

## **IN YOUR DREAMS**

*By Jackie L. Young*

### **BACK STORY**

*This is a recent screenplay that I envisioned Jim Carey or Jack Black in the lead. The concept originated from one of the first short stories I ever wrote titled "Charlie's Worlds." Maybe I am getting older and life lessons are creeping into my stories, because underneath this story is a sincere message about life. Let's face it, I'm a dreamer. I always have been. Don't we all have a little dreamer in us? Sure we do. So, this is a story close to my heart. It's about a dreamer who finally breaks through and changes his life and the others around him. I hope you enjoy.*



## **CHAPTER I**



### **Cops, Robbers, & Pirates**

In a rundown part of the city, a police car is in hot pursuit of a pair of criminals in an old Cadillac. One of the criminals, wearing panty hose over his face, leans out the window and shoots at the police car, shattering the car's side mirror. In the police car, Harry, an older police officer, returns fire, missing them. Six year old, Morris Moe Hill, sits in the driver's seat, dressed in full police gear, with his hat tipped down to his eyebrows. His dark brown eyes peer out from under the brim of the hat, his concentration unwavering, while he skillfully wheels the car around a corner. He gracefully draws out his forty-four pistol and fires. His shot takes out two tires at once.

Harry is impressed with little Morris's accuracy. "Good shooting, Officer Morris." The compliment rolls off Morris, as he fires again, taking out the remaining tires of the bad guy's car.

"Thanks, partner," Morris says confidently.

The robber's car flips over, tumbling down the deserted street in the run down neighborhood. Morris squeals his car to a halt and springs out, ready for action. Officer Harry backs him up as Morris approaches the overturned car. One of the criminals is pinned beneath the smoldering wreckage and is sneering up at the little cop approaching.

Morris delivers his Dirty Harry speech in his best Clint Eastwood voice, “I know that in all of the confusion, I may have lost count of how many bullets I fired. Seeing that this is the most powerful handgun ever made, and holds six bullets, you have to ask yourself one question, punk; how many bullets has he fired? Five or six?”

As Morris cocks his gun, his partner interrupts, “Moe?”

Morris, anxious to finish the Dirty Harry routine, turns to his partner, Harry. “Just a minute, partner.”

Morris frowns at the familiar voice of his mother coming from Harry’s mouth. “Moe?”

Morris turns to see what’s wrong with Harry. He finds himself facing his mother, Ann Hill, dressed in Harry’s uniform. Morris’s fantasy world of cops and robbers comes to a screeching halt. The forty-five Morris once held is now a toy gun. His big shiny cop car is now only a cardboard box with *Police* scribbled on the side in crayon and cutouts for the doors. Morris is disappointed. “Ah, Mom. I had the bad guys and you ruined it.”

His mother approaches with his lunch box. She kneels down and fashions a curly “q” in the front of his hair. She readies herself for their morning ritual. “Come on, Moe,” she says, smiling and waiting.

A grin finally breaks across Morris’s face as she slides her hand up along the bridge of her nose. Morris holds up two fingers and jabs at her eyes. She blocks it, like she does every morning when they do their 3-Stooges ritual. With a slight push and a kiss on the cheek, Morris is guided toward the door. His father, Walter Hill, a real policeman, meets him. The father and son exit together, he off to work and Morris off to school.

A beautiful seventeen-year-old blond girl, Angela, struggles against the thick ropes that bind her to the mast of a Pirate ship. Her valley girl shag hairstyle seems out of place.

Captain One Leg, a sleazy looking pirate with a peg leg, hobbles toward her, his sword drawn. He places it close to her throat. “Yee’ll tell me whar to find Captain Morris or yee’ll walk the plank!”

Angela rolls her eyes at his dramatics and stops chewing her gum to respond. “I don’t know where he is. So give me a friggin’ break.”

A voice shouts down from the crow's nest, "I'm here Captain One-Leg. Release her or suffer my wrath!" Morris now seventeen, is dressed like a swashbuckler. A pirate crewmember lays unconscious, dangling over the edge of the crow's nest. Morris heroically swings down on one of the mast's lines and lands bravely in front of Captain One Leg.

He swirls around, ready for a sword fight. "Suffer ye will Captain Morris when I'ee cut 'er head off and feed it to the sharks! Arrrh!"

Angela cringes over the thought. "Eeee. That's like, totally gross."

Captain One-Leg and Morris sword fight on the deck of the majestic pirate ship. The crewmembers gather to watch the fierce battle. Captain One Leg attacks. Morris easily fends him off, and occasionally stops to yawn from his boredom with the mediocre swordplay.

Captain One Leg is impressed. "You aare as good as they sayeee. But I'mm betterr." He then queries Morris as the swordplay continues, "I only have one question for yee, Captain Morris."

"And what's that?" Morris responds while continuing to fight.

Captain One-Leg's voice is suddenly replaced with that of Morris's math teacher, Mr. Wolf. "Where's your homework?"

The swashbuckling hero is ejected from his daydream to find himself in math class on his feet. The sword now replaced with his number two pencil. The entire classroom erupts into laughter as Morris, embarrassed, sits and digs for his homework. The heroine, Angela, from Morris's pirate dream, sits directly in front of him. Morris hands forward his homework to her. Even she is embarrassed for Morris. She rolls her eyes and handles his paper as if it has cooties.

Morris Moe Hill has always been a dreamer. Even as a young boy his daydreams were so real, he had a hard time separating them from reality. If this wasn't problem enough, Ben, the football quarterback had it in for Morris since grade school. That year, at the prep rally for the game against Westside High, Morris found himself in the most embarrassing moment of his life, courtesy of Ben and his football buddies. Morris was on the pep squad and before he changed

into his uniform, Ben and his buddies got there first, putting itching powder in his jock strap.

During the pyramid routine, it finally kicked in. Morris gave in to the urge to dig deep into the front of his pants and scratch his privates like a dog in heat. Naturally, this was right in front of the whole school and his parents. The entire gymnasium sat completely quiet and in shock for more than a minute watching Morris, sprawled out on the floor, kicking his legs, his hand buried in his pants, scratching frantically. His mother buried her face in embarrassment. Ben and the jocks roared with laughter. This alerted Morris to the fact he was making a fool of himself in front of everyone. Nonetheless, he sprung to his feet and made a hasty exit from the gym . . . as well as from his life.

It's twelve years later and Morris is still living at home with his parents. His room is decorated with *Dirty Harry* and *TJ Hooker* posters. A framed photo of himself at age six with his father, Walter, in his police blues, sits on Morris's cluttered computer desk. On the wall hangs a framed degree, *Hopeville Community College Associate Degree in Criminology*. His alarm clock sounds.

A hand reaches out of the covered clump in the middle of the bed and smacks the top of the alarm clock. The covers are thrown back and Morris, now thirty years old, with hair disheveled, wearing *TJ Hooker* pajamas, sits up to face another day in his mediocre life.

Later that morning, Morris enters the kitchen and interrupts his parents having an intimate moment. His mother, now in her fifties, springs from her husband's lap, who is seated at the kitchen table. Embarrassed, Morris tries to escape off to work, but not before his mother places the infamous curly "q" on the front of his hair and performs the ritualistic Three Stooges gag with him as she has done since he was a boy. Unenthusiastically, he cooperates, then he gathers up his lunch along with a blue military style hat, and sets off to work.

Morris walks down the front sidewalk and it suddenly becomes obvious where his life has taken him. On the back of his uniform is embroidered, *Hopeville Animal Shelter*. Morris is the town dog catcher. He steps toward his dog catcher van that's parked in front of the house. He notices that the next door neighbor, Mr. Chrimshaw, who is in his seventies, is letting his dog, Skippy, take a dump on the Hill's lawn.

Morris looks down at the dog squatting for a dump and tries to professionally handle it. “You know Mr. Crimshaw, you should let Skippy do that in your own yard or else carry . . .” Morris digs out a little scooper from his back pocket, “. . . a pooper scooper with you so you can clean—”

Mr. Crimshaw blows him off. “Bite me, dog boy.”

Morris, left standing with the scooper extended tries to recover. “Okay. See ya.”

His parents, having seen everything from the kitchen window, shake their heads. “Where’d we go wrong, Annie?” Walter asks, watching as Morris climbs into his van.

“Who says we went wrong, Walter?”

“Three generations of law officers, and then . . . Morris.”

“It’s his life.”

“He was meant to be the police chief just like my father and me.”

Walter reaches up and clasps her hands in his as the van pulls away.

“Things change,” she adds, as she moves close to the side of his face, watching the van along with him.

“Why can’t they change with someone else?” he adds sarcastically.

She moves close to his ear and whispers, “I feel frisky.”

Walter rolls his eyes. “Oh boy.”

Until Morris came along, Hopeville had always had a Hill in the police chief’s office. In fact, Morris is named after his grandfather, Morris, and his great grandfather, Moe, both police chiefs of Hopeville in their day. Walter, his father, had retired as police chief several years earlier. The family tradition had ended with poor Morris.

Every morning Morris goes through the same ritual. He stops at the antique storefront window, just before going into the Hopeville Café, to undo his mother’s “q” curl that she leaves in his hair every morning. He then enters the café and ALWAYS avoids eye contact with Ben, the arch enemy from high school who is now the town police chief. He proceeds to sit on the same stool at the counter, where he continually orders the same breakfast, a cinnamon roll and coffee.

On Mondays, the ritual includes Mr. Hodges, the bank manager, who tests the old main bank’s alarm. The alarm sounds off at exactly

8:00 AM every Monday. It is so precise that everyone in town sets their clocks and watches by the alarm. Every Monday, when the alarm sounds, Morris has the same vivid and realistic daydream. The bank alarm is real and a bank robbery is in progress. Morris calmly rises off his counter stool and takes Ben's revolver from his holster, because Ben is frozen with fear.

He succeeds in rescuing the town from the bank robbers. But every time Morris returns from his daydream, he remains the uninspired dog catcher who is still trapped in Hopeville; while Jenny, the attractive, friendly waitress, who Morris is secretly in love with, continues to be groped and pursued by Ben, the police chief. And Morris continues to take it.

Nevertheless, Morris is comfortable being Hopeville's dogcatcher. He likes animals and they seem to like him. It is unfortunate that he cannot say the same about the citizens of Hopeville. Once, after awakening from a daydream in the café, he stepped down from his stool, tripped and fell face down onto the floor in front of a full house of patrons. Ben and his buddies had tied his shoelaces together while he was off in his other world. Morris knew then that his place was with animals.

Morris has a full day ahead of him at the Hopeville animal shelter. With Hopeville being the county seat, they also service other smaller towns that do not have the budget for an animal shelter. So Morris's day usually includes a road trip to the surrounding towns to pick up strays.

On his way to the nearby town of Anderson, Morris drives by the old and dilapidated Hopeville welcome sign that announces, *Welcome to Hopeville, Town of Hopes and Dreams*. He can't help shaking his head while thinking of what Alice, his supervisor at the animal shelter, had said.

"They should've named it Hopelessville, because folks come here when there's no hope left. It's the end of the road."



**CHAPTER II**



*The Shaman's Cure*

Morris has a mysterious and unusual encounter while on the road to the nearby town of Anderson, to pick up strays. He picks up two Indians, Jack Little Bear Johnson, in his eighties, and his grandson, John Son-of-Little Bear in his thirties, who are hitchhiking to John's sister's wedding. When John tells Morris that his grandfather is a Shaman, Morris has a daydream in which he is in the old west. Morris finds himself as a frontier scout, sporting a goatee and dressed in buckskin. He tries to comfort the Calvary Captain as Indians prepare for a final attack.

The captain surveys the hills for reinforcements with his binoculars. He drops them to his side. "Well, Morris, looks like we may not get out of this alive."

Morris takes a deep breath and checks his gun chamber. The captain breaks down crying. "What's wrong, Captain?" Morris asks. "We don't have a prayer. They've got Shamans with them."

Scanning the Indians on the hill, Morris turns. "I've been meaning to ask you about those . . . Shamans. Exactly what kind are they?" Morris asks, not wanting to sound stupid.

The captain shakes his head. "The worst kind . . . cannibals."

Morris is stricken with fear. He then realizes that the old Indian, Jack Little Bear, is in his daydream and the Captain is gone. The old Indian shakes his head, disgusted with Morris's stupidity. He points at a subtext in front of him. It reads *That is not true* in three-dimensional letters that hangs suspended in midair. Morris examines the block letters, looking for wires. He touches one of them and is suddenly catapulted back into the van he is driving.

Morris is so startled by the intrusion of the old Indian into his daydream that he nearly drives off the road. "How'd he do that?" Morris asks, astonished.

Morris calms down as John explains that his grandfather is a Shaman and can see other's dreams. He translates his grandfather's Shaman diagnosis of Morris's problems. He tells Morris, "You dream too much. Not only do your dreams follow you, but they are also

ruining your life.” Jack Little Bear then performs a Shaman ritual on Morris to help him.

They reach Anderson and Morris pulls over to let the two hitchhikers out. Smoke from Jack Little Bear’s Shaman ritual bellows from the van as they climb out. Morris pulls the smoke filled van back onto the highway. The two Indians vanish as mysteriously as they had originally appeared.

Further down the highway, in his rear-view mirror, Morris observes something very odd occurring in the back of the van. There is a strange cloud hovering over a stray cat, which is taking a nap. In this weird cloud, the cat is chasing a dog. Morris is so alarmed by the occurrence that he nearly drives into the ditch trying to stop the van. He flings open the doors and checks the van inside and out but cannot find any trace of the strange cloud. Perplexed, he climbs back into the driver’s seat and heads home.

At the animal shelter, Morris is unloading the strays, when another strange cloud appears. This time, it hovers over the animal shelter. He can see Alice, his supervisor who is in her twenties and somewhat plain looking. She is dressed in a skimpy dance outfit and dancing on a stage in front of a room full of cheering men. He watches and starts to get into the music and her dancing, thrusting his pelvis and swinging it around. He is then shocked to find Willard, the janitor, a nice older black man, watching him.

Willard doesn’t see the strange cloud that Morris sees. “You feeling all right, Mr. Morris?” Willard asks.

Morris continues to unload the strays’ cages while keeping an eye on the strange cloud. He slams the door after having removed the last one. When he looks back, the strange cloud is gone. He stands, cage in hand, staring at where the cloud used to be. Willard steps to his side and tries to see what Morris is looking at.

Willard takes off his gray cap and scratches his head. “You ain’t having one of those close encounters like I seen on TV, are you Mr. Morris? They say ten percent of folks have one.”

Morris thinks about it. “No. I’m not seeing little green men. Wish I were.”

Willard picks up a couple of the cages. “They’s ain’t green. They’s gray. Gray with big black eyes,” Willard says knowingly.

Lifting a couple of the cages, Morris enters the animal shelter. “Ohhhkay . . . I stand corrected.”

Later, at the end of the workday, Morris observes another cloud. This time, it is above Willard who is mopping the floor. Willard is on a podium in front of the whole town accepting a High School Diploma.

That night as Morris tries to shake off the day’s strange events, another dream cloud forms in his room. Morris is oblivious to it, until the applause inside the dream cloud causes him to turn toward the source. It seems to be his father’s dream. Morris sees himself dressed in officer blues and standing at a podium. Propped up on his elbows, he is puzzled by the strange dream.

Suddenly, a supernatural force grips him and pulls him toward the cloud. Morris struggles to grab anything to hold onto but he is sucked in claspng onto his pillow. He finds himself standing at the podium, holding a pillow, in front of the whole town. The banner behind him reads, *Congratulations Morris, Our New Police Chief*. An acceptance speech lay on the podium before him.

Morris tosses the pillow over his shoulder and starts to read, “For generations our family has been part of a tradition here in Hopeville. By accepting your nomination for police chief, I will be upholding a long tradition of—” Morris stops reading and folds the speech. “I’m sorry Dad. I can’t accept.” His father and mother in the audience look down, disappointed. “Thank you all for nominating me, but I’m not the man for the job. I wish I were.”

Stepping down from the podium, Morris is met by his disappointed father and mother. His father reminds him that as a boy he always wanted to be a police officer and how Morris was destroying a family tradition. He suggests it might be better if Morris moved out. The dream progresses and Morris moves out, takes up drinking, and loses his job because, as Alice puts it, “You’re a dirty drunk and all of the animals hate you.”

Morris’s life, in the dream, gets continually worse. He finds himself as a dirty bum fighting with alley cats over scraps of food. He then starts attacking elderly citizens for their groceries. Having had enough of Morris, who has become an evil and dirty bum, the town organizes a lynch mob right out of a *Frankenstein* movie to hunt him down and get rid of him.

Captured, Morris finds himself in a black and white prison uniform, reminiscent of a 1950s prison movie, trying to make a break for it in the prison yard. He screams, “Come and get me you dirty coppers!” Morris is mowed down in a barrage of bullets.

At his burial, his father and mother stand at the graveside. His father, Walter sobs. “Where did we go wrong?”

Morris is catapulted out of the dream and lands on his bed so hard that he bounces off and lands on the floor on his head. Morris only has enough time to sit up and rub his injury before his mother’s dream cloud starts to take shape. Her dream begins with a chorus line of male strippers in leopard underwear dancing to KC & The Sunshine Band’s, “Shake Your Booty.”

His mother shouts, “Shake that booty, baby.”

Morris barely gets out the words, “Oh crap!” Just before being sucked into the dream.

The next morning at breakfast, Morris looks like hell, having spent most of his night trapped in his parents’ dreams. His father isn’t sitting at the breakfast table as usual. He is out on the deck trying to sort out a nightmare in which things had gone horribly bad. Morris joins his father on the deck and announces that he is moving out and is sorry for letting his father down.

When Morris passes through the kitchen on the way out, his mother attempts to do the curly “q” in his hair. He gently stops her. “Mom, you don’t have to do that anymore. I’ll just undo it anyway.” Stunned, his mother sits down at the kitchen table and watches Morris leave for work.

Morris enters Hopeville Café. The usual crowd is there. He plops down in his usual chair to have his usual breakfast.

Jenny serves his order and notices he is glum. “Is everything all right, Morris?” she asks. When she discovers that he is moving out, she offers to help by showing him the empty apartment above hers. Morris agrees to take her up on the offer and settles in for his Monday morning ritual of saving the town. But today is different. The bank alarm sounds but as hard as Morris tries, nothing happens. For some strange reason, he cannot daydream, no matter how hard he tries.

Then, as he sips his coffee, trying to figure out what’s happening, a daydream cloud forms above the short order cook,

Deloris, a large butchie-looking woman with short black hair. When it forms, Morris leans forward and as before, he is sucked into the dream. The old man seated next to Morris is just getting ready to ask for the salt shaker when Morris vanishes. The old man looks down at Morris's empty chair, feels it, then shrugs his shoulders and grabs the salt.

In the dream, Morris is dressed in skimpy black leather gear and hung up with his arms outstretched. Deloris steps behind him also dressed in skimpy, revealing, black leather gear. She smacks a small black whip on the palm of her hand as she eyes Morris. She wickedly licks her lips. Morris feels a strange draft and looks down in back to see that the seat of his black leather bottoms is missing. She swats him across the bottom. He screams, "Oh Nooooo!"

Jenny passes Morris's empty seat with a tray of dirty dishes and notices that Morris has mysteriously disappeared. She looks around for him and collides with a patron, spilling the dirty dishes onto the floor with a crash. The cook snaps out of her dream and Morris is thrown from the dream cloud as it disappears. Morris hits the seat with such velocity that it causes him to spin round and round on the stool. Finally coming to a stop, Morris notices the old man seated next to him is staring at him with a mouthful of food. He hands Morris the salt. Morris sets the salt on the counter then rubs his butt, still stinging from his wild dream encounter with the cook. The old man watches Morris's every move with curiosity. Morris notices, so he leans in sideways and whispers, "Hemorrhoids."

The old man continues chewing his mouthful of food and responds, "Me too. Mine are so big, you could tie knots in 'em."

Morris feels his breakfast trying to come back up. "Whoaa. Okay. Gotta go." He stands and walks toward the exit. Jenny calls to him as she waits on Ben and reminds him of their 'date' to see the apartment. Ben stiffly reminds her that they have a date that night and eyes Morris suspiciously as he departs.

Arriving at work, Morris opens the back door of the animal shelter and is exposed to one of the most horrific scenes in his lifetime. Every single dog and cat in the holding area is having a dream of humping! Dogs are humping cats, cats are humping dogs, and even a squirrel is humping a dog! Morris slams the door and throws himself

against it, his breakfast again trying to come up. Morris contemplates what to do when Alice, his supervisor, arrives for work.

She notes a problem with Morris. “What’s wrong?”

Morris fumbles for words to describe what’s going on behind the door. He finally spits it out. “It’s an animal humpfest!”

Then he makes like a squirrel with his fingers. “Eeee, Eeeee.”

Then he moves his hips like he is humping. Alice’s mouth drops open. Speechless, Alice pushes him out of the way to investigate. She swings the door wide open as Morris covers his eyes with his hands. Inside the kennel, nothing is happening. Alice turns to him. Morris peeks out between his fingers. She shakes her head. “Are you taking medication for something?”

Later that afternoon, as Morris is reviewing his animal pickup list, he is still trying to defend his earlier actions. He mumbles under his breath as he plans his route. “I’m telling you all that animals think about is humping and—”

Alice nods in agreement just so she can get Morris moving.

“Sure, Morris. Whatever you say.”

Morris looks up to further argue his case and sees something over Alice’s shoulder that leaves him speechless. A gray Cockapoo, they have named Max is taking a nap in his cage and is having a dream. Above Max’s cage in a cloud is a fairytale scene of a beautiful farm cottage and an apple orchard. Alice turns to look, but doesn’t see what Morris is in awe of. The phone rings. She turns to get it just as Morris steps forward and reaches toward the dream. While talking on the phone, she notices that Morris has vanished.

Morris finds himself in Max’s dream, running alongside Max as he excitedly races toward his home, barking. Morris stops at the end of the sidewalk by the mailbox as Max races up to the door and scratches. Morris glances at the name on the mailbox. It reads like Greek. He studies the hieroglyphics as the front door opens. Max jumps up to greet his masters, the owners of the cottage. An older couple in their eighties, Elmer and wife, Eleanor step out. Max jumps up, trying to give them a kiss. They both scratch and pet him.

Morris smiles. “Hi. I guess he’s yours, huh?”

Elmer speaks, but most of his words are garbled. The only thing that is understandable is, “Max good boy.” Morris looks at him

strangely, then understands. It's Max's dream and dogs have a limited vocabulary. Even the address of the house is undecipherable. Dogs don't know numbers either. Scanning the surrounding community for landmarks, Morris spots several large white irrigation windmills.

At the shelter, Alice finishes cleaning a cage and slams its door. Max snaps from his dream, Morris appears out of nowhere, and lands on the floor in front of Alice.

With a sponge and bucket in her hand, she looks down at Morris on the floor. "You have some explaining to do."

Morris explains to Alice that while on his journey to the town of Anderson, he had an encounter with an Indian Shaman. He now has a strange new ability to interact with others dreams.

When he finishes, Alice studies him carefully, not fully believing his story, then remarks, "You had to know that a Shaman is the tribal medicine man. For God's sake you had two years of community college, Morris."

"Well, I think I missed Indian Medicine Men 101," he retorts. He does a little hip movement and asks her how would he know about her dream to be a dancer. Alice gives in and decides to help Morris look up local apple orchards. Morris then drives off with Max in the truck to take him home.

While Morris had good intentions, some things just do not work out, no matter how much you want them to. Such was the case with Max. Morris did find Max's home exactly as Max had remembered, except for one important detail. His owners had both died earlier that year. A neighboring farmer came upon Max and Morris at the home. He explained how the farmer had been heartbroken when Max was lost. Morris felt a connection with Max and decided at that moment to claim him as his own. So, when Morris returned to town, Max was at his side. They met Jenny at the Hopeville café to check out the apartment. Jenny instantly took to Max.

Jenny lives in a first-floor apartment of a yellow two-story wood frame house just off Main Street, just a short walk from the café. The walk takes Jenny, Morris, and Max past the police chief's Office. Ben, who is inside, steps to the window, unseen. He keenly watches as the two and Max go by.

Jenny unlocks the apartment door and enters. She leads Morris on a tour of the sparse and conservatively decorated apartment, while Max takes off sprinting joyously on his own tour. Morris expresses his concern whether the owner will allow pets. Jenny laughs.

“I guess I’d better, or I’ll have to get rid of my dog, Butch.”

Morris is impressed. “You’re the landlord?”

“What’s the matter? A girl can’t own property?” Jenny declares. She goes on to explain that it is cheaper to buy the house and rent out one apartment than it is to rent an apartment. The tour ends with them exiting the French doors to the apartment’s balcony that overlooks the small town. Max rejoins them from his own explorations. Morris lifts Max so he can get a view from their new home. Max licks his face. “I think he likes it! We’ll take it!”

Jenny offers to help Morris move in and accompanies him to his parent’s house. Upon arriving, Jenny discovers her first humorous bit of information about Morris. His mother calls him “Moe.” His mother doesn’t realize that Morris has company with him, or she wouldn’t have embarrassed him. He feels uncomfortable to have to explain that his name is actually Morris Moe Hill, but his mother likes to call him “Moe.” Jenny thinks it is cute. In the kitchen, Morris introduces Jenny, then informs his parents that he is moving out today. They are startled. Morris and Jenny leave the kitchen to go to Morris’s room. His mother starts sobbing while holding the leftover spaghetti she had gotten out for Morris when he first arrived.

Morris’s father puts his arm around her to comfort her and observes, “Dear, you’re crying on the spaghetti.”

Morris packs his belongings into a box in his bedroom. Jenny lifts a picture from his dresser. It is the photo of his father dressed in police blues and Morris dressed in his toy cop gear as a boy. She examines it and reminisces.

“I remember when your dad was the police chief.” She walks over and hands the picture to Morris. Morris takes it and studies it for a moment. “We used to see him when we rode our bikes. He always waved to us. My dad said he was the best police chief we ever had.” Morris packs the pictures and his diploma. She moves in closer to look in the box. “You look like you’re standing with your hero. You wanted to be like him didn’t you?”

Morris looks down at the picture. "I suppose."

"Can I ask what happened?"

Morris moves to the wall and removes a Dirty Harry poster. "Yeah, but I'm not sure I have a good answer." Jenny is puzzled by his remark and is about to inquire when Morris's mother enters the room carrying a bag of his toiletries. His dad follows but stops at the doorway and watches.

"I brought your toiletries," his mother says solemnly.

"Thanks, Mom."

She sniffs and waits. Morris puts the poster into a box and approaches his mother. Gently putting his hands on her shoulders, he kisses her on the cheek. "It's just across town, Mom."

"Could we—you know?" she asks.

Morris thinks about it, then finally gives in. He smiles. "Okay."

Jenny watches curiously, not quite sure where all of this is leading.

"Your father too?" his mother pleads. Morris sighs.

"I guess."

His father beams a smile and quickly joins them, messing up his hair so it is stretched in every direction. Morris's mother comes to life and quickly grabs a pillow stuffing it under her blouse, creating a fake stomach. Jenny oddly studies them as Morris checks himself in the dresser mirror. Using a comb from his dresser, he combs his hair down in the front. He now resembles Moe Howard, one of the stooges, as his mother and father move together side-by-side. Morris moves to the bedroom door for his entrance. He sees that Jenny has a confused look on her face. "You might want to cover your eyes. This could be scary," Morris warns.

Jenny crosses her arms and smiles. "I'm fine. Pretend I'm not here."

Morris, his mother, and father spring into their 3-Stooges routine. Morris steps up between his mother and father and pushes them aside, and in his best 'Moe' voice says, "Spread out."

Doing her impersonation of Curly, his mother, waves her hands across her face and shoves her stomach out toward Morris. She speaks in her best Curly voice, "Mmmmmmmmm."

Turning to face Morris, Walter does his Larry impression. “Hey what gives?”

Morris bops him on the forehead with the palm of his hand then slaps him on the back of the head. “How about that?”

His father rubs his head. “Okay, okay.”

Continuing with her Curly routine, his mother moves her wavering hand past Morris’s face. Morris watches the hand go up and down. “Knuck knuck knuck.”

Morris holds out his two fingers to his mother. “See dat?”

She shoves her stomach out and makes her best Curly face. “Yeah. So what?”

Morris tries to poke her in the eyes. She blocks it with her hand. “Knuck knuck knuck.” Jenny can’t contain herself any longer and bursts out laughing at their antics. The three stop and look at her. Morris’s mother wraps her arms around Morris and hugs him tightly. Jenny stops laughing when she sees that it has turned emotional. His father looks down and tries to smooth his messy hair.

From the van, Morris and Jenny wave to his parents standing at the front door. The front door slowly closes as Morris starts the engine. He hesitates, reflecting on his strong feelings for his parents. Realizing how strange the whole ordeal may have been for Jenny, he tries to explain. “Sorry about that.”

“Oh no. It was very . . . interesting. I’ve never seen a family do the 3-Stooges before. It’s not something you see everyday.” She looks out the truck window, trying to contain herself.

Morris continues his explanation, “My mom loved them and with a middle name like Moe, well she always wants to—”

Jenny interrupts, “Morris, you don’t have to explain. It was very touching.”

Morris is surprised by her response. “Oh. Okay.” He puts the truck in gear and pulls away.

Morris puts away his belongings in his apartment. Jenny is placing his toiletries in the bathroom cabinet when there’s a knock on the front door. Morris answers and is surprised to find Ben at the door, dressed in a casual jacket and holding a bouquet of flowers.

Ben pushes past Morris without an invitation. “I’m looking for Jenny. Is she here?”

Closing the front door, Morris sarcastically quips, “Sure. Come on in.”

Ben, unimpressed by the apartment, surveys it.

Jenny enters with several pairs of Morris’s underwear not realizing that Ben is in the room. “Your mother must have put these in with your toiletries—” Jenny is caught off guard by Ben’s appearance. Then she recalls the date. “Oh, our date. I forgot.” Ben silently stares at the underwear she’s holding, then approaches her.

He holds out the flowers. “I got you flowers.” She starts to take them, then realizes that she’s holding the underwear. Morris quickly grabs the underwear so she can take the flowers.

She examines the flowers then smells them. “They’re beautiful.”

While Morris helplessly looks on, he sees Ben’s eyes roaming Jenny’s body. A dream cloud begins forming over Ben. In the dream, Ben, dressed in a robe, is with Jenny on the couch in his apartment. The lights are low and a *Sinatra* song is playing. Ben caresses her shoulder and then kisses it romantically.

Jenny sexily throws her head back. “Take me, you big stud.”

Ben pulls her dress strap down and reveals . . . Morris clears his throat extremely loud. The dream vanishes as Jenny and Ben both look at him. Morris grabs his throat and pretends to be clearing it. Jenny retreats to the kitchen to find a vase. She bends over to dig under the sink, Ben steps to the doorway and sees her body bent over. The dream cloud reappears. In this dream, Ben is in bed, undressed, his hairy chest exposed above the covers. Jenny sexily steps into the frame and undoes her sexy nightgown straps and it falls revealing . . . . Morris clears his throat loudly again. The dream cloud vanishes. Ben looks at him strangely. Jenny fills a vase with water and puts the flowers into it, then walks out of the kitchen.

Ben leads her toward the front door and opens it. Morris follows and closes the door after them. A moment later there is a knock at the door. He opens it to reveal Jenny holding a house key. “Almost forgot . . . your key.”

Morris shyly responds, “Thanks for everything.”

She starts to leave, then turns back to Morris. “Thank you. I enjoyed meeting your family. It was fun.” She turns and leaves. Morris

hangs on the door watching her leave, regretting that he doesn't have the guts to stop her, then slowly closes the door.



**CHAPTER III**



***Marilyn Monroe and E.T. Call Home***

Morris awakes on the couch to a car door slamming. Max, his dog, is resting his head on Morris's lap as the local TV station is signing off the air. Morris flicks the TV off and pets Max on the head. Picking up Max, he steps out onto the balcony. Below, in the driveway, Ben is dropping Jenny off from their date. Max growls. "Yeah. I know. I don't like him either."

Jenny quickly climbs out of the car. Ben exits and moves to cut her off. Grabbing her arm, he tries to pull her to him. Max growls again as Morris watches intensely. Jenny looks up at Morris then hastily makes her way toward her apartment. Ben, frustrated with how the date went, slams the door and speeds away.

Morris turns to go inside, then stops as he catches sight of something out of the ordinary from the corner of his eye. With Max still in his arms, he slowly turns back around to face the night landscape of the small town. Floating above the houses of the town are hundreds and hundreds of dreams. Creeping slowly toward the balcony railing, he gapes in wonder. "Look boy. Look at all of the dreams. What's wrong with me? Why am I seeing all of this?" Max whimpers. "Yeah, maybe I'm crazy, huh?" Morris turns to Max. "Maybe we should get a closer look."

Morris and Max walk the deserted streets of the small town. He is in awe of the number of dreams that exist. Morris is attracted to the dream that is floating above Mr. Lacasta's house. Although it is not the most unusual, it is the loudest. The dream is blaring out a symphony of horn instruments. Mr. Lacasta had been the high school's musical director and as a teacher, he loved music. Morris is drawn closer and closer by the wonderful music. A dancing figure in the center comes into focus. Marilyn Monroe is doing her popular walk over the grate, which blows up her dress. That is odd, he thinks. Suddenly, Morris is sucked up into the dream. The leash drops to the ground. Max cocks his head and looks around confused.

The next morning at Hopeville Café, Morris drags himself to his stool and plops down. Jenny takes note. Ben is in his regular seat, but

Morris is so worn out he doesn't even notice him, or even notice Jenny approach with his usual cinnamon roll and coffee. "Rough night?" she asks.

Morris jumps, then collects himself enough to get his hands around the coffee and raise it to his mouth. After a sip, he looks up at Jenny. "If you consider being chased by a horny old geezer with no teeth aaaall niight bad, yeah it was—"

It suddenly dawns on Morris what had just come out of his mouth. He's not in a dream. He is sitting in the café and that may have been a little much. Expecting a jeering crowd in the café, he turns to face them, but finds that nobody is paying attention. It's just Jenny, who is still standing in front of him.

"I see. That sounds a little strange Morris."

He then becomes a little too confident in voicing his odd experience. "And I was dressed like Marylyn Monroe. Yeah, I'd call that strange."

Every conversation in the place comes to a screeching halt. Forget about hearing a pin drop, you could hear a dust mite flossing. Morris notices the silence and turns to face his fear. Yep, everyone was looking, including Ben. Ben shakes his head then takes a sip of coffee. Morris tries to cover his tracks. "Costume party." With that, as suddenly as it had stopped, it starts again, the murmur, the chatter.

But Jenny is not satisfied. She is concerned. "Are you all right?" Morris takes a big gulp of coffee to wash his stupidity away. Jenny motions Morris to follow her. She reveals Max, who is being held in the stockroom. Jenny found Max at her door in the morning and was curious as to what could have happened to Morris that night. Morris wasn't sure he could explain the series of weird events that have occurred over the last week, or if anyone, other than Alice, would believe him. With Jenny, he was willing to try to explain. It didn't work. When Morris said that he could see people's dreams, she thought it meant that he could read minds. She didn't get it.

Standing in the doorway, having heard Morris's crazy story, Ben got it.

Morris realizes that he is late for work and tries to leave. Ben blocks the doorway, and offers to help Morris find a nice quiet padded room. Then it happens. For the first time in his pathetic life, he stands up

to Ben and asks him to move. Stunned by Morris's attitude change, Ben moves. Morris leaves the restaurant.

Ben still can't believe what has just happened and remarks to Jenny, who is also stunned. "Did you hear the way he talked to me?"

Jenny smiles. "Yeah. And it's about time."

When Morris arrives at the shelter, Alice is very inquisitive as to how it turned out with Max the day before and if he had located Max's owner. Morris tells her the bad news that it was only a dream and that Max's owners had passed away. He shares the good news that he is claiming Max as his own and got an apartment for them to live in. Morris relates his 'all night adventure in denture-land' with the old man and himself dressed like Marilyn Monroe.

Alice reminds Morris that she is a visual person, and to not tell her anything like that again. Alice suggests that Morris use his newfound talent to help the other pets find their owners. They agree that Morris should have a cell phone, when he needs to get out of a dream, he'll simply call Alice at the shelter to wake the animal. They agree and she hands him her cell phone. "ET phone home," She teases.

They then crawl on all fours through the kennel, trying not to wake the pets. They find a candidate and Morris is sucked into a dream. Alice is impressed. She crawls out of the kennel, completely forgetting about Willard, the janitor, who has been observing their strange behavior. She bumps into Willard, who is waiting with his mop and bucket. She looks at his work shoes and bucket, then springs to her feet. He starts to move past her with his bucket into the kennel. "Uh, where are you going, Willard?"

He looks at her strangely. "To mop the kennel. Why? he asks.

"Uh . . . you can't."

Willard doesn't get it. "Why not?" he asks.

"I don't know," she answers.

"Okay." Since this means less work to have to do, this is fine with Willard. He turns and pushes the mop bucket away, whistling.

She scurries to her desk and checks her telephone for dial tone. She hangs the phone up and sits. Willard collects the trash keeping an eye on her because of her strange behavior. She gives him an *I'm normal* smile while acting like she's doing paperwork.

There is a knock on the front door glass. Willard unlocks the door and talks to someone briefly. Mrs. White's cat, Missy, had disappeared the previous night and she is shook up. Alice steps outside to talk with her since they aren't officially open. When she does, the phone rings. Willard doesn't normally answer the phone, but seeing that Alice is busy, he does. He picks up the phone and listens.

"You got to get me out of here. Hurry. I've got a pit bull on my ass," Morris demands.

"Hello. Is this Morris?" Willard asks meekly.

"Who's this?" Morris asks.

"Willard, sir."

"Oh. Is Alice there—Ouch!"

Willard pulls the phone away and looks at it strangely, then continues. "You at home, sir?"

Morris, on the other end, is getting impatient. "No. I'm stuck in this crappin' dream! Get Alice please. I need to get out. Ouch . . . you little shit!"

Willard listens for a second and can hear a dog barking over the phone. "Just a minute, sir." Willard lays the phone down and walks toward the front door, then sticks his head out. Alice is busy writing down information about the missing cat. He waves his hand trying to get her attention. She finally notices him. "Excuse me," he interrupts. Alice and Mrs. White, both look at Willard. He continues, "It's Mr. Hill. He's having a nightmare or something."

Alice rushes into the shelter and answers the phone. Willard pretends to mop while keeping an eye on Alice. She pretends it's a normal phone call.

Morris is raving on the phone. "Get me the hell out of here!"

Willard can hear Morris from where he is standing. Hanging up the phone Alice frantically scurries around the room, looking for something to prod the dog awake.

Finally, she spots Willard's mop. She approaches Willard who is very protective of his mop. He starts backing away with the mop and bucket. Lunging toward him, she grabs the mop and runs toward the kennel door. Dropping to all fours, she crawls into the kennel, dragging the mop behind her.

Willard cautiously approaches the door and peeks into the kennel. Alice, crawling along the floor, reaches the dog that is asleep. She shoves the mop handle in, poking the dog. Willard takes off his cap and scratches his head. Suddenly, without warning, Morris flies out of the dream and tumbles to the floor, his pants ripped from the dog attack. Willard's eyes widen then he quickly steps away.

After a busy day of adventures into the dreams of animals in the shelter, Alice and Morris go over a list of what he discovered in their dreams. They discuss the information Morris found, noting that some of the dogs only had dreams of treats and toys. They realize that Willard has stopped cleaning and is staring at them, listening to their very odd discussion. He shakes his head and goes back to work.

Because of Morris's successful adventures into the dreams of the animals, many are now destined for home. Morris and Alice load the cages of the pets destined for home. Morris delivers the pets across the county and finds many happy and appreciative pet owners. They joyfully shake his hand and hug their precious animals.

After returning from his deliveries, Morris stops at the pet store to fill the rest of his shopping list. Inside the pet store, Morris rolls up with a cart of chewies and toys for the pets. The clerk's mouth drops open at the abundance of dog and cat toys.

Leaving the pet store, Morris drives past the beauty salon where Mr. Lacasta is escorting his wife Betty, in her seventies, into the salon. Morris stops his truck and backs up. Morris watches them enter the beauty salon. Moments later, Mr. Lacasta exits, and drives away. Morris looks at Max, a wonderful idea forming. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" he asks. Max barks. "Right. Marilyn Monroe."

Morris quickly parks the van and runs into the beauty parlor. Morris has a discussion with Amanda, the beautician about a makeover that would make Betty's husband, Mr. Lacasta, very, very happy. Later, Morris impatiently waits outside the beauty parlor. Mr. Lacasta pulls up and parks. Morris lifts Max up to the window. "Watch this, boy." Mr. Lacasta enters and shortly exits.

Like a boy in love, he carries his wife in his arms from the salon as he smooches on her. Gently placing her in the car, he speeds away. Morris puts his hand up for a high five from Max. Max doesn't

understand. With his free hand, Morris gives Max some help with the high five. Morris throws the van in gear and drives away.

Across the street at the police chief's Office, Ben is standing at the window, and has seen everything. He doesn't know what to make of it. He drops the blinds.

Willard, back at the animal shelter that afternoon, has been doing his best to avoid Morris and Alice most of the day. He notices the two leaning against Morris's desk, both wearing mighty big grins for no reason. Willard's first thought is that it is probably a good time to go straighten up the stock room. He notices that they are motioning him to come over to them. The way they had been acting lately, it did cross Willard's mind to make a run for it. Instead, curiosity got the best of him. He calmly puts down his cleaning equipment, straightens his clothes and approaches. "You want to see me?" he asks. Morris smiles.

"Yes, we do Willard. We have something very important to discuss with you."

Looking down, Willard shuffles his feet. "I'm not fired 'cause I seen something I wasn't supposed to see?"

Morris has to think about it a second, not sure what he's talking about. "No." Stepping aside, they reveal a High School GED package behind them. Willard is not quite sure what it is, but approaches anyway. Morris prods him on. "Go ahead."

Gently picking it up, Willard reads the letters, GED.

Alice explains, "General Education Diploma." Willard looks at her, not sure what that means.

Morris helps. "It's a high school equivalency diploma, Willard."

Puzzled, he looks up at Alice. "High School diploma?" he asks.

"Yes. You study the materials and then take tests. That's it."

Willard turns the package over examining it. "All that in this little package?"

Standing, Morris lightly touches Willard's cap with his finger. "The package is up here, Willard." Putting his hand on the package, Morris continues, "That's just the paperwork to prove it."

Thinking about the proposition for a second, Willard expresses his doubt. "How do you know I can do it?"

Morris smiles and crosses his arms. "Because I know that you want it." Willard nods yes.

Willard turns and starts to leave. He turns back. “Thank you. Even if aliens are involved, I still thank you.”

As he leaves, Morris and Alice look at each other. Alice mouths the words, “Aliens?”





**CHAPTER IV**



*Fire Hydrants and a Dog Named Butch*

Morris lay in his new apartment staring at the ceiling drifting off to sleep. He can't help but think about home. It had always been hard enough living up to his father's dream, but to see it, or to even participate in a dream that was beyond his reach, was too painful. Here, Morris thought, he was safe from seeing his father's recurring dream of something that would never ever happen. His mother's dreams . . . well let's not go there. Morris was nearing the dark abyss of sleep when it appeared; a dream cloud materializes almost directly over him. Learning from his experiences with getting too close to them, he instantly jumps from his bed and dives to the floor with a thud.

Slowly raising his head, he peeks at the apparition that is invading his bedroom. There, in full cinematic color and live action is Jenny's dog, Butch, madly humping a fire hydrant. The sight of it is bad enough, but Butch is making horrible slobbering noises as well. Morris cringes, grabs his blanket and pillow, and slides out of the room.

Not long after, there is a slight tapping on the door. It is Jenny, in her robe, still half asleep. She heard Morris plunge to the floor and is worried that he is hurt. Morris invites her in for some tea. She accepts.

They step out on the balcony with their tea. Jenny says that she has noticed something going on with Morris. Morris starts to defend himself but she cuts him off by stating that it is a good thing. Morris has never had a friend, especially a girl.

Morris puts his cup down and turns to her to try. "Do you believe in dreams?" he asks.

Jenny searches for an answer, then replies, "I don't think I have dreams. I mean, I don't remember them. I don't know why. I suppose we just lower our expectations. You finally get to the point that there aren't any anymore. If you don't expect, you won't be let down."

Morris realizes that Jenny lives a safe but lonely life. Although she dates Ben, who, she says, is like dating an octopus, all hands. As they talk more, Morris reveals that all of his life he has wanted to be like his father, but nothing ever happens outside of his head. But in his mind, it was real, until recently. Now it is gone and all he can see is the

townsfolk and their own dreams. He says that Hopeville is really a town of hopes and dreams. Jenny is sincerely impressed that Morris cares about the townsfolk enough to talk with them about their hopes and dreams.

Maybe Morris should have stopped there, but he felt she had missed his point. He went on to explain that he could actually see their dreams and how Mr. Lacasta dreamed of Marilyn Monroe and his mother who had ‘Booty’ dreams. Morris stopped when he realized that Jenny was becoming frightened by his claims. She nervously told him she had to leave. Morris misunderstood her words and actions. He thought he’d hit a nerve, because she had given up on dreams of ever being more than a waitress. From there, it went down hill. Jenny was offended by the suggestion that her life was sad, especially hearing this from a thirty-year-old dogcatcher who had just moved out of his parent’s house.

As Jenny leaves to return home, she hesitates outside Morris’s apartment door feeling a mix of emotions about him. She likes him, always did, but she was still slightly put off by his remarks. At the same time, she was regretful of her comments she had made. She pulls her robe together, to block the night’s chilly air, and heads home.

Meanwhile, Morris enters his bedroom to find Jenny’s dog, Butch, having a dream about the fire hydrant again. Morris pulls his covers from the bed and looks down at Max, “Remind me to put a fire hydrant on my list.” Max barks.

Jenny is serving customers at the bustling café the next morning. She can’t keep her mind off Morris. Maybe she is falling for him, and maybe in a strange way, his dream stories made sense. She glances at the clock, noting it is past 8:30 AM, and Morris’s seat that he has occupied for so many years like clockwork, is empty. Grabbing another food order, she goes about her job.

At the shelter, Alice is taking full advantage of Morris’s newfound talent. She is trying to find the pets their homes before his odd ability to enter their dreams vanishes. Morris and Alice quietly crawl along the kennel floor to try to catch a pet dreaming about home. Morris warns Alice that one dog has a continual dream about, well to put it as gently as possible, seducing a squirrel. Today, Morris has brought a stuffed squirrel with him and places it in the dog’s cage.

Later that morning, Alice and Morris review the new list, which was made from Morris's adventures in the dreams of the kennel residents. They have gotten it down to an efficient process and have cleared out more than half the kennel. The problem is that Morris has created a lot of work for himself. Now his schedule is booked full. That afternoon, as Morris heads out of town to deliver pets, he drives past the local bookstore. Suddenly, he stops the van with a jerk. Taking out the black book of dreams he has been keeping on the Hopeville citizens, he finds the entry about Mr. Henderson's wife. She has been having recurring dreams of a remodeled kitchen. He turns to Max as he parks the van.

"Mrs. Henderson's has been dreaming of a new kitchen. Think they might have some remodeling books?"

Max barks his approval.

"I thought so. Maybe I can find a writing book for Mr. Jansen, who's been dreaming of writing the great romantic novel." Morris springs from the van.

When Morris drives out of town, he stops at the antique store and puts a book titled, *Selling Antiques on the Internet* in Mrs. Avery's business mailbox. Max watches him curiously. "I think Mrs. Avery won't be so cranky when her sales pick up." He closes the mailbox and drives away.

On the outskirts of town, he stops at several other mailboxes, dropping off books. Morris still had a couple more stops to make. First, he knew that Dick Randall, who ran the local shoe store, had dreams of being a fireman. He had wanted to be one since he was a kid. Morris stops in at the town fire department to pick up a volunteer form.

Later, he sneaks into the shoe store and while Dick is helping a customer, puts the form on the counter with a note stating that the firehouse is looking for volunteers. He knows that Dick will do a good job.

His last stop is at Al's Fancy Ladies Dance Club. He knows that Alice secretly wants to be a dancer and Al is looking for part time dancers. Morris parks the van and looks at the sign for part time help that is hanging in Al's window. Max sits up hoping to go with Morris. Morris turns to Max, seeing his enthusiasm. "I wish I could take you in with me boy." Max lays his head down and whimpers. "You're not

gonna miss much, just voluptuous big breasted women in very tiny revealing—” Morris quickly jerks the door open. “Be right back.”

In the café that afternoon, Jenny is pouring Ben a cup of coffee when she spots Morris arriving back in town from his trip. She overfills the coffee cup, and frantically tries to clean up as Ben turns to look at what had distracted her. Realizing it was Morris, Ben warns her. “If I were you, I’d stay away from him. There is something very wrong with him. I saw him the other night just walking the streets, pointing up in the air, writing in that book of his, and talking to that mutt like it was a person. I tell you he’s getting ready to go to pieces, and when he does, I’m gonna be there to pick ’em up.”

Jenny gives Ben a sharp look, then turns and goes back to work.

Ben sees it. “What’s wrong with you? You can’t like him?”

Jenny cleans the counter as she glimpses out the window. “Butch makes noise all night. I just need a good night’s sleep,” she explains.

Ben takes a sip of coffee and looks at her oddly. “Who’s Butch?”

When Morris arrives back at the shelter, Alice excitedly tells him about a phone call from Al at the dance club to set up an audition. She knows that Morris is behind it but isn’t sure if she is good enough to audition. With a little coaxing, Morris convinces her to go for it then leaves to pick up strays and to make more ‘Dream’ stops.

After crawling under Mr. Kennedy’s porch to retrieve a stuck cat, he then makes a stop at John’s Hair Clinic on Main Street to pick up some brochures on hair replacement for Mr. Crimshaw. Morris figures maybe Mr. Crimshaw wouldn’t be so crabby, and would get his dog Skippy to crap in his own yard, if he could realize his dream of having more hair. Morris figures it is worth a try.

Morris makes one final stop that day. It is more personal than the other dreams he has been trying to fulfill. It is for his mother. He picks up a *KC & The Sunshine Band* CD and some leopard briefs. Kinky as it seems, he figures this will make his mother happy. When he arrives at his parent’s house, his father is in the garage under the car, changing the oil, and his mother has gone shopping. His father slides out from under the car on the coaster, and wipes his hands. Morris takes this opportunity to find out if his father is like him, a dreamer. “Dad, did you ever daydream?”

His father pulls an oily red shop rag from his back pocket and wipes his hands. "Are you kidding? I was the king."

"You were? What kind did you have?" Morris asks excitedly.

Walter goes on to tell him how, as a kid, he had wondrous adventures as Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers zooming through the universe fighting galactic enemies and saving damsels in distress. Then he quick-draws his pretend six-guns and tells of dreaming that he was John Wayne with guns blazing. Morris pretends to be shot and fakes a fall against the car.

Then his father tells of how later in his life, he dreamed of being Fred Astair and dancing the night away with beautiful and classy ladies. Morris straightens, then curtsies. "May I have this dance, Mr. Astair?" he asks.

Walter nods and smiles. "It would be my pleasure, Miss Rogers."

Walter takes the lead as they dance around the garage. Walter twirls Morris away as he selects several quarts of oil from the steel shelf. He steps to the car to put the oil in, Morris follows. "What about being a policeman? Was that one of your dreams?" Morris asks.

Walter opens a quart and pours it in the engine. "That was the one that really got me. That's why I did it for thirty years."

Morris discovers that his father is a lot like him. In fact, while Walter is servicing the car, he says that he daydreams that he is at the NASCAR 500. With that, Morris says that he loves him and hands him a present. Morris tells him the present is for his mother.

As Morris turns to leave, his father answers the question Morris had really come to get answered. "I'm happy. Maybe I wasn't an astronaut or a big star like Fred Astair, but I have you and your mother. That makes me happy. Only you know what your dream is. Go be happy. Do what you have to do, Morris."

"Thanks, Dad."

Morris goes to leave then stops at the edge of the garage and peeks around the corner. Sure enough, when his father returns to work on the car, a dream cloud appears. His father is passionately working the pit at a major NASCAR race. Morris smiles and goes on his way.

Morris has been absorbed in making the dreams of the pets at the shelter and the town's citizens' dreams come true. He hasn't been

paying a lot of attention to the fact that Ben is running for reelection as the town's police chief. That day as he is leaving Mel's Pet Mart, he is stuck on the way out of the store behind a couple of elderly ladies who have stopped to discuss the police chief's reelection poster that is posted inside the doors. He waits patiently while the ladies discuss why Ben has even posted them since nobody in town is running against him, and how Ben calling himself 'The Right Man for the Job' is a joke. They finally move out of the way. Morris finds himself staring at the poster.

When Morris's mother returns from shopping, she finds her husband sitting at the kitchen table staring oddly at the KC & The Sunshine Band's CD and leopard thong underwear. It doesn't take more than an instant for her to drop the groceries and drag her husband, with the CD and leopard briefs toward the bedroom.

Morris enters the animal shelter to pick up more work. Alice is beaming a smile and cannot wait to share some good news. She has found a home for a couple of the strays on a farm, but unfortunately, the farm is in another state, and it is a good ten-hour drive. She flinches, knowing how Morris hates long drives, expecting a problem. The news just rolls off Morris and he agrees to make the trip. Alice knows something is up. She crosses her arms and waits.

"Okay. What's up? You complain when it's a half hour drive."

Morris smiles. "I'm gonna run for police chief."

Alice is shocked. "What?"

"If you can go after your dream, why can't I?"

She moves over toward him. "Do you know how long we've been waiting for you to say that?" she says, putting her arm around his shoulder.

"About as long as I've been wanting to say it," Morris replies.

Alice beams a smile. "And since we're sharing good news, I took off an hour this morning and went over for an audition."

Morris turns, excited for her. "Well?"

Alice brushes her fingernails nonchalantly against her work uniform and flashes her eyelids. "I knocked their socks off."

Morris joyfully embraces her and twirls her around. "I knew you could do it."

Alice leans over and kisses Morris on the cheek. "Thanks."

Morris notices the time on the office clock. "I've got to go. I have to stop by City Hall before I leave town."

As Morris rushes out, Alice wishes him good luck.

Jenny serves the local customers at the café and begins to notice unusual changes going on with the customers. When she bumps into Mrs. Avery, she is handing out flyers for her new antique web site and instead of her usual dismal outlook on life, she is actually jovial and polite.

Willard, the janitor, is happy as a lark, his head buried in high school books at the counter. Down a couple of seats, Mr. and Mrs. Henderson are gleefully selecting a kitchen design. And then there is Mr. and Mrs. Lacasta, who have stopped in with their suitcases for a quick bite before their long overdue vacation. Mrs. Lacasta is sporting her new Marilyn Monroe hairstyle. Jenny has to stop and scratch her head. Something strange, yet wonderful was happening. Even the butchie cook, Deloris, notices the difference. Ben, in his usual pessimistic attitude, suggests that it might be a virus.

Jenny studies the happy and vivacious patrons and looks at Ben, who is busy stuffing down a roll. "They're not sick, Ben. They're alive."

Morris finally arrives at City Hall, after dropping off a toy fire hydrant at Jenny's apartment for Butch. He enters and can't help but notice that the main lobby is being remodeled. Rupus, the old town drunk, dressed in white coveralls, is packing the City Hall portraits, which have hung on the lobby walls for years, into a box. Morris notices that the portrait on top is that of his father, when he was police chief. He lifts it from the box as Rupus approaches.

"Can I help you, son?" Rupus asks.

Morris studies the picture.

"This is my father."

Rupus moves around to get a better look at him.

"So you're Morris. You probably don't remember me."

Rupus offers his hand, as if it were an honor. Morris looks at him and studies his wrinkled face.

"I don't think so," Morris responds, trying to place him.

Rupus continues, “Rupus Smith. Folks call me Smitty. I knew your father, Walter, when he was police chief. I knew your grandfather too. I was a little bit of a troublemaker back then.”

Morris turns to look at him. He puts the portrait back.

“I see.”

Morris then lifts another portrait. It’s of his grandfather, Morris Hill, also a previous chief. Below this portrait is one of his great grandfather, Moe Hill. Rupus extends his hand to Morris.

“It’s a real honor, Mr. Hill. And I mean that with all my heart. Your father was a good man. He put me up many a cold night when I had no place to go.”

They talk. Morris discovers how his father and grandfather helped Rupus to turn his life around. Rupus shows him pictures of his grown sons and explains how he now has a great relationship with them. Rupus also explains to Morris that he is reluctant to take the portraits down, but Ben, the police chief, told him that things are changing and to put the portraits in storage because the days the Hills ran things are over. Morris only has four words for Rupus.

“We’ll see about that.”

Morris enters the city clerk’s office, as Rupus curiously follows him. When Morris utters the words to Diane, the clerk, that he wants to officially run for police chief, it doesn’t take long for Rupus to scoot off to inform everyone in the building that Morris Moe Hill is running for police chief. By the time the forms are found and placed in front of Morris, just about every employee in the building had left their office and had collected in the lobby to get a look. Morris signs the forms as the gathered crowd cheers.

The historical event is dampened when the clerk informs Morris that he has to have two hundred signatures to officially run. And he has to have them by Monday, since the election is on Tuesday. The crowd lets out a sigh as Morris turns to make his exit. Morris makes his way through the somber crowd. Rupus meets him and wishes him and his family the best, then steps to the counter and eyes the clerk, Diane. He watches Morris depart from the building and scratches at his unshaven face, an idea forming.

Morris heads out of town. Driving away, he can’t help think about how a dream, a destiny, an era, has just slipped away. Maybe it

was a valiant effort, but it is too little too late. Morris's white van disappears down the highway.

Over at the Hill's house, Rupus steps from the bus and approaches the house. Later, when this story becomes a part of the local folklore, Rupus supposedly arrives at the Hill house to hear someone excitedly call out, "Shake that booty baby!" When Mr. Hill answered the door in his robe, a hint of leopard-skin underwear could supposedly be seen peeking from behind the robe.





**CHAPTER V**



***Convicts on the Run***

Returning home from a long day at work, Jenny discovers the toy fire hydrant at her door with a note attached, which reads, *To Butch from Moe*. Later that night she can't sleep. She lies quietly staring up at the ceiling as Butch cuddles his fire hydrant on the floor. She can't stop thinking of Morris. Maybe she is falling in love with him. Finally, unable to sleep, she throws the covers back and springs out of bed.

Arriving at Alice's apartment, she pounds on the door until a very displeased Alice opens the door. "This better be good," Alice says snidely, dressed in a 101 Dalmatians robe, her hand on her hip.

Jenny blurts it out, "I'm in love with Morris . . . I think."

Alice swings the door open for Jenny to enter. "That'll do." She grabs her and jerks her into the apartment.

Morris, at a motel in the middle of a deserted and dark landscape, is unable to sleep. He walks with Max up a hill to an overhanging tree that's silhouetted against a large full moon on a twinkling starry night. Morris stops and looks up at the moon. "You know what sucks, boy? I can't even dream about her." Morris takes a few steps but notices that Max isn't following. He has decided to take a break and is lying on the ground. Morris walks back to join him and sits.

A small dream cloud appears over Max. It's Jenny and she's bending down and petting Max. "Thanks, Max." Morris props his elbow on his knee and rests his chin on his fist. The dream plays like a personal movie, magically glowing, lighting the night sky and Morris's smiling face.

The next day, in a neighboring county, two inmates, Larry, the leader, and Albert, the dummy, are on a work detail. They are unloading a truck at the back of the jail. They overpower the unsuspecting guard, and take his gun. They make their break over a six-foot fence and escape.

The following day, Morris returns to the motel from delivering the dogs to a local farmer and notices a leak under his van. His van is towed to a garage in the nearby town for repairs. He rides along in the tow truck and is told by the mechanic that the water pump is shot and

the part will not be in until the next day. Calling work, Morris leaves a message for Alice that he's broken down and will be back to town the following day.

Larry and Albert, the escaped criminals emerge from the brush and step up onto the highway. A sign on the highway reads *Hopeville 80 Miles*. Albert puts out his thumb. Larry, the smarter of the two, steps up to him and looks down the highway, then looks the other way, "What are you doing?" he asks Albert.

"I'm getting us a ride."

Larry cannot believe how stupid his partner is. He grabs Albert's shirt and pulls it up for him to see. "You think this might be a dead giveaway that—" He raises his voice, "WE'RE ESCAPED CONVICTS!"

Albert looks down at the shirt and finally gets it. "Oh."

Larry pulls him by his shirt, "Come on. There's gotta be a car on one of these farms."

They disappear back into the bush and approach a farmhouse. They peek in the window and see that an old farmer is inside, dressed in coveralls, watching a game show. They burst through the front door.

The farmer, now tied to a chair in the kitchen and gagged, watches as Larry and Albert ransack his house. Larry finds what he is looking for, the car keys, and heads for the door.

He exits the house. The screen door slams closed as he looks at the dangling keys. He remarks proudly to Albert, "See told ya there'd be a car—" He stops talking and looks around for Albert. Albert hasn't left the house. Larry shakes his head and goes back in after him.

Larry approaches Albert in the kitchen, who has his head in the refrigerator searching the contents and nonchalantly asks, "See anything you like?"

"Yeah, the meatloaf looks tasty—" Suddenly, Albert is jerked out of the refrigerator and the door slams.

Larry pulls Albert close to his face, "Do you understand that we're on the lamb?"

Albert looks at him puzzled. "The lamb? I don't get it."

Larry raises his voice, "ON THE RUN! ON THE RUN!" Then Larry's voice returns to normal and he continues, "When you're on the run, you're on the lamb and you don't hang out with the hostage or in

their refrigerator. It's how you get caught." Larry releases him. "Now give me the gun and let's go."

Albert puts the gun behind his back. "I want a gun too," Albert demands.

Larry walks to the kitchen sink and picks up a knife. Walking back, he hands the knife to Albert, jerks the gun from him, and walks away. Albert stares at the knife disappointed, but quickly follows. They step out of the farmhouse front door, when he spots the red Ford truck.

"Where we going now, Larry?" Albert asks.

"To find some cash. One of these hick towns has got to have a bank."

Morris picks up the van at the gas station and is finally on the road home. Hours into his trip, Morris cannot believe what he sees on the side of the road. The two Indians, John Son of Little Bear and his grandfather are hitchhiking. Morris pulls over to pick them up. They are traveling toward Hopeville. John tells Morris that his grandfather had too many spirits at the wedding and was not well for a while. John translates his grandfather's current diagnoses of Morris. Although, his grandfather is pleased with Morris's progress so far, he feels there is more to do. Grandfather thinks that another Shaman ritual is necessary for Morris to reach his full potential, so out comes the Shaman bag again.

Hours later, the smoke-filled van pulls over to let the two mysterious Indian passengers out. However, as Morris begins to drive away, he realizes that the two have disappeared from view. Quickly stopping the van, Morris springs out to find himself on a deserted highway, the two Indians nowhere in sight. Climbing back in, Morris heads home.

That next morning, the sun is coming up as a tired and confused Morris drives past the 'Entering Hopeville' sign and into town. Unaware, he drives past a red Ford truck that's parked along side the road and a poster on a telephone pole that reads, *Elect Morris Moe Hill as Police Chief*. The poster was made using one of Morris's pictures that has the curly "q" in his hair. Inside the red truck, Larry and Albert wait patiently. Larry checks the chamber of the gun.

It starts as a typical day for Mr. Hodges, the bank manager. He unlocks the back door of the bank promptly at 7:30 and starts to enter.

When he unlocks the door, Larry and Albert spring from nowhere and rush him, forcing him into the bank.

The usual crowd is gathered for breakfast at the café as Morris enters and makes his way to a stool. Strangely enough, he sits on a different stool. Everyone, including Ben and Jenny, notice. Jenny quickly attends Morris with an unusually big smile, “Welcome back . . . Moe. How was your trip?”

He looks up and smiles. “The van broke down.”

Jenny, still smiling, pours his coffee, “I know. I heard.”

Morris takes a sip of his black coffee without adding sugar. “Jenny, there’s something that—” Morris starts, but is interrupted when Ben suddenly stands and steps to the center of the café.

He adjusts his gun belt like a tough guy and waves his arms interrupting everyone. “Okay, everybody listen up.” Everyone stops to listen. Ben goes on to describe his disappointment in their efforts over the weekend and how they have betrayed him by in running someone against him for police chief. Morris looks on, puzzled by the news of someone running against Ben when Ben approaches him waiting for a response.

Morris looks around at the smiling faces. His eyes come to rest on Jenny, who’s smiling and nodding. It finally sinks in. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m not running against you.”

“Oh no?” Ben replies as he walks out the front door and to a nearby pole. He takes down a poster and comes back in. He steps over to Morris and hands the poster to him.

Morris studies the election poster with the curly “q” picture. “Oh God, not that picture. Why did you use that one?”

Jenny smiles. “Sorry. It’s the only one your mother had and —”

Suddenly, one of the patrons stands and exclaims, “Hey it’s eight o’clock! What happened to the bank alarm?”

The Monday morning bank alarm test, which occurred like clockwork, had failed to go off. Everyone starts talking and agrees that something is wrong. They turn and look at the bank. The stolen farmer’s red truck slowly pulls up and parks in front of the bank.

Ben steps up to the window. “What the . . .?”

Just then, Larry rushes out of the bank and runs toward the waiting truck. Immediately Ben draws his gun and rushes out the door.

Everyone in the café crowds to the windows to watch as Ben runs with his gun drawn. Larry runs out of the bank front doors with a bag of money. Mr. Hodges excitedly exits the bank and runs after him. Ben approaches as Larry takes aim at him and fires. Ben is struck in the shoulder and falls to the street. Albert cranks the steering wheel and peels away from the bank heading straight for Ben. Ben rolls and reaches for a short chain hanging from the truck hitch. He holds onto the chain and is dragged behind the truck and toward the café. Everyone inside the café gasps at the sight. Morris instinctively rushes out the door and dives for the truck as it passes, landing on the hood. Everyone in the café crowds out the front door as Morris and the truck zoom away, down the street.

Morris clings to the hood and is having difficulty staying on. Larry, the smarter of the two crooks, yells to Albert to get rid of the two unwanted passengers. Albert swerves the truck back and forth to lose them. Grasping for anything to hang on to, Morris accidentally pulls the windshield wiper off. Realizing what he has in his hand, Morris begins whacking Albert up side his head with the wiper. Albert ducks his head away from the window after a good whack on the side of his face,

“Ouch! Hey stop that,” Albert whines, just as the truck crashes into the town telephone booth.

When the dust and smoke clear, Larry is standing over the wounded Ben. Larry sneers at Ben. “You stupid cop. You just couldn’t stay out of it. Now it’s gonna cost you.” He cocks the gun and aims it when his hand is suddenly hit with the windshield wiper. The weapon fires as it drops, the bullet just missing Ben. Ben rolls on the ground as Morris steps forward with the wiper. Larry rubs his hand as he turns to see his new aggressor. Just then, Albert staggers up. He pulls the knife from his back pocket. Larry sees that Albert has the knife. “Kill these Mayberry hicks,” he demands.

Albert tosses the knife down at Larry’s feet. “You do it. I’m tired of taking orders from you.”

Morris and Larry both dive for the knife and become entangled in a fight as the café patrons approach and surround them. Morris grabs Larry, pulls him to his feet and punches him. Larry staggers back. The café crowd “Oooohhs” with the punch. Morris pulls him back and cocks

his fist.

“We ain’t hicks and this ain’t Mayberry. It’s Hopeville.”

Morris punches him. Larry collapses onto the ground. The crowd cheers and runs to gather around them. Albert quickly raises his hands and collapses to his knees in surrender. The crowd surrounds them as Morris steps to Ben, and helps him up. Jenny pushes through the crowd to embrace Morris. She sees that Ben is wounded then shouts.

“Someone call an ambulance!”

As she turns to Morris, he too collapses.

Morris awakes in the Hopeville Clinic. His mother, father, Alice, Jenny, and other townsfolk are gathered around his bedside. Morris didn’t realize that during the fight, Larry had gotten several good jabs in with the knife and he required stitches.

Morris’s mother moves to his side. Morris tells her he had a strange dream where he took on some bank robbers and was running for police chief. Morris’s father tells him that it wasn’t a dream. He goes on to tell him that while he was out of town, Jenny had gotten everyone together to get the signatures to put him on the ballot.

Jenny adds that not only does he have the two hundred signatures, but has over six hundred. She shows him the stack of signatures. She steps forward, puts her hand on his, and assures him. “You’re gonna be the next police chief of Hopeville, Morris.” She then stands. “I have to get these in today though to get you on the ballot.” Morris tries to sit up. His mother stops him.

“You have to stay—”

“No, mother. I want to do it.”

Morris is helped across the street toward city hall. The townspeople cheer and applaud. Strangely enough, Ben meets Morris at the doors to city hall, shakes his hand and wishes him the best in the election.

A month after the bank robbery and the election, Hopeville Café is back to normal. The butchie cook is cooking, and Jenny is serving the customers. Now sitting on the first stool is Morris, wearing a police chief uniform. The door opens and Ben enters wearing the dogcatcher uniform that Morris used to wear. He stops to pat Morris on the shoulder and say hello. Jenny approaches and leans over the counter to Morris.

“Good morning, Chief.”

Morris smiles. “You can call me Morris or Moe.”

She leans closer, intimately. “Are you sure? How would that look? The police chief flirting with a waitress? You might get a bad reputation.”

Morris rubs his cheek thinking. “You have a point there.” He takes Jenny’s hand. “Maybe I can save my reputation.”

Morris rounds the counter, still holding her hand. She follows.

“So you have an idea?” she asks.

“Yeah, but I can’t share it here,” Morris responds teasingly.

“Ohhhhh, I see. Maybe we should step into my office,” she says, as she tries to poke Morris in the eyes. He blocks it.

“That could work,” he says.

Jenny turns and heads toward the storage room. She opens the door. Morris follows and steps into the room. She closes the door. It’s pitch dark. She reaches up for the light switch. “Maybe we should turn on the light.”

Morris stops her. “I have a better idea.”

A dream cloud begins to form. It lights the closet and their faces. Jenny looks up. There’s a beautiful beach with white sand and sky blue water in the cloud above them. She looks back at Morris. “Now maybe I’m crazy, but I suspect that there’s a dream above us.”

“It’s ours,” Morris declares.

“It’s our dream?” she asks.

Morris takes her hand and lifts it toward the dream. Whoosh, they are sucked into the dream. Now there they are standing on that beautiful beach. Morris holds her hand. “It’s our honeymoon.”

“Honeymoon?” she asks.

“There’s just one problem,” he begins.

She knows what he is going to ask and puts her finger to his lips to shush him. “Yes. I’ll marry you,” she answers as she wraps her arms around his neck. They passionately kiss. She pulls back and looks at him. “I only have one question?”

“What’s that?” he asks.

“How do we get back. Knuck Knuck.”

“Who cares?” They passionately kiss again.

One month later, Alice got the job at Al's dance club. She invited the entire town to see her first show. The club is packed with Hopeville Townspeople. Alice, dressed in her skimpy cowboy outfit, gyrated and dances to *Shake Your Booty* while everyone in the town applauds and cheers, including Morris, his parents, Jenny and Ben.

Willard, the janitor, graduated in front of the whole town. As he accepted his GED, he made some very strange comments about how aliens had been very helpful in his pursuit of education. No one understood what he was referring to but they applauded anyway.

*The End*