

Book One of the Modern Prophet Series

Two Doors

Chapter 4

Pete was having one of his favorite dreams. The first cup of coffee was the best part of the morning to him, and he was sitting in a small coffee shop savoring every drop. He sat at the front window, watching the traffic and pedestrians walk by. It was a busy day in the city, and the sidewalks were packed with people heading to work. It was cool and a gentle rain poured over the field of black umbrellas. He took a bite of his scone and looked to his left. A stunning blonde with blue eyes sat on the stool next to him. She smiled when he looked at her. Her perfume smelled like strawberries. He tried to say something to her when an odd smell hit his senses, but it was not like the body odor of the cabbie. It was more sinister, like sulfur or chlorine. A young man walked into the coffee shop to grab some coffee before heading to classes. His backpack was brimming with books. He saw Pete looking his way and smiled before heading over to the counter to place his order.

Pete noticed the beautiful woman had picked up her bag and walked out the door. That would be him soon, with places to go and things to do. Today, he was just happy to explore this new neighborhood. Another smell caught his attention. He turned to his right and saw the cabbie sitting on the other stool. He turned back quickly to avoid being recognized, and began to climb off the stool. As he turned back to grab his cup of coffee, he noticed the young man walking out of the store, but he had somehow forgotten his backpack. He smiled at Pete again as he began to type numbers into his cell phone. Pete tried to get his attention when the store exploded.

Pete, the other patrons, furniture, and broken glass flew out onto the sidewalk and the street. The mass of people on the sidewalks began to scream and run away from the scene. Pete was on the bottom of a pile of people and debris. He could hear others shouting for help. He was able to see the cabbie's lifeless body a few inches away. Blood poured from a large chunk of plate glass that was embedded in the cabbie's chest.

Pete sat up straight in bed with the sounds of sirens and screams for help still ringing in his ears. He was drenched in sweat and trembling. He slowly rose to his feet and walked into the small bathroom. He washed his face and sat on the toilet, allowing the images from his dream to fade. Looking at his watch by the sink, he noticed it was three-thirty in the morning. After five minutes he felt calmer and returned to bed, although he doubted he would sleep again. Under the covers, the images of the dream filled his head still. He pushed the thoughts out of his mind, and after fifteen minutes fell asleep again.

He awoke again and looked at the alarm clock, which read four-thirty. That would be it, he thought. He sat up and turned on the light on the bedside table. He was startled to see Gabe in his room, sitting on the easy chair beyond the end of the bed. "What the hell are you doing in here?" he demanded. "What about the privacy rule?"

Gabe stood up and walked to the end of the bed. He was smiling but said nothing. Pete stood up and walked over to the other and thumped him on the chest with his index finger. "Hey, I'm talking to you, Gabe! What the devil are you doing in here?"

Gabe only smiled and stood his ground. Pete smelled that same sulfurous odor he had in the coffee shop dream, but now it was overpowering. He covered his nose with his hand. Suddenly, the walls of the room were ablaze. The curtains were consumed instantly and the fire spread to the ceiling, where waves of flame raced toward the center of the room. The temperature was soaring and noxious black smoke covered the ceiling and was moving toward them. Pete could feel his pajamas catching on fire and tried desperately to put out the flames. Gabe was laughing now and pushed Pete back down onto the burning bed. Pete screamed in pain as the fire covered his body.

Pete awoke to a knock on the door. He was still shaking from the last dream and weakly said, "Yeah?"

Maria opened the door and said, "Mr. Pete, breakfast will be ready in fifteen minutes." She smiled at him and closed the door. He was panting for breath and his skin felt like it was still on fire. He rushed to the bathroom and turned on the shower. He pulled off his pajamas and stood under the cold water. As the water warmed, the dream began to fade into another miserable memory. Clearly, one day in this new place had done nothing for his sleep.

Twenty minutes later, he left his room and walked into the kitchen to find Michael and Gabe sitting and eating. They motioned him to sit between them and Maria brought a plate of food and a cup of coffee for him. "How are you today, Pete?" Mike asked.

"Not too good, I'm afraid," he replied. "More bad dreams. I'll be okay, just let me get something into my stomach." The two cousins had been watching a morning news talk show. Pete began to watch as well. It was the typical format with small snippets of news between various local interest stories and celebrity interviews. It was the kind of television Pete hated, but he was the guest here. He preferred scientific or historical programs where he could feed his mind.

The host on the show said, "This just in. There has been an explosion at a coffee shop in Manhattan this morning, approximately thirty minutes ago. That is all we know now, but the area is now cordoned off by police. We will keep you advised as more information becomes available." Pete's fork dropped to his plate and he sat slack-jawed, staring at the screen.

"Are you okay, Pete?" Gabe asked.

"No, I'm not," he replied. "This can't be happening."

"It's probably just a gas line explosion," Mike said. "What a terrible tragedy. I'm sure the police will get to the bottom of it."

"You don't understand," Pete argued. "I had a dream about that last night." The two cousins exchanged worried glances. "It's probably a coincidence, but I saw a young guy come into the shop with a backpack. I thought he was a college student or something. Then I saw him leave without the backpack. The bastard smiled at me and dialed a number on his cell phone. That's when the bomb exploded."

"It must be a coincidence," Gabe insisted. "The odds of a terrorist attack are very small. What else do you remember?"

"There was a beautiful blonde sitting next to me. She left just before the blast. Sitting on my other side was the cabbie who brought me here. He died in the blast," Pete recounted, panting for air.

"You have to know your mind put him there, Pete," Gabe said. "You saw him yesterday and your mind plugged him into the other dream. I'm sure he's fine."

"I know you're both right," Pete sighed. "The coincidence caught me off guard. I'll be okay."

"Anything else?" Mike asked.

"Not in that dream, but I did have another one," Pete admitted. "It was very strange. I woke in my bed and Gabe was in my room." He turned to Gabe and continued, "I asked you why and you just smiled at me. Then the whole room caught on fire and you pushed me down on the burning bed."

"Well, that part is definitely a dream!" Gabe said. "Pete, excuse Mike and me. We have a conference call in a few minutes. It shouldn't take too long and then we'll both go out with you to look around, okay?"

"Sure, that would be great," Pete replied as the other two hurried out of the room. He turned to Maria who looked horrified by his revelations. "The pancakes are awesome, Maria. Thanks. And don't worry about my dreams. I get them all the time." She smiled and returned to cleaning the dishes.

Michael and Gabe rushed into Gabe's room and closed and locked the door behind them. "It's got to be a coincidence," Gabe began. Mike raised his hand to silence the other and dialed a number on his phone.

"It's Michael . . . what can you confirm about the explosion today . . . okay, I understand . . . what about a Vincent Manson . . . really . . . okay, tell Granddad we have a situation. Bye." Mike collapsed onto one of the large chairs in the room, held his head in his hands and sighed. "It's all confirmed. Every last word."

"We have to keep this from Pete. If he knew, who knows what he would do? He might start thinking he is causing all of this," Gabe said.

Mike laughed weakly. "You have to know that is a possibility, cousin."

Gabe laughed and said, "You know better than that! He's just a guy, not some evil demon or terrorist. And what about the room on fire? You know I would never do that!"

Mike stood and walked over to the window and looked down on the city. "Yeah, you're right. But something is going on here. We have to keep our eyes on Pete, and we absolutely can't let him take that other job. That would provide too many hours a day when we cannot watch out for him."

"I'm sure your dad or mine can find a job for him," Gabe replied. "Or there is another possibility. We could tell him everything."

Mike laughed out loud. "You must be nuts, Gabriel. It may come to that eventually, but it's way too early. This could be a once in a lifetime premonition. As you said, the burning room was just a dream. Even his dream when he thought Vincent Manson would rob and kill him was just a dream. That poor bastard is dead now. He won't be hurting anyone anymore."

"What about the bomber?" Gabe asked. "Pete saw his face. I'm sure the police would love that information."

"There were lots of witnesses who saw the student with the backpack, so the police don't need Pete. Besides, are they going to believe a man's dream?" Mike laughed.

"We sure do," Gabe remarked. "You even told Granddad we have a situation. That's not something he'll be happy to hear."

"It had to be done," Mike sighed. His phone buzzed and he looked at the caller ID. "And speaking of the old man, here he is." He pressed the connect button. "Hi, Granddad, how are you . . . yes, Gabriel is here with me . . . yes, I said a situation . . . okay, let me put you on speaker."

While he was waiting for his roommates to wander the sites, Pete was typing into his journal. Years ago, he had decided to keep track of his nightmares. He hoped to find a trend in the data, or closure, but so far nothing. He thought it might make a good book someday, so he kept at it. As he was finished with the dream about the room burning, his cell phone rang and he looked at it. It was his cousin calling. "Hi Alice, how are you?"

"I'm so glad to hear your voice," she sighed. "You heard about the bombing today, didn't you?"

"I heard about an explosion, but didn't know it was a bombing yet," he replied.

"Get off your computer and check out the news!" she said. "It was definitely a bombing, although no one has claimed responsibility yet. At least ten people were killed and dozens injured. Many of the injured are reporting a young man with a backpack left it behind just before the blast. That's not far from you, is it?"

"They said backpack?" he groaned. "It's just like my dream."

"What are you talking about?" she asked. "I want you to move back here. Don't worry about the job. I want you to be safe."

"Relax, Alice, I'm fine," he replied. "I'm living in one of the most secure buildings in the city. My new job is only a few blocks away. I'm not going to hide from some maniac with a bomb, and the cops will probably nab him today anyway."

"I'm afraid, Pete," she said. "Your folks asked me to keep an eye on you. I don't think the city is safe anymore."

There was a knock at his door. "Alice, my roommates are taking me out on the town. I'll call you later. Bye." He walked over and then opened the door to find Gabe standing there. "Are we ready to go?"

"There's a bit of a change in plans, Pete," Gabe said. "Can I come in? I promise not to set your room on fire."

Pete laughed. "Sure, sorry about that stupid dream, come on in." When the two had sat down, Pete said, "If you guys can't go, that's okay. I just want to look around."

"Bob and Sam tell me the streets are a real mess right now," Gabe began. "Cops and the FBI are everywhere. Bob has brought in another ten security guards until things cool down. "It's probably better we stay here today. Hopefully things will be back to normal tomorrow."

"No problem," Pete replied. "I don't want to get caught in a mob. That would just fuel more bad dreams."

"There is one other thing," Gabe said. "My dad, Mike's dad, and Granddad are coming for dinner at six."

"I know the rules," Pete said. "I'll stay here. I've still got lots of stuff to put away."

"Well, that's the thing. They all want to meet you," Gabe said.

"Me? Okay, that's fine too," Pete said. "Any special things I need to know about them? I don't want to mess up."

"My dad's cool. Mike's is a lot like him; another stick in the mud. Granddad is the greatest, but to some folks, he can seem a little overwhelming," Gabe answered.

"So, he's like a superhero? He sounds great!" Pete replied.

“Something like that, Pete. Just let him do the talking. If he wants small talk, he’ll lead the way. And sometimes he says some stuff you’ll find hard to believe. Don’t worry about that. He’s fine, but a little eccentric,” Gabe stated. “And wear something nice. No suit and tie, but no jeans either, okay?”

