

Chapter 1

The red strobe lights of the ambulance disappeared into the night fog. Quiet and still he lay on the ground. Paramedics battled to save his life, but Jonah Sidmore lay motionless. As he looked up, he saw the trail of lights fade as his son was rushed to Winters Gate Memorial. U.S. Route 93 is a dark and winding road that stretches for miles and has many dangerous curves. On that particular night, misfortune and despair awaited Jonah. He hadn't received the news that his son had passed away enroute to the hospital. After about twenty minutes, Jonah arrived at the hospital, where the paramedics had started treatment. He was unable to speak. He could tell from the expressions on all their faces that something was wrong. Back at the scene, the local police investigated the area of the collision and determined foul play was involved.

"Mr. Sidmore, can you hear me? Can you feel my hand?" He was still unable to respond.

For the moment at least, he was in and out of consciousness, possibly even for days. He lay motionless in a shell he had no control over. Even though he could understand all that was going on, he was unable to yell out, as if he were in a bad dream. He tried to alert anyone who would look into his eyes. His son now lay on a stretcher

awaiting the coroner, who would bring him to the county morgue where an autopsy would be performed. Dr. Marisa entered the room and tried one more time to get a response from Jonah.

“No response again. We will have to keep a close eye on him,” he softly said.

“Nurse, keep me informed of his progress!”

“Yes, doctor,” as she obeyed his command.

It was two in the morning, and all seemed quiet. Inside the shell of Jonah were the pain and cries unheard outside. He hadn't seen his son. No one had said anything contrary to the idea that he was still alive, fearing he might not be able take the news.

Seven in the morning and at the county morgue. The medical examiner was ready to perform the autopsy on Jonah's son. Staff wheeled the gurney into the room for the awaiting doctor. He and his assistant took 20 minutes to prep for the procedure. Scalpel in hand, the doctor began to make the incision at the breastbone. Suddenly he stopped at the sound of the phone. His assistant answered and told the doctor it was important. It was the detective from the police station.

“Yes, yes, I'll do that. Thank you for calling, Detective. Bye.”

He slowly hung up the phone, almost in a kind of trance. He walked over to the gurney and bowed his head. He rolled the sheet over the body, completely covering it, and then slowly stepped back. He looked up at his assistant and said nothing. He then left the room and headed toward the administration office to meet with the detective.

The detective got up from the chair. He offered his hand to Dr. Evan Franken. They shook hands and then seated themselves.

Detective Kowalski looked the doctor straight in the eye, and with serious certainty said, “Dr. Franken, I have some information about the auto accident that I need to discuss with you.”

Evan, at this point, swallowed hard. He tried to prepare himself for what the detective had to say.

“The fatality that has come into your custody was a direct result of a homicide. At first we thought it was an accident,” he stated to Evan, reluctantly.

“I’m sorry to inform you that your wife was driving the car that caused the collision that killed Jonah Sidmore’s son, Nathaniel. She is uninjured and in the custody of our department, but she was found to be under the influence of alcohol.”

The doctor excitedly asked, “Can I see her, please?”

“Yes, sir, you can. My car is outside, and we can be there in a few minutes.”

Hastily the detective opened the car door for Dr. Franken. At the hospital, Jonah remained in a critical state, still unable to communicate with anyone. The nurse came in to check his vitals. He was stable at the moment. She noticed tears rolling down his cheek and lightly wiped them from his face. She placed her hand on his for comfort. Nothing anyone could say or do would change this sad situation. At the crash scene the next day, some family members placed flowers and said a prayer, in memory of young Nathaniel.

In the early evening the coroner, with shaky hands, performed the autopsy. He dropped the scalpel and began to whimper during the procedure. Comforting him, his assistant said, “It’ll be all right. We must continue.” After finally completing the autopsy, they concluded the boy died of multiple head wounds from being ejected from the car. Evan stayed a few hours into the night and completed his report for the detective. It was

the longest procedure he had performed in his entire career. After he completed the paperwork, he headed home with a sense of urgency to take the route where the accident occurred. He came to a curve in the road. In the distance, his headlamps shined onto the memorial erected for young Nathaniel. He pulled over to the side, stepped away from his car, slowly knelt down, and bowed his head in prayer for a few minutes. He stood up and faced the site as if to say "Good-bye." Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a shadowy figure headed toward the woods near the roadside. He shrugged it off as an animal, got back into his car, and headed home.

About a week later, on Route 93, another collision occurred about a mile from where Nathaniel was killed. Three were killed, and two were seriously injured. The two left alive were air lifted to the hospital. The cause of the crash was wet road conditions, so the accident was unavoidable. Three crosses and lots of flowers were later placed at the scene, along with a small stuffed bear, indicating a small child was one of the victims.

The roadways were always crowded during the latter part of the summer. But over the past few years, traveling this part of Route 93, sent shivers down one's spine, because so many accidents had occurred that memorials were beginning to cover the roadway. This really presented a problem to the local government, because all the monuments were distracting the motorists. Removing them or even reducing their number was a touchy subject that any government official dare not deal with. Nonetheless, the problem was beginning to grow.

Mr. Sidmore was now in stable condition and fully aware of his son's death and the cause of the crash. He was not angry, or at least did not display any anger, toward the woman who caused the accident. He discovered a spiritual side in himself he never knew

existed. He now seemed at peace. Dr. Franken visited him and apologized for his wife time and again. He couldn't accept the fact that he had already been forgiven. Time has passed on rather quickly for everyone; all involved shared the same hope.

On the anniversary of Nathaniel's death, family members laid more flowers and said a prayer at the crash site. Jonah Sidmore died two months after his son. To cope with their deaths, Mrs. Sidmore enacted a trust fund for underprivileged children without fathers and for education on how to avoid drunk driving. It was a monumental effort to try and rid the roadways of carelessness, but the effort was worth it.

A car with New York tags speedily rounded the curves on Route 93. The driver obviously didn't know the roadway because his car was hugging the curves too closely. In an instant, he found himself swerving to miss someone at a sharp curve, who suddenly came out of nowhere. He skidded off the roadway a few feet in the woods, causing severe damage to the car's front axle. Immediately he assessed the wreck and called local police for assistance. Once the police arrived, they dispatched a tow truck to the scene. The New York driver told the police he saw a man standing in the middle of the roadway, but then he disappeared. Noticeably shaken by what he had seen, he said it was a really queer experience.

Following that incident, Mavis Danzig, also from out of town, was traveling eastbound on 93. With the night so clear, she could see quite a distance in front of her. As she approached a curve in the road, she clicked on her high beams. She saw someone approaching her car from the side of the road and swerved to get out of the way, but her effort was futile. She pulled over and got out of the car to see if the person was all right, but no one was in sight. She called the state police and waited for them to arrive. Police

searched the area, but there was no sign that anyone was hit. After she gave a statement to the police, they let her go on her way.

News of these incidents in this particular roadway was spreading. Articles were written in the papers. The news had spread as far as White River Junction and Rising Falls, Montana. An old English teacher from Bedford, Massachusetts, caught sight of one of the articles in his local paper and remembered seeing someone standing alongside the roadway near one of the crosses. He thought about it for a few minutes and then decided it warranted a call to the local police. He explained what he read in the paper and described his experience, which had a peculiar similarity. The police took note of his account and thanked him for his trouble.

Police Chief Ron McFarland reviewed the information and decided to open an investigation of the strange occurrences on that particular stretch of Route 93. He put a couple of patrol cars in the area to keep an eye out for any mischievous behavior, especially teens who had nothing better to do than cause trouble. It was late October, a cold month with a lot of wind blowing leaves off the trees. One night, a young couple was traveling on the roadway a few miles from Route 101, which paralleled 93. Suddenly, along the dark stretch of road, they slammed their breaks trying to avoid a large mass. They swerved away from the obstruction and stopped to catch their breath. At first they thought it was a body, but it turned out to be leaves piled across the roadway, more than likely the work of pranksters. After reporting it to the police, they proceeded home.

“What the hell will be next?” yelled Chief McFarland.