

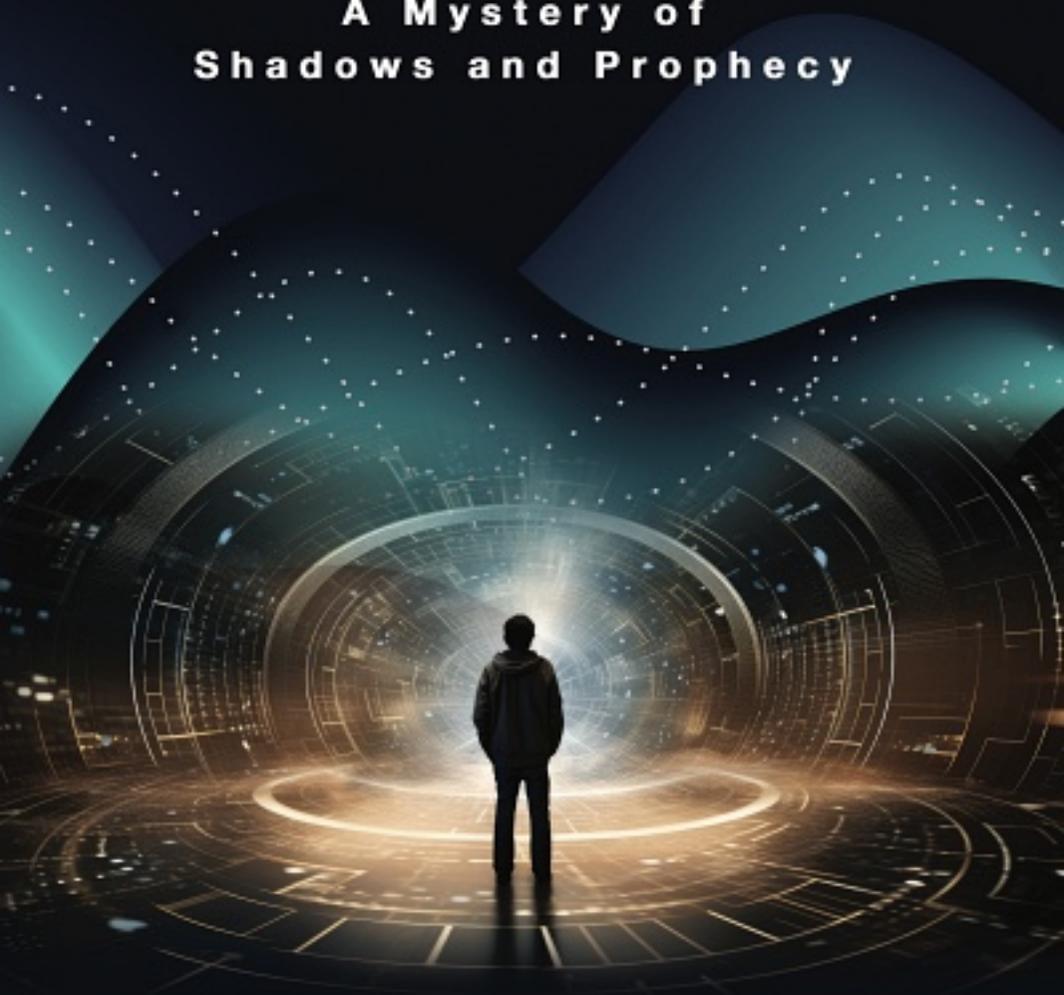
Frequencies from Beyond the Veil merges supernatural mystery, scientific intrigue, and raw emotion in a story about grief, power, and the vibration of love that connects all living things.

**Frequencies from Beyond the Veil:
A Mystery of Shadows and Prophecy**
By Albert R. Rodriguez

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FREQUENCIES FROM BEYOND THE VEIL

A Mystery of
Shadows and Prophecy



ALBERT R. RODRIGUEZ

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Things Are Not Always What They Appear.....	1
Chapter 2: Familia	15
Chapter 3: Person Of (Dis)-Interest.....	31
Chapter 4: Bump In The Night	41
Chapter 5: Digital Entity.....	55
Chapter 6: WTF?	69
Chapter 7: Missing.....	81
Chapter 8: Dare To Dream	91
Chapter 9: School Drama.....	103
Chapter 10: Elimination.....	115
Chapter 11: Fantasma!.....	125
Chapter 12: They Know.....	129
Chapter 13: Strange Tech	147
Chapter 14: What's Next?	157
Chapter 15: Say It Isn't So.....	165
Chapter 16: Nikola Comes Through!	173
Chapter 17: Putting The Puzzle Together.....	185
Chapter 18: Darkness Comes Calling.....	197
Chapter 19: Seen The Light.....	211
Chapter 20: Spiritual Networking.....	223

Chapter 21: Familiar Attack.....	241
Chapter 22: Meet And Greet.....	253
Chapter 23: Not This Time	263
Epilogue	277
Appendix.....	283
Glossary	285

Chapter 1:

Things Are Not Always What They Appear

Six months ago

General Richard Thompson nervously slid his mouse back and forth, reviewing the brief in his Fort Detrick, Maryland, office. Knowing that the survival of humanity depended on him made good sleep scarce. Most mornings, the general needed at least three cups of coffee to get him going.

Not today.

He knew he would kick off the most important mission of his life and had been awake all night.

The general took a deep breath and walked over to his security cabinet, punching in a 12-digit code on the small keypad on the front door. Inside the cabinet sat another secured locker that required his fingerprint to open. A black bracelet on his wrist also synced the cabinet lock electronically. The general placed his thumb on the scanner; a small green light on the bracelet illuminated briefly, then a clicking sound unlocked the compartment.

He slid a single shelf out, revealing a small iridium container measuring 4 inches by 4 inches. Inside lay four rare Taaffeite crystals, separated by iridium dividers.

As Richard lifted one of the purple Taaffeite crystals, he observed how cold it felt. Individually, the crystals were inert, but when placed in proximity to each other, something unbelievable happened.

The general, though quite a no-nonsense individual, was aware of events that were making him rethink the fundamental rules of the universe.

A knock at the door prompted the general to return the iridium box to its secure container and lock the cabinet.

He turned to face the door while adjusting his uniform.

“Please come in.”

A sergeant dressed in a camouflage uniform opened the door. “Sir, your nine-a.m. appointment is here. Briefing room SCIF-A1.”

General Thompson nodded. “Thank you. I appreciate it. Please let him know I will be there shortly.”

The general returned to his desk to read the briefing that he had provided in advance to the colonels who would support the operation. It helped him think about how best to convey the situation. The briefing's primary purpose was to request funding and support from the various divisions.

General Thompson had served several combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. He had commanded troops, including special forces, through treacherous missions.

Often, in these missions, comrades did not return. But none of those experiences had prepared him for what humankind was now facing. A frightening series of events across the world had begun, threatening to get worse.

As Richard looked at a picture of his wife and son for the first time, he was truly concerned about their future.

He closed his eyes, painfully remembering when it first began, barely a month ago.

The general had received a phone call concerning a guard who had become quite ill under unusual circumstances at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. He probably would not have given it much consideration, except that before the incident, people had reported pulsing lights and strange sounds in the area. When the guard had gone to investigate, an unknown force knocked him unconscious.

Shortly after, the guard exhibited odd symptoms and, in a matter of hours, succumbed to his affliction.

After that initial incident, identical ones occurred in the Middle East and the Americas. Shortly thereafter, it went from a few stricken to an imminent threat to all.

General Thompson walked down the hallway to begin the incredible mission that lay ahead of him.

His cell phone vibrated, and a text message arrived. The general glanced at his phone, viewing a message from the senator.

Senator: Are you ready?

Thompson (typing): Hope so, heading to my first meeting now.

Senator: Good luck!

The senator was his primary confidant because he had forewarned him of the coming crisis and secured the funding for the mission. It was the senator who had entrusted him with protecting the crystals.

Since the exposures were occurring worldwide, information containment was also crucial. The senator had been successful in his efforts by delicately balancing support from colleagues on both sides of the aisle. This helped to keep it under wraps.

He showed devotion to his religious beliefs as well.

The senator had told him, “General, for me it’s God, country, then family—in that exact order. And for this mission, I am definitely counting on God to get us through this.”

The general walked into the highly secure room, officially known as the Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF). The room had reinforced walls, soundproofed interiors, and strict monitoring to prevent eavesdropping. No one could bring in cell phones or any electronic equipment.

All the restrictions made the air sterile, giving anyone entering a wave of unease.

This morning, he was meeting with one of the three colonels he had handpicked. Each one would lead an elite team crucial to the mission.

As he made his way inside the SCIF, he saw Colonel Horatio Phelps sitting at the end of a rectangular table surrounded by black leather chairs.

The colonel, who was of a smaller stature compared to the general, wore thick black-rimmed glasses from extensive use of computer monitors. Though only in his thirties, he seemed much older because of a receding hairline, a compliment to a decorated military career. He had made it through the ranks of Army intelligence expeditiously.

The general had worked alongside him on several previous top-secret missions. The colonel's determination to complete objectives efficiently had impressed him. He was reasonably cautious, always choosing his words carefully.

The colonel stood up to salute him.

The general saluted back, "Thank you, colonel. Have a seat, please."

Biting his lip, he paused momentarily as he formed his initial words in his mind.

"I know you received a briefing on the operation with limited details. As a heads-up, it's a rather sensitive situation. Things are not always what they appear to be."

The colonel nodded with a quizzical expression.

The general was never cryptic-always direct.

So why the pause?

General Thompson took a deep breath. “Only a handful of people know the actual situation. You must not share what I am about to tell you without my approval.

“A source, who will remain unnamed for now, contacted a member of Congress. This source warned some humans would become ill from an untraceable exposure and that this initial wave would be only the beginning. Despite the warning, personnel could not readily verify it, so they did not act on it.

“Soon after the warning, military personnel from multiple bases fell ill and suffered psychotic episodes. I have a video to show so you can understand what we are dealing with.”

The general clicked a button, and two large monitors embedded in the wall turned on. The video, duplicated on both monitors, began by listing a warning:

TOP SECRET - Highly Confidential

Obtain clearance from General Richard Thompson prior to viewing.

Subject: 001

Time: 1900

The video began showing a young soldier sitting on an examination table, talking with two medical personnel.

Initially, the soldier was answering questions coherently, appearing a bit confused. The soldier was explaining how he had come upon a bright orb on the ground. He recalled blacking out just as he reached out to touch it.

After a few minutes, however, the soldier's demeanor changed. His personality became quite different, and his mental state unraveled. He started talking in a disjointed foreign language.

The medical staffers were unsure how to treat him. He waved his hands around, becoming more unstable.

As Colonel Phelps watched the video, he appeared apprehensive and unsettled.

The soldier's behavior became so erratic that it was necessary for the staff to restrain him on the table.

His eyes were wide open, and he growled at times, laughed at others. Several staff members attempted without success to calm him down. The portions of his arms that were not held down moved uncontrollably, as if he were spasming.

Colonel Phelp's eyes focused on the monitors, confused and unsure of what to make of what he was viewing. Seeing the soldier in extreme discomfort was not the most concerning part for the colonel.

It was that the soldier no longer seemed in control of his own body and mind.

The recording advanced to several hours later. The room was dark. Video distortions appeared around the patient. He exhibited random neck movements as he talked in his sleep. When a medical staff member came to check on him, he became aggressive. The patient foamed at the mouth. He appeared to mouth words to the camera, yet the recording registered no coherent sound. The staff member injected a sedative into the patient.

The next morning, his behavior had worsened-more uncontrollable movements, screaming. It was obvious the soldier had not improved, with bloodstains near his eyes, ears, and nose.

“In my dreams-they got in my dreams. The world is ending! They are coming for all of us!” As he yelled, his eyes turned white for a few moments.

Colonel Phelps exclaimed with deep unease, “That is not normal.”

The general quietly acknowledged, “I know. I know. Disturbing.”

The general stopped the video.

“He died later that day, unfortunately.

“The source provided a treatment protocol for these exposed humans. It was not always successful, as you saw. Essentially, we received instructions to treat the afflicted with acoustic waves at specific frequencies.”

The general brought up a map of the world on the monitor. Continents were blue. Red dots were visible across the world.

“The red dots represent soldiers afflicted with the disorder. Right now, we have at least one on every habitable landmass. It would seem this danger is not over.

“The source warned that more people would become afflicted. We do not know the exact number, but our information will help us identify the next humans who will be exposed.

“I will oversee the various teams from here at HQ.

“Colonel, you will lead BRAVO Team, our intelligence-gathering and assessment arm.

“Now, I can try to address questions, but I may not answer all of them fully. I understand this is a lot to process; I trust your experience, and I believe you trust me.”

Colonel Phelps spoke slowly but firmly, “Yes, I do.”

He paused. “General, what exactly happened to the soldier in the video, to the others?”

General Thompson responded, “We have done extensive testing, but still uncertain of the exact cause. Experts believe their condition resulted from a neurological response brought on by a toxin or possibly an extreme dose of radio frequency.”

Colonel Phelps continued, “Is this effort to control the crisis an international one?”

“Are other nations aware of what we have encountered?”

The general replied. “So...yes and no.

“Yes, we are working alongside international partners.

“And no, most do not know the whole situation. We cannot risk a leak.

“We are cautious about what we share and with whom.”

The colonel, becoming alarmed, asked, “Well, have you met this source?

“Who are they?”

“As I mentioned, it’s a sensitive situation. At first, no one believed this would proceed as it has, but so far, everything this source has told us has come true.”

Colonel Phelps sensed the uncertainty. “What is the delay? The initial contact was over a month ago. Why have we not progressed more quickly? Is the entire government in line and supporting this?”

The general raised his hands in a calming motion. “I understand-this is a lot to take in. But I can promise you we have been doing our best to follow this through.”

His voice became sterner. “You are concerned by our lack of progress? We are facing a crisis we have never had before. Despite some of the afflicted receiving immediate treatment, death was still the result.

“Our top scientists are trying to wrap their heads around all of this. We know something bad is happening, and we believe we have a plan to stop it.”

He paused.

“Colonel, I guarantee we are moving as expeditiously as we can.”

Phelps sighed as he absorbed the complexity of the situation.

“My apologies, General. I meant no disrespect.”

General Thompson turned the monitors off and walked back to the front of the SCIF.

“Everything we discussed today cannot leave this room.

“When you return to your section, your tasks will be obscured to some extent. Your sole focus will be to achieve our mission, but its description may vary. Obviously, this is for secrecy and protection.

“Please remember what you saw here today and the mission's importance: protecting our fellow man.

“Thank you in advance for the sacrifices you will be making.”

Richard walked out of the SCIF, glad to get some fresh air. His phone vibrated as he retrieved it from the outside locker.

Surprise, surprise! I wonder who that can be?

Senator: How did it go?

Thompson (typing): It went okay.

Senator: General, we could use better than ‘OK’.

Thompson (typing): I mean, the first meeting is over, and the colonel has raised no serious objection.

Senator: Thank God, that is what I want to hear. Keep me informed.

The general walked back into his office.

The information he shared with the colonel was enough to get the plan in motion.

But he did not tell him everything. For now, he would hold back-and not purely for security reasons, but to ensure the teams stayed focused.

Those who were affected told of shadows that appeared out of nowhere and attacked them. Many of the afflicted reported having the same dream. An apocalyptic nightmare with the world ending in a wave of fire.

The world was under attack, and only a few people actually knew the genuine horror happening around them.

He reached to close the door, his hands trembling.

How could I tell the colonel that something unspeakably evil was coming our way?

Moving to his glass cabinet, Richard opened it and took out a bottle of liquor.

Taking a deep breath, he then poured a shot of Jack Daniel's. He drank it in haste and paused for a moment of reflection as he gazed at the secure cabinet that held the crystals.

I'm grateful we have the help. I only hope our teams will be ready for what awaits them.

Chapter 2: Familia

Saturday, 6:35 p.m.

Luis sighed, reluctantly sampling the smallest amount of cold black-eyed pea fish soup that would be enough to satisfy Beth, his foster mom.

She smiled. “It’s delicious, right? No reason to wait until New Year’s!”

Trying to control his gagging, Luis replied, “Oh, yep,” and spat it out while Beth was glancing away.

Fortunately, Nathan, his foster dad focused completely on his phone.

Luis stood up. “I forgot—I uh have a lot of homework.”

I have no intention of doing any homework.

“Are you sure you got enough to eat?” she asked, pointing to the large bowl of soup remaining.

Luis gave a thumbs-up, “I’m good!”

As he walked up to his room, he struggled to ignore the fish flavor lingering in his mouth.

There was an electronic buzz as he turned on his light. The light dimmed, then flickered before finally turning on to full brightness.

Must be the wiring or something.

Luis closed and locked the door. With his recent nightmares, he had been feeling the need for more protection.

Opening the closet door, Luis tried to recall where he had hidden his stash. He stared at the shelves containing several columns of small baskets with clothing inside of them.

He pulled one of the bottom baskets out, but it only contained a spaghetti mix of socks. Trying to remember where he had put it, he shook his head.

Pulling out the adjacent basket revealed T-shirts. From the top, it appeared to be just shirts, but below, a sliver of cardboard separated a cornucopia of packaged snacks. It was a good way to keep his stash private. He grabbed a packet of spicy ramen noodles and a bottle of salsa *verde*.

Luis missed the Tex-Mex food his real mom and dad used to cook: enchiladas and his favorite, chicken mole. Since being orphaned, he could rarely taste that food again, at least not the way he remembered it. His foster parents had attempted to make a Tex-Mex meal once, which ended with smoke alarms going off.

So, Luis made do, creating his own version of Tex-Mex flavor, just on a smaller scale.

Last year, he had saved up money to buy an electric kettle, but kept it a secret. It was for making food on the days his foster mom served fishy black-eyed peas. His favorite snacks were the ones his uncle used to bring him from Mexico. Luckily, he had saved some and used them sparingly.

He grabbed a bottle of water from the floor of his closet and filled the kettle.

Luis took a moment to observe himself in the mirror, combing his hair back. He wished he were taller and had bigger muscles. He did not like that his black hair made him stand out from most of the other kids at school.

Oh well. No matter. I am out of school in a year, anyway.

He tossed his Speedy Gonzales keychain, holding a single key, onto the desk and prepared his proper dinner.

The kettle light turned off, indicating that the water was ready. He poured the steaming water into a small bowl.

Next, Luis broke apart the ramen noodles and placed them into the hot water along with a special blend of Tex-Mex spices.

Last of all, he added some salsa.

Now that Luis's second dinner for the evening was ready, he thought about what to do next.

He glanced at his phone-7:17 p.m.-checking for texts from Emma or John. Emma was a good friend, though he tried not to

make it obvious because she was a girl. She had gentle green eyes and brown hair. John was also a good friend; someone he had known since middle school.

Yeah, I figured. Nothing from anyone.

He cleaned up his ramen packaging.

Another phone check.

Still no texts.

Luis changed his cat's litter box.

One more phone check.

No dice. No one cares about me.

He stared across his room. "Guess it's game time."

Though he liked the games his friends played, *Minecraft* and *Fortnite*, he preferred older video games. He dove into gaming while taking samples of his ramen. The warmth of the meal gave him a sense of safety and comfort.

After what felt like only a few minutes, he took a break from gaming to check his phone.

"It's almost midnight?" He muttered.

Ugh. I need to go to bed.

He had been getting poor sleep lately, and not only because of late-night gaming. Yes, he enjoyed video games as much as any

other kid his age, but something else was off. The dreams-or more like nightmares-were getting worse.

He nostalgically viewed an image on his laptop screen: a picture of his birth family, which he used to be part of. They had taken the picture at his uncle's ranch in El Paso, Texas. His little sister, Sofia, proudly displayed her new pigtails and was squeezing two poor chickens. His parents, holding hands, seemed thrilled. And his Uncle Eloy, always the comedian, sported what resembled a gang sign.

Those were the good old days.

He recalled the life he used to have. It was almost too perfect, easygoing parents and a little sister who thought the world of him. Luis loved the togetherness, the simplicity.

He never realized how good he had it-until the bad things happened.

First came his little sister's death, which was an immense shock to the family. Then his parents' marriage collapsed. It all seemed to happen so quickly.

Maybe my life falling apart is why I'm having these weird dreams.

Originally, the dream was not a bad one. The first time he had it, it was pleasant, filled with wonderful memories. But lately, the dream had not ended well.

After trying hard to avoid falling asleep, Luis finally gave in.

I will relax for just a few minutes.

The game controller slid off his lap onto the bed. Soon, his head moved to the side of the pillow.

Before long, he was in a deep sleep.

Luis dreamed.

The dream began as before; he was with his family back at his original home. They were barbecuing chicken in their backyard. It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon. The smoke smelled good; the food was delicious, and everyone was happy. He was playing frisbee with his mother. Luis went to fetch an overthrown Frisbee.

When he turned around, he was no longer in his backyard. There was a smell of ozone in the air, like when he had tinkered with electronics.

It was now only he and his sister Sofia in a field at the edge of a forest.

Sofia held out her hand. “Luis, come with me to the woods. I have something to show you.”

Still bright outside, the wooded area had bands of sunlight peeking through. They started walking together.

Luis grew concerned as he heard disturbing sounds and unfamiliar voices.

The further they walked, the darker it became.

“Sofia, let’s stop now. We ought to get back to Mom and Dad,” he said.

But she didn’t respond.

She led him further into the darkness and laughed after letting go of his hand. Her pigtails flapped behind her as she ran ahead.

Luis could no longer see her.

She called to him in a cute, ever-so-slightly sinister voice, “Luis, I want to show you something,” and then giggled.

She seemed to play a cat-and-mouse game. Just when Luis thought he was about to reach her, the voice moved to another part of the forest.

Luis heard more laughter, but it didn’t really sound like Sofia anymore. It just sounded off.

He glanced to the right and glimpsed Sofia dropping to the ground. She began crawling eerily along the forest floor.

“Stop it, Sofia, it’s not funny anymore!” Luis shouted.

Finally, he reached the end of the forest. There was a small clearing with a sharp cliff that dropped so far that he couldn’t see the bottom.

He was peering over the edge when he heard someone yell, “Luis!”-in an evil voice.

He turned to see Sofia, her eyes reflective and red, similar to an animal's caught in headlights. Her hands were outstretched.

Luis wasn't sure if she was trying to hug him or push him off the cliff.

In that instant, he woke to his phone alarm vibrating on the bed.

An annoying digital tune he couldn't remember selecting accompanied it. He thought about sleeping in, but he knew his foster mom would knock on his door shortly.

She always started the day with a peppy, "Wake up, it's time to get up for school! It's a new day!"

What did she know?

Despite being only seventeen, he had stopped being excited for a new day long ago. As he reached to turn off the alarm, he noticed the date.

It's Sunday, no school today!

Sunday, 8:00 a.m.

An enormous sense of relief washed over him. His phone vibrated twice in quick succession. It was Emma.

Emma: u awake?

Luis: barely. had a bad dream, but think I'm going back to bed.

Emma: kks, text me later.

Luis didn't tell Emma that his sister had been the reason for his nightmare. No need to give her the impression that he was going crazy. Though he didn't want to return to that dream, the idea of sleeping in was too tempting.

He heard his foster parents talking outside, along with the sounds of the neighborhood waking up. Luis closed his eyes, turned onto his side, and pulled a blanket over his head.

The sounds slowly merged into a distorted audio collage as he drifted back to sleep.

Luis found himself again, near the forest, at the edge of the cliff.

"Why are you trying to kill me?" he asked Sofia.

She smiled, her eyes still glowing red. "I am not trying to kill you. I am trying to cure you."

She grabbed his arm, trying to lead him away. "I know the pain you are feeling. We can end it right now!"

"No," Luis pleaded. "You're my sister. You're supposed to care about me."

She whispered in his ear, "But the end is coming; you don't want to be around. Come on!"

Her nails dug into his arm.

"Ouch," Luis cried out. "You're hurting me!"

Out of nowhere, his cat, Smokey, landed on his chest, jolting him awake.

“Damm Smokey! You almost gave me a heart attack!”

Smokey stared at him, almost annoyed, as if Luis were the one in the wrong.

It was time for Smokey’s breakfast.

Luckily, Luis kept an extra supply of cat food in his room so he could avoid his foster parents in the morning.

“Meow,” cried Smokey.

Luis forced himself to sit up. He opened his eyes fully; the sun now lit his entire room. This time, he was glad to be awake.

No more sleeping.

“Meow,” Smokey cried again, more emphatically.

“All right, all right. I am getting your food already.”

Luis was actually relieved Smokey had jumped on him and pulled him out of the nightmare.

As he reached for the bag of cat food, he felt a slight pain in his arm- the same arm that Sofia had grabbed in his dream.

He looked down and froze. Several small fingernail impressions marked his skin.

Did I grasp my arm while sleeping?

He tried to convince himself that was the case as he finished feeding Smokey.

After getting dressed and brushing his teeth, the smell of breakfast lured him downstairs. His foster mother was making pancakes and bacon.

“Good morning,” she said. “Feeling all right?”

“Yeah. I am doing much better now that I realized it’s not a school day.”

“I remember those days,” Beth laughed. “You’d better enjoy this time. It only gets harder: college, jobs, families, house payments. These are really your best years.”

My best years? I sure hope not.

Luis had given little thought to what he would do when he got older. He imagined he’d find some kind of job and go from there.

“Nathan had to run an errand. I’m about to go grocery shopping. Want to come with me?”

“Well, I was going to meet Emma soon.”

“Oh, the cute redhead? You can invite her to dinner if you like.”

Luis wolfed down his pancakes and bacon with a glass of milk, then darted back upstairs.

“Thanks for the pancakes!”

“Anytime. Don’t forget to tip your server,” Beth said sarcastically.

He wanted to find out if Emma would be free to hang out.

Luis (texting): hey, are you around?

Emma: yup just helping my mom with some house chores. argh!

Luis: ha-ha, lucky you. my foster mom tried to get me to go grocery shopping with her

Emma: I would have rather done that-at least you get to leave your house

Luis: meet John and me at the park in about half an hour?

Emma: sure, if I can get away from my mom, I will join u all.

Luis: okay u better!

Luis considered texting John, but since his house was right by the park, he decided to just swing by on the way over.

It was a nice, sunny day, just a tad chilly. Luis was glad he had brought his jacket.

He reached the house and knocked on the door. No one answered after several tries, so Luis tried looking in the backyard, where John typically played his video games. He said it allowed him to enjoy electronics while being one with nature.

Most of all, it got his parents off his back about spending time outside.

Not seeing John, he walked on to the park, hoping Emma would still show.

Luis made his way to the sidewalk that led to the baseball field.

It was not an enormous park, but it had a lighted baseball and soccer field. He found a baseball in the field and started tossing it by himself. Counting each time, he tossed it up: one, two, three... After losing count, someone from behind him covered his eyes.

“Emma?”

“Can I have my Ojós back so I can catch the ball?” he said, laughing.

“I guess. You're no fun,” she said, pulling her hands away.

“You made it! Noce!”

“Of course, no John?” She inquired.

“I went by his house, but no one was home.”

“It’s okay, he annoys me sometimes. Sorry,” Emma put her hands together apologetically.

Luis grinned, “I get it, he annoys me too sometimes, but he means well.” Teasing Emma, he continued, “Whereas you annoy me all...”

Emma laughed and smacked Luis gently on the forehead, “So, how have things been at casa de Luis?”

“Alright, I guess,” Luis frowned as he tossed the ball to Emma.

“Are your foster parents still treating you as if you were nine years old?” She teased, “What was that they bought you for your birthday, a Pokémon plushy?”

“Shut-up” Luis replied playfully.

“It’s kind of messed up. I mean, feels like one moment everything is great, and then the next, you are saying, ‘What the hell happened?’ you know?”

“Yeah. You heard from your mom, your real mom?” Emma tossed the ball back to Luis, overthrowing it.

“No, it’s been a while now,” Luis sighed. “She believed it was my fault that Sofia died. That’s why she left.”

“You know that’s not true. Your mom loves you, Luis. Sometimes people can’t take sorrow; it’s too hard, even for adults. I think she felt in her condition; she could not be her best for you.”

Luis went to fetch the overthrown ball. “Oh wow, when did you get to be so smart? And bad at throwing?” laughed Luis.

Emma responded snippily, “Well, excuse me, Mr. Athlete. I have been doing a lot of the chores lately because my mom is still under the weather.”

“Hey, if you ever need a hand, I can come help. Just give me any reason to get out of my house!”

A nearby car honked its horn.

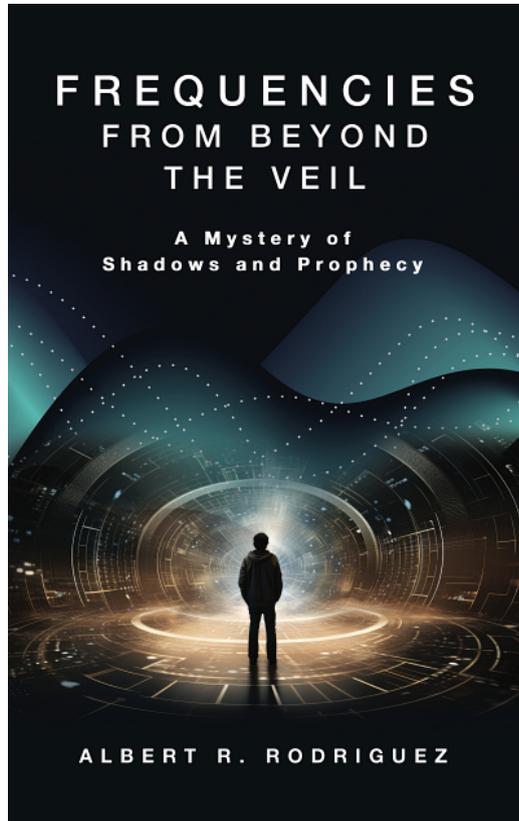
Emma complained, “Ugh. It’s my dad. He told me he would pick me up to run an errand. I did not know it was going to be so quick.”

“No problem, I am glad you came out.”

“Okay, see you at school this week.”

“No skipping again,” teased Emma.

Luis had thought about sharing more about his nightmare with Emma, but was relieved he did not. He was afraid to admit how much it concerned him.



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