

# MATT LEGEND: Veil of Lies



Denis Mills

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ISBN: 978-84-09-03703-2 (Paperback)

ISBN: 978-84-09-03809-1 (Hardcover)

ISBN: 978-84-09-03808-4 (eBook)

ISBN: Pending (audioBook)

ISBN: Pending (CD-ROM)

Front cover photography by:

Paul Nicklen/National Geographic Creative

Book design by: Matt Legend LLC

Audiobook Narrator: Shelby Villnow

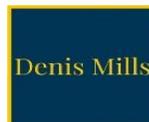
Printed and bound in the United States of America

First printing edition 2018

Matt Legend LLC

California USA

Visit [www.mattlegend.com](http://www.mattlegend.com)



## En-Dor

*THE ROAD to En-dor is easy to tread  
For Mother or yearning Wife.  
There, it is sure, we shall meet our Dead  
As they were even in life.  
Earth has not dreamed of the blessing in store  
For desolate hearts on the road to En-dor.*

*Whispers shall comfort us out of the dark –  
Hands—ah God!—that we knew!  
Visions and voices – look and hark! –  
Shall prove that the tale is true,  
And that those who have passed to the further  
shore  
May' be hailed – at a price – on the road to Endor.*

*But they are so deep in their new eclipse  
Nothing they say can reach,  
Unless it be uttered by alien lips  
And framed in a stranger's speech.  
The son must send word to the mother that bore,  
'Through an hirelings mouth. 'Tis the rule of  
En-dor.*

*And not for nothing these gifts are shown  
By such as delight our dead.  
They must twitch and stiffen and slaver and groan*

*Ere the eyes are set in the head,  
And the voice from the belly begins. Therefore,  
We pay them a wage where they ply at En-dor.*

*Even so, we have need of faith  
And patience to follow the clue.  
Often, at first, what the dear one saith*

*Is babble, or jest, or untrue.  
(Lying spirits perplex us sore  
Till our loves—and their lives—are well-known  
at En-dor).*

*Oh the road to En-dor is the oldest road  
And the craziest road of all!  
Straight it runs to the Witch's abode,  
As it did in the days of Saul,  
And nothing has changed of the sorrow in store  
For such as go down on the road to En-dor!*

— Rudyard Kipling

## DEDICATIONS

To Deb, Matt, Scott and Stephen, my inspiration.

Special thanks to Susan K. Varesko for your encouragement, moral support, brainstorming, wisdom, advice and faith but most of all for getting the whole *The World Needs Dreamers And The World Needs Doers But Above All The World Needs Dreamers Who Do* thing.

To my good friends Ben and Sue Uribe.

To Abeba, the messenger.

To the totally awesome high school, middle and elementary students, faculty and staff of the Modoc Joint Unified School District, Alturas, California, and the wonderful staff of the Alturas Public Library.

To the memory of F-16 driver 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Scott Trapp, United States Air Force, who did it right.

To the memory of James V. Forrestal, the first United States Secretary of Defense and former Secretary of the Navy. A good man.

To the memory of Wu Yongning. Some people risk a little, some people risk a lot. A brave few risk it all.

And last and least, to those the outer barrier is for – your time is nigh. Good riddance.

No animals were harmed in the writing of this book although a great many trees met an untimely end.

| Chapter | TABLE OF CONTENTS                                | Page |
|---------|--|------|
| 1       | Nightmare on North Oak                           |      |
| 2       | Banished   |      |
| 3       | Trouble In Paradise                              |      |
| 4       | Whistle Stop                                     |      |
| 5       | Field of Nightmares                              |      |
| 6       | 29 Messages From ET                              |      |
| 7       | Where's the Thunder?                             |      |
| 8       | The Mound  |      |
| 9       | Giants, Giants Everywhere                        |      |
| 10      | Jail Birds                                       |      |
| 11      | Liars and Thieves                                |      |
| 12      | Skyfell  |      |
| 13      | The Crown Jewels                                 |      |
| 14      | Invisible War                                    |      |
| 15      | The Ring   |      |
| 16      | Lying Spirits                                    |      |
| 17      | "We Are All In Danger"                           |      |
| 18      | Stonehenge                                       |      |
| 19      | Father Malvic                                    |      |
| 20      | Demon On A Field Trip                            |      |
| 21      | Road Trip  |      |
| 22      | Lake of No Return                                |      |
| 23      | Ambush   |      |
| 24      | ZNN  |      |
| 25      | The H-Stones                                     |      |
| 26      | The Broadcast                                    |      |
| 27      | The Mountain                                     |      |
| 28      | Yikes – Aliens!                                  |      |
| 29      | Yellowstone                                      |      |
| 30      | Taken  |      |
| 31      | Partly Cloudy with 90 Percent Chance<br>of Rocks |      |
| 32      | Return to Chickasaw                              |      |
| 33      | Just in Thyme                                    |      |
| 34      | The Cenoté                                       |      |
| 35      | The Gloves                                       |      |
| 36      | Xibalba  |      |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 37 | The Ruins   |
| 38 | Fengdu  |
| 39 | Leap of Faith; The Politburo                                  |
| 40 | Going Home  |
| 41 | Witch House II  |
| 42 | Lights On the Moon  |
| 43 | Ripleys' Revenge  |
| 44 | The Expedition  |
| 45 | Goodbye Kitty   |
| 46 | Nanos Here, Nanos There, Nanos<br>Everywhere; Skin to Die For |
| 47 | ET Phone Home; A Local Call<br>Epilogue                       |

## FACT AND FICTION

Though it is based on actual historical and archaeological events, this novel uses fictional events, places and characters.

### PROLOGUE

*M*ost parents tell their children monsters aren't real – they're wrong.

Before the world became a place of battling caspers, ripleys and pennywises there was Thousand Oaks, a suburb of Los Angeles named for its many oaks – an idyllic, peaceful place with few cares and fewer worries. A place where a kid could be a kid and wile away the endless summer days any way he or she chose; a place where your room was your castle and where every night the moon and stars put on their shows for free. A place where your only cares were friends, school, relationships, surfing, bikini and swim trunks season, never enough spending money, what the future holds, and parents. It was a carefree place where your friends were your friends – and be they real friends – life was good.

Then everything changed.

## *Chapter 1 - Nightmare On North Oak*

We live in a strange and mysterious world. We think we know so much about it but we know so little. For instance, did you know there is a barrier inside our galaxy? That's right, a barrier. A barrier through which nothing is allowed to pass – nothing living, that is, apart from the beings who put it there. It is not something your science teacher will know anything about. Only a few deep inside the blackest, scariest, super-secret spy agency you've never heard of and never will. It sounds like science fiction only it's real. The barrier was put there for a reason. A reason twelve-year-old Matt Legend is about to discover, but not in a good way . . . in a kick you in your gut, drag your body down the street and stuff it in the dumpster kind of way. A barrier is to keep something bad out . . . or in.

The beings who put it there are immensely powerful and immensely old – billions of years in fact, and are watching us this very moment and know everything about us down to the actions of one boy. Sometimes they intervene in the lives of those they have a reason to.

Trouble is, the beings the barrier was put into place against are watching too. They too are very old and very powerful. And very, very evil. And they too have taken an interest in this boy – and his family – and his friends – and his computer science teacher . . .



Feeling lost, angry and alone Matt backed his bike to the schoolyard steps, adjusted his earbuds and clicked his helmet strap. There was something in the air. Little could he know there would soon be a series of events that would thrust him into the dark world of the supernatural. One foot in each of three worlds when most people know only one, blissfully ignorant of the others. Those worlds would soon collide, ultimately forcing him to choose sides and in doing, make nightmarishly powerful enemies.

He pressed his phone's play button, adjusted the volume to pain minus one, gave his friend Venn a nervous nod and steeled himself for the nightmare ahead.



It was a time of firsts – first kiss, first heartbreak, first seriously bad decision –

Clucking filled the seventh period hallway. Hotas Clutterbuck was being a horse's rear again. It had begun simply enough. In the third grade, with a question. But as with most questions, it's how it's put . . .

“So what nationality are you anyway,” Hotas had hissed, for Matt was a delightful mix of races and nationalities – part Chilean, part African-American, part Caucasian and part Native-American with honey golden skin, light brown eyes and wavy, curly dark

brown hair. Matt took in turn to calling the bullying Clutterbuck twins “cluster schmucks” and “garbage trucks” which Hotas and Otis didn’t like at all, which led to a slap fight outside the cafeteria and suspensions for all. But that was third grade. This was middle school.

“Somebody oughta do somethin,’ ” Venn grumped.

“Can’t afford another suspension,” Matt moaned.

“Bummer, dude. He’s clownin’ you. Kids are looking,” said Venn, as he opened his locker. A book tumbled to the floor.

Matt seethed. He was nobody’s clown. “I’ll take care of it,” he said, mechanically spinning the dial of his own locker.

“Dude, whatcha gonna – OMG . . . Babe Alert! . . . Nadia . . . comin’ this way! . . . don’t look!”

Matt looked up to see Nadia Patel heading for them with her trademark graceful back and forth swaying motion, clutching her books firmly to her top.

“So are you gonna do it?” she asked, holding up her pink anodized digital camera.”

“Yeah,” Matt offered hesitantly.

A burst of contrived laughter erupted down the hall. It was Hotas and his miscreant buddies.

“Ignore him. He’s just jealous,” said Nadia.

It had been a month since Matt accepted Hotas’ dare – first a dare, then a double dare, then a triple dare, then a quadruple dare that he was too chicken to grind Bone Buster. He had bragged he would be the first to grind the full 250-foot death slide. It would

mean equal status with the star quarterback, getting in *Guinness World Records*, maybe even a tv or movie role if he was lucky. *YouTube* fame at least. But the big day came and went. It being the thirteenth of the month he had abruptly backed out leaving Hotas with a field day of accusations, but being the thirteenth on the thirteenth was just too much thirteen.

“Well, see you there,” said Nadia. “I heard you barfed all over Mr. Little fifth period,” she said admiringly. “I can’t stand him. Can you do it again?”

Nadia stooped low. “*The Invisible War*. Good book,” she said passing it to Matt. “Nobody’s ever made it to the bottom of Bone Buster in one piece. If you do, you’ll be the first. Here’s my number in case you do. If you don’t, don’t call me.” Then with a near perfect 9.7-level-of-difficulty hair-flip-with-backward-twist-and-glance at Matt, she turned and walked away. Their eyes locked for a moment. All eyes followed her until she rounded the corner.

Matt took a deep breath. “I need a girlfriend.”

“She’s out of your league, man. Dude, that’s *all* you had to say? ... just ‘*yeah*’ to the smokin’est hot megababe ever? Dude, she’s a tenth degree drop-dead- gorgeous trophy babe. No meet me after *Bone Buster*? No whatcha doin’ for the rest of your life?’ Dude ... I’d read that book if I were you. At least next time you’d have somethin’ to say to her.”

Matt studied the thin book in his hands – *The Invisible War; What Every Believer Needs to Know About Satan, Demons, and*

*Spiritual Warfare.* Venn’s monologue on trophy megababeness faded into the din. Matt’s thoughts were on Bone Buster. He fidgeted for his cell phone for the eighth time in as many minutes ... 03:09 PM. Time for a wrist clock, he thought. That Navy Seal Luminox he had seen in the window of H. Samuels would do nicely, the one with the orange face and tritium hands guaranteed to glow in the dark for twenty-five years. He would be old by the time they stopped glowing. Soon everyone would be waiting at Bone Buster – for him. His stomach was turning backflips but having hurled his Fiesta Chicken Burrito Cafeteria Special lunch all over his world history teacher, no chunks were left to spew. Mr. Little had just finished telling the class about World War II and how The Greatest Generation had risen to the challenge and forced the surrender of the Axis powers by which time, unfortunately, Matt’s stomach had already surrendered.

“See you at the steps,” Venn grinned.

Matt placed his books into his locker, removed his bike helmet and his translucent blue plastic torso armor and slammed the locker door. There was a flyer taped to Venn’s locker – a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting. He pulled a Sharpie Magnum from his pocket and hastily scribbled a fat red X across it. God’s nothing but a big fat lie, he thought angrily. Otherwise why would he let bad things happen to good people, like his father. He snatched the flyer, watched it flutter and ground it into the linoleum.

Charlie and Matt were BFFs. Inseparable since the day at the bike cage when Matt, the kind of person he is, had returned someone's fallen bike to its kickstand. It turned out to be Charlie's. It was a pain having to constantly explain she was just a friend, but she was the only one of them who knew all the Starfleet General Orders by heart.

Matt took Charlie's coma hard. After his father's death, he was all alone now except for his mom who was constantly threatening to send him to Chickasaw to live with his aunt and uncle. Except for the fireflies and a legend about a bogeyman the flyspeck town was an utter wasteland. And there was the obnoxious brat of a girl next door there who'd had the nerve to challenge him to a foot race. He was still smarting from that defeat.



Everyone called it Bone Buster. An insane 250-foot steel handrail of death that ran down the middle of a marble stairway outside a busy downtown office hi-rise that turned into a pedestrian under-crossing that ran beneath North Oak Boulevard. Matt Legend had been doing some big talking and the day had arrived to back it up – or try at least. In twenty minutes he would more likely than not be lying broken and dazed on its cold hard steps or even paralyzed like Charlie — another victim of Bone Buster. Or he could be a coward and just walk away. But then he would never know. He would have to spend his life wondering. Girls are

supposed to be pretty. Boys are supposed to be brave. That's just how it is.

The whole crazy idea it seems was to hop your bike onto it and grind down it on its stunt pegs, the pipe stubs screwed to your wheel hubs. Evel Knievel would have passed on it. Mr. Toad's Wild Ride had nothing on Bone Buster. The 90-degree bend at the bottom where it turned under the street was the killer. Most riders fell off long before reaching it. But the scariest part was the nasty business which came just before.

Twelve boarders and BMXers had broken thirty-seven bones on it and it wasn't even summer yet. The worst off – Charlie – number twelve, the best of them, paralyzed from the waist down, in a coma at New Mercy. She would emerge two months later wiggling her big toe, a good sign, begging her nurses for a Pink's hot dog.

He studied Venn for the signal.

Three ... two ... one ...

With a drop of Venn's outstretched arm Matt blasted past the veiled tennis courts, dropping through the sloped planter strip's wood chips and scattered Spartina grasses that gently swayed in the waxing afternoon breeze. Behind him Tiffany Zimbalist's desperate cry went unheard – drowned out by *Crack Babies Don't Cry*, 160 beats per minute coursing through his ear buds, a diversion from the agonies of life, a drug that heightened his senses while dulling thoughts of his parents' divorce and his father's brutal murder.

“STOP HIM! That creepoid . . . Hotas,” she gasped . . . “He did something to Matt’s bike!”

Tiffany was walking past the bike cage after school with a girlfriend when they observed Hotas Clutterbuck bent over Matt’s metallic purple stunt bike with a wrench in his hand, looking like the cat that swallowed the canary.

“DON’T JUST STAND THERE! DO SOMETHING!”

Venn’s call went to Matt’s voice mail . . . “Hi, if this is my parents I need money . . . If this is a friend I’ll get you your money . . . If this is a hot girl don’t listen to what I said, I’ve got plenty of money” . . . (BEEP) . . .

Matt weaved his way through the startled human pylons along the sidewalk of a block of stores, zipping past an LAPD officer outside a Willy Nilly talking to a skateboarder. “HEY!” the officer shouted as he raced after him. Matt pedaled faster.

Ahead the drone of traffic from a noisy four-lane intersection signaled trouble. Green light or red the point was to make it across without stopping, something dreamt up by The Valley Boys, a clique of skateboarders from wealthy families with far too much time on their hands. The foolhardy stunt was undoubtedly what *The Valley Herald* had meant by. . . “before someone is killed.” Warily he approached. His heart beat faster.

Sometimes we do stupid things only later to stop and ask – What was I thinking? When firefighters asked kids why they pull fire alarm call boxes, the answer was always – “ ‘cause it’s there.” Good idea or bad, we each have our own ways of exploring our

world. It's what makes us unique, like our fingerprints or our DNA or our biofrequency.

Matt shot off the curb. A tired old pickup stacked high with abandoned mattresses screeched to a stop. The acrid stench of burnt rubber galled his lungs. Moments later a sickening dull thud sent the mattresses flying.

"1 . . . 2 . . . . . 3 . . 4 . . . . . 5 . . .," the crash counter counted, a plump girl in a bright yellow hoodie standing on the corner tallying the crashes . . .

Meanwhile the driver of a speeding big rig transporting storefront windows bound for Newberry's department store, behind schedule, distracted, looked down swearing at the *thirsty-four ounces* of freezing ice-cold Mr. Pibb soaking her blue jeans. A terrible screeching was followed by a loud crash and a horrible grinding, crunching and rattling of metal and tinkling of glass. Two grungy mattresses dropped out of the sky sandwiching Matt like cheese on toast a blink of an eye before a storm of broken glass slammed him to the blacktop.

"Wow . . . bonus points for the glass truck," the counter squealed . . . "New record! . . ."

Lying on his back on something soft the stomach-wrenching smell of stale pee shocked him to his senses. Hefting a mattress peppered with forty pounds of jagged glass aside he staggered to his feet. He drew in a dazed deep breath. His eyes widened. All around him a sea of shattered glass sparkled like tiny diamonds in

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