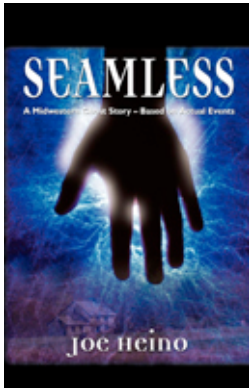


SEAMLESS

A Midwestern Ghost Story – Based on Actual Events



Joe Heino



Inspired by actual events, SEAMLESS is a Midwestern ghost story that explores the unsettling possibility of inter-dimensional contact. A strange light that cuts through the night skies of Northern Wisconsin appears to have been accompanied by an ominous dark presence - all rather "seamlessly." What it is and where it came from are questions that will be answered, but only after a decades-long search to find the "key" as to why the presence entered this world.

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CHAPTER 1

Kennan, Wisconsin [Wednesday, July 15, 1936 – a little past midnight]

Joe never felt more alone than he did tonight. The nineteen-year-old stood motionless, arms crossed, in front of the screened window of his parents' bedroom, staring into the black void of this moonless night. During warm summer nights like this, the window was usually left open. It helped cool the first floor of the Keller's old two-story farm house. Damp night air blew gently into the room, smelling strongly of the freshly-cut hay that lay in the field just outside the window, now hidden under the cloak of darkness.

The evening was unusually warm. The Midwest, including northern Wisconsin, had experienced the peak of the July 1936 heat wave a few days earlier. To Joe, it seemed that there was no end in sight for the hellish heat that had already killed hundreds. The sun punished those who worked under its glare and sapped vital crops of what little moisture was left in them. Joe was dead tired and his body ached from the back-breaking work he performed earlier that day. With his parents and only brother gone for the day, he shouldered all of the farm's chores. The previous day seemed to have been one of the longest days of his life. He now faced the prospect that this could be one of his longest nights as well.

His eyes were dry and eyelids heavy. Fatigued, he wondered how much longer he would be able to stay awake. He had visited this window more than once tonight. During each visit, he desperately hoped to catch a glimpse of the familiar family pick-up truck returning home so that he could finally go to bed.

During the day, the window provided the best vantage point for viewing traffic along the two-lane county highway that

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cornered near the old farm house. From this window, one could see the road, and anything traveling on it, for several miles to the east and about the same distance to the south. Even at night, a vehicle travelling in either direction could be easily spotted by its oncoming yellowish-white headlights, or its trailing red tail lights.

Refreshed, at least for the moment, Joe's fatigue gave way to thoughts about his family. Running his calloused fingers through his thick, black hair, he sighed. He thought that, somewhere out there, his twin brother John and his parents must surely be on their way home. Exactly when they would arrive was anyone's guess, although Joe believed that should have been hours ago. After all, he reasoned, the farm was only a few hours from Minneapolis, the only city within a hundred miles of this place with a hospital. He assumed that once the doctor gave John the "once over," his parents would most likely turn right around and make the four hour or so drive back home. At least that's how much time it took last year after Joe sliced his arm on the hay baler. A few stitches later, he was as good as new. A shiver ran down his spine at the mere thought of that unpleasant experience.

Seeing no car lights in sight, he decided to give his strained eyes a rest. He lowered his head, and closed his eyes. He squeezed them and then gently rubbed them with his fingers in a futile attempt to force fluid into his dried eyes. It didn't work. His body was just too sapped. Joe decided to venture to the kitchen in search of something to drink.

Barefoot, Joe buried his muscular hands deep into the pockets of his faded blue jeans and hiked up the pants legs so that the cuffs would not drag on the floor. He strolled into the dimly-lit kitchen. This was definitely his mother's domain. She kept it immaculate and he knew that he had better leave it that

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way. Moving across the stone-cold linoleum, and welcoming its coolness on his feet, he walked to the refrigerator.

The refrigerator was less than a year old, but he couldn't remember what life was like without it. Appliances were a luxury and it was just a little more than a year ago when the farm had been wired for electricity, a product of the New Deal's Rural Electrification Administration, or REA. The REA was one of President Roosevelt's efforts to employ workers during this "depression," they called it. Joe had read about it in the papers. The depression had little adverse impact on the Keller family, and most farm families for that matter. While city folks struggled daily to earn enough just to put food on the table, farmers had fared pretty well, growing and harvesting their own food, typically even more than they could eat. Anything left over was canned or dried for winter.

Joe stopped and stood in front of the large white appliance that reminded him of something out of a science fiction comic book. It was topped by an odd circular dome, a "monitor top" they called it, and was supported by four spindly metal legs that seemed barely adequate for their intended purpose. His interest moved away from the outward appearance of this monolith and towards what was inside of it. He considered what he had a taste for at this late hour as he tugged at the heavy white door, opened it and removed the glass milk bottle that was sitting in its usual spot on the top shelf. There really was nothing that tasted better than cold fresh milk from the family's own cows, Joe thought. He took a few large gulps from the bottle and then returned it to its rightful spot. He didn't dare drink out of the bottle when Mom was home. What she didn't know tonight wouldn't hurt her. He closed the door and used the back of his dark, sun-burned hand to wipe a milky moustache from his upper lip.

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Looking for more ways to kill time, Joe wandered out of the kitchen and into the dark living room. “Damn, it’s hot in here,” he grumbled to himself. The living room was on the west side of the house, opposite his parents’ bedroom, and was the last room to be exposed to the hot summer sun just before sunset. Holding the trapped heat well after dark, this room was stifling during the summer, even at night. That warmth was welcomed during the winter months, but the heat tonight was just short of unbearable.

Deciding to tough it out anyway, Joe bent down and reached for the family radio, another electrical gadget that was new to the family. The regal Zenith console radio was more a piece of furniture than it was an electrical device. It had finely fluted wooden side columns that framed a center speaker. The speaker itself had similar graceful lines and was quite attractive, even when it wasn’t turned on. The radio provided a new form of entertainment for farmers who, once secluded but for the newspaper and word of mouth, were now able to listen to the goings-on in other parts of the world.

He groped in the dark for the small rotary “on/off” knob that was positioned atop the radio. As he turned it on, the power button slowly grew to a bright red glow. The backlit channel dial also illuminated and cast an eerie gray light over his hand and face. The air waves were strange at night. For reasons Joe did not understand, radios could pick up signals from all around the world at night, signals not typically available during the day. He slowly rotated the channel dial in both directions, catching small bits and pieces of different broadcasts.

Finally finding a reasonably strong and stable signal, Joe listened for a moment to the last part of the broadcast. It was a sports update from a station in Detroit, announcing the upcoming 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, German. The narrators were speculating on the likelihood of a young

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athlete by the name of Jesse Owens being able to place for gold in the 100-meter dash.

“That should be interesting,” Joe thought. He then laughed out loud, realizing that, from his place in the world, the Olympic Games might as well be held on the Moon. He’d never be able to see them, even if he wanted to. He would, however, always be reminded of them whenever he looked at the radio. The grille design of the radio formed a torch design, believed by some to have been configured that way on purpose, commemorative of those Olympic Games.

The signal for the broadcast wavered before slowly drifting away altogether. Joe carefully rotated the dial ever so slightly in an effort to regain the signal. Unable to, he gave up. After losing that signal, he was able to catch only a few barely intelligible words from transient broadcasts coming from stations throughout the Midwest, most of them discussing the current heat wave. But none of that held much interest for Joe. He already knew it was hot, God-awful hot.

The heat in this room was starting to get to him and he decided that he had heard enough from the radio tonight. As he turned it off, its lights slowly dimmed to black. The living room around him turned dark again. “Hell, even the damn radio gets to go to sleep,” Joe thought. “Lucky me.” He moved over to his dad’s easy chair, which sat in a cooler corner of the room. Never getting to occupy it while his father was around, Joe relished the opportunity. He comfortably settled in.

“This is more like it; nice and peaceful,” he said, trying hard to pretend that he wasn’t lonely, and trying even harder to convince himself that he should be enjoying this rare bit of solitude. It was indeed a rare thing on a busy farm. But it was too quiet, much too quiet for his liking, which was why he had decided to wander about the house in the first place.

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Joe closed his eyes and rested his head on the back of the chair. As he relaxed further, his thoughts drifted back to his family. He recognized that he wasn't used to being alone in this big old house, day or night, and he was certainly used to more activity. During the day, the back door opened and then slammed shut almost continuously, so often that no one noticed it. That familiar noise had been conspicuously absent today. Even at night, Joe was used to one or more bickering voices coming from the kitchen just before bedtime. As annoying as that could be, he still missed it.

"Hey, Joe," his mom would ask on a typical evening. "What do you want on your sandwich?" It was a night-time ritual, a time when everyone could grab a snack before bed and then share some good conversation. He missed that tonight. He even missed the bickering. Joe really hadn't appreciated how much he would miss that conversation until tonight. He even missed the opportunity to argue with his brother.

Joe had a close bond with John, and the boys had been born in this very house. Although they had shared the same birthday, the brothers were quite different. John had always been bigger and stronger. Joe was shorter and had always been sickly. He disliked being labeled that way, but knew it was true. John seemed never to get sick. Joe couldn't even remember when John last caught a cold, if ever. As the boys matured, it was also clear that John was so much more the ladies' man than Joe. Joe got the raw end of the deal when it came to good looks and being comfortable around girls, and he knew it. John was naturally more confident and just seemed to be comfortable in just about any setting or situation. That wasn't Joe, who doubted his own abilities and potential.

"Why can't I be more like John?" he often asked himself. Joe even asked himself that earlier tonight. Then, maybe, he wouldn't have to be sitting in this big old farmhouse by himself.

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Maybe, just maybe, Lorraine could have come down to the farm to sit a bit with him as they watched the sun go down. Lorraine Letson was a sixteen-year-old girl who Joe and John had gone through several years of grade school with. Her family lived a few miles down the road, in town. She was known to be a flirt and a somewhat regular visitor to the Keller farm. She was a sturdy, extremely attractive and well-developed young woman. Her long and flowing brown hair complemented her most striking feature, piercing green eyes.

As he slouched further down into the chair, Joe's thoughts now drifted to the family homestead. For countless centuries, this land had been nothing more than uncharted woodland, cross-hatched by white-tailed deer trails and American Indian foot paths. Then came the loggers, who quickly stripped the land of its wood giants and moved on. The logging companies had bought large tracts of land for pennies an acre. After the land was logged, owners of those companies put lines on a map and sold off smaller parcels to anyone who was willing to start a farm.

The allure of cheap land was a draw for many, particularly the flour mill workers who had spent far too much time breathing the dusty air that filled the mills in Minneapolis. Joe's grandfather, Jakob, was one of those. Jakob Keller was an immigrant who, by way of Ellis Island, came to this country by himself, leaving his family in his native Germany. Once he was established, he would venture back to the "old country" and return with them. He worked long enough and hard enough to buy a small lot and modest house in the lower east side of New York City, that part of the City usually inhabited by the most newly arrived immigrants. The majority of them started out by renting a single small room, saving every penny they made and surviving on as little as possible. Jakob Keller did the same, eventually sending word to his family that he would soon be

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returning to close out the family's affairs and bring them to America.

The Keller family's relocation to New York was relatively seamless because a large German population had already settled there and their native tongue was understood by most. But after all of his efforts to re-establish his family in the area, Jakob was later forced to sell the home. He could not afford the taxes imposed by the City as it sought to modernize its water and sanitary systems; he simply refused to indebt his family by borrowing money from scheming bankers who took advantage of immigrants by setting high interest rates that were largely unchecked by the government. Jakob was fed up with New York and decided to move westward, to Pittsburgh. Prior to leaving New York, August Keller, Joe's father, was born. He was one of Jakob's eight children.

While en route to Pittsburgh, the growing family heard of another city further west, dubbed the "Bread Basket" of America. Enticed by the promise of high wages paid in the flour mills, Jakob decided to keep moving on to Minneapolis. But working in the flour mills was far from wonderful and he soon learned why the wages were so high. The air in the mills was stifling and the fine white powder that surrounded them choked the workers incessantly. Some died in dust explosions. Others died a slower death, coughing and spitting up clumps of disgusting white matter from their lungs long after work was done. The attraction of the wide open spaces and fresh air in Northern Wisconsin was all that some needed to encourage them to move away from the mills. The Keller family was one of them.

Jakob Keller moved his family, one last time, eastward to the small town of Kennan. When it arrived, the family stayed in a local hotel for several weeks, just long enough for Jakob to build a starter home, which was nothing more than a crude

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shelter made of scrap wood and heavy canvass. Of necessity, such a structure was simple so that building it would not consume valuable time. That time was better spent clearing the fields of huge stumps left behind by the loggers and equally large boulders left behind by the glaciers that plowed over the land even before the loggers arrived. The original homestead, a simple three room structure, was built months after the family had settled in the area and the first season's crops were planted. Joe found comfort in the fact that the house that he now occupied had its foundation on the very spot of the Keller's original homestead. The land surrounding the house had been cleared away decades ago, now giving way to a flat and lush green lawn that surrounded the house. An apple orchard also occupied the land to one side of the house. The remainder of the land now provided grazing pasture for livestock and fertile fields that produced a plentiful bounty of corn, wheat and hay.

His head bobbing down suddenly, Joe was startled for a moment and then realized that he had dozed off. It was enough to refresh his thoughts and bring him back to the moment.

"What time is it anyway?" he wondered. He stood up from the chair, stretched and slowly walked back into the kitchen. Rubbing his eyes with his hands again, Joe could see that the clock above the stove showed the time to be a few minutes past two in the morning.

"Great," Joe thought, realizing that this was now way past his bedtime and that he would have to get up to milk the cows in a only a matter of hours. He also realized that he would probably have to do all of that by himself, again. Wanting desperately to go to bed, Joe resigned himself to the idea that his parents wouldn't be home until daybreak. Walking back his parents' bedroom, he stripped off his sun-bleached t-shirt and blue jeans and dropped them in a pile on the floor. He looked at the window and stepped in front of it with one last hope of

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seeing someone coming down the road. He stretched his arms above his head and yawned. Just as he began to turn away from the window, he caught the faint flicker of a light in the distance.

“Finally, a truck,” he thought. It must be his parents and John. With the dampness of the cool night air sitting above the warm asphalt, a light fog distorted the lights. Joe squinted to catch a better view. The dim light gradually grew brighter, as he would expect when a vehicle was seen coming down the road, towards the farm. As the unidentified vehicle continued its approach, it was apparent that the vehicle had only one working headlight.

The vehicle and its single headlight continued to follow the road, as best as Joe could tell, but seemed not to be slowing down as it drew closer to the corner. If anything, it seemed to be speeding up. Knowing that his father would never drive that recklessly, particularly at night, he doubted that this was his parents and brother returning home.

“He better slow down, or he’ll miss the turn,” Joe muttered, tense as he continued to watch the light carefully. He leaned forward, pressing his nose against the screen of the window, and strained to get a better look. His hands now firmly grasped the sill of the window. He tensed up even more as the object behind that bright light now seemed to accelerate as it approached the corner. Joe leaned forward, bracing himself for an impending impact.

“Damn it,” Joe shouted. He now expected the driver and car to miss the turn and hit the mailbox, which had happened before. The light brightened to the point that the vehicle must have been about a hundred feet or so from the corner, by his estimation. Now close enough to hear its engine, Joe was terrified, realizing that the vehicle, or whatever was behind the light, wasn’t making any noise. No revving motor, no sound at all.

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Before that fact completely registered, he gasped as he saw the light begin to lift upwardly from its straight path along the road. He instinctively leaned backwards and away from the window, to distance him from this strange object. The light, now brilliantly white and fully illuminating the field just outside the window, veered slightly to the right and was headed directly toward the house. Joe froze as he could no longer rationally believe that it was a car or headlight heading toward him. It was something else, something horrific.

In a matter of seconds, which seemed like an eternity to Joe, he watched in awe as the blinding light continued its path. It then rose sharply and shot up and over the house, barely missing the peak of the roof. In a fearful frenzy, he tumbled backwards, bounced onto the bed and fell to the floor. He quickly rebounded and ran to the other side of the house to follow the mysterious light.

When he got there, he threw open the screen and lunged out the door, completely missing all of the steps of the concrete porch and landing on the sidewalk. His heart pounding, Joe quickly scanned the night sky in all directions. He saw nothing. Thinking that he had perhaps seen some sort of strange reflection and that the car had somehow managed to navigate the corner, he ran to the end of the house facing the road.

He peered into the darkness. He saw no red lights going down the road. He looked back and saw no white light climbing into the night sky. He heard nothing. He saw nothing. There was no light, no trail, no sound – absolutely no trace of anything. Only the blackness of the moonless night enveloped him now. Whatever it was had simply vanished. In all of his years of living on this place he called “home,” Joe had never seen such a startling sight and had never been so shaken to his core.

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His senses were now fully heightened. He was as awake as he could be, and this had not been a bad dream. He again surveyed the road, the yard and the sky, one last time. A cold shiver ran down Joe's spine as his mind began to slow. He now realized that he was standing barefoot and outside the house in nothing but his underwear. He walked back towards the house, carefully picking his path across the damp lawn. He climbed onto the porch, opened the screen door and entered the house. The spring-loaded screen door slammed shut behind him, as it always did.

Halfway across the kitchen, Joe stopped and paused for a moment. He turned and walked back to the screen door and yanked it, to make sure that it was closed. Then he did something that he had never done before. He locked it. No one locked their doors in these parts, ever. It just wasn't done. But it gave Joe some comfort to lock the door tonight, at least for as much of the night as was left and for what little protection the screen door could afford. He wandered back into his parents' bedroom and decided to sleep there for the next several hours.

As he tried to calm and relax himself enough to fall asleep, Joe struggled to rationalize what he had experienced. Was it some sort of strange reflection? After all, anyone driving with only one headlight could also be driving without taillights. That could be it. Maybe it was a meteor. He had read about them in magazines. Maybe it was some strange electrical discharge from the new power lines that ran along the road to the farm.

Whatever it was, it had to be something that Joe could explain in his own mind before he even dared to describe it to anyone else. His head and thoughts spinning, Joe eventually fell to sleep. As he did, he could not yet know that his older sister, Josie, who lived about four hundred miles to the southeast, in urban Chicago, had experienced a disturbing event of her own this night.

CHAPTER 2

Chicago, Illinois [Wednesday, July 15, 1936 – a little past midnight]

Josephine Keller, or “Josie” as she was known to her family and friends, suffered many sleepless nights as an incurable insomniac. Going on just a couple of hour’s sleep a night, she was accustomed to staying up late and getting up very early. Tonight was no exception.

Things had to be just “right” in order for Josie to get any sleep at all. She had to have a pitch-black room, with no lights. Even small cracks of light that would otherwise shine underneath her door were strategically blocked by towels placed over them. The sleeping mask that she used to cover her eyes was her last defense against any intrusions of light that would enter her bedroom. She had to have just the right amount of covers on her. She even had to sleep with earplugs. Just getting ready to go to sleep was a chore in itself.

Josie was a young career woman. She thought herself fortunate to have broken out of the mold of being a farmer’s wife. Besides, she thought, she was just too darn good looking to be hidden away on some God-forsaken pig-sty of a farm. A busy clerical job in downtown Chicago kept her busy during the day and she loved every minute of it. Although the financial depression of the thirties had hit workers harder in the city, she had been fortunate to find and keep her job.

As much as she loved the city, there were times, however, when she missed the simple joys of being with her family, but only occasionally. Her younger brothers, Joe and John, and her folks still lived on the Keller family homestead. She would ride the bus to the farm each summer, when she could take her yearly one-week vacation. But by the end of that week of

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vacation, Josie would find herself longing for the hustle and bustle of the streets of Chicago. She was no longer a country girl, having truly transformed herself into one of the “city-folk,” as her parents now called her.

After work, Josie would stop by the neighborhood grocery store and pick up a few things for dinner. Most nights, she ate alone. After dinner, she would settle in for a night of book reading or visiting with one of the neighbors in her building. Josie loved a good conversation. Her friends knew that she loved to talk. It was an innate ability that Josie had to carry on a conversation, even when others were only half-heartedly listening, and then sometimes for hours. Tonight wasn’t one of those evenings. Josie was alone.

On this night, Josie opened the windows to her apartment to let the cooler night air in. She sat down to read several chapters in her newest book, *Tender is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. She read for a spell and then realized that it was getting close to her bedtime, which was any time between about one o’clock and two o’clock in the morning. She closed her book and placed it face down on the coffee table. She got up and tidied the couch she had been curled up on. As she reached for the switch on the light that sat on the coffee table, a strong breeze suddenly blew through her open windows and into the room. The breeze off Lake Michigan was particularly cool tonight notwithstanding the heat wave that the city had suffered through the last few weeks. The Lake was like a huge air conditioner in the summer, as the night breeze shifted inward, toward land.

“Oh, this feels good,” Josie thought. As she turned the light off, she heard something that was bone-chilling. It was a clearly human sound, something between a deep moan and a painful groan. Together with the breeze that had just wafted through the room, the unearthly sound made the hair on the back of her neck stand up. She stayed calm, trying to imagine what the sound

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could have been. It happened so quickly that it left her wondering if it she had heard it at all. Her door was locked and no one could possibly manage to hide in this small apartment without having been discovered long before now. She dismissed the noise and straightened the couch, fluffing its pillows.

She walked to the bathroom to clean up for the night. She took her wrist watch off and sat it on the counter, then turned the faucet handles to draw water, testing it with her fingers. Satisfied with the temperature, Josie cupped her hands together to gather some water to rinse her face. Just before she splashed her face, Josie looked over at her wrist watch. The hands showed that the time was ten minutes after two o'clock in the morning. She was right on schedule. Josie finished her nightly routine, turned back her bed linens, and climbed into bed. As she did, she was completely unaware of the connection that the strange sound she had heard would have with her life.

CHAPTER 3

Kennan, Wisconsin [Wednesday, July 15, 1936]

The alarm clock rang promptly at 4:30 A.M, waking Joe from his unusually brief night's sleep. He rolled over, disoriented a moment from having fallen asleep in a different bedroom than he was used to. Realizing now where he was, Joe turned his head and looked at the window. A yellowish-pink light began to stream through the screen and bathe the room with light. He knew that this meant the sun was just starting to creep above the horizon, the same horizon that the mysterious light came from just a few hours earlier. He couldn't shake the feeling that what he had seen was not real. Lying in bed for a short bit, he played the night's events over and over in his head. No matter how hard he tried, he could not come up with any rational explanation for what had happened.

Did it really even happen? Although Joe knew that it did, he now entertained the possibility that, perhaps, he had fallen asleep and dreamt it. Whatever happened, it was something that Joe knew he would either have to find some logical explanation for, or dismiss it as having been the result of his being over-tired and half-asleep. Either way, this dream or event was something that he would not soon forget, if ever. He vowed not to dwell on it for now. There was work to be done. He crawled out of bed and stumbled into the kitchen. He lit the wood stove to cook breakfast. As he filled the coffee pot with water at the sink, he looked out the kitchen window just above the sink. He noticed that the side-hinged door to the garage was still wide open. The garage was empty, evidence that his family never made it home last night.

"They'll be home soon enough," he thought to himself. After finishing breakfast, Joe retrieved some clean clothes and

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headed for the screen door. He pushed gently on the latch, expecting the door to spring wide open, as it always did. The door didn't budge and Joe found his nose poking into the screen. He had completely forgotten that he had locked the door.

"Still locked from last night; that's good," he thought. But that fact also meant that none of it had been a dream. With that sobering thought, and somewhat embarrassed at having walked into the screen, Joe paused for a moment, shook his head and then unlocked the door. He pushed the door open and bounded down the stairs and across the still damp lawn on his way to the barn to begin the day's chores.

As Joe sent the last cow out to pasture, he went about the usual clean-up routine. His folks would be proud of him. It was still early, about 7:00 A.M., and the morning milking was successfully completed, clean-up and all. Joe stretched and then strolled back across the still-damp grass between the barn and the house, satisfied with his morning efforts. As he got closer to the house, he heard the distinctive ring of the telephone. He quickly jumped onto the porch, skipping all of the steps in the process, and threw open the screen door. The phone rang again as Joe picked up the receiver.

"Hello," he said, anticipating his father's husky voice. There was a brief pause and, hearing no response, Joe repeated his greeting.

Crackling through some static, and only faintly intelligible, a frail female voice responded. It was Victoria Keller, Joe's mother.

"Joe, are you there? Is that you?"

"Yeah, Mom, it's me. We've got a bad connection. But I can still hear you . . ." Feeling somewhat put off by having to spend the night alone and his nerves being somewhat frayed from a lack of sleep, Joe snapped. "What's going on? Why

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didn't you guys make it home last night? Why didn't you guys call to let me know what's goin' on?"

After a short moment of silence, Joe repeated the first of the questions to his mother, raising his voice slightly in the event his mother hadn't heard him. Victoria interrupted.

"Joe, listen to me. I'm sorry that we didn't call you right away, but we have some bad news."

His anger now in check by his mother's tone, Joe anxiously waited for the rest of her message.

"We arrived yesterday afternoon and the doctors were able to see John right away. He was sick, Joe . . . really, really sick. We didn't realize how sick he was." Pausing to keep her composure, she continued. "You know how John said his stomach was hurting him yesterday? And he was all, you know, sweaty, and clammy?"

Joe shook his head, silently acknowledging that he was in agreement with what she was telling him. Joe continued to hang on her every word.

"It turned out that John's appendix burst sometime yesterday, probably before we even left home. By the time we got here, John was much sicker than anyone knew."

Joe shook his head in disbelief. He had a sinking feeling as he reached out as far as the length of the phone cord would allow him to and pulled a kitchen chair over to the phone. Bracing himself, he sat down.

"Joe," she said, as her voice began to crack, "we lost your brother last night. He died from infection. It was too far gone and there was nothing that the doctors could do for him."

He could hear his mother's voice drop off as she began sobbing uncontrollably on the other end of the line. He sat speechless, dropping his hand, still holding the receiver, to his lap. He felt the blood rush to his feet. Bringing the receiver back

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up to his mouth, Joe said, “No, Mom, it can’t be true. Say it’s not true. I can’t believe this.”

Victoria, sensing her son’s rush of deep emotion that only the bond between brothers, between *twin* brothers, could produce, maintained her composure and continued. “Joe, now listen to me. Are you okay until we get back home?”

In a confused state of utter disbelief and unbearable grief, he responded almost mechanically. “Yeah, Mom . . . I’ll be okay.”

“We have to make arrangements to have John brought back home. We didn’t have time to do that last night because it was so late and . . .”

“But *why* didn’t you guys call me right away?”

“Joe, it was so late, and it didn’t make sense to bother you last night.”

“But I stayed up waiting . . . I was up. How late last night did this happen, Mom? Why didn’t you call me last night to let me know?” He was upset at the thought that his parents hadn’t called him immediately, however late it would have been.

“It didn’t happen last night, Joe. It happened this morning, early this morning. That’s why we waited until now to call you.”

Confused, Joe asked, “Mom, when did John die?”

“A little after two o’clock this morning . . . I think it was about quarter after or so. I don’t know exactly . . . it really doesn’t matter.”

“No, you’re right, it doesn’t.” There was a pause.

“When do you expect to be home?”

“Tonight. We should be home tonight.”

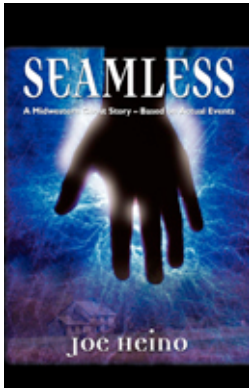
“I’ll see you tonight.” There was another pause.

“I love you.”

“I love you too, Mom. Have a safe drive home.”

SEAMLESS

As Joe hung the receiver slowly onto the phone, he clutched his head in his hands and began to cry, devastated by his unimaginable loss.



Inspired by actual events, SEAMLESS is a Midwestern ghost story that explores the unsettling possibility of inter-dimensional contact. A strange light that cuts through the night skies of Northern Wisconsin appears to have been accompanied by an ominous dark presence - all rather "seamlessly." What it is and where it came from are questions that will be answered, but only after a decades-long search to find the "key" as to why the presence entered this world.

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