

# **Crow's Eye**

**by**

**Tim Pompey**

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*Thanks, Deborah, for the desert retreat.*

*And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons  
and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your  
young men will see visions.*

— Joel 2:28

*We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe  
is long but it bends toward justice.*

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*“Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution.”  
Speech given at the National Cathedral, March 31, 1968*



*TULSA, OKLAHOMA*





*June 1, 1921, 6:00 a.m.*  
*The Home of William and Dorothea Grant*  
*Greenwood District*  
*Downtown Tulsa*

The first thing young James heard when he woke was his father's voice. William Grant, usually a calm man, was shouting. James was confused as to why, especially this early in the morning.

The second thing James noticed were noises outside his bedroom. He jumped up, threw back his covers, and hurried to the window to investigate. What he saw horrified him: smoke and fire from buildings burning, an armed mob rushing down his street like a flash flood, bloody bodies, women crying, and children wandering without their parents.

"James," his papa yelled.

James turned toward the urgent voice. His father stood at his bedroom door, a frantic look on his face. "C'mon, boy. We've got to leave."

James could hear his mother downstairs sobbing.

"What's happening, Papa?" said James, his terror growing with each new breath he took. He was only eight and all this commotion upset him mightily.

"No time to explain," said his father. "There's trouble outside. We have to move fast."

James stood frozen by his bedside. His legs refused to budge.

"James!" his father shouted a third time. "Move it!"

James hurried from his room and ran down the stairs as if his father were chasing him.

He noticed his mother throwing clothes in a suitcase. Her body shook. Her hands shook. She appeared to be wrestling with an animal, the clothes fighting against her anxious attempts to pack.

"Hurry, baby," she said as he scooted down the last stair.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Leaving," she said. "Got to get going before those folks find us."

Those folks? Who were they, and what could cause grown people to be in such a hurry this early in the morning?

His mother, Dorothea, was a slim woman, some might say slight, but there was nothing small about her at this moment, and her voice commanded his attention. The fact that she was crying doubled the impact.

"Come over here," she commanded and pointed behind her skirt. "Don't move till we're ready to go."

James buried himself in her hemline.

William walked halfway down the stairs and stood against the railing. For a man hollering just a minute ago, he seemed suddenly calm.

"Aren't we leaving?" she asked.

"Too late," he answered. "They're already here."

The volume of rowdy people increased in front of their house. The rushing flood had arrived at their doorway, demanding their attention. The Grant family heard voices crash together like trees splintering in a wild surge of water. The rage in their speech spread terror around the room.

William peered around Dorothea's skirt at James.

"Come here, boy." A command, but a gentle one not caused by anger. James knew the difference.

Reluctantly, he peeked around his mother's skirt.

"Come here. Please," William implored.

James moved two steps forward. His eyes were big as grapes.

William knelt eye-to-eye with the boy.

"You know that fort you're always telling me about? The one you and the kids play in? Out back, across the railroad tracks?"

Dorothea grabbed her son.

"He's not going anywhere without us."

"He's not going to die here either," William countered. "I won't leave him to those savages."

William stared for a tragic moment at his wife. Not a hard stare; instead, it was love, sadness, and terror all mixed into a single glance.

The years of their lives were summed up in this one last moment together as they waited helplessly for the waters to break through their house. Flight. Protection. Desperation. An even more heartbreaking choice. She read his face and understood.

"Dorothea . . ." he said and stopped.

William caught the gaze of his young son again.

James stared back. His hand grasped his mother's skirt so tight, William could see the outlines of his son's knuckles.

"You know that fort?" he asked again.

"Yes, sir."

James had helped build it and played army games there. He and his friends had spent hours making up wild tales: pirates, cowboys and Indians, and other adventures they created on the spot. They had played baseball in the empty field and sometimes

just sat and took in the afternoon sunlight. They had escaped their everyday routines and gotten lost in their imaginations. It was a happy place, a getaway from their families. He had never pictured it as his last wall of protection. But now, watching his father as he spoke . . .

"I want you to go out that back door and run like the devil, find that fort, and stay there till all this ruckus dies down," said William. "Don't come back here till you hear nothing but quiet. If we can, we'll be waiting, but don't you come back till you know for certain it's safe. Could be a while. But that's the deal. Be brave and wait there."

"Here, honey," said his mother as she rushed into the kitchen. She returned with a small basket packed full of chicken. "Should be enough here to last you a couple a days."

James frowned and fought back the tears. *A couple of days and then what? Where would his parents be? Where were they going?*

James took the box and held it tightly against his chest. He backed up two steps, his face filled with questions. His concern wasn't about the chicken or the fort. His concern was for his parents—their safety, their whereabouts, their continued existence—but here they were, telling him to run as if this was their last goodbye. It made no sense to him. But adults being who they were, James had to obey.

"You get my gist?" said William.

James, still confused and panicked, was torn by indecision: leaving his parents, running to safety, or staying right here in his familiar house with all that commotion outside. It came down to this: stay here and risk his death or flee and risk losing the people he loved most in his life. His mind whirled like leaves in a stiff breeze.

"James?" said his father.

"Yes, sir."

"You understand?"

James was not sure how to answer. *Understand what?* But right now, his father's words pressed him into action, and his parents weren't leaving him any time to ask questions. At last, the poor boy gave in.

"Yes, sir," he said reluctantly.

"All right," his father replied. "Now. Let's hug."

They all gathered in a tight circle, arms about waists.

James looked up and noticed his father praying silently. His last words. *Amen.*

"Now," said William. "Run!"

He pushed James, the basket of chicken pressed tightly in his arms, toward the back door.

"Run, Son!" he said urgently. "The devil's at your heels. Don't let him catch you."

James veered toward the door.

"Go on," his father urged. "No time for crying now. Git!"

James hit the door and barreled out the backyard toward the railroad tracks. He could fly when he wanted to, and at this moment, he wanted to so badly. He ached to drop the chicken and sprint, but the chicken remained firmly tucked under his right arm. The chicken held those last memories of his parents.

Dorothea sobbed as she looked out the back window and watched him disappear.

Then the terror came—fists banging on the front door, rocks crashing through the front windows, a torch that lit the curtains and the house on fire.

William looked at Dorothea. She hesitated in the kitchen.

What desperate darkness had arrived? Where was God in this moment? The God of the Psalms who promised protection, salvation, and deliverance? The God whom they had relied on to bring them to Greenwood and start their lives together? The God they prayed to on Sundays in church and during grace at the table?

"I love you, honey," William said softly.

Dorothea was beside herself. "I love you, too," she said and choked up, her fingers pressed against her cheeks.

Dodging shrouds of smoke, William hurried to the front door. He opened it and faced a rowdy mob.

Suddenly, Dorothea was right next to him. She had stopped her tears, and her face was steely. They were a family, after all, in good times and bad. William was not going to face this alone.

"How can I help you, gentlemen?" he asked.

Within seconds, everything was chaos, death, and ruination.

*April 11, 2018, 2:18 a.m.*  
*Apartment of Dovey Declair*  
*South Tulsa*

It was the worst time of night for Dovey, especially when the dreams came. Dovey, sitting at the side of her bed, observed the faint light glowing through her curtains from the adjacent parking lot. Those lamps always threw off that ugly, yellow glare and made her white linen drapes amber as Sulphur pools.

She glanced at her bedside clock. 2:18 in the morning. Another eight hours before her shift at Sid's Deli in downtown Tulsa. Time enough to go back to bed if she dared. Still, she had enough experience to know that slumber had deserted her. The routine was familiar: troubled dreams followed by restless nights and a restless soul hiking through fields of insomnia. Sleep didn't come easy these days. The dark mornings always seemed to rob her when she least expected it.

Dovey tried to recall her most recent dream; something about a red light shining through her hands, a pair of red, fiery eyes glaring down from a tree, and a voice commanding her to leap in a hole at the edge of her feet. How deep? She couldn't tell. It was too dark and none of the red light penetrated the hole. Something pushed her forward against her will. When Dovey woke up, she knew she had no choice but to jump. All that and strange music

emanating behind her, like a movie score from a horror film. No wonder her heart was racing.

She looked at her computer sitting on her desk. It had the logo for her fledgling business— BlackSpark—her web page specializing in African style jewelry and accessories: bracelets, rings, earrings, necklaces, and chokers. Bouncing lazily across the screen, the logo looked eerie in the dark, glowing gold with flecks of black, green, and blue.

Why had she approved this design? Did she have any inkling that it would come back to torment her? When she chose it, she loved the colors and thought they popped on the page. But she had only seen this with lamps and sunlight. She never dreamed it would haunt her.

The catchy part she had got right. Yes, it popped, and tonight at the witching hour, it crawled across the screen like a portal from hell. It was positively bubbling.

*God, this is crazy. Crazy in terms of . . .*

She was trying to decide.

Since her freshman year at the University of Tulsa, she had had so many disturbing dreams. Her goal back then was to succeed as a Black entrepreneur, a strong woman of color who grew her own business from scratch using her love for fashion and her insights into the designer needs of Black women. She wanted to sit proudly in a board room with her logo gleaming in the background. She wanted the world to take note of her as a Black female CEO—the triple whammy.

But tonight, her head had been deluged with nightmares. Seven years later and she was still struggling to find her niche. Dovey Declair. Troubled Black woman. Up in the middle of the night. Pummeled by insomnia.



*Leave me alone,* she said to herself.

She got up to go to the bathroom, then veered off to her tiny galley kitchen for some water. She had Perrier cold in the fridge. When she opened the door, the bright light streamed out and temporarily blinded her. It wasn't a cop shining his light in her eyes, but it was just as surprising and painful.

"Ah," she groaned. Was this not the story of her life? Pitched between darkness and light and not sure at any given moment which she preferred. She grabbed the water and shut the door. Light gone. Instant relief.

Dovey padded over to her kitchen table located next to her small balcony. Opening the blinds, she peered out at the twinkle of city lights across her south Tulsa neighborhood. Street lamps burned in the night, and underneath those lamps, peaceful people. Most of those people slept safely in their beds, not bothered by their dreams or refrigerator lights, not bothered by their past or future. Sleep was sleep, the serene routine most people enjoyed at this hour. Dovey, however, was up with a brain that wouldn't shut off. Worst of all, the dreams kept coming back, as if a video in her head was stuck on play. It was not a matter of choice for her. It just happened repetitiously and unannounced.

Tonight, for instance. Red lights. A black hole. Scary music.

*Well, girl,* she said to herself as if she were her own psychiatrist. *Explain that to me.*

Nobody answered, and she didn't answer herself. If there were spirits in the dark, she assumed they also were sleeping. It was just her awake at this hour. She took another swig of water and tried to bask in its cold fizzle down her throat.

"Shit," Dovey muttered and went over to the couch. Turning on her T.V., she surfed through channel after channel. Finally, she

stopped on a broadcast of the original 1939 version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

“How appropriate,” Dovey commented as she settled in to watch Dorothy and friends follow the yellow brick road.

Within minutes, she was asleep, dreaming of a pair of red shoes she had found in her closet. She wanted to wear them so badly and wondered if they were the right size.

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When she woke, the sun peeked over the horizon. The TV droned with another movie that blared across the living room. Dovey wondered what day it was, whether she had slept for a night and a day and another night and perhaps missed her shift at Sid's. She rushed to her computer to check. April 11. Still today, just hours beyond her dream. Dovey's head ached and her mouth was dry as cotton. Hurrying to the refrigerator, she took another swig of Perrier.

“Damn,” she mumbled. “Fucking long night.”

Dovey wondered what had happened to her, whether she had been rolled and beaten like bread dough by some evil demon while she slept. Her dream had faded to a shadow in her mind, but she knew that it had frightened her. What could she do to end this? If she was harboring anxiety, maybe she needed to go to a shrink or a hypnotist. Whatever boiled in her had turned chaotic and dismal. Dovey mourned another night wasted as she prepared to go to work. At Sid's, she would be a walking zombie whose job was to give good customer service. *Good luck*, she thought.

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The next half hour, Dovey got dressed and fixed breakfast. Over coffee and a buttered piece of toast, she picked up her weekly copy of the *Tulsa Eb*, a local community paper that focused on issues, events, arts, and other news relevant to the local Black community. The opening page featured the headline of the week: *Tulsa Massacre Connected to Local Black Families*.

She read the whole article in one sitting and paid close attention to the interviews.

Ten thousand white people marched into Greenwood on June 1, 1921, some of them in Army uniforms. By the time they finished the massacre, the estimate was 300 dead, most of them Black, 1,100 homes burned, 35 square blocks devastated. The dead had been thrown on trucks and hauled away like refuse.

Where had they gone? Some suspected they buried them in unmarked graves in the vicinity of Oaklawn Cemetery in downtown Tulsa.

Some family members recounted the stories of horror their kin had described: homes burned, businesses looted, people shot in the streets. The Black community was outnumbered and outgunned. Against such a mob, even with the weapons they had, they didn't stand a chance.

"Jesus," she whispered.

Something about the event hit home. Not that she knew much about the massacre itself. They had recently begun to revamp the old Greenwood section of Tulsa and include markers commemorating the event. A park had been built on Detroit Street as a memorial.

Up till now, Dovey had only paid attention to the Tulsa massacre in passing. This morning, however, was different. This morning, the words seemed to leap out at her. *Why*, she

wondered? *What was different about this morning?* It wasn't fresh news that Black people had been taking shit from the white community for nearly 400 years, first as slaves, then with Jim Crow laws. All this she knew, but the Tulsa massacre? Not so much, and the bloody killing and wanton destruction struck her hard.

"Lord have mercy," she concluded as she rose from the table and finished getting dressed for her shift.

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While applying her makeup, Dovey tried to picture what it would be like to have a mob drag her out of her house and shoot her—or worse. What would it be like to stand helpless and wait to die? What if she had been forced to watch her family die? What would she do?

Her parents. Dovey winced at the thought. Since her parents' death three and a half years ago, Dovey had a hole in her life, a sense of self-identity that felt like a blank piece of paper. Who was she? She saw the stocky Black woman looking back at her. *Strahan*, they nicknamed her in high school, after Michael Strahan, former defensive end for the New York Football Giants. Dovey and Strahan had the same gap-toothed smile. Her perfectly round head framed an enormous scalp of brown curly hair that exploded and danced around her head. Her freckled cheeks set off her warm brown eyes. It was a face filled with expression, all the nuances that made up Dovey's bubbling personality.

Still, the woman staring back at her seemed different from the woman who gazed into the mirror. Dovey pictured that woman, the one in the mirror, in the middle of a bloody riot with an angry mob screaming at her, pointing their guns, pulling the triggers,

hauling her off for burial like a dead cow. Who was she to them? What did she matter?

“Ah,” she said in disgust, wishing she had more in common with someone like Beyoncé or Rhianna, or even women of her body type—Oprah or Queen Latifah. But she was Dovey. She didn’t ask to be this way, but here she was, a normal Black woman getting ready for work. Or was she normal? The dreams said otherwise.

When Dovey finished, she checked her watch and hurried toward the door. Just another day for her in Tulsa. Except that she couldn’t get the article out of her mind. She wondered as she drove toward downtown if her dreams and the Tulsa massacre were part of the same story. If so, the question that perplexed her: Why?



*December 28, 2014, 3:30 p.m.*  
*Home of Paul and Cecilia Declair*  
*Central Tulsa*

Sunday afternoon and the Declair's had just finished their late lunch. The family had gathered to finish off all the holiday goodies from Christmas before Paul and Cecelia took off the following day for Minneapolis. Between them, they polished off the rest of the turkey and fixings, yams, greens, cornbread dressing, black-eyed peas, and the remainder of the sweet potato and pecan pies. For a lunch of leftovers, it was a feast.

Stuffed and happy, Paul excused himself and left the table to watch the NBA game between the Thunder and the Mavericks. Full house. Big rivalry. Paul a huge Oklahoma Thunder basketball fan.

Dovey had brought home her best friend and classmate from the University of Tulsa, Billie Lovett, for the weekend. It was during their winter break. They were relaxing in the dining room as they chatted and continued picking at the food.

Soul sisters since they were freshmen at the University of Tulsa, they had bonded over school, boyfriends, clothes, and career choices. They would graduate together in the spring—Dovey in business management, Billie in arts, culture, and entertainment.

Paul passed through for a beer before the game started.

"What're you guys gossiping about?" he said before disappearing into the kitchen.

"Gossip?" said Dovey. "We don't gossip. We discuss."

"Uh-huh," Paul answered. "Sure enough. I hear ya."

"Big news today," said Dovey.

"Such as?"

"Oh, you know, I'm pregnant. Due in the summer, and Billie, well, she's being sexually harassed in her classes. Other than that, business as usual."

Paul, an attorney, always pricked up his ears where his daughter was concerned.

"Whaaat?" he said with his body in the kitchen and his head in the dining room.

"You heard me," Dovey laughed.

Paul, who suffered from protective daughter syndrome, frowned for a second, then chuckled.

"Ahhhh, you got me there, baby girl," he said as he wagged a finger at her. "Yes, you are soooo clever."

"I am, aren't I?" She wagged her finger back at him. "And you don't trust me, do you?"

"About as far as I can throw you," he said as he zipped through the door and threw the fridge open in search of his favorite Fat Tire brew.

"Did I hear something about being pregnant?" said Cecelia from deep in the kitchen. Her voice was loud and carried throughout the house.

Billie and Dovey laughed.

"Nosey mother," said Dovey emphatically. She turned to Billie. "You see what I put up with? I am an adult under my parent's strict supervision. How is that legal?"



Paul passed through on his way to the den.

"My house, my rules," he joked.

"Your house, Mom's rules," said Dovey.

"That's right. You're a pushover," said Cecelia. "I'm the enforcer of the family."

"I pick my battles," he said as he faded into the den.

Order was temporarily restored.

"What time you leaving tomorrow?" said Dovey.

"9:00," said Cecelia, "if your father drags himself out of bed in time."

"Don't you worry. I'll be up and ready," said Paul from his comfortable, concealed corner.

"Supposed to snow tomorrow," said Billie. "Highways will be slick."

"That why we're taking the SUV," said Cecelia. "Damn, isn't it good to have a 4-wheel drive?"

"Sure is," Paul yelled.

Dovey continued the patter.

"Remind me. Why aren't I going?"

Cecelia walked through the dining-room door.

"We need a so-called adult to watch the house and take care of the dog. You're nominated."

"Chauncy can take care of himself," Dovey argued.

"Chauncy needs to be fed and walked, and he's your dog which we've fed and sheltered for the last four years. So, do your parental dog duty. It's good practice. And remember. You owe us for being such good parents. Time to pay up so we can play up."

"Ah. Being an only child, I have a debt I can never repay."

"Never," both Cecelia and Paul chimed together.

Paul added, "But you got the house to yourself."

"Don't encourage her," yelled Cecelia.

Dovey's eyes lit up. She grinned broadly. "That's right, Billie. What say we party New Year's Eve? Get into my dad's private wine collection? You know? The good stuff that he keeps locked up?"

"Nooooo," Paul protested. "Hands off."

Billie cheered and clapped.

Dovey continued, "You've got the friends, I've got the house. And he wine."

They began to chant, "Party, party." Then they stood up and waved their hands as if a hip-hop rave had just broken out. Cecelia, who watched from a corner, smiled, took note, and joined in the dance. "Oh yeah. I still got it."

The three of them cackled loudly.

"You want that wine? I'll even give you the key," Cecelia murmured.

"No, you won't," Paul shot back.

Cecelia giggled and walked into the den as she pranced and waved her hands.

Billie and Dovey sat down and egged one another on with their chuckles and cheers.

"Your parents are cool," said Billie.

"It's the holidays," Dovey cooed. "Alcohol makes everyone happy."

Paul overhead and responded: "One beer," he said. "One beer does not a party make."

"But two beers between us does," said Cecelia. "Cause we're old."

"You are," Dovey teased. "And don't forget that champagne we just polished off."

"They are not old," said Billie.

"Good girl," said Paul. "Dovey. Pay attention."

"I'm all ears," said Dovey lightly.

Dovey sipped her Coke. The mood was merry. It was a good day.

She loved the holidays, Christmas especially. The lights, the tree, the music, the happy spirit.

Every so often, she took it in and realized that she was lucky. Not that she would ever tell her parents, but she knew it. These were the good times. The family times. The fun times. And this year, she had much to look forward to.

She raised her can of Coke in a salute.

Billie followed suit and they clanked cans together.

"Here's to being Seniors," said Dovey. "We are flyin' into the future."

"Here, here," Billie acknowledged.

Billie had also received good news recently. Her breast cancer screening was clear. She, too, felt lucky.

"We got a Black man for president, we're at the top of our class, and we got each other," Billie piped.

Dovey stood up and stepped into another hip-hop groove by the table. "Merry Christmas. Happy New Year," she chanted and danced.

"Hey, you guys are happy in there," said Paul.

"Yeah. New Year's Eve. You're gone. Everything's peachy," Dovey exclaimed.

"Oh, we're coming back and counting all the dishes broken," he said. "And the wine. Anything missing or broken, that's money out of your tuition."

"Gee, Dad. I'm already poor."

"Well, you're gonna be broke by the time I get finished."

Dovey and Billie laughed again and sat down.

Dovey loved this about her family—the banter, the humor, the back and forth. It reminded her. They were a family, a good family, and she was Dovey Declair, the beneficiary.

"Kay, now," Dovey announced. "We're gonna go upstairs and do fun stuff."

"Keep the windows open and the smoke outside," Cecelia joked.

"Right, Mom."

"And stay out of my stash."

"Ooooo," said Billie. "Room search."

They both giggled as they ran upstairs.

*April 11, 2018, 12:47 p.m.*

*Sid's Deli*

*Downtown Tulsa*

She came into Sid's during rush hour, a tall, striking Black woman in a dashiki dress brimming with red floral prints, diagonal yellow stripes, and blue squares. She wore a matching Gele headwrap that sat tall over her long braids. The elegant woman was as stunning as any famous African model. Dovey, being an avid fashionista, took immediate notice.

Sid's Deli, owned by Sid Gosh, was a working-class restaurant that catered to government officials, secretaries, lawyers, oil engineers, and bus drivers alike. It had been a landmark in Tulsa for two decades. Small in seating capacity, with wood walls and shelving piled with Tulsa memorabilia, the deli stood in contrast to downtown Tulsa's squared-off glass and steel architecture. It had an old-world charm for those who wanted coffee and sandwiches, espresso and small desserts, especially those who needed to order, eat, and get back to their office in under an hour. Sid's also provided a brisk take-out service for business meetings and for those sacrificing their lunch breaks to eat at tables or desks.

Today Sid stood behind the deli counter where he took customer orders—meats, cheeses, loaves of breads, salads of all sorts—and doled it all out with standard wrapping paper and Styrofoam containers.

As the woman walked in, even Sid noticed and eyed them both as Dovey showed her to her table. It was a rare day when royal guests ate at Sid's. This woman was in a class of her own.

"What can I start you with?" Dovey asked.

The woman surveyed the menu and spoke in a gentle Caribbean accent.

"I think a nice hot herbal tea, perhaps chamomile," said the woman.

Dovey wanted to imitate her voice but did not want to insult her to her face. She loved the way the woman pronounced *herbal tea* and *chamomile*.

"Coming right up," said Dovey. She mouthed the words *herbal tea* and *chamomile* to herself as she headed for the hot water burners.

As she passed the front counter, Sid grinned and Dovey gave him a wide-eyed glance.

The woman took out her phone and kept busy until Dovey returned with her order of tea.

"What would you like today?" Dovey offered.

The woman looked up and smiled gracefully.

"You're Dovey," she said.

Dovey stood still for a moment. How did the woman know who Dovey was? Should she have recognized her, maybe from her aunt's church or some noted community meeting?

"Yes," said Dovey, frantically trying to recall the woman who would have impressed her if they had ever met.

"I'm pleased to make your acquaintance," said the woman.

"And you are?"

"Atalia. Atalia Willows. The name means *God is praised* in Hebrew. My parents were Jamaican Jews. But I am of my own

religion, though I love the meaning of my name and welcome the association.”

A Jamaican Jew. Dovey had never heard of such a thing. Jamaicans she assumed were Protestants or Catholics or Bob Marley fanatics. She’d never even met a Black Jew. The only alternative religion she had ever encountered for Africans were the Black Muslims. There were a few of those at her university. Very few. Indeed, Black religious royalty had arrived today at Sid’s.

“Well, Atalia, we welcome you here to Sid’s. What would you like?”

“Do you offer a Reuben?”

Dovey paused and looked at Sid. He nodded.

“Yes,” she said and looked over at Sid again.

“Yeah,” Sid announced. “I make a hell of a Reuben. I even make my own sauerkraut. It’s from an old family recipe.”

Atalia smiled. “Reuben it is,” she said and handed the menu back to Dovey.

“Dear God,” said Dovey on the sly as she went by the counter and tried to picture such an elegant woman eating such a messy sandwich with those gorgeous hands.

“Jerry, Reuben,” said Sid to the back kitchen, “and be sure and include the pickles.”

The woman nodded at Sid and returned to her phone. Dovey, with a moment’s break between orders, kept an eye on her.

Sid slipped back in the kitchen and made sure the sandwich was flawless.

It turned out that Atalia ate the Reuben quite elegantly without spilling a glob of sauerkraut or a dollop of dressing.

Dovey considered her feat nearly magical.

When Atalia finished, Dovey began to remove the dishes.

"You can sit down, dear," said Atalia. "I have something to tell you."

Dovey looked up from the dishes, then over at Sid.

"I'm sorry, but I'm working," she said.

"Your guy over there, he'll give you time," she said calmly.

Again, Dovey peered over at Sid. He shrugged his shoulders and motioned for her to sit down. The scene had captured his attention. He wanted to hear the story.

"Did you like your sandwich?" Dovey asked as she sat down.

"Oh, the sandwich was delicious," said Atalia. "I shall come back here again. And."

Atalia smiled and raised her index finger. "You folks provide excellent service. I'm very impressed."

"Oh, thank you," said Dovey. "We do try."

There was a moment of silence.

Atalia opened the conversation.

"I am here because of you."

Dovey cocked her head. "You are? I can't imagine what you'd want from me. By the way. How'd you know my name?"

Atalia pointed at Dovey's shoulder.

"Your name tag, dear."

Again, Dovey was embarrassed.

"Oh. Right. Duh."

"But no matter. I came to share something with you."

Dovey paused. "Yeah?"

"Yes. I have a message for you."



“From?”

“From the spirits who bring messages. They often speak to me and I carry out their wishes. These are the spirits of our ancestors, our old, old community that remain with us, even before the dawn of history. They don’t die, you know. They are always with us.”

“You mean like an email or a text message?” Dovey joked, betraying her doubt.

“Ah, you are witty,” Atalia chuckled with a broad grin.

Dovey was skeptical about spiritual matters, Christian or otherwise, and always thought people like Atalia who spouted mumbo jumbo like this, had a couple of screws loose. Still. The woman was a customer, and she seemed sane enough, so what had Dovey to lose?

“So,” Dovey asked. “What’s the message?”

Atalia let her eyes fall on Dovey for a long time.

“I know you are a woman dealing with dreams.”

Dovey was surprised.

“You know that . . . how?”

“As I said, the spirits told me.”

Dovey refrained from commenting. It would have been unwise and certainly not good customer service to share her frank thoughts.

“The same spirits give visions,” said Atalia.

“They do?” said Dovey trying hard not to be harsh or disrespectful.

But Atalia knew immediately. “You do not believe?”

“Believe what? The message? Visions? I don’t know. What are they? I can’t believe in something I don’t know about.”

"Oh, but you can," said Atalia. "You just don't know it yet. Your faith will be stretched . . . tight. It will become the head of a drum. Strike, and it will resonate."

Dovey was getting a little spooked by this very odd woman claiming to have messages from ancient spirits.

"I promise you," said Dovey, fighting back her irritation, "I'm no drum."

"Not yet, but you will be." Again, the irksome smile, the smile of someone who knew something that remained a mystery to Dovey; a goddamn drawn-out muddleheaded mystery if Dovey had to guess. *Spill it, Lady.*

"Can you just tell me?" she asked, "what this is all about?"

This time there was no hiding her annoyance.

"I can tell you *some* things. The question is, can you believe me?"

Dovey lowered her head to keep from growling. Now she was irked.

"You first," she offered.

Atalia turned the moment into a dramatic pause, then proclaimed:

"Your dreams will turn to visions and your prophecies will raise the dead."

Dovey just stared at her.

"Big changes are coming," Atalia added.

"Really?" said Dovey flatly.

"Yes. Guaranteed."

They both sat silently.

"That is the message," Atalia pronounced. "Now. Will you believe it?"

Dovey slid sideways in her chair and stared up at the ceiling. She played with a saltshaker before she decided to speak.

"I have no idea what that means. As for believing, maybe, maybe not. I guess I'll know it when I see it."

"Ah," Atalia promised, "That you definitely will."

Dovey took a deep breath.

"Great. Thanks for letting me know."

Atalia shook her head. "Such lack of faith."

"Yeah. That's me," Dovey grumbled. "Miss big ol' lack of faith. My aunt says that sometimes. I don't pay attention to her ramblings either, not much anyway. I'm not a mystic, spiritualist, whatever you want to call it. I'm just plain ol' Dovey, and this message, well, you might as well speak Greek to me, and I don't speak Greek. And I don't believe in your message either. I'm a proud Black woman just trying to earn a buck here. I believe in what I see. I believe in the money that falls in my hands. I believe in what I can learn about and rationally figure out. I don't believe in spirits or ghosts or anything beyond this world I live in. As I said, I'm a Black woman in the here and now."

"A Black woman who has troubling dreams," said Atalia, "and stays awake at night wondering what they mean."

Dovey turned back to her and put her elbows on the table.

"You know, you're really scaring the shit out of me. How about we wrap this up? I can give you a nice chocolate chip cookie to go and welcome you back anytime. As you've told me, we give good service here. I wouldn't want you to let this come between us. It's a sandwich place. No dreams for sale here. No visions either. Just basic lunch. Real sandwiches for real people who need to work and eat and make a living."

"Oh, I will return," said Atalia. "Whatever your faith, you and I are bound together by the spirits. Whatever you think now, you will remember this, and that is my message and mission. The visions will come, and then you will believe."

Atalia took a long sip of tea and smiled. "Mission accomplished," she concluded.

Dovey stood and picked up her dishes.

"Thank you for coming," Dovey said with gritted teeth. "Have a very nice day."

Dovey hurried back to the kitchen to drop off her load. When she came back, Atalia was waiting by the front counter.

"Thank you, Dovey, for listening," said Atalia.

Dovey was careful to let Atalia's words roll off her back. It was something she had learned as a waitress. Never let the customer see you frown. Make sure they feel appreciated. Keep your damn feelings to yourself.

"Thank *you* for coming," Dovey said pleasantly.

"Thanks, Miss," said Sid as a way of reinforcing a positive outcome to a bizarre conversation.

Before she left, Atalia leaned over to Dovey and whispered: "Follow the crow."

Dovey stared at her. "Okay, then."

Atalia left with her garments billowing and walked elegantly down the sidewalk.

Both Dovey and Sid ran to the front window to watch her go.

"What was that?" Sid asked.

"Whoo whoo time," said Dovey. "I think we just served our first psychic."

“No,” said Sid. “My wife’s eaten here. She’s psychic as hell. But this woman, yeah, she’s from another planet, I suspect. You okay?”

“Not unless I find a crow to follow.”

“Plenty of them around. Shouldn’t be that hard.”

“True enough.”

They both returned to work.

When Dovey finished her shift, she was careful to make sure the woman wasn’t following her. She did not want to reveal where she lived to someone who insisted on giving her otherworldly advice. This conversation would be her secret, and Atalia’s message would remain cryptic and concealed.



*April 12, 2018, 7:48 p.m.*

*U Storage  
South Tulsa*

Dovey stared at her computer screen like a woman in a trance.

She had come to her so-called *office*, a storage unit in South Tulsa, to fill orders for BlackSpark jewelry and run some Facebook marketing strategies. For the moment, however, her mind wandered like a child, roaming at will when she should have been working.

The words of Atalia nagged her, pressed her like a courtroom lawyer, made her shake her head and try to expel the mantra: *Follow the crow.*

What she followed at this point wasn't crows or jewelry or anything with a direct purpose in her life. For now, she vegetated in her chair and waited absentmindedly for her fingers to move. They weren't cooperating. Her cursor stared at her like a tiny eye.

Dovey had dreamed for years about being involved in fashion. It was a favorite subject between her and Billie. She read magazines, watched T.V., and doodled her fashion designs on paper. She spent hours wandering through chain stores of all sorts examining clothes, rings, shoes, hats, purses, belts, and even umbrellas. From head to toe, she had ideas about fashion that she thought might be sellable. She nicknamed her ideas *Dovey's Dreams.*

BlackSpark was part of her bigger plan to run her own company. The storage facility was a convenient stop on the way to something bigger. The jewelry was a starter kit. Here within a tiny room, a plan existed. But tonight, it had stalled for lack of attention. Dovey's thoughts were elsewhere.

Dovey had been pleased this morning when she logged into her website and discovered that several orders were waiting: a set of beaded earrings; a blue and gold silver ring with black inlay; an African continental pendant and matching chain. It was a good start for a fledgling business. She had worked hard to do her homework, dig out customers, and do the marketing required to launch BlackSpark. So tonight, with victory within reach, what was she waiting for?

*Follow the crow.*

It ran like a flashing traffic signal through her head.

*Follow the crow.*

It was programmed to *repeat*.

*Follow the crow.*

Even though she had come here to work, it seemed her brain had a different plan.

*Well, Dovey thought as she waited. No crows tonight.*

The sun went down and she just waited, for something, or someone, whatever it was she waited for because she hadn't a clue about spirits or crows or anything that might be from another universe. While she gave the words of Atalia serious consideration, Dovey sat and stared at the tiny, vertical cursor.

And therein lay the problem. Dovey's thoughts were solitary and focused on a single item. A single feathered item. A crow. Not business. Not jewelry. A plain old bird. She waited in front of her keyboard for a bird.



*Dovey, get busy,* she told herself.

Her mind didn't obey. Instead, she sat and meditated on Atalia.

"Jeepers, this is creepers," she murmured. "What the hell is going on?"

The cursor waited.

Dovey thought it might help if she reviewed some inventory and gave some thought to future sales. What were her distributors offering for Fall? Fashion was cyclical. She had to keep one step ahead to be ready for the next season. A fashion expert had to be a futuristic planner.

She walked around the small storage area, metal walls with a solitary light bulb and a plywood floor, some shelving for her boxes, and a series of labeled signs for sorting.

The unit had a single garage door that faced its twin across the alleyway. The owners had built these units to be homogenous. It was part of their business plan. They stored stuff. They hid stuff. Like Dovey was hiding. Her. Stuff.

Though the evening was warm, the room made her shiver. It struck her how the place was lonely. At least tonight, she was lonely. Why not just call Billie and have her come over? Oh yeah, Billie had called. She was working late on a project.

In the beginning, Dovey had valued this solitude as her getaway. Now it felt more like a tomb.

"Damn," she blurted out. "What's going on? Dovey, get your shit together."

Determined to work, she returned to her computer and processed the first order for the earrings. She worked for several minutes to box them, run out shipping labels, and get everything

ready to go to the post office tomorrow. When it was all finished, she congratulated herself.

"One down," she counted.

Then she heard it.

A voice. No, several voices. A crowd of voices.

They were crying and screaming, moaning and praying. And there were gunshots.

Dovey ran to the entrance and peeked out.

The voices were distant, perhaps miles away. They were clearly in distress. Something terrible had happened to them.

Dovey took a long walk around the units. They were fenced off on three sides by open grasslands. On the south side, the street entrance, she could hear traffic on the freeway. A couple of cars had parked further down. Like Dovey, other people had come to move, rearrange, and collect stuff.

The voices continued.

Dovey peered through a fence across an open field. The fence was too high to climb, but the voices were distinctive and loud enough to concern her. She pulled out her cell phone and called 911.

Tulsa emergency dispatch came on the line.

"911. What's your emergency?"

Dovey spoke slowly. "I hear crying in the distance, somewhere."

"Crying, ma'am?"

"Yeah, sounds like a crowd of people in trouble. I can't see them, but I can hear them. They need help."

"What's your location, ma'am?"

"I'm on the east end of U Storage. 711 River Avenue in South Tulsa. If you want, I can come to the front gate."

“Crying, you say?”

“Well, screaming, crying, people wailing, sounds of guns firing. I don’t know. I can’t see it, but it sounds terrible, like someone has a gun and is shooting people.”

“Okay, I’ll get a unit out there.”

“Thank you,” said Dovey. She felt relieved, and then, she wondered. Had she done the right thing?

Dovey closed shop and drove her car to the front entrance. In five minutes or so, a cruiser came by. She opened the gate with her fob key and flagged down the officer.. He parked, used his radio, and stepped out.

“You the one that called?” he said.

“I am,” she replied.

He looked around the units, went still for a second, then walked over.

“You reported gunfire?”

Dovey pointed east. “Out there somewhere. I heard people crying and screaming. I heard guns go off. I was worried.”

Again, the officer listened.

“You mean through that fence?”

“Yes, sir.”

He paused again. “I don’t hear a thing.”

“Well, what’s out there?” she asked.

He looked at her skeptically.

“Nothing. It’s a field for a couple of miles, and beyond that, it’s a shopping center.”

“And no reports of gunfire?”

“No, ma’am. Not from that place.”

Dovey grew still. She listened again. Nothing.

She offered an apology. “I’m sorry. I swear I heard it.”

The officer walked a few steps toward the fence and turned in a circle as if he were a beacon.

Dovey agreed with him. Right this minute, she heard nothing. Her embarrassment turned torrential.

"I'll drive around," he said, "and see if I find anything." The look on his face suggested his disbelief.

"Well," said Dovey, "thank you for coming."

He didn't reply. He walked back to his car and drove through the open gate.

Dovey returned to her car and waited.

Eventually, the officer came back, drove through the gate, and disappeared.

Dovey left her car and stood by the fence. The sun had set. Dusk crawled across the prairie grass. She heard it again—the same crying, screaming, and gunshots. If the officer had been there, she would have alerted him again. But he was gone, and she was not going to call and get the same result.

The words of Atalia floated through her head: *Follow the crow.*

And that seemed to be exactly what she was attempting at this moment, except there was no crow to follow. There was nothing and nobody out here. So what exactly was she doing? For Dovey, that was the important question of the day. Unfortunately, she had no answer, at least not now.

"Yeah, right," said Dovey as if confirming that Atalia was a nut job and she was the nut follower who let the woman slide into her head. Now, she concluded, it was time to slide her out.

"Dovey, you have lost your damn mind," she argued.

Dovey wondered what was going on? She knew what she heard. Then again, she knew what she didn't hear. Like a staticky

radio on a lonesome Oklahoma road, the reception went in and out.

“Damn,” she muttered as she shook her head, hurried back to her car, and fled home.



*April 14, 2018, 8:36 p.m.*

*McNellie's Restaurant*

*South Tulsa*

Dovey and Billie met for drinks and dinner at McNellie's. They hadn't seen one another in several weeks. Dovey had been buried in web design and a business launch for her jewelry line. Billie was busy with her job at Red Heart Commercial Graphics in South Tulsa. As it was harder these days to catch time, it felt good to get back together.

Dovey wanted to share her recent bouts with dreams. There was something turbulent in her life. Her dreams reflected it. What was it? Dovey hoped Billie might give her some feedback.

Right now, however, drinks in hand, they were doing the usual between them—comparing old boyfriends.

"Whatever happened to Delbert?" said Billie. "I thought he had the hots for you."

Delbert, an insurance agent whom Dovey had dated. Delbert, who had professed his love for her, then proceeded to disappear in the rearview mirror.

"Delbert?" Dovey replied. "Delbert had the hots all right, just not for me."

"Ahhh," said Billie sympathetically.

"You didn't hear? He married another girl just last month. They moved to Norman. Needless to say, I didn't get an invitation to his wedding."

Billie reached out and gripped her hand. "He didn't see the real you."

"Well, nothing wrong with his eyes. I think he saw the real me and decided to seek the slimmed-down version."

"No."

"I saw the wedding announcement. They had their photos published in the paper. They got married at Dresser Mansion."

"Really?" said Billie.

"Yeah. Big money. Big to-do, all the trimmings. Cute couple, the two of them. She looked like she just walked off a Paris runway. I can see why Delbert was be-witched. Man knows a good pair of legs when he sees them."

"Oh, Dovey."

"Ain't no loss. Delbert gonna get his trophy wife and three beautiful kids. I'll find someone better, someone who appreciates a full-bodied woman." She played as if she was posing for a fashion shot.

Dovey smiled slyly. "You?"

Dovey had assumed Billie would be married off by now. Tall, slender, with short hair, a model's face, and a pirate's mind, she cocked her head as if in thought.

"I don't have any man at this moment who's smart enough for me, and the ones who might be don't like to party. They're just pencil pushers. Got no life to them. So . . ."

"You want brains and dance?"

"I want the full package." She smiled. "I mean . . . the *full* package." She winked at Dovey. "You know of anyone?"



Dovey laughed. "Beyond good ol' Delbert? Now there was a man who liked to push pencils. And he liked money. So, no, sorry, darling. Not a friggin clue about anyone up to your standards. I think you should buy a dog."

"And clean up the mess? Might as well pick a man. Same difference."

"You're too picky," Dovey teased.

"I am definitely. Most men want something, but it's not what I want, and I don't plan to give it to them till we agree what we want from each other. Get a lawyer. Sign it in writing. Make sure he knows the deal. Done."

Billie nodded in affirmation.

"What?" said Dovey. "What does that even mean?"

"Think about it."

"I have thought about it. You want someone who lets you be the boss. That's what you want."

"That's right. I am the boss," said Billie.

"Exactly."

"No booty till they're willing to do their duty."

"Yup. Duty call. Ain't what most men wanna hear."

The waiter came over to check on their menu selections.

Dovey looked over the menu twice. She always tried to count calories, but tonight she was hungry and willing to compromise.

"I'll take the South City chicken with corn on the cob, please," said Dovey.

Chicken. You could never go wrong with chicken.

"And I'll take the salmon with a small side salad. No veggies, please," Billie added.

"You eat like a bird," said Dovey, always jealous that Billie never had a weight problem.

"Birds eat fish," she shot back. "I'm just a big ol' bird on the hunt. So yes, if a bird eats salmon, that's me."

"And to drink?" the waiter asked.

"Another Blue Moon for me, please," said Dovey.

"Stella Artois for me," said Billie.

The waiter left with their orders.

"So, girl," Billie segued. "You sounded like you really wanted to talk. Hope everything's okay."

Dovey took a moment to gaze around the room. With all her recent dream troubles, she wondered if someone might be spying on her. After all, Dovey had secrets to share. That's why she wanted to talk to Billie.

"I don't know," she murmured as if searching for the right words. "I can't seem to sleep much, and I don't know why. I keep having these terrible dreams."

"Ain't you the terrible dream lady," Billie replied. "I never met someone who's got dream problems like you. What now?"

Dovey put her hands on her chin. How to explain?

"I feel like I'm being stalked."

Billie looked surprised. "By someone?"

"By some-thing. I read an article the other day about the Tulsa massacre. Ever heard of it?"

"Well, sort of."

"I think my dreams are connected to that."

"What?"

Dovey did not answer.

The waiter returned with their drinks.

"What on earth?" said Billie. "Why?"

Dovey nodded. "Call it my gut instinct."

Billie took a deep swig of her beer. “That riot was what, a hundred years ago? How’s that possible? You don’t have anything to do with it. You don’t even know if you had family there.”

“I might have. I’m Tulsa born and bred. My dad grew up in Tulsa. We might go back that far. I haven’t checked out much about my genealogy.”

“Come on, Dovey. I know you got ghosts in your head sometimes, but they’re just dreams. They might mean something. They might not. We’ve talked about this. Dreams are . . . well . . . just dreams. Most of ‘em, you don’t even remember.”

Dovey took another sip from her glass. Billie was her best friend and sometimes her harshest critic, which is why she needed to talk to her. If anyone could convince Dovey otherwise, it would be Billie. Billie was not a mystic. She was as rational as Newton’s law of thermodynamics. Yes, she had an arts background, but her mind was as technical as an engineer’s.

Still, Dovey persisted. She couldn’t shake what she sensed, and what she sensed was otherworldly. Atalia and *follow the crow*, the voices in the field, her disturbing dreams. All of these couldn’t be just coincidence. Dovey had come to believe that something, someone, a spiritual presence, hunted her.

“I don’t think they’re just dreams,” she countered. “And I don’t think they’re by accident. I think they’re trying to tell me something.”

Billie sat up and looked at her skeptically. “What? You mean like fortune-telling?”

“No, but they’re not just dreams. They’re . . . speaking, talking to me. I just don’t know what they’re saying.”

Billie chuckled. “Well, this is me trying to tell you something, and you know what? Stop it! Good God. Go find someone else to

date. Or better yet, let me take you out for a night on the town. Might do us good to get laid. Come on, Dovey. This is Billie talking. They're just dreams. No more, no less. Don't take it so serious."

"Yeah?" said Dovey hesitantly.

"Yes." Billie did a little dance wiggle with her arms. "You know. Par-tay. Fun. Hit a club or two. Tonight, even. Hell, next weekend, come over to my place. I got friends. Maybe hook you up. We'll put on some OG. Snoop. Dr. D. Even some Motown. I got all that shit downloaded. So, my dear. Please. Stop dreaming. Go dancing. With me, no less. I'll show ya a good time." She smiled broadly in her charming Billie way.

"Okay, okay. I hear ya," Dovey concluded.

Seeing no way to resolve this with Billie, Dovey decided to change the conversation's drift. As usual, the talk always veered eventually to their favorite subject: clothes. Dovey was a fashion addict and Billie was right behind her. The two of them could shop for hours and talk even longer about nothing more than shoes. Tonight, however, they discussed, of all things, lingerie, specifically, if Victoria's Secret understood the intimate desires of the Black woman or the limits of their pocketbook. Dovey and Billie both agreed. The chain was nothing more than a white woman's money pit.

When their dinners arrived, the conversation veered back to old boyfriends and some intimate secret sharing about who had it and who didn't. As usual, Billie had more to share than Dovey, but Dovey always loved to listen to Billie's stories.

While they chatted, Dovey noticed a white man walk into the room and sit at a corner table a few seats up the aisle from them. Nothing unusual, except that when he sat down, he folded his

hands and stared at her. His face was ghostly, his eyes black. A small man, he didn't look like the average jock in a pub, and his steady gaze unnerved Dovey. In the middle of her conversation with Billie, she stopped.

Billie, seeing the look on Dovey's face, also stopped.

"What's wrong?" she said.

Dovey did not answer.

"Dovey?" she asked.

Dovey took one breath, exhaled, and said, "That man. That man two tables up. He's . . . staring at me."

Billie turned to look, but Dovey grabbed her arm. "Don't. Don't encourage him."

Billie waited a moment and tried to read Dovey's face. "You know him?"

"No, I don't know him. He's creeping me out though. Oh my God. He's just . . . staring."

"Is he frightening you?"

"Duh," Dovey exclaimed.

"Is he making eyes at you? Does he want something?"

"No," Dovey hissed. "He's just . . . staring."

"Well, if he's just sitting there, staring, what's the problem? Just flip him the bird. Better yet, go over there and tell him to fuck off."

"I'm not doing that," Dovey grouched. "Like I said, I don't want to encourage him."

Billie's curiosity got the best of her. She turned and glanced at the table. Then she slowly turned back and eyed Dovey.

"Dovey. There's nobody there."

Dovey let out a slow breath and raised her eyes to the ceiling. She rubbed her face, took a second look at the man, and caught Billie's somber face.

"You're telling me my eyes don't work?"

"I'm telling you there ain't nobody there," Billie insisted. "If you're talking about someone two booths up, a man sitting and staring at you, at us, there's nobody there."

Dovey closed her eyes, opened them, and looked again. Then it dawned on her what this might be—a vision, a close encounter. Dovey felt blood rush to her head. She felt faint, angry, overwhelmed—all the above in a single wave of emotion.

Once again, Dovey exhaled and tried to fight back the panic. Standing up slowly, she pawed through her purse and dropped forty dollars on the table.

"Thanks, Billie. I've got to run. That ought to cover my bill."

Billie looked alarmed. "Where you going?"

"Home, where I won't be embarrassed when I say something's there and someone tells me I'm crazy."

"I didn't say you were crazy," Billie protested.

"Yes, you did, or you might as well have, and by the way, he's still sitting there giving me the stink eye. So, I'm taking my big booty home and hoping he doesn't follow me to my couch. I'll call you later."

"Dovey, don't be mad. I just said there's nobody there. And there isn't. What else can I say? If the table's empty, the table's empty."

Dovey gave her a squinty-eyed stare. Then she turned and walked out.

Billie sat bewildered with Dovey's temperamental behavior. Imagine. Her best friend just up and leaving her to sit by herself.

Billie gulped down her beer, left her own money on the table, and walked out. By the time she hurried around the side of the building, there was no sign of Dovey. It was as if she had disappeared.

But Dovey hadn't disappeared. She was still sitting in her VW in the parking lot, her seatbelt attached, her hands in her lap.

Just moments before, as she closed her car door and glanced out the front windshield, the man in the restaurant, the white man who stared at her from his table seat two booths down, passed in front of her bumper and floated off into the darkness.





*April 15, 2018, 12:30 a.m.*  
*Aunt Lorraine Chamele's House*  
*North Tulsa*

Dovey left McNellie's and drove straight to her aunt's house on the north side of Tulsa. Aunt Lorraine Chamele, the older sister of Dovey's mother, welcomed a very agitated Dovey into her home just after 10:00 in the evening.

Lorraine had become Dovey's mother figure when her parents had died. It was a role she welcomed, since, despite being married and divorced twice, she had no children of her own.

Lorraine was a charismatic woman, known for her community activism and her great sense of passion for the arts.

Dovey trusted Lorraine with her story because Lorraine had experience with the mystical. She sometimes called herself a *seer*. Some even referred to her as a prophet, though Lorraine was humble and downplayed such a title. Dovey knew she could come to her and discuss her troubling dreams. Lorraine would be patient and discerning.

Dovey had seen this in action. As a curious teenager, she occasionally sat in Lorraine's living room and watched her aunt work with ladies from her church. Sometimes quietly, sometimes with a shout, sometimes with a prophecy. Always under Lorraine's watchful eye.

Lorraine had a reputation among church folk, though she was careful with whom she chose to work.

"I don't mind crazy," she used to joke in her melodic Midwestern drawl, "long as they behave themselves."

What she *was* interested in was giving common people a voice in their own prophecies and visions; especially women who might be subject to the impatience and intolerance of men's doctrinal restrictions.

"Woman's got a voice that needs to be heard," she often said. "God uses us just like those men folk. God's voice is God's voice, whichever side of the aisle they sit."

Tonight, Lorraine soothed Dovey through several bouts of panic and crying. It took all her patience to calm Dovey down and get her to talk coherently about what was wrong. With some assurance and comfort by Lorraine, the immediate crisis passed. The two of them were now sitting at the dining room table, quiet and reflective.

"You feeling better?" Lorraine asked Dovey.

Dovey sniffed and dabbed her eyes with a tissue. "Yeah. A little."

Lorraine gave her a long look, eyes filled with kindness, yet intimate and probing. "So, you wanna get down to business?"

Her aunt. Always a straight shooter.

"I don't know what's going on, Auntie," said Dovey. "The world's shifting in my head."

"The world's always shifting," she said. "We don't always know how to dance with it. Sometimes we wait to catch up. Sometimes we find the right tempo. And sometimes we need to pick up the pace. But if the train's moving, well, it's time to figure out how to get on board."

Dovey chuckled. "What on earth does that mean?"

Lorraine gazed at her with her soft brown eyes. Her face held Dovey's attention.

"Start by believing in what you're seeing."

"As in . . ."

"Believe in your dreams for one thing. They're talking to you. You should listen. And if something strange appears to you, well, believe in that, too. It's all part of the same universe."

Dovey thought about what this meant.

"You mean you believe in ghosts, spirits, things like that?"

Lorraine smiled gently. "Now, listen, Dovey. We give these things names because there's no other explanation, but these names are only descriptions of that other universe that we don't always understand. So call it what you will, but pay attention. Not to the name. To the experience."

Dovey gave her aunt a questioning glance. "How am I not paying attention?"

Lorraine reached out and grasped Dovey's right hand. Her grip was firm but tender. "There's a difference between being distracted and giving your attention to someone when they talk—for instance, this moment between us. Right now, you're trying to shush your head, and your head is shouting. Your head is shouting, but you don't want to hear it, and you don't really want to hear me, either, though you're troubled enough to run here when you need it. Ain't that why you're here? Sitting with me in my house?"

"Yeah," said Dovey reluctantly.

"You're afraid of what you think, and these dreams are like words in your head. And if you see other stuff, well, like I said, it's all part of the same universe. So, your job is to figure it out. That's

what you and I are doing. Trying to discern: What are those words? And who's talking to you?"

Dovey exhaled softly.

"So, you believe in what I saw in that restaurant?"

"I do."

"That man was real?"

Lorraine sat still for a moment.

"No. He wasn't a real person. He was a vision, but that doesn't make it any less real."

Dovey shook her head.

"A vision? Auntie, I saw him sitting at a table. He was as real to me as you are."

"Yes."

"Are you saying he was a ghost? Cause ghosts don't look as real as he did."

"No. A ghost is just another name for something we don't understand. Yes, you saw him, and no, he wasn't a ghost. Not like we think of ghosts, as in stranded people who haven't made it to the other side yet. There's the earth. There's the spirit. He was a spirit. Spirit's got a side he's from—either God or darkness. I suspect he was from darkness. But you know, the devil appeared to our Lord Jesus in the desert and they had a real conversation. Spirit can fool us sometimes and appear just like something normal, but that man in the restaurant, he wasn't normal. He was spirit."

"Come on, Auntie. You know I don't believe in those kinds of things. All that churchy stuff."

Lorraine's face tightened. She leaned back in her chair and folded her hands on her chest. "What'd you tell me about what you saw?"

"The man in the restaurant?"

"You *said* you saw him, right?"

"I *did* see him."

"Then what you believe about churchy stuff has nothing to do with this. You come to me cause you saw something. Now, the question is, what was it? And if you saw it, and you came to me, then it has everything to do with what's out there, earth and spirit. You didn't come to it. It came to you, and you came to me. So, you gonna waste my time telling me you don't want my help?"

Dovey drew back. "No, Auntie. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. Just believe in what you saw, and then we can talk about *what* you saw."

"But . . . why? Why me?"

"I don't know, child. I don't pick and choose the ways of the world. World has its own mind. I just try to understand what's happening in the world. And right now, I want to know what's happening with you. Because, if it's what I think it is, you better wake up and pay attention."

Dovey paused for a few moments. Something in her aunt's voice alarmed her, awakened her, made her sit up and take notice. It was as if Lorraine had struck a large bell in Dovey's ear. The rhythm of her aunt's voice vibrated through her body.

"Take my hands, Dovey," Lorraine offered. "Let's just sit quietly for a while."

Dovey reached across the table and grasped her aunt's hands. They sat together bathed in the warm light from the small chandelier overhead.

Lorraine closed her eyes and hummed.

Dovey closed her eyes and kept silent.

"Many people come to me," said Lorraine. "I don't claim to be anything except a tool of God. So, what I say, you take with a grain of salt, 'cause it's just me talking. But just remember. This is *me* talking."

Dovey felt her aunt's hands tighten their grip. They were fingers of certainty holding her, protecting her from whatever spirits might be hovering next to them. Dovey imagined herself fully enveloped in a blanket against which no evil could penetrate. There was no greater force of safety, and Dovey believed her aunt's hands protected her.

Lorraine spoke again.

"Some people, they have a dream or two, come to me for interpretation. Dreams aren't the future. They're just possibilities that come with choices. So, I make suggestions and these people go home and make those choices."

As her aunt's voice filled the room, Dovey wondered if this was what people might call a seance? Lorraine would not accept that term. She was after all a woman of the Church. But here they were, contemplating spirit issues—dreams, visions, disappearing men. Tomato, tomahto. What did it matter? Like it or not, believe it or not, Dovey suspected that, as her aunt suggested, they had crossed over into the spirit realm.

"You, however, are different," Lorraine continued.

Dovey opened her eyes. "How so?"

Lorraine looked directly at Dovey. Dovey noted the penetration of those eyes. Lorraine spoke clearly.

"You have second sight."

The room was still.

Dovey tried to swallow her shock.

"What's that?" she asked.

“Same gift as came to Jeremiah, Daniel, Isaiah, even women like Miriam and Deborah. They could see things that other people couldn’t, and people relied on them to tell them what God was saying.”

“Uh, what God was saying? You mean God is talking to me?”

“Well, you know. That was in the Old Testament. I don’t know today if you speak for anyone, God or otherwise, but you have a gift. In modern terms, in Aunt Lorraine’s interpretation, I call it the crow’s eye.”

“What?”

“Crow’s eye. Crows. Important birds in lots of cultures. Symbols of dreams, crossovers between spirit and earth. Long history of crows being revered for their intelligence, and maybe, just maybe, their spiritual powers. Sometimes the spirit of the crow may even visit you unknown, send you a message. Sometimes even ward off bad spirits. I tell you. You got these kinds of powers. Like I said. The crow’s eye.”

“Uh. Another message?”

“You’ve had more than one?”

“Mmm, maybe.” Dovey recalled her visit with Atalia. She wondered if she should talk about it.

“Good spirit or bad?” her aunt asked.

Dovey wavered. “I don’t know. She was just . . . weird.”

“Uh-huh. Like your old Aunt weird?”

“No, Auntie. You’re definitely a good spirit.”

“But you been visited by spirits?”

Dovey finally confessed. “Yes.”

“Good or bad?”

“Both, I think.”

A statement of faith which left Dovey thoroughly bewildered.

"What do I have to do with spirits?"

"Well," said Lorraine. "You about to find out."

"Because . . ."

"I just told you. You got the crow's eye. Means you're gonna be doing a lot of seeing and discerning." Lorraine took a deep breath. "Maybe other people telling you as well. Maybe other spirits. Just get used to it. You're on that road now, and they're coming."

"Do I have a choice?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Don't ask me. It's *your* gift."

"I am asking you."

"I didn't give you the gift."

"God?"

"Probably."

"Probably?"

"Well, it's not only Bible people get the gift. We live in Oklahoma, you know. There's a ton of Native Americans around here. They get visions, too. And you're Black. In our culture, there's a long history of spiritualism going all the way back to Africa. Powers of voodoo and other stuff run deep. I told you, there's more than one source for this."

Dovey leaned back in her chair. She broke the grip with her aunt and rubbed her face in disbelief. She folded her hands as if pleading with someone to help her understand.

"What are you telling me?"

"Choose wisely. Pick the right team."

Dovey shook her head and propped her chin between her fingers.



“Now you’re preaching to me again.”

Lorraine nodded in affirmation.

“Hmm-hmm. Best as I can, and hoping you choose right.”

“Ahhhh. And I thought you were going to help me.”

Lorraine laced two hands together and braced her chin on top. Her eyes flashed.

“My dear niece, all this time we’re talking. Late, too, way past my bedtime, but you know I love you like a daughter. Otherwise, why are we here? So. Are you telling me you don’t find this helpful? You think this is your old aunt losing her marbles, talking crazy?”

Dovey realized she was fighting against her aunt’s good counsel, and true to Lorraine’s nature, her aunt was fighting back. Dovey took a moment to gather her thoughts and ask herself this question: Why was she fighting it? Because, she realized, she was scared shitless.

“I’m sorry, Auntie. All this otherworldly talk just scares me.”

“Yeah, scares me too, but here we are, and I’m on your side. Stop arguing and start to throw out a welcome mat. Either way, it’s on you. Better to work with it than against.”

“Thanks, Auntie.”

“Don’t thank me. Don’t blame me either. I’m just the messenger.”

“No,” Dovey said with a smile. “According to you, *I’m* the messenger.”

“We’re both messengers. You just need to start believing in your message.”

“Right.”

Dovey rose and picked up her purse. Thinking about her aunt’s words, she realized she needed to be appreciative.

"Thanks, Auntie."

"Stay here tonight," Lorraine urged. "It's late and I think you need to be sheltered."

"Sheltered?"

"Girl, right now, you're as dense as a thicket and heavy with burden. Not good for traveling. I'm offering you a haven, least for tonight. Take it. I'll fix you breakfast."

Dovey gave it some thought.

"Okay. Then we can talk again in the morning. Maybe I'll be a little more clearheaded."

"That's right."

Dovey put her purse back.

"Bed's already fixed upstairs," said Lorraine. "You know the way. Have a peaceful night's rest."

"Thanks, Auntie."

"You're welcome."

Dovey kissed her aunt and went upstairs.

Lorraine sat for a half-hour at her table in the darkness. Then she rose and peeked out the living room window. Around her yard, she sensed sheens of lights not powered by electricity, lights from another world. Lorraine recognized their presence. Protectors against darkness.

Tonight, Lorraine had felt power go out of her, power of the Spirit to deal with spirits. She knew when this happened. She could sense the drawing, like electricity through a socket. Lorraine had faith to believe that the same power had gone into Dovey and strengthened her. She took comfort in her faith.

Touching the window, she felt a sense of Spirit surround her, as if God's hand had reached down and pressed against her shoulder.

"Take care of us, angels," she murmured prayerfully and walked to her bedroom.



*December 29, 2014, 9:30 a.m.*  
*Home of Paul and Cecelia Declair*  
*Central Tulsa*

Dovey woke in a panic.

Cold sunlight pressed through her curtains.

Billie had gone home about one or so.

“Mom? Dad?” Dovey called out and realized. They were gone and she had slept right through their leaving. No hugs, goodbyes, bon voyages. It was as if they had just vanished.

Dovey was startled by the fact that she was alone in the house. As if to reinforce this, the house lacked the usual patter of kitchen machinery, feet on the floor, and echoing voices.

Dovey hustled out of bed and threw on an old bathrobe. She felt compelled to search every room, every spare corner, even the garage, to confirm they were gone.

Dreams. Dovey had dreamed something last night. It struck her as she wandered through the house. What was it about? She couldn't remember, but it was not pleasant. She had briefly awakened with her heart racing and a blank sense of emptiness in the pit of her stomach. Dovey recalled the bare light breaking through the windows, the gentle sounds of her parents snoring. Now it was gone, both the dream and her parents. They had vanished into the arc of full daylight, and, to make matters worse, she was alone. Her search confirmed it.

The silence harassed Dovey. She hurried back to her room, dug out her cell phone, and called her mother.

Cecelia picked up on the second ring.

"You up?" she teased. "Sorry, no pancakes this morning. And. You'll have to make your own coffee."

"I didn't get a chance to say goodbye," Dovey lamented. Her voice wavered in her silent bedroom.

Her mother was a genius at cheering up Dovey. Always had been, and today was no different. Cecelia sensed her daughter's tremors and tuned in to Dovey's frequency.

"You were snoring when I came in," Cecelia joked. "I was afraid to wake you. You sounded like an angry bear."

Cecelia chuckled. Dovey took note.

"I swear, I was clean and sober."

"Well, sober anyway," said Cecelia, "though I admit, I didn't do a thorough search. You caught a break today. I assume you'll shower later."

Again, Dovey grinned and laughed. "Oh, Mom."

"Oh, Mom," Cecelia mocked playfully.

Right on cue, Dovey's spirits were back to normal. Then she asked the real question on her mind:

"You guys all right?"

"Yeah," said Cecelia. "Why wouldn't we be?"

"I don't know. Just asking."

Dovey wondered as well. A premonition? Separation anxiety? She was, after all, a grown-ass woman and capable of living on her own. Why did she sound so worried?

Dovey had no clue. Something in the pit of her stomach said otherwise.

*Buck up*, she told herself.

"Dad's driving?" she asked.

"Yeah," her mother groaned. "Captain Paul in charge of the voyage. You know how he is. The large man in charge. I'll be lucky to get a potty break."

Dovey pictured her mom grinning at him slyly. Dovey heard him answer, "One is all you get," as he laughed.

"You hear that?" said Cecelia.

"Yeah," said Dovey. "Glad it's you and not me."

There was a silence between them, an awkward silence.

"Go back to bed," said her mother. "We're all fine. And goodbye, by the way."

"What," Dovey joked. "No kiss?"

"You're too old to kiss," her mother laughed.

"I am not."

"Don't be a baby."

"Okay. Have a safe trip."

"Don't burn down the house."

"I might. I've got plenty of matches, and Billie will help, right after we finish the party."

"Goodbye, dear," said Cecelia deliberately. Her tone told Dovey to be brave and stop whining.

"Bye, Mama."

The line clicked.

Dovey pulled back the curtains and stared out the window.

It was one of those gray days, soft on light, long on melancholy. Just last night, she had been bantering with everyone. Today seemed different. A different house. A different family. Dovey on her own.

What did she dream?

Dovey couldn't remember, but if she worried about it, it couldn't have been a good dream. Not a holiday dream.

She rolled back into bed, pulled the covers over her head, and went to sleep.

Later that afternoon, while she ate the last of the leftover turkey at the kitchen table, she got the call.



*April 15, 2018, 1:30 P.M.*

*Crown Hill Cemetery*

*North Tulsa*

Dovey sat on a small bench at the edge of her parents' graves. She closed her eyes and basked in the spring sun.

On their tombstones, their names and deaths engraved:

*Paul Declair*

*Cecilia Declair*

*December 29, 2014*

*God's Angels Taken Home.*

Paul had been a tax attorney for Billings and Billings in downtown Tulsa. Cecilia taught psychology at the Tulsa campus of Langston University. They had died in a car crash on I-35 as they headed north to visit her mother's family in Minneapolis.

Dovey still remembered the phone call, the shock, the grief, the hole in her heart.

Up until then, she had an ideal life.

An only child doted over by both parents.

Economic stability in a town where Black poverty was high.

A good education at Cascia Hall Preparatory School and the University of Tulsa.

The chance to live her life as she pleased without parental interference. Dovey's parents were open to any career choice she made, and they had confidence she would make the right choice for herself.

Up until then, her biggest worry in life had been her weight and her sorority choice.

It was different now.

She was a woman in search of a purpose.

She thought of her dreams, of Atalia, of what having these types of dreams and visions might entail. Not that she really bought into Atalia's musings, but the mystery of it just added to the tension Dovey felt about all these strange things going on in her life. Might it result in something more significant?

"Sure miss you guys," she said in a low voice. "Can't wait to tell you some things going on in my life."

It was a warm day for mid-April. Some puffy clouds in an azure sky. A bit of wind to brush her face. Not even the buzz of planes in the atmosphere or the sound of local traffic. Absolute silence. A perfect time to unburden herself.

Dovey recounted what had happened to her last week and what it might mean to *follow the crow*.

"Never thought this would happen to me," she confessed. "Me. *Dovey of no faith*, as Auntie used to call me. I'm the one who got in trouble at school for dubbing all those Catholics the *Hail Mary Club*. Remember? Remember I wondered if all those white-robed priests were part of the Ku Klux Klan?"

The memory brought a smile to her face. She remembered how her father laughed at that one. Her mother scolded her for being disrespectful, but even she smirked. Dovey's humor was sharp like

her father's, and she was not afraid to speak her mind. Certainly, that trait was from her mother.

A different scenario, now.

*Ah, Dovey thought. This is just crazy, what I'm thinking. Here I am, talking to dead people. No wonder I'm haunted.*

Crazy, maybe, but it seemed natural enough to discuss with her parents as she did much of her thoughts, and it struck her that they might be listening. Was this proof of an afterlife?

Overhead, the birds flew across the open skies in search of shelter and food.

Dovey gave them a long look. Her life was birdlike now, in-flight to somewhere, in search of something, in need of comfort. Since her parents' death, her wings had flapped nonstop. Yet, here she was, returning to two graves. Like the birds above, she circled over her parents in search of . . . what?

Dovey's ship had lost its oars and its rudder. She felt the stiff winds blow and yearned desperately to find direction, and perhaps listen to someone named Atalia inform her she was going to prophesy. Dovey, who didn't give much thought to other people's problems, who rarely went to church, and now, she would be a what, spiritualist? Fortune teller? Would she have the courage to walk up to a perfect stranger and tell them about their future?

For Dovey, all this mumbo jumbo was a road less taken. Did she believe in what Atalia told her? Not really, but maybe . . .

"Man, I really miss you guys," she repeated.

The graves waited.

The day waited.

Dovey waited for, what?

*Your prophecies will raise the dead.*

The exact words of Atalia.

Well, here her parents lay. What about now? Could she raise them from the dead?

Dovey concentrated and made a wish.

Nothing happened.

The graves remained where they were, sealed and cold.

From where Dovey sat, they were still dead.

A crow flew overhead and landed next to the gravestones.

"Good timing," said Dovey. "I think we're supposed to hang out."

The crow tiptoed around the headstones, gave a loud caw, and flew off.

"No? Not your deal?" she asked.

*Well, whose deal is it?* she wondered.

*Follow the crow.*

*Not without wings, I can't,* Dovey said to herself.

Whatever she was supposed to do, it wouldn't happen today, and it wouldn't help her parents. Nor would it help Dovey to understand what all this was supposed to mean. Setting all that aside, Dovey sat for an hour, talked to her parents, and thought about that question.

*Whose deal is it?*

*Nobody's but mine,* she concluded.

*April 22, 2018, 3:04 p.m.*

*Greenwood District*

*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey carefully considered her aunt's words during the week. She even reread the article on the Tulsa massacre and wondered if the paper and her dreams had something in common.

The spiritual implications from this conversation began to make her wonder what *message* she should hear. It led her to pay close attention to her surroundings as she walked to her car, went back and forth to work, and carried on with her everyday life.

Dovey thought about Lorraine's comment that she had *crow's eye*, a strange designation to be sure, but as she read about crows online, she began to realize her aunt was right about the crow's history in ancient cultures. As if to reinforce this, Dovey sat on her balcony one morning and saw a crow land on the railing. Looking at the crow looking at her, she wondered what the bird thought, if crows had thoughts. English thoughts. Had the crow arrived for Dovey? Did he have a message?

"You have something to tell me?" she asked.

The crow cawed, flew in a big circle outside her patio, and returned to its balcony perch.

"I'm impressed," she said. "So you can fly. What else have you got?"

The crow sang her a raw song, its beak opened like a wide river. It jumped off the rail and landed at her feet. Walking in circles, it did an odd kind of jig, hopping up and down, first on one leg, then the next.

"Ah, the dance of the crow," Dovey observed. "Who knew crows could dance. Okay. What else?"

Dovey, reminded of the words of Atalia and the discussion with her aunt, paid close attention.

*Follow the crow*, she said to herself, and then she wondered. *Well, who is following who here?*

When the crow finished, he hopped back on the railing and eyed her again.

"Yeah, this part I don't get," she said. "Am I supposed to dance with you? Play a little Bee? Get up, do some hip-hop? What part of this involves me?"

She put her hands on her head.

"You've got to do better than that," she argued. "I don't speak crow, and you don't speak English. So, where does that leave us?"

The crow, as if exasperated, flew off.

"Okay," she said. "Thanks for the visit. Next time, bring an org chart or something to help me out. You need to improve your communication skills."

She watched it fly high and sail over her head several times. As it descended in the parking lot, she was surprised to see it land on the curved hood of her '64 Volkswagen Beetle. It sat there and just stared at her. Absurdly crooked. Weirdly personal.

The words of Atalia repeated back to Dovey: *Follow the crow*.

Dovey sat for several minutes, fascinated by this turn of events, chagrined that she took it seriously, annoyed by how it all made sense to her. Still, she argued with herself.

“Oh, this is ridiculous,” she sputtered.

But was it?

The crow waited.

“Ah, what have I got to lose?” she said. “If nothing else, it’s a nice day, a good day for a drive. Little sun, little birdwatching, some fresh air.”

She imagined the crow sitting next to her in the front seat. “Billie will never believe this.”

Her aunt? Maybe. She hoped the bird was potty trained.

Heeding Atalia and her aunt, staying open to the signs around her, she rose from her chair, grabbed her purse, and went down to follow the crow.

“Crow’s eye,” she murmured as she shut the door. “Stupid crow’s eye,” she added.

—

Dovey followed the crow as it flew in front of her car and showed the way like a trained hunting dog.

The crow led her to the old Greenwood section of Tulsa, the very spot where the massacre took place. When she saw where the crow had landed, the hair stood up on her neck.

“Oh, this is no accident,” she said to herself. “How on earth did he know?”

Parking the car, she strolled from the corner of East Cameron down North Greenwood Avenue. She imagined herself stepping back in time. Little plaques about the history of some of the buildings were available for her to read. Dovey began to understand why Greenwood was so crucial to the Black community. It was the one city in Oklahoma, perhaps the U.S.,

where freed Black slaves had pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and turned the town into their Black Wall Street. Millions of dollars in real estate, business, entertainment, education, and small family businesses existed within a few square blocks. It was all Black, and they were free to prosper. Until.

She strolled down North Greenwood, taking eye notes as she went, trying to picture what these streets must have been like on that dreadful morning—the horror, the surprise, the destruction, the anger, the despair. All these businesses and their accumulated wealth, gone in a day, gone for a century. Dovey's eyes welled up with tears as she thought about all the families that died or fled. The impact was equivalent to dropping a bomb in the middle of the city. Worse, because, for all these Black residents, their loss remained permanent and buried in history.

Dovey's shoulders were heavy with grief. She felt anger sear her thoughts. She wanted to brandish a gun and make someone pay for this injustice. And then, as if by association, Dovey faced it firsthand.



*June 1, 1921, 6:30 a.m.*

*Greenwood District*

*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey was near the Old Smith Building in the 120 block of North Greenwood Avenue when it happened—an explosion like none she had ever experienced. She ducked, screamed, and held herself against a wall.

Smoke drifted high in the air. Gunfire. Shouting. A Black man ran down the middle of the street with a rifle and fell dead from gunshots. Planes circled overhead and dropped bombs. Pieces of concrete, bricks, planks, glass, and metal rained from the sky, and Dovey was smack in the middle of it.

“Oh, shit,” she yelled in terror and looked around for shelter. There was no part of Greenwood not under attack. Thousands of men filled the streets, spreading chaos and destruction. Dovey had nowhere to run.

“Auntie,” she cried in desperation.

Dovey realized she had landed in it. June 1, 1921. Greenwood, Oklahoma. Black Wall Street. In some inexplicable way, Dovey had fallen into the middle of that dreadful Tulsa massacre.

Sprinting down North Greenwood, she ran directly into a white rioter. He sprawled on the street from the impact. Dovey yelped, stepped on him, and continued to run.

Across the street, she spotted an open door and darted into the road. Desperate to escape, Dovey ran blindly through traffic. Old cars swerved to miss her. A man running alongside one of those cars tried to shoot her, but she kicked him in the knee. He fell in a heap, and the car to the rear ran him over.

Dovey felt as if she were crossing the Arkansas River on a boat without a paddle. In her haste, she tripped on a piece of debris, rolled over it, and crashed face down in the street. Surrounded by noise and violence, Dovey assumed she would die.

Picking herself up, scraped and bruised, a panicked Dovey limped to the doorstep of the house across the road. An address sign said 103.5, and underneath it, another that read *Dr. J.T. Roberts*.

Dovey took a step toward the door, but a sizeable mob descended on the place. A man leading the crowd screamed at her: "Stop, there, or I'll shoot you dead."

Dovey froze in her tracks.

"Come on down here," he ordered.

Dovey complied.

When she turned around, she nearly fainted. The man facing her was her spirit in the restaurant, that same person in the flesh. Yes, his skin was pale, but it was also actual skin. He stood shorter than Dovey, slight of build, dark-haired with a mean look in his eyes and a pistol pointed directly at her. Dovey's "ghost" was now threatening her.

"Ooh," she groaned. "You."

The man looked at the mob as if unnerved by the possibility that he was associated with Dovey. He cocked his gun and threw her an angry look.

"I know you?"

“Well, yes,” said Dovey, “sort of.”

“I ain’t never seen you,” he insisted. “Only place I might see you is in some lowdown whorehouse, and I ain’t hang around in no whorehouses, and I don’t fuck niggers. Only women I know are white and respectable.”

Dovey was incensed at what he implied. Her fear burned off in a quick spark of fury.

“Well, I don’t hang out in whorehouses, either. Don’t you call me a nigger, and I’m guessing not a lot of respectable women, white or otherwise, would hang out with your dirty ass. I wouldn’t.”

The man was shocked by Dovey’s frankness. “You got a mouth on you, little girl.”

Coming quickly to her senses, she backed off.

“A big one,” she agreed.

He pointed the gun at her nose, and she knew that any more sass might provoke him. Dovey steadied herself and stayed quiet.

“You live here?” he demanded.

“No, not exactly.”

The man looked annoyed.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Long story, and you’d be surprised how I *do* know you.”

The man seemed to be simmering with rage, and Dovey was not helping her cause.

“Once again, I don’t know you, but you gonna die, Miss, and I’m the one who’s gonna make that happen. But before you die, let me tell you who I am. It’ll be the last name you hear before you leave this world.”

He gave a dramatic pause.

"My name is Frank G. Kelly, and I'm planning on cleaning out this shit hole."

"Shit . . . hole . . ." Dovey murmured, struggling with her 21<sup>st</sup>-century knowledge of Tulsa. "What? You mean Greenwood?"

"That's right," he yowled. "We're cleaning the place up."

The crowd roared its approval.

At that moment, a bomb exploded across the street. Everyone, including Frank, ducked and covered their heads. The bomb threw dirt and debris across a whole city block.

"Damn if those goddamn dimwits ain't gonna kill us all," Frank swore.

As he straightened up and turned back, Dovey had made a bolt toward the door.

Frank fired wildly. Dovey fell in a heap on the doorstep.

Before the crowd could lunge on her, several guns poked out the doorway and began firing. Some of the rioters collapsed in the street, wounded and dead. The rest of the men scattered.

Dovey, the pain roaring down her right arm, bled from her shoulder.

A pair of hands pulled her inside and began administering first aid. The last words she remembered:

"Hold on, ma'am. Now, just hold on. We're gonna help you."

Dovey passed out.

*April 24, 2018, 10:12 a.m.*  
*Oklahoma State University Hospital*  
*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey woke up in a hospital bed, moaned, and tried to sit up. Her aunt was there to catch her.

“Whoa, whoa,” said Lorraine. “You sit yourself back down. You’re not going anywhere for a few days.”

Dovey shook her head, glanced around, and tried to focus. “Where am I?” she mumbled.

“Hospital, dear. You’ve been out a couple of days. Surgery and all.”

“Surgery?”

“Yes, dear. Apparently, someone shot you, though we have yet to know your side of the story. And you’re here by the grace of God at Oklahoma State University Hospital. You’ve had major surgery on your right shoulder. You’re lucky to be alive. Bullet cracked your shoulder blade into several pieces, which the surgeons had to put back together with metal and screws. Nasty piece of business. You are one lucky lady.”

“Lucky lady . . .” she repeated incoherently.

*Bullet wound, shoulder surgery, hospital. How could that be lucky?* Dovey wondered. She laid down and tried to fight her way back to the real world, her world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Billie rose from her chair and peered into Dovey’s eyes.

"Billie," said Dovey groggily.

"Yeah, baby. I'm here. We've both been here for a couple of days making sure you pull through. How on earth . . ."

She stopped. As if Dovey was in any shape to explain.

Dovey tried to speak in phrases:

"Greenwood . . ."

"I saw him, the man . . ."

"He shot me . . ."

"Frank . . ."

Exhausted, she trailed off in mid-sentence.

For a few moments, Lorraine stood on one side and stroked her right hand. Billie stood on the other and rubbed her left.

"Oh God," Dovey moaned. "No one is going to believe me."

"That's all right, baby," said Lorraine. "There's plenty of time for talking after you feel better."

Dovey looked at both women, smiled weakly, gazed up at the ceiling, and went back to sleep.

"She's talking crazy," Billie whispered.

Lorraine stroked Dovey's right cheek.

"Maybe, maybe not," she counseled. "We have to listen regardless. That's why we're here."

Billie seemed unconvinced.

They both went back to their chairs and dived deeply into their somber thoughts.

—

Over the next several days, Dovey's condition improved. As her sedatives wore off, she was able to talk more coherently about what happened to her. During dinner one night, she shared her

story with Lorraine and Billie. More memory returned, and she clarified some of her earlier thoughts.

"I was there, in Greenwood when it happened," she insisted. "I saw it all go down. Horrible. People died in the streets. Whole city blocks were on fire. They took out most of Greenwood."

"You mean, as in you traveled back in time?" Lorraine asked. "How is that possible?"

"I don't know, Auntie. I just know what I saw, and I know who shot me. He told me his name. Frank G. Kelly. He tried to kill me. I don't know how I survived."

Lorraine sat with her thoughts for several minutes.

"Lord have mercy," she noted after giving the story some consideration. "You're on a long, strange journey, girl. That's for sure."

"But . . . do you believe me?" Dovey pressed.

"Oh, I believe you," Lorraine assured her. "Certainly, that gunshot is real. Just never heard of such a thing before. You say you were there? In Greenwood? While they were killing people and burning homes?"

"I saw it, Auntie. It was terrible. It was worse than terrible. It was . . ."

"Barbaric," said Lorraine.

"Yeah." She laid back on her pillow. "Barbaric."

Billie refrained from comment and kept her thoughts to herself.

—

During the lull, they were interrupted by a visitor who introduced himself as Tulsa Police Detective Greg Genard. Genard

was Black, stocky, with a shaved head, a thick mustache, and jovial eyes that matched his large smile. From all appearances, he was a man of both law and humor.

"Ma'am," he said to Dovey as he stood by her bed.

"Officer," said Dovey tentatively.

Genard looked down at her and smiled.

"You're a Black detective?" said Dovey.

Genard waited a moment, then smiled again.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Really?"

Genard pulled out a business card and showed it to her.

Dovey smiled back at him. "Wow. Congratulations."

"Thanks," said Genard. "

"Excuse my surprise, but, you know, these days you wonder if someone like me can get a break, you know, get some justice?"

Genard gave a long pause.

"Dovey, I can assure you. I'll do my best."

Dovey gave him a long look, summing him up not only as a Black officer but as a Black man willing to solve a crime perpetrated on a Black woman.

"I'll take your word, Officer."

Dovey knew that beyond Genard's status as a cop and detective, there was the story that Dovey would tell. What would he say if she told him the truth? It was one thing to trust your aunt and best friend with this secret. But a cop? Even if he was a Black cop? Would someone like Genard take her at her word? Dovey opened the conversation.

"So, you're here to talk to me?"

"I am," he said. "I would like to hear your story. And. I would like to find whoever it was who shot you."



"I don't think you're going to believe me."

Genard was puzzled. "Why?"

Dovey glanced at Lorraine as if to seek her help.

"Keep talking," said Lorraine.

"Well, Detective, this story is a little strange."

"Oh?" said Genard. "Why is that?"

"Spooky," said Dovey. "I'm haunted."

Genard glanced over at Lorraine, then shot a look at Billie.

"Haunted?" he replied.

Billie just turned away and rubbed her chin.

Lorraine waved her hand at him. "Go on, Detective. She's got a story to tell."

"Yes, detective," said Dovey. "I have a story to tell. You want to hear a story?"

Genard gazed down at Dovey. "Yes, ma'am. Please."

"And don't call me ma'am. I'm a young woman, a young single Black woman. I got a name. Dovey. Dovey Denise Declair. Lots of Ds. You can just call me Dovey."

"Sounds good," said the detective.

"All right, now that we got that out of the way, here's my story."

And for the next forty-five minutes, she gave him all the details, everything, including her dreams, her encounter with Atalia, the meetup with the crow, and the dual encounter with Frank G. Kelly. When she finished, she gazed steadily at the detective. He gazed steadily at her.

"You believe me?" she asked.

Genard hesitated. "Right now, I'm just collecting evidence. When I put it all together, I'll let you know."

"Ah, see, he doesn't believe me," Dovey grouched. "I told you. I told you he wouldn't believe me."

"Dovey," said Genard. "Don't jump to conclusions just yet. Let me do my job, and then we'll talk."

"All right, Officer Genard. We'll talk. But can you tell me, please, how the hell I ended up here?"

Genard's face softened.

"Well, Dovey, as you know, someone shot you. And someone else drove you here. We don't know either of those someones. Someone tried to kill you. Someone tried to save your life. Lots of possibilities in between.

"The doc said the one who tried to save you seemed to know his stuff about gunshot wounds. They fixed you up long enough to get you here. 'Damn good medic,' the doc told me. So, you were fortunate to fall into the right hands.

"I wish I could tell you more. We're trying to track down that end of the story. No reports of gunshots in Greenwood that day. Pretty quiet. In fact, we were surprised to get your case. Didn't come through our dispatch. So, we're both dealing with mysteries. We have the bullet shell, courtesy of the doc, and we're running it through ballistics. If I find out something, I promise, you'll be the first to know."

"Detective's honor?" said Dovey.

"Yes. Detective's honor."

Dovey leaned back in her bed.

"Well," she exclaimed. "Wasn't this fun? Here I have quite a tale to share with a brother detective. Who would have thought this could happen to l'il ol' Dovey? I tell you. I'm on a roll. Next thing you know, a crow's going to fly right in this room and sit on my toes."

The room went quiet before everyone burst into laughter.

"No kidding," said Dovey. "I'm seeing strange things these days. Nothing surprises me anymore."

"Does that crow have radar?" said Genard.

"The one I saw danced," said Dovey. "Maybe he knows where I'm at."

"No animals allowed," Lorraine chuckled. "Especially birds. I'll chase him right out the door, he comes in here."

"But he's such a nice crow," Dovey protested.

"He can be nice outdoors."

Genard excused himself.

"Pleasure to meet you, Dovey Denise Declair. I promise we'll talk again soon."

"And you, Greg unknown middle name Genard. I promise I'll have more stories."

"Jackson," he added. "Greg Jackson Genard. And I can't wait."

"Thanks for listening, and come back anytime."

"I will."

When Genard left the room, Lorraine looked at Dovey quizzically. "You all right?"

"Fine, fine. As fine as I can be with a gunshot wound in my shoulder and a cop who may or may not believe me and all the drugs I could ever hope for."

"Well," said Lorraine, "you've got to admit. You tell a good story."

"Emphasis on the word *story*."

"He said he'd follow the evidence."

"Yeah. With a story like mine, what evidence?"

"Dovey, stay positive."

"Do I have a choice?"

Billie rose and walked to her bedside.

"What about you?" Dovey asked. "You believe me?"

"I'm working on it," said Billie.

"Ah," Dovey huffed. "you don't believe me either."

"Dovey, I'm here. Let that speak for itself."

Dovey gave her words some thought. "Okay, then. Keep working."

Dovey leaned back and closed her eyes.

"He wasn't wearing a ring," said Billie with a grin.

"Oh, you noticed that?" Dovey quipped.

"I see everything," she joked.

"Yes, you do," Dovey concurred.

"Ain't that something," said Lorraine. "A Black detective, single no less."

"Cut it out, guys," Dovey chuckled.

"A good man is hard to find," said Lorraine slyly.

On that, they all agreed.

*April 28, 2018, 2:12 a.m.*  
*Oklahoma State University Hospital*  
*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey woke up suddenly. Not from a dream. From something else. What?

Nothing seemed out of place. The regular beeping of monitors and an occasional nurse in the hall meant it was business as usual, the subdued calm of a late-night shift.

Dovey lay still and counted the ceiling tiles, eyes moving from square to square until she had finished the whole room. Seventy-four tiles, unless she had missed one or two due to darkness.

When she finished, her sight fell on the cushioned visitor's chair. In the muted light, with just the fluorescence flowing through her doorway, Dovey thought she saw someone sitting there.

Black? White? Spirit? Visitor? Who would be here at this time of night?

Dovey's mind raced. She could hear her heartbeat.

"Hello?" she whispered.

There was motion, to be sure, but actual motion or a trick of the eye? A spectral presence or a shift in the light?

Dovey pushed her pillow to a sitting position and sat up. She was irritated that she might be having irrational thoughts when it turned out it was only her environment, or floaters in her eyes, or

her pupils dilating, or her very vivid imagination. If this were a hallucination, it would not surprise her. The things she *had* seen were not of this world, so how could she tell the difference?

Her mind wandered back to Greenwood. How was it possible that she traveled there? That she had witnessed the massacre? That a bullet from that day had put her here, today, this moment, in the hospital? The idea of being shifted back and forth through time was simply unfathomable, improbable, and frankly, beyond reason or science. Never mind that her story was questionable to her aunt, Billie, the detective. As far as Dovey was concerned, she also doubted its veracity.

To make matters worse, here she was seeing things in the dark. Dovey wondered if the medications had affected her brain cells.

"What the hell?" she said out loud to protest all she encountered—dreams, visions, ghosts, whatever. She wanted it all to end. Immediately.

"Stop this shit," she said, "Stop it right now."

The shape moved, and she knew. Something or someone sat there. Something or someone had heard her speak. She caught her breath, gasped, and held back a scream.

"What do you want? Who are you?" she said shakily. "I'm not going to sit here and be toyed with. Either speak or get the hell out of my room before I scream my bloody lungs out."

"I saved your life," a voice replied, a man's voice.

"Who are you?" she said a little louder hoping to attract a nurse who would dash in, turn on the lights, and make it all go away.

"Dr. Joseph Tenable Roberts," he said. "I lived in Greenwood. My office burned. You can imagine what happened to me."

The man leaned forward. His shape became more apparent in the weak light. A man with a broad scar across his cheeks and burn marks around his ears. But was he real, or just another spirit come to haunt her? Yet this man sat and talked with her in 2018, and his face said it all. He'd been there the day of the massacre. He'd died.

"Are you real?" she demanded.

Dr. Roberts leaned back.

"Define real," he responded.

"Flesh and bone," said Dovey. "Living tissue, a real man who could get up and walk out of this room and people could see you. The real you."

There was a long pause.

"Are *you* real?" he asked.

"I'm where I'm supposed to be. You can't tell me my body's not here laying in this bed." She raised her arms as proof.

Dr. Roberts nodded. "So am I. But you only define real in your sense. I've learned that real is not the term to use in this case . . . because . . . you only want to limit me to this room or to my house a century back. But real crosses boundaries, and universes, and time. Time is such a human construct, but real isn't limited by minutes or hours. Real is beyond it. Past it. High and above it. Real is what you have lived and done and been and even suffered. Real goes on like a strong river. Once it begins, it has no end. So, you ask if I'm real, and I say yes, but not in your definition. I use real as it should exist. Scientifically, spiritually, astronomically, and most important, ontologically. You're familiar with that term, aren't you?"

Dovey sank in her bed.

"No," she answered.

"Then you must learn it because you are real in the real sense, and you must understand that so you can know where you've been and where you're going."

Dovey sank further. Her voice was weak.

"What do you want?"

"Like any good doctor, I'm here to check on my patient."

Dovey let loose with her irritation.

"I am not your patient."

"As I said. I saved your life."

"How?"

"That bullet would have killed you. I was a medic in the Army and a trained physician. Fortunately for you, I've had experience treating gunshots. You landed in my house, and I made sure you got to a good hospital. In the real sense, I broke through time to help you survive."

"How?"

"What the spirit world calls The Bridge of Justice."

Dovey was intrigued, less afraid, more willing to engage Dr. Roberts. Maybe he held clues that would explain what was going on in her life.

"Okay," she acknowledged. "So . . ."

Dr. Roberts turned slightly, adjacent to the seat, his leg propped across the right arm.

"This, as you know, is a very fine hospital," he mused. "If only I had had a chance to work here for *my* patients, patients of color just like you . . ."

He went silent, his thoughts breaching universes.

"Dr.?" said Dovey.

Dr. Roberts came back to attention and sat straight in his chair. He leaned forward, his eyes pressed toward Dovey.



“The world cracked, Dovey, on June 1, 1921. The levers of equanimity broke like a dam. What was a hole grew into a disastrous breach. The ghosts of the abused in Virginia demanded it, and all across this country, slaves cried out for vengeance. The deaths from riots in Omaha, Milwaukee, and Chicago built such a stench in eternity as to create a volcano’s eruption of protest. The burned and maimed from Roseville and those lynched in Alabama joined in. For the last four centuries, this injustice rose like a mountain. Only this mountain had a mind and a will, a community of thousands upon thousands cracked by hate, murder, poverty, theft, torture, and human indignity. The mountain boiled with the spirits of the dead. After Tulsa, they were freed to seek . . . you.”

“Me?”

“Yes, Dovey,” the good doctor said gently. “You.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“No.”

“Why me?”

“Why not?”

“Seems very . . . random, and not all that important. I’m just a normal Black woman. All I want to do is sell jewelry.”

“Was that day in Tulsa random?”

“Well, no.”

“So, the choice of you is *not* random.”

“It doesn’t answer my question. I mean, a hundred years have passed. If those spirits are waiting . . .”

“I told you. This is beyond time.”

“Beyond me, too. I don’t get it.”

“But you will.”

“You know that because . . .”

"You have been chosen."

Dovey scoffed. "You haven't answered my question. I'm not a volunteer here. If you're so hot to choose me, don't I deserve an answer?"

"Your question doesn't need an answer. It simply . . . is."

"And you?"

"I was not chosen randomly. I was a doctor. I was a high priority on their list of victims, and I will always remain a doctor. Between one world and the next. Here I am visiting you."

"I don't understand."

"Oh, Dovey, I think you do. I think you see the fracture. It's not about you or the people you look for who matter. It's not about your importance. It's not about the size of the task or who is the subject of your mission. It's the *cause*, Dovey. It's the beginning of something so much larger than yourself, and it needs a spark. *You* are the spark. You just need to believe in what you see, as you see me, as you see and have seen . . . Greenwood. You are the origin of that bridge."

"Ohhhh, I don't want to hear this. I don't want this mission. I don't want to be . . . *the spark*."

Dr. Roberts sat up like a preacher about to make his point. He gave her a long stare.

"You remember those voices you heard at your office? Those people crying, the sound of guns?"

Dovey opened her mouth, but nothing came out.

"That crack, Dovey, across all these centuries. The sounds of wailing from that day in Greenwood. It broke the time barrier and all this pain and suffering escaped into your world."

"Wait. What I heard in my office? That was real?"

"You keep asking that question."

“Because it’s hard to believe.”

“But you must believe.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s true, Dovey. Judgment fractured. Time fractured, and our lives from that day forward fractured. My family fractured. I fractured. Oh, it is quite severe this crack between here and there. Many, many souls hang in the balance, and the agony stretches across generations upon generations. You heard right. We are unfinished by it. So, my good friend, you are the bridge in that fracture. The Bridge of Justice. For those who seek justice, *you* are chosen.”

Dovey pounded her hands on the bed.

“I don’t want to be chosen. What the hell am I supposed to do about it?”

Dr. Roberts was silent for several minutes. Dovey wondered if he had been offended and disappeared. Finally, he spoke.

“The souls of the dead, they shall rise,” he said as if quoting a book. “But what of their bodies? Who cares for them? Who shall seek their final rest?”

“What bodies?” she asked.

“That . . . is your question,” he announced.

Dovey waited for something further, but it never came.

“My question? I have a question, but not the question I asked? Another question that I didn’t ask. Wow. Talk about scrambled logic.”

Again, no answer.

“I don’t understand,” she pleaded.

Again, no answer.

Dovey sat up and looked hard into the darkness.

“What bodies?” she demanded.

"'Seek and ye shall find,' the words of the good Lord," the voice answered as if drifting in the wind.

Dovey sat up further and leaned forward.

"What bodies?" she repeated.

She saw nobody, nothing, just a chair in the dark.

A nurse passed by and stopped in her tracks. She noticed Dovey was sitting up.

"You okay, miss?" she said as she turned on the light. Melbus was on her name tag. Dovey had not met her before.

Dovey looked around the room before answering and verified that, save for her, the space was empty.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just thirsty. Can I get some water?"

"Yes, dear. I'll bring some to you."

She walked out and left the lights on.

Dovey breathed heavily.

"Oh God, Oh God, Oh God," she said in a dire state of panic.

Real, as she understood it, or not? Dovey, in the middle of a large fracture in . . . what? The man with the scarred face who sat not more than ten feet from her talking about . . . ontology?

"Damned if I can figure it out," she muttered.

One more layer of mystery.

When the nurse returned several minutes later, Dovey thanked her for the water.

She sat in the dark for several hours and thought about what Dr. Roberts told her.

When the light of day began to emerge, Dovey laid back on her pillow and went to sleep. She dreamed she was flying.

May 15, 2018, 11:36 a.m.  
Aunt Lorraine Chamele's House  
North Tulsa

Dovey had retrieved her laptop from her apartment.

For the last several days, she had researched and tried to decipher what Dr. Roberts told her about *ontology*.

From the Internet, she had retrieved two basic definitions:

1. *The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.*
2. *A set of concepts and categories in a subject area or domain that shows their properties and the relations between them.*

Dovey, however, didn't understand what these definitions meant. What did *the nature of being* have to do with time travel or the Bridge of Justice?

She scoured her memory for clues. What had he said to her?

*Real goes on like a strong river. Once it begins, it has no end.*

She looked up the first definition again and ran her finger across the screen.

*The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.*

*Real. Being.* They were somehow connected.

As if being real *was* a state of *being*, and time was not limited by it. He said that *real isn't limited by minutes or hours. Real is beyond it*, implying that perhaps what she believed about the physical world was not limited by her senses or even time itself. Real was a world beyond, and time had been *fractured* by the real horrors of

what happened on June 1, 1921, in Tulsa. Translated thus: *being* had been fractured.

Dovey sat and thought about this for some time.

It was hard. Dovey did not believe in spiritual things like her aunt. She did not go to church or practice any official religion. Dovey was a skeptic of anything that demanded *faith* beyond what she could sense or see.

But her visions had been *real*. Tangible. Touchable. She had defended them because of her experience.

Dr. Roberts certainly seemed *real* to her. She had seen him sit in a chair and talk to her.

And her gunshot was real, even though the crime had occurred a century ago. Yet, here she sat in 2018 recovering from a serious injury. If Dr. Roberts was to be trusted, he had saved her life in his own home and delivered her to a hospital a century in advance of his own time. All that seemed real enough, though the logic was certainly beyond her state of reason.

*Being. Time. Fracture. Bridge of Justice.*

Were they all part of this ontology, this state of being?

"Jesus," she whispered.

Her aunt walked into the room and sat across from her.

"What'cha doing, Dovey?" she asked.

Dovey looked at her computer. Then she looked up at her aunt.

"Being," she responded.

Her aunt looked curious.

"The doctor in the hospital said the answer to my question was ontology."

"What doctor?" said Lorraine.

Dovey shared with her the story about Dr. Roberts and his view about Tulsa and the Bridge of Justice.

Her aunt looked puzzled.

“Was he really there?”

Dovey nodded.

“I asked him that, and he shot back with a lecture about *real* and *time* and *ontology*. Blew me out of the water. I had no idea what he was talking about.”

Lorraine sat pensively as if absorbing Dovey’s words.

“So, now that you’ve had a chance to think about it, what do you suppose he meant?”

“Honestly?”

“Yeah. So far, you’ve been right.”

Dovey held her breath and then slowly let it out. “I think he meant I can cross through time and help victims from the Tulsa massacre. I went back to Greenwood. I stood in the middle of the massacre. I saw people die. *Real* people. I talked to Frank G. Kelly. And, he shot me with his own pistol. They pulled a very real bullet out of my shoulder from his gun.”

Lorraine gave this some thought.

“And?”

Dovey closed the hood of her laptop.

“Ontology,” she answered. “The branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.”

Lorraine sat quietly.

“Time is part of that,” said Dovey. “Time is part of our sense of being. And history.”

“And you’ve crossed over,” said Lorraine.

“Oh, yeah. I definitely crossed over. My body has been in two different worlds, two different centuries. How is that possible

unless what Dr. Roberts said is true? In my case, time doesn't exist, or at least it's been opened up for me to cross over."

"Sweet Jesus," said Lorraine.

Dovey sat for a while with the computer in her lap.

"But you don't know how it works," Lorraine added.

"No idea."

"You just . . ."

". . . cross . . ."

". . . because . . ."

"Well, something's in control, but it's not me, and there must be someone I need to help."

The two women sat for a while in meditation.

"I'll keep praying for you," said Lorraine as she stood up and went upstairs.

"Thanks, Auntie," said Dovey.

As she drifted off in thought, the weight of it all settled on her shoulders.

"Thanks a lot, guys," she said to whomever was in charge of her journeys.

She just wished they might give her a few more clues as to when it was going to happen, and maybe a little more help understanding why.



*May 26, 2018, 11:36 a.m.*  
*Aunt Lorraine Chamele's House*  
*North Tulsa*

The dreams returned, especially one recurring dream:

Dovey flew above a field, a pale light emanating like landing lights from some mysterious source. A large tree stood by itself, barren and leafless. The tree appeared as black as coal, its limbs like pinchers extended toward the sky. The light's reflection illuminated the tree just enough to create a backdrop outlined like a charcoal drawing.

In her dream, Dovey heard a voice ask: "Where are the bodies?"

Dovey couldn't answer the question, but the question fed her stubborn determination. "I'll find them," she said repeatedly. "I'll find them. I promise."

The tree was alive and shook its branches like ladies in a Pentecostal service. It waved. It tilted. It laughed in a deep growl, taunting Dovey. The voice asked repeatedly:

"Where are the bodies?"

Dovey frantically ran around the tree and searched for cracks in the earth, signs of a possible grave, but there were none.

"I'll find them," she gasped again. "I promise. I'll find them."

And then she would wake up whispering to herself:

"I'll find them. I will. I'll find them."

What bothered her most about the dream—she had no idea who she needed to find.

—

Dovey recuperated over the next month at her aunt's house. Her recovery meant that she couldn't work, couldn't pay rent, and couldn't take care of herself by herself. She couldn't drive. She couldn't cook. She needed extensive care, plus all those doctor visits and trips to the drugstore.

Lorraine willingly volunteered to carry the load, help with the rent, and do whatever it took to get her back on her feet.

While Dovey recuperated, she sat during the mornings on Lorraine's front porch and thought about the meaning of her dreams, her wounds, her future. She thought about Atalia and Dr. Roberts. She tried to put the puzzle pieces together, but some simply didn't fit the big picture. They only led to more questions, more missing details, more mysteries.

There was something else—regular visits from her friend, the crow, on the front porch.

*Same crow?* Dovey wondered. *I mean, don't all crows look alike?*

But this crow seemed familiar, acted familiar, danced familiar, even did the same jig he had performed on her balcony last month. It was always there to meet her when she sat on the porch, and it stayed for however long she sat there. She even had casual conversations with it and anticipated its visits every morning.

The crow would hop next to her on the bench where Dovey sat and they would watch traffic and people pass on the street.

She would feed it birdseed. Sometimes it would bring her little gifts: branches, tiny pieces of metal, a small rock. It was an endearing sign of friendship. She called the crow Hopalong.

This morning, Hopalong brought her something unsettling and presented it at her feet.

An oak leaf.

After everything Dovey had been through with dreams and visions and visitations from prophets and spirits, plus a very friendly crow, was there a message here? As in, find this tree?

Dovey wondered if she was overthinking the gift. But it *was* a leaf, and her dreams had centered on a tree. Was it an oak tree? Were her dreams and the oak tree connected? Was the crow telling Dovey something about the tree in her dreams?

*Oh, God, I am going crazy,* she thought.

—

Today was a busy weekend for Dovey. She was expecting Detective Genard any minute. He said he had news to share. Then, tomorrow afternoon, they were going to visit someone whose family had been directly affected during the Tulsa massacre.

Dovey's head was spinning as she sat in the living room, oak leaf pressed between her right thumb and index finger. The doorbell rang. It was Genard.

Lorraine greeted him and led him in to the living room. Dovey sat nervously.

Lorraine had prepared some sweet rolls and tea for them and served each with her usual grace and dignity. Recusing herself to a love seat on the far side of the room, she sat demurely and anticipated the news.

"How are you feeling, Dovey?" said Genard.

"Better," she mused. "I'm going to get back on my feet. My aunt has been a big help. I'm regaining the use of my right arm. We're sorting through all the doctor bills. It's a long road, but we're gonna make it."

"Good, good."

They all sat silent for a moment.

"Well," he said, "I have some news. But first, I'm going to tell you a couple of things."

He paused and folded his hands in his lap.

"This is the strangest damn case I have ever worked."

Dovey nodded. "Welcome to my world."

Genard smiled pleasantly. "I made you a promise, Dovey, to follow the evidence. Did I not?"

"Yes, you did," said Dovey. "And then you were going to tell me if you believed me."

Genard glanced out the living room window for a moment as if gathering his thoughts. Then he looked Dovey square in the eyes.

"Oh, I believe you," he affirmed. "What I can't tell you is why, because there's only one piece of evidence to follow. Just a single clue."

"What?" Dovey exclaimed.

"One bullet," said Genard. "That's all I have. But. What a bullet."

"Okay," Dovey followed.

"Uhhh," Genard sighed in one breath. "Well, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's back up."

Dovey and Lorraine waited.

"Frank G. Kelly," said Genard. "Let's start with him."

"That's the man who shot me," said Dovey.

"Yeah. Oddly enough, I actually believe you."

"You do?"

"Yes. I did some digging in the Tulsa PD's ancient catacombs. Amazing what they've kept on file. He was arrested in 1925 for armed robbery and went to prison. Want to know what the PD took off him as evidence?"

Dovey leaned forward. "What?"

"A .45 caliber Colt New Service Revolver. He used it to shoot a guard. The bullet was recovered and presented at Frank's trial. The guard survived and testified. Kelly went to prison as a result."

"And?" said Dovey eagerly.

"Yeah, we ran a ballistics report. Frank's bullet was the same caliber they took out of you."

Dovey blinked.

"By the way. Those guns were discontinued in the 1940s," he added.

"And?" Dovey pushed.

"From the bullet we analyzed, someone shot you with a very old gun."

"Yeah. I keep telling you. I was there. 1921. June 1. I saw it. I saw the gun. I know it was Frank who shot me."

"Yeah, with the same gun he used to shoot the guard."

Lorraine murmured, "How is that possible?"

"My question as well," he answered.

Genard caught his breath and took a sip of tea.

"And that's not all," he said.

Dovey shook her head. "Ah. See. You're a good detective."

"Kelly still has family in the area."

Lorraine gasped.

"North side of the county, few miles outside the city limits, near Collinsville. Seems the apples didn't fall far from the trees. The Kellys have a long track record with the police."

"Um-hm," said Dovey.

"But."

"But what?"

"Well, legally, I can't arrest a dead man, and I can't blame his kin for your shooting."

"Oh," said Dovey.

"Frank Kelly died in prison in 1935."

Dovey remained quiet.

"So," said Genard, "officially, your case is going to the cold files for lack of evidence. Or. To put it more accurately, lack of a living shooter."

"Lord, Lord," said Dovey. "Hard for a Black woman to get justice in this town."

"Always has been," Lorraine concurred.

"But," Genard repeated.

Dovey eyed him suspiciously. "But?"

Genard continued. "I want to keep in touch. I want to know what else you find."

"Toward what end?" Dovey demanded.

"I'm hooked. This is a great story. I want to know what happens. It's like reading Stephen King, and I *love* Stephen King. *The Stand*? Best book ever."

"So I'm just a story to you? Right?"

"A damn good one, and if more evidence pops up, well, I'm here. You just call. I'm on it."

"Well then, you'll have to stick around," said Dovey, "and keep in touch, check in, let us know what's happening."

"I can do that."

"I kept your card. If I find out anything else, I'll call you. Promise."

"Okay," said Genard. "Good to know."

Genard excused himself, politely shook Dovey and Lorraine's hand, and walked out the door.

Dovey giggled.

Her aunt seemed amused.

"You like what you see?"

"At least he's got a job," Dovey answered.

"Um-hm," said her aunt. "That's a damn good start."

"Auntie," Dovey laughed.

"I told you before," Lorraine asserted. "A good man is hard to find. This one has my vote."





*May 27, 2018, 2:40 p.m.*

*Granny Myrtoff's Home*

*North Tulsa*

The following afternoon, Aunt Lorraine took Dovey to meet one of her friends on the north side of Tulsa.

Ofelia "Granny" Myrtoff lived in a small A-frame house, one bedroom, one bath. The house was in dire need of a paint job, but the interior was clean and well-maintained. Ofelia, who was 80, had lived here nearly all her life.

Granny stood in the doorway, a short, slim woman with white hair parted in the middle and tapered with a braid. She stooped slightly, but her eyes were clear and her manner dignified. A smile seemed natural to her face.

"Welcome to my house," she said sweetly. "I been here most of my adult life. Me and my husband, George, bought it when we married way back in '59. It's been home ever since."

Her speech was honeyed and slow like molasses. Dovey was charmed by her.

Granny continued as they walked to the living room. "I met my husband here in North Tulsa," she recounted. "He sold shoes. Good ones, too. Wasn't so many people around back then. Had a little more space to roam. I used to take walks, long walks in the fields. Can't do that no more. I'm just too old."

"Thanks for seeing us, Granny," said Lorraine. "This is my niece, Dovey Declair. She lives down on the south side."

"Well, hello, Dovey, dear," Granny cooed. "Ain't you a beautiful girl."

Her kindness touched Dovey.

"Hello, Granny. I'm so pleased to meet you."

Granny peered at her through her large eyeglasses.

"You the one who got shot?" she asked.

"I am," Dovey replied.

"Lord, Lord, ain't we all in need of Jesus' protection."

"Yes, we are," Lorraine confirmed.

"How you doing now, dear?"

"I'm mending," said Dovey.

"Good, good. Thank the Lord."

They all sat down in Granny's living room. Granny in a rocking chair. Lorraine on the couch. Dovey in a love seat positioned directly across from the living room window. She watched as the traffic passed. It was a busy street.

"I hear you want to know about that ol' Tulsa riot," Granny said to Dovey.

"Well," Dovey responded. "I want to hear about your family, the ones who were there that day."

"I got some stuff for you," she said and handed a few photos and papers to Dovey. "What little there is to offer. You know, nobody wanted anyone to know about that terrible day, so you have a hard time finding stories or pictures. What I tell you comes from my own family and some digging around. I saw some articles recently in the paper. I cut some of them out as well. Also, I talked to a *lot* of people over the years. You can judge for yourself if what I say is truthful."

They sat quietly for a few moments.

“Go on, Granny,” Lorraine encouraged.

Granny nodded and folded her hands together prayerfully.

“Well, I am the last living relative of James Grant, whose father and mother, William and Dorothea Grant, were killed during the riot. I am James Grant’s daughter. I married Jeremiah Myrtoff in 1959. We lived together for nearly 45 years till he died in 2004. Ain’t a day goes by I don’t miss him.”

She seemed to slow her breathing as if she were struggling to tell the story. Lorraine and Dovey waited patiently.

“My great-grandfather William ran what they called in those days an apothecary. His older brother, James, for whom my father was named, was a doctor. They were both new to town and working together as partners in business. They lived close to Cameron and North Greenwood, not far from the old Vernon A.M.E. Church, which, as you may know, got burned to the ground that day and has since been rebuilt.”

Dovey felt a tingle in her spine. Outside the living room window, a crow peered at her from the front porch railing.

The words of Atalia materialized: *Follow the crow.*

Dovey repeated them softly.

Lorraine glanced at her.

Dovey’s vision expanded beyond the horizon as if the blue sky had suddenly extended to infinity.

Granny continued.

“The last James heard from his father and mother, he was told to run for his life, and so he did, out the back door and into some fields south of Archer. Just think. He was only eight-years-old. Must have been terribly frightening.

“Well, that boy followed the railroad tracks to a fort he and his friends had built from scraps of wood and old tree branches. That fort saved his life, and he stayed there for two days until he was sure it was safe to come back.

“Now, as my father tells the story, someone, a young woman he said, found him that day and helped him return home, but he had no idea who she was or why she happened to be in the same field as him. But he did return to Greenwood and carried on, and he credits her with helping him..

“Eventually, my father followed in his Uncle’s footsteps and became a doctor, too, and a good one at that. I’m very proud of my father. He was a good and decent man.”

As Granny gave her description, Dovey saw young James running away from his house. He was small for his age, but wiry and fast. She watched as he crossed the railroad tracks and jumped inside the fort. She saw the interior leaking sunlight and filled with wisps of smoke from the nearby fires in town.

James didn’t budge from his hiding place. He had some chicken with him, and periodically, he would eat a piece and sit very still as if he was listening for someone to approach.

All this Dovey saw as if she were watching a movie.

“James said he saw some terrible things,” said Granny. “They stuck with him all his life. He said he couldn’t get those pictures out of his head.

“He said he saw people shot in the street as they fled. He saw buildings burning and children trying to escape. All those good white citizens, some of them police officers, turned murderers that day.

“James said as he peered out from his fort, it looked like hell burning. He knew then that his folks were dead. Even though they

never found their bodies, it was a safe assumption. He always prayed to his dying day that someone would find them and give them a decent burial. And it's been passed down to us. We always pray at holidays when we get together: 'Lord, bring back William and Dorothea.' So far, we're still waiting for that prayer to be answered.

Dovey remembered Dr. Roberts comment.

*But what of their bodies? Who cares for them? Who shall seek their final rest?*

Dovey focused on the final scene from her vision: James walking alone into town, stopping at the edge of Greenwood, and just staring up into the sky. Then he turned and looked straight at her, his eyes imploring her to help him. Dovey started crying.

Granny immediately apologized.

"Oh, my dear, I'm so sorry if this upsets you. I know for some people, it's just too difficult to imagine how good people could act like that. I wonder myself sometimes. It just don't seem real."

"No, no, Granny," Dovey answered as she tried to catch her breath. "No, it's the whole story about your father and his parents. It's, it's just the saddest thing I've ever heard."

"Yes, it's very sad," she said. "So much sadness, passed down from family to family, and so many people who've never ever heard the story. It was just forgotten. No one was ever brought to justice, and Greenwood itself got rebuilt with new owners. White owners. The Black merchants were run out of town and lost their livelihoods. Stolen, they were, and nothing anyone from Greenwood could do about it. Imagine. Your whole life burnt to the ground in a day. And like the bodies that were lost, so was the story. It's only been left to the few of us alive to tell it."

A respectful silence filtered through the afternoon light. No one dared say a word. Dovey made her decision as she saw the crow stir on the outside railing and start to do his peculiar hop. The crow knew, and she had the crow's attention. She had the crow's eye and the words of Dr. Roberts to help her: *Seek and ye shall find.*

"I'm going to make you a promise," said Dovey.

"Oh?" said Granny.

"I'm going to find William and Dorothea. You're going to be able to give them a proper funeral."

"Dovey . . ." Lorraine murmured as if to warn her off.

Dovey stared her aunt down. Lorraine refrained from any more comments.

"You are?" said Granny.

"I am. That's my promise to you."

Granny was stunned. Her hands shook and her face went slack.

"Okay. We best be going," said Lorraine, as if to ward off any more confusing promises from Dovey. "We thank you for your time."

She stood and grabbed Dovey firmly by the arm.

Lorraine gave Granny a soft kiss on the cheek. "I'll be calling you, darling. You take care."

"I'm so glad you came to visit," said Granny appreciatively. "It always helps me to talk about it."

"I know, dear. You just keep sharing, and someday, this story will be unburied."

As they drove off, Lorraine kept silent, but Dovey knew that her aunt was steamed.

"You don't believe me?" Dovey asked.

"I don't make promises I can't keep," said Lorraine sternly.

"I don't either."

"Well, you just did," she said. "And to one of my dearest friends. All I can say is . . ."

"It's the journey, Auntie. We're in this together, and sooner or later, you have to trust me."

"With *that* promise?"

"Yes. We're about to embark on another chapter. You're the one who told me. I have the crow's eye. Well, this is it. And we're going to find them. That's also my promise to you."

"You know where they are?" Lorraine asked.

"I will."

Lorraine drove without further comment. Several miles down the road, she said, "You better keep that promise."

"I will, Auntie. We're going to keep that promise together."

Lorraine drove silently for the rest of the trip.

Out the windshield, off to her right, Dovey observed the flight of her friend Hopalong.

Dovey had doubts, but the crow stiffened her resolve. She had seen his powers, felt them in her dreams. He had revealed the truth in part. The rest would follow. Wherever that tree was, she knew the crow would help her find it. Somewhere on the Oklahoma plains, there was a path to that tree. There was a crow who guided her. There was a promise she made, and she fully intended to keep that promise.

She smiled at her aunt and patted her on the shoulder. Her aunt said nothing and kept her eyes on the road.





*June 1, 2018, 7:00 a.m.*  
*Aunt Lorraine Chamele's House*  
*North Tulsa*

This time Dovey was ready.

Poised with a yellow pad and pen, she sat on the porch, the sun just lifting over the horizon. Having just awakened a half-hour earlier from another intense dream, Dovey had determined to write it down.

Though her arm was still weak from the wound in her shoulder, she had enough strength in her fingers to hold the pen. It felt good to grip something. Much of her focus the last few weeks had been untethered. A simple pen in hand was a good sign. She could concentrate. She could recall.

Dovey wrote in block letters at the top of the page:

*Dovey's Dream, June 1, 2018.*

June 1. She realized the anniversary. She pondered the date and the events she had recently learned. How strange that she was here putting together a *dream line*. For a moment, she was overwhelmed.

Putting the point of the pen to the paper, she wrote:

*Very dark. No stars, no moon, no light of any sort.*

*A large white crow flew in my room.*

*I got out of bed and climbed on the crow's back.*

*We took off through my opened bedroom window.  
I was so frightened. We were so high, or so it seemed. It was cold and  
I was in my nightgown.*

*Where were we going? I said to the crow.*

*The crow did not answer.*

*I buried my hands in its feathers. They were soft like a pillow.*

*Was the journey going to be long?*

*It seemed that we had been flying a long time.*

*The crow started to descend.*

*And then I saw it.*

*An oak tree.*

*Strange how even in the darkness I knew what it was.*

*The crow landed next to the tree and I jumped off, only to find that  
my feet were deep in some kind of mud or liquid.*

*The crow flew off and left me stranded.*

*I walked around the tree and suddenly, it was daylight and I saw my  
feet. They were soaked in blood.*

*And next to my feet, a large hole.*

*And at the bottom of the hole, two bodies, their skulls cracked, their  
bones broken, their mouths stretched wide as if they were screaming.*

*I screamed.*

*I woke up.*

Dovey put down the pen and held the pad close to her chest.

"Auntie," she called through the open door.

"Coming," said Lorraine.

When Lorraine appeared, Dovey handed her the pad.

"The next step in our journey," she said. "We're going to find  
that oak tree."

"What oak tree?"

“Read it.”

Lorraine browsed through what Dovey had written and handed it back.

“All right then,” she said and went back inside to finish her morning coffee. Dreams, niece screaming, a promise to find bodies, and now an oak tree. Lorraine had to still herself for a moment of silent prayer.

“Dovey,” she called out.

Dovey appeared at the door.

“Sit down, dear. I have something for you.”

Dovey sat at the table, her eyes curious.

Lorraine set a small box on the table.

“This is for you, dear. I hope it helps you focus.”

Dovey gasped and reached for the box. She opened it and gasped again. “Oh, Auntie.”

Dovey pulled out a ring with an elaborate inlay, inset with a small diamond.

“This was your grandmother’s,” Lorraine explained. “My mother, our mother, Cecelia and me. Just like you, I feel my mother is always with me when I need her. I’m sorry you didn’t know her. She died when you were tiny. But this is her ring, her wedding ring, my gift to you, and hopefully a bond between your past and present and future. May this stone reflect the light of your life, and I hope it reminds you how much you mean to me.”

Dovey put it on. It fit perfectly.

“Oh, Auntie, this is so precious.”

Lorraine looked pleased.

“This ring, well, it carries my prayers,” Lorraine added. “I want you to finish your mission. But I also want you to be safe.”

“Our mission, Auntie.”

"Okay. Our mission."

Lorraine rose and put her hands on Dovey's shoulders.

"The Lord is with you," she said.

"Thank you, Auntie," Dovey replied and put a hand over her aunt's hand as it rested on her right shoulder.

"You're welcome, dear," said Lorraine. "Don't ever think I don't believe in you, whatever we may struggle to understand."

The two women waited for a moment in meditative silence.

"Crow's eye," said Dovey as a mantra.

"Crow's eye," Lorraine responded.

*June 2, 2018, 7:10 p.m.*  
*Wanda J's Restaurant*  
*Greenwood District*  
*Downtown Tulsa*

It was lunch between two best friends. Today's mood, however, was as solemn as a church service. Billie sat pensively at the table as they both waited for their orders.

Dovey noted that her friend seemed troubled and wondered if it was her fault. After all, who had been troubled by dreams and visions, and whose attention had been preoccupied by the pursuit of an oak tree? If Billie was annoyed by all the events in Dovey's life, who could blame her?

"You mad at me?" Dovey asked outright.

Billie, sitting in a fugue state of mind, perked up.

"Me? Mad? No," said Billie. "I just don't follow what you're doing, you know; this bit about your dream story, or why. You know, time travel, prophecies, the whole ball of wax. That's just something beyond me. Ever since that night at McNellie's, you've been acting different. And this business in the hospital, you and that detective. Dovey, that's one hell of a story, but really?"

"You think I'm crazy?" Dovey continued.

"I don't understand why you're doing what you're doing. It's that simple. Crazy? No. Acting crazy? Yeah. Why? I have no idea."

"You think I'm lying about Greenwood?"

"I don't know. Sounds like a movie to me."

"It's not a movie. It's my life."

"Right," said Billie. "Your time-traveling life."

"Billie . . ." said Dovey on the verge of tears.

Billie backed off. "I know, I know. I'm sorry. I just don't understand it—at all."

"I don't either."

Billie played with a fork. "Isn't the world complicated enough as it is? I mean, you've got Trump and Charlottesville and police shooting us in the back and putting us in chokeholds. Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Philando Castile. Plenty of trouble in the streets these days, and God knows when you and I will get pulled over, and then, what? Dovey, we have enough reality right in front of us. Why make it worse?"

Dovey frowned. "How am I making it worse?"

"By not facing up to the world we have, Dovey. This Black reality that we face every day. Stay in this world. Let's work at it together. Me and you. The racket twins. Dovey. Billie. You know. The sisterhood. We're a team."

Dovey gazed at Billie, her true sister in crime. Inseparable except for now; Dovey with a bullet hole in her shoulder, wondering which reality she should accept?

"You're afraid, aren't you?" she said gently.

A tear rolled down Billie's cheek.

"I can't lose you," she said in a bare whisper.

And Dovey finally understood.

Billie was from Narsto, Texas, in the heart of the state. Small town, mostly white. Beet red. A tough place to be Black.

Her parents, a conservative Baptist working-class family. Billie only went to college because she was offered a scholarship at Tulsa U, and the divide between them had only grown from there.

When Billie was in high school, her older brother, Johnson, had been pulled over by the local police and died in police custody. The cause of his death remained unsolved.

For Billie, Dovey was her adopted family. It had been hard for her when Paul and Cecelia had died. Now she faced the possibility that Dovey, too, might disappear one day. Another phone call. Another tragic loss.

"I'm not going anywhere," said Dovey.

"Not now anyway," Billie responded. "But . . . tomorrow?"

"I didn't ask to do this," Dovey said. "Someone seemed to have chosen me. God, Buddha, Mohammed. The spirits that remain out of sight and out of mind, at least they did until now. Now they won't leave me alone."

Dovey took a deep breath and swallowed some iced tea.

"I don't know, Billie. I'm just sort of following the thread here. By the seat of my pants, really. I don't know where this leads. But . . . I don't seem to have a choice either."

"What thread? What does that even mean?"

"Well, you know, what's been happening to me."

"Well," Billie mused. "That's the thing. I keep saying, dreams are dreams. I don't think it's anything more than that and maybe the dinner you ate the night before. The fact you insist otherwise, well, that's the crazy part."

"Billie," Dovey said. "You know what's not crazy? Someone shot me."

"Yeah. Someone did."

Their food arrived.

They ate in bits and pieces, neither seeming to be very hungry. Billie picked at her food as if it was a yard sale. She put down her fork and began to beat out a rhythm with her tongue as a beatbox.

"Right," she said. "You crazy. I'm lazy. But the world is hazy so let's just dance till we're fine like it's all of 1999."

Dovey waved her hands to the tune.

Billie started singing a few lines from the old Martha & The Vandellas song "Dancing in the Streets." Her voice seemed to break with each phrase.

She stopped and smiled. "See any ghosts lately?"

"Ghosts?"

"Yeah," she teased. "The last time we ate together, you saw a ghost. Check it out. Anybody here?" She glanced facetiously over at the next table.

Dovey was about to tell her about Dr. Roberts but cut herself off in mid-sentence. She didn't want to make a bad situation worse. Billie was not a believer, and Dovey was concerned for their friendship. Should she mention her encounter in the hospital? Probably not a good idea. She resorted to a lie.

"No, I haven't seen any ghosts lately," she tittered. Then a giggle. "You're funny."

"I am funny, and so are you, but this . . ."

"Too spooky, huh?"

"Yeah, that's one way to put it."

Dovey sipped her iced tea.

The waiter came by to check on them and noticed they weren't eating their food.

"Everything all right?" he asked.

"Fine," said Dovey.

The waiter walked away unconvinced.



“So what’s your plan?” Billie asked.

Dovey hesitated. How much should she tell her about her tree dream?

“No plan at the moment,” she said with the sting of regret. No plan except following a crow and finding bodies buried somewhere under an oak tree. Other than that . . .

All this upset Dovey. Since college, they had shared their secrets and talked about everything, except this.

Billie gave her a skeptical glance and stared down at her food. Dovey was not a good liar.

“I don’t believe you,” said Billie. “Not since you got shot. I know you’ve got something up your sleeve. Maybe you see into the future . . .” Billie rubbed her glass like she was a fortune teller.

Dovey’s resistance weakened.

“When I find out, I’ll be sure and let you know.”

Billie looked at her plaintively.

“Sisters forever?”

“Always,” said Dovey.

Billie held out her right pinky. Dovey embraced it with her left pinky.

It was sisterhood pushed to the brink.



*June 3, 2018, 4:32 p.m.*  
*Aunt Lorraine Chamele's House*  
*North Tulsa*

Dovey and Lorraine sat on the front porch enjoying some summer sun and two fresh glasses of iced tea. Dovey had informed Lorraine about her discussion with Billie. Lorraine was giving her a sympathetic ear.

"I don't know why she's so upset," Dovey lamented. "I'm not a liar and I wouldn't make this stuff up. Why does it bother her so much?"

Lorraine sat thoughtfully, then spoke.

"What you've gone through, Dovey, you got to admit, it's not easy for someone to accept. You know, she's just a rational person. Don't know if she ever went to church or believed in anything spiritual. So, she just finds this awfully hard. I'm not saying it's easy for me either. We're dealing with something wayyyy out there. Average person just doesn't believe in this kind of stuff."

"I know," said Dovey.

"Just remember to be patient with all of us. Maybe somewhere down the road, she'll come around, and when she does, you be sure and welcome her. Good friends like that don't come cheap."

"You think she will?"

Lorraine didn't answer.

"I'm going to find them," Dovey insisted.

Again, Lorraine stayed quiet.

"You with me?" Dovey implored.

"I hope you do," said Lorraine. "I'm praying for you."

"Auntie . . ."

"Deeds, Dovey. Don't give me words. Give me deeds. I'm giving you a lot of room here. Bring it on home."

Dovey observed her aunt for signs of faith. She was desperate to have her support, for that matter, anyone's support. She felt like she was hanging off a cliff by a skinny wire, and those who watched her were hesitant to lift a helping hand. At least Lorraine was in her corner. She felt confident her aunt would be there at crunch time.

Dovey nodded her head.

"It's gonna get done."

"Keep believing," said Lorraine.

Along the skyline above the driveway, Dovey watched the crow fly.

*June 4, 2018, 11:30 a.m.*  
*Harold Kelly's Ranch*  
*Collinsville*  
*North Tulsa County*

Dovey found the ranch easily enough with a basic Internet search and some help from Google Earth.

She drove solo to the site in her VW, embraced by a bright, blue sky and vast stretches of the Oklahoma prairie.

Dovey followed the crow as it sailed to her left just above the driver's window. She would check periodically to make sure they were in sync.

At the entrance to a long driveway, she stopped and verified the rural mailbox with the name Kelly stenciled in block letters. Her GPS identified the address as 13798 North Cherokee Road in Collinsville. It was one of thousands of ranches in Oklahoma, yet she knew there was more here than just a town. This was a graveyard waiting to be discovered.

Dovey scanned the scene and saw the dilapidated house at the end of the drive. The deteriorating posts, rusted wire, brush, and scrub trees said to the casual passerby, this home is dying.

The crow sat on a fence post and eyed her as if he questioned her courage. Perhaps he implored her to seek the truth, even if the truth was deplorable.

Her heart raced as she turned the key in the ignition and drove down the driveway.

At the end of the road, Dovey noticed that the house was more extensive than it first appeared. It was a ranch-style design whose prime had long passed. A hundred years ago, it was probably the pride and joy of Frank G. Kelly and family. Now it just stood begging for paint, repairs, and landscaping. The yard paled beyond the scope of the average lawnmower. At one time, it might have sparkled white, but today, the stains overwhelmed the primer. With holes the size of trash cans, the shingled roofing exposed the underlying plywood to the elements.

A single glance would have told any buyer to tear it down and start over. And yet, upon closer inspection, there were crystals hanging in the living room window, a set of greying lace curtains, and an open doorway. Someone still lived here. Perhaps someone named Harold Kelly.

As Dovey got out of her car, she saw it, far off to her left in an open field—the oak tree—and on the lower branch, small but visible, the crow waiting for her.

“Oh my God,” she exclaimed. She stood for several minutes taking it in and thinking about who might be buried there.

She took out her phone and dialed the detective.

“Genard here,” a familiar voice answered.

“Detective,” said Dovey.

“Dovey?”

“Yup.”

“Where are you?”

“Officially, 13798 North Cherokee Road in Collinsville.”

“Collinsville?”

“Yes. The house of Harold Kelly.”

"No."

"Yes. I found his house."

Genard took a measured breath. "Dovey, why are you there?"

"You know why I'm here."

"No, I don't, and what you're doing could get you in a world of hurt. Is he there?"

Dovey scanned the house for any sign of movement.

"I don't know. The door's open."

"Dovey," Genard commanded. "Get in your car and drive away."

"I can't . . . Greg," she said softly.

He paused and lowered his voice. "Yes, you can."

"No. I can't."

Genard's voice pressed against her ear as if he was leaning into his phone. "Why not?"

Dovey was shaking as she spoke: "I see the tree, Greg."

"What tree?"

She took a deep breath.

"The tree in my dreams. The one where the bodies are buried. The oak tree."

"What bodies?" he demanded.

"William and Dorothea Grant. They're buried next to that tree. I saw them. I saw them in my dreams. The crow is there. He knows, too."

Again, a sizeable pause.

Genard's voice was tense.

"Dovey, drive back to the road and wait for me. I'm on my way."

"If you don't see me, dig around that tree," she implored. "That's where they are."

"Dovey, get the hell out of there and wait for me. Right now. Get in your car and go."

"Don't forget," she said and hung up.

—

Dovey peered in the doorway and said politely: "Hello?"

There was no answer.

"Hello?" she repeated a little louder. Still quiet.

Dovey worked up her courage and took a step into the house. She expected at any moment to be confronted by an angry white man, but no one appeared. As she walked further in, she had the feeling that it was empty. But why was the front door open?

Yes, this was Collinsville, a small town tucked away among hundreds of Oklahoma cities, but common sense said not to extend an invitation for theft or vandalism, or perhaps it was an invitation to finish off the home's death spiral. Destroy the place, set it on fire, implement God's final justice.

It was dark inside. The lights were off. Only slivers of sunlight penetrated the interior. Still, Dovey could tell from the pictures and guns on the wall that this was a family house with a long history.

Dovey eased along the hallway that led to the kitchen in the back. More photos, more collectibles, more family memorabilia. A giant family Bible.

Dovey browsed through the first few pages and noted the listings for all the weddings and funerals. Kellys from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century born, living, dying. She ran her finger along the chronicles and found the wedding date of Frank G. Kelly, married to Sara Pinske on October 14, 1922, roughly a year after the



massacre. The birth of their son also recorded: Harold Delaney Kelly. November 6, 1924. Born right on the farm, perhaps in this very house. For Frank, life went on as a family man without consideration for those he destroyed in Greenwood.

*As if nothing ever happened, Dovey mulled.*

And then she saw it. A large, framed photo with Frank pressed between members of his family. Perhaps other brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, even a parent or a grandparent. It seemed typical that a large family like this would take the time to commemorate their gatherings. Frank stood in the middle of it all, the same dark eyes, the same scowl, the same slight build, the same angry face. To his right, a young woman, perhaps his new bride. Scrawled in white ink in the lower right-hand corner, the date: 1923.

Once again, Dovey concluded: *As if nothing ever happened.*

Dovey sat at the kitchen table and took it all in. She had found the Kelly presence, the center of their orbit. Perhaps she had also found Harold.

But what if Harold found her? Given their history, what would he do to a Black woman standing in his kitchen? He could justifiably shoot her. By entering uninvited, Dovey had given him permission. No jury would convict him for shooting a trespasser. Furthermore, her presence would just stand as proof to Harold that the creeping Negro shadow of Tulsa could be found even as far north as Collinsville.

She heard Frank's voice in her head: *Guard your things, boys. Your women and valuables. Them negroes are coming. Only a matter of time.*

From her vantage point, she spotted the mother lode. Attached to the wall, a long-nosed revolver.

Dovey knew nothing about guns, but this one was familiar. As Genard had explained, the weapon used against her was a Colt New Service Revolver, the same gun on the wall.

"Holy shit," she said.

Visibly shaken, she walked over and gazed at it. While recuperating, she had surfed the Internet and intimately examined pictures of the weapon's design. It had a five-and-a-half-inch barrel, slim for the size of the gun. The Colt on the wall was black with a brown handle. The logo stamped on the upper part of that handle. The gun itself worn from great use. A working man's gun to protect himself against invaders, predators, and Negroes.

As she recalled, it had a .45 ACP cartridge, quite lethal, especially at close range. Dovey felt an ache in her right shoulder. She could testify as to the gun's power and pain, and this gun perhaps had found other victims in Greenwood who weren't so lucky. This gun's bullets had taken Black lives.

Delicately, she reached for the weapon, sat down at the table, and cradled it in her lap. Dovey wondered: *Was this it? Was this the gun that had wounded her?*

"Oh my God," she murmured. "Can this story get any stranger?"

Dreams of an oak tree, skeletons, and crows. Visions of Greenwood and the massacre. A gun pointed at her and then fired. This gun? From 1921 to 2018, the Colt's weight rested in her lap as if no time had passed. It felt familiar even though she had never touched it. The gun and Dovey had traveled similar paths on different roads. Now, the connection clicked in her mind. But for what purpose? Dovey sat and thought about it for several minutes.

And then, as things fell into place, as she connected the dots, Dovey sank into another vision.

*June 4, 2018, 2:30 p.m.*  
*Harold Kelly's Ranch*  
*Collinsville*  
*North Tulsa County*

Margaret Foster awoke abruptly from a nap. Something was wrong, but what? Why was she so uneasy? Was it from a dream? Was it noise in the house? What had awakened her?

"I'm just getting old," she concluded. Her 70-year-old body confirmed this as she tried to stand up. Margaret stretched and felt the pain of arthritis roll down her hips. Grabbing a clip, she pulled back her waist-length gray hair and snapped it into a ponytail.

"Goddamn it," she mumbled. "Hurts just to walk."

Margaret flexed the muscles in her back and headed for the kitchen. She was startled by what she saw.

The old pistol her grandfather owned—the Colt New Service Revolver—lay like a dropped spatula in the middle of the kitchen floor.

The gun, part of her family legacy, hadn't moved in decades. Lack of ammo for one thing. For another, her father, Harold, had forbidden anybody to touch it. He wanted it left where it was, hung in a small rack on the kitchen wall, and refused any suggestion otherwise.

"Leave the goddamn thing alone," he would curse at anyone who approached the weapon—adults, children, pets, anything that crawled or flew, as if he treasured and cursed it in the same breath.

Harold was adamant, and as a result, it had become part of the furniture over the last 50 years or so, a family antique, now sprawled carelessly on the floor.

"Good God," she said. "How on earth . . ."

She bent down to pick it up and gently placed it back in its cradle.

Her second surprise stood at the living room door—a stocky Black man staring at her in her post-nap messiness. She gasped and took a step backward.

"Afternoon, ma'am," said the man. "My name is Greg Genard. I'm a detective for the Tulsa Police Department."

"Yeah?" she asked. "What the hell you doing way out here?"

"There's a car parked out here, a '64 Volkswagen. I happen to know who owns it and I'm concerned for the safety of the owner. Her name is Dovey Declair. She's Black, mid-twenties. I got a call from her a couple of hours ago that she was here. Have you seen her?"

Margaret was baffled. There were too many odd things happening at once. She took a deep breath, sat down in a chair, and gave the detective a long, hard look.

"I don't know any Black people out in this part of the woods. Don't know why they'd be coming to my house either. I got no Black friends, and I certainly got nothing to do with the police department. So I guess the answer to your question is no, I've not seen her. I have no idea why that car is parked out there or why she would be visiting me."

“Well, your door was open,” said Genard. “Maybe she just walked in.”

Her disquiet. Her sudden awakening. Had she heard a noise? Did the law want Dovey? Margaret was both intrigued and distressed.

“If she did, she was mighty quiet. I been in the house all day. Ain’t heard a peep.”

“Did you notice anything, maybe outside your window?”

Margaret began to connect the sequence. Dovey in her house. The gun on the floor. But why? Why would a Black woman from Tulsa take down her family’s pistol and throw it on the floor? The gun was useless without ammo and not worth much as an antique. Margaret chewed on this privately, without giving Genard a clue about Dovey’s visit.

“No,” she said.

Genard looked perplexed and stared toward the field where the oak tree grew.

“What the hell, Dovey?” he mumbled.

He wondered if she had already gone up to the tree and started digging. Given what he knew about Dovey, he would not be surprised.

Margaret kept her eye on Genard, her curiosity piqued. “Why’re you looking for her? She on the run?”

“No,” said Genard. “Not from the law, but I’m just wondering why her car is here and she’s not. She’s a friend of mine. She called me to tell me she was here. As I said, I’m concerned for her safety.”

“You think *I* did something to her?” said Margaret defensively.

“No, ma’am, not suggesting that at all.” He shrugged his shoulders. “Just wondering where she’s at.”

"Well, it's pretty obvious, she's not here."

"But her car?"

"Got no clue."

"So . . . she's somewhere around here."

Margaret grew irritated. "If she is, she's trespassing, and if she came into the house, she's a nosy busybody. Lucky I didn't grab my rifle."

Genard nodded. "Yes, ma'am. I agree."

There was a brief pause.

"Is Mr. Kelly home?" asked Genard.

Margaret squinted at him.

"You mean Harold?"

"Yes. Harold Kelly. I have him listed as the owner of the property."

Now she was curious. How did this man know her father?

"He's been dead for six months. I'm his daughter. I own the house now. Gonna sell it shortly." She looked at him with deep consideration. "You interested?"

Genard sighed and peered around the property.

"No, ma'am. All I care about is Dovey, my friend. I want to know where she's at. Her car's parked here. She has to be around, somewhere."

"As I said," Margaret repeated. "I've not seen her. If I had seen her, I would call the cops, but it seems you're already here. So if you see her, arrest her."

Genard flinched but held his tongue.

"Well, you mind if I look around?"

Margaret was peeved that this visitor wasn't going away any time soon. Still, he was a cop, so she played friendly.

"Sure. Help yourself. If you find her, get her off my property."

“Yes, ma’am,” he said politely. “Will do.”

Genard began a walkaround.

Margaret moved to the living room and sat in the chair next to the window. She watched him search the property and wondered why he was here, really; a cop, a Black cop looking for a Black woman in her neighborhood. Her day had taken an unusual twist.

—

Genard spotted the oak tree far out in the field. Remembering Dovey’s words, he had come prepared with a small spade he could hide as he strolled toward the tree. Given her warning, he was quiet, even reverent in his steps. If what she said bore out, he was entering a cemetery.

As he approached the tree, he kept an eye out for Dovey. A crow cawed at him and flew down from a branch. The crow jumped up and down on a bare spot about ten feet or so from the main trunk.

“You know something I don’t?” he asked. “Like, where’s my friend?”

The crow continued to caw and jump.

Genard took it as a sign and walked over to the exposed dirt. Scanning the property, he noticed that from where he stood, the tree trunk cut off the view from the house. The crow sat nearby and observed as Genard gently dug.

It didn’t take him long, ten minutes or so of careful excavation. What he found surprised him.

About six inches down, he discovered bones from a hand. Genard pictured this hand connected to its body rising from the grave, fighting through the earth, and demanding removal.

He dug even more cautiously and uncovered the upper portion of a skeleton. He used his hands and fingers to clear out the loose soil delicately. He took great care not to disturb the bones themselves. He would let the experts handle that.

"Ahhh, shit," he said to the tree, the crow, and the sky.

Dovey had been right. He rehearsed what he would tell the Tulsa County Sheriff's Department. No one in law enforcement would believe the actual story. He hadn't. Why would they?

He reached for his cell phone and made multiple phone calls to request assistance. Sheriff's deputies. Crime scene units. Patrol units.

His final call, and the one he most dreaded, was to Lorraine.

When she picked up, something caught in his windpipe.

"Hello?" said Lorraine.

He cleared his throat and spoke.

"Mrs. Chamele, this is Detective Genard."

"Oh, hello, Detective," she said sweetly. "You have some news for us?"

Genard wondered which news to share first.

"Yes. Some good news and bad news. I'll start with the good news."

"All right."

"Those bodies Dovey was looking for."

"Yes?"

"I think I found them. They may be those missing relatives she was talking about. What were their names?"

"William and Dorothea Grant."

"Yes."

"Oh, praise Jesus. Granny will be so grateful."

Genard swallowed hard and spoke again.



"The bad news."

"Yes?"

"Dovey is missing."

"Missing?"

"I found her car. She called me earlier today. Last I heard from her, she was up in Collinsville at the ranch of Harold Kelly."

"What in tarnation was she doing up there?"

"Looking for the bodies."

"Oh, good Lord."

"So, I found the bodies, or a body. I suspect there may be more, but I didn't find Dovey. Her car's here, but the property owner hasn't seen her, and I have no idea where she might have gone. I'm concerned."

"Well, I haven't heard from her either."

"I'll put out a missing person's bulletin with Tulsa PD."

"Well, thank you, Detective, for letting me know."

"You're welcome."

Genard hung up and breathed a sigh of relief.

He prepared himself for what was coming. He knew the importance of this find, knew what shock waves it would send throughout Tulsa, and once the news media smelled it . . .

"Oh my God," he murmured and walked down to the house to let the owner know that her peaceful, isolated home was about to be overrun as a major crime scene.



*June 30, 2018, 4:00 p.m.*  
*Harold Kelly's Ranch*  
*Collinsville,*  
*North Tulsa County*

Billie walked with Genard to the periphery of the dig site. She had insisted that he keep her posted about Dovey and that he take her to the crime scene. Genard had resisted but finally relented under pressure. Billie would not take no for an answer.

When they arrived, the sun was setting. Several people were excavating and processing data from the scene. There were lights around the tree and all sorts of professional equipment, including a small excavator. Billie thought the site looked like a moon landing.

The sounds of summer surrounded them: crickets, grasshoppers, birds, and the wind swaying the tall grasses near the field.

As they stood on the edge, Genard pointed out various parts of the scene around the tree.

“That’s where I found the first body,” he pointed and explained. “And then, lo and behold, what was one quickly became six. I’m guessing they must have done a dump-run out here. Kelly, well, I don’t know if these bodies were personal or what, but he must have wanted them permanently out of sight, out of mind. He went to a lot of trouble to conceal them.”

Billie stared wide-eyed.

"And Dovey knew," she said. "She knew all along there were bodies here."

Genard glanced over.

"Yeah, I think she figured it out, somehow. Her and the crow. And we were the ones who questioned her . . ."

". . . I questioned her . . ."

". . . but she knew. She was spot-on. The last I heard from her, she told me right where to go."

"And now she's gone," said Billie mournfully. "My sister."

Genard eyed her curiously.

"You guys related?"

Billie shook her head. "You don't have to be blood to be sisters. Billie and Dovey. We called ourselves the racket twins. We're both loud, especially when we laugh. And with a few drinks, Lord, Lord, it's a party."

"Oh," said Genard. "That's nice. I never had that growing up. My brothers were, well, we're from Jersey. They had their own problems with the law, and me being a cop, it didn't go over too good with the family."

"Really?"

"Nope."

Another pause.

"Not a very good sister, I was," Billie confessed.

"Well, Dovey had a odd story to tell," said Genard. "I admit I had my doubts, too."

Billie set her mouth firm.

"One thing about Dovey. She was *not* a liar, and she would be in your face if you called her one. That girl had a backbone. Most

people learned not to mess with her, except me. That's what I called her. In so many words. I think it must have really hurt."

Billie fought off tears. "Sorry, Dovey, dear. My bad."

"Guess that goes for me, too," Genard admitted.

"Dovey was a straight-arrow," said Billie. "I should have known she was telling the truth."

They stood in silence as the sun lowered on the horizon.

"I'll find her," Genard promised.

"I want her alive," Billie pleaded as her voice cracked and tears rolled down her cheeks.

"She was alive when she called," said Genard. "I have to keep faith and keep steady. She's a tough girl. If anyone can survive whatever this is, it's Dovey."

"You think someone took her?"

"You know her better than me. She was here. Then she wasn't. If she was around, why wouldn't she call? Where would she go? I don't think she'd leave us in the dark. Dovey cared about you and Lorraine. I never doubted that for a minute."

"Another trip to the past?"

"You believe that?"

"I do now."

"Then you're probably right."

Billie shook her head.

"She wouldn't leave without saying goodbye," said Billie. "Not by choice, anyway. She loves Tulsa. It's her home. There's no reason for her to leave. Except . . ."

"Well, she's gone," Genard confirmed.

"Somewhere else a century back."

"You think?"

"I have to believe that to believe in Dovey."

A warm wind whisked across the farmlands as the sun blazed directly in their eyes. Billie shivered. Genard offered her his coat.

"I'm not cold," she insisted.

Genard wrapped the coat over her shoulders anyway.

Billie pulled it tight and exhaled.

"I hate it when people are missing."

"It's terrible," said Genard. "I've done a lot of these cases."

"And?"

He did not answer. Genard didn't want to add to Billie's burden.

Billie guessed his thoughts.

"You think she's dead."

"I didn't say that."

"You didn't have to."

They stood silently for several minutes.

"You're not the first cop I've dealt with," said Billie. "You guys rarely say what you mean."

"Yeah? I guess that's true. We can't really. We have to sit on information. It does get tricky."

"And for us Black folk, hiding that information gets us killed."

Genard stood silently. He knew there was no argument from him.

"You grew up Black," said Billie. "You remember what that's like?"

"Oh yeah. Even as a cop, I always keep my badge handy and my hands on the wheel."

Billie paused.

"What if that was Dovey?"

Genard looked at her sympathetically.

"I would have known."

Billie challenged him with her eyes.

“You think they would have told you?”

“I’ve kept my antennas up,” Genard insisted. “There’s nothing about this case I would have missed. Trust me. I’m on this.”

“Me? Trust a cop?”

“Yes, Billie. You can trust me.”

Billie smiled weakly.

“You find her, Detective. Then I’ll trust you.”

“Deal,” said Genard.

She took off his coat and handed it to him.

“You can have this and thank you for bringing me. And don’t forget to call when you know something.”

“You know where to reach me.”

“I’ve got your number memorized.”

She let out another deep breath and turned to walk back to his squad car.





*June 1, 1921, 7:10 a.m.*

*Greenwood District*

*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey landed in the middle of another turbulent Greenwood street. She wondered where she had fallen in the scheme of the massacre: her location, the time of day, in what part of Greenwood she stood.

She thought about James and whether he had escaped and found shelter. For the moment, however, Dovey was in unfamiliar territory and had no clue where to begin her search. Besides, with all the uproar around her, she had to take care of herself first.

Gravitating toward a two-story home where the crowd was assembling, Dovey followed them cautiously. She was all too aware that her life was in danger solely because she was a Black woman standing alone in the street.

Around her, the same chaos as before. She had to move carefully and keep track of who might be approaching and what weapon they might use on her.

She heard banging on the door of a house, and before too long, a young couple emerged. Dovey gasped. It had to be them. William and Dorothea Grant. She had never seen a picture of them, but who else could they be? And why else would she land here?

The woman held her partner's hand. With the executioner at the door, they both looked resigned to their fate. The man, slender and dignified, stood proudly, even defiantly.

"How can I help you?" he asked.

A familiar voice spoke up. Dovey recognized it as Frank's. It had the same brash tone as their previous meeting, and he seemed to relish the volume in his voice. For a man slight of build and pale, he had a remarkable sense of charisma. A different crowd, but the same result. They followed him like a captain into battle.

"I think the question is, how'r we gonna help you?" Frank said. "And the answer? Well. Today it's about cleanin' up downtown and we gonna do the cleaning. And you, well, you gonna be the one who gets cleaned. Time we finish, this street's gonna be spotless, white, and beautiful."

The couple did not respond until the man on the doorstep spoke gently:

"The Lord forgive you," he said as if he was standing in the middle of an altar call.

Dovey panicked when she heard this. He must have known what would happen if he opened the door. He must have made a promise to himself to hold his dignity and keep the faith. The woman, too, had decided to stand with her husband. They were like two prisoners on death row.

Dovey guessed that by now, James had escaped out the back door. They had saved their child. They had nothing left to defend. Dovey assumed it was up to her to protect them.

"Stop!" she yelled at the top of her voice.

Everyone turned to look at her. The eyes of the young couple turned as well.

Dovey felt everyone's gaze on her. The heat of their stares warmed her face. Now that she had everyone's attention, what would she do?

When Frank spun around, his eyes went wide.

"You! Didn't I just kill you?"

"No," Dovey answered.

Frank took a step backward.

"You a witch? I shot you dead on that doorstep. I know you were kilt."

"No, you shot me, but I didn't die. I think you can say I've been reborn."

Frank glared at her, his dark eyes calculating and cold.

"You are a witch."

"If I am, I think that means you're in trouble."

Frank hesitated, looked around the group, and gathered his thoughts. He was not about to be bested this go-around.

"Maybe, maybe not. I still got bullets, and last time I put you down good. Maybe you got lucky. Now that I think about it, you ain't no witch."

"No," Dovey said. "I'm not a witch, and yet I'm still here, which means you fucked up the last time. You're a lousy shot and not much better as a human being. Cockroach, I think, is what we call your type. You'll have to do better if you want to get rid of me."

Frank's gaze narrowed.

"Well, if I got to do the job again, I will," he sneered.

Dovey challenged him.

"You can't kill what you can't see, Frank. These people you want to clean out will come back."

"Not here, they ain't."

"Yes, they will. I've seen it."

"You seen what?"

"The future, Frank. I come from the future."

Frank was puzzled. He scratched his left ear and glanced at the crowd as if testing the political waters.

"You're going to die in prison," Dovey continued.

Frank gave a sly grin. "Oh, now you're telling me *my* future. Like you know somethin' I don't."

"I do, Frank. You. Cockroach. Prison."

"What? No, I ain't goin' to no prison. I ain't done nothing to go. I'm not breaking no laws. This here is a perfectly legal assembly."

"To kill Black people."

"To make this town safe. I am performing a public service to the community."

Dovey stepped toward him. He stepped back.

"Did you rehearse that, Frank? 'Cause it doesn't fit the killer you are. It sounds, well, like a politician, and you are no politician. I'm not even sure you could spell the word."

"Well, one thing I know how to spell is the word dead. D-E-A-D. And that's what's gonna happen to you. I'm gonna kill you with this here gun easy as shooting out this here . . ."

He pointed his pistol, pulled the trigger, and shot out a glass pane from the Black couple's house. When the gun fired, everyone ducked. The echo of the blast hurtled down the street. The smoke from the shot drifted high into the Oklahoma wind.

". . . window," he finished.

Dovey recovered and frowned at him.

“Right. That gun. It’s gonna kill you as well. And once you’re dead, what then, Frank G. Kelly? What awaits you? You and your dark, smelly soul?”

“Amen,” said the Black man from his doorstep.

A series of shots rang out from down the street. A truck approached with guns ablaze and the crowd scattered.

“Get in,” a voice shouted.

Reverend Carter Nelson and his wife Jenetta responded. Jumping in the back seat, they ducked down as guns and rifles fired back. But not one bullet touched the truck. As he would later testify, the Lord brought a woman prophet in their midst and protected their escape.

Dovey watched it all happen. As she gazed at the disappearing vehicle, that rough voice spoke to her.

“You ain’t gonna escape this one,” said Frank. “I got you now. You gonna die.”

Dovey turned and looked him squarely in the eye.

“I did my job,” she said. “Nothing else matters.”

The crowd reassembled around Frank.

He raised his voice as if to make an announcement. “I get this one, boys,” he declared.

Pointing the barrel of the gun straight at her heart, he fired.



*June 3, 1921, 5:27 p.m.*

*Greenwood District*

*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey flew between one world and the other, suspended in a dream or vision or something spiritual, a world not human, yet not unfamiliar. She was awake as a conscious presence in a universe that had taken her far beyond her earthbound existence. There was no time in this place, either past, present, or future. She simply existed as being.

*Ontology, she thought. This must have been what Dr. Roberts talked about. Living without time or history. Simply existing to exist.*

It was not a dark place. Light from some unfamiliar source penetrated the atmosphere; ambient light, the kind you see just before sunrise. Soft, gentle, ebbing with various shades of blue, mauve, purple, and lavender.

Dovey wondered if she was dead. Had another bullet killed her? Was this what her aunt would refer to as the afterlife?

But, contrary to last time, she felt no pain. Nor did she see her body. Whatever life she had was beyond flesh, beyond a place and time. She concluded that, as her aunt had once explained, she was spirit. Dovey had left one world and now lived in another.

And what of this being, this existence? Was she floating or flying or both? Dovey had no sense of destination. She was, however, keenly aware that something held her like a pair of giant,

unseen hands. To what end? That was the question that baffled her, for she was confident she was going *somewhere*. But here in this other world, in this state of being, waiting was all she could do. She must wait for her destination. Whoever carried her would deliver her when he, she, or it determined the right time.

In her mind, there was no thought of the present or past. Her whole being depended on a world in which time did not exist. Perhaps she had moved beyond time, beyond the cyclical state in which you counted your life in days and minutes. She had no memories and no anxiety, no anticipation or worries. Her whole life was simply dwelling in an alternate universe.

Never a particularly religious person, Dovey wondered if God was taking her to the promised land or some other place, and if she might face some of that eternal judgment she sometimes heard from her aunt. Yet, she was not concerned, as this was a world where concern did not exist. It was a place for being, and of course for waiting, blameless waiting.

And then, in a blink, a millisecond, the waiting was over.

—

Dovey landed in a field of weeds and grass. Her last memory: a man pointing a gun at her heart and firing. She had expected to die, but here she was fully conscious and unhurt. Earthbound. Just not fully aware of her surroundings.

"Ohhh," she groaned as if she had just gotten off a long flight and caromed to the ground. Her body ached. Her head ached. She rolled over and peered up at the sky. *Where was this?* she wondered. Not Tulsa. Not Greenwood. Not heaven either. Dovey was back in her world, whenever and wherever that world existed.



A young voice spoke to her.

“Ma’am? You all right?”

It took her a moment to realize someone was talking to her, someone of this earth. She rolled over and peeked up. There he was, young James, the same boy who had pleaded with her in her vision at Granny’s. He was the same small boy with his handsome face, short-cropped hair, and serious eyes. His mouth was closed tight as if the fate of the world had fallen on him.

He repeated his question: “Ma’am? Can I help you?”

Dovey thanked the sky above for the breath she took and the fact she could see sunlight, trees, and a young boy speaking politely to her. She sat up and cleared her head.

“Oh, thank you, young man. Yes, you can help me, and I can help you. In fact, why don’t we help each other?”

James stood aloof, cautious about this stranger who had landed literally at his feet. From where had she come? James’s only answer: The sky.

“What’s your name?” Dovey asked gently.

“James, ma’am. My name is James Grant.”

“James Grant. I know this may surprise you, James, but I know you.”

James looked puzzled and troubled, but on this subject, he was quite clear.

“No, ma’am, I don’t believe you do. I know everyone in Greenwood, and I’ve never seen you. I think you’re mistaking me for someone else.”

Dovey stood, stretched her limbs, and tested all parts of her body. As far as she knew, she had jumped between two worlds and arrived in decent shape. All four limbs intact. Eyes working. No gunshot wounds. Heart beating. Mind still functioning.

"I know you, James," Dovey insisted. "I know your parents, William and Dorothea. I know you live in Greenwood. I know you grow up to be a fine man, a doctor, in fact. I even know someone from your family, your future family. Your daughter."

Now James was thoroughly perplexed.

"Ma'am?"

"Your daddy owns an apothecary, works with your Uncle, Dr. James Grant."

"That's true," he said. "At least it was true."

"You've been here what, two days or so?"

"'Bout that."

"I saw you running away from the house. I saw you coming back to town. You looked at me and asked for help."

James just stared at her as if nothing she said made sense.

Dovey could tell that he didn't believe anything she said. His eyes questioned her sanity.

She pressed on.

"Well, I'm going to take you home, James. We'll see who we can find to take care of you."

James looked cautiously in the direction of downtown Greenwood. He kept still, testing the wind as to whether he should trust her. Taking him home was the first thing she said that made any sense.

"You think it's safe?"

"Probably by now. Do you have someone you can stay with?"

James struggled to speak. "I don't know who's still there. My folks . . ."

"Oh, sweetie, I know about your folks. I'm so sorry."

"You think . . ."

Dovey nodded. No sense beating around the bush about this. The burnt wreckage in the distance made that all too obvious.

A tear rolled down James's cheek.

Dovey hauled herself up and took him in her arms.

"James, don't you worry, now. I'm gonna take care of you and make sure you get back and find someone. You tell me if that someone cares for you. We'll work this out together. All right?"

"Well, what's your name?" he asked with his head buried in her chest.

She let him go. He stood straight and looked up at her with his penetrating eyes.

"Oh," she said. "I completely forgot. Yes, I'm sure you're wondering. Dovey. Dovey Declair. Pleased to meet you." She reached out to shake his hand.

He reciprocated. "Pleased to meet you, Dovey."

She took his right hand and started to walk toward Greenwood.

"All right, young man. Let's be brave. Let's go back."

They proceeded across the field to what remained of Greenwood, for the community itself was a burnt shell. Dovey had no idea if anything would still be standing, nor if a community waited for James to make his return. But she was determined to find him a safe home. This, too, was part of her mission.

—

Dusk was setting in, but even so, the area was busy with Black citizens cleaning up the streets. There was charred lumber to clear out, roads to unclog, and meetings to attend to discuss rebuilding

Greenwood. A steady flow of traffic moved up and down Greenwood Avenue.

Dovey and James stood in the middle of the commotion and watched busy bees go about their task.

"Where's your house, honey?" she asked.

James pointed south.

She followed his directions, though it was difficult to find any undamaged homes. Most of the buildings had been smashed, looted, and burned. There were no addresses. They ended up counting lots to determine where exactly he lived.

When they found the charred remains of the Grant household, they just stood and stared in disbelief. Two days ago, this had been a busy street full of family activity and business concerns. Black folks had lived the same lives as any other American citizens, thinking about their future, their children, their businesses, and accumulating their fair share of profits from their work endeavors.

Now, there was nothing. All these people owned had been pilfered and scorched. Many of the residents who lived here had disappeared. Such was the state of James's family and house. It was as if they had never existed. Dovey repeated the words in her head: *As if it had never happened.*

"You're sure this was it?" Dovey asked James.

"Sure as I can be," he said, "given it's gone."

Dovey knelt to be close to James. "You have any other family or friends you can find?"

"Lots," he said, "but . . . where are they?"

James looked around the neighborhood, his eyes wide with concern. His face said it all. He was a lost little boy.

Suddenly, a car drove by and stopped. A man jumped out and stared at them.

“James?” he asked warily.

James turned around. Relief registered through his whole body.

“Uncle James?” he cried out and darted away.

His uncle wrapped him in his arms. “Boy, where you been?” he said as his voice cracked and he started to weep.

“I was in my fort,” said young James. “This woman came and helped. She brought me back, helped me find my house.” He pointed backward.

Uncle James looked up with gratitude, ready to thank whoever had rescued his nephew. His eyes searched the street.

“What woman?” he asked.

Little James turned to point her out, but there was no one to find.



*July 17, 2018, 9:07 a.m.*  
*Tulsa Police Department*  
*Downtown Tulsa*

From the moment word got out about the discoveries of six bodies on the Kelly farm, the news rolled like thunder across Oklahoma and the U.S. The local papers and media picked it up as the *Greenwood Six*.

An outcry went out about searching for more bodies, since these six were only a fraction of the number who died on that tragic day. A push by local chapters of the NAACP meant that Oklahoma politicians, including the mayor of Tulsa and the Governor of Oklahoma, were under fire to allocate more resources for this project. The additional cry of the Black community in Tulsa was this: *There's more out there. Who's gonna find them?*

Genard was blasted by interview requests from radio and T.V., not to mention inquests from all branches of the Tulsa Police Department and the Tulsa County Sheriff's Department.

Instead of solving cases, he sat in front of inquiry panels and answered question after question from straight-faced law enforcement officials.

Genard wondered if they wondered how he found the bodies and if he was in some way connected to the dead. He considered that all the procedural questions fired at him—protocol, probable cause, discovery, warrants, chain of evidence—might be more than

just procedural. A Black cop finds Black bodies. Coincidence or not? The thought crossed his mind.

Genard never expressed his concerns. His years on the force had taught him three things: answer honestly, answer factually, and don't stray from the subject. Most important, explain your logic, especially the why question.

As the investigation progressed, he was thankful for what the criminologists, the archeologists, and the historians confirmed. These bodies had been buried a century ago. Now the push was to identify them and give them a proper burial.

Granny Myrtoff gladly provided her DNA. The resulting evidence was strong enough to confirm that the man Genard uncovered was likely William Grant. Perhaps time and research would reveal that the ID of the body next to him was Dorothea.

When they released his body to the family, Granny made immediate arrangements to have William buried in Crown Hill Cemetery. She paid for a large, celebratory funeral at Vernon A.M.E. Church.

But Genard knew something was missing: Where was Dovey Declair?

No sign of her surfaced anywhere, though Genard was careful to keep track of the missing person's report and sneak in casual walks around the crime scene.

As the days passed, the gnawing pain in his stomach increased, and he waited daily for a phone call. Genard had made lots of phone calls over the years informing families that their loved ones were dead.

Now he waited for that same phone call. He waited for the bad news. Missing this long, what else could he conclude? Had Dovey Declair, personally responsible for finding the Greenwood Six,



become a victim of violence? Had Frank finally found his target? It kept him up at night. It followed him around the office. He could not relax as long as Dovey was missing.

And then, when he finally buried himself in other cases—a phone call.



*. . . Dovey crosses the bridge . . .*

This world was different.

For one thing, Dovey could see herself. Her body was flesh.

For another, the atmosphere was chaotic with light, wind, and sound, as if she had stumbled into the middle of a hurricane.

And she was falling like a woman without a parachute.

Arms and legs stretched out.

The wind roaring past her body.

Her face buffeted by the speed of her flight down, down, falling toward . . .

Dovey could not determine. Everything around her, above her, below her, was the same chaos. If she was falling toward something, her eyes could not pick it up.

“What the hell?” she yelled as loud as she could, but her words were swallowed up by her speed.

All she saw was this chaos, continuous and relentless.

Dovey was frightened.

Dovey was perplexed.

Dovey believed she would die.

She said a quiet prayer hoping she wasn't too late to be converted. Her aunt would be proud that she acknowledged the truth, though Dovey would argue the truth had been forced on her.

She wondered if her motive was suspect, and if God would take that into consideration. Still, she said the prayer and hoped for the best.

As her body rotated, she tried to look through all the rumbling and flashing to determine how far she had to fall, but in this case, distance in any direction—toward something or approaching something, or even away from something—seemed irrelevant. Dovey fell toward nothing. At least that was some comfort. She wouldn't end up flattened on some rock or splayed out in a field, and even if it did happen, she would never see it coming. It would be quick and painless.

"Help me," she cried to anyone or anything who might listen.

With all this activity, she assumed it had to be caused by someone or something. These kinds of disasters didn't happen by accident. The pot had been stirred, but the stirrer remained anonymous. Perhaps, however, that stirrer had ears.

And then the apparitions started. They grew clearer the further she fell. Bodies of all sorts hurtling past her.

Black bodies. All different types of Black bodies. Men. Women. Children. Bodies from another continent, another century, another millennium, another age in human history. Live bodies. Dead bodies. Bodies in various conditions of decay. Elegant people. Workers. Slaves. Kings. Queens. Warriors. Bodies in business attire of all sorts.

"What is this?" she gasped.

As if the history of Black culture flew past her like the frames in a movie.

They came within inches of her face. She hoped they were spirits because at this close distance, it was possible Dovey might crash into someone and lose an arm, or a leg, or an eye.

“Ohhhh,” Dovey cried out again. “Goddamn it, someone turn this fucking thing off.”

Not a good thing to say right after confession, but Dovey hoped God would understand her panic. Sometimes when you’re afraid, you say the damndest things. Literally.

The bodies stopped. Her own body extended legs down. She eased onto a structure, bright white, as if she had a parachute. A bridge.

The bridge extended further than she could see to the other side. It stretched for miles, maybe a thousand miles, maybe even longer.

The noise, the rumbling, the flashing stopped.

Dovey stood on the bridge, and standing next to her—Dr. Roberts.

“You!” she cried.

“At your service,” he responded.

“What the hell is this?” she demanded. “Why am I here?”

“We are *both* here.”

“What is this? A lunch meeting?”

“No, Dovey. Look closely. Think carefully.”

Dovey stared into the white light until her eyes hurt.

“The bridge,” she said.

“Yes.”

“It’s The Bridge of Justice.”

“Yes.”

“Am I supposed to . . .”

“Yes.”

“Oh, come on. This thing, I don’t know how long it is. I don’t know how far to the bottom. And did I tell you, I hate heights?”

“Trust, Dovey. It’s the reason you’re here.”

"No, it isn't. I'm supposed to find bodies. William and Dorothea Grant. I'm supposed to help people in Greenwood. You didn't help me much on that end, but thank goodness I had the brains to figure it out. And that's what I did."

"That's where you started," said Dr. Roberts.

"What," Dovey demanded. "You mean there's more?"

Dr. Roberts nodded.

"As in, I've gotta cross this thing? And do what?"

"Trust," he repeated.

"Ah, now, don't go getting fuzzy on me, Doctor. That ontology thing was hard enough. Now, what? Trust whom?"

Dr. Roberts bowed to her.

"Trust your mission."

"What mission? I already did my mission."

Dr. Roberts took two steps onto the bridge and pointed across.

"This is only the beginning. Your road is long."

"It doesn't have to be *that* long," said Dovey. "Not if you don't make it that long."

"Trust."

"Stop saying that. It's not your ass on the line, is it?"

Dr. Roberts smiled.

"It's not funny," Dovey protested.

Still, he smiled broadly and motioned for her to begin.

"Do I get a care package?" she asked. "I mean, hell, it could be a while before my next meal."

Dr. Roberts remained in place.

Suddenly, from both sides, more apparitions.

On both the left and the right. Solid Black people.

A cheer went up from both sides, as if this were a soccer game.

"Oh, now we got a crowd," said Dovey. "That's nice."

Still, Dr. Roberts stood and pointed.

“Ohhhhh, all right,” she grumbled. “Can you at least give me a clue?”

Dr. Roberts did not answer.

Dovey stood frozen to the end of the bridge. Though it looked steady, light permeated it, and the surface appeared as glass.

“If I get hurt, there’s a lawsuit coming,” Dovey yelled.

She took a tiny step forward.

The crowd cheered.

Dovey took a longer step and tested the bridge. It held.

She took several steps. Still, the bridge held.

“Well, this isn’t so hard,” she concluded.

Dovey took several more steps and peered back at Dr. Roberts. He stood like a statue and watched her.

The crowd cheered again.

Dovey began to walk normally as she would on a sidewalk.

And then it happened.

The sides of the bridge bent down and the shape of the structure turned oval.

Immediately the crowd gasped.

Dovey heard whispers from individuals in the crowd.

“Oh, no . . .”

“Hold on . . .”

“Center, center . . .”

Dovey scrambled to find her balance. Then, she nosedived like a swimmer and hit the surface, stretched out her arms and legs, and balanced herself.

She held that pose for at least a minute.

The crowd cheered.

The bridge returned to normal.

Then, from different angles above, white rocks the size of baseballs shot down at her. As they struck the bridge, it vibrated from the shock, each collision making the bridge roll in waves like an ocean. Finally, the rocks skidded across the surface and disappeared. Sometimes they skidded left, sometimes right, and sometimes down the middle.

Dovey was doubly challenged to hold her balance and avoid being struck. At one point, three of them hit at the same time from different angles and collided together. Dovey jumped as high as she could, but one of the rocks struck her ankle. When she fell, she collapsed on the surface in pain and laid on her back.

"I'm dead," she murmured helplessly.

Dovey made a discovery about the surface. It had turned gelatinous. Her hands dipped below as if the bridge was made of Jello.

She pulled out chunks of it by accident and those chunks immediately hardened.

"Whoa!" she gasped and began to build a shelter out of it. Gelatinous below. Tough above, like bulletproof glass.

As the boulders shot down, she worked fiendishly to build a fort. Dovey fashioned mortared bricks from the lightweight material. She thought of it as an Igloo made from Jello. The higher the walls, the more protection. The rocks slammed into the sides, but the fort held fast. Not a crack to be found.

When the rocks stopped falling, Dovey stood up in her fortress. There was just enough room at the top to allow her to fit through the opening above. She waved her hands in triumph.

Once again, the crowd cheered.

Dovey slid up through the opening and jumped onto the bridge. It had returned to its hard, glassy surface.



She looked around for the next challenge. Seeing none, she sprinted across the bridge and hoped that somewhere nearby was the other side.

Dovey saw it. The other edge. Her estimate. About a quarter-mile or so, within walking distance. She limped toward it only to discover two more challenges:

First, the bridge stopped short of the finish line. Between Dovey and the end was a chasm. Much too far to jump.

The second challenge flew down from somewhere in this universe's version of the heavens and landed on that other side. A giant, white dragon. Scaly. Red eyes. Tail as long as a bus.

The biggest surprise though was this. The dragon talked.

"This is where your journey ends," he growled.

Dovey stood on her side of the bridge. She had to admit. The dragon was correct, unless she could fly, and as of this moment, she had no wings nor wind to carry her.

Dovey scanned the horizon, expecting help from somewhere. She believed she was not alone in this endeavor. Someone had brought her here. Someone had given her a mission to carry out. Someone had chosen her to be here. Now Dovey waited for help.

"Expecting someone?" the dragon taunted.

Dovey felt her hopes sink.

"Isn't that just like faith?" he continued. "Always expecting a miracle."

Dovey fought back tears.

"Oh, Dovey," said the dragon. "Don't you know by now? There *are* no miracles. There's . . . just . . . you."

Suddenly the world around Dovey fell silent. The crowd disappeared. The chaotic universe stopped. It was so quiet, her ears hurt.

"The Bridge of Justice is just that," he continued. "Not really a bridge. Or maybe it's better to say, it's a bridge to nowhere."

Dovey broke down and cried. She sat down on the edge of the bridge and looked straight down into nothing and nowhere.

A hand touched her shoulder.

Startled, Dovey looked up.

Dr. Roberts stood by her side.

"Oh," she said. "It's you."

"Not just me," he countered. "Look behind you."

Dovey stood and turned around. Behind her, a sea of Black faces. The crowd had joined her on the bridge.

Dovey turned back to Dr. Roberts.

"What am I supposed to do?" she asked. "The bridge ends. The dragon is on the other side. It's game over."

"Seek and ye shall find," he reminded her.

She shook her head.

"No, I haven't found anything. I've crossed a bridge and it ends here. That's it. I'm done."

The dragon chuckled.

"As I told you," he said.

"No," said Dr. Roberts. "You've only just begun. A bridge is built by walking."

"What?" she said.

"Take your next step."

"No," said Dovey. "You just want me to fall off. That's been your game all along, hasn't it?"

"Your next step," he said quietly and disappeared.

Dovey looked behind her again. All those faces. Perhaps millions of them. They looked at her expectantly.

“What?” she said to the crowd. “You think I can just, what, imagine it? Just poof and there it is!”

Not a sound. But eyes watched and waited.

Then they slowly chanted:

“The next step. The next step. The next step.”

Dovey felt their bodies push against her. She made her choice.

She stepped out into the open.

Expecting to fall, Dovey felt something solid beneath her. Under her right foot, a small portion of the bridge extended. She took another step. The same thing happened.

The crowd followed her step by step like soldiers marching. Dovey gained confidence and began to walk more boldly.

The dragon stood up and threatened her.

“One more step and I’ll burn you to cinders.”

Dovey glared at him.

“If you burn me, there’s someone to follow in my footsteps. You can’t burn all of us.”

The crowd continued chanting.

“The next step. The next step. The next step.”

“Don’t come any closer,” the dragon roared and opened his mouth as if to breathe fire.

But Dovey kept walking and the bridge kept expanding closer to the other side.

Finally, within a step of the dragon, Dovey leaped across.

The dragon let loose a barrage of flames.

Dovey felt her feet land on solid ground.

The crowd cheered loudly.

The flames struck at Dovey’s feet. She assumed that like those in Greenwood, she would die by catastrophe from the thousands of dragons who had descended on Black Wall Street.

“So long, Auntie,” she muttered and put her arms in front of her face.

From behind her, someone placed a black shield in front of her path.

A voice whispered: “He is a shield unto those that put their trust in Him.”

Dovey braced herself against the shield.

The flames bounced off.

The crowd cheered again.

The shield fell to the ground.

Dovey had disappeared.

*July 17, 2018, 5:07 p.m.*

*Greenwood District*

*Downtown Tulsa*

Dovey lay flat on her stomach in the middle of a busy street, annoyed that once again she had lost control of her body, embarrassed to be publicly exposed in this position—prone on the street in full view of walkers, passengers, dogs, and various small wildlife. It was still daylight and she lay sprawled in full view. She caught sight of a squirrel nagging at her.

“Up yours, too, buddy,” she snapped.

A passerby stopped.

“Ma’am?” he said.

Dovey was roiled.

“If one more person calls me that . . .” she threatened.

The stranger persisted. “Ma’am, you need help?”

Dovey looked up and realized she was safe from the flames. She thought better of her anger. It wasn’t every day someone offered to help a woman in need, and she had just escaped dire straits. Having just been saved from becoming burnt wreckage, she was grateful for the offer of help.

“Yes, sir,” she said as politely as her embarrassment subsided. “I need help. Thank you for stopping.”

He walked over and held out his hand. Dovey took it and stood up. Her ankle was swollen, but otherwise, she was intact. She brushed herself off and asked outright:

"Where the hell am I?"

The man—brown, tall, with salt and pepper hair and a gentle lilt to his dialect—spoke slowly.

"I seen you fall," he said. "I wondered if you was okay. I think we need to get you off this street. Pretty busy here this time of night."

"Where am I?" she demanded.

The man looked surprised.

"Where are you?" he echoed.

"Yes. City, street, date, time. I have no idea where I'm at."

The man looked curiously at Dovey as if she was a drifting derelict lost in downtown Tulsa.

Still, he didn't hesitate to answer her questions.

"My name is Willie," he said. "This here's Detroit Street, downtown Tulsa. Over there's James Hope Franklin Park. It's Tuesday, not sure of the exact date. I'm retired, you know. I don't keep track of a calendar, but my watch says it's just about 6:30 or so. That would be this evening."

Dovey breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh. Thank you, sir. So I'm in Tulsa?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Dovey grimaced.

"Greenwood?"

"That's right."

"2018?"

"Yup. You got it."

Dovey patted herself and realized she had no purse, no phone, and no money.

“Son of a bitch,” she murmured. “I’m like a bum on the street.”

Willie was startled.

Dovey stumbled. He reached out to help her.

“Your ankle don’t look so good,” he said.

“Yeah, I think it’s sprained.”

“Well, you reach out, use me to brace yourself.”

Dovey followed his instructions.

From the look on his face, she realized what a scene she created.

“Sorry for my language, Willie, but I’ve had a hell of a day and I’m just a little confused right now. Just to reassure you, I’m no bum. My name is Dovey Declair. I work at Sid’s Deli just a few blocks from here. I live on the south side of town, but, and it’s a long, long story, I don’t have any way of calling anyone or getting home. I’m as broke as a dried-up well in the middle of a dust storm, and my ankle is killing me. Can you help me?”

Willie smiled broadly.

“Well,” he said thoughtfully, “it ain’t much, but I got a phone if you need it.”

“That would be heavenly,” she exclaimed.

Willie riffled through his pocket and brought out a small cell phone. He showed her how to dial and handed it to her.

“Thank you, Willie. You’re a genuine gentleman.”

Willie smiled again. Even retired, he still maintained a full set of pearly white teeth. His face lit up as he watched her use the phone.

Dovey anxiously dialed her aunt. She breathed a sigh of relief when Lorraine answered.

"Auntie," said Dovey in tears.

"Dovey?" said Lorraine.

"Oh, Auntie, have I got a story to tell you. One more thing you're not going to believe."

Willie stood and listened. A family reunion. It was the best thing he'd heard all day. He chuckled and clapped his hands.

"Well, damn," he said quietly. "Ain't this just a ticklin' hoo-haw."

Dovey heard him, looked up from the phone, and burst out laughing.



*July 17, 2018, 8:00 p.m.*  
*Aunt Lorraine Chamele's House*  
*North Tulsa*

There was a knock at the door.

Lorraine, Billie, and Dovey were sitting in the living room.

"Wonder who that could be?" Lorraine asked.

She hurried to the door and opened it. Detective Greg Genard stood waiting.

"Detective," said Lorraine.

"Hope I'm not too late," he said apologetically.

"You are not," she replied. "We were just sitting and listening."

Genard walked into the living room.

"Hey, the great detective himself," said Dovey with a broad smile. "I heard you found them and that you're world-famous."

"Oh, thank you," said Genard. "It ain't fun, let me tell you."

Lorraine stood up and escorted him to an open love seat.

"All those mucky-mucks been grilling you, huh?" she asked.

"Like a well-done steak," he responded.

"Well, you're safe here."

Genard looked at Dovey's booted foot.

"You live life dangerously."

"I do, don't I?" She grinned at him.

Well, you're still in one piece, which is just a relief to me. I can't tell you how happy I was when Lorraine called me."

"A very nice man lent me his phone," said Dovey. "Nice to know there are gentlemen left in Tulsa. And a very wonderful aunt came to pick me up. And a very competent doctor took care of me at the clinic. And now we're having a great time swapping stories."

"I'm glad to hear that."

Genard sat down and let loose a long sigh. "God, I was worried."

"We all were worried," said Billie.

"So." He gave another sigh. "What's the story?"

"Oh, detective," said Dovey, "you're going to really enjoy this. Have I got a travel tale for you."

As Dovey shared her story, Genard sat like a man watching a good movie and took it all in.

—

When Dovey finished, Genard sat motionless for a good minute. Then he nodded his head and said, "Holy smokes."

Dovey waited for his response, but he remained quiet.

"You believe me?" she asked.

"Yeah, but damn, what a story. You know, Dovey, you should write a book."

"No, I shouldn't, because no one would believe me. And if there were such a contest, I'd could run for Ms. Crazy Oklahoma and win. Uh-uh. This stays between us."

"Well, make it fiction. It'll be a best seller."

Dovey stared at him.

"Then you believe me?"

"Yes, Dovey. I believe you. According to the evidence, that gunshot wound, and your sprained ankle, you're telling the truth."

"That's what I wanted to hear."

Billie jumped in.

"And I believe you. *And* I apologize for doubting you."

"Apology accepted," said Dovey as she grinned at her girlfriend.

"So," said Genard.

"So?" Dovey answered.

"Are you now the official Sherlock Holmes for the Tulsa Massacre?"

"What?"

"You know, this is just the beginning."

"Says who?"

Genard looked at Lorraine, then at Dovey.

"You're a channeler."

"A what?"

"Crow's eye," said Lorraine.

"Oh, that," said Dovey.

"Yeah. That. There are more dead people out there just waiting to be unburied."

"Yeah?"

"Unofficially, about three hundred or so, minus six."

Dovey frowned.

"So you think . . ."

"Oh, girl," said Genard. "After a tale like that? You are called."

Dovey fell silent.

"But you're not alone," said Lorraine. "You know that, don't you?"

Dovey didn't answer.

"Dovey?" Lorraine insisted.

"Right," said Dovey. "I'm not alone. I learned that when I crossed the bridge."

"You remember that."

"Oh, it's seared in my memory."

Dovey grinned and everyone burst out laughing.

"I said I want to follow this story," said Genard. "I hope you don't mind if I keep in touch."

"Mind? Why would I mind?" said Dovey.

Lorraine and Billie grinned.

"Detective, can I offer you a fresh piece of pecan pie and maybe some coffee?"

Now it was Genard's turn to grin.

"You can, and I would gladly accept."

"Then you can tell us a little more about yourself. We are curious women."

"Auntie," said Dovey.

Lorraine smiled. "Don't you deny it," she answered as she left for the kitchen.

And with that, the mood lightened up.

The pie and coffee made it even better.

—

After Billie and Genard left the house, Dovey and Lorraine relaxed on her porch and enjoyed a warm summer night. A bare amount of daylight remained in a sky painted with navy blue streaks and dotted by blinking stars. The warm humidity pressed against their bodies.

The streets had quieted. The neighbors were settling in for the night. It was that moment in late summer when the earth baked, the crickets roamed freely, and July promised to stay forever.

"Beautiful night," said Dovey.

"Hm-hm," Lorraine replied. "I love me some summer."

"Hope I get to stay," Dovey chuckled.

"Don't say that," Lorraine answered with a wry smile. "I like you here."

Greg's comments had triggered Dovey's thoughts. She remembered her most recent encounter with Dr. Roberts. The reminder. Her journey was a long one. She wondered what might be next and if the doctor was right. What would be next?

One thing was certain. After living through her experience with Greenwood and the Bridge of Justice, she promised herself that she would never take her family or her friends for granted.

"Here is good," said Dovey. "But whatever or whoever chose me hasn't said a word about why or what else they require."

"You'd like what, a letter, an email?" Lorraine joked.

"Something official," said Dovey. "And a little advance notice would be nice."

"Ha," said Lorraine. "As if."

"Seriously," said Dovey. "How in the world am I supposed to live my life now? Between here and there? Between one place and the next? I don't know if I'm coming or going."

Lorraine looked at Dovey sympathetically.

"Oh, Dovey. If only I knew the answer to that question."

"Can you find out? Throw up a prayer or two?"

"I do that for you every day, dear."

"Any answers yet?"

"Yes. Live one day at a time."

"That's it?"

"That's it."

"Huh," Dovey grunted.

The summer insects grew louder. A cricket chirped prominently in front of the porch. He had taken this moment to provide them with a solo.

"You think I'll have to keep this up?" said Dovey.

"Keep what up, dear?"

"What Greg talked about. Searching . . . for dead people."

Lorraine thought about this question. She knew Dovey was bothered by it, knew that the burden of this dark mission would never leave her. She sought a word of comfort that she could share with her niece.

"If you do," she said, "you will always receive strength. You're not alone, and you're not without those same spirits who chose you. You're part of history, Dovey, living history. Perhaps you'll have another, what should I call it, adventure? But the living and the dead are joined together. Being Black means you always have us as your people. That's what all this has taught us. We're joined together. Our ancestors, our families, our long, long history. You're part of that. I think you see that now."

"I didn't, but yes, now I do."

Dovey thought for a moment.

"This saying came to me when I was on the bridge. 'He is a shield unto those that put their trust in Him.' Where's that from? Do you know?"

Lorraine looked at her curiously.

"Why, yes, dear. Proverbs 30. I know that verse well."

"Someone told me that just before I was about to be sizzled. Worked, too. That and the black shield. Came in handy."

“That’s good stuff, Dovey, and you’re still young. Think of all that’s yet to come in your life. When you get to be my age, you’ll be so much richer for it.”

“Really? What about actually being rich?”

Lorraine laughed. “Well, maybe that, too. Write a book, do a T.V. show on cable.”

“Maybe a movie,” said Dovey.

“Oh, yes. Dovey. Time traveler.”

Dovey nodded. “I like that.”

Again, they sat in silence.

“Six down,” Dovey whispered.

Lorraine glanced at her.

“You worried?”

“Well,” said Dovey. “I mean, as Greg said, there are lots of dead Black people in the ground, some of them in unmarked graves. There’s more out there in Tulsa, maybe somewhere in Oaklawn. I can’t imagine how many more I could find and what difference it might all make. I feel like my mission is . . . impossible.”

Lorraine watched her niece and tried to put herself in Dovey’s shoes. She could understand why the girl was overwhelmed. Just going through the experience with her, Lorraine had also felt the burden.

“I was thinking of Dr. King,” Lorraine stated. “His famous saying: *The moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.*”

“Yeah?” said Dovey.

“Well, maybe you’re just one of many bends. It’s not all on your back, but you do what you’re supposed to, and maybe, somewhere down the line, it’ll all make sense.”

“That’s a longggg wait,” said Dovey. “Meantime.”

"Live one day at a time."

"Gotcha," said Dovey.

—

The sky finally gave way to night. The stars were now giving them a show.

Suddenly, as Dovey and Lorraine finished their iced teas, the front yard transformed from darkness to a silky sheen that suggested a very gentle aurora borealis, all within the confines of Lorraine's white picket fence.

"Oh my," said Lorraine.

Dovey gasped.

The aurora flowed like a river from one corner of her yard to the next. It shone as a pale mist with shimmering changes from milky green to translucent lavender.

"Auntie . . ." Dovey murmured.

"Dovey . . ." Lorraine answered.

What . . ."

"Don't know," said Lorraine. "Maybe an answer to your earlier question."

"Oh?" said Dovey. "Spirits?"

"My good guess," Lorraine said.

The two women watched the show for as long as it lasted, perhaps a half-hour, maybe longer. They lost track of time and grew absorbed by this visitation.

The light slipped across the porch and whisked by their feet. Their faces, touched by the fine mist, felt cool.

Dovey reached out her right hand and brushed against the light. She giggled as her fingers made the presence ripple like a



finger in a lake. The ripples filtered and vibrated all the way to the street.

When it finally disappeared, neither said anything for a long time. Finally, Lorraine spoke.

“Well, if that isn’t a sign, I don’t know what is.”

Dovey remained quiet.

Lorraine reached out for Dovey’s hand.

“You okay?”

Dovey nodded.

Lorraine sat back on the bench.

After several minutes, Dovey spoke.

“Crow’s eye,” she said and patted her aunt’s hand.

“Crow’s eye,” said Lorraine.

They grasped each other’s fingers and held that grasp for several minutes.



*August 4, 2018, 10:12 a.m.*

*Sid's Deli*

*Downtown Tulsa*

Today was Dovey's first day back at Sid's. Her birthday dinner was tonight. Lorraine, Greg, and Billie would be waiting at her aunt's house.

Dovey had moved back to her cozy apartment.

The traffic on her website had picked up.

Hopefully, the crow and all the crow's eye things that went with it could be set aside for a while.

With the help of Greg, she had kept herself out of the limelight. No one except her immediate family and friends had any idea of her experiences, including that weird time travel bit.

As she prepped for today's business, she was especially jovial toward Sid and the crew, and they were genuinely happy to have her back.

The day started with the deli's opening at its usual time: 11:00 a.m.

Business progressed and she happily waited on tables. Dovey enjoyed the interaction with customers. She felt as if the real Dovey had made a comeback.

When a young Black couple came in, Dovey, being a fashionista, immediately noticed how they dressed differently. More like people from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

He wore a slim gray suit, high-collared shirt with a blue silk tie, tapered pants, a straw boater's hat, and a pair of men's Oxford black and white lace-up shoes.

*Very dapper*, Dovey noted.

She outfitted herself in an apricot sequined flapper dress tapered down to her feet, a gold cloche turban hat with a butterfly broach sewn to the side, and grey button-up boots.

Perhaps, Dovey assumed, they were actors in some local theater production who had come in to share a lunch break, or they might have been fans of the Roaring Twenties. Whatever the occasion, they carried themselves well with the look.

He was slight of build, but good looking, with a gleam in his eye.

She was also slight, with a gentle face and long, lovely fingers. Maybe a piano player.

They sat together and laughed at some private jokes.

Dovey was aware that they were watching her watch them. Both sets of eyes followed her across the room. As she approached their table, they smiled at her.

"What can I do for you?" Dovey asked pleasantly. "Maybe some drinks to start?"

Their mannerisms were sophisticated as they examined the menu.

"What would you recommend?" the lady asked.

Dovey was a bit surprised. It wasn't like they served wine or spirits here. No Margaritas or Vodka Gimlets. Regular tea, coffee, fountain drinks. Ordinary stuff. Why would she ask that question? But being inclined to give good service, she played along.

"We have several different types of hot tea," she suggested. "And our iced tea is fresh brewed. We also have some delicious

coffees if you'd like something hot, or we can serve you from the espresso bar."

The woman looked a bit confused.

"Oh my," she said. "So many choices. I've never had a chance to choose like this."

"Whatever you want, dear," said the man tenderly. "Order it."

Dovey made the connection. They were a couple, perhaps married. Dressed oddly, yes, but respectable.

"I'll tell you what," said the woman. "Bring me an iced tea, very sweet, with a little bit of lemon."

"And I'll take just regular old coffee," the man followed. "You choose what you think is best."

Dovey was perplexed by all these questions, as if ordering tea and coffee was a new experience for this couple.

"Okay," she chirped. "Look over the menu. I'll be right back."

As she prepared their drinks, they continued to watch her and whisper to each other. It unnerved Dovey, this odd familiarity. Did she know them? No, she decided. She'd never seen them before.

Dovey returned with their drinks and readied her pad to take their order.

"What can I get you?" she said.

"I'm sorry. I don't mean to be nosy, but do we know you?" the woman asked.

Dovey was surprised. She wasn't the only one who was making a connection.

"No, ma'am," and then she corrected herself. She hated being called ma'am. "No. I don't believe so."

They gazed at each other as if searching for a lost relative. "Maybe you've been in here before?" said Dovey.

"Nope," said the man. "First time, ever. We don't usually come this far out."

"Oh? Where do you live?"

"Down near Greenwood. But the place has changed a lot since we used to live there. It's been a while since we've been back. We're visiting."

"Well, welcome to Tulsa. My name's Dovey. I've lived here all my life."

"Really?" said the woman. "You have family here?"

"Just my aunt," said Dovey. "My folks died several years back."

"Oh, I'm sorry. You see, I'm so nosy. I apologize."

"That's okay."

The woman continued. "We have family here, up in North Tulsa. As my husband said, we're visiting."

"Oh. So glad to see you. Hope you come back. Now, what can I get you?"

"Roast beef," said the man, "with lots of mustard."

"And for your side?"

The man looked puzzled. "Side?"

"Chips, macaroni salad, french fries . . ."

The man looked as if he were counting off in his head.

"Well," he said hesitantly. "True enough. So many choices. Uhhh, chips, I think. Whatever they may be."

Dovey chuckled. "We make them fresh," she said, trying to hide her nervousness. This couple was strange. She hoped they weren't some crazy street people who intended to order without paying. Every day, there was someone. But these two, they didn't look the part.

"I'd like one of these salads," the woman said. "Is this really . . . tuna? From the ocean?"

"Yes, ma'am," Dovey said and cursed at herself again. Damn hard habit to break when you're dealing with strangers.

"That's all," she finished.

Dovey carried their orders back to the counter.

As more customers came in, she got busy taking their orders as well. Still, the couple kept an eye on her and conversed between themselves as if they were critiquing her service technique.

Dovey wondered if they might be food critics from the local newspaper. Even the *Tulsa Eb* did a regular food column.

When their order was up, she was careful to serve them as best she could with a smile and genuine concern for their well-being.

When they finished, Dovey brought them their check and thanked them for coming.

"We hope you come back," she said pleasantly.

"We will," said the man. "My name is William. William Grant. I used to own a drugstore in the downtown area. And this is my wife, Dorothea. She's a fine seamstress. If you ever need anything sewn, like say a wedding dress."

William's eyes gleamed. He smiled broadly.

Dorothea nodded at her.

Dovey was stunned.

"William and Dorothea . . . Grant?"

"Yup. That's us."

They both smiled at her.

Dovey almost dropped their bill.

"Well . . ."

At that moment, their eyes turned toward the large window that fronted the street. Against a lamp post just outside the front door, a group of white men gathered.

Dovey noticed their dress as well. Like the Grants, not of this century. Their greasy looks said they were laborers. Their mannerisms said they were looking for trouble. One of them stared in the front window and pointed at the Grants.

The Grants looked alarmed.

The strangers' skins were lily-white. Their eyes, to a man, were dark. The men looked at them the way Frank first looked at Dovey at McNellie's.

"Oh, shit," Dovey mumbled under her breath.

The Grants looked at her.

Dovey looked at the Grants.

She put two and two together.

"Oh, hell no," said Dovey and walked directly out the front door.

The men spotted her and smiled, but not a friendly smile. It was as if they had found another source of amusement among themselves, another Black person to taunt. But this was Dovey Declair, and she was not in a playful mood.

"You boys want something?" she demanded.

One of the men snickered and tried to hide it.

"You know what century this is?" said Dovey.

Another man leered at her. "Does it matter?"

"Yeah," she snapped. "It matters. It's not 1921 anymore. Things have changed, and we have helped change them. So. It matters to me. It matters to that couple in the store. It matters to a lot of us these days, and you boys with your podunk attitudes are not welcome here."



"It's a free country," said another as a dare.

"I know and you know. You don't believe that shit. You don't believe in freedom, but here in this store, we do. So, you ain't gonna spoil their day. Not on this block, you don't. Not while I'm here, and not while they're enjoying themselves in this *free* country."

"What you gonna do about it?" said the one who had hidden his snicker.

"How about I kick your ass?" said Dovey and took a step toward him. "You don't think I can do it? Look at me. I outweigh you by fifty pounds. I could lift you with my right thigh, you boney-assed punk."

The men changed expressions, from amusement to fear.

Dovey poked a finger in one man's chest.

"I took a bullet for those folks," she continued, "in your century, no less, and I'm still here. Now, what're *you* gonna do about *that*?"

The men hesitated. They muttered among themselves and then, as if in sync, they slowly moved down the block and out of sight.

"That's right," Dovey said. "Go about your business. No spirits allowed. This is officially a no harass zone."

She brushed her hands together as if their presence had made them dusty.

A crow flew on the sidewalk.

"You again. Your fault?" Dovey grouched. "Aren't we finished here? Don't you have someone else to haunt?"

The crow stared at her. No jig. No hop. Just a regular old crow.

"I got work to do," she concluded and went back inside.

As she walked through the door, the couple nodded at her. Dovey nodded back and returned to work.

As the Grants left the restaurant, Dorothea whispered to Dovey: "Keep up the good work."

"I will," Dovey answered and watched them walk down the sidewalk arm-in-arm as casually as a gentle summer breeze.

"Nice couple," said Sid. "Never seen them here before."

"Me, either," said Dovey.

"You take a break out there?" Sid asked.

"A break?"

"Uh, you were having a gay old conversation with yourself."

Dovey realized Sid had been watching her confront the young men. She had to think fast.

"I'm in a play," she lied. "Practicing my lines."

"Oh, good for you. Make me proud," Sid stated, "and save me a ticket."

He went back to work.

Dovey stood for a moment and tried to make sense of it all. The Grants. Visible. The boys. Not. Something told her she hadn't finished yet with this whole Bridge of Justice routine, but she'd be happy to wait for a long time before another assignment.

Or.

No assignment at all.

In the meantime, maybe someone would show up who could explain to Dovey precisely how ontology worked and what other terms she might need to learn. She felt like her education was in need of a boost. She could use a little more help from Dr. Roberts, if he decided to show himself.

Meantime, for Dovey, she wouldn't let it take away from her pleasure. Helping a lovely Black couple have a good lunch. Taking

off tonight for a birthday party. Keeping watch for hoodlums, be they spirit or flesh. Right now, no additional explanation was required. Dovey felt confident that today was going to be a good day.



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