

Chapter One



*August 17, 3:02 A.M.
Hamilton, Bermuda*

Jamie Edmunds knew something wasn't right. She lay in her bed, staring at the ceiling of her second story apartment, trying to quiet her thoughts. The sound of her heart beating in her chest echoed through her mind like a jackhammer and the sensation of a million microscopic feet traversing her skin caused her to scratch uncontrollably, first at head, then her wrists and finally her ankles. She sighed and opened her eyes, the darkness of her room interrupted only by the bright glow from her bedside alarm clock. She stole a glance. 3:02 a.m.

She brushed her long brown hair behind her ears and rolled onto her side, hoping a new position would help. It didn't. Although everyone she knew was surely slumbering at this late hour, sleep eluded her. She was awake and completely alone in her bedroom, isolated from the rest of the world.

She pressed her eyes closed, trying to force herself to sleep. Her nightshirt clad body shivered, and she pulled the flower-patterned sheets and blanket up to her chin, but it didn't help. A realization slowly dawned on her that it wasn't the cold causing her body to tremble. It was fear. Memories came flooding back of past sleepless nights, and she remembered what happened next. Dread washed over Jamie like a wave smothering her in the darkness.

The trembling grew worse; her breathing fast and shallow.

There's something in my room.

The words popped into Jamie's mind. She tried to dismiss the thought as an overactive imagination, but knew better.

I'm alone in my bedroom, I'm alone in my bedroom.

She repeated the refrain, but the words rang empty. The sense that someone, or something, was nearby overwhelmed her. She didn't want to look but had to know. She tilted her head to the side and saw ... nothing. Her eyes drooped shut and she breathed a sigh of relief.

A soft clicking sound rose from the corner. Jamie's eyes popped open and her muscles tensed as terror ripped through her. Sheets of perspiration flooded down her face and chest, her nightshirt clinging to her wet body. She slowly turned her head toward the sound. A figure lurked by her dresser, masked by the darkness that enveloped the room. It moved slowly, as if studying her from a distance. She sobbed.

No, please. Not again!

More movement, this time steady, calculated. The being moved from the shadows until it stood over her, its translucent skin gleaming in the moonlight. It peered at her

with cold, dead eyes. She tried to scream but couldn't. The being controlled her now, her body under its influence. It moved closer, its bald, mouthless head tilted to one side as it examined her.

It drew back the sheets in a slow, mechanical fashion, exposing her nightshirt-clad body. It reached for her with long, slender, fingers. She wanted to cry, but tears wouldn't come. The creature wouldn't allow them. The fingers inched menacingly closer to her.



Nick Randall sat upright in his bed, his heart thundering in his chest. He grabbed for the bat he kept propped against the wall for intruders. His trembling hands bumped the nightstand, nearly causing the bedside light to tumble to the ground. It tilted back and forth before wobbling to a settled position. He gripped the bat tightly and scanned the room, ready to strike.

He looked toward the corner where he had first seen the creature but nothing was there. His eyes darted around, adrenaline coursing through his body as he twitched at every sound. Slowly, sanity returned, and he realized it had only been a nightmare. He set the bat across his lap and took a deep breath, trying to steady his nerves.

Why did he keep having this same night terror and what did it mean? In the dream, he had felt completely powerless and isolated, unable to keep the being at bay. He shivered at the thought of being alone in its presence. A mixture of despair and anger welled inside of him and he balled his fists.

He glanced at the clock: 3:05 a.m. He fell backward onto his bed, gulping large breaths. His heart pounded so hard it felt like it would rip free of him. There would be no more sleeping tonight. Fear would keep him from returning to the land of dreams.

Randall thought back to when these episodes had begun. The nightmares had started a couple of weeks after his trip to the jungles of Peru, searching for the lost city of Vilcabamba. The odd physical attributes of the tribe that led him to the ruins—enlarged heads with bulging eyes—was a minor footnote compared to the discovery of Vilcabamba ... and its otherworldly inhabitants.

The discovery of the lost city had changed the way he viewed archaeology. Sadly, the eruption of El Misti, the volcano that powered Vilcabamba, had destroyed any proof of his discovery, and brought the entire episode to an end. Or had it? Either the experience was now influencing his dreams, or something else was happening. Were these night terrors a warning?

Randall shook his head. Impossible, they were only nightmares. He sat on the edge of his king-size bed and glanced at the side where his wife Ann used to sleep. He wished she was with him, by his side, her warmth comforting him. His fear was suddenly replaced with deep sadness and longing. He turned to face the window and dropped his head into his hands.

What the hell is happening to me? Am I losing it?

He forced himself to his feet, feeling the hard wood floor beneath him. Shivering, he slid on his lamb-wool slippers and reached for his robe.

He stumbled over to his desk, plopped down in his black leather chair, and flicked on his desk lamp. The sudden brightness caused him to wince. He sat motionless while his eyes adjusted, unsure of what to do next. Pressing the power button of his computer, he heard the hard drive whine to life. Research. That was the solution to his problem. He needed to learn why he was having these terrible dreams and needed coffee. Lots of it.