

THE DOORWAY TO THE OTHER WORLD WILL OPEN

ENDOSYM

Book Two

The Plantation

By J. Henry Thomson

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Thomson spent more than three years in West Africa and lived twelve months in the jungles. He has worked with the governments of Spain and Brazil on counter terrorism, mines and explosives; and with Delta Force and the Central Intelligence Agency. He lives with his wife in the state of Washington. He is the author of book one of the Endosym series *The Dark Face of Evil*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When writing a novel, there are always those individuals whose contributions make the novel come to life.

A special thanks goes to Yelm, Washington Police Chief Todd Stancil who provided an insight into law enforcement work.

Then Dianna Main, John Main and Larry Hicks who read the draft and told it like it is.

Dave Raymond, thank you for explaining the concept of flying helicopters.

My brother-in-law Dick Raymond, you are an awesome Webmaster.

As always, my editor, Irene Hicks, who provided the energy, unflagging support and encouragement got me through the difficult periods. Without her constant efforts none of this would be possible.

The events and adventures in this novel are fiction. The names, characters, places and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any similarity to persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales are entirely coincidental.

The story and the description of the lives and beliefs of the people of West Africa are based on the author's experiences. The ancient statues are real, as is the leopard tooth. Their origins are fictional.

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He must be hallucinating. He looked again. Three things – no, not things—but demons, stepped out of what appeared to be a black pipe. They seemed human, yet something beyond human. Two horns sprouted from their large, hairless heads. Their long, pointed ears dangled almost to their shoulders. Their bodies seemed human in shape except for one feature – tails that began at the base of their spines. The sharp tips dragged behind, leaving their mark on the surface of the Earth.

Johnsonville, Virginia August 18, 1861

It took three days for copies of the *Richmond Herald* to reach Staunton, the county seat, and another full day for Amos to locate one paper and carry it back to the plantation. He rushed to the door and handed the newspaper to the houseboy, hoping to avoid the master's wrath. More than likely, his punishment for taking too long would include a whipping.

News travels fast, thought Nathaniel Johnson, but not fast enough. Now with the front page spread out in front of him, Johnson ran his finger across the bold print as he leaned forward at the broad oak desk. Here in the mansion's second-floor office, he maintained paperwork, inked records, and kept books on animal husbandry and agriculture. In his right desk drawer he stored the ownership titles for his sixty slaves – those purchased and those born on his land.

Johnson's lips moved silently as he again read the bold headline: "Militia Mobilized, Ordered to Report to Charlottesville." He had known war was coming, but he didn't think it would happen so soon. It had been only five months since the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter, South Carolina on April 12, 1861.

"Yes," he said out loud. "Now it's time for war."

One hundred miles from Richmond, war had finally come to this peaceful valley in the Alleghany foothills. The United States fought within itself, yet the brave men from the righteous Confederacy would quickly defeat the Union army. Johnson knew it was meant to be. The North was hell-bent on destroying their way of life, his livelihood, and everything that fine Southern gentlemen held dear.

How dare those Yankee bastards tell him and his neighbors that they could not own slaves? They didn't understand – or refused to understand – the issue. The slaves were his property. Furthermore, the black slaves were incapable of surviving on their own. Letting them go their own way would be as dumb as taking a domestic dog that had been raised all its life on a farm and releasing it in the woods to compete with the wolves for survival. The Negroes lacked the intelligence to live on their own.

If the fight was to come, so be it. Johnson looked to his left where his Confederate jacket hung from a peg on the coat tree. The bright stars of Brigadier General were affixed to the lapels. The South needed leaders, and, as one of the most powerful landowners in Augusta County, Johnson was prepared to quickly bring this conflict to an end and send those Yankees running north with their tails between their legs.

The windows in his office stood wide open on this late summer day, yet no cool breeze brought any relief from the insufferable humidity. Johnson stood as he heard the yapping of the dogs and the clip-clop of an approaching horse and rider. He looked out the window. His son, Beauford, wearing his gray military uniform, jerked the reins and pulled to a halt.

The boy was just twenty years old. In less than a week, Beauford and every able-bodied white man in the county would ride off to Charlottesville to take their places in the proud Confederate army.

The boy was tall and broad shouldered, Johnson thought, just like his father at the same age. So much had happened in the last two decades.

Just twenty years ago, in what had seemed like months, not years, Johnson had brought his young family to the valley. In the spring of 1841 when Johnson was thirty-five years old, he arrived in the valley with a young wife and six children. He took every penny of his inheritance after his father's death to purchase the four hundred acres fifteen miles west of Staunton.

The Johnson family had left Richmond along with six other white families, one hundred fifty slaves, a hundred head of cattle, forty horses, sheep, goats and swine. In addition to the wagons that carried the families, they had ten wagonloads of building materials and supplies. They had traveled west through Charlottesville, crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains and spent several weeks in Waynesboro, replenishing their stores before heading farther west. Elizabeth was carrying their seventh child, Beauford, who was destined to be the first white child born west of the mountains.

When they reached the valley, Johnson knew that he had arrived at the place where he and his family could live and prosper for the rest of their lives. He built the main house next to a stream that wound its way through the property. The front of the house would face the east to catch the rising sun; the

back would border the stream. Out of sight of the main house, the slave quarters were built behind the main house.

The four-level main house contained more than nine thousand square feet of living space. The lower level was dug into the hillside. A large storeroom under the house took up twelve hundred square feet. An open-air kitchen was built next to the stream. It was joined to the lower level by a covered walkway. Slaves brought food via stairs to the dining room.

Double doors of solid oak provided the entrance to the second level from the wide, front porch. A large, formal ballroom was located to the right of the entry. A library, a living room, and dining room completed the second level.

A wide staircase off the foyer rose to the third level. Hidden from sight, a second small staircase led from the kitchen and dining room. Most of the family's activities took place here. Besides the office, the floor consisted of a sewing room, the children's playroom, the master bedroom, a sitting room, and two additional bedrooms. The fourth level provided space for three more bedrooms and a large storage area.

The house was built to last three hundred years. From virgin forests, eighteen-inch thick beams supported the upper levels. Above the hard dirt floors of the lower level, the upper floors had four-by-twelve-inch hardwood planks. Granite blocks cut from a quarry on the property formed the building's foundation. Bricks for the six fireplaces were shipped from factories in Richmond.

For the next twenty years, the plantation had grown and prospered. As more families moved into the valley, the town of Johnsonville, Virginia was established. It served a population of two hundred fifty whites and two hundred black slaves.

Johnson watched his son take long strides as he neared the front porch. The young man paused momentarily to acknowledge thirteen-year-old Tillie, Carla's daughter, who ran up to greet him. From his office window, Johnson admired the girl's budding breasts beneath her white cotton dress. He smiled with approval when Beauford patted the girl's rounded buttocks before she scampered away.

Johnson laughed to himself, "Good for you, boy. Already sampling some of the stock." It was healthy for his son to fornicate with slaves. It would help him to learn ways to satisfy himself with a woman. Hell, Johnson himself still enjoyed Carla, Tillie's mother. Yet Johnson was discreet. If Elizabeth found out, she would threaten to cut off his manhood.

Beauford knocked on the office door.

"Come in, son, have a seat," said Johnson.

"Good morning, sir. I have the information you wanted about the ceremony tonight."

"Good, did you have any problem finding out who is responsible?"

"No, sir, the whip worked great," grinned Beauford.

"What did you do with him afterwards?" asked Johnson.

"He's over at the Hendrickson barn tied up in the loft," answered Beauford.

"We'll release him after we teach these heathens a lesson. I just can't believe that our slaves are participating in idolatry. We taught them the Ten Commandments, and I've told them that I will not have them blaspheming the Lord," grumbled Johnson.

"It's because of that slave that we bought last year. He was an African boy, and he learned witchcraft over there. Now he's teaching it to our slaves," said Beauford.

"Well, after tonight, they will never practice it again. We'll teach them a lesson they won't ever forget."

"Beauford, notify all the folks in the valley that tonight they need to be here at midnight. We're going to show our slaves what the wrath of God really means."

The derelict mansion on the Johnson plantation faced east, toward the rising sun. But the sun was no friend to the dilapidated structure.

Clearly the ravages of time and weather had stolen its grandeur. Even at ten o'clock in the morning, the outdoor thermometer registered eighty degrees. It would be another day with the muggy heat rising into the high nineties, making this the hottest summer in decades. Later, dark clouds would move in, bringing thunder and lightning, but little moisture. The summer drought had already shriveled the hardiest of weeds. Muddy pools of stagnant water marked the path where a stream had once flowed steadily for as long as anyone could remember.

The building's thick walls creaked as the temperature differential between sweltering sun and cool interior pulled at its joints. Creeping vines clung to the brick exterior, on a mission to overcome the thick blanket of moss that covered the slanted roof. Wide planks had been haphazardly nailed to the window frames, concealing the interior. A twelve-inch metal hasp and heavy padlock secured the double doors. One side of the front steps had collapsed. Several inches of dried leaves and broken branches piled up along the crevices between the building's tattered wallboard and sagging porch.

In its glory days, the huge dwelling would have been one of the most magnificent structures in the valley. Now, like the young beauty who one day looks into the mirror and discovers she has been transformed into an old crone, the once-prosperous Johnson plantation had become an ugly blight on the landscape.

A rough roadway wound its way to the neglected building. No longer lined with carefully tended gardens, clumps of wild grasses and unruly weeds were gradually eroding the once-grand entryway. A foot or two of faded yellow tape – a remnant of a crime scene investigation – hung limply from the porch railing.

A large gray squirrel raced along the rotting lumber, jumped to the uneven wood slats, and then scampered down the broken steps before coming to an abrupt halt on a broken tile in the slate walkway. The young male, nearing its prime, raised his bushy tail and surveyed his location. One large acorn, a product of the single large oak, promised a rare treat in this parched land. He sniffed, jerked his head to the right, and stood stock-still.

Several other squirrels scampered in the branches of the nearby oak, yet none ventured near the steps. A magpie whistled at the bold rodent. Never before had this young creature gotten so close to the decrepit building. In fact, the older squirrels avoided it completely. But this youngster dared to test his luck. The acorn was large and tempting. He jerked his head to the left and sniffed again. The scent of man was barely detectable. He cautiously moved forward, ignoring an urge to abort the quest.

The thing under the porch watched and waited. It patiently rested in its dusty hideaway. It had not moved for hours. The squirrel moved forward. The thing tensed. The squirrel hesitated, and then bolted back to the safety of the porch.

Unconcerned, the thing had no regret. If not this squirrel, it would be another.

But greed would win out. The squirrel dashed forward, grasped the acorn in its paws and pushed the precious morsel into its jaws. The chiseled teeth cracked the nut. The squirrel had only seconds to savor the fresh pulp. It never saw the white mouth and flashing fangs as the copperhead struck, injecting a fatal dose of poison into the rodent's body. After an agonizing scream, the squirrel went limp, its life force gone. Four feet in length, weighing more than fourteen pounds, and with a head larger than a man's open hand, the serpent was the inevitable winner in the contest for survival.

The snake quickly swallowed the squirrel, then slithered back under the porch and disappeared into the cool darkness.

On patrol in downtown Johnsonville, things were slow, even for a Tuesday. Patrolman Jimmy Johnson looked once again at his watch, the third time in as many minutes. He'd started at midnight. Now it was half past one o'clock in the morning. He had another six and a half hours until his shift ended at eight o'clock. He'd been sitting in the lot of the Baptist church with his lights out and engine idling for the last twenty minutes. Only two cars had passed.

It was a good place to hang out. The black and white police cruiser faced east, looking toward the hill where Johnsonville Avenue led into town. Halfway down the hill was the thirty miles per hour sign, right at the city limits. It was another warm night, the temperature still in the mid-seventies. The green light on the radar detector began to flash.

"Looks like I got me my first customer," the officer said out loud.

He'd first seen the car's lights as the vehicle crested the hill. He figured it was a compact car, judging from the spacing of the headlights. They were the round, old sealed beams. The speed limit was fifty up to the sign, but this car went faster, rather than slowing down. The detector read fifty-five, then sixty, and then seventy. At the thirty miles per hour sign, it was going a good eighty miles per hour.

"Shit," cursed Johnson as he dropped the gearshift into drive and switched on the emergency lights. He hit the gas. With gravel flying, he pulled out on to the road, catching a glimpse of a small, red convertible as it flashed past. He gritted his teeth and gripped the steering wheel with both hands. The car slowed as it passed closed shops, turned left on Second Street, went another two blocks and stopped along the curb next to the police station.

The patrolman pulled up behind the vintage Sunbeam Tiger. Built in the sixties, it sported a small block Ford V-8. Even after all these years, this was one fast car. He got out of the cruiser, adjusted his flack vest and walked up to the driver's side.

A thin, white man in his mid-forties sat behind the wheel. He had short blond hair, graying at the temples. Without hesitation, the driver opened the car door and stepped out onto the sidewalk. Johnson did nothing to stop him. The man was five feet, eleven inches tall, three inches shorter than Johnson. He wore a blue uniform, white shirt and black tie. A police utility belt with a holstered .40-caliber Glock was visible at the waist. Three gold stars were affixed to each side of his shirt collar.

"Morning, Chief Bishop," said Johnson.

"Good morning, Jimmy. What did you clock me at?"

"Eighty."

"My speedometer must be off. I was doing eighty-five when I hit the thirty miles per hour sign," said the chief. "Mind if I ride with you when you check the bars at two o'clock?"

"Not at all, Chief."

Chief Brian Bishop slid into the passenger seat. Johnson dropped the cruiser in drive and slowly pulled out.

"Quiet night?" Bishop asked.

"You're my only speeder," said Johnson. He thought he detected a slight odor of alcohol on Chief Bishop's breath and wondered if his boss was not only speeding, but also over the legal limit for alcohol. Not that he would do anything about it. If it hadn't been for Brian Bishop, he would never have landed this job.

Johnson was born and raised in the colored section of Johnsonville. After graduating from high school, he had enlisted in the army and served six years as a military policeman. When his enlistment was over, he came home. He was looking for a job when Chief Bishop called him.

Bishop himself was hired just two years earlier following the firing of the former chief. Johnson remembered that when he was a kid, all the cops were white. Typical of many small southern towns, only "the good ol' boys" made the force. They bullied black people and looked the other way when the rich

white folks did something wrong. Bishop had turned the force around. He required all his officers attend the Virginia State Patrol Academy, got rid of the fat, lazy officers, and hired two black officers, Johnson being the first.

Bishop had also been an MP and retired as a major. Although he liked his booze, he ran a pretty decent shop. The chief would go out on patrol with his men, and he actually listened to their concerns.

Recently, the city council voted to close all five of the town's bars at two o'clock in the morning. Bishop required his night shift officers to make the rounds to see if the bars were complying. Johnson and his chief had just finished their stop at the fourth bar. At Bobby's Bar, they had to ask one guy to leave.

Although Johnson had been enforcing the ordinance for the past six months, he still felt the white guys' resentment when he walked through the doors. Sure, it was the twenty-first century, but even now a few bar owners might as well still have the sign "No Coloreds" because no black man would dare go into the bar. Bobby's was definitely an all-white bar.

After Bobby's, only one bar remained.

"Well, I guess that leaves Ginger's Bar," said the chief.

"Ginger's Bar?" asked Johnson.

"You know, the bar in Shantytown."

"Aw, chief, I don't think you should go to Ginger's Bar."

"Why?"

"White people never go to Ginger's."

"Jimmy, I doubt if black people go to Bobby's, but you have been going there every night at two in the morning for the last month."

"That's different. They look at me as the police, not a black man."

"What's the difference?"

"Chief, there is some bad people at Ginger's. Let me go in and close it down while you wait in the car."

"Sorry, Jimmy, that's not the way it works. Head for Ginger's," ordered the chief.

They drove into Shantytown. Even after two years in Johnsonville, it amazed the chief that something like this could exist in rural America. It was like driving into the past. Most of the homes were run down. Junk cars lined the streets. Several houses had boarded-up windows.

Ginger's didn't look like much. An old two-story house had been made over into what passed as a business. A sign on the front flashed on and off with the word "-inger's." The G was dark. The cruiser bounced as it hit one of the potholes in the dirt parking lot. Johnson pulled into a wide spot between three cars and an old pickup truck. Even before they opened their doors, they could hear the blare of hip-hop music coming from the wide-open doors. It was now quarter to three. The bar should have been closed forty-five minutes ago.

The chief stopped momentarily, noting the strong odor of cigarette smoke, spilled beer and unwashed bodies. Two strikes against them, thought the chief. Not only are they in violation of the closing order, they aren't abiding by the no smoking ordinance. He looked around.

A white-haired black man behind the counter looked up and froze in place. Four men stood silently by the pool table, each with a partially consumed bottle of cheap beer in his hand. One glanced up and stared at the black officer and white man who had interrupted their game. He leaned to his right and whispered to another, larger man.

The big man had a ragged scar that ran down his right cheek, and his muscular arms were heavily tattooed. He dared to break the silence.

"What's happening?" he said, glaring at the deputy.

"It's past closin' time, TL. You guys need to go home."

"Yeah, sure," growled the big guy. "Hey, Willie, there's a white honkey in here. Throw him out."

"Sure, TL."

It was hard to tell who said that because Bishop didn't see anyone's lips move. He whirled around to the dark corner behind the cue rack.

"Holy shit," Bishop thought, trying to control his first reaction.

Out of the shadows came a huge black man, maybe six feet, ten inches tall or better. Bishop sized him up at more than four hundred pounds.

"TL says you gotta leave," said the man called Willie.

"Sorry, Willie. That's your name, right?" asked the chief as he moved forward and stood side by side with his officer.

"That's my name. What's you be sorry for?"

"I can't leave until the bar is closed down," said the chief, his eyes fixed on Willie's face.

"Willie, throw that asshole out!" shouted TL.

Willie stumbled forward, grasping the edge of the pool table to steady himself.

"Willie, if you don't stop, I am going to arrest you," said the chief in a steady, calm tone of voice.

Someone else yelled, "Go on, Willie, throw the whitey out."

All four of the men at the pool table begin chanting, "Throw whitey out. Throw whitey out."

Suddenly Willie sprang forward. He reminded the chief of an angry, charging bull.

The chief recalled his Fort Leavenworth judo instructor's words, "Use your opponent's weight and momentum as leverage." As Willie reached forward, the chief grabbed the man's right wrist, rotated his hips and sent him flying over his shoulder. The glasses behind the bar rattled as Willie crashed to the floor.

The chief was on him in an instant, fitting his knee in the small of Willie's back. He snapped a handcuff on the wrist and pulled the left wrist over the right, cuffing them together. The man's wrists were so large that the clasp barely fit into the last link.

"On your feet!" ordered the chief. Willie slowly got up. Even though the chief expected him to continue to resist, Willie bowed his head and stared blankly at the floor.

"Yes, sir," he whispered.

The chief saw that his patrolman had his hand on the butt of his service weapon.

"Harry, you close this bar right now!" said Johnson. "And, TL, I don't want any problem from you or the boys. You got it?"

"Sure, Jimmy, sure. No problem," answered TL. "Let's go over to my house, guys." Without another word, the four men walked through the front doors and disappeared into the night.

Both officers escorted Willie to the patrol car. He was so big that they had to tell him to sit sideways in the back seat. The two policemen rode in front. The chief's hands began to shake. He held them together tightly until the shaking stopped.

"Well, that was a little more exciting than I expected," he said. "Let's take this guy down and book him."

"Yes, sir," said Johnson.

The chief took a second look at his patrolman. Something wasn't right.

"You know the guy in the back?"

"Yeah, Chief. He's my cousin."

"Christ, I suppose his name is Johnson, right?"

"Yeah, Chief. He ain't really bad, just a little drunk. Willie wouldn't hurt a fly."

"Maybe not, but he sure could squash one," mumbled the chief. "Where does Willie live?"

"Two blocks over," said Johnson.

"Take me to his house."

"His house?"

"Yes, his house."

When they got to Willie's street, Johnson pulled up at a white house.

"That's Willie's house?" asked the chief.

“Yeah, Chief. Willie and his wife, Jasmine, live there. They don’t have no kids, but his grandmother lives with ‘em,” said Johnson.

“Let me guess, the Grandma Johnson everyone in town talks about?”

“Yes, Chief, that’s his grandmother.”

The manicured lawn and a sidewalk bordered by purple petunias made this house stand out in the otherwise shabby neighborhood.

“His grandmother must be quite the gardener,” said the chief.

“No, Chief, Willie does the flowers. He used to work for the parks department before they had to lay him off following the budget crunch,” said Johnson.

“Funny, he didn’t strike me as a gardener,” said the chief as they opened their doors.

“Get out!” he ordered, noting the fear in the big man’s eyes. Turning to Johnson, he said. “Tell him I’m not going to hurt him.”

“Get out, Willie,” said Johnson, guiding the large man out of the back.

“Turn around,” the chief said. He unlocked the handcuffs. Willie rubbed his wrists together and looked up in disbelief. He had been taken home, not to the police station.

“Go home and sleep it off, Willie,” the chief said softly.

Willie lumbered up the walkway.

“Willie?”

“Yes, sir?” he asked, again lowering his eyes. “When someone tells you to do something stupid, don’t listen to them. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Willie said, a faint smile coming to his lips. “Yes, sir.”

“Let’s go back to the station, Jimmy. I think I need to go home and have a drink,” the chief murmured as he leaned back and closed his eyes.

“Yes, sir, Chief,” grinned Jimmy as he pulled away from the curb. “Yes, sir!”

Overlooking New York's Central Park, a black man of indeterminate age stood at the window in his newly acquired penthouse. With the downturn in the economy, the luxury apartment was a steal at forty-eight million dollars.

He admired his reflection in the glass. Hands positioned firmly at his belt line, he lifted his broad shoulders and breathed in deeply – clearly this was an uncommonly magnificent specimen of humanity. By most standards, he was not tall, perhaps five feet, nine inches, yet he appeared much larger. Weighing around two hundred fifty pounds, his bulk would strike fear into the hearts and minds of those who would test his power.

Bullet-like, his shaved head joined with his thick neck, forming a single unit atop the broad shoulders. His ears were small and close to his head, adding to streamlined effect of his firm cheeks and polished forehead. But, clearly, his eyes were the single most impressive characteristic. The eyes, even the irises, were totally black. Most people looked away when they first encountered him. Few had the confidence to look into the piercing orbs.

And the tailored suit – purchased for thousands of dollars – completed his image. How impressive, he thought, and how good he looked in the iron gray fabric, complemented by the ivory-colored shirt and crimson tie. The penthouse was the perfect setting for this extraordinary example of a human being.

He smiled again at his reflection. Six years had passed quickly. Anyone who knew him in Liberia would not recognize him today. He had shed nearly one hundred pounds through extensive workouts and diet. He was the powerful being that would now carry on the cause.

His mind drifted from self-admiration to assessing how far he had come in the time he had spent on Earth. He congratulated himself on his progression. Soon, he would win the greatest victory ever known. The *endosyms* would wage outright war against mankind and evil would triumph. It was just a matter of time.

This man-demon had transformed himself many times throughout the centuries. For thousands of years, he had hidden from humankind, cowering in ignorant fear. The demon that had entered his mind and body hadn't begun to realize its power.

Thousands of years ago, he was simply one among the many warriors who engaged in endless conflict on the African continent. His warrior band had fought an Egyptian priest who had been trapped inside an enormous underground cavern. The priest, the self-proclaimed leader of the demons, must be killed.

In the heat of battle, the warrior had brutally forced his sword into the priest's gut. It was surely a fatal blow, but the evil creature did not die. Instead, the priest turned to confront his attacker. About to strike the warrior, the priest's foot had slipped on the bloody floor. At first, the priest collapsed. Then he rose awkwardly to his hands and knees. He raised his head to focus on the warrior. It was a fatal move. His thin neck stretched out within an arm's length, directly in front of the warrior. It was so easy and so inevitable. With a single blow of his sword, the warrior sliced through the flesh and delicate bone. The head separated from the body and tumbled to a stop against a boulder.

Instantly, the warrior felt a strange demon-power enter his being. Frightened beyond reason, the warrior ran down the length of the dank tunnel until he emerged into the light. Now a crazed being without direction, he lost himself in the jungle. No longer a lowly warrior, he drifted aimlessly, unsure of his purpose or identity. When other creatures died, he continued to live. A naked and unkempt creature, he fed on the uncooked flesh of small animals. He had no concept of time. All he knew was that he must hide from humans.

He lived on for centuries, never experiencing the finality of death. Some six decades ago, three nomadic hunters attempted to capture him. He killed the humans with his bare hands. As they died, their essence entered his body, and he felt renewed. Strangely, the human part of his being took charge. He donned the humans' clothing. He wandered into a native village. The villagers assumed that he was a crazed man and offered him food. An old woman, Shana Sarday, took pity on him and gave him meals and a place to sleep.

Gradually, he learned the language of the village people and again learned to use the power of words. At the same time, he developed an urge to slaughter more humans, as he had the three hunters. But he was smart, and he kept his hunger hidden from the villagers.

West Africa was rife with people who practiced bloody sacrifices. He began to withdraw from the villagers and joined those who relished participating in the killings. Each sacrifice seemed to increase his sense of power.

He called himself George Nay Sarday. He assumed a leadership position at the University of Liberia. He believed that he was destined to rule the nation and eventually conquer all of humankind. He almost reached what he thought was his destiny. When the coup d'etat succeeded and the rebels upset his quest, Sarday was forced to flee the country.

"Damn," Sarday said, a self-satisfied smile spread across his face. What at first seemed to be failure, led to his current status. He had become a bold and inventive African man who could re-direct the foolish Americans into following his pathway to enlightenment. They would hand over their wealth, and Sarday would reward them with a new church, one that could provide these lost souls with a sense of belonging.

New York was only the starting point. Soon, he would have access to the human beings who would be primed for sacrifice. Their deaths would serve to increase his powers and take him even closer to his goal – destruction of the entire human race.

When Sarday escaped from Liberia, no one on Earth knew that he had become an *endosym*, a man-demon. Sarday and his henchman, Oscar Jalah, had slipped out of Liberia during collapse of Steven Dowling's administration. The unfortunate Jalah was on Liberia's most-wanted list. Charles Morray, in his second term as president of Liberia, had vowed to track down all those involved in atrocities during Dowling's reign of horror. But Liberia had no DNA or fingerprints for Jalah. It was an easy move to acquire a Jamaican passport and identity for him.

Yet he, Dr. George Nah Sarday, former chancellor of the University of Liberia, had remained in the shadows. Despite Morray's claim that he had witnesses to Sarday's involvement, he was unable to provide proof.

Sarday used his forged academic credentials and easily found employment in the United States as assistant professor of African Studies at New York University. With the funds he had in Swiss and Cayman bank accounts, he could move in the most elite circles, socializing with the rich and famous.

In his classes, he introduced Dacari Muomba, identified as an ancient sacred being. Sarday claimed to be in communication with this being that could change men's fortunes. He wove fact and fiction into mesmerizing stories that gained him a large following, not only at the university, but also with thousands of believers who followed his Internet blog.

Even he was surprised to discover that America was fertile ground for those who searched for a leader who would bring them wisdom and wealth. Here in this advanced civilization, channelers earned millions by promoting New Age religions. Their gods were derived from the stories of the ancient horned beings. It was a perfect environment to come out from the shadows and to operate in the open.

When his book, *Dacari Muomba, the Path to Power*, became a bestseller, he was catapulted to celebrity status and became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. Each new venture compounded his success. Yet he lacked a physical center to further recruit even more believers. Once he had a location to open a school, preach to his followers and recruit new believers, he would be poised to spread his teachings throughout the world.

On the library table, Sarday caressed the message that would be the answer to his quest. Jalah had done his research well. He had found the perfect location for the religious center – an old Southern plantation in the town of Johnsonville, Virginia.

Yes, this would be the place that would bring thousands of believers the wisdom and fortune they were seeking. And Sarday would be one step closer to reaching his destiny. But, more important, he believed that he had found the secret that would open the demon's world creating more *endosyms*.

He couldn't resist reading Jalah's report once again.

PROPERTY FOR SALE: The Johnson Plantation
Sixty acres with house and outbuildings for \$2.2 million

This property is located outside the Town of Johnsonville, Virginia, in the foothills of the Alleghany Mountains. The town was named after its founder Nathaniel Johnson.

In 1842, Johnson and several other white families traveled west one hundred fifteen miles from Richmond Virginia. With them were one hundred slaves. The Johnson family settled in the valley prior to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Following the death of Brigadier General Nathaniel Johnson during the battle of Shiloh, his oldest son attempted to run the Johnson plantation. With the slaves freed and no one to till the land, the farmland lay vacant. The Johnsons became as poor as the former slaves who, even today, work as sharecroppers.

In 1914, Walter Smith, an executive for Reynolds Tobacco, purchased the property. The Smiths restored the plantation to its original glory, but elected to sell off all but sixty acres of the adjoining farmland.

During the Great Depression, Smith, who had lost his fortune in the stock market crash, was believed to have murdered his wife then committed suicide. His body was found lying face down at his desk in the library. His wife, Mary, lay on the floor nearby.

Their daughter and only child, Martha, returned to the plantation after their deaths where she became a recluse. For seventy years, she seldom left the plantation. The townspeople called her Crazy Martha. Sometime in mid-April of 1999, Martha, well into her nineties, fell down the basement stairs and broke her back. She died alone of dehydration and starvation.

The Smiths had no other children, and the plantation had remained vacant for seventeen years. It became a Mecca for teenagers who dared to spend a night in the supposedly haunted plantation.

Then three years ago, six teenagers held what was rumored to be a drug party on the old plantation. Something went wrong. Bad crack cocaine; alcohol and a Samurai sword were found in the bloody kitchen.

When the bodies were found, they had been in the ninety-degree heat for at least five days. The corpses were infested with maggots, their eye sockets dark with rot, and their fingers and toes gnawed to the bone by rodents.

The plantation was boarded up. A distant relative placed it on the market at a reduced price of two million two hundred thousand dollars.

This was the place; Sarday was sure of it. He picked up his cell phone and punched in the contact.

“Yes, sir,” answered Jalah.

“Oscar, make the arrangements for me to see the plantation property in Johnsonville as soon as possible.”

“I’ll get on it immediately,” said Jalah.

Sarday smiled. Soon, very soon, he would have the power to control these foolish humans.