

The Hawardens



KERRY BURNS



The Hawardens is a parallel worlds story. The worlds are similar - one being our world in 2000 and the second is about the same with little electronic development. Secretly invading aliens have stopped development. Don, a retired electronics engineer, finds the door to the second world and is driven to save it from the aliens. He is tested with battles, love, friendship and mysterious instructions before he gets his reward.

The Hawardens

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8066.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Your free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

The Hawardens

Kerry Burns

Copyright © 2015 Kerry Burns

ISBN 978-1-63490-450-6

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida, U.S.A.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2015

First Edition

Chapter 1

The Copper Door

A year after my wife died, I retired from my academic position, left my family home in Wisconsin, and bought a house in Hawarden, Iowa. I had never visited the place, nor did I know anyone there. As far as I know, no one I knew ever visited there. I wanted nothing to do with the familiar or the memories and feelings that it carried including kids, grandkids, and other relatives. Even though I was pulling 60, I had a compulsion to move to Hawarden and start life over and leave all of the old behind. I told everyone goodbye and left. They suspected suicide, and maybe that would've been better.

I had money for retirement, and with the sale of the house, I could buy something suitable, sound and quiet. There weren't many homes for sale which were sound in this small town, but there was one, and it was cheap.

The real estate agent spoke to me firmly, "I want to warn you, Mr. Elliot, this house is haunted. That's why it's cheap. It's been on and off the market for years. One family lasted two weeks before they left. They sent a note to the bank from St. Louis forfeiting their down payment. Most families last about six months. One family, several years ago, lasted about a year and a half and disappeared. They were never seen again. Their car is in the garage with the keys in it. If you buy, be well warned. You'll have a hard time selling it."

"I spent my life as a scientist, and I don't believe in ghosts or hauntings. My interest is in the soundness of the structure, and how much maintenance I have to put into it. But since the bank thinks it's haunted, and this is a small

town, they'll never sell it except to a sucker, I'll give them thirty thousand cash as is," I replied.

"Well now, Mr. Elliot that's only half of the asking price. I don't think the bank will go for it."

"Look, there are a hundred small towns in Iowa, and they're all shrinking. I could go twenty miles down the road and find a good house that isn't haunted for a little more. One that's been lived in and kept up to boot. You ask them. I'll wait until dark, and then I'm going to Sioux City. There's no motel here I want to stay in," I told him.

The bank took the deal, as I knew it would, and I moved in after a couple of weeks of cleaning and fixing. There was no sign of ghosts. My new home was a single story, three bedroom Midwest special with a single car attached garage on the right hand side. The only person I'd met so far was Mary Anderson who lived in the house across the street. She was blonde, overweight, and married. She warned me several times in our one conversation that the house was haunted and dangerous.

A few weeks later, while I was cleaning the basement so I could fix the furnace for winter, I noticed an obscure door on the basement wall. It was barely noticeable.

Ah ha, the fruit cellar. I opened the door to look at inky blackness. With my light, I could make out a door handle about a foot away. I reached through and turned it. It opened into a basement that looked about like the one I was in. I noticed that the part of my arm in the blackness between the doors was invisible or missing. I closed both doors, barred the one in my basement and went upstairs.

"That's enough cleaning for today. I have to think about this for a while."

The side the door opened on was toward a vacant lot. The nearest house was fifty feet away.

Therefore, no interconnecting basements. The blackness between the two doors wasn't a lack of light. It barely responded to my light bulb, enough to see the other door.

Mighty damned strange, if you ask me. This must have something to do with why all of those other owners ran away.

With that, I poured myself a strong drink and found a book to read. I could only ignore my discovery for a couple of days, and I decided to do a little exploring.

Nothing like a little fear to perk up your mind.

I went down the steps into the basement. It was as I had left it. I turned on all of the lights and opened my side. The blackness was there. I reached through and once again, opened the other door. I could see a little in the other basement through the blackness. I took a deep breath and stepped through past both doors. The basement was shaped like mine, and the furnace was in the same place, but there was different debris, with a thick coat of dust. There were a number of tracks in the dust leading to the basement stairs, but there were none leading to the 'door'.

There was no sound in the house, but I could hear an automobile driving by outside.

That's enough science for today. I'll try tomorrow and listen for some sounds in the house, although it feels empty.

I closed both doors, barred mine and went upstairs to have a stiff drink. I examined myself carefully, in the light, by mirror, and by touch. Everything felt normal. The blackness between the doors appeared not to have hurt me even if I tended to disappear when I was in it.

I'm not going to be completely in the blackness. I might disappear entirely.

A few days later, after the furnace was repaired, and everything was cozy, curiosity called to me again. I went back through the doors and into the other basement. It was

darker today in the basement because it was raining outside, as it was on the other side. I listened carefully. *Not a sound.* I crept up the stairs. The upper door was cracked open. I pushed it farther open, and I could see the kitchen. It was built exactly like mine except the table was different. The kitchen was dusty, and I could see tracks going out the back door. I felt confident there was no one living in the house. After a relaxation breath, I stepped into the kitchen and crept through the house. No one had been in here for a long time. The only thing different from mine was the furniture.

I looked out the front window. The houses were the same as on my street. Although there were different cars parked in the driveways. A woman was walking down the street with a couple of small children. I didn't recognize her.

"This is unnatural; how can this be explained?" I muttered. The numbers on the houses across the street were identical. On an inspiration, I pulled out my cell phone.

No signal. Next time I'll bring my portable radio and see if there's a signal for that. I wonder if there's an abandoned car in the garage.

Once again, I decided I'd given enough to science for today. I closed the basement doors and hurried back to my own.

"Yes, I have cell phone signal now. I have to conclude that these are two separate places which are similar."

After two days, curiosity overwhelmed me, and I had to check further on things. I got my portable radio out and turned it on. I found a Sioux City FM station and returned to the other side. The radio cut out as it passed through the blackness, but returned in a few seconds playing different music.

Well, they speak English, and they have radio stations like ours.

I was about to go upstairs when I felt a surge of menacing fear engulf me. I called it that because I had a knot in the pit of my stomach, the hair on my neck was standing up, and I could hear a high pitched faint humming. It had a menacing, sinister quality to it which made me uneasy. I had first noticed it in a weaker form when passing through the black space.

Oops, gotta keep both doors closed. That crap seems to spread. I'll bet that's what got to those other folks.

I noted that the doors were metal covered, probably copper, since I could see green corrosion. I secured them and hurried upstairs to see what was on the street. The yard was overgrown with weeds and tall grass. The 'For Sale' sign had blown off the fence and lay rusting on the front sidewalk. The lots on both sides of the house were empty, as with my house. Mrs. Anderson was in her yard across the street raking leaves. She looked slightly different from the Mrs. Anderson I had met.

If Mrs. Anderson is in her yard on both sides, then am I on both sides? If I crossed through, did I cross through both ways simultaneously? I'm guessing this is a parallel world that separated in the not too distant past. Am I supposed to fix the house on the other side or does the other me fix it? But since this house hasn't been fixed up or occupied, then I guess I haven't been here yet. To solve this problem or to be safe, I have to control both houses or else forget this side. Yeah, like that's going to happen.

I didn't believe in parallel worlds, but I'd read science fiction stories about them. There's a lot of edgy speculation, and in most of the stories I had read, the worlds were wildly different.

I decided it was time to get back and think about the problem, because of a nagging fear of being trapped on the

new side, and I certainly didn't want that to occur. I went through the reverse ritual of securing doors and locking the basement. It was time to have some lunch, but I was out of beer. *Can't have lunch without beer.*

When I went out to walk to the Quik Stop for beer, Mrs. Anderson hailed me from her yard where she was raking leaves. "Mr. Elliot, did you feel it?" she shouted.

"Feel what," I called back.

"That creepiness or weirding or whatever it was, like a nasty breeze coming from your house," she answered.

"I didn't feel a thing, but then I was in the back porch," I answered untruthfully, since I knew exactly what she meant.

"Well, be careful, Mr. Elliot those ghosts may be about again. It's not long until Halloween," she urged.

"I'll keep a close eye out, and thanks for the warning. By the way, call me Don. We're neighbors, and I'm not the formal type."

I continued down the street musing over the complications this business could bring.

Is Mrs. Anderson one person or two? Or one person with two slightly different aspects, and how do I keep them straight if I get to know both of them? Do they do the same thing all of the time on both sides?

I bought my beer and returned home for lunch.

I was wishing I had my old lab at the university handy.

What does copper have to do with it? I know a well-grounded copper screen will stop almost all electromagnetic waves.

I didn't have frequency detectors or S meters to aid in investigating. I could build a small copper enclosed room around each door to see if that blocked the feelings of menacing fear. I knew where to order rigid, copper screen. That and some rigid three-quarter copper pipe for framing

ought to do the job. A week later I had the supplies, and I finished the job in both basements in two days, two nice twelve by twelve rooms with copper screen ceilings carefully grounded to the plumbing and a 48 inch wide door opposite the door across.

Now for the test. Using a piece of copper pipe with a hook, I pulled the door to the blackness open and waited. After a couple of minutes the copper screen began to crackle and an energy nimbus formed. The screen held and grounded the signal, and after a while the energy quit. I pushed the door closed. The copper screen was hot, so I decided to let it cool. I walked across the street and knocked on the door.

“Mrs. Anderson,” I called. “Did you feel anything weird or strange?”

“No Mr. Elliot, I didn’t, but I was in the house. I don’t feel anything now. What did you do?” she asked.

“It was a strange sewage problem. I changed the plumbing in the basement, and I fixed it, but be sure to let me know if you get the feeling again or if you smell something,” I answered.

“Oh, I will. I hope you fixed it. This business has frightened us for years. Thank you Mr.--- I mean Don. And please call me Mary,” she replied.

“Ok Mary. I’ll be around to talk from time to time,” I answered as I started home.

Now I want to meet the other Mrs. Anderson.

I let several days pass thinking about the world on the other side. I’d have no identity there, and I’d have to watch for my double.

Would money be the same? How different will the people be? How do I approach them?

I pondered these questions and others.

I'll have to leave and enter the house in the dark since I've no right to be in the house. If I'm caught, I could lose access to the door and not be able to get back. Oh hell, give it a try.

I decided to leave soon after dark and walk downtown to familiarize myself with the differences and maybe talk to someone. I made a copper bracelet to wear when passing through the black space to see what would happen. Nothing happened. I entered the other basement and secured the doors. In a few moments, I was in a new world. I walked downtown without meeting anyone. Instead of Stan's Coffee Shop, it was the Coffee Shop. I took a chance and went in. It was almost exactly like Stan's, a half dozen booths in red plastic lined two walls. There were several large tables at the back and a row of four seat tables in the center. The kitchen was across from the door and there was no counter space for customers.

There were a couple of old guys at a table talking and a waitress. She was a large woman, about 5'10" or more, with wide shoulders and hips but not overweight. Her brownish blonde hair hung almost to her shoulders with a little end curl. Her complexion was faded and coarse, and she had a couple of small warts on her cheek near one ear. She appeared to be in her early forties and wasn't attractive. Most notably, she had a tired and haggard look about her. She reminded me of a woman who had worked too many years on a farm. I ordered a cup of coffee and gave her a dollar bill. She looked at the bill and quickly stuffed it in her apron.

When she returned with a refill she asked softly, "where did you get that dollar?"

Our eyes met. "I don't know, probably in change somewhere. Why, is there something wrong with it?"

“You’d better walk me home. I get off in about twenty minutes. This isn’t a come on, but you could get in trouble if you’re not careful,” was her serious reply.

“Ok, I’ll hang here until you’re ready to leave.”

“It’ll take me ten minutes to close. Leave when the other customers do and walk slowly around the block. I should be out by that time,” was her reply.

When she announced closing, I followed the others out and started around the block, kind of window shopping and checking out the back street as I went. As I came around the fourth corner, I could see her locking the shop and caught up with her.

“Hi, I’m Don.” I greeted her.

“I’m Nora, but don’t figure on being a close friend. I’m interested in saving your butt. How long have you been here? And don’t give me a bunch of crap; I know how you got here,”

“Ok, I’ve been in and out several times, but I never left the house until tonight,” I replied.

“You’re damn lucky I was on shift. The money is close, but not exact. Anyone who looks will notice. Coins are close enough to pass,” Nora answered.

“There’s only one reason you know this. How long you been here?” I asked.

“Thirteen years, my husband and I came with the family. We had a lot of debt and thought things would be better here. He was a drunk and got pissed one night, beat me up, took the kids and went back and barred the door. I was trapped. I’ve made the best of it. You’re not the only one to come over. A family came into the café about a year ago. They wanted to stay on this side, but they didn’t know shit and weren’t prepared for anything. I put them in touch with some people I know. They should be ok. What do you have in mind?”

“I don’t know; I’m drawn to this business. I bought the other house, and I’m living there, but I’m afraid to leave for fear someone will bar the door when I am here. I want to buy the house here for safety reasons, but I don’t have a clue on how to do it. This whole business scares hell out of me, but I can’t leave it alone. If you want to go back, you can do that now, and I’ll help however I can,” I answered.

“I’m afraid to go back. Something got me, or bit me, or invaded me when I tried to go back after he took the kids, and I couldn’t get the other door open. The darkness in between is a path to hell, and I’ll be dragged down if I try again. Are you saying you want to stay in this jerkwater town?” Nora asked.

“I don’t know, but I feel I need to be in control of both doors. I ought to move to California and stay away from this whole business, but I don’t think I can.”

Chapter 2

Nora

I told her the story of my retirement and how I ended up in Hawarden 1 and 2.

As we walked by ‘the house’ Nora spoke up. “You haven’t been careful enough. Mrs. Anderson said she heard music coming from the house a few days ago. People are afraid of the house, and they’re nosy. Sometimes I feel an evil wind is blowing out of it, and it gives me the chills. I’m scared to death of that place. If you had some money here, you could buy the house. Nobody wants it, but if you did, they’d wonder about you. Wouldn’t you be afraid to live in it?”

“No. I’ve solved the problem with the haunting, but we’ll see.”

We continued up the street for about a block when she stopped and turned to me.

“This is where I live. I couldn’t bear to be far away from the house either. Do you want to come in for a while? We have some things to talk about,” Nora said.

“Sure, you don’t look dangerous. Do you have a man?” I asked.

“No, after Harry left and took our kids, I swore off men. It’s been hard to think about them or have a relationship with someone, and if you screw around in this town, everybody knows. It’s better that I stay alone. Maybe someday I can go back, or the kids can come here. I try not to think about any of that.”

We went into the house, a late 19th century two story.

“Is this your house?”

“No, it’s rented. I don’t need this much house, but it was the only thing available. I’ve been here since Harry left. It’s expensive to heat, but the landlord has been good to me.”

She served me coffee and cookies, and we chatted about life in the town and what to expect. It was clear she was lonely. I suspected she had no close friends.

“What it comes down to, Nora is in order for me to live on this side even part time, I have to have some local money, and an identity. You’re the first person I’ve talked to on this side, and I’m glad you’re here. How can I thank you? Is there anything you want me to bring back?”

“Yes. When you go back, see if you can find any word on my kids or my rotten husband. I’ll give you their names, ages, and social security numbers. Please, be careful crossing back and forth. Bring some gold over; I know a metals dealer, and that will get you local money.”

I said good night and left. I walked down the alley for the block and a half back to the house. A few dogs barked. I slipped into the house and was soon in my own kitchen.

Damn, this business is too crazy. Safety and comfort in my own home is a block away. Or I could be trapped on one side or another if some little thing goes wrong. This isn’t what I had in mind for retirement.

It took a couple of phone calls and a Google search to find Carol Spotswood, a nineteen year old sophomore at Oklahoma State in Stillwater. There was nothing on her son John, and Harry worked at being a drunk in Tulsa. I’d planned to relax for a few days, but a feeling of urgency was on me.

First I need some gold, but I’m running low on cash. I can’t be buying houses in every world I happen to run into.

I found a metals dealer in Des Moines, and bought ten thousand dollars’ worth of gold and three thousand worth of

platinum. He was surprised when I wanted to take the metal with me. I told him it wasn't an investment.

"I manufacture electronic parts occasionally since I retired, and I haven't established an industrial supplier yet."

He went to his vault and weighed out the proper amounts and gave them to me. The trip home was uneventful, but I could barely wait to get on with the adventure.

The next morning I crossed over early and hid my gold in the basement and went looking for Nora. I slipped out the back door. It was a quiet Friday morning, and there didn't seem to be anyone around. Nora wasn't at work at the Coffee Shop, so I went back to her house. She answered the door in her nightgown, but let me in.

"What's up? I didn't know if you'd be back or not. Thinking about going through the blackness scares hell out of me. Did you find the kids?" She asked.

"I found Carol. She's at OSU. A sophomore, it said. I'm sure it's her. I didn't find any sign of John, and Harry is in Tulsa."

"Did you talk to her?"

"No, not yet. I got some gold to sell. I feel I have to get control of that house and have a place to be when I'm over here. Sooner or later someone will see me going in or out, and they'll want to know why."

"For the time being, Don, I could rent you a room. I've done that a couple of times in the past. You can't buy a house until you're a real person. We have to take a drive to Sioux City and talk to some people I know. Do you have your gold with you?"

"Aaa, No. I hid it in the basement. I can slip over and get it in a few minutes."

"No, it's too late. There'll be people around now. I've a better idea. I'll call the realtor and tell him you want to look

at it. You can get your gold, then we'll go to Sioux City. I'm going to take a shower and get dressed. Pour some coffee and read the paper until I'm ready," she answered and left the room.

I poured the coffee and started looking at the paper. I checked the financials. Gold was worth a third more here, but platinum cheaper. *Now there's some business potential.* There was a vast amount of new information in the paper, and I knew I'd better subscribe. It took a half an hour for her to get ready. Her dress clothes were clean and pressed, but old and worn.

"The real estate agent will meet us in 20 minutes. Do you understand why I am doing these things for you? It's not because I'm crazy about you, although you seem to be an ok guy. I want some contact with my kids, and you're the only one in this world who can do that for me. Do we have a deal on that?"

"Sure, Nora, as soon as this is business settled, I'll go back and go to Stillwater and find your daughter. Give me something to take to her, and I'll at least get you a letter from her."

"Great, keep your promise. The last time I trusted a guy it didn't work out at all. Finish your coffee, and we'll take a walk down the block and look at your new home."

We met the agent, and Nora did the introductions, identifying me as an old friend from Oklahoma. He was the double of guy I bought the last house from.

We walked around the yard, but the agent was hesitant to go into the house. Finally, I asked, "do you have the key?"

"No, but I don't think you need one. I doubt if it's been locked for years. Even transients won't stay in it," he answered.

“I want to take a walk through the inside. I have to see if it’s fixable and how much water damage there is.”

“Nora and I will wait. This is one uncomfortable house, and it’s Friday the thirteenth.”

I walked through with more boldness and looked at all of the rooms and picked up my stash in the basement. The house wasn’t in terrible shape. Mostly, it was dirty and needed paint. A couple of windows would have to be replaced.

When I met them outside, the agent said, “Mr. Elliot, I must warn you this house is haunted-----.”

The speech was word for word that I had heard last time. The only a difference concerned the people who had been there. I almost couldn’t stop myself from saying the same thing I had said before about structure on the other side.

“Who owns this house,” I asked.

“The bank, they’re asking 15 thousand since it’s been empty so long. That’s about the price of the lot.”

“I’ll give them ten since the place is haunted-----.” The same words came out of my mouth as last time. “I should have the money by Monday. I’ll be staying with Nora for a while until I have something to live in. If I should be out of town, she can get the news to me.”

“That’s a damned lowball offer, but I’ll ask the bank. I doubt they’ll go for it, but maybe for cash. Then they’ll be out of it completely,” the agent answered.

“There’s an extra five hundred for you if you get it done,” I added.

The agent left and Nora and I walked up the block. Mrs. Anderson waved and called to Nora. We stopped to visit. After the introductions, she asked if I intended to buy the house.

When I told her I was thinking of it, her reply was, “Oh Mr. Elliot, that house is haunted. Please be careful. I heard music and noises coming from it the other day, and sometimes I can feel the weirdness coming out of the house. There’s something bad or evil over there.”

“Don’t worry Mrs. Anderson, I’ll be careful. There’s a natural explanation for everything you’ve heard coming from the house,” I assured her, but it was clear that she didn’t believe me.

We said our goodbyes and hurried up the street to Nora’s.

“I’ll call Marco before we leave and make sure he’ll be available,” she said.

“Who’s he?”

“He sells ID’s. That’s where I got mine. An honest business man so to speak,” she said as she ran in the house to call. I waited by the car.

Boy, for a waitress, this lady knows how to get things done. Meeting her kind of makes me wonder what’s going on. She seems so competent, but she’s kind of existed for the past thirteen years. She was out in 5 minutes.

“Hop in, and we’ll go. I have to be back for work at four,” she said, and away we went.

It was thirty miles to Sioux City. We pulled into a coin and metal dealer on a side street. I decided not to sell the platinum since that was a loss. The gold had certificates of purity and was stamped, but the dealer didn’t recognize the stamp.

“Look, the guy’s in Des Moines, you can check it out. It’s not like it’s a big time sale or something,” I argued.

“Ok, I’ll take one percent insurance on this deal. Next time come with better paperwork. Nora says you’re safe. I’ve been drinking her coffee for a long time. I’ll take a chance.”

He went to the safe and took out over 14 thousand, and we did the deal.

Nora drove to a residential neighborhood and stopped in front of a two story Queen Ann.

“Marco’s Sicilian. Make sure you don’t insult him. He knows his business, and if he has a good ID this won’t take long,” Nora warned.

She did the introductions and Marco seated us in his office.

“After you called, Nora, I checked my files, and I have one. It’s clean, no felonies, no wanteds, college degree, and 63. How old are you Mr. Elliot?” Marco asked.

“Sixty-three,” I answered.

“Good, good. This guy originally died when he was 19, but there was a big confusion because there was another guy at the college with his name. We moved some numbers around and nobody was sure which was which. Then the other guy died about ten years ago so nobody can complain if we use part of his ID. This ID has been active for most of the last forty years so you can get social security in a couple of years, but don’t worry about kids. None of the carriers had kids under this ID. Oh, shit! What did you say your name was?” he asked.

“Donald Elliot. Two ls and one t,” I answered.

“So is this one. What’s the deal here? Is this some kind of set up? Nora, be straight with me. How can this be? What’s the odds we got three Don Elliot’s for the same ID?” asked Marco getting riled.

“Wait a minute Marco,” I interrupted. “Don Elliot is a name I happen to be using because my real name is bad news. But the freaky thing is this ID you are talking about, I think, is my cousin’s. We were going to school at the same time at University of Wisconsin, Madison. I figured it was safe to use

his name because I wouldn't run into anybody who knew him."

"Yeah, or so you say. How do I know you're not from the feds trying to bust me for selling IDs If I push this button on my desk, my guys will be in here in less than a minute to take you out," Marco answered coldly.

"I don't doubt it. I'd expect you to be able to take care of yourself, but let's not screw up a deal until you know for sure. Even the Feds aren't that stupid. A guy with no ID can't prove anything. Nora's the only person I know around here, and I haven't known her long. I promised to find her daughter if she'd help me with this," I answered, thinking up lies as fast as I could.

"You don't need to tell me your name, but where you from?" Marco asked.

"West Coast, Seattle mostly, ever hear of the Jokers. I rode with them for years until I got too old. When I retired, they tried to push me into doing some bad shit including rubbing out some chicks. I don't do that, and they decided to burn me. I heard what was coming down before they ratted me out, and I left town. That was a while back, but I still gotta lie low."

"I heard of the Jokers. They're a tough bunch. If you're in trouble with them, you're really in trouble. Ok, Nora, you backing this guy?" Marco asked.

Nora was pale but she nodded, "Yes, I don't know him well, but I know him well enough to know he's not with the law. He knows some stuff that can help me. Cut us some slack on this .Marco. You know where I live."

"Ok Nora, you're my hostage. And you Don, or whatever your name is. I'll sell you the ID for two thousand. It's usually a thousand, but I want insurance I want cash, and I want it before you leave. You understand that?"

“What? You think I come to do business with no money? Tell me what else I need to know about this ID, and if it’s clean and safe we got a deal,” I snapped.

“Hey, I said it was good. Here’s the paperwork. You’ll need to get a driver’s license with a new picture. Tell them you lost the old one, same with the passport if you should need that. If the Jokers are after you, you probably will. Palermo is nice most of the winter.”

I had Nora look through the paperwork, and she thought everything was OK. I pulled out my wad and peeled off four 500s. “Here you go Marco. Nice doing business with you. Sorry about the misunderstanding. But the ID freaks me out too,” I concluded.

“Hey, you guys want a glass of wine before you go to kind of seal the deal?” he asked.

Nora shook her head, “Sorry Marco, not today. I have to get back for work, but stop in the Café, and we’ll have coffee. Tuesday afternoons are quiet.”

With that, she stood up signaling the meeting was over, and Marco showed us to the front door. I kept a firm hold on my new ID as I got in the car and breathed a big sigh of relief.

“Get us out of this town, Nora. I’ve had all the fun I need.” I looked through the paperwork getting more shocked by the minute. “You realize this new ID is me. I died in this world when I was nineteen. Everything but the social security number is the same up to the time of the accident. There are too many things happening here to be random chance. I don’t blame Marco for being suspicious.”

Nora kept her eyes on the road, but looked grim. “I’m sure as hell glad you thought up a bunch of lies. I thought we were goners. You’re right. The new ID being you is a little much. I kind of like you, but this whole business is scaring hell out of me.”

“I stepped into this world and walked down the street knowing nothing. You, the first person I talked to, are probably the only one who could help and protect me. You took me under your wing and knew exactly what to do and who to see, and I got my own ID for this world. I have a feeling we’re not in charge of events on this side or the other,” I mused.

“So what happens now? I don’t think Marco will go after us unless something causes him to think we’ve exposed him. However, I wasn’t going to drink his wine today. We’ll have to send a little business his way. He does do other things you know,” she commented.

“I don’t even want to know, but you can handle that. Ask him if he buys rare metals. I’ll try to close on the house on Monday, get a bank account and a driver’s license and become a real person. I may go to the other side for this weekend to keep in touch. I’ll take your offer and rent a room from you.”

Nora dropped me off at the bank and went home to get ready for work. I went in the bank and asked about the deal. They said they’d sell for that price, and I could get possession on Monday. That left me with the feeling I’d offered too much. While I was there, I opened a checking account. I put in \$12,000. The teller was a little dubious about that much cash, and I had to lie a little. *I guess I’m close to legitimate.*

Nora was still home and showed me my room. I had the weekend to make plans.

I have to get a driver’s license and a car, and think about fixing the house. I still don’t know anyone here other than Nora. I need some friends.

Nora went to work, and I fixed myself some supper and read some of the papers she had lying around. Things were similar, but not the same. If I paid attention I could get along

here. She came home after her shift at the Café, and as it turned out, I didn't need my room at all. Although Nora was enthusiastic, there was as much of that menacing fear as there was intimacy, and I didn't enjoy the encounter much.

I don't think she's sworn off men, they swore off of her. This woman puts out weird vibes. That's too bad, because she's gone all out to be helpful. What more could I possibly ask for?

We spent the weekend enjoying each other's company on a more platonic basis and barely went outside. I never did get to the other side.

On Monday, I closed on the house, and bought some locks and a few tools and made the house secure although there was no danger anyone would go near it. I told Nora goodbye and crossed back to world One. I continued to have the feeling I had to be on both sides at the same time. Wherever I was seemed like the wrong place. I promised Nora I'd find Carol and get a message to her. Once I was back in my fixed up house, I ate some leftovers and drank a couple of beers. I dialed the Google number I had.

"Hello?"

"Hello, is this Carol Spotswood?" I asked.

"Yes it is, who's calling please?"

"This is a friend of your mother, Nora. She asked me to give you a message," I replied.

After a long silence, she replied. "My mother is dead. Why are you bringing this up?"

"She's not dead and is where you left her thirteen years ago. Harry may tell you she's dead, but it's not true. I talked to her this morning. Listen, Carol, I know you haven't forgotten what happened when all of you left her. I'd like to meet you on campus somewhere and talk about this. She gave me a letter for you." I insisted.

“You seem to know something, but I don’t trust you much. Are you willing to meet in the Student Union tomorrow morning?” she asked.

“Can’t, I’m not in Oklahoma, but I can be there by Wednesday. I’ll call you when I get to Stillwater,” I answered.

Chapter 3

Carol

She hung up. It was over a day's drive to Stillwater; I pulled onto campus before ten a.m. and called from the SUB.

"Carol, this is your mother's friend. Can we meet? I'm on campus." I asked.

"I have class at ten. How about eleven in the SUB caf? I'm bringing people with me," she answered. "What do you look like?"

"Fine, it's your privacy. I'll be sitting alone. I have grey hair that's kind of short, I'm about 5' 9" and built stocky, a lot of that's because I'm overweight. I wear bifocals that are tinted and I'm wearing a red shirt. Nora said you were blonde. Is that the case?"

"No, not any more. It's darkened. I'll look for you after class," she hung up.

Near eleven, I returned to the SUB and found a table and some coffee.

Before long, three coeds approached my table. They sat down and waited. I introduced myself, "I'm Don Elliot, a friend of Nora Spotswood. Which of you is Carol?"

"I'm Carol," the one in the center replied with hesitation. Her voice wasn't the same, and as I scrutinized her, I noticed another young woman watching us some distance away.

"What is your brother's name?" I asked. Frozen silence from the three. "Why don't you ask Carol to come over and sit down? I didn't drive 700 miles for a game," I replied.

They waved to the coed, and she came over and sat down. I handed her a picture and asked, "who are these people?"

“How did you get this? I remember when it was taken. That’s me and John with Mom when we were little. Have you seen her? Daddy said she was dead and that’s why we left in a hurry. I thought he killed her. They fought so much,” she answered with tears in her eyes.

“Do you want your friends to hear this? I talked to her in new Hawarden on Monday.”

“Hey guys, this is private and scary. Could you sit over at that other table so you can’t hear, but can see that I’m ok,” she asked.

The three girls got up and moved to a table a short distance away without a word.

“You’ve been across haven’t you?” she asked.

“Yeah, I bought the house in Hawarden. I met your mom on the other side. She’d like to come over, but she’s scared to cross, so she sent this letter,” I answered and handed her the letter.

“I’m scared to cross too. Something got us when we crossed back. John was never right after that and ran away four years ago when he was seventeen. I’ve never heard a word from him. Daddy tried some girlfriends, but they wouldn’t stay in the house. He’s a total drunk now; I’m barely hanging on. Studying keeps me calm.”

“What are you using for money to stay in school?” I asked.

“Nothing, my friends said they’ll help me through the semester. Daddy’s in jail on a DUI and can’t send me anything. He lost the apartment when he went to jail. I have no place to go. I’ll drop out and work this winter and maybe by next fall I can afford to go back.”

“Do you have a boyfriend or a guy to help you?” I asked as gently as I could, but I knew where this was leading.

“No, I’ve never had a boyfriend. Two or three kisses and they make some excuse and leave. I must be repulsive too. Kind of like what happened to Dad,” was her answer.

“How about relatives; don’t you have any?” I asked.

“Yes, but they’ve cut us off. Dad’s family told all us to never come near them again. And mom’s family is sure that Daddy did something to Mom, and they don’t want us around,”

“Ok, I’m Mr. Softie. Your mom has done me some favors. I’ll keep you in school until summer. Then, I want you to work for me in Hawarden to repay. Are you willing to do that?”

That’ll get someone safe in the other house.

“Yes, I’d appreciate that. Since Daddy went to jail, I don’t have any prospects, and that would be closer to mom,” she replied.

“Now read the letter from your mom, and write something so she knows you’re alive. She’s been isolated, and she doesn’t trust me much, but I promised to make contact. When’s your last class?” I asked.

“I’m out at 3:40.”

“Ok, I’ll meet you here. Have a letter for your mom or a package or whatever so she knows I didn’t make this up. And give me your address, and don’t move. I’ll have a check for you in a few days to keep you going until Christmas.”

Those were my final instructions; I got up and left. I got off campus because I didn’t want to be lurking around while I waited for Carol to absorb the contents of the letter and make a reply. I returned to the SUB at 3:30. She was sitting at a table alone waiting for me. That was when I realized she had the same tired, beaten down look that Nora had.

She’s not a fresh faced coed.

“You’re telling me the truth aren’t you?” she asked as I sat down.

“Yes, I knew it would take Nora’s letter to convince you I wasn’t some kind of a con man. Do you have any questions I can answer in public?” I asked her.

“Only about a thousand, but most are about the door. When will you see mom next?”

“If everything goes well, in two or three days; I have to drive back to Hawarden, and I have other business to take care of before I leave. It seems so far, and it’s so close.”

“Can I go with you? I want to see Mom. I can’t focus on school now.”

“No! That isn’t a good idea. You don’t know me. I told you I’d send you money to get you through the semester, and I will. Finish up the semester, and see to it that you pass. Nora will be mad at both of us if you flunk out. We’re into November so there are only a few weeks left. Drive to Hawarden at Christmas break and go to the house on Pine Street. I’ll take you across. I’ll give you instructions when I send the check,” I lectured.

“I don’t have a car. I have to take the bus to get to Tulsa,” she protested.

“I’ll send you a bus ticket to Sioux City, and I’ll pick you up. We can stay in touch by phone,” I answered, wanting to get out of there before this helpless waif overwhelmed me.

I took the package she had prepared for Nora, gave her a hug and left Stillwater. I took a side trip to Oklahoma City, where I sold my Platinum and bought some gold from a bigger dealer. *Maybe they’ll recognize this stamp.* It was a full day to Hawarden, and I felt more at ease being near the door.

Nora will be off tomorrow. I’ll go over in the morning and give her the package.

I did what cleaning was needed and checked upstairs and downstairs carefully. I was being paranoid, even though people wouldn't enter this house on a bet. When I crossed over the next morning, I realized I had more energy and felt stronger on this side. The depression I dragged around since Paula's death seemed to stay on the other side. I had to start on the outside work before winter closed in and get heat on inside.

I'll get started tomorrow when the hardware store opens.

I hurried down the street to Nora's. She was sitting in her nightgown reading the paper.

"Did you find her?" she asked jumping up and coming over to me. "I wasn't sure if you would be back since you got what you wanted from me."

"Carol sends her love and this package. After you look it over, I'll tell you the story. I'm going up to my room and change clothes."

I gave her a pat on the shoulder and went upstairs. I sat on the bed for a while until I heard sobbing down stairs. I decided to give her some comfort.

"She's alive and ok isn't she? And all these years; how can we get together?"

She went on for a while. I put my arm around her shoulders, and she settled down.

"I'll bring her over for Christmas if I can arrange it. She's in a mess financially, but I understand. I'll send her money to keep her going until we decide what to do."

She threw her arms around me, and I felt the menacing coming out. I gave her a quick kiss and broke away.

"Nora, I have to change the subject. Have you had any boyfriends since Harry left?"

“Why do you ask? Are you jealous, and besides, it’s none of your business.”

“Nora, it’s important. I understand something, but I need information. On a personal basis, I don’t care, but for science I want to know. Carol said she’s never had a boyfriend. After a few kisses on a date, they’d find some excuse and leave. Has this happened to you?”

“Yes, I had a few dates right after Harry left, but after a little making out, they made an excuse and left and never asked me out again. Then, nobody asked me out. What do you know about this?” she answered blinking away tears.

“When we were together last week, every time we kissed or were close, and you had some emotions, I had this weird uncomfortable feeling. When you kissed me now, I could feel it again. Carol told me the same thing. She said Harry would bring home girlfriends, but they’d never stay. None of the relatives would let them come near. I’m sure it has something to do with what happened when you tried to cross.” I explained.

“I thought there was something. I haven’t felt natural since I came here. That’s why none of the guys stayed. Why did you?” she asked.

“I’m not sure. I need you for advice in this world, and I kinda like you in spite of the weirdness. I was familiar with those strange feelings from when I crossed and left the doors open once. You might’ve noticed I pulled away from intimacy quickly.”

“What can we do? I don’t want to be like this indefinitely. This’s worse than being ugly,”

“It is. I couldn’t hang in there long no matter how charming or helpful you are. I have an idea, but I’ll have to think on it. I need to make a trip to sell some gold. I have to

work on the house most of the week and get some heat in there. Winter's coming.”

She held her arms out to me with her night gown hiding very little.

Gotta get this fixed. I can't handle it for long. She seems to like me more than I'd expect. But then we're both doing important things to help each other.

I gave her a quick hug and pulled away.

“Sorry Nora, I sense that nasty feeling when you get aroused. Let's keep it neutral.”

She accepted the rejection, and I assured her we'd remain friends, and I'd stay at her house if we could both handle it.

I spent the week working on my house. The systems were in bad shape, but I got the heat, lights, and water on. A storm moved in, and I couldn't work outside, but I got things cleaned. Whatever I did, I couldn't get Nora to come in my house. We had Thanksgiving the next week. There were two of us with families who weren't even in the same world. We were company, but it wasn't enough. I spent three nights a week on the other side.

A week before Christmas, I got a call from Carol. She was on her way. I drove to Sioux City to pick her up. Everything went well; we were back at the house by early evening.

“Are you ready to cross?” I asked her.

“I want to, but I'm afraid. I could feel things stirring in me as soon as I came in the house. But it's the only way to see mom.”

“I'm going to try something. I'm with you all the way, and I won't let them get you,” I promised as though I knew what I was talking about.

I led her downstairs and into the copper room. She was crying and twisting and pulling at her clothes. I closed the

copper door even though she fought me. She fought me until she fell to the floor. Almost immediately the screen began to crackle and the blue aura formed around it. I could see glimpses of wings and legs thrashing; Carol lay on the floor shuddering and crying. Then it was over. The copper screen was hot, but the blue aura was gone and all was quiet.

I helped her up. "Are you ready to cross now?" I asked. She nodded.

I put a copper bracelet on her wrist and opened both doors. I dragged her through into the other basement and slammed both doors. Carol had a stunned look on her face, but she seemed to be ok. We walked down the street for the grand reunion.

"I'm ok now. Whatever it was; it's gone. I feel different, but I'll find out."

Nora met us at the door. After a few seconds of looking and sizing up, they were embracing and crying. Then Carol pulled away.

"Mom, it still has you. I can feel it. Stay back. I don't want it to transfer to me. It knows I got free of them."

Carol slipped behind me and put her arms around my waist.

"Please, don't let it get me, Don," she whimpered.

Well, it worked better on Carol than I thought. Whatever it is, it can't stand the copper screens shorting out their electromagnetic radiation. I'm not sure that the creature is dead, but it left Carol. Now we have to do something for Nora.

"Relax Carol. The copper bracelet will protect you. I wear one and nothing has happened so far. Let's have supper, and you two can get to know each other at a distance."

“Does this mean I can never have anyone close to me? That I’m a creepy freak and my daughter is afraid to hug me?” whimpered Nora.

“We cured Carol, and we can cure you, Nora. Whenever you’re ready,”

“I’m not going into that house, and I’m not crossing. They’ll drag me down to hell if I get near. You know how they whisper, don’t you, Carol. I’d rather be lonely than take the chance. So to hell with both of you,” shouted Nora.

“Relax, Nora. We’re not going to make you do anything you don’t want to do. Let’s eat and enjoy each other’s company,” I soothed, suspecting we were speaking to more than Nora.

While Nora was in the kitchen fixing dinner, I whispered to Carol, “after supper we’ll get her damn good and drunk, and when she can barely walk, we’ll take her down the block to the house. Make sure you don’t get drunk. I’ll need help, and don’t say anything. The creatures might understand at some level.”

Carol and I had a good time, but Nora was miserable because Carol stayed six feet away at all times. I broke out the champagne and passed it around. I honeyed up Nora and told her maybe the creatures would go to sleep, and we could have some fun later.

It took about an hour since I was adding vodka to Nora’s champagne, and Carol and I were pouring ours out.

“Let’s go for a walk sweetie, you’re about on your ass,” I whispered to Nora. I put my arm around her and walked her out the door with Carol following. When we got to my house, I steered her in, but she struggled. Carol grabbed one arm, and I the other. We dragged her up the steps into the house before anyone noticed what was going on. Nora began to shout and protest.

“This behavior won’t do. Don’t you know how to act around your daughter?” I snarled. On an inspiration, I put my copper bracelet on her mouth. She quit shouting, and we led her down the stairs. Carol opened the door, and I pushed her into the copper room. When the door was closed, the energy discharge began. Carol and I stayed in the room with her. After a few minutes, Nora passed out, but the discharge continued. The screen was hot enough to glow red, and there was thumping and knocking on the door to the other side. I could feel the flutter and flitter of the ‘energy beasts’ as I called them since once they grounded out on the copper screen, they disappeared. Finally, after a few minutes, they, threw themselves against the screen and gave up a flash of blue sparks. Then it was quiet. There were no remains of any creature. When the screen cooled, Carol and I picked up Nora and carried her out.

“I’ll make sure the screen door is locked, even though whatever it was is gone, dead, or shorted out. How did I get tangled up in this craziness?” I asked Carol.

“Oh, shit! I was scared. I didn’t see any of this when you took me through, but twice in one night is too much for me. I hope Mom will be alright. We did her a favor by getting her drunk. Can we go back to Mom’s now and drink our share. I’m rattled.”

“Not until Nora sobers up enough to walk. We’ve attracted the attention of the neighbors as it is. I don’t want to carry her up the street. Let’s see if we can get her up the stairs. This basement is a little too much for me.”

Getting Nora up the stairs was a struggle. She was slightly more conscious than a sack of grain. We’d barely laid her on the couch when there was a hesitant knock at the front door.

I opened it. “Yes, Mrs. Anderson, was something bothering you?” I asked.

“Oh, Mr. Elliot, is everything alright. I could see blue sparks flashing in your basement window, and some loud shouting. I thought maybe the ghosts were out again,” she said.

“Not to worry. There are a couple of things going on though. Come in a moment. I want you to meet someone.”

“I-I don’t know. This is a haunted house. Will I be safe?” she asked, but stepped in.

“Perfectly safe and it’ll only take a moment.” I waved to Carol to come to me. “This is Carol, Nora’s daughter. She’s been missing for thirteen years, but I was able to find her and arrange a reunion. Unfortunately, Nora celebrated too much and is passed out on the couch.”

They did their social greeting and Mrs. Anderson asked, “what were the blue sparks and that glow? I was afraid your house was going to catch on fire.”

“Nothing that drastic. There was a minor problem with the plumbing I had changed, and I did some welding before it started leaking. I’m sorry it upset you. By the way, did you feel any of that creepiness we talked about?” I soothed.

“I haven’t felt any bad things since you bought the place. I hope the scary days are gone. Well, I won’t intrude on your celebration. Will you need help with Nora?”

“Carol and I can handle her. We’ll let her sleep a while and then get her up and walk her home. Goodnight, Mrs. Anderson, and thanks for your interest,” I opened the door for her.

“I knew it. She got here quicker than I thought she would. I’d better get some basement curtains. You have to lie fast if you want to live in this town,” I commented to Carol as Mrs. Anderson walked down the front walk.

We looked at the house and talked about identity while she was on this side. Carol had figured out that these were parallel worlds, and her duplicate was somewhere near.

“Let’s see if we can get Nora up the street without making a big scene. You know Mrs. Anderson will be watching.”

We gave her a couple of drinks of water and poured the rest on her. After we annoyed her long enough, she woke up and was able to navigate.

“They’re gone aren’t they? I can’t feel them anymore. I never got used to them being there; I could always feel them. They put up a hell of a fight to stay,” were Nora’s first words.

“Are you ok Mom? You don’t sound too drunk to walk home,” asked Carol.

“I’ll be alright in a few minutes. Whatever you put in my drink hit me hard. When you put me in the cage, the things went crazy. That knocked me out. Funny, they were drunk too.”

“Vodka,” Carol replied. “Now let’s get down the street before we get more callers.”

The trip home was easy, and we gave a sigh of relief when we were in her living room.

“Champagne or vodka, we can celebrate something more important than your reunion.”

“None for me, I’ve had all I need of everything for tonight,” answered Nora.

Just Champagne for me. We need to finish the bottle before it goes flat, and I’ve had all the fun I want for tonight,” Carol replied.

Carol and I finished the bottle of Champagne, and we were ready to go to bed. Nora came over to me and put her arms around my neck.

“Thank you for this. I don’t know what the future holds, but I’m grateful to you for the present,” she said and kissed me passionately. “That was a test. Do you feel any creepiness?”

“I don’t think so, but you had better do it a couple more times so we can be sure,” I replied. She obliged. I felt none of the feelings I had before.

“Nora, you’re ok; we cured that problem.”

“That’s wonderful; I was sure I was ok. That’s all you get tonight. I’m too messed up for anything serious. I’m going to my room. Carol can have the other room upstairs. See you guys in the morning,” Nora answered and went to her room.

“I want to thank you too,” Carol said. “I don’t know what you are getting out of this or why you are doing it. Do you want to do the kiss test on me?”

“Sure, but keep in mind there’ll be nothing more than that. My life is too complicated for a retired guy,” I told her and kissed her a few times. “No bad feelings there. I think you are good to go. So go to your room.”

“Thank you Don. That’s all I wanted; to know that I’m rid of those things. I hope I can cross back safely. Good night,” she replied.

I sat down alone in the kitchen and had cup of coffee.

What the hell is this about? This isn’t what a retired electronics engineer might expect. I’m pushed into things I thought I wouldn’t interest me, but I can’t let go of it. I left children and grandchildren behind to escape the pain, and now I have these two women. I have to find a way to make more money. Trading gold and platinum can kind of keep things balanced. This world seems to have no computers or fancy electronics. Even the banks do things manually. Maybe

I can sell some circuitry on a licensing basis. Well, to bed for now.

The Christmas vacation went well. Carol didn't need to prove who she was. Who knows where her alternate might have been. I spent time getting my house ready to live in including drapes over the basement windows. I stayed at Nora's which pleased her. I found I was more virile than I'd been for years. I sold some gold and bought some platinum. Then I bought a used car and got my driver's license. I spent several days a week on the other side, to keep down suspicion of the neighbors. On the second of January Carol had to go back to school.

"Put on your copper bracelet. I don't know if it works, but I have been ok wearing mine," I told Carol as we went down the basement steps.

She was shivering with fear, but determined to return to the world she knew.

"Don, I don't know if I can do this. It's been good to be free of them," she whimpered.

"Don't worry; we'll get rid of any creatures in the copper room on the other side. Go through fast, and I'll slam the doors." All was quiet in the copper room, and when she was ready, I opened both doors held her hand and dragged her through. I closed both doors.

"You ok," I asked.

"Yes. I don't feel anything, but I'll tell you later when I am sure."

We spent the night at the house and the next morning, I took her to Sioux City for the bus ride back to college. She promised to come back in the summer and stay at the house.

Now if I can get Nora to go back and forth.

As I expected, when I got back to H1, Mary Anderson was soon there and was full of questions about Carol and where we'd been.

"Carol's my niece. My sister lives in Des Moines, but she wasn't able to pick her up for Christmas break so I had her come to Sioux City. I hadn't seen her for several years. I took her back to catch the bus to school."

"Don, you come and go, and I don't know when you're home, and I never see you come home or leave. It's pretty mysterious," Mrs. Anderson inquired.

"I don't know. It's nothing mysterious. A lot of times I come in late or leave early. I don't sleep as well now that I am older," I lied.

"Well, I know you're retired, but what do you do? You're not home much," she pushed.

"I buy and sell things, especially commodities. I travel around the Midwest looking for good deals, especially in metals and electronics to buy and sell. So far, I've been doing well." I replied. "Oh! By the way Mary, have you seen or heard any ghosts in the past couple of months?" I asked changing the subject.

"No, I haven't, but I worry. It'll be a long time until I feel safe."

"At the end of spring semester, I'll have Carol stay here so there'll be someone home to watch things while I'm gone. I want to be sure my neighbors are comfortable," I answered. I escaped as best I could and went in the house. I dug through some boxes I hadn't unpacked looking for circuit drawings.

If I can patent some of this stuff on the other side and sell the license, I can make some real bucks. They only have the vaguest notion about computers.

I found an old motherboard and some other hardware to go with the drawings and took them to the other side. I had to

know more about who did what before I could peddle my wares.

Nora was at work when I got back so I stopped by the Café to reassure her that Carol was safely on her way and free of the energy creatures.

Several hours later, she asked me, “why are you doing this? You treat Carol like a daughter, and you treat me better than my husband ever did. Who are you?” she demanded.

“Everything I told you is true. That’s who I am. I’m not in love with you, but I like you, and I have a feeling we’re supposed to be together at least as trusting friends. You’ve helped me a lot, and I’ve tried to repay my share. I don’t know why I am involved in this two world stuff. As a scientist, I don’t believe in this, but here I am. I’ll be your guy until you find someone or this business resolves itself. I’ve a plan to make more money, and I’ll share if you help me with this business,” was my direct answer.

“Well now, that’s romantic, but it beats hell out of any offer I’ve had since I was eighteen. We talked about local politics, and what I had to do to become part of the town. I’m not social, and I wouldn’t make much progress in that area. We retired early and found the encounter to be more satisfying than our first attempt.

The next morning I returned to working on my house, and it was now livable. The garage needed work. My new driver’s license came, and I traded the car for a pickup. I had to be able to travel without Nora if that became necessary, as well as haul construction supplies for repairs. On the eighth of January, a blizzard struck. It howled in from Saskatchewan with snow and subzero winds. I hurried over to the other side and, as I expected, the blizzard was there also. I secured everything and made sure the heat was on. My car was

outside because the dead car was still in the garage. That afternoon I made a suggestion.

“Nora, how’d you like to spend the night on the other side at my house? I’ll fix supper.”

“Oh, shit, I don’t know if I can do it, but I have to try sometime. One step at a time and let me chicken out if I want to,” she requested.



The Hawardens is a parallel worlds story. The worlds are similar - one being our world in 2000 and the second is about the same with little electronic development. Secretly invading aliens have stopped development. Don, a retired electronics engineer, finds the door to the second world and is driven to save it from the aliens. He is tested with battles, love, friendship and mysterious instructions before he gets his reward.

The Hawardens

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8066.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**