

### **Science fiction and fantasy:**

Kyle Wilson is stranded in a different world after witnessing a flash of light in the sky. His determination to visit the perimeter line, where one reality is separated from another, provides for a suspenseful story with a twist ending.

### **Perimeter**

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John Reizer

# Perimeter

## Perimeter

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## **Chapter One**

Kyle Wilson was thoroughly exhausted. His career as a self-employed computer entrepreneur had turned out to be a lot more demanding than he, initially, thought. Although he enjoyed building intricate websites for his clients, the day-to-day pressures that went along with being a small business owner completely stressed him out.

Kyle had graduated from the University of South Carolina Upstate, two years earlier, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in computer sciences. His reputation, as a brilliant student, at the institution eventually opened an important door for him to land a good paying job in the school's information and technology department.

After working at the university for just over a year, Kyle learned that major budget cuts would prematurely end his employment at the state funded facility.

The deep economic recession, which began in 2008, had dragged on for over four years. It had adversely impacted many people's lives within the country and positions of employment, in general, were

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few and far between. Kyle decided that the solution to his problem lay in the creation of a home computer business.

Kyle quickly discovered that running a home-based business was a lot different than showing up to a 9 to 5 job, Monday thru Friday. Instead of having one boss, like he did at the university, he currently had dozens of clients constantly demanding a hundred percent of his time and attention, 24 hours a day.

*Thank God it was finally Friday*, he thought to himself. This day had started out, pretty much, as any other Friday. It was December 21, 2012, only four days remained until Christmas. Kyle's business had been on the upswing and he was really looking forward to a nice relaxing weekend. Maybe he'd catch a movie at the Regal 16 Theatre in nearby Spartanburg, or perhaps he'd just stay at home and catch up on some leisure reading. There was a very interesting article he'd begun to read and never quite had the chance to finish, for various reasons, in the December issue of *Time Magazine*. He'd definitely make it his top priority to finish reading that story over the weekend.

It was later that evening, however, when things started to happen that would separate this day from the likes of any other. It was about a quarter to 9 and Kyle had already cooked and finished eating his dinner. Like he did on most Friday evenings, the computer

entrepreneur was propped up on his brown, Italian leather recliner. The new high definition flat screen TV he'd recently purchased from Sears had been playing the sci-fi movie, *Back to the Future*, in the far corner of the apartment. He'd purposely set the volume extremely low. Kyle had been focused on the laptop computer that was perched between his knees. He played the TV only to create some background noise, in the apartment, which seemed to comfort him during the evening hours.

On the other side of the living room was a small fiber optic Christmas tree. Although he hadn't placed any decorations on it, the holiday prop still managed to project a beautiful array of colors throughout the apartment. In some respects, the Christmas tree was very symbolic of Kyle's life. It looked good, offered some signs of hope, but was missing something important.

Kyle was 25 years old and still an eligible bachelor. It's not that he didn't like women. He just never seemed to have an opportunity to meet the right one. That was until two days earlier when he'd met the most beautiful young lady, he'd ever laid his eyes on, right inside his own apartment complex. Actually, he'd bumped into her by accident.

Kyle had needed to speak with the maintenance supervisor, Paul Callahan, about a leak in his bedroom closet. The supervisor usually camped out in a small utility shed that was located directly across from the

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rental office. Kyle figured that he'd kill two birds with one stone. He decided to pay next month's rent, after visiting the maintenance guy, so that he wouldn't have to make a second trip to the office, to write a check, the following week.

On the way out from paying the rent, Kyle collided with a young woman at the office front door. She had long, silky, black hair and olive colored skin. Her face was stunningly pretty.

It was a bit of an awkward scene. She'd been carrying some papers and a rather large hardcover book. Her belongings dropped onto the sidewalk during the collision. Kyle and the young woman quickly reached down, at the same time, and began picking up her things.

"I'm terribly sorry," he'd said. Kyle had noticed that the publication, resting on the ground, was a textbook titled, *The Fundamentals of Basic College English*. Nervously, he picked up the book and quickly handed it back to her. Then one of those uncomfortable moments occurred where he just stood there, staring at the angelic looking woman, without uttering a word. She was gorgeous and he definitely wanted to get to know her but he became completely tongue-tied. As usual, Kyle blew the chance encounter by leaving the scene without introducing himself. When he returned to his apartment, a short time later, he was very depressed

that he hadn't been more aggressive with his opportunity.

Kyle had always been a bit of a loner and somewhat shy. Whenever he saw a young lady that he was attracted to, he seemed to always freeze up and lose his nerve. He just wouldn't allow himself the chance to strike up a conversation.

Kyle also hated going to the local night clubs, and wasn't much of a drinker. He preferred working out with weights, in his apartment, and avoiding the local fast food establishments. He knew that meeting a girl would be very challenging for him because he wasn't into the social scene.

Although he never thought so, Kyle was an exceptionally good looking young man. He possessed a finally chiseled face that favored the likes of a New York City model. He had long flowing blond hair along with beautiful golden eyelashes that further accentuated his good looks. And although he didn't realize it, many local women, he came into contact with, secretly admired his well defined and very athletic looking body.

On this particular evening, Kyle had been surfing the Internet for about forty minutes and was getting pretty tired when he'd suddenly, and without warning, heard a loud thunderous boom outside his single story apartment. It sounded, initially, like a beam, in the building's attic, had dislodged and fallen. The noise was



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followed by another; a screeching vibration that seemed to tear a massive hole in the Earth's atmosphere. It was an absolutely horrific sound. In fact, it reminded him of the sound a jet plane might make if it were hurtling towards the ground at breakneck speed.

Kyle immediately jumped off the recliner and tossed the laptop computer onto the chair. He quickly made his way to the apartment backdoor and looked up into the night sky. Outside, the entire area seemed to be bathed in an eerie shade of red. It was the most peculiar thing he'd ever witnessed. The strange color had completely engulfed the entire backyard area outside his apartment building. For as far and as long as Kyle could see, everything was bathed in a mysterious red hue.

And then it began! An event that would forever change his life and the lives of countless others was taking place outside his apartment. A magnificent flash of white light suddenly illuminated the sky. It was so brilliant that Kyle had to turn his head away from the window. He dove, headfirst, onto the apartment floor and immediately shut his eyes. The blinding light was accompanied by a tremendous amount of heat. Kyle desperately hugged the ground while keeping his eyes closed the entire time.

## **Chapter Two**

**October 31, 2000**

### **The University of South Carolina – Spartanburg, SC**

“Dr. Grossman! Dr. Paul Grossman, can I please speak with you for just a moment?” yelled the blond haired man as he sprinted across the faculty parking lot.

The 51 year old physics professor turned around, just in time, to see the approaching stranger dodge an oncoming car. He estimated the man to be in his early to mid 20’s. He didn’t recognize the individual’s face, but assumed that he was enrolled in one of his general physics courses. “Do I know you?” the professor asked.

Slightly out of breath from running, the stranger placed both his hands on the top of his knees as he attempted to suck some air into his lungs. “I don’t think that we’ve ever met before. My name is James Wilson.”

“Well Mr. Wilson, what can I do for you today?” The professor stared at the young man curiously.

Paul Grossman wasn’t a very distinguished looking fellow. He was dressed in a brown, slightly frayed, suit and was wearing a matching brown bowtie. Soaking wet, he weighed no more than 150 pounds. He

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had an oval shaped face, and a partially receding, gray hairline. He was clutching an older looking briefcase in his right hand.

"Professor, I flew into Greenville-Spartanburg this morning from Jacksonville, Florida. About two months ago, my parents, Kyle and Angel Wilson, were killed in an automobile accident just outside of Orlando."

The professor set down his briefcase onto the surface of the parking lot. He'd noticed that the blond haired young man was quite handsome. "I'm very sorry to hear that, James," he replied.

"Thanks. Look, the reason I'm here in Spartanburg, chasing after you in the parking lot, is because of an envelope that I found scattered among my parents' personal papers."

"An envelope?"

"Yes sir. And it was addressed to you." He handed the professor a very old and tattered piece of paper.

"When I originally found the document, it had another paper taped to it," James said. He was breathing easier now. "On it, my mother had written me specific instructions to hand deliver the parcel to you here at the university. She was especially clear about the fact that I was only supposed to deliver the envelope, to you, in the event that both my parents had passed away."

Paul felt his curiosity burn away all other consideration. He carefully opened the parcel and gently pulled out a white napkin and another smaller envelope that was still sealed. His eyes immediately moved to the second envelope which had the words; **TO BE OPENED—IN PRIVATE ONLY – BY DR. PAUL GROSSMAN**, printed on the front of it. Next, he glanced over at the napkin. On one side was a single sentence that was printed in blue, block letters. The sentence read:

**KEEP SAFE AND DO NOT DESTROY!**

Written on the napkin's flip side, also in blue ink, was a detailed schematic drawing of a circuit board. On the top of the napkin was a group of numbers and letters that read:

**34.93 N 81.92 W: 122112: 20:45**

The professor stared at the drawing and then at the long succession of numbers and letters. His eyes nearly jumped out of his head. He'd instantly observed that the content, on the paper napkin, had been written and drawn with his own hand.

## Chapter Three

When he opened his eyes, Kyle didn't see a thing. It was completely dark in the apartment. He was seated in his recliner clutching the laptop. All the lights in the apartment were off. He wondered what had happened. A few seconds ago, he'd been on the apartment floor trying to hide from a brilliant flash of light. Now he found himself, back on the recliner, holding his computer.

Kyle gripped the laptop's frame and realized that it too had been turned off. He pushed the button to restart the machine, but nothing happened. Kyle pushed the recliner back to its normal position and picked himself off the chair. He carefully managed, in the absence of light, to make his way over to the nearest wall switch and flipped it on and off. Again, nothing happened. The power seemed to be out throughout the entire apartment.

Kyle cautiously moved over to the back door and peered outside again. It was pitch dark this time and there was no evidence, whatsoever, of the red glow, in the sky, which had been present just a few moments

earlier. He wondered if he'd been dreaming. *That's what it must have been – a dream*, he thought to himself.

Kyle maneuvered his way over towards the kitchen where he kept a flashlight. He fumbled around in the darkness before he remembered it was positioned against the wall for emergencies such as this. Keeping his arms stretched out, Kyle finally made contact with the kitchen countertop and he was able to navigate his way towards the flashlight. He picked up the light and pushed in the switch. Nothing happened.

"God dammit," he said. "Nothing works when you need it to." He tossed the flashlight aside, hearing the sound of cracking plastic as it struck the kitchen floor.

Kyle reached for the telephone that was situated on the wall alongside of where the flashlight had been located. He wanted to place a call to Duke Energy to report the power outage. He lifted the receiver and placed it to his ear. No dial tone. "This is absolutely unbelievable!" He yelled the words out loud. Clearly frustrated with the night's turn of events, he slammed the phone back into its cradle.

A sudden knock on the apartment door startled him. "Just a moment," he called out as he began to feel his way towards the front door. Even though his eyes had begun to adjust to the darkened conditions, Kyle still found it a challenging proposition to find his way around the apartment. He immediately stubbed his left

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big toe on the corner of the refrigerator. "Ouch," he yelled and reached down to rub the affected area. Another knock on the door rattled through the small apartment. "I'm coming," he said raising his voice louder this time so that the person outside the apartment would definitely be able to hear him. Kyle cautiously made his way through the living room area and eventually located the front door.

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"What do you want?" Kyle yelled as he pressed his ear up against the door.

"My name is Angel McClure. I'm your new neighbor from across the hall."

When Kyle opened the door, he found himself standing face to face with the same beautiful, young brunette he'd bumped into at the rental office. She was holding a lighted candle in her hand. It fully illuminated the small area where the two of them were standing.

Kyle looked at her for a moment. Oddly enough, he didn't feel like he was at a sudden loss for words. "Hello, I'm Kyle Wilson." He stuck out his arm to shake her hand with a level of confidence that had previously escaped him. "I guess the entire building's out of power?"

Angel looked at Kyle. She'd recognized him right away. "You're the good looking guy that helped me pick up my papers the other day." She smiled as she reached out and shook his hand. "I just moved into F-12 yesterday afternoon." She brushed the hair away from



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her face. "Did you hear that loud bang before the lights went out?"

"Yeah," Kyle replied. "Did you happen to see the red sky?"

"Yes. Pretty creepy."

"I thought that maybe I'd been dreaming," Kyle explained, more confused now than he'd been a few minutes earlier.

"The lights and telephone aren't working at my place. I even tried three flashlights, and they didn't work either," Angel said. Her voice quivered a bit. "Nothing's working."

"Same thing here," Kyle explained. "Everything's dead!"

Angel, suddenly, looked back over her shoulder in the direction of the parking lot. She'd heard some voices and spotted a few dim lights that were moving about. "They seem to have lights that are working," she said.

Kyle stepped out of his apartment to get a better view of what Angel meant. The two of them decided to walk up to the parking area. As they got closer, Kyle and Angel were able to see that the people congregating in the parking lot were also using candles as a source for their lighting.

Kyle went up to one guy that had been clutching a small candle. "Hey," he yelled out to the man. "What's happening around here?"

The guy turned around and looked at Kyle. "Everything's fried is what's happening." He paused momentarily and looked up at the sky. "Anything that uses electric isn't working. We must've been hit with an EMP." The man, who seemed to be preoccupied with the strangeness of the current environment, walked away from Kyle and into the direction of some other people that were huddled together next to a garbage dumpster.

Kyle and Angel overheard two other men talking about a terrorist attack and some sort of invasion that, they believed, was taking place.

Angel tapped Kyle on the shoulder. "What's an EMP?"

"Electromagnetic pulse," he replied. "I think it's a type of military weapon that can be used to shoot a pulse of energy in different directions. It supposedly destroys the electronic components in most machines. I guess it makes everything that runs on electric, useless."

"Is that why the flashlights don't work?" Angel asked.

"Possibly," Kyle said. He looked up and down the parking area and out across the apartment complex. He could hear some people screaming and the sound of

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breaking glass in the distance. "I think we should get back inside our apartments where it's safe. We should wait for the lights to come back on before we go exploring any further."

Angel moved a bit closer to Kyle and said, "I'm really scared." She was sticking right by his side. "I know we just met, not even five minutes ago, but I really don't want to stay in my apartment, alone. Would you mind, terribly, if I camped out at your place until the morning?"

Again, in the distance, the unmistakable noise of breaking glass could be heard. It sounded as though a small riot was taking place on the other side of the apartment complex.

"No, I don't mind," Kyle said. "It's probably a good idea that we stick together until we figure out what's going on. Let's get back inside though. I don't like the sound of all the commotion out here."

Angel agreed. The two of them walked back down the sidewalk and made their way into Kyle's apartment. It was, apparently, going to be a very long evening.