The sound of thousands of people echoed off the walls of the coliseum. Posters, televisions, attendees, and booths were decorated in celebration of the science fiction convention. Sefin soaked it all in as he stood in the middle searching for the area marked off for “Dark Times” his favorite sci-fi show. He moved through the crowd gripping a CD case in his right hand and grasping his laminated, official, “special pass” lanyard that hung from his neck in his left hand.

Huge posters with the show’s main character, Jared Jensen, were collected in a corner. Sefin stopped to take in the huge scenes of his favorite actor. He took out a camera from his fanny pack and snapped a photo of each poster. To Sefin it looked as if Jared was using his psychic powers on everyone passing by the posters.

He approached a roped-off area that read “special passes only.” There was a large man standing in the entrance of the ropes checking lanyards and lifting the ropes to let people enter. Sefin looked at the CD in his hand then back at the large gatekeeper.

Before the man could ask to see his pass, Sefin already held his laminated, official, special pass in front of his face. The gatekeeper unhinged the little clip and raised the rope. Sefin moved forward and waited patiently in line.

In the front of the line was a table where Jared was signing autographs. He wore a fake smile as he pulled from a stack of 8 X 10’s, scribbled down an autograph, posed for a photo, and motioned for the next person in line to come forward.

“Thanks for support,” he said a thousand times. “Keep watching.”

Sefin watched the back of the young lady’s heads in front of him. They giggled and flipped through magazines that featured articles about Jared. One of them turned back and glanced at him for a moment. She looked at his balding head, then at his face. She smiled a little smile and neither of them acknowledged him again. He turned back to check the ever growing line. He met eyes with the young man behind him. Sefin made a polite nod and the young man returned it.

“Lots of people here today,” said Sefin.

“What’s that?” said the young man.

“Bunch of people here today.”

“Sure is.”

The young man looked on. Sefin turned back around to giggling ladies in front of him. He looked down at the CD case and ran his hand over his balding scalp.

Before long the young ladies were at the table screaming and chatting with Jared. Sefin watched Jared’s reaction. Jared seemed entertained by their enthusiasm. He posed for silly pictures and signed their books and the 8 X 10 that came with the special pass package. As the
ladies walked away, Jared’s face went blank and he motioned for someone to call the next person to the table.

“ Seems like you’re next,” came a voice behind Sefin.

Sefin turned around to face the young man. “I have to say I don’t think I can show as much pep as those girls did.”

“Next,” said the security person.

Sefin stepped towards the table tightening his grip on the CD case as he moved towards Jared. Jared took a photo from the pile in anticipation.

“Hey, Jared Jensen,” Jared said extending his hand.

“Sefin Patrick,” Sefin shook his hand. “Nice to finally meet you.”

“Sefin? That’s a unique name.”

“Yeah my parents were a unique bunch.”
“ So can you spell it for me,” Jared had his marker hovering over the photo.

“Oh you don’t have to do that.”

“I’m sorry?”

“You don’t have to waste one of your pictures on me.”

Jared looked at Sefin as if searching his face for some clue.
“ You know Sefin that the 8 X 10 comes with the pass purchase.”

“It’s OK. I’m not interested,” Sefin handed the CD that he had been carrying to Jared

“This is a gift that I think you might enjoy. It’s a CD from a local band called Bush Buck.”

“Thank you very much.”

“Yeah I figured you might like it because of some of the ways you responded to some of the interview questions on the DVD extras of the second season. I think their style might be something you enjoy.”

Jared looked at the CD and then back at Sefin.

“Would you like to get a picture?” Jared asked.

“No. I’m fine. It’s nice meeting you.”

Sefin walked away. His cheeks were red and his face felt warm. He must have thought I was crazy, Sefin thought.

As Sefin walked away, Jared placed the CD in his laptop bag.
The crowd was thick and became too much noise for Sefin. He went to the lobby area to get a soda and view the schedule of events. A tap on the shoulder almost made him spill his drink. Sefin turned around to see the young man that had stood behind him in line to see Jared.

“Do you like know someone here or something? Or get some kind of discount?”

“No, why do you ask?”

“Because I know these passes were like fifty bucks, and if you got that kind of money to throw away then I thought I might ask you if wouldn’t mind donating some money this way.”

Sefin turned around and lost the young man through the crowd.

Sefin walked several blocks from the coliseum to a small bar. He checked through his fanny pack and counted his cash as he stepped inside.

He sat at the bar, ordered three shots of whiskey, and a beer. Some sports channel spat stats at the patrons from a television just past the bar. Sefin looked around, but no one returned his gaze.

The bar tender cleaned a mug with a dirty towel while his eyes were glued to the television screen. Sefin’s lips parted and for a moment he almost asked the bar tender “who won,” but instead he just sipped his beer and peered at himself in the mirror on the wall behind the bar. What do I know about sports anyway, he thought.

The little bell, just above the door frame, jingled and broke the gaze of the bar tender.

The alcohol sank deep into Sefin’s brain. He crunched on some pretzels as his vision began to blur a little. He finished his beer and ordered another without looking up.

Someone sat down beside him, but he kept his eyes on the bottle. The bar tender moved over towards Sefin.

“You look familiar,” said the bar tender. “You famous or something?”

Before Sefin could respond, a familiar voice spoke up beside him.

“No sir, guess I just have one of those faces.”

Sefin turned to see Jared Jensen. He lifted his beer bottle to Jared and then drank the remainder of its contents.

“I know who are” Sefin whispered. “But don’t worry, I won’t tell no body.”

“Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Sefin ordered another beer. Jared looked at Sefin as if he was trying to remember something.
“You know,” Jared said “You look familiar.”

Sefin looked at Jared.

“Yeah, you’re the dude with the CD,” said Jared.

“Yeah, that’s me. Sorry about that.”

“No man, it’s cool. I actually listened to some of it.”

Sefin felt his cheeks getting warmer.

“Not too bad,” said Jared. “I thought the sound quality was pretty bad, but the music was really unique.”

“Well, I’m glad you liked it.”

Jared watched the television and chatted with someone. As Sefin drank the remainder of his beer he tried to focus on keeping his mouth shut. He jammed some pretzels in his mouth.

“I have all the seasons on DVD,” Sefin said as bits of pretzels fell from his mouth.

“Excuse me?”

“I said I have all the seasons of your show on DVD. I even have those movies you made for the Hallmark channel too.”

“That’s cool man. I appreciate it.”

“Hey it’s no problem. ‘Dark Times’ is like my favorite thing to look forward to during the week. My wife, she doesn’t like it too much, but I got my own T.V.”

“Good to know and all but listen, I just want to chill, you know, and forget about the convention stuff right now, so…”

“Oh, sure. I understand. Totally.”

Sefin put some pretzels in his mouth. His face felt like it was on fire. He kept his face down as he chewed on the pretzels.

Jared ordered drinks and moved to a table closer to the television. Sefin paid for his drinks and left.

Sefin stumbled down the road. He stopped at a bench and sat there for several minutes. He fumbled in his fanny pack and counted his cash. He stood up and flagged down a taxi cab.

Sefin stepped into the cab.

“Where to buddy?” said the cab driver.
Sefin looked back in the direction of the coliseum then down at the lanyard around his neck.

“I think I just want to go home.”