’m just wondering whose body was pulled out of the mine and who pulled it out of there.

Chapter Ten

The team puts all the equipment back around Riley.

“You’ll be going down inside the mine with me again,” Kevin tells Jon.

“Okay,” Jon answers.

They walk onto the elevator after they put their equipment on again. Karen is sitting next to Ross in front of the monitor, watching the video Jon is sending with the camera.

“So, how long did you say you’ve been working for the USGS? Six months?” he asks Jon as they descend to the bottom of the mine.

“Yeah.”

“Is Riley the first time you’ve ever been in a gold mine?” Kevin asks.

“Yeah.”

Suddenly, the engine to the elevator stops working; a strong jolt causes Kevin and Jon to grab the elevator rails. “What’s going on?” Jon asks after the elevator stops bouncing.

“Ross, what’s the problem?” Kevin asks as he looks above.

“I don’t know,” Ross answers.

Kevin and Jon stand there for a couple of minutes waiting. Suddenly, the elevator starts to fall at a high speed. They hold on to the rails. Kevin raises his voice and says to Jon as the elevator keeps falling, “Bend your knees in case we hit the bottom!”

“What’s going on?” Karen asks Ross as her cameraman is filming.

Brian rushes to the elevator building and pushes the emergency button. The two cables attached to the elevator swiftly come to a stop. Down below, the stop causes the elevator to bounce and hit the sides of the mine. Jon loses his grip and falls backwards on his back; the upper half of his body hangs over the edge. Kevin lets go of the bar with his left hand and grabs Jon by his heat-resistant suit.

After the elevator stops bouncing, Jon gets back up with Kevin's help. "Thanks," Jon says to Kevin.

"Are you guys alright?" Ross asks.

"Are you going to be okay?" Kevin asks.

Jon says, "Yeah." He looks up and says, "That was interesting." "You want to go back up?" Kevin asks.

"No, I'll be alright,"

"We're okay," Kevin begins to tell Ross. "What happened? We're almost to the bottom," Kevin says as he shines his flashlight downward. "Can you lower us, and then figure out what's going on with the elevator?"

Suddenly, the elevator starts to fall again. Several seconds later, it hits the ground. Kevin remains standing but Jon lands on the elevator on his back again. Jon slowly starts to get up as Kevin grabs his arm and helps him once more. Jon dusts off his suit and puts his hand on the back of his head.

Kevin sees blood on Jon's forehead. "Where are you cut?"

"It's nothing," Jon says as he wipes the blood off. "Man, it's hot!"

“Yeah, it is. We’re not going to be able to go back up until they figure out what’s wrong with the elevator,” Kevin explains to Jon.

“Ross, we’re on the bottom, if you haven’t guessed. We’re stuck here until you guys figure out what’s going on with the elevator.”

“We’ll let you know when we find out,” Ross answers.

“Alright,” Kevin says.

Jon checks his personal equipment to make sure it still works.

“Is your equipment still working?” Kevin asks.

“Yeah, I believe so,”

“We’re going to start making our way to the east,” Kevin tells Ross.

“Brian and Chat are looking at it now,” Ross explains. “It says it’s a hundred and forty degrees, guys, but I don’t have any video.”

“It’s not working,” Jon tells Kevin as he shakes the camera, thinking it will do some good.

“Alright,” Kevin answers Ross. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Roger that,” Ross replies.

Jon lays the camera on the ground next to the wall, several feet from the elevator before they start walking through the mine. A hundred and fifty feet in, Kevin asks Jon, “Want to take a break?”

“Sounds good.”

While sitting on the ground and leaning their backs against the wall, Kevin pulls out the gas sensor from his pocket and checks the air.

“Checking for gas?” Jon asks.

“Yeah, I forgot to check when we got here.”

“What does it say?”

“It says we don’t have anything to worry about.” Kevin puts the sensor back in his pocket.

A few minutes later, Ross explains to Kevin, “We’re having a hard time getting this thing to work right. We won’t be able to get a mechanic here until later this morning.”

“Yeah, I know. I don’t want to be down here that long.”

“I’ll be back,” Ross says.

“Have you ever had that happen to you before? The elevator dropping like that?” Jon asks.

“Once,” Kevin begins to explain. “When I first came to work for D.C., we were on the elevator going up and the cable broke, causing the elevator to hit the bottom, but we were only about ten feet above the ground. Always bend your knees if the elevator is falling; it helps cushion the hit if you do hit the bottom. The elevator system is supposed to be checked after every third shift. It just sounds like an electrical problem, though.”

Up above, Brian and Chat are in the elevator building, removing the cover off the fuse box. “No! You don’t have to unscrew that one, just take out the three screws on the side,” Brian tells Chat.

“Have you ever done this before?” Chat asks.

“Yes, I have, more than once. Unscrew those three screws,” Brian says as he points to them.

Back on the bottom as they sit in silence, Kevin goes to stand up, but accidentally bumps his elbow on the wall behind him. Jon is relaxed and has his head facing down and his eyes closed. Kevin walks away from Jon, several feet from Jon’s left, and hits the wall with his right hand. Kevin then grabs a five-gallon bucket, turns it upside down and stands on it. He feels around the wall, pushing it with his hands.

Jon looks over at Kevin with his flashlight and says, “What’s up?”

Kevin hits the wall with his hand. “It feels like it’s hollow on the other side of this wall,” Kevin answers.

Kevin looks around for a shovel and finds one. “You’ll probably want to back away.” Jon stands up and steps away from the wall.

Kevin hits the wall with the shovel. Nothing happens. He hits it several more times, using all of his strength. Suddenly, after hitting the wall a total of eight times, the wall comes down, causing a pile of the rock and dirt to pile on the ground several feet high. The opening is seven feet wide.

They both point their flashlights to the big and empty cave that’s on the other side of the opening.

“What in the world?” A shocked Jon says.

“I’m wondering the same. Why is this here?”

“Man, it’s really hot in there, too!” Jon says as they both feel heat coming from the cave.

“Yeah, I feel the heat. The walls are pitch black.”

“Did your guys do this?” Jon asks.

“Make this cave? No, it isn’t on the map anyway.”

“It’s got to be twenty-five feet high in there,” Jon says as they both shine the flashlights up to the ceiling.

“The walls are perfectly vertical,” Kevin says.

“Could mining equipment do this? This perfectly shaped?”

“Yeah, but still, it would be on the map. I don’t see the other side.” Kevin puts on his suit hood that was hanging behind him on his back; Jon looks at him and does the same.

Kevin walks over the piled rock and dirt; Jon follows him from behind. Kevin pulls out his temperature sensor. “It reads two hundred and twenty-eight degrees.”

“It can’t be that hot,” Jon tells Kevin.

“It is.”

“What does the gas sensor say? Poisonous gasses,” Jon asks.

Kevin gets the gas sensor out of his pocket and turns it on. “No gas again. High levels of sulfur, but that’s it.” Kevin puts the gas sensor back in his pocket. “Ross, are you there?” No reply. “You try calling him,” Kevin tells Jon.

“Are you there, Ross?” Jon doesn’t get a reply either. “Are these radios working?” Jon asks Kevin.

“I hear you on mine.”

“Yeah, I hear you on mine, too,” Jon says.

Kevin walks back over the rock and dirt back into the mine again. “Ross, do you copy?”

“I copy,” Ross answers.

“Hold on. Tell me if you can hear me.” Kevin counts from one to ten while walking back into the cave. “Are you there, Ross?” Hearing no answer from Ross again, he walks back into the mine. “Can you hear me now?”

“Yeah, but you faded away after you started counting,” Ross says. “What’s up?”

“It’s hard to breathe without the hoods,” Kevin starts to explain.

“We found a cave that’s not on the map. The temperature is two-hundred and twenty-eight degrees inside it, and the radios don’t work when we’re inside the cave.”

Up above, Ross, Brian and Chat look at each other, surprised. Karen looks at Will, showing that she’s confused, too.

“We’ll get back to you,” Kevin says.

“What do you think?” Jon asks Kevin.

“It’s the first time I’ve ever seen anything like this. Two-hundred and twenty-eight degrees?”

A minute later, as they continue to walk around, Kevin gets out his pocket knife, breaks some dirt away from the wall and puts it under his hood to smell it. “I’ve never heard of dirt smelling like smoke. That’s the first.” Kevin tosses the dirt to the ground.

Kevin shines his flashlight towards the opposite end of where the wall came down, "It's too far to see the other side," he says to Jon before Jon does the same thing with his flashlight. Kevin puts the light back on the wall and says, "There isn't anything holding the ceiling up, either."

A minute later, back in the mine, Kevin asks Ross over the radio, "What's up with the elevator, guys?"

"Hold on," Ross answers. Several seconds later, Ross comes back on the radio and says, "We got it, you can come back up."

Jon then comes out of the cave and they both start walking towards the direction of the elevator.

Suddenly, faint voices are heard coming from the mine. Both Kevin and Jon quit walking to listen after they remove their head covers.

"What in the world..." Jon says.

They both stand there listening for several seconds while they shine their flashlights towards the voices in the mine.

"Everybody is talking at the same time," Jon says as they both remain still.

"I noticed," Kevin says.

"I can't figure out what they're saying, though."

Kevin turns back around towards the direction of the elevator as he hears voices coming from there now. "I can't send miners down here yet," Kevin says.

They both remain standing there for several minutes, listening to the voices until they stop. "Let's go," Kevin tells

Jon. They slowly walk back to the elevator, trying to hear if there are any more voices.

Once they make it back, the elevator takes them up without any problems. “Man, it’s bright out here!” Jon says.

“What was wrong with the elevator?” Kevin asks Brian.

“One of the gears attached to the pulley has to be replaced; the teeth are worn out.”

“How did you fix it?” Kevin asks.

“I adjusted the rest of the gears.”

“Good job,” Kevin says.

“What happened? You found another mine?” Brian asks.

“Yes, no. Sort of,” Kevin starts to explain. “I collapsed the wall using a shovel and we found a cave on the other side of it that didn’t have any supports holding the ceiling up. It was over two-hundred degrees in there.”

“We heard a bunch of voices, too,” Jon starts to explain as he unzips his suit. “A bunch of people talking. We couldn’t understand what they were saying.”

“You must’ve hit the bottom of the shaft pretty hard, huh?” Chat jokingly says.

As Kevin and Jon are putting their suits inside their bags, Jon turns to Kevin and says, “Shoot! I forgot the camera.”

Kevin looks at Brian and then looks at what he’s looking at. Once Kevin sees the monitor, he says, “You’ve got to be kidding.” Jon looks at the monitor, too. It shows the camera is working and all the mine lights on. Will hurriedly grabs his camera and records the monitor that everybody is looking at.

Chapter Eleven

Jon asks Kevin, “Where’s your flashlight?”

“That’s not a flashlight. Look at all of the lighting, Jon!” A slightly frustrated Kevin says.

Everybody continues to stare at the monitor.

“Did you see...? Kevin stops in the middle of the sentence.

“I saw it,” Brian answers.

“Saw what?” Jon asks but doesn’t get an answer.

As everyone stands in front of the monitor, including Karen and Will, Ross gets back from taking equipment to the truck and looks at the screen, too. “What are you looking at?”

“It was there a second ago,” Brian explains.

“What was?” Ross asks.

“A light,” Brian answers.

“An orb is what they call it,” Kevin explains.

Ross responds, “That was probably just the screen playing games. Why are all the lights on?”

“No, something was there. It wasn’t the screen, it was moving,” Brian responds.

Several seconds go by as they all stare at the monitor.

Kevin says, “There it is.” The orb is coming from the other end of the mine and getting closer to the camera.

“You were right!” Ross says. The orb disappears again.

“Jon, did you turn the camera’s microphone on before we went down?” Kevin asks.

“Yeah.”

Kevin reaches over to the monitor and turns the volume up. A constant loud noise comes through on the speaker. “I know what that is, the conveyor belts,” Kevin explains.

“Yupp,” Brian agrees.

Kevin continues to say, “But we haven’t turned them on.” Then suddenly, all of the lights hanging from the ceiling start flashing on and off rapidly. “What?” Kevin whispers to himself. As everyone continues to look at the monitor, Chat stands up from kneeling and says to Kevin, “And you want me to go down there?”

Kevin then says to everyone, “We’re going back down.” He turns towards Jon and tells him, “Let’s go!” Kevin then turns to Karen and says, “You realize that nothing is going on.”

“That’s an understatement,” a slightly frustrated Karen says.

“Everything you say about what’s going on here has to be run by me first. I’m not going to make you leave.” Kevin turns his head from Karen to Brian and says, “Because, frankly, everything we’ve seen so far is open to speculation.”

A short time later, Kevin and Jon make their way back onto the elevator; they’re wearing the heat resistant suits again. Brian walks over to the elevator and says to Kevin, “Are you sure you want to do this right now? It’s daylight.”

“Yes, I do.”

Chapter Twelve

“We’ve made it, Brian. The conveyor belt engines aren’t on anymore but the lights are,” Kevin says as they get off the elevator.

“We hear you.”

“How are the lights on when the engines aren’t running?” Jon asks Kevin.

“The batteries,” Kevin answers. “We’re going to the east again,” he explains to Brian.

“Roger.”

Jon picks up the video camera that’s still working. The moment they start walking, the engines turn on and the conveyor belts start working. Kevin quickly walks over to the fuse box and removes the main power fuses and the engines stop. He says to Jon and the crew above, “I removed the fuses to the engines.”

Kevin turns around and takes one step away from the engines before they start up again. He turns around and stares at both of the engines.

A confused Kevin turns to Jon, who is behind him, and motions to him that they need to start walking through the mine. Jon turns around to follow Kevin who has already started walking. The mine’s lights turn off. The two get their flashlights out. Several hundred feet later, the lights turn back on.

Up above, Ross is watching the temperature on the laptop computer. He tells Brian, “Tell Kevin the temperature says it’s three-hundred degrees.”

“Kevin, Ross says the temperature down there is three-hundred degrees.”

“That’s not right,” Kevin explains. “If it was that hot, I’m sure we’d know it. We don’t even have our hoods on.” Kevin gets his temperature sensor and looks at it. “My temp says it’s one-thirty-eight. Ross is wrong.”

Suddenly, all the light bulbs start breaking by themselves, one by one, on both sides of the mine. Kevin and Jon remain standing there, listening as they hear the bulbs breaking farther and farther into the mine until they can’t hear them anymore.

“What’s going on?” Kevin says to himself.

“Four-hundred and ninety, Kevin.” Brian anxiously says.

Kevin shakes his head *no* and looks at the sensor again, and says to Brian, “It’s not that hot. If it was, we’d be dead.”

Jon, barely able to talk, and with perspiration covering his face, looks over at Kevin and says, “Yeah, it is!” Suddenly, part of the wall and a large part of the ceiling above it collapses and crushes Jon. Kevin is able to quickly move away, causing it to miss him. As Kevin stands there watching it pile up, Jon is pulled out from under the rocks and thrown against the wall three feet above the ground by an invisible force. Then more of the wall comes down, landing on Jon again.

A shocked Kevin stands there watching it happen. After the rocks and dirt stops falling, Kevin quickly digs Jon out just enough to reach his neck and check his pulse. When he doesn’t find one, he digs Jon out as much as he can and uses CPR on him.

A little less than a minute later, Jon comes back to life and screams, “Help me! I’m on fire!” Jon’s eyes become still. “Help!” Jon continues to yell, but his lips aren’t moving. Kevin checks his pulse but doesn’t find one.

“Help me!” Kevin hears Jon yelling but his voice is coming from behind Kevin. Kevin turns his head around and points the flashlight to the other side of where the wall came down where Jon’s voice is coming from.

He sees a pile of clothes leading up to the twenty-foot ceiling while listening to Jon’s yelling get fainter and fainter. Following the direction of Jon’s voice, he takes a step into the cave and points his flashlight to the left and the right. The clothes of every color extend fifty feet to both sides of Kevin, to the side walls. The highest of the clothes is in the middle, directly in front of Kevin but fifty feet in.

Kevin quickly starts walking back to the elevator. He lies on his back while the elevator returns back atop the ground. Just before it reaches the top, he stands back up.

“Where’s Jon?” Ross asks.

Kevin walks off the elevator but doesn’t say anything. “I’ll explain, just start packing the stuff up, guys.”

As everyone starts to gather all the equipment, Brian stands in front of Kevin wondering what happened. Kevin explains, “He’s still down there. Part of the mine collapsed; he was killed. Get all the stuff together and pack it up. We can’t get his body until tonight; it’s too light out now.

Kevin looks at Karen and says, “Just keep all of this quiet for now, please.”

“Okay,” Karen answers while shaking her head *yes*.

On the way back to the hotel, Kevin explains to them all of the details of what happened, not mentioning Jon getting slammed against the wall, though.

Once back at the hotel, Kevin asks Brian to meet him in his room. Brian takes his and Kevin’s equipment to the banquet hall first. “I didn’t tell the whole story,” Kevin says as he sits on the end of the bed and Brian sits on a chair next to the window in the hotel room.

“What happened?” Brian asks.

“Jon was buried underneath the part of the wall that came down, and then something pulled him out and threw him against another part of the wall that was still there. Then that wall came down on him.”

“Oh man!” Brian says while turning his head and looking out of the window.

“I also didn’t tell you, after the wall came down, another cave was on the other side. I didn’t get a long look at it, but there were clothes everywhere.”

“What? Clothes?” A surprised Brian says.

“Yeah.”

“Well, what do you want to do?” Brian asks.

“I think we’re done here. We’ll get Jon’s body tonight. I’ll call D.C. here in a minute and tell them to keep the mine closed.”

Brian stands up and starts to leave the room. “Call me after you talk to them, let me know what they say,” Brian says before he shuts the hotel room door behind him.

Kevin picks up the phone and calls Brice, but no one answers. He gets into bed, puts the covers on him, and turns off the light.

A few hours later, Kevin is sleeping when somebody knocks on his door. He turns the hallway light on in the room and then opens the door; it’s Mike Wallace.

Chapter Thirteen

“What?” a surprised Kevin says. “I thought you were dead!”

“Can I come in?”

“Of course,” Kevin says before opening the door.

Mike walks in and sits on one of the chairs in the room. He looks like he hasn't had any sleep for several days. He's wearing dirty clothes and has rings of sleeplessness under his eyes.

“You alright? What happened? You've been missing.”

“Did you guys get the recording?” Mike asks.

“The flash drive? Yeah, we watched it before we came here.”

“I left it for you.”

“Why haven't you contacted us?” Kevin asks as he pulls up a chair.

“I've been talking to my wife. She was here for a few days; She went back to the States yesterday. I haven't called anybody else, I've been trying to figure out what happened that night. I was hoping they'd send you to investigate the mine; I've been waiting for you.”

“What *did* happen that night?” Kevin asks.

“Ever since that demon threw me like a rag doll, I'm a firm believer in God.”

“Why have you been hiding, and why didn't you deliver the recording yourself?” Kevin asks.

“When I went back to the mine the next day, I put the recording, the flash drive, in a box and left it in the elevator

building. Then, three people I've never seen before pulled up at the mine; I ran over to the cornfield where they wouldn't see me. I've never seen them before. There was a tall guy there. He was telling the other two guys to do things, like get the electronic equipment and put it in the vehicle, turn off the elevator, but when they left, I turned the elevator back on, just in case Scott would come back up. He never did."

"What happened to you that night when Scott was in the mine? Just before your conversation with Scott ended, we heard a strange, demonic voice say your name."

"Well, when I heard that voice, I turned around and saw a dark figure about ten feet tall standing in front of me. It picked me up and threw me a good thirty feet or so. Needless to say, I got up off the ground staggering, then I got in the truck and took off."

"I've been in Riley several times," Kevin says. "I never saw Scott."

"You and your crew. Who is it, Chat and Brian?"

"Yeah. And Ross and Jon, but Jon was killed this morning; the wall came down on us."

"What? Who's Jon?" a surprised Mike says.

"He was from the USGS."

"Man! What are you going to do next?" Mike asks.

"We're going back in Riley in the morning."

"I'll go with you."

"Why?"

“I cannot let this go until I know what’s happening in that mine, and what happened to Scott. Believe me, I was tempted to disappear from everyone at D.C., but I couldn’t. I waited for you to get here, and to make contact with you so that we can investigate it together.”

“You’ve never been the type of person to walk away from a job. I can’t get a hold of Brice to tell him about Jon. I’ll try again; I’ll let him know that you’re here.”

“Okay,” Mike replies. “By the way, can I stay in here tonight? I’ve been at the other hotel down the street but I don’t care for it much, and this hotel is booked up.”

“Yeah, no problem. I’m going to go pay Brian a visit, tell him you’re here. I’ll be back.”

“Okay. Tell him I said hi.”

“Will do,” Kevin replies before leaving the room. Kevin arrives at Brian’s room and knocks on the door. After he opens the door, Kevin says to Brian, “Mike Wallace is here.”

“What?” A surprised Brian responds.

“Yeah. He told me to tell you he said hi. I couldn’t get a hold of Brice. We’re going back into the mine. I don’t think this thing is over with. Besides, if we quit and go back home, they’ll send another team out here to investigate it and we don’t want that.”

“I agree. We need to do it. Whatever you want to do.”

“Okay, can you do me a favor and call the team and update them?”

“No problem.”

“Thanks. I’ll talk to you later.”

“Talk to you later.” Kevin leaves and goes back to his room. Kevin and Mike spend thirty minutes talking before going to sleep; Mike sleeps on the spare bed.

The team arrives at Riley at midnight later that day, as do Karen and Will.

Kevin looks at the mine and notices something different from the night before. He gets his measuring tape and measures the width of the opening again. “Brian, take this end of the measuring tape and go to the other side,” Kevin says. Brian does so.

“What does it say?” Brian asks.

“I think it’s wider. I measured it before; it was nine feet and seven inches, now it’s just over eleven feet wide.” Kevin pauses before saying, “Which is impossible, and doesn’t make any sense.”

A short time later, Kevin and Mike get on the elevator. For the first time since the California mine, goosebumps run across Kevin’s skin as he starts to lower the elevator.

Chapter Fourteen

“We’re going back to the east to get Jon’s body,” Kevin starts to explain to Ross over the radio.” “We’ll bring him back to the elevator.” A few minutes later in the mine, Kevin and Mike walk up to Jon’s body.

“Is that what you were talking about?” Mike asks as he shines his flashlight to the large cave of clothes.

“Yeah,” Kevin answers.

They both pick Jon up after getting the rocks off of him.

After they put Jon’s body on the elevator, Chat brings the elevator back above ground while Kevin and Mike go back to the cave where the clothes are.

“Man!” Mike says as they both shine their flashlights on all the clothes. “Where did they come from?”

“I have no idea!” Kevin answers.

They walk on the pile of clothes leading up to the ceiling. Every time they take a step, dust and dirt rises. They start picking up the clothes and look at them. “Look at these pants, they look like they were made not too long ago,” Mike says as he holds a pair of men’s dress pants.

Up above, Ross tries to make contact with Kevin but is failing. “Remember?” Brian starts to explain. “When Kevin and Jon walked into that cave after the wall came down, their radios wouldn’t work. They probably won’t work at the cave of clothes either.”

Ross sits there for a moment looking down on the ground; he’s sitting on a folding chair. “Kevin is right,” Ross says.

“What?” Chat asks.

“The opening is getting wider,” Ross starts to explain. “When we got here, I put this chair about four feet from the edge of the hole, now look. I’m a lot closer.”

Chat looks at the legs of the table that holds the equipment. “It’s moving,” he says. Will walks up close to the edge with the camera, filming it.

Down below, Kevin is digging through the pile of clothes, noticing that the clothing gets older in age as he gets deeper. “What are you doing?” Mike asks.

“Every time I get deeper, the clothes get older. That means these clothes keep piling up here, they didn’t get here all at once. Look at this!” Kevin holds up a woman’s dress that looks like it’s from the 1950s.

“What’s on the other side?” Mike says as he shines his flashlight around the cave. They both go to the top of the pile and squeeze their way through two feet of open space from the top of the clothing to the ceiling. After getting through to the other side, they stand on top of the pile and shine their flashlights as far as the lights can go. What they see is a never-ending pile of clothes.

They start walking farther in. About fifty feet later, Mike sees a pile of different types of clothing. “Come over here,” he says. They walk up to countless amounts of military uniforms lying everywhere. Mike picks up one of the battle dress uniform jackets and the name on it reads “Soltser.” Kevin picks up one and it reads “Hendin.”

“These are German World War Two uniforms, they’ve got the Nazi insignia on their sleeves!” Kevin says as he continues to pick up the German jackets. All the army jackets have names, ranks, medals and buttons, but the jackets get dirtier as Kevin digs deeper.

Kevin shines his flashlight on one of the jackets on his left, which sits alone and has a lot more decorations on it than the others. He walks over and picks it up, reads the name on it and says “Oh no!”

Mike hears Kevin and walks over to ask, “What’s up?”

“Read this one,” Kevin says as he gives the jacket to Mike.

Mike reads it out loud, “Himmler. Does that mean Heinrich Himmler?”

“He was the main architect of the Nazi concentration camps.”

“Yeah, I know,” Mike replies.

“So, if Hell is here,” Kevin starts to explain, “these clothes belong to the people who are there. Ross, are you there?” Kevin doesn’t get an answer. “Ross, are you there? It sounds like our radios won’t work in here; we had this problem before. I’m ready to go.”

“So am I.”

They get back to the mine and Kevin makes contact with Ross, “Ross, are you there? We’re on our way up.”

“Got it,” Ross replies.

They start walking towards the elevator, but Mike stops because his flashlight quits working. “Come on, we’ll use

mine,” Kevin tells him, but as Mike starts to walk again, Kevin remains standing there. He turns around and starts walking back towards the clothes.

Mike follows him and asks, “What’s up?”

“Hold on,” he tells him.

Back at the clothes, Kevin shines his flashlight into the cave. “Is my dad down here?” Kevin whispers to himself.

Scott hears Kevin and shines his flashlight in the cave of clothes, too.

“He’s not around anymore?” Scott asks.

“He died when I was a kid.”

“Oh, sorry to hear that,” Scott replies. Scott turns his head to the cave of clothes, too. My first wife passed away shortly after we were married. Is her clothes down here, too?”

“I wonder.”

Chapter Fifteen

“Are you ready, Ross?” Kevin asks as they walk back towards the elevator.

“Yeah,” Ross responds.

Kevin and Mike return back to the top. The team lowers the elevator into the mine for the day. Chat and Ross will take Jon’s body to the morgue in town. Kevin and the rest of the team will go back to the hotel.

“We’re going to need more time,” Kevin says to Brice on the phone while he sits on the bed in his hotel room. “We’re still going there only at night; it’s impossible to spend a lot of time there.” Kevin pauses to listen. “Yeah, Mike’s here. He’s going to stay with us until we’re finished. That’s all I have for now.” Kevin listens for several seconds before saying, “Okay, got it. Bye.” Kevin hangs up the phone.

Kevin writes a note and leaves it on the end table between the two beds. It says: “I have to go back in Riley by myself this time, I’ll be back before we go tonight.”

Kevin knows he is not making a smart decision by going into Riley by himself, but he believes that looking for proof of whether his dad is in Hell or not is a personal quest.

Kevin arrives at the mine as the sun is starting to show. He gets all of the equipment he will wear from the front seat and the back of the truck and puts it on, but after he puts his new video camera on the seat, he forgets and leaves it there.

He turns on the engine to the elevator. A short time later, he arrives at the bottom of the mine. “What was I thinking?” he

asks himself as he looks at the enormous amount of clothing thinking he was going to sift through it. He squeezes through the clothes and the ceiling again. Once on the other side, he shines his flashlight on all of it and wonders where to start. He then realizes his anxiety of finding where his dad is at has overruled any common sense.

Giving up already, he starts walking back to the mine, but just before he reaches it, he sees a black figure in the left corner of his eye. He looks that way with the flashlight. The black figure is gone. Kevin still stands there, though, sure he saw something. There it is again – a shadow-figure four feet tall in the shape of a person. It appears for only a few seconds.

Kevin waits for several seconds before more shadowy figures start appearing walking from both the left and the right. The shadows start walking faster.

This scares Kevin, but he starts walking to the mine again while he looks for the black figures with his flashlight.

Ten minutes later, he arrives back aboveground. It's 8:05 a.m. He walks over to the truck and takes his equipment off. Once inside the truck, he picks up the camcorder and puts it on the dash so he can put the heat-resistant suit on the seat.

He starts the truck, puts it in reverse, and backs the truck up. After he puts the truck in drive, he looks up in front of him; a dark figure is looming in the air. The demon is ten-feet tall.

Kevin stares at the demon through the windshield because he doesn't know what to do. He eventually decides to get out of

the truck. While standing face-to-face with the demon, Kevin tries not to show the demon that he's scared.

The demon's wings are mostly bones, and his skin is pitch-black. His arms and legs are extremely narrow. He has cheekbones and a chin, but no teeth. He has a very large forehead and a large square jaw.

“What do you want?” Kevin asks.

Without saying anything, the spirit moves closer to Kevin in a threatening manner. They stare at each other for several seconds. Kevin finally gets back into the truck and simply drives away. Once he gets far enough, he stops the truck and tries to collect his composure. It shows that he was obviously scared during the encounter. He lifts his head off of the steering wheel and drives off again.

He arrives back at the hotel and gets out of the truck, but when he turns around to turn the alarm on the truck with the remote, he sees the video camera on the dash. “Please tell me it was recording,” Kevin says to himself. He turns the alarm back off and opens the passenger side door. He gets the camera and finds it recording. When he plays back the video, it shows the ten-foot demon on the screen.

Later that afternoon, Kevin opens his hotel room door to go visit with Brian. On the other side of the door is Karen, who was about to knock.

Chapter Sixteen

“Morning,” Kevin says.

“You mean afternoon,” Karen replies.

“Yeah, I guess so. What’s going on?”

“You got a minute? It looks like you’re about to go somewhere.”

He replies, “No problem. Come in.” Karen walks into Kevin’s room and he shuts the door behind her. She sits on the end of the bed.

“Was someone else here?” Karen asks as she looks at the messy spare bed.

“Yeah, Scott. He’s got his own room now, though.”

“Oh.” Karen starts to explain, “Something happened at my house in Minneapolis before I came here. Three men broke in and threatened me, telling me not to come to Longlac. They told me if I didn’t stay away, that they’d kill me.”

“Did they say why?” Kevin asks as he expresses concern.

“No,” she says.

Kevin remains standing, leaning against the wall next to the TV and looking at the floor, trying to figure out why she would be threatened. He asks Karen, “Are you sure it was about Riley?”

“I’m sure of it. It was about this mine.”

“What exactly happened?” Kevin asks.

“They broke into my house when I was there. One of the men pointed a gun at me and told me to go anywhere else except here.”

“Sorry,” Kevin says.

“It’s not anybody’s fault.”

After several seconds, Kevin breaks the silence, “Want to find some lunch? You can talk to me about it more there.”

“Yeah,” Karen responds.

Just short of arriving at the hotel door to walk outside to the truck, Kevin turns and says to Karen, “Maybe those guys that broke in were actually meaning the opposite.”

“What do you mean?” Karen asks.

“If you weren’t threatened, you would’ve come here for just another news story if you found one, but when you were told to stay away, you were going to find out no matter what, what is happening at this mine. Right?”

“Absolutely.”

“Then there you go.”

“That’s why I’ve wanted to go into the mine. I really don’t want to, but you’re right; I’m still here because this sounds like it will be a big story.”

“You want to go in the mine?” “Yeah.”

Kevin turns his head and opens the door for Karen. They leave.

A few blocks from the hotel they stop at a gas station, one of the only two gas stations in town. Kevin doesn’t want to fight the temptation anymore; he’s going to buy cigarettes

“Do you want anything?”

“No thanks,” Karen responds.

Kevin walks into the gas station and to the front counter.
“I’ll take the cheapest pack of cigarettes, please.”

“Sure,” the cashier says before she turns her head around to grab them. She swipes the pack of cigarettes in front of the scanner, but while she does, two teenage boys rush out of the gas station. Unknown to the teenagers, Karen was on the other side of the door reaching for the handle to walk in. The door quickly swings open and hits the front of Karen, knocking her to the ground and breaking the door window. Kevin rushes out of the store and up to Karen. The two teenage boys, feeling bad, walk up to Karen and stand there surprised. Karen has a lot of blood on her head and face.

Kevin looks inside of the gas station and thinks to himself,
“If I wasn’t here to buy cigarettes, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Chapter Seventeen

Forty-five miles and an hour later, in the Bethany Hospital emergency room, Kevin waits in the waiting room for news about Karen.

A doctor walks into the room and sees Kevin sitting there. “Kevin?”

“Yeah.”

“She’s going to be fine,” the doctor starts to explain to Kevin. “There was no concussion. Are you her husband?”

“No, just a friend,”

“You’ll want to have someone keep an eye on her the next day or so, and if she has any dizziness, bring her back here right away. Other than that, she can leave after we finish her release papers.”

“Alright,” Kevin says. “If she does feel dizzy, is there a doctor in Longlac, or do we have to drive here again?”

“We’re it. The closest doctor to Longlac is here at the hospital.”

“Can I see her?”

“Yeah, of course. You can go in now.”

Kevin stands up and walks to her room and walks in. “Hey, how ya feeling?”

“I’ve got a headache. Besides that, I’m alright.”

Kevin takes the chair that’s sitting next to the wall and puts it next to Karen’s bed. “All of this is my fault. I can’t say sorry

enough. If I didn't go to buy cigarettes at that gas station, we wouldn't have been there.”

“Trying to quit smoking?”

“Actually, I'm trying not to smoke again. I quit a year ago; that's a long time to put up a fight.” Kevin quits talking for a moment, staring at Karen and admiring her beauty.

Karen breaks the silence and whispers, “How do you do what you do?”

“Investigate mines?”

“No. Deal with what's inside of them.”

“Well,” Kevin begins to explain, “it's not usually like this. This isn't normal. In Cali...” Kevin stops talking.

“What?”

“Tell me you're not going to report this on the news.”

“I'll let you tell us what to report, just like you said.”

“Okay. First, understand that paranormal activity in a mine is like saying astronauts in space see ghosts. We had some activity in a mine in California. Brian and I were the only ones in the mine that day. The miners said they always heard people screaming, but never saw anything.”

“Weird,” Karen says to herself.

The nurse walks in while holding paperwork. “You're all set to go, I have your paperwork right here. The doctor said if you get any dizzy spells, you're to come back to the hospital right away.

“Ok.”

“Here you go,” the nurse hands the paperwork to Karen.

“Do you want a wheelchair or do you want to walk?”

“I’ll walk.”

“Ok.” The nurse walks out of the room.

“Are you a Christian?” Karen asks as she sits up on the bed.

“Yeah.”

“So am I.”

“Are you still hungry?” he asks.

“Do you have a place in mind?”

“We passed a truck stop on the way here when you were in the ambulance.”

An hour later, they walk into the restaurant. After they order food, they continue talking. “Do you have family back at home?” she inquires.

“No, never been married.”

“Have any brothers and sisters?”

“No, I was the only child. My mom died a short time ago, and my dad died when I was six.”

“That had to be hard.”

“I was threatened in my home and told not to come here. You keep finding paranormal activity in the mine. Someone was killed. You found people’s clothes down there. What are you going to do next?”

“I’m still working on that.”

“Divine appointment.”

“What?” Kevin asks.

“Do you think you were sent here on purpose?”

“Are you talking about God sending me here?”

“Yeah,” Karen replies.

“I do know that of all the people in the world, I’m the one that’s here. God knows what he’s doing; he knows I can handle it.”

“Are you handling it?”

“I’m still working on that, too,” Kevin says while slightly laughing.

Karen looks at him with admiration for several seconds. Kevin returns the look as he continuously admires her beauty and the softness of her voice. “I’m glad you’re alright,” Kevin breaks the silence.

They both find themselves with very few words in this awkward but enjoyable moment. “From now on, you stay in the truck,” Kevin says before she smiles. Kevin puts his right hand on her left and says, “I’m sorry for being rude to you when we first met.”

He removes his hand and she says, “No problem. How is it that you can deal with this mine, but you can’t stop smoking?” Karen asks.

Kevin smiles back and says, “That’s a very good point. Since you said that, I’m going to call you every time I get tempted. You can be...” He pauses while trying to remember, “Be that person that someone calls when they’re trying to quit something.”

Karen laughs. “Ok.”

Kevin pauses to think. “It’s weird. I don’t want to find anything else in the mine; I’m scared of what I could see down

there, but on the other-hand, I do want to find something because I don't want D.C. to send someone else here to go through this. And, I will admit, I'm curious on what I'll find. I know that's weird, but..."

Karen interrupts, "Then do it! Go into the mine and find the worst possible situation so you can tell your company you work for that nobody can go down there again. Make sure they won't want to send anyone into that mine again."

"That's actually a really good idea, come to think about it," Kevin begins to explain, "but it might be easier said than done – there's a lot of gold in Riley." He pauses before continuing, "I'm going to get the team together." He reaches into his back pocket to get his wallet, and continues to explain as he puts thirty dollars on the table for the tip and the two meals. "From now on, I'm going to focus on getting the biggest reason to shut the mine down for good. Starting today."

After they get in the truck to leave, Kevin turns to her and asks, "So, you want to go into the mine, huhh? We've had one journalist go down into the mine with us once; they were doing a documentary about gold mines. You'd be the first news journalist, but I don't think I have a problem with it."

"Yeah," she replies. "Why would you let me, though?"

"I'm figuring, after what you went through at your house, you deserve to see everything down there up close. As long as you're sure about this, though."

"I need to," Karen answers.

Two hours later, Kevin, Karen, and the team, along with Will, arrive at Riley.

“It’s really early, it’s only six-thirty,” Brian explains.

“I don’t want to wait until later; let’s get this done,” Kevin says.

Chapter Eighteen

Karen gets the news camera and checks it to make sure everything is working. She also gets an extra battery. Kevin gives her a heat-resistant suit to put on.

When Kevin and Karen arrive at the bottom of Riley, Chat, back on top, says, “Shoot! I forgot my laptop back in the hotel room. I’ve been documenting everything that we’ve been doing.”

“You remember this now? Kevin is already at the bottom.” Brian explains. Chat stands up to leave when Brian then says, “Just use my laptop.”

“No, I’m going back to the hotel and getting mine.”

“We need you,” Brian explains.

“It won’t take me long; I’ll be right back.”

On the bottom, Kevin once again checks the air. “What’s that?” Karen asks.

“It’s an electronic device that detects a few different gasses,” Kevin answers. Several seconds later, after walking around the center of the mine, he says, “All clear, let’s go.”

As the two walk through towards the cave of clothes, Karen says, “I hope I didn’t make a mistake coming down here. This is my first time in a mine and I’m a little nervous. I don’t have a problem being in tight and small places, it’s just...”

Kevin interrupts, “Just stay close to me, you’ll be okay, but if you want, we can go back up anytime. It’s just – when we left that restaurant earlier, I had a strong feeling that you need to be down here to see this for yourself.”

“So, you think – God wants me to be here?”

Kevin looks at her and says, “I think so.”

“How deep do you guys go down to get gold?” she further inquires.

“There is no certain depth that mining companies go by; it’s whatever depth the company wants, and still feels safe about it.”

They arrive at the cave and Karen asks, “What’s the deepest anyone has gone?”

“Two miles, but mining companies try to break records all of the time.” They continue to talk to each other, standing at the entrance of the cave; Karen hasn’t looked in the direction of the clothes yet. “The problem with that is that there is more danger of an explosion. Earth has poisonous gasses like methane and natural gas; that’s why every time we get to the bottom, we have to check the air. But to answer your question, seven miles with a two-inch drill bit is the deepest someone has gone down. Years ago, I heard a story where people drilled deep into earth and put a microphone down into the hole. They said they heard people screaming. I don’t know. That’s probably an urban legend.”

Kevin pauses for a moment to call Ross. “Ross, we’re here. We’re at the clothes. I’m going to lose communication with you for a while.”

“Understood,” Ross responds.

Kevin finishes what he was saying to Karen. “After all this, I think I believe that story.” Kevin turns the flashlight off of Karen and points it toward the clothes. “There they are.”

“Oh, my gosh!” Karen says. “What is all of this? Did people put all of this here?”

“No, that would be impossible; there’s nothing holding up the ceiling either. What we’re looking at should not be.”

“What do you mean? Holding up the ceiling?”

Kevin answers, “Every mine, especially when you get deeper, has a risk of collapse because of the amount of weight from the ground above it, but in there, nothing is holding the ceiling up. It would be impossible for man to make this.”

The two walk into the cave and Karen starts picking up the clothes to look at them. Kevin walks around, but just looks at the clothes as they lie there. “For some reason, this cave isn’t as hot as the other cave, the one we passed to get here,” Kevin explains. A couple minutes later, a thought comes to Kevin and he asks Karen, “Do you mind staying here for a few minutes by yourself? I want to climb to the other side and check something out.”

Karen looks over at him with a slightly worried face. “I won’t be long,” Kevin explains.

Karen wants to say something so that he wouldn’t leave her, but she doesn’t want to sound like a coward. She watches him walk to the top of the clothes. When he gets there, he once again squeezes his way through to the other side. He then walks straight to his left until several hundred feet later, where he finds a wall.

He turns to his right and walks along the wall, while still stepping on clothing. A short time later, he finds an opening in

the wall and walks through it, but on the other side he finds something he wasn't expecting – another cave. He doesn't want to walk too far into it, because he's worried that he won't find the entrance he used to get in there. So he walks to his left, keeping the wall to his left. Then he stops, assuming the cave is completely empty. He remains still and starts to whisper a prayer – “God, what is this?” – and then he stops and says, “Never mind. I already know; there's more room for more clothes.” He turns around and finds the entrance he came in through. After he gets back to the cave of clothes, he takes a left. Just before giving up after walking a long distance, he walks through another opening, but the opening leads to a dead end. He turns around once again and goes back to the cave of clothes. He squeezes himself between the ceiling and the clothes where Karen is waiting for him.

“What'd you find?” she asks.

Kevin shines the flashlight to her face, and can tell she's upset. “What's wrong?” He asks.

“I didn't want you to leave me here.”

“Oh, sorry,” Kevin replies.

“What did you find?” Karen asks.

“Nothing. I was hoping I could find the Colonial mine...” Kevin stops talking as dozens of voices start shouting from a distance. Kevin walks in the direction of the voices. Karen follows him, listening too. After they squeeze through the clothes and the ceiling, they walk along the wall, passing the two openings Kevin already went by himself a few minutes

earlier. As the voices get louder, they find another opening and walk in it. They continue to hear numerous people screaming. It gets louder and louder, but before they reach where the voices are coming from, they turn around and start walking back.

“It’s obvious we’ve found Hell,” Kevin says to Karen as they continue walking back to the cave of clothes.

“I’ve never heard anything like this. Listen to them!” Karen says.

Nothing else is said between them as they listen to the screaming while walking back. When they get to the Riley mine, the voices fade and it becomes quiet again. Instead of starting the walk back to the elevator, Kevin picks up two empty five-gallon buckets, turns them over and sits on one of them. “Let’s take a break before we go back to the top.” Karen sits on the second bucket. “I did find another cave when you were waiting for me. There was nothing in it this time, no clothes. I walked into it as far as I could without getting lost, and I didn’t see anything. There wasn’t an old, musty dirty clothes smell like the one we just came out of either. It makes sense, though, if you think about it, a much larger room with absolutely nothing in it. It’s got to be for the people that will die and be sent down here, too.”

Karen doesn’t say anything, as she starts to have tears in her eyes. Kevin turns his head and looks at her while putting his hand on her hand that’s on her leg. Then he turns the other way opposite of her, while trying to resist getting emotional too. As

she starts to get more emotional, he puts his arm around her and pulls her towards him.

“There’s going to be people who won’t believe what we found down here,” Karen explains.

“The investigation is over. There’s nothing else that I need to know. Kevin turns up his walkie talkie as he stands up and says to Ross, “We’re on our way.”

“Coming up. Roger,” Ross replies.

A short while later, they make it back above ground. Kevin asks where Chat is, and Brian answers, “He left his laptop in the hotel room and went back to get it. That was a long time ago, though; he should be back by now.”

“Did he take the Jeep?” Kevin queries.

“Yeah. Why?” Brian asks.

“Because his laptop is in the front, on the passenger seat.” Everyone is quiet for a few seconds, wondering what is going on with Chat. Then Kevin quietly says to himself, “Now what?”

“We have to tell D.C. that there’s no way anybody can go back down there,” Kevin starts to explain to the others. “Karen and I found an opening in the cave where all of the clothes are at – we believe it led to Hell itself.” Kevin pauses, and then says, “Literally.” Being shocked, everybody is quiet for several seconds.

“Why do you think that?” Will asks.

“We heard a whole lot of people screaming. And, I assume, those voices were from the people just inside Hell on the other side of the opening that we found.”

Everybody helps pack up the equipment and puts it in the vehicles. Kevin tells Brian after they get in the truck, “I’ll tell D.C. in person that nobody can go back in the mine. Let’s go back to the hotel and get all of our stuff. I’ll call the pilot.”

“There’s nothing more we can do here,” Brian affirms.

When the crew gets back to the hotel, they find Chat is still missing. Wondering about him, Kevin leaves a note for Chat at the front desk. It reads: “Kevin here, the investigation is over, we’re going back to the States. Pilot will be here at 1.”

Chapter Nineteen

The team arrives at the airport. Everyone waits in their vehicles outside of the locked gate that leads to the runway. A short time later, a car pulls up next to Kevin's truck on his driver's side. Kevin watches as Chat and two other men get out of the car. The two men are wearing black dress suits with black ties.

"Now what?" Kevin says.

They walk up to Kevin, who remains sitting in the truck. He rolls the window down and says to Chat, "What happened to you?"

He responds, "I need to talk to you. Get out of the truck." Kevin, surprised by Chat's order, gets out of the truck and stands by the driver's door in front of Chat. Brian also gets out and walks over to Kevin. Ross stays in his car with the window rolled down, listening as Karen and Will do the same in their car.

"What's going on, Chat?" Kevin asks as he crosses his arms.

Chat pulls out a gun from his coat pocket and points it at Kevin. He says, "You and the crew will go back in Riley and see what that opening leads to."

Brian says, "Are you talking about the opening where the screams are coming out of? We already know what it leads to. And how do you know about that opening?"

"Well, I don't answer to you," Kevin says to Chat.

"You don't have a choice. Besides, your boss is my boss."

“So, Brice is ordering this?” Kevin asks.

“No,” Chat answers.

“Then who are you talking about?” Kevin asks with a stern voice.

Chat doesn’t answer, but says, “You and everyone else meet us at Riley, Brian will be in with us in our car.”

While Kevin opens his door and starts to get in, he asks, “How long have I known you, Chat?”

“You don’t,” Chat answers.

Without saying anything else, Kevin starts the truck while Chat, Brian and the two strangers get into Chat’s car.

A short time later, they all arrive at Riley. As everybody except Chat and the two men set up the equipment again, Kevin asks, “So who’s your boss back at D.C. you were talking about?”

Chat answers, “You have no idea.”

Kevin sarcastically says, “That’s why I asked.”

“Just set up the equipment,” Chat responds with little patience.

After they do so, Chat says to Kevin, “You and Brian will go back into the mine. Both of you wear these suits.”

Kevin and Brian take the suits from Chat and look at them. On the front of both of them, at the chest, is a mini-camera.

“The cameras are heat resistant. Take this one camera,” Chat hands Kevin a camera, “and leave the audio running so I can hear you.”

Kevin and Brian get on the elevator and start to descend. After they get 20 feet below the ground, Kevin turns the camera off.

“Aren’t you supposed to leave that on?” Brian says.

“I don’t care. Look, if we do find that it’s actually hell, these suits aren’t going to save us.”

“Then what do we do?”

“I don’t know.” Kevin turns the camera back on.

“Don’t turn the camera off again,” Chat orders.

“Whatever,” Kevin replies.

They put the hoods over their heads when they arrive at the opening at the cave of clothes, and the distant screaming is easily heard again. Just inside the cave, Kevin looks at his temperature sensor and asks Brian to look at his. “One-sixty,” Brian answers. “That’s what I’m getting. Keep a close eye on yours as we get closer.” Kevin says.

“You lead the way,”

When they get to the opening where the screaming voices are coming from, they both look at their temperature sensors again. “Now I’m not getting anything,” Brian says very loudly, trying to be louder than the screaming.

“Neither am I.”

“What do we do now?”

Kevin looks at Brian and walks in the opening. Several hundred feet later and fifty steps short of what looks to be their destination by the light and noise that’s coming from it, they hesitate to go any further.

“Both of us don’t need to go in there,” Kevin says with a loud voice. Brian turns to him and makes a face as though he understands and agrees. “Stay here,” Kevin tells him.

Kevin steps slowly through the opening and directly into the flames.

Chapter Twenty

Kevin starts walking in no specific direction. The ceiling is two feet above Kevin's head and black in color. As he walks through the flames that cover every square inch of the area, he reaches a naked and completely hairless man. The skin from both of his arms is bubbling and hanging towards the ground. Also, the bones in the man's arms are showing. The skin that should be covering his back is gone.

Kevin looks down at the man's feet, as only the bones in his feet are showing. The man continuously screams, not saying any specific words. Kevin stands in front of the man, but the man doesn't see him.

Kevin walks past him. When he gets to the other side of the man, the flames thin a little, allowing Kevin to see numerous people standing directly in the fire and screaming. Once again, no one sees Kevin.

Kevin looks at the thermometer and it reads 100 degrees. It shows on Kevin that he doesn't understand why the temperature is so low. He stands there for several seconds before having an idea; take one of the gloves off of his hand and see if he can feel the heat and the flames. He takes one of the gloves off and puts his hand in the flames, but doesn't feel anything. He then takes the head covering, but still doesn't feel the flames. "Lord Jesus," he whispers.

Kevin puts his focus on the people in hell once again and is overwhelmed by the horror he is witnessing. He doesn't know it because he's never had one before, but he is starting to have a

panic attack. He finds it difficult to concentrate because of the fire he's standing in and the people that are in the fire, but he says a prayer asking for peace. He feels none.

He decides he's going to leave. He turns around to walk back to where Brian is waiting for him, but he realizes that he should be thankful that he is seeing this place, knowing nobody ever does until it's too late.

Feeling slightly better, he turns back around. The people look like monsters to him: their skin, if it's not missing, is hanging off of all parts of their bodies – legs, arms, backs, necks, and their sides and their heads, showing their skulls.

With some of the people, their skin rubs across the ground as they frantically search for a place that has no flames. Others jump up and down, as if trying to get out of the fire that goes above their head and touches the ceiling. Kevin notices that some people are extremely dark in color, like they've been there for a long time. Others are light in color, like they've just got there.

As he walks by hundreds of them of every origin, both male and female, no one is quiet. They're either screaming and saying nothing specific, or Kevin hears them yelling "God." Trying to keep his sense of direction as he walks farther away from the opening he used to get in there, he just keeps on walking to record as much as he can before he leaves. Just before he's about to turn around and go back, after he walks by hundreds of more people, he walks up to an opening similar to the one him and Brian walked through to get here.

He starts to walk through the flame-filled opening, but has to kneel down; it's only five feet tall. Twenty feet later, he reaches the other side. Instead of stopping and turning back around, he continues to walk almost blindly because of the thickness of the flames. A few feet later, he falls into a hole three feet deep in a large room.

Kevin turns around on his hands and knees, wanting to find his way back to the opening he came through. Once he reaches the edge of the hole, just below the opening he's trying to find, he touches with his right hand a chain link that's several feet long. A single link is bigger than both of Kevin's hands side by side. Kevin realizes that he didn't just trip into the hole; he tripped over the huge chain and fell into the hole. "This has got to be here for a reason, for somebody," Kevin thinks.

He crawls back to the part of Hell where the people are at. His knee is a little sore from hitting the ground when he fell into the hole. Kevin makes it back to the entrance where Brian is waiting. Neither of them exchanges any words, and both simply start making their way back to the mine.

"Can you hear me?" Just before they reach the cave of clothes, Kevin and Brian hear someone yelling from the other side of the wall in the opening.

"We can hear you," Kevin yells back.

"Miners?" Brian turns to Kevin and asks.

"I don't see how that's possible."

"Where are you?" the man yells.

“We’re on the other side of the wall. How did you get over there?” Brian yells.

“I don’t know how I got here. I don’t know if there’s a way out.”

“Are you alright?” Brian asks, because the man sounds like he’s in a lot of pain.

They quickly walk back to the entrance of Hell and Brian stays behind again.

A minute later, Kevin reaches the man who is still yelling, while facing the wall. “I can hear you; I don’t know how to get out of here,” the man screams in pain as Kevin is standing right next to him. Kevin turns around and starts walking back. The man continues to yell, “I’m stuck; I don’t know what to do. There are hundreds of us in here. Something’s wrong!”

After Kevin meets up with Brian in the opening once more, he shakes his head *no* to Brian and they make their way back to Riley, but after they take a few steps back in the Riley mine, Kevin looks behind him. He stops and grabs Brian by his arm, so Brian would see what Kevin sees.

“It’s gone,” Kevin says as they look at what was the entrance to the cave of clothes.

After looking at the wall that wasn’t there a minute ago, they both turn slowly back around to start walking to the elevator.

Chapter Twenty-one

As they walk off the elevator back above ground, Chat points the gun at both of them.

“What did you find?” Ross asks.

“Hell,” Kevin answers.

“You ever been to Seattle?” Chat asks Kevin. “What’s in Seattle?”

“Our boss. We’re going back to Longlac. I called the pilot; he’s going to be at the airport.”

“Our boss is not in Seattle,” Brian explains.

“Are you making Karen come with us?” Kevin asks Chat.

“The news crew is coming too,” Chat explains.

Kevin and Brian take the suits off and hand them over to Chat. Chat disconnects the camera cords, puts both boxes in a bag and hands the bag to Kevin.

“What do you want me to do with these?” Kevin asks.

“You’ll need them where we’re going.”

At the airport, Dennis is standing by his plane. “I don’t know what you were thinking; this plane can’t carry all of you,” Dennis says to the crew.

“Okay.” Chat turns his head and says to the crew, “Put the luggage in the plane.” Then Chat walks up to Dennis and points at him the gun that he had in his coat pocket, and says, “We’re all leaving in your plane together.”

“We’re not going to get off the runway with all of this weight,” Dennis retorts.

“We will. How much fuel do you have?”

“It’s a full tank,” Dennis answers.

They all get into the plane except for the two men in suits. Chat sits on the seat just behind Kevin, who is sitting on the front seat again.

As Dennis is taxiing, Kevin turns to Dennis and whispers, “Sorry about this.”

Because of all of the weight, Dennis has to use the entire runway to get the plane off the ground.

Halfway through the trip, Dennis says, “It’s a good thing we’re only going to Winnipeg; this weight is taking all of the fuel. We couldn’t go any farther if we wanted to.”

Kevin, who waited until a couple minutes before they would land, very discreetly holds out his left hand above Dennis’s right leg and points to the gun. Chat is looking out of the window. Slowly, and only moving his left arm, Dennis gets the gun from under the dash and gives it to Kevin.

Surprisingly to Dennis as he watches, Kevin puts the gun inside his left coat pocket.

Dennis turns off the airplane once he finishes taxiing to the parking area of the regional airport. Everyone gets out of the plane without saying anything and gets their luggage. They gather around Chat, who is standing and watching everyone while keeping his right hand in his pocket with his gun.

Chat looks at the front door of the airport. Kevin follows Chat’s eyes to where three men in black suits walk up to the crew. Chat says, “Everybody except Kevin, go with these guys.”

One of the guys in a suit points to another plane similar to Dennis's and says to Chat, "Your plane is right over there."

"So far so good, Mr. Christenson," Chat says.

"What are we doing? And do you know how to fly that?" Kevin asks as he points to the plane.

"You and I are going to Seattle. Your crew will be alright, as long as you keep doing what I tell you." A short time later, Chat flies the plane off the runway while Kevin sits on the passenger seat again.

Just short of seven hours later, and after refueling the plane twice, they arrive at the SeaTac airport in Seattle. Nothing was said between Chat and Kevin during the flight.

At the airport parking garage, Kevin follows Chat to a car. Chat unlocks the driver's side door and tells Kevin to get in the passenger side. Chat stands at the driver's door watching Kevin get in the car. As Chat drives out of the parking garage, he says to Kevin, "You're a pretty good customer so far. My priority is you, not your crew. As soon as I get you to where you need to go, I'll call my people back at Winnipeg and they'll let your crew go." Kevin stays silent.

As Chat drives them north on I5, he begins to explain, "The owner of the Darrius Corporation is who we're going to see now."

"Topeka, Kansas is where the main office is. Or is it?" Kevin asks.

"The man you believe is the owner of the company is not. He works for our boss."

“Why the secrecy?” Kevin asks.

“Because if you knew the owner of D.C., this whole plan wouldn’t have worked.”

“What plan?” Kevin asks.

Chat explains, “Since you started working here, everything has been a plan. We knew two years ago that Hell itself was at the bottom of Riley.” Kevin keeps listening while looking at Chat. “You think you got this job by chance?” Chat continues. “Those Sundays at church where you and I met, that was all part of the plan. You had absolutely no mining experience before you came to work for D.C. You weren’t hired for your skills.” Kevin is getting a little angry from what Chat is claiming.

Chat is driving through rush hour traffic; thus, no one on the interstate is moving more than thirty miles an hour. Chat continues to explain, “That accounting job you had before you came here – they laid you off because I told them to lay you off. It cost my boss a hundred thousand dollars to get you laid off from that company you were at to come work for D.C.”

At that moment, Kevin swings his left arm over to Chat, hitting Chat’s face with his left elbow. Chat’s nose bleeds, and he becomes disoriented. Kevin takes hold of the steering wheel and goes to the shoulder of the road. He then pulls the emergency brake handle, and the car skids to a stop.

While Chat is pulling up his shirt to catch the blood coming from his nose, Kevin gets out of the car, walks to the driver’s side and opens the door. “One more and they’re dead, even your roommate,” Chat says while he holds his open cell phone.

Kevin stands there looking at Chat for several seconds as cars slowly drive by behind him. Chat pushes 28 on his cell phone, and then pushes talk. “We’re on the way,” he says. Kevin shuts the driver’s side door and walks in front of the car back to the passenger side, but continues to stare angrily at Chat.

During the rest of the drive, Chat tries to drive the car and stop his nose from bleeding at the same time. Forty-five silent minutes later, they arrive at D.C.’s main office. It’s a plain white brick three-story building with no sign in front.

Kevin follows Chat to the front door. As they walk, Kevin looks closely at the building; it appears to be about ten years old. Chat pulls out two cards from his pants pocket, swipes one of them on a small computer next to the door, and the windowless steel door unlocks. They walk up to another windowless door in front of the last one; Chat uses the other card for that door before it also unlocks.

When they enter the building, several men, wearing similar suits that the men at the airport were wearing, are in the hallway staring at Kevin like they already know who he is. Kevin still studies the building. The walls and the carpet on the floor are black. The Styrofoam ceiling tiles on the ceiling are white. The hallway is ten feet wide, and the ceiling twelve feet high.

As they walk down the hallway, they pass ten closed, plain gray doors. They reach a door at the end of the hallway and stop. Kevin had counted twenty-three men that they passed.

Chat says, “Go inside, somebody is waiting for you. By the way, my real name is Rah.”

Kevin looks at Chat and says, “What?” Chat doesn’t say anything more, and steps back away from the door. Kevin, not caring, just opens the door and walks in.

At a desk straight across from the door, a man stands up and looks at Kevin. The man is Kevin’s dad, Russell Dave Christenson.

Chapter Twenty-two

His large office has no windows or pictures on the walls. A door to Kevin's right leads to the bathroom.

"Dad?" Kevin asks. Russell is six-foot-two and sixty-two years old. He's mostly bald, has no facial hair, and is wearing a black suit and black tie.

Kevin, not knowing what to feel as he sees his dad for the first time since he was six years old, puts on an unemotional face and says, "You're dead."

Russell walks around his desk to stand in front of Kevin. "Sort of felt that way for a long time," Russell says with a British accent. "Take a seat." He points to the chair that's sitting between him and Kevin, but Kevin doesn't move, continuing to stand there staring at his dad.

"I was in a prison for most of your life," Russell begins to explain as he leans on the front edge of his desk. "I didn't die that night at the bottom of that cliff, though I made it look that way." Russell corrects himself: "We made it look that way. I had a very close friend in Britain at the time who got me a job working for the British government. After the crash, I moved to Britain and spent two years in training. The British thought they had proof that the Soviets were going to invade Britain; I was one of several dozen spies that were recruited to work for the British because of the Soviet threat.

My first assignment was inside the Soviet Union, but I was captured less than two days after I got there. I was released from a Soviet prison when the Wall came down several years later."

“What have you been doing since then?” Kevin asks.

“I’ve been working here,” Russell answers. Kevin slowly steps towards Russell in a threatening manner. Russell says, “There are many men outside my door,” Russell warns Kevin. “And by the way, I know you have a gun in your left coat pocket.”

“And how do you know that?” Kevin asks.

“I’ll just say I have a friend,” Russell answers.

“What do you want from me?” Kevin asks.

Russell stands up, turns his back to Kevin and walks back over to his desk chair and sits down. “I want what my boss wants,” he answers.

“Who’s your boss?” Kevin asks as he remains standing. Russell doesn’t answer the question, though; he just stares at Kevin, waiting for him to come up with the answer himself. A few seconds later, Kevin responds, “You have a relationship with...?” He doesn’t finish the sentence.

Russell answers, “I’ve known my boss for a long time. He told me the exact place where I needed to build a mine, and what I would find inside of it.”

Kevin, in fear, takes a step backwards towards the office door.

Russell continues, “I knew where to find Hell before I knew anything about the Darrius Corporation, which was going under when I bought the company.”

“What do you want from me?” Kevin asks.

Russell answers, “I want you to tell the world what you found down there. I want you to be my business partner. If everybody knows that Hell does actually exist, they’d want to know what to do to avoid dying and going there.”

“There’s one place in Hell, though...” Kevin stops and doesn’t finish the sentence.

“What place?” Russell asks. Kevin doesn’t say anything.

Russell quickly turns his head and looks behind him as if someone got his attention, but Kevin doesn’t see anyone there. Russell stands back up and walks back over to Kevin. When he gets there, he turns his head and looks at the area behind his chair again. Kevin looks that way too, wondering what Russell is looking at, but Kevin still doesn’t see anyone.

Russell turns back towards Kevin. “What I am saying is this, once people know that Hell does exist, they’ll want to know how to avoid...” Russell stops in his sentence, like he’s listening to someone. “They’ll want to know how to avoid it.”

Kevin asks, “He would want that power all to himself. What does he want with you?”

“We tell the world the only way to avoid going to Hell is through you and me. After they give us that power, we give them over to him. You have the video you took of Hell and all the people that are there; we show the world that.”

“Why didn’t you do this yourself?” Kevin asks. “You could have taped it and got people to watch it. Why did you involve me?”

“Because, you’re my son. Plus, you’d know who I was when you’d start seeing my face everywhere.”

Silence fills the room as Kevin tries to come up with a way to get out of Russell’s office. “I can’t give you an answer right now,” Kevin says, breaking the silence.

Russell smiles at Kevin and says, “No problem. You can go. Your friends in Canada have been let go too. And, you can hang on to the tapes you recorded.” Russell smiles and then says, “I trust you.”

Kevin, who doesn’t want to show Russell he’s in a hurry to leave, slowly opens the door and walks back in the hallway, shutting the door behind him.

All the men are staring at Kevin again, and their numbers have doubled. He walks through the hallway, but before he reaches the doors to the outside, he stops and asks one of the men, “How many are you?”

The man says, “Thirty-three.”

Kevin finally makes it out of the building; it’s almost completely dark outside, and it’s raining. He grabs the railing that’s on the stairs leading up to the door, and takes a few deep breaths. He walks to the sidewalk that’s parallel to the street in front of the building. He stands there for a moment, trying to take in everything that just happened.

He turns to the sidewalk on his right and starts walking, ignoring the heavy rain that’s falling on him. After he crosses the street and walks up on the curb, he looks to his left to high-level blinking clouds above a bluff, off in the far distance.

He stops walking and stares at the blinking clouds for several seconds until the wind slowly pushes the clouds away. It reveals a radio tower with three blinking red lights.

Kevin makes a slight smile and whispers to himself, “Tell the world, Hell does exist.”

To Be Continued...