

THE PRETERNATURAL

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First and foremost, I thank Jesus Christ, my personal Lord and Savior, who helped to make my dream a reality.

Thank you, Kent, Gil Dawson, Richard Ray, and J. Abreu for your invaluable input.

To all fans of and believers in the paranormal.

SPECIAL NOTE:

All deaf and hard-of-hearing characters in this book communicate via sign language, which is indicated by the dialogue markers “he signed” or “she signed” unless specified otherwise.

PROLOGUE

Someone—or something—glided through the vacant house and stopped in the expansive living room.

Through the huge picture window, it observed in the distance a small convoy of trucks and cars as it wound its way through the streets of the quiet hillside town of Knollwood Meadows.

1

When Nathan and Josslyn Bryant perused hundreds of real estate classified ads online several months ago, a picture of a particular house captured their interest: an ultra-contemporary, two-story, four-bedroom, three-bath house designed in a futuristic configuration and situated near the top of a small hill.

They contacted the real estate agent, saw the place for themselves, and bought the house that day. It was a momentous occasion for most couples when they bought their first house. For Nathan and Josslyn, there was an added cause for celebration.

Both descended from multigenerational deaf families—DOD (Deaf of Deaf). Members of the Bryant clan had various degrees of hearing loss, which ranged from hard-of-hearing to profoundly deaf.

“It’s so beautiful here,” Josslyn signed to Nathan. She smiled as she looked out the passenger side window.

“Peaceful, too,” Nathan signed with one hand and nodded in agreement. He steered the U-Haul truck along

Sierra Linda Drive.

“Those trees remind me of the ones back home in San Bernardo.”

They saw their new house up ahead, flanked by two other houses fifty feet away on either side. Even from here, they could see the back of the house which overlooked a sloping hill that led to the next street below.

The truck pulled up in front of the house and backed up the driveway. It lumbered toward the two-car garage and squeaked to a stop as the parking brake was put in place.

Both doors of the truck’s cab popped open. Nathan hopped down from the driver’s side, and Josslyn jumped out from the passenger’s side. They were excited as they admired the view of the house.

A Chevy van drove up and parked at the curb in front of the house, followed by a Dodge pickup truck loaded and tied down with furniture, and behind it, a GMC pickup truck weighed down with more paraphernalia.

Nathan went to the back of the U-Haul truck and rolled out the loading ramp. Relatives, friends, and neighbors from Nathan and Josslyn’s previous residence let themselves out of the van and trucks. They clapped and waved their hands in the air with joy.

Nathan’s mother, Augusta, cradled her seven-month-old granddaughter, Maddie, in her arms. “I can’t get over how beautiful your new house is,” she signed with one hand to Josslyn. “That ultra-modern style is not at all my thing, but it seems to work very well here. It has great bones and interesting features.”

“Thank you,” Josslyn signed.

“I’ve seen pictures of so-called ultra-modern and ultra-contemporary houses and other buildings, but they weren’t as appealing as this one. This is the nicest and the best that I’ve seen. This one takes the cake.” Augusta looked at the roof. “I really like those solar panels.”

“Nathan and I appreciate the fact that the house is ‘green.’ We really love it very much.”

Augusta embraced Josslyn and planted a soft kiss on her cheek, then handed Maddie to Josslyn as they entered the house.

“You know,” Augusta signed, “the hardwood floors, the tiled floors, and the backsplash in the kitchen are just stunning! And I absolutely love the front door with the horizontal frosted-glass windows framed in black. It even matches the windows on the garage door. The architect has very good taste and obviously knew what he or she was doing when designing this house.”

Josslyn nodded with a smile.

Thor, a three-year-old black male Labrador, jumped out of the Dodge truck. He wagged his tail, barked on occasion, and ran up to the different people who milled about and carried boxes.

Josslyn noticed this and signaled for the dog to go into the house, which he did. She then watched the others, who went to and fro as they unloaded the van and trucks.

“Excuse me,” Josslyn signed as she waved her arms in the air to get everyone’s attention. “Sorry to interrupt. Please put all pets in the house first, where they will be safe, especially with all this activity going on. I would like them to be indoors where it’s cool, since it’ll be warmer later on. Whoever has the cat—” Trina lifted the pet cargo

cage to show that she had the cat “—please put her in a room,” Josslyn signed to Trina, “either the bedroom or the bathroom, with the door closed and don’t let her out.”

Trina was Nathan and Josslyn’s fourteen-year-old daughter, a middle-school student who enjoyed English and reading comprehension. She loved to read and hadn’t decided what she wanted to do after she graduated from high school or what courses she would take if and when she decided to go to college.

She went into the house and found the bathroom down the hall, where she set the pet cargo cage on the tiled floor and released its catch so that the cat could roam about the bathroom. She left and closed the door, then went back outside to help unload furniture from the trucks.

Caden, her sixteen-year-old brother, was a high-school student who favored math though he didn’t enjoy history, whether it was US history or world history or any history. But he still made a conscientious effort to get good grades. He had been more interested in finance and economics, and aspired to be a day trader like his father, Nathan.

As an aside, it was commonplace that many deaf families had second, third, or fourth generation descendants who were born deaf.

Jared, a seventeen-year-old deaf friend of the Bryant family whose parents were hearing, picked up a box from the back of a truck and approached Josslyn and Augusta as he made his way toward the house.

“Your house is something else,” he signed to Josslyn with one hand as he held the box in his arm. “It’s very beautiful.”

Augusta concurred with a nod. “It is, isn’t it?”

Jared nodded as well. “The wall-to-wall, floor-to-

ceiling windows framed in black are so cool.” He walked into the house.

Nathan’s father, George, carried a small box and walked up to Augusta and Josslyn.

“I wish our house had an infinity pool and a hot tub like yours,” George signed to Josslyn as he shook his head. “The standard in-the-ground types are boring.”

“I know,” she signed. “Besides the pool and the hot tub, the house’s *biggest* selling point, *the* dealmaker is the huge balcony on the second floor. Believe me when I tell you it’s twenty feet across and juts out about seven feet.”

“Incredible.” George went into the house.

Evan carried a large box into the living room where Caden, Trina, and Jared stood. With a goatee and moustache, Evan appeared older than his eighteen years. He considered himself a close friend not only to Caden but to the entire family. Evan could hear well, but his parents were deaf. Speaking and signing at the same time became a habit for him whenever he was around deaf people, and he enjoyed his role as interpreter.

“Amazing space,” he signed to them as he admired the room. “The recessed lighting in all the rooms, even in the outdoor areas, is awesome.”

George met Nathan in the kitchen. “I’m very proud of you, son,” he signed to Nathan. “Congratulations.”

“Thanks, Dad,” Nathan signed. “As you know, Josslyn and I worked hard to get to this point in our lives.”

Nathan had graduated with a bachelor’s in finance and while job hunting, noticed a sidebar ad on a blogger’s site proclaiming anyone could make thousands of dollars by trading in penny stocks. From there, Nathan researched all he could about penny stock trading. In the interim, he

had saved some money while he worked at an accounting firm and received some financial support from his parents.

Skeptical and curious, Nathan had enrolled for seven free video lessons taught by the proprietor of the blog site. Now, Nathan traded in penny stocks full-time.



Everyone continued to unload the van and the trucks as they moved in furniture and boxes.

Caden carried an animal crate with a pair of long-eared bunnies; a male and a female. He brought it inside the house and set it on the floor in Trina's room upstairs.

Josslyn hefted a medium-sized box and walked up the path to the front door. She saw Diva, the family's black cat, skitter around the foyer by the entrance and then run into the living room. Josslyn set the box down on the ground in a huff and followed Diva upstairs. She found Diva in the master bedroom as she stood on all fours with her back arched, her fur standing on end, her ears back and fangs bared. Diva hissed and yowled, which unnerved Josslyn.

"What's the matter?" Josslyn signed to the cat. "It's all right. We're in a new home." Pensive, she left the room and closed the door. She went downstairs to look for Trina, who came in with a few small boxes.

"Boy, it's cold in here," Trina signed after she set the boxes on the floor. She rubbed her arms to purge the chill.

"It is a little chilly in here," Josslyn signed. "That's

because the house sat vacant for so long, especially with the windows closed.”

“But it’s such a warm spring day in March.”

“I know. Anyway, I need to ask you—where did you put Diva?”

“I put her in the bathroom down the hall. Why?”

“Well, someone must have used the bathroom and inadvertently let her out. I found her running around in the living room and had to chase her upstairs. She’s in the master bedroom with the door closed, and she looks pretty frightened.”

“I hope she’ll be okay, especially since she’s pregnant and will be having a litter soon.”

“Yes. That’s another month away or so. In the meantime, we’ll just have to keep an eye on her, what with the move and all, which can be pretty stressful for some animals.”

“I agree. I’m going to go up to my room now. I’ll be back down to get some more stuff.”

“Wonderful.”

Josslyn planted a light kiss on her daughter’s forehead.



Pizzas and sodas had been ordered for lunch. Everyone relaxed and savored the relief from all the hard work of the move.

They chatted in sign language, swapped jokes, shared silly stories, and laughed. The one-hour cooling-off period

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