

Visit the exciting Web site for kids at www.cool2read.com
and the Forbidden Doors Web site at
www.forbiddendoors.com

Copyright © 1995 by Bill Myers. All rights reserved.

Cover image copyright © Dynamic Graphics, Inc.

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

ISBN 0-8423-3989-2, mass paper

Printed in the United States of America

07 06 05 04 03
7 6 5 4 3

1



The train's light blinded Rebecca as it thundered toward her. She lay on her back and felt the locomotive's power vibrating through the tracks. It was nearly there. She could smell the diesel fuel, see the massive wheels rolling at her. She opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came out. There was only the shriek of the train's whistle.

The wheels were nearly on top of her. She tried to move, but the IV tubes kept her pinned to the hospital bed.

IV tubes? Hospital bed?

With a jolt, Becka woke up. She fought to catch her breath. Her eyes darted around the room. There was no train, no glaring light. Only the muted glow from the lights in the hospital parking lot as they shone through her curtains.

With a groan, she fell back against her pillows. It was another dream. Another one of *those* dreams. The type she'd been having every night for the last week. Ever since her little accident with the train.

She adjusted her hospital gown. It was damp with sweat and stuck to her back.

The shrinks (you don't stand in front of a racing train in the middle of the night, almost getting yourself killed, without a few psychiatrists dropping by) said the dreams weren't unusual. After running about a thousand tests on Becka, they assured her she was going to be all right. "Other than major trauma from the accident, and scoring slightly below average in the area of self-esteem, you seem to be a perfectly normal teenager."

Becka didn't feel "perfectly normal." Last week's run-in with the train—and with Max-

well Hunter, the hotshot New Ager—had left her a little shaky. Actually, a *lot* shaky. Maxwell was an acclaimed speaker on reincarnation. To prove his theories of past lives, he had hypnotized Becka in front of an audience and taken her back to her “past lives.”

At first Becka bought it. It all seemed so believable . . . right up to the end. Right up until she realized the past lives were nothing but demons playing a game with her mind.

But that was all behind her now. Ancient history. The doctors had assured her she was “all right” and “perfectly normal.” And if the doctors said that was so, who was she to disagree?

She turned her head on the pillow and looked through the stainless-steel rails of her hospital bed. The digital clock on the nightstand glowed a crimson 3:01. Four hours and fifty-nine minutes left before she could go home. Four hours and fifty-nine minutes before she was finally out of there.

Her eyes drifted from the clock to the get-well cards on the dresser, then stopped at the giant bouquet of carnations. Even in the dim light, she could make out the flowers’ vivid reds and whites. Fear from the dream melted, dissolving into a pool of warmth, a glow of happiness that stirred deep inside her chest. It was too dark to read the card

attached to the carnations, but she didn't have to. She knew it by heart:

Hurry and get well. I really miss you.
Your buddy, Ryan

She could have lived without the “your buddy” part. Other phrases would have been much better. Actually, one specific word—the *L* word—would have done the trick. But the sentence “I really miss you” rang in Becka’s heart as resoundingly as when she’d first read it:

“I *REALLY* miss you.”

“I really *MISS* you.”

“I really miss *YOU*.”

The glow in her chest spread through her body. She felt cozy all over as she snuggled deeper under the covers. Ryan said he might be there when Mom and Scotty, her little brother, picked her up in the morning. She hoped so.

She glanced at the clock and closed her eyes, smiling. 3:02. Four hours and fifty-eight minutes . . .



The six robed figures stood in a secluded clearing of the park. All around them were dense trees and overgrown bushes, making

it impossible to see them from the road. This was good. This was exactly what they wanted.

As usual for this time of year, the fog had rolled in from the beach and blotted out all light from the moon. This was good, too. Now there was only the glow of six candles—five black, one white—on the picnic table, their orange light flickering and dancing over the young faces around them.

There were two boys and four girls. Teenagers. Dressed in homemade robes, complete with hoods. All of the group had been drinking, and the boys' red, watery eyes gave clear signs that they'd been smoking dope. Lots of it.

The rat had already been killed, its neck broken. Now the group's leader, Brooke, a chunky girl whose black hair was an obvious dye job, carefully drained the animal's blood, filling the bottom half of a torn diet Coke can with the dark liquid.

The boys snickered. It may have been from the booze or the dope or just from the chill of what they were doing. Who knew? But it was obvious they weren't taking the ceremony seriously.

Laura Henderson, a brooding blonde whose face was ravaged by acne, gave them a scowl. This was important business. After all,

Brooke had called this meeting and was making this sacrifice for a very serious reason. She had been humiliated—not once, but twice! By a couple of zeros who'd moved into the neighborhood barely a month ago. First there was the younger kid, Scott Williams. He'd actually dared to challenge their leader's powers with the Ouija board. And he'd done it right in front of the entire Society!

Then there was the sister, Rebecca Williams . . . as plain as they come. And yet, for some reason, she had been handpicked by the famous guru, Maxwell Hunter, for her supposed gifts. How did such a nobody rate that kind of honor? As if that wasn't bad enough, there was that stunt Williams had pulled with the train—proof to all that Rebecca Williams was trying to compete with Brooke's power and position.

Laura turned and watched with admiration as Brooke finished draining the rat's blood into the can. Brooke meant everything to her. She lived for the girl's praise, wilted at her criticism. She glanced around at the group circling the candles. As her eyes returned to Brooke, her expression hardened.

OK, Williams, you want power? So be it. We'll show you power.

She closed her eyes and began to recite:
“Hate your enemies with your whole
heart . . .”

The other two girls joined in. The chant
grew louder, more concentrated: “. . . and if
a man smite you on the cheek, *smash* him on
the other!”

The boys smirked and snickered. Laura
opened her eyes and cut them an icy glare.
After another snicker and a shrug of indiffer-
ence they also joined in.

“Hate your enemies with your whole heart,
and if a man smite you on the cheek, *smash*
him on the other!”

Brooke set the rat carcass on the picnic
table and reached into her robe, pulling out
a feathered quill and a piece of homemade
parchment.

The chant continued.

“Hate your enemies with your whole
heart . . .”

Brooke dipped the quill into the can of
blood.

“. . . and if a man smite you on the cheek,
smash him on the other!”

And then she wrote:

Rebecca

“Hate your enemies with your whole
heart . . .”

BILL MYERS

Williams

“. . . and if a man smite you on the cheek, *smash* him on the other!”

Their voices grew louder. The booze, the drugs, the force of six people chanting together—it all gave them a kind of energy, a sense of belonging. Laura drew a deep breath and felt a surge of exhilaration. The chant grew stronger, more determined, filling the air, filling her being. This was the unity she needed, the power she craved.

“Hate your enemies with your whole heart . . .”

Brooke set the pen down and raised the parchment above the flame of the white candle. The chanting grew more and more feverish. All eyes watched now in eager anticipation.

“. . . and if a man smite you on the cheek, smash him on the other!”

Suddenly the parchment ignited into a bright orange flame. The paper curled and crackled as it was consumed, quickly and efficiently, until everything—including Rebecca’s name—was nothing but ash.



“Why so glum, sweetheart?” Mom asked as she turned their clunker Toyota onto their street and headed toward the house.

Rebecca stared out the window at the passing homes. Theirs wasn't the poorest neighborhood in town, but it wasn't the richest either. Usually she didn't notice the sagging screens, the peeling paint, the semikept yards. But today she did. Today they bugged her. Today everything bugged her.

For good reason. What had started out as such a great morning had already turned into a major disaster.

First, Mom was late getting to the hospital. Almost an hour late. Second, nobody came with her. Not Ryan, not even Scotty. Obviously their lives were far too busy to squeeze her into their schedule. But that was small potatoes compared to the third reason, the one crammed into the Toyota's trunk.

"You still embarrassed about the wheelchair?" Mom asked.

Becka said nothing.

"The doctors say it'll only be for a few weeks."

More silence.

"If you'd just broken your leg, you could use crutches, but—"

Becka impatiently interrupted, "But since I cracked my collarbone, I can't put the extra weight on my shoulders. I know, Mother. I was there, remember?" Becka bit her lip. She hated being a jerk. She knew

Mom was only trying to cheer her up. But still . . .

And then she saw it: the white vintage Mustang parked in front of their house. “Ryan’s here!” she blurted.

“Well, what do you know.” Mom threw Becca a knowing smile.

Becca grinned back, realizing her mother was part of a conspiracy. For not only was Ryan’s car there, but so was her best friend Julie’s Jeep and Philip’s burgundy convertible. Instinctively, her hand shot up to her thin brown hair, fluffing it out, trying in vain to make it look halfway presentable.

The Toyota turned and rattled up the driveway. Mom turned it off, and after a couple shuddering coughs, the engine finally died.

Little brother Scott was the first to spot them. Not that he was so little anymore. In the last couple of months, he had almost caught up to Becca’s height. And by his cracking voice and thickening shoulders, it was clear that manhood was lurking just around the corner.

“She’s here,” Scott called as he threw open the porch door and clambered down the steps. The others piled out after him. First there was Scott’s dorky friend, Darryl. Then Becca’s best friend, the athletic and always-too-beautiful-and-perfectly-dressed Julie, followed closely by Ryan, who sported a devilish

grin. Finally, there were Philip and his air-head girlfriend, Krissi (better known as Ken and Barbie).

Rebecca could feel her ears start to burn and color run to her cheeks. This was the first time most of them had seen where she lived. Not that she was trying to keep it a secret, but let's face it, this was definitely not one of those hotsy-totsy country-club homes they were used to.

Still, as they headed toward the car, throwing jibes and barbs, she saw no signs of snobbery.

"Hey there, Crash, how you feeling?" Ryan brushed the thick black hair out of his gorgeous blue eyes. And if that wasn't enough, he suddenly flashed her his triple-A heart-breaker smile.

"Great," Becka answered with a grin as she pushed open the car door. She wasn't lying, either. Suddenly, she *was* feeling better—a whole lot better.

"I'll get the wheelchair," Mom called.

Suddenly, she was feeling worse—a whole lot worse.

"Wheelchair?" Julie echoed.

"Just for a few weeks," Mom explained as she crossed back to the trunk and opened it.

"Don't tell me we've got to push her around like some old duffer," Scott groaned.

Good ol' Scotty. *Thanks for the support, little brother.*

"Just a few weeks," Mom repeated as she unfolded the chair.

"Here, I can get that," Ryan said, quickly moving in to take it from her.

"That's cool." Philip grinned at Becca. "That means we can, like, escort you all around, then."

Krissi laughed, "The queen on her portable throne."

Ryan hammed it up as he rolled the chair toward her open car door. "And I, her loyal servant, shall take her wherever she bids." Before Becca could protest, he swooped down and scooped her from the car seat and into his arms. Then, ever so gently, he set her into the chair. "Welcome home." He grinned. Becca felt her heart do a little flip-flop.

When she had first met Ryan, she agreed with Mom that they could hang out as friends. But as far as any "official" dating or boyfriend/girlfriend thing—no way. It made no difference how many back flips her heart did when she saw him or that he just happened to be the cutest and nicest guy in school (no prejudice there). The point is she was a Christian and he was not. And until that changed, she knew it was best

to guard her heart and simply remain good friends.

But still . . .

Ryan pulled the chair away from the car and started pushing Becka toward the open garage. Everyone followed, talking and making jokes, while Krissi, once again proving her incredible airheadedness, asked, “Does this mean you won’t be running in any more track meets?”

More laughter and wisecracks as they passed through the dozens of stacked boxes in the garage and headed toward the kitchen door.

“So this is the famous haunted garage?” Philip asked as he slowed to a stop and glanced around.

“It doesn’t look so scary,” Krissi chirped.

“Not in the daylight,” Scott said. “But try hanging out here at night.”

“All alone,” Darryl added, pushing up his glasses and giving a little sniff, “with all those sounds and that light and stuff.”

And then, as if on cue, there was a gentle whine. Becka stiffened. Even now, with all these people around, she was still a little skittish. “Did you hear that?” she asked.

“Hear what?” Ryan asked.

The sound repeated itself: a high-pitched whine, accompanied by scratching.

“Don’t you hear that?” she asked.

Ryan looked puzzled, then shook his head.

“You guys hear anything?”

Everyone quieted down and listened.

“I don’t hear a thing,” Philip said.

“Me neither,” Krissi said.

Becka looked up to their faces and fought off a shiver.

The sound recurred.

“There.” Becka pointed toward the closed kitchen door. “It’s coming from behind there.”

“Here?” Ryan asked as they rolled to a stop in front of the door.

The scratching and whining grew louder.

“Can’t you guys hear that?” Rebecca demanded.

There were more baffled looks, this time accompanied by some raised eyebrows of concern. “We, uh, we don’t hear anything, Beck,” Julie ventured cautiously.

The scratching grew louder. “Guys—” Becka tried to smile, thinking it was some kind of joke—“you mean to tell me none of you hear that?”

But no one smiled back. She shifted uneasily, her fear and self-doubt starting to grow.

Ryan dropped to his knees and put his ear to the door. “You’re talking about this door, right here?”

“Yes,” Becka said, fighting off her impatience. “There’s something behind it. Can’t you hear that?”

Cautiously, Ryan reached up to the knob and turned it. It was unlocked. He looked at Becka, then, suddenly, he threw open the door.

Becka gasped as a little ball of black-and-brown fur scampered out and leaped into Ryan’s arms. It immediately began covering the boy with slobbery licks and kisses. “Easy, fella,” Ryan laughed. “Down boy, easy.”

“You guys!” Becka cried as a wave of relief washed over her. She watched as the puppy continued washing Ryan’s face. “He’s so cute. What kind is he?” she asked.

“Got me,” Ryan said, trying in vain to dodge the wayward tongue. “Heinz 57, a mix of everything.” He stood up and placed the squirming bundle of fur on Becka’s lap. It took the animal half a second to find her face and resume the licking.

The group laughed and Becka giggled, trying to fight off the kissing attack. “Where’d he come from? Whose is he?”

“He’s yours,” Julie laughed. “Ryan got him from the pound.”

The kitchen phone started ringing, but Becka barely heard. She looked up to Ryan. His eyes were sparkling with delight. He said

only four words, and they were so soft no one else heard: "I'm glad you're back."

She reached out and took his hand. "Thank you," she whispered. His eyes sparkled even brighter. As far as Rebecca was concerned, the moment could last forever. Unfortunately there was Krissi. "Do you like him?" she blurted. "Hey, Becka, do you like him?"

"Like him?" Rebecca looked back down to the pup and was met with another licking attack. "I *love* him."

Everyone moved in, kneeling and petting the animal who grew even more hyper from all the attention.

"What are you going to call him?" Julie asked. She leaned in and was met with a wet tongue right across the mouth. "Oh, gross." More laughter.

"What am I going to call him?" Rebecca giggled. She paused a moment to look him over. Ryan was right, the little scamp was a mix of just about every breed of dog imaginable. "What am I going to call him? . . . How about . . . 'Muttly.'"

Everyone agreed. It was the perfect name.

Suddenly Scott was shoving the cordless phone through the crowd of faces toward her. He looked a little perplexed. "It's for you," he said.

The Spell

Still laughing and still fighting off the puppy, Becka took the receiver. "Hello?"

At first there was no response.

"Hello?" she repeated.

Then came the voice. It was low and raspy. "The spell has been cast, Rebecca Williams."

"I'm sorry?" She motioned for the others to quiet down. "What did you say?"

Now she heard the voice distinctly. "The spell has been cast. . . . Your destiny belongs to me."

Rebecca swallowed. It took a moment for her to speak. "Who—who is this? What are you talking about?"

There was no answer, only the click of the receiver followed by the dial tone.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

As I continue writing this series, I have two equal and opposing concerns. First, I don't want the reader to be too frightened of the devil. Compared to Jesus Christ, Satan is a wimp. The two aren't even in the same league. Although the supernatural evil in these books is based on a certain amount of fact, it's important to understand the awesome protection Jesus Christ offers to all those who have committed their lives to him.

This brings me to my second and somewhat opposing concern: Although the powers of darkness are nothing compared to the power of Jesus Christ and the authority he has given his followers, spiritual warfare is not something we casually stroll into. The situations in these novels are extreme to create suspense and drama. But if you should find yourself involved in something even vaguely similar, don't confront it alone. Find an older, more mature Christian (such as a parent, pastor, or youth leader) to talk to. Let them check the situation out to see what is happening, and ask them to help you deal with it.

Yes, we have the victory through Christ, but we should never send in inexperienced soldiers to fight the battle.

BILL MYERS

Oh, and one final note. When this series was conceived, there were really no bad guys on the Internet. Unfortunately that has changed. Today there are plenty of people out there trying to draw young folks into dangerous situations through it. Although the characters in this series trust Z, if you should run into a similar situation, be smart. Anyone can *sound* kind and understanding, but their intentions may be entirely different. All that to say, don't take candy from strangers you see . . . or trust those you don't.

Bill