**Chapter 1 – Nightmares**

Jamie lay in her bed, staring at the ceiling. Her room was pitch black except for the bright glow from her bedside alarm clock. Unable to resist, she stole a glance at the glowing beacon reminding her of the fact she had insomnia. It was 3:02 a.m. She sighed knowing the coming day would be a rough one. She lay there in her nightshirt, and closed her eyes tightly trying to will herself to sleep. A cool breeze from the window of her second story apartment building washed over her. She pulled the flower patterned sheets and blanket up to her chin to stop the shivering.

But it wasn’t the cold that was causing her body to tremble, it was fear. Fear that the creature was coming for her again. Coming to take her and do unspeakable horrors to her. She was suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling of dread and a sense that she was not alone in the room. She forced her eyes shut, telling herself it was only her imagination and nothing more. She repeated, “I’m alone in my bedroom, I’m alone in my bedroom, I’m alone in my bedroom,” but no matter how many times she said it, the words rang empty in her ears. She slowly opened her right eye and saw…nothing. Then in her peripheral vision she caught the faintest movement of a shadowy figure near her dresser. She closed her eyes and began to shake. She didn’t want to look; didn’t want open her eyes. Unable to resist, she found herself stealing a glance out of the corner of her eye. It was back. The creature stood over her, its hideous, featureless face gleaming in the moonlight. It peered through her with its cold, dead eyes. She tried to scream, but couldn’t. Not a single muscle in her body was under her control any longer. It possessed her now; her body under its influence.

The blanket and sheets drew back in a slow mechanical fashion, exposing her nightshirt-clad body, now dripping with sweat. The creature reached for her with long, slender, probing fingers which slowly made their way towards her chest. She wanted to cry, but tears wouldn’t come, the creature wouldn’t allow tears. The fingers inched menacingly closer to exposed flesh, closer now, within inches. “Please, not again…” Jamie cried.

Nick Randall sat upright in his bed, torrents of sweat cascading down the back of his t-shirt. He was nearly hyperventilating as he awoke from the nightmare. He grabbed for his glasses on the nightstand, his fingers clumsily feeling for them. Slipping his glasses onto his perspiration covered face, he scanned the room, looking for the creature, ready to scream, punch, and do whatever was necessary to keep it away. Slowly, sanity returned to him and he realized it was only a dream. He glanced at the clock; it was 3:05 a.m. He fell backwards into the softness of the bed, still breathing heavily. He reached for his chest and could feel the pounding of his heart beating so hard it felt like it would rip free of him and fly away into the inky night. There would be no further sleeping tonight, he was sure of this. Although the adrenalin rush would eventually wear off, there was no way he would close his eyes again tonight. Fear was a wonderful motivator in that regard and fear would keep him from even thinking about returning to the land of dreams today.

Instead, he lay there thinking. The dreams had begun a couple of weeks after he had returned from the jungles of Peru. They were becoming more frequent now and more vivid. Intellectually he realized that these were nothing more than manifestations of his subconscious. His experience at Vilcabamba with the aliens, real or imagined, was now influencing his dreams. Chief Yupanqui, the leader of the jungle tribe, had told him there were others and that their motives were sinister and now his dreams were painting a picture in his minds-eye of what they were like. The only thing he found strange was the fact that in each and every dream about these creatures, he was the same woman and the room seemed so real and familiar to him. Could these events really be happening? No, they were only dreams. Randall shook his head and tried to convince himself there was nothing more to it than that.

He sat at the edge of his king size bed and glanced over his shoulder at the left side of the bed where his wife Ann used to sleep. He wished she were with him, sleeping by his side, her warmth comforting him. His feeling of fear was suddenly replaced with deep sadness and longing. He turned to face the window and dropped his head into his hands. What in the hell was going on with him? Was he losing it; going crazy? He forced himself to his feet and felt the cool wood floor beneath him. Shivering, he slipped into his lamb wool slippers and reached for his robe. He didn’t dare look at the thermometer because he knew it would confirm that it wasn’t the cool of night that was causing him to shiver. He walked over to his desk and plopped himself down in his black leather chair, absentmindedly flicking on his desk lamp. At first, the bright light caused him to wince in pain at the sudden brightness. His eyes slowly adjusted and he sat for a moment unsure what to do next. Without knowing why, he flicked the power switch of his computer and heard the hard drive whine to life. Research. That was the solution to his problem. He needed to research why he was having these terrible dreams and he also needed coffee and lots of it.

Randall pushed himself up from his desk and walked across the creaking wooden floor and into his living room. The room was exceptionally dark causing his eyes to once again try to adjust from the light of his desk lamp to the darkness of his living room. Unable to see clearly, Randall’s left foot caught an edge of his living room rug, causing him to careen wildly towards the large, plate glass window overlooking his street. Randall struggled to regain his balance, falling headfirst towards the large pane of glass. At the last moment, he stuck his left hand out, catching the wall on the side of the window, arresting his fall, but not until his head whapped the glass and bounced back. For a moment, Randall stood in his living room, blinking and rubbing his head, his heart beating wildly again. Slowly his breathing returned to normal and he glanced out onto the quiet street outside. “That was close,” he said, grinning at his clumsiness.

The world outside was peaceful, which was to be expected at this time of day. “Completely still,” Randall said under his breath as he looked up the block. He was startled as he caught a glimpse of a man, walking briskly and turning the corner onto Bungalow Drive from his own street. *That’s odd,* Randall thought. A few minutes later, the window incident safely in the past, Randall poured himself a strong cup of coffee and returned to his desk. His computer now fully booted, Randall began a web search for the information he hoped would explain his dreams.