

CHAPTER 2

Claire stood in the doorway to the bedroom, wearing the oversized night-shirt he had bought her when they went to Virginia Beach. "You're up early, cowboy," she said. He'd almost forgotten about the "cowboy" business; she always called him that. He never liked it, but he'd never said anything, so she kept doing it.

"Got-ta go to work," he said, trying to sound casual.

"Work? It's Sunday. You're supposed to be off today. Did they call you to come in?"

Sunday. Good, at least that gives me a day to get my bearings before I have to go back to the newspaper. "Sunday? I'm such a moron. I thought it was Monday."

"Why don't we go back to bed?" said Claire.

"I'm not tired," he said, rising from the couch.

She sidled over to him and put her arms around his neck and shoulders. "I didn't say we had to go back to sleep." With that, she kissed him, which was quite shocking for him. For a moment, all he could think about was the unpleasantness of their separation. He wanted to pull away, but without warning he allowed himself to be swept into the sensation of her kiss. It felt good, better than he remembered it, better than it had any right to be feeling to him. She pulled gently away and smiled at him. "Good morning, lover."

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Comment [AS11]: I put Kevin's internal thoughts in italics to set them apart from the action of the story.

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Kevin wasn't sure if he was smiling or not. He looked into Claire's eyes, knowing ~~—~~ somewhere in the jumble of his thoughts ~~—~~ that his words and actions over the next ~~24~~twenty-four hours would have an immense impact on his future. "And good morning to you," he said pleasantly.

"What's wrong?" she asked. "You look a million miles away."

No, just 3,200. "I had a disturbing dream, ~~s~~ that's all."

"I'm sorry. Do you want to talk about it?"

"No. Uh, ~~...~~ thanks anyway. It'll pass; ~~I~~ I'll be okay. Say, ~~what~~ what time is it anyway?"

"Seven ~~-~~thirty."

"And today's ~~...~~ what date?" He was trying not to sound too much like he had just landed on the planet.

"The sixteenth. Boy, ~~that~~ that must have been some dream; ~~to~~ to throw you off this badly! ~~?~~ Are you sure you don't want to talk about it?"

He sat back down on the hideous couch; and she sat next to him, her face showing genuine tenderness and concern. Kevin looked at her; ~~he~~ he saw the love and ~~the~~ confusion there. To her, it was just another Sunday morning; and the man she loved dearly was acting strangely ~~—~~ distant and afraid. For an insane moment, he wanted to tell her what he had been through. But what could he say? *Baby, I seen the future, and you ain't in it.*

Neither prudent ~~n~~or tactful.

"Claire, something's happened, and ~~...~~ I can't quite explain it. My dreams, lately ~~—~~ I feel like ~~...~~." *Careful, careful what you say.* "I feel like I've had premonitions, visions of things to come."

Comment [AS12]: New speaker, new paragraph.

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"Bad things?"

"Some bad, some good. It's troubling, because they seem so real." His mouth was moving faster than his brain would have liked. "Claire—do you love me?"

She ~~looked~~ very surprised. "What a question! Of course I love you. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone in my whole life. Do you love *me*?"

Comment [AS13]: Watch for tense shifts.

The question was almost inevitable, particularly given his present state of mind, and he knew that even a small hesitation would look as bad as saying no. "You'd better believe I love you, and no matter how spooky my dreams may be, I don't want you to forget it."

Kevin accepted her kiss, and held her close to him, again living in the moment. Despite what all his future memories would tell him, today was Sunday, August 16, 1987, and he was very much in love with Claire Hooper. And until he could decide what course of action to take, the safest thing to do was to return to the mindset he possessed ten years ago.

"What do you want to do today?" she ~~said to him~~ asked.

"I don't know. I've been so pre-occupied, I haven't given it much thought."

"You mentioned yesterday that you wanted to go to the farmer's[!] market."

Yesterday. Yesterday I drove along the Pacific Coast Highway in my 1997 Lexus, with my wife, Hannah, by my side. We drove into the mountains and had a picnic lunch to celebrate the premiere of my third film, April's Twilight, some of whose anguish comes from the pain you and I inflicted on each other in 1988. But that was my yesterday, dear unsuspecting Claire, not yours. Your yesterday was spent by the side of a younger Kevin Greene, riding bicycles at the park, or watching rented videos.

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His train of thought was suddenly interrupted by a strange question: ~~—if the~~ *Kevin of 1997 ~~was now inhabiting~~now inhabited the world of 1987, where did the Kevin of 1987 go? Did he hop back to 1977 to check out life in high school? Was he put into some karmic penalty box for sins he hadn't even dreamed of committing yet? Or, was he there, lurking in the shadows of future-Kevin's mind, listening to everything that transpired?*

"Kevin?"

Right, the question. The farmer's market. Yet another detail of the person he then was came back to him. It was a Sunday ritual for the two of them to go to the farmer's market. Raleigh was blessed with one of the ~~countries~~country's finest. It had hundreds of stalls for growers to sell and showcase their goods, from lettuce to peaches to ~~muscadeen~~muscadine grapes to watermelon. By the time August came around, it was like a paradise. How could he have forgotten the joys of Sunday at the farmer's market?

Simple— you haven't been there in eight years.

At the moment, he couldn't think of anyplace he'd rather be. "Yeah, let's do it."

For the umpteenth time since he awakened, Kevin decided to change his viewpoint on his current situation. Now he chose to look at it as a vacation—a trip to a pretty place he'd enjoyed as a younger man, but where he'd contracted a kind of poison ivy of the soul. Only now, the poison ivy plants were well-trimmed-back, and there was no danger.

Besides, he decided, a force that can transport you *back* in time can also transport you *forward* in time. In a way, this was an honor. He had accomplished something

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average humans could never experience. He had proven that all the science fiction writers of his youth were right—Jack Finney, Richard Matheson, all the time-travel storytellers. The past was not gone, and the future was not out of reach. They simply existed side by side, and if you weren't careful, you might find yourself on the wrong bank of the time stream.

So he decided to take a vacation from the *fin de siecle* and spend a little time catching up with the past that had caught up with him. Then, when he had discovered the reason for his return, he would simply accomplish his karmic goal, and find a way to return to his own place and time.

Please, God.

They dressed and had a quick breakfast together at the hand-me-down dining room table Claire's grandparents had given them as an apartment-warming gift. Kevin opened the apartment door to a clear, hot North Carolina summer day. The sights and smells were *severy* different from California—not unpleasant, just different. There was something very special about Raleigh, something that told him he wanted to stay in this city after graduating from Duke. Raleigh was large enough to be cultural, but small enough that it lacked traffic snarls and big-city rudeness. It was a few hours's drive to Cape Hatteras, one of Kevin's favorite places in the world. There was plenty to recommend Raleigh. But once he and Claire had broken up, there was no joy left here.

Amazing what eight years away can do to lend enchantment to a former home.

Kevin looked around like a tourist as he walked from the apartment to the parking lot, and suddenly realized, *I don't remember what car I was driving in 1987.*

Comment [ASI4]: I know what you mean here, but you might consider choosing another way to say this. If a reader doesn't know this term, it could throw him out of the moment.

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"Um, Claire honey, why don't you drive us?"

"Forget the way there?" she asked playfully.

"No, I just feel like being a passenger today."

She led the way to the 1984 Buick *(of course, the '84 Buick, how could I forget that hunk of crap?)* and unlocked the doors. As they climbed in, Kevin knew that he *had* in fact forgotten the way there. He knew it was an exit off the *bB*eltline, but his mind was so attuned to Mulholland, and the curves of Sunset Boulevard, that he couldn't retrace his steps in Raleigh right now if his life depended on it.

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So how you gonna get to work tomorrow, sport? Later, later, I'll worry about that when I have to. Besides, I'm on vacation, remember?

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Claire was happy to do the driving, and as she turned onto Glen Eden Drive, the lay of the land began to return to Kevin. With each street they passed, familiarity grew, and soon he was confident that he could find his way to the store, or to Crabtree Valley Mall, or even to the damn newspaper, if he decided to go to work tomorrow.

Work, what a sobering thought. In California going to work meant going downstairs to the study, where his office was set up. In 1997, his writing earned them a very nice living, coupled with Hannah's photography. Besides his screenplays, he wrote a weekly humorous insights column for the newspaper, which he e-mailed to the editors before each week's deadline. Then there was the occasional short story for *Spy* or *The Ume Reader*. In short, the time clock was a thing of the past. Only now, he was in the past, and the time clock at the *Raleigh Times* awaited his 8:30 punch-in tomorrow. *If he* decided to go.

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But how can I not go? If memory serves, money is exceptionally tight right now, and between the two of us working, we're just paying the bills. I don't know how long I'll be here, and even if I leave next week, I can't just randomly blow off work, otherwise I'll really screw things up for the me who gets to take over when I leave. So, looks like it's the daily grind again. The features department of the Raleigh Times, writing historical facts, clever quotes, droll statistics. God, I was a journalistic prostitute.

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"Penny for your thought," Claire interrupted. She was always offering him pennies for his thoughts. By his estimation, she owed him several thousand dollars.

"Oh, nothing much. Just wasn't looking forward to going to work tomorrow."

"Then, we'll just have to make the most of today," she said. "Besides, if you can hold on for one more week, we'll have our vacation."

"We will?"

She laughed. "Earth to Captain Alzheimer! It's all you've been talking about for a month. How you can't wait until vacation."

"Well, of course I can't wait. I just didn't realize that it would be here so soon. The days are just flying by."

"I know. I'm looking forward to it too. You still want to go to the Cape, don't you?"

Oh yes, now I remember. The vacation of '87, out on Cape Hatteras, then up to Kitty Hawk. We had a really great time. One week until I have a chance to relive that. Maybe it's worth staying for.

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"Absolutely," he said. "You know how much I love the Cape. Besides, it'll be a good chance for us to get re-acquainted. I'm afraid I've been a bit of a stranger to you lately."

"I don't feel that way," she said, "but if you do, then maybe this will be good for us both. Get us away from our jobs for a while."

They exited the ~~b~~Beltline and proceeded down Lake Wheeler Road to the Raleigh ~~F~~Farmer's ~~m~~Market. Though it was still early, a good crowd was already on hand, so they had to park quite far from the buildings. The anticipation of what was to come sustained Kevin during the walk over. Then, like an old friend, the sights and smells of the place rushed up to greet him. The aroma of roasting peanuts and almonds affected him most strongly. As he looked from booth to booth, he felt like a child at the state fair. He was overwhelmed by just how much he had missed this place. He did his best to hide this reaction from Claire, but as they approached the first building, he was well aware that he had her by the hand, and was pulling her along with him in his haste to get inside.

Comment [AS15]: It's capitalized this time because you use the full, official name.

Comment [AS16]: The chapter is in good shape. There are some mechanical issues, particularly with italics, so I would recommend a LINE EDIT to correct these.