

Fractured Time

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One

Donovan Vicar was a “feeler”—a man who feels the vibrations of people around him. He was on his way home after a class at Carroll High in Bitternest where he taught history. He lived downtown with his autistic sister, Samantha. The fifteen minute walk home was his favorite moment of the day, especially in the fall. The fallen leaves gave off a pleasant aroma to the crisp night air. The Louisiana city of Bitternest was normally plagued by a dense fog, but tonight the streets were clear of any mist. Vicar enjoyed walking through Swan Park where the red and gold trees looked alive. The park was almost empty; it struck him as strange for a Friday evening.

There wasn't anyone else on the path save for a man coming toward him some thirty feet ahead. When Vicar was about ten feet from him, he began feeling anxious. When they were about to cross paths, the man's shoulder bumped hard into his. Vicar felt the discomfort peak as they made contact. He immediately sensed a growing unease taking over him. He could discern a tingling in the pit of his stomach. Soon enough, darkness suffocated him. From past experience, he knew that was never a good sign.

If someone was pure, he would sense the warmth of their kindness, a feeling of well-being would set inside him. If he went near a person that was corrupt or immoral, their threatening energy would make him feel uneasy, sometimes to the point of sickness. A sensation of sadness or anger would wash over him. He had come across a few people he could label as evil. In the instances it occurred, it sent tremors straight to his core. He thanked God that the vast majority of mankind was basically good. Otherwise he'd have a hard time going outside every day.

The last time he had experienced it, the woman whom he'd touched had gone on to kill her mother and daughter the following day. When he had seen her get arrested the next day on the six o'clock news, he had nearly choked on his food upon recognition. He swore to himself that if he ever came across a similar feeling, he would act upon it.

He stopped mid-stride and turned to get a glimpse of the bulky man whom had already exited the park. All he could see in the twilight was the back of his shaven head and his heavy grey overcoat. Vicar glanced at his watch; Samantha would be all right for another half hour.

He went after him, walking at a brisk pace, making sure not to look too obvious. He followed him for four blocks on Fascination Street. The man didn't turn around once. At one point, he paused in front of a candy store and stared at the window. He resumed his walk moments later.

Vicar tailed him for another ten minutes until they arrived at the Greyhound bus terminal. He slowed his pace, careful not to let the man see him as he entered the station. The man went to a ticket counter and purchased a ticket. Vicar watched him walk to the Dallas-bound waiting area and sit there in a chair.

Vicar ambled across the room to a souvenir kiosk and pretended to browse through a magazine. He looked at the departure times for Dallas on the monitors. The next one was in forty-five minutes. Vicar didn't have that much time to dedicate to this. He hated this. The old axiom “With great power comes great responsibility” reverberated in his head again and again. As much as he didn't like giving up, he couldn't see how he would be able to pursue this any further. He had no idea what he was looking for. He didn't have a clue of what the

man could do or when he would do it. His choices were few. He finally opted for the obvious one: to head back home. He decided there was nothing more he could do for the time being.

Vicar hadn't gotten a clear view of the man's face; from where he stood, all he could distinguish was that he was white and bald. With a deep breath, Vicar took the room in with one sweep of his eyes. He had one last chance. He would start toward the exit and walk right in front of him.

When he was inches from him, he felt the darkness overcome him again. This guy was bad news; Vicar's emotions were going off the chart. His heart began to race and his breathing grew shallow. He wasn't even touching him and he felt this bad. He wondered how it would be to shake this man's hand.

He had to get out of there fast.

The man had his head down, staring at the floor as he passed him. That was his only chance. He had blown it.

As Vicar exited the terminal, the man raised his head and smiled.