# Prologue

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Who would have thought that I would wake up and realize that I would be sleeping in a totally different bed tonight. Interested, you say, well read on. I get up in the morning, usually because my cat feels that I must wake up, at 6am. So, with that, I get up which takes me 2 minutes as the joints are full of arthritis and the body refuses to hit the “go” button for lift off. I finally stagger, well more life shuffle to the kitchen and pour me some tea. And yes, it is sweet and very yummy and full of caffeine. Then I turn around and fix the ole coffee brewer and get hazelnut coffee dripping. I then pick up the speed from shuffling to a slow walk to the recliner. Here I wait until the brewer stops making the popping and hissing noises and I get back up and pour a cup. I look out the kitchen window and barely see a glimmer of sun. I return to the recliner, turn on Foxnews and there I sit for a spell. One of many morning rituals for me is to check both work and personal email. I guess I am hoping for that long-lost uncle that says, he missed me, where are you and I have lots of money for you. On this particular day was the same as any. I would check my email and see that USPS had sent my daily notice of mail coming in. I really wish I had not “opted in” for this mess but here I am and well, I just don’t know if I will get to remove the stupid thing from my email. I just can’t get over how much email I get. I tried to go through one day and remove so many of the emails and unsubscribe from the mailing list and yet, more come so I have started a new process; ignore the bloody email

Oh, yeah, right now back to my daily process, here I am looking at the email from the wonderful snail mail and I see a letter that I am unfamiliar with. It looks like the letter is dated March 19th, 1999. Now wait, that is the day that my dear sweet grandmother had passed away. Oh, the stories I could tell you about that woman. She was a true hero to me. There I go again, losing you, now back to the story. Anyway, the letter seems to have been, well a few years late. Like 21 years late. You see, that truly supports my theory that the mail is truly the snail mail. Anyway, got to keep on track, I am now thinking, what in the hell is this letter. It shows the letter is from a lawyer’s office in Athens, GA. I do not recognize the lawyer’s office, a Summers, and Drake Associates. I only know of one Drake and that is my best friend, who is a lawyer, I wonder? With my luck, I am either getting sued by my ex-wife, there were 2 of them or it could be that I am going to be taken to court cause I have an unknown past credit collection that is coming back to haunt me.

Well, I can’t worry about the letter even though I know that no matter what I do, it will be back in my head wondering what that letter is all about. Now back to my coffee and tea and watching a little bit of Foxnews in the morning. Damn, wish I knew what that letter was about. Just thinking of that day brings back a rush of memories for me. Dad calling me at 9pm that night to tell me that she had passed on. I knew she be in heaven with grandfather which is what she always wanted. I heard stories that those two were truly in love with each other. Grandfather passed away in November of ’65 which means that they were married for about 40 years. I wished I had that.

Anyway, I hear the mailman outside driving down the street, so I drag myself out of the recliner, go out to the garage and pack my pipe full of tobacco and light it. This works out about right as I walk down to the curb when Tony drives up and says “Hi, how you doin” and I tell him “I am doing great.” Actually, I am kind of nervous, but I keep that to myself. He hands over the mail and while puffing away on the pipe, I walk up the driveway.

Sure enough, there is that blasted letter, and it looks weary. Like someone had stuck the damn thing on top of a shelf and let it sit there for years, realized that it was sitting there and figured they just drop it into the mailbag. Now, I was thinking, how does that letter get to me when I was living in Raleigh at the time and I had changed addresses, now let’s see, I am thinking it was 6 times and it’s been 20 years. That is amazing considering that most places don’t forward stuff after a year. Very curious so anyway I get to the garage and sit the other mail down and have a sip of coffee. I love hazelnut coffee; it just warms my heart.

So, here I am looking at the letter, flipped it over and besides all the forwarding yellow strips on the front, nothing else gives any clue to what is in the letter. It is thick and has 50 cents worth of stamps which at that time, 20 years ago, it was 25 cents to send a first-class letter. Anyway, I take my knife and open the letter and look at the letter head and it has the Summers and Drake Associates on 2301 S. Milledge St in Athens, GA. That must have been grandmothers’ lawyers as I was not privy to that info at the time grandmother had passed and the will was given by a lawyer, can’t remember that person at all.

So, the letter states to Mr. John Allister Lawwill Stourton IV, late grandson of Mrs. John Allister Lawwill Stourton II, do hereby state the following:

*“On the day of my passing, henceforth is information that must be passed to my grandson who is truly, by birth my true grandson and of that of my late husband. You are not from my son. You were from our true son who was killed on the very day you were born. You were given to your father who was adopted along with your uncle. Because of this information, you cannot disclose this information until your father as you know him, and your uncle are no longer alive.*

*You come from a long line of well-known individuals which trace their ancestral history to Scotland. You are also entitle to the titles and vestiges that were part of our family. You are also entitled to the trust that was set aside many years ago without the knowledge of your father or mother for reasons, I am sure, you understand by now. The letter you received was meant to be given to you upon my death and that information would be passed on to you. If this letter becomes delayed, then there were forces that I was afraid would be put into place. If you have received this letter than those forces have disappeared and you can go fourth and do what we, you and I had envisioned.*

*Know that I, your grandfather, and father truly loved you and pray that you have reached your goal of becoming a doctor in whatever field you wished.*

*Now, to the trust that awaits you. You are currently worth, at the time of my passing some $535 million dollars. You currently have an estate in Aberdeen Scotland, a home in Spruce Pine, North Carolina and another home in Danville, Illinois. These places are kept in the trust and will be maintained until you take over these locations. The trust also has a mine in the Bakersville and Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Grandfather always had a weakness for digging gems up for me and having the local jeweler who you knew here in Athens. That is why I had the jewelry that I did because of his love for me. You have at your disposal someone law firms one banker, both manage the entire estate and trust including business concerns. You also have a staff of approximately 50 people who are currently on your payroll and are very loyal to you. The last bit is going to surprise you. You are of royal blood. You are part of a secret society that protect people and helps promote good. Let that sink through. You are going to have a life altering change that will take you to places you never imagined. Keep the faith in God, do well for others and protect those that cannot protect themselves. When the time comes and you come to heaven, we will be waiting for you, until then, be the best and honor your forefathers.*

*Love,*

*Grandmother”*

 I think I need to sit down and maybe steady my hand and no, what I need is to visit the little boy’s room as nature has just made a call on me.

# Chapter 1

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# Headrush

I woke up on the floor and realized just then that I must have passed out, from what, I don’t remember. I was, wait, I had been standing in the living room and I was, oh yeah, reading the letter when I realized that I had just become a very wealthy person and, bingo! Lights out for me and here I am, leaning next to the sofa and rereading the letter again. I am thinking that someone is having a joke on me. John, my high school buddy must be laughing to himself for pulling this on me. It has been 20 years since my grandmother passed and the change of address for 6 different addresses just doesn’t make since. And why am I just hearing that my dad, who was adopted, really isn’t my dad but rather a stand in for my real dad who died on the day I was born. And yet, I look so much like my ‘not real’ dad and mom. And where is my real mother in this picture? Grandmother never stated where she was in this whole affair. And where do I go to get this large sum of money. Me thinks that someone had way too many drinks when this was written. But my grandmother was never one to drink, much and she was always a straight shooter with me.

 I need another cup of coffee and see where I need to go to find this mysterious money. I guess someone thinks I am a sucker for anything. I got bills to pay, I rent the place I have, and I don’t even own a solid running car. Oh, I could drive the car I have but the transmission might decide at the least inconvenient time to go bust and leave me stranded. So, I drag myself to my office and sit down. I push the mouse on the desk to activate the computer, which was a Christmas present to myself, well at least the computer tower itself. The monitors are hand me downs but they serve their purpose. I look to the right and see my lamp. It is a Steampunk lamp that I built using iron pipe and some wire, with a wood base and use railroad insulators as top pieces to each holder. Something catches my eye as I peer out the front window. It is a black Suburban. Don’t see many of them on this street, kind of reminds of Secret Service vehicle or some unknown acronym that has a silent function in our government service. Who knows, so I turn back and start typing on the computer.

“Ding Dong”

What the hell, oh that’s the front doorbell. Wait, I look out again and the Suburban is still there. Damn, I am so screwed now. They are here to take me away and I am not dressed to meet anyone. Well the hell with it, if it is my time, then I will go out with a smile. I get to the door and look through the peep hole and I see a woman and man standing there. The man is in a simple suit, bland shirt, blue tie, and government written all over them. I holler out to my honey “We got company and it looks like the government”

So, I open the door and am greeted with both of them, the guy states his name “My name is, Jake Stead and my partner, Jane Brown, we are with the Secret Service, can we come in?”

I’m thinking, yeah, sure come on in and while you are at it, tell your other “friends” that they don’t have to hide.

I say “sure, come on in. You want something to drink”

Both said in unison “No”

“So, what does the Secret Service want with a 50 something year old college professor who tries to mind his own business?”

Mr. Stead pulls out some papers and hands them to me, while he is doing that his partner, Ms. Brown decides to be the spokesperson.

“Mr. Stourton, we have here on the behest of the US government”

I say “what for”

Ms. Brown continues “You are the recipient of a letter from Summers and Drake Associates in Athens, GA?”

I said, “Yeah, and how did you or were you aware of this letter?”

Ms. Brown continued “We have been aware of the letter since your grandmother wrote the letter. We were also given a letter that at the time when all parties are deceased that you would receive the letter. Furthermore, because of the nature of the meaning behind the letter, you have been granted personal protection by your US government”

Well, I must state the obvious, I am speechless, which to my friends, is a rare feat indeed. I get up and go into the kitchen and ask if anyone wants something to drink, and again both in unison say “no”. What is with these people, they go to the same school and act the same at the same time? I look out the back window and look what I see, in the next street over is another black Suburban. See, I knew they ran in a pack.

Well, I go back into the living room and sit back down in my rather worn leather recliner.

My mouth starts to run on auto pilot “So, with what you have told me, what am I in for? You see, I still have classes I must teach online and I have things here I need to tend to. Oh, by the way, why don’t you get your people to either come over here or go somewhere so they don’t spook the neighbors or worse, they start asking questions”

Mr. Stead finally talks to an invisible person “Baker and Charlie rendezvous at the Delta location. We will update on the sitrep when we can, copy?”

“Baker confirms, Charlie confirms”

Mr. Stead continues “Dr. Stourton, we have made arrangements with your school for 3 days to help you with your affairs. First, you need to consult with Mr. Drake, who I believe is your best friend Steven, which is one of your private Lawyers. Second, you will need to go to the bank in Athens, I believe it is SunTrust Bank in downtown Athens and third, we need to go to your home in Spruce Pine, NC. All of this will be explained to you when you arrive.”

I asked “Can’t Mr. Drake just meet us at the house in Spruce Pine? I would think that would sort of kill, as they say, two birds with one stone?”

Ms. Brown starts talking “Charlie, get on the phone and ask Mr. Drake to come to Dr. Stourton’s home in Spruce Pine and make it this afternoon as we need to get this in concrete, copy?

“Charlie copies, do you want bank to be there as well?

Ms. Brown “Copy, good idea. Also get Stourton’s car ready as well. Am sure he will need it. From now on, he is call sign, Roverman, copy?”

“Charlie copies, see you in 5 hours, over”

You know what I am thinking don’t you, I ask myself questions like this all the time just to keep me guessing, am I like being treated as some official of the US of A government? I mean, I did vote the guy in office now who is a Republican but dang, am I losing it or what?

Mr. Stead pops up, “Roverman, you need to get dressed and get your family ready. We will be leaving in 30 minutes to go to Spruce Pine”

I’m thinking, I have a 20-year-old, Named Kira. Now Kira is a unique, beautiful woman at 6-foot-tall and built like a Greek goddess who is already a volleyball professional and gets paid for volleyball apparel and equipment. I have seen her out with her friends, and you can watch as certain guys will just walk away as if they are intimidated and then it is the athletic guys that walk up to her. She had told me once that she doesn’t want to date a guy shorter than her, said it was just not right. Well, I don’t think that will be an issue. I know what will be is watching after these young men who are attracted to her but I also know that I really don’t have anything to worry as she is strong enough to beat the stuffing out of a guy and do it with a smile. Oh yeah and I forgot to mention that her mom is her manager and she has her own Range Rover AND it is paid for. You know something, she actual brings home more money than a lowly professor, something is twisted in society. Now Kira takes 2 hours to get herself looking like she might be ready to go out and another hour along with talking to half of Wake Forest. I smile to myself, but it was enough for Mr. Stead to notice.

He asks “And what are you smiling for sir”

I say, “You have a 20-year-old that can get ready in 30 minutes, and I have some swamp land in Florida I sell you”

Mr. Stead “Nope and not interested in kids at the moment”

So, off I go through the house getting Kelly up, give her coffee and then, oh I dread this, open the door and tell the 20-year-old to get her butt up, we are going to our new house in the mountains.

She asked, “is there a second floor just for me?”

Lord have mercy on me, I guess that is a 20-year-old girl thing. Worried about her space. But it did get here out of bed. That is a first. So, I go into the bathroom, do those things one does to get cleaned up and looking decent. Oh yeah and don’t forget cat attention. Got to pay attention to the kitty. Oh damn, just remembered, who going to look after the animals.

I get done, in record time and ask either one who is going to mind the animals?

Ms. Brown speaks up “We have 2 people who will be staying here until you come back or instruct us otherwise”

That sound ominous but okay. Right at 30 minutes, and we are ready to go.

Then the actions begin, someone please wake my ass up, PLEASE!

Ms. Brown “We are coming out, ready to go in 5, meet us at echo location, copy”

“Flight One copies”

Flight One copies? What the hell. Someone, anyone, please get me some sanity and oh by the way, how bout lining up the shot glasses, I hate flying and I need to be in the 2 sheets to 3 sheets status.

And I will be damned if not 5 minutes later there is a helicopter waiting for us, I think. Sure enough, in the parking lot of none other than the Southeastern Seminary College right here in Wake Forest, we pull right up to it and we are instructed to load up in the helicopter. Never been in one. I hear that you need to have both hands and feet to drive one of these babies. Wonder if that is true. Damn, wonder if there is a hidden bar in here. I look over and see the sun rising as we start to rise up in the air. You can feel the chopper vibrating inside. I can see that this will not be my normal mode of transportation. I look outside, wow, so that’s what Wake Forest looks like in the air. At least the air was fresh as we had had a fresh rainfall over the night and the temps were in the low sixties which was not normal for summer. Still looking for that drink, flight attendant, where is that drink, my nerves are shot?

The chopper rises and the look on the 20-year-old is absolutely funny, but I can’t let her see it. She is scared and you can see it in her eyes.

Ms. Brown reaches over to her and puts her hand on her and talks with her over the headphones. Whatever she is saying is good as I can see her relax a bit.

I ask the pilot “So, you been driving this thing for some time”

Chopper pilot “Yep, good to meet you Mr. Stourton, hoping we could meet. I am your pilot, and this here is your chopper”

I choke out “Say what, this is my rig and you’re my pilot? What else do I need to know, or can you say?

Pilot “Mr. Stourton, when we get to the palace, that is the place in the mountains you see, all will become clear to you”

Now, with a dry throat “Okay, so how long it be until we get to the palace?”

Pilot “oh, about an hour”

I look over to Mr. Stead and ask “You listening in on this, right?

Mr. Stead nodded his head

“Okay” I say, “How about telling more of what we are getting into at the palace as it seems that I am the last to know of this stuff. I understand that when I woke up, I was perfectly happy in my 3-bedroom home with a cat and dog, and old Rover in the garage and actual grass in my front AND back yard. Then you 2 drive up, after I get this letter that is some 20 years old and has found me from 6 previous addresses and tells me that I got more money than Doan’s Pills. Does that sum it up?”

Mr. Stead, takes a few seconds and then starts to talk “Now that we are in a more secure location, you can be aware of where you are going and what is waiting for you”

I wave him to come on with it

“The Palace is a 120,000 square foot home that is 3 stories high and has a basement/underground facility. The home has 6 bedrooms, several bathrooms, a large kitchen, 2 living rooms, dining room that will sit 20 and an office. This was your grandfather’s favorite place to relax and to enjoy digging minerals on the mountain. That is an important place as you own 500 acres of land that includes a surface mine located within view from the house. You will get a chance to see that once you have been informed of all the assets. You have 6 individuals who are under your care at the Palace. You also have access to cars and the chopper at any time. You also have a jet on standby when you need to go to your home in Danville and Aberdeen. You have full communication gear both satellite and fiber. Both systems are totally secured.”

Pilot interrupted saying “Mr. Stead, we will arrive 5 minutes”

“I heard that” I said “Okay then, let’s get ready for the show”

We sit down on the landing pad, next to the house or should I say a mansion. And it is a log house to top it off. I get out and look at the view to the east, I think and what a view this place is. And off in the distance looks to be surface mines. I wonder if they are mine? How strange to think things are mine. We must be up around 4,000 feet up as the air is crisp and fresh. You can see down to the valley and the road that follows the mountain side up to the house. And the trees as beautiful. The fur trees, oaks and maples are spectacular. The house is cover with gardenias, azaleas, iris, and other flowers. I bet I have a gardener who has double great thumbs, I can’t wait to meet him. The home itself is quite spectacular itself with a center A frame on the third floor and a balcony that would be the dream for hotels. We all go inside on the second floor where the kitchen is located. The Bedrooms and one living room are on the third floor. The office is on the south end of the third floor and living room is in the middle atrium portion and the master bedroom is on the north side.

The kitchen, the other living room, one bedroom is on the second, while the other bedrooms, storage closet and pantries are on the first floor. There is also a garage that can hold 2 cars and the second floor has a 3-car garage. The front yard is set up in a terrace sort where there are three levels and each one has a themed color setup to the layout. Also, if you look closer, you will see quartz lining the beds. One layer has amethyst, another has rose and smoky quartz and another layer has citrine and beryl. One just imagines the different flower that contrast these beautiful stones. The time it took to collect the stones alone were amazing but taking the time to build such an extravagant flower bed is breath taking.