

KALIM CREAN

Caroline chapter sneak peak

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Caroline - Sneak Peak

There's a horrible smell of meat and rot in the air. It's the same one that hits me when I walk into a butcher shop. Only it's clearly been decomposing for a long time.

I can't smell fish. Thank god! Breathing in the stale, rotten air makes the back of my throat burn. It stings feeling the scent travel back my nostrils.

I can't see anything. My eyes feel strained trying to open them. Judging by the stench I don't think I want to. It's hard to even move my face, almost as if my body is in shock. What the fuck is happening to me!?

The tang of rotten flesh and blood is starting to make me nauseous. I can feel the contents of my stomach and half a glass of wine, starting to climb from my stomach to my chest.

I can feel the vomit sit and wait in my chest for a minute. Will it settle? I hope so. I'm already struggling to move. I might choke to death lying here if I puke!

I get another whiff of the rotted flesh in the air. It's coming out! I vomit up bile, wine and what looks like chunks of God knows what. I start coughing violently as it comes up.

Each cough chokes me. I feel the warm liquid stick to my face and I end up swallowing a chunk of vomit as I cough and feel

my lungs burn.

I'm lying on the floor facing up, I need to try harder to move and get up. I'm not choking to death! I force my left arm up. I feel the pain shoot right up my arm as the feeling starts coming back.

I put my palm to the floor and feel something squishy under it. As I push my body upright I cough out all the remaining vomit. I sit still for a second and puke again. This time I won't die though!

As I sit up and regain a little energy to start opening my eyes. I can't see much. It's so blurry and dark. I close one eye because I heard if you're in a dark room your eyes will adjust quicker with one eye closed.

As I slowly open them wider, I focus my vision on my surroundings. My eyes can't help but water up from the smell, the strain of trying to move my body and the realization of the situation I'm in.

I see ahead very faintly. It's dark. I close my palm into a fist and feel something pop! I smell a foul odor once the liquid pours out of my hand. I gag and stop myself from puking a third time.

It's painful trying to force my body to sit up. I feel the shooting pain all over my body getting intense. It takes a few seconds after sitting up for the pain to go away. There's no fresh air coming from anywhere. There's barely even rotten air.

My vision starts to sharpen as I look around. I look around at my dreaded surroundings and there are thick, stone block walls enclosing the area. A solid stone floor that's made of the same huge blocks.

The block walls are all perfectly built together into a cylindrical cell. It looks as though there is enough room for two people to stand and spread their arms but that is about it.

Pieces of dead animal heads line the walls of the room. I see various bear, deer, cat, dog and various farm animals heads! I know where all the nasty flesh and shit came from. Who or what did this?

There is dirt, shit and blood almost smeared along the floor and walls. In the middle of the wall opposite me there is an iron gate leading out to an empty, dark passageway. I try to stand up but it's like my legs never worked to begin with. There's no way I can pull myself over in this condition.

It might be the deliriousness or my mind playing tricks on me, but my legs almost look transparent! This has to be a dream. Nothing is making sense. I hear some dust and little pebbles fall to the floor.

I look around to see where the source of the sound is. What made that noise? I look up and notice something almost hanging in the center of the ceiling. There is something big and hairy!

If I could use my vocal cords, I would scream until my trachea ruptured. It was better with my eyes shut. I think I'm in a prison cell. I think I'm in that thing's prison cell!

I look at the cell gate and try to pull myself over through the pain. The stone floor scrapes my pyjamas as I pull myself. I can't feel my legs but I see my pyjama pants tear as the stone pulls at it. I am covering myself in so much blood and shit!

I get to the gate and try to focus on what's past the metal bars. It's just darkness. Not even dust blows through. There's no way

that gate leads to the outdoors.

It's so dark and the air is so stale that I could be underground! It's unnaturally empty outside, it's just a hallway that leads into a pitch-black void. It's almost as if there isn't anything existing but the cell and the shadows.

With all this shit around me, why do I feel grossed out rather than in danger? Is it because this is a dream? It can't be. Usually, when I slip into a lucid dream, I'm almost a god in a way. I don't feel like a god here, though! I still feel too calm for this to be real.

That thing on the roof has been too still and quiet since I've woken up. At first I thought that it was so quiet that my breath echoed back. It isn't though. It was my breath and that thing breathing back! What happened to Jordie while I was asleep? Where is he?

"You are here spiritually. I hear your thoughts. Do not worry your human companion is sleeping soundly right next to you, dear. I figured that revealing myself too soon would make you panic more, child."

That thing speaks! It has a high pitched but very raspy voice. It sounds like somebodies century old nana that's been smoking three packs a day her whole life!

"No need to fear... yet. You have a journey ahead of you, one filled with death, ruin and destruction. I see from the lack of knowledge or mobility that you still don't have a

grasp on your projecting yet. You are lucky that you came to me, dear! And not to one of the bigger-bellied gods! They would have slurped you up before you reached the first hour, dear."

What does she mean by the first hour? I open my mouth and start to speak but no sound comes out. I still seem to be unable to use my voice or even open my mouth.

The hairy thing on the ceiling starts to turn! It was the back of a head this whole time! The face comes into my view once the head fully turns. It moves across the ceiling and onto the wall opposite me. I think this might be someone's nana?

She looks like she's been locked in here for decades! Her dress is ragged and torn like it's centuries old! Her hair is white and stringy. One pull and it would break off or fall out completely! How does she still have so much of it?

"Would you speak this openly about a more powerful deity! I may be old but I do not appreciate the hostility you exude."

Why are you doing this to me? How can I not be hostile when I'm surrounded by death!?

"I am not doing anything to you, child! I am merely being intruded upon in my abode. You came to me, child. But I do see what is in your future clearly, child. I have been warned of your arrival. I am shocked to see a projection and not a body."

What do you mean warned? How did someone know I was

coming here?

“My daughter informed me that my grandchild had guests arriving soon. Three of them. You are not meant to be in here though. My daughter is probably looking for you now.”

You said you see my future. What do you mean by that?

“I am an Oracle, dear. I see the threads of Reality’s plan for you. If you consent, I will tell you your prophecy.”

Prophecy? I’m not some Greek demi-god. You are confused. Her eyes roll back until I see the whites of her eyes. The room gets colder and I actually start to feel a breeze blowing up from the hallway outside the cell.

“You are a mere guest stuck to The Hallowed Isle. The walls drip with the blood of your choice; the floor waits for your arrival. Shall you walk a path where shadows dance in pairs—yet one wears the crown of night, and the other’s tongue burns with brimstone. Or will you be blinded by the judgment that clouds your mind and make the worst mistake of your life.

One counts the dead as numbers, the other feeds on the tally. One of them will be your doom... or your deliverance. Separate or a choice will be made, and together Earth will be depraved.”

What do you mean depraved?

"Two walk at your side. Each will lead you toward the path of depravity or deliverance. You will need to open your eyes and truly see what's in front of you to make the right choice. Reality is not yet set on which decision should be made.

You must excuse me now, child. The guests are arriving soon."

I feel a weight beginning to lower my eyelids. It's like a week's worth of insomnia just caught up to me. Please I need clearer answers! This is a lot to take in.

"Ah. It looks like they've arrived. And you are starting to return to where you belong. Make the right choices, and we will see each other again."

I notice the hag slowly climbing back up the wall and then the tall ceiling. The room starts to get darker and darker. Before my eyes fully close, I hear footsteps running up the dark hallway. The feet get louder and closer as my vision narrows.

I briefly see a black sneaker coming into view. Before I can catch a glimpse of who the shoe belongs to, my eyes shut fully.

My body follows right after and I can't keep my head up anymore. I expect my head to hit the stone floor once my energy is depleted. Instead, it feels like I fall straight through it.

I can feel two hands on my shoulders pushing me back and forth. I open my eyes and I think I'm back in my bed. I see my bedside locker with the half-finished glass of red wine that I left when I was going to sleep.

Maybe that's why my dream was so real feeling. I don't ever drink red, but it was a gift from Jordie's mom and dad

to celebrate our engagement. Now it's getting thrown out after a fake "Oh, it was amazing!" text to Julie.

"Babe! You need to get up. You've been having a night terror. You're sweating like you're in the Sahara! Are you OK? I've been shaking you for like a solid seven minutes and you are burning up!"

"Yeah, I think so. It was definitely a night terror or sleep paralysis or something. I think it was the wine; it's the first time I've drunk alcohol in weeks. All I've been doing outside of stress about planning and saving money is work in the cafe."

"Well, go get some water and clean sheets. I'll strip the bed. It's already 4 a.m. and we have to open the cafe at 8am! And you need to get some sort of sleep. This is the third time this month that you've freaked out in your sleep."

He's right! I've been having a couple of vivid nightmares lately. There was one with a weird life-size doll that was obsessed with me. I got stabbed by a child while I was hiding under a bed in another. There was even a weird cyclops one!

The cyclops wasn't a scary dream. It felt more tragic than scary compared to the other ones. I don't even think I was me in that dream.

The first nightmare I had, I was just a floating consciousness. Each one I've had after the first one feels like I'm better immersed in the story. It has to be the stress of the wedding coming up!

This dream was different though! The other ones felt like I was watching a scene play out. This dream felt like I was participating. Even the nightmare with the child stabbing me, I was looking at it from across the room.

Jordie yawns and opens his eyes again, trying to stay awake to finish his thought.

"You know what, these dreams started a couple of days after the accident."

Jordie yawns again. I feel bad for freaking him out and waking him up. I'm also thankful he woke me up though. Ugh, I need a shower after that dream. I can even taste puke in my mouth.

"Maybe it's just trauma or something. We should talk about it more tomorrow when we get some proper sleep."

He's right. Morgan almost died a few weeks back! He got hit really badly after a piece of a satellite fell from space and landed on the top of his head. There was a lot of blood everywhere, but it ended up being a little cut and a concussion.

The size of the satellite was tiny after burning up and breaking apart in the atmosphere on its way down! The doctor told him that if it had been any bigger when it hit him, his head would've been smashed open on impact.

He even said the part that did strike him should've killed him! He is alive by sheer luck. It was horrifying to witness Morgan stumbling back to the group all bloody and barely able to speak.

That has to be why I'm having these nightmares! I'm probably

traumatized by the incident.