**Concept**

**a detective from a agency of the government that explores different abnormalities or anomalies. The book starts out with him talking to his wife discussing whether or not he wants to go take a new opportunity because they want to move him somewhere else in the job and it would pay a lot more but he would not be around his family as much and his wife is about to have a baby, he ends up getting a call that day where he has to go and check out a site in the middle of the woods so he ends up going out there and the whole book kind of takes place in like a gloomy foggy rainy Forest and he ends up finding a rock with a giant machine kind of infused into the rock. So he starts trying to figure out what it is and he uses a bunch of different equipment to check it out and he ends up hearing knocking coming from the inside of the inside of the machine so he tries to drill a hole through it but he can't and he ends up being able to tune his radio to communicate with what ends up being a man inside of the machine that's infused inside of the rock. So they end up talking, and the main character tells the guy inside of the rock about how he has to make this difficult decision and then the guy inside the rock starts to tell the main character about how he was at one point in the same situation. He ended up taking a job that kept him away from his family and his family ended up resenting him for it and he missed a lot of the good times with his family and his family ended up leaving him. Because he threw himself into his work so much. And then at the end of the book The guy ends up saying you know I never got your name, and he says his name and it's the same as the main character. It turns out that the machine that was infused inside of the rock is a time machine and that the job that the company wanted the main character to take was to work on the time machine. So the main character originally took the job and then went back in time to tell himself not to take the job essentially.**

**Outline**

**Act 1: The Dilemma**

**Chapter 1**

It was a cold April morning, colder than it had been in the past. Rain was pattering the windows in the tan non-descript concrete headquarters of the AIA. Non-descript is exactly what the Anomaly Investigation Agency was supposed to be. Frank Hawthorne had been hired as an “Anomaly Detection and Investigative Specialist” – which in his mind was a fancy way of saying “everything the agency needs to investigate that doesn’t actually seem spectacular in any way”. In the nine years he had been with the agency he had not actually investigated anything he would actually consider an anomaly. The closest he ever came to discovering something other worldly was the time he was sent to the Appalachian Mountains deep in the West Virginia woods where there were reports of an creature that the local hill-folk described as an “eight foot tall terror creature”. The “terror creature” in question ended up being a poor black bear – nowhere near eight feet tall – that had evidence of being caught in either a burning building or brush fire. It was disfigured, but nothing that would make Frank believe in a world outside of the previously scientifically discovered. However, today of all days, Frank believed maybe there was an anomaly afoot. Because today, he was called to his bosses office. His boss who hadn’t spoken to him since he was hired eight years ago.

“Frank, take a seat”, said Director Langley with the same blank expression on his face he was famous for. Frank sat down without saying anything.

“You’ve been with us for what – eight years now?”

Frank nodded, “Almost nine”.

“I’m told you’re one of the best”

Frank wondered who was going around telling people he was on of the best.

Langley leaned back, studying him. “That’s why I wanted to talk to you personally about this. We’ve got an opportunity-big one. High clearance, high stakes, high reward.”

Frank already didn’t like the sound of it. He exhaled slowly, bracing himself. “What exactly is it?”

Langley slid a file across the desk. The black cover had no markings, no insignia-just a single white tab labeled **Project: Ironoak.**

Frank hesitated before opening the file. He skimmed the first page, catching glimpses of vague reports: **electromagnetic fluctuations**, **unidentified metallic structures**, **possible containment breach**.

“Where is it?” he asked again.

Langley exhaled and turned in his chair. “That’s the thing. It would be on an off-site location in Antarctica. I -”

“Antarctica? I can’t drag my family to Antarctica. My wife is due any day now and there’s no way I could leave here high and dry like this”. Frank said, to what he thought might end up on def ears.

Langley’s face didn’t leave the window. “You’re right, you can’t bring your family with you. They would have to remain here. But this is a big opportunity for you, Frank. A new kid on the way – this could be the perfect opportunity to make some real money. Something like this only comes along once in a lifetime. I’m talking a big pay raise”.

Franks eyes widened. “How big?”

“life changing”.

**Chapter 2**

Frank drove home in silence. He couldn’t stop thinking about the amount of money he was just offered. “Life changing” was almost an understatement. His wife and kid and grandkids wouldn’t ever have to worry about money again. But was it worth it to trade such a large chunk of his life for money? Frank thought back to his upbringing. He was never rich growing up and he remembers many nights of having “wish sandwiches”, which is what his brother would call the dinner they wish they had. His dad wasn’t around, and his mom was the only one taking care of him. Although “taking care of him” was a bit of an overstatement – he thought. His dad wasn’t around and yet he ended up okay – right? He had a loving wife and soon he would have a newborn.

Frank pulled into his driveway. The rain pattered his metal roof with a clang on every drop. He shut the door of his car. It squeaked. “Had it always done that?”, he thought. He looked at his house. It was a two-bedroom home which was about all he could afford on his salary. He was by no means poor, but he felt like he wasn’t giving his wife the life he would have liked her to have. He shook the rain off his black jacket before opening the door. He took a deep breath as he entered.

Opening the door he took in a deep breath. The aroma of freshly baked bread engulfed his senses.

“Welcome home handsome”, said Lucy – bending to hug him.

Frank met Lucy while he was a junior in college. Back then Frank was not exactly the best student. He didn’t care that much about classes – certainly now as much as he cared about going to parties with his buddies. But when he met Lucy, all of that changed. After one night when he had a long, slightly alcohol fueled, talk with her about their future - his perspective on life shifted from enjoying life in the short term, to planning on how they could enjoy life in the long term. He began to study and take his classes more seriously. He ended up graduating with decent enough grades to get hired on to the FBI right out of college. As soon as his clearance went through is when the AIA approached him to joining their agency instead.

“Hey beautiful – that goes for both of you”, He said with his hand on her belly. He pecked a kiss on her lips. “Something smells good.” He said, dragging out the “oo”.

Lucy loved Frank. In her mind she saw a man who cared about her and took care of her. She was orphaned at a young age and grew up in various relatives’ homes. She didn’t like to talk about those days. She was just happy that she had met someone like Frank and had the happy little home she was never able to have growing up.

“Chicken-pot-pie and some baked bread”, she said, leading him by the hand to the kitchen.

Frank kicked off his shoes while she led him through the house. “Wait, I’m getting the floors wet”.

Lucy laughed as she got plates out of the cabinet and handed Frank a few glasses to set the table. They sat down and ate the perfectly browned pie and bread while talking about the latest thing Lucy read in a magazine that day – she was a big reader and that was one of the things Frank loved about her the most. Her inquisitive spirit. She always wondered about the universe and could always come up with questions about anything she saw. He stared into her eyes as she talked, as his mind became fixated on her beauty. Brown crystal-like eyes and brown silky hair with a smile that he could get lost in.

“What do you think”, she said.

Frank snapped out of his trance, “Um..”

“You weren’t even listening”, she said laughing.

Frank took a deep breath. “Honestly, something happened today at work and I think he need to talk about it.”

**Chapter 3**

The rain continued to beat on the old metal roof as the wind began to pick up. The windchimes on the Hawthorne’s porch had begun to ring. The wind began to whistle through the woods and Frank could have sworn he was hearing distant thunder.

“Antarctica Frank? Really? Antarctica.” Said Lucy, as they both began to put away the leftover dinner. “You really think it’s a good idea to leave your wife and newborn child day?”

Tying the bread bag up and putting it on the counter, “I wouldn’t even consider it if it wasn’t going to set us up for life – it’s a life changing amount of money, Lucy”.

“And what exactly about our life is so horrible that it needs changed?”

“I don’t know – nothing I guess – I just don’t want you to ever have to worry. That kind of opportunity doesn’t come along often, if ever.”

“We’re not doing this Frank. I will not subject my children to a life without their father. I lived my life without a father figure and it was only for the grace of God that I didn’t turn out worse.” She said with a hind of tears in her voice.

The last thing Frank wanted to do was make her cry, but what could he do. It was like Langley said, “It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity”.

“I grew up without a father, you don’t see me whining about it”. He regretted the words as soon as they came out of his mouth.

Although Frank loved Lucy, there were times where he would put his foot in his mouth so far, he wondered how he hadn’t been the subject of a murder mystery podcast.

Lucy stared at him and began to cry. She walked into their bedroom and shut the door. Frank turned and stared out their kitchen window. He looked at the large pine tree that hung overlooking his house. He watched as the rain continued to fall. Lightning struck and thunder rolled soon after. This was Franks favorite type of weather – as long as he didn’t have to go out into it.

Frank wondered how he could be so stupid. That was one of the worst things he could have said, he thought to himself. But was he wrong? This job could improve their life – and in the back of his mind he was constantly worrying about what he would do if something were to go wrong. He had a few friends that ended up homeless because of one reason or another – a car breaking down, or a medical emergency. Frank wondered what he would do if his child was born with a defect of some kind. How would he be able to afford care?

As he stared out the window contemplating his life, he saw a flash of green - almost like a ball of lightning. Frank was familiar with the phenomenon of Ball Lighting, but had never seen it before and wouldn’t have actually believed it if he hadn’t seen it with his own eyes. Three seconds later frank heard a thunderous bang that shook the house.

“It’s okay, just a little thunderstorm”, he shouted to his wife – thinking about how he should probably give her some space.

Just as he had that thought, his phone began to buzz. He pulled his phone out of his pocket.

“You’ve reached Hawthorne.”

**Chapter 4**

“Hey Frank, it’s Bill”.

Bill had been Franks handler since he joined the AIA eight years ago. He never actually met Bill – he only knew him from talking to him over the phone. Bill had a deep gruff voice, like he had been smoking cigars since he was five years old. Frank liked Bill and they were on friendly terms. Frank thought of Bill as his best friend. Thinking about it, Frank couldn’t name even one other friend he had talked to in the past two months, other than his wife.

“Let me begin with a congratulations”. Bill said in an tempered voice – his way of sounding exciting.

Frank put his finger to his temple and began to rub it – trying to avoid the headache that was beginning to form. “Congratulations?”

“The job they offered you – shit Frank. I guess I jumped the gun. They asked for a recommendation a while back for a supposedly top-level position and I put your name in for it”. Said Bill.

Frank could feel the headache begin right behind his eyes, despite his best efforts. “Oh no - yeah, they offered it to me this morning.”

“Well, I take it by your enthusiastic tone you are over the moon about it, huh?” He said without changing the tone of his voice. Bill had always been kind of sarcastic, but Frank never actually acknowledged it.

“I don’t know Bill, I’d be away from my family for years and you know the AIA – it’s hard enough to get your vacation days approved around here, let alone trying to take extra time to go see my family.”

“Sounds like you’ve been talking to your wife too much”. Frank wasn’t sure if this was sarcasm or not.

Frank had both fingers rubbing both sides of his head with no avail. “Seems so”.

Bill took a deep sigh. “Well I won’t harp on that – just got a call about an A-3 that’s got your name written all over it”

Frank thought back to his training. A-4 was an anomalous object with a level 4 severity level. He never actually had the opportunity to investigate anything higher than a level 3 – his last A-3 was a large creature in a lake that kept appearing on the surface of the water. This turned out to be a hollowed out log that a manatee was living in – every time the manatee would get in it, it would sink to the bottom, and every time it wasn’t it would float back to the surface. From what Frank was told, there were quite a few scientifically significant anomalies – he just didn’t get to investigate them.

Bill popped a few aspirins into his mouth. “Sounds like a plan. What exactly are we looking at?”

Frank could hear the clicks of a keyboard in the background, “Same ol’ same ol’ – electromagnetic pulse followed by a seismic event – not to far from your current location.”

Frank thought back to the ball of light he saw. Maybe it wasn’t ball lightning he thought. “Oh, yeah, I felt a pretty good bang over at my house – but I thought it was just thunder”.

“Could’ve been, but you know how these things go – it’s an alien making contact until we get eyes on it.”

Frank chuckled. “I doubt they’d make it a level four if it was alien contact.” He never had an A-4, so he wasn’t sure what to actually expect. They wouldn’t send him by himself to meet up with aliens by himself, would they? He thought to himself.

“Well to be honest, we would get someone a little more experienced if it wasn’t for this rain – the storm coming in makes it a little complicated – not sure our guys here would be able to make it there in time. You’ll complete the initial assessment and give a report. If it’s something serious we’ll send some help – hopefully by then the storm will have passed.”

Frank heard movement from his bedroom. “Well thanks for thinking of me. Send me the details and I’ll try to get out there.”

Frank heard typing on the other end of the phone again. “Okay, sending them now.”

“Sounds good, thanks Bill.”

“Oh and Frank”

“Yeah?”

“Try to make it quick, the levels scale exponentially, 4 isn’t necessarily what 2 is to 3.”

“10/4”.

**Chapter 5**

“You know I could go into labor at any minute, right?” Lucy said with clear anger in her voice.

Frank couldn’t really think of a good reason for him to go check out the anomaly immediately. When investigating anomalies, one had to be prepared for anything. However, this one was just a few miles from his home. He had hoped it was just some drone stuck in a tree or something. It wasn’t unheard of for government drone projects to crash – and if the AIA wasn’t informed, they were usually called in to check on what was going on.

Frank pulled his jacket over his sweater and began to tie his boots. “I won’t be long – a few hours, max.”

Lucy stood with her arms crossed. “And what am I supposed to do if –“.

“Lucy. You’re worried over nothing. Your due date isn’t for another couple of weeks. If you start to feel contractions, just call me. I’m only a few miles away – I’ll rush back here asap.”

Frank wrapped her in his arms and kissed her on the forehead. Lucy kissed him back. “I was thinking about the job. I support you no matter what, and I’ll miss you, but who knows, maybe the assignment will be quick, and you’ll be back sooner than you think.”

Grabbing his pack off the floor and his truck keys from the counter Frank said, “We’ll talk about it some more when I get back. This could be a big opportunity for us.”

Frank headed towards the door and pulled it open. The wind was continuing to pick up and the rain was beating down harder. His wind chimes played him off as he walked to his truck.

“Love you, see you soon.”

“Love you too, see you in a little bit.”

Sitting in his truck, Frank took a long sigh. This could be a very long night. He started his truck and turned on the heat. The cold began to bite at his ears as soon as he left his house, so he was glad that he wore his thermal clothes. He pulled his phone out of his pocket opened the AIA website. He put in his credentials. Flipping through the online documents he found the information for his new case. A-4 was written at the top of the screen in big bold letters with “urgent” written in red underneath. Frank put the coordinates in his phone and took off down his driveway.

Frank lived in what his wife called “the middle of nowhere”. In his mind it really wasn’t the middle of nowhere though, because he was only about a thirty-minute drive to into town. “The middle of nowhere” Lucy would describe was due more to the lack of neighbors. But Frank liked this – he was never a people-person. His neighbors were the trees and the animals that lived in them. The trees were pine, and they extended as far as the eye could see. The road to was gravel, but it was no problem for his truck. This was his ideal home, but even Frank had to admit that deep inside he had something longing for more. Something unsatisfied with his life. He wasn’t sure what it was, but it had been eating at him for years. He was a dreamer, and the dreams he had didn’t have much to do with investigating the universe of random bizarre situations that ultimately amounted to nothing. He kept pondering over and over his job offer – so much so that he drove right past his destination. His phone beeped and he came to a stop.

Backing up and pulling off the road, Frank took another long sigh. He had another two miles until he arrived at his destination. Unfortunately for him it was directly into the woods. He shut his truck off and checked his phone to be sure. He got out of his truck, picked up his back and began trekking through the forest. The wind was blowing harder now and rain continued to beat down as the thunder cracked in the distance. He was glad for the thick forested canopy overhead to protect him from some of these elements. Things could be worse.

He thought back to the time when he had to go check out an A-3 anomaly at the top of a light house. It was a “specter” that the local people called The Ghost of Old Lighthouse Keeper Peter. When he got to the top of the lighthouse, he found nothing – his equipment picked up no abnormalities – and all he could find was a couple of old beer bottles scattered on the floor. On his way back down, he slipped down the stairs and fell all the way to the bottom. On his way down he fell into a group of teenagers. Recovering at the bottom of the stairs, he integrated the bruised up teens and they admitted that they had been drinking and partying at the top of the lighthouse every weekend for a few months. Frank limply drove himself to the hospital where he was treated for a cracked rip and a broken wrist.

It was storming then too. In fact, he felt like most of the time he had bad things happen is when it was storming. He continued to walk. After a mile of hiking his phone beeped again. He looked down at it. His service was gone. Frank pulled out his compass and made sure that he knew the direction he was supposed to head in order to get to the anomaly and to get back home. He adjusted his compass with a mark to identify both directions. Red for anomaly, green for the road. He continued to walk in the direction red direction. He wasn’t sure how long he would be walking, but he assumed by the gate of his walk he would have another 30 minutes until he arrived.

The closer Frank got, the more his stomach began to turn. Normally he was cool, calm, and collected, but something felt different about this. He reached down and felt where his gun was. It was on his side. He never killed anyone – or anything for that matter. But it gave him reassurance, nonetheless.

**Chapter 6**

Cautiously Frank continued through the rain-soaked forest, feeling uneasy. Frank pulled out his recorder and clicked it to life. “Detective Frank Hawthorne – Class A-4 Anomaly – ID 2547890. I have been walking for about two miles. I believe I am getting close to the anomaly.”

Pulling up his radiation detector it hummed to life. “Negative reading on radiation – setting sensors to pick up anything that could be above dangerous levels”.

He clicked the detector to his backpack as the little light continued to blip green. He continued to walk and stumbled upon an enormous rock formation. The rain was trickling down creating a small stream. To Frank, nothing looked out of the ordinary. He wasn’t sure exactly what he was supposed to find. That was the problem with anomalies – they were so anomalous they could be overlooked. For all he knows there was a specter at the top of the light house all those years ago, and he just discounted it as the tomfoolery of teenagers.

“I should be right on the coordinates, but I’m not seeing anyth-”

As he said this, he felt warmth. He looked down at his flashlight. His flashlight was standard issue AIA technology. It had different sensors on it with an easy-to-read display. Trying to handle ten different sensors and scanning devices was a problem of the past. The temperature had risen twenty degrees. As he looked at down at the screen, he noticed that it had also stopped raining.

“Looked like it stopped raining, and a warm front moved it. Weird, it happened so suddenly”.

Frank set his pack on the ground and then suddenly couldn’t move. He was looking directly in front of him where he saw a wall. His felt like his eyes were deceiving him, but as he continued to stare – nothing seemed to change.

He slowly approached what looked to him like a glass wall – clicking the recorder to full time record and clipping it to his shoulder. “I-I don’t know what I’m looking at.. It’s like a glass wall – no – a dome.”

He turned - following the dome with his eyes.

“It looks to be about 50 feet from one side to the other.”

He took his knife out from his pocket and flicked it open, pushing it into the glass. It went through.

“This isn’t glass. It’s like a barrier – forcefield”

Bringing his knife away from the barrier – it was wet.

“Oh my god – it – it’s – the rain is still falling – only it’s not – its frozen – not frozen – but stopped, frozen in time”

He dropped his knife.

“Oh my god, Bill wasn’t kidding when he said an A-4 was nothing like what an A-3 is to an A-2”. He stammered.

Frank turned to observe the rest of the dome. Something had to been creating this. He noted that nothing looked out of the ordinary, but the enormous rock formation was jutting halfway into the center of the dome. He approached it hesitantly. He pulled out his radio – it was a state of the art satellite radio.

He turned it on, and it clicked to life. “Hey Bill, you’re not going to believe this.”

The radio just buzzed back.

“Hey Bill you there?” He said letting go of the button.

“Great, what a piece of junk.”

“Wait a second, maybe it some something to do with this forcefield. If I leave it – maybe then the radio will work. Could be something to do with that.” He said, thinking about how he’s talking out loud and how he could potentially be losing his mind.

He approached the barrier when his radio clicked, “Wai—‘zzzzz’—don’t”

Frank froze in his footsteps.

**Chapter 7**

“Hello? Is someone there?” Frank jacket was beginning to dry, and he was contemplating taking it off because he was beginning to sweat.

He turned his head and looked around at the surroundings of the dome frozen in time. He caught glimpse of a bird, frozen mid-flight.

“Ye-‘zzzzzz’” click.

Frank turned his attention back to his radio. Fiddling with the controls he began to adjust the frequency.

“Hello? Hello? Do you read me?” He repeated.

Frank kept tuning the radio and kept repeating himself. “Hello? Is anyone there?”

Frank clicked the dial, “-es I am here. Can you hear me?”

Surprised, Frank dropped the radio. Picking it back up he frantically said, “Err, umm, hi-“

The stranger on the other end began to laugh. “I was wondering when someone was going to pick up.”

Frank was cautious, but his curiosity was at cat levels of height. “I-I’m on official government business and this is a private line. You can be penalized if you don’t immediately disregard all communications with this channel.”

“Are you at least going to ask me about the time bubble you seem to have found yourself in?” The mellow calm, voice said.

To Frank this voice seemed to be comforting to him. Something about it was familiar. Something in this man’s voice was able to be trusted. It was warm and calm, and in that moment it was exactly what he needed to remain calm as he considered the situation in which he found himself.

“Listen man, I don’t know what game you’re trying to pull, but this is a serious government investigation, and you could get in a lot of trouble for interfering.” He said, secretly hoping the sternness of his voice would be enough to scare this guy into revealing himself.

The line went dead for a few seconds. “Hello?” said Frank.

Laughing again the stranger replied, “Sorry, dropped my radio, I only got part of that. I think I better cut to the chase – I think I’m what you’ve been sent to investigate.”

Frank took a few steps back from the barrier, “What are you talking about? How are you what I’ve been sent to investigate?”

“I think you need to turn around and take a look at this formation of rocks. You might find something afoot with them.”

Frank turned around and studied rock. It looked like a normal rock. And as he looked at it, it appeared. A giant metal square fused into the rock. Frank fell backward at the sudden appearance of this mysterious object.

It was nothing special, but something abnormal at the same time. It was a corner of a smooth metal cube with no markings.

“Sorry about that – guess I should’ve warned you.” The voice said, laughing and then wincing.

Frank began to stand back up and pulled out his camera. He set the camera on the ground so it would take a panorama of the surroundings. “What the hell am I looking at?”

“I’m not sure I can disclose that.”

**Opening Scene:** The protagonist (Detective Frank Hawthorne) is at home with his pregnant wife. They discuss his career opportunity—a high-paying but distant job. His wife is supportive but hesitant.

* **Inciting Incident:** Carter gets a call about an unidentified anomaly deep in the forest. He has to leave immediately.

**Act 2: The Mystery Deepens**

* **The Journey:** Carter drives through the rain-soaked woods, feeling uneasy. Strange signals interrupt his radio.
* **Discovery of the Machine:** Carter finds an enormous rock formation with a machine partially fused into it—rusted, ancient, but humming with energy.
* **Investigation:** Using scanners and other tools, he examines the machine. It appears to be generating a field that distorts time.
* **The Knock:** He hears knocking from within. Something—someone—is inside.

**Act 3: The Conversation**

* **Communication:** Carter fine-tunes his radio and makes contact. The voice inside is weary but familiar. The trapped man shares a hauntingly similar past.
* **Revelations:** The man warns Carter of the consequences of choosing his job over his family. His life fell apart, and his family left.
* **The Truth:** As the conversation continues, small hints suggest the man inside knows Carter too well. The final reveal—he is speaking to himself, from the future.

**Act 4: The Choice**

* **Emotional Climax:** Carter is shaken. The man inside the machine tells him that taking the job led to his downfall. Now, he’s trapped in time, paying the ultimate price.
* **The Decision:** Carter stands in the rain, looking at the machine, realizing what he must do.
* **Final Twist:** The man inside asks Carter’s name, and Carter finally says it. The radio goes silent.

**Epilogue: A Different Path**

* Carter returns home. His wife, sensing something different about him, asks what’s wrong. He tells her he’s made a decision—he’s staying.
* In the woods, the machine hums… and disappears.