

Chapter 1: Bond for life

Carol's face slammed into the hood of the car. Her cheek squeaked against the smooth warmth of the metal. The wind was knocked out of her. There wasn't any chance to scream.

Her head throbbed. Her cheek burned with pain. She opened her eyes wide. She wasn't ready to give in. She tried with all her might to push off the car, jerking her body to break free. She was lifted off the ground, kicking and screaming, but it was useless. She was slammed down again.

Her forehead bounced twice upon impact. There was a bright flash. The lights were beginning to go out. She could feel her eyes wanting to roll back. Her strength was fleeing. All of the fight in her was gone. The battle was just about over.

Carol was frozen, paralyzed with fear. The darkness of his shadow towered over her. He was a demon getting ready to take possession of her soul. She felt the elastic of her underwear being ripped down around her thighs. He kicked at her feet, forcing her legs apart. She tried to move again, but she was too weak. His overwhelming power was too much. He had her pinned. She was beaten.

"Not like this. Please God, no," she thought.

Tears welled up. It was going to happen. She couldn't stop it.

There was a brief pause in the attack, but it was only for a moment. She tensed up, locking her eyes on a rock about the size of a basketball. She wanted that rock. If only she could hit him with it, ridding the world of this monster.

She closed her eyes, helplessly waiting for the final invasion. She dreamed of the rock. She could see it flying and crashing into his head. She still waited for him, but nothing. The overpowering force was gone. She was free.

She lay motionless in the eerie silence. The sound of the waves crashing below teamed with some birds chirping above. It brought about an odd soothing sensation. She almost didn't want to move. She could've laid there for days without a care in the world, but where did her attacker go?

She opened her eyes, darting them around in a search. She slowly rose from the hood of the car. Her sandals scratched at the gravel beneath her feet while she turned. Her heart raced through her chest. Her lungs refused to breathe. She found him on the ground. Blood was beginning to pool around his head. His once shining blue eyes were wide open, surprised, but now extinguished. The rock, she saw, now just lay a few inches from his head.

1 year earlier

“Carol!” Madelyn Thompson screamed loud enough for the neighbors to hear.

“Leave me alone!” Carol retorted, running out of her room.

“You get back here this instant and put this bra on!”

Carol made her way into the kitchen, hoping her mother wasn’t in pursuit. She whipped open the basement door, stepped down into the stairwell, but then quietly closed the door behind her. She tip toed down the stairs, stopping at the landing.

She opened the back door, letting in the bright morning sun. Carol stepped to the storm door, pressing her forehead gently against the window. She held her breath, waiting to hear her mother scream some more. She rests her hand at the knob, readying herself to make a quick escape, but there was silence. Maybe her mother had given up.

Carol settled herself, feeling the warmth of the day coming off the door. She dreaded leaving the comfort of the central air, but she was either going to face the heat of the day or the constant nagging of her mother. She slowly pushed the door a few inches open. Hot air blew into her face. She let the door close.

Too hot.

The nightmare from last night began to weigh heavily on her. She couldn’t remember the dream completely, but knew someone was trying to hurt her. Carol touched her cheek, and then rubbed it. She stared at the picnic table outside, losing herself. She couldn’t remember much of it, but there was definitely blood. She thought she might have been at the beach. Was it a dream? A premonition? It felt so real.

She felt a little flustered. The morning had been too emotional already. She backed from the door, giving herself a look over. She thought she had dressed appropriately for the sweltering day. She wore denim shorts, the kind that would show more than most girls wanted if she happened to bend over. They were from last year, but she was happy to find that they still barely fit. Her t-shirt was pink reading “lovin’ life” across the front. It barely covered her stomach, but that was okay. It allowed air to get in around her body. She looked down at her sparkling pink toes sticking out from her “life’s a beach” flip flops.

Looks good to me.

Carol could hear her mother stir in the kitchen above, probably in search for her. Carol grimaced, putting her hands to her breasts. She didn’t feel like wearing a bra on such a hot day. She hadn’t even planned on leaving the yard.

They aren’t big at all and they’re still developing. What’s the big deal?

She laid her head against the door again. The thought of college starting in the fall chased away last night’s dream. She wanted to stay in high school, not start some new life. She had trouble with the life she lived now. How could her parents expect her to fit in with these older kids when she couldn’t even fit in with kids her own age?

They want what they want. I never have a say.

In a fit of frustration, Carol grunted, pushing through the squeaky screen door. It then slapped back against the house, giving away her position. She rolled her eyes. She cringed at what was coming next.

“I’m warning you, don’t go out that door! You’ll be grounded this whole summer!” Her mother yelled from the kitchen.

Carol stopped a few feet from the house. Her mother’s voice sent chills through her spine. She knew of her mother’s open threats, but usually didn’t try to push her limits. This morning, however, she felt a little mischievous. She wanted to have some fun. She wanted feel alive, but maybe she wouldn’t start today. It was too sticky outside. Sweat began to form on her forehead already. She wiped it clean with the back of her hand.

She closed her eyes, stretching out her arms. She accepted the sun’s rays, pretending that they would give her the strength she needed to endure the day ahead of her. She took in the sounds around her. There were some kids ringing the bells on their

bikes. The neighbor's dog was barking at some invisible nuisance. There were sprinklers turning in hopes of finally getting the lawn only golf courses had. The two boys that lived behind her just came outside.

She could hear them laughing and playing, but couldn't quite make out their exact words. She knew their voices and had to grin when she heard Matthew give a hearty chuckle. She opened one eye, trying to see into the next yard, but Matthew was just a mere silhouette in the glare of the sun.

He was a cute boy, she thought, and he was only two years younger. Carol knew he adored her, but she could say she did feel the same for him. This past Valentines day he bought her roses with money he saved from his allowance. There was a card confessing his heart was hers. Carol had a feeling he wanted to be her boyfriend. She giggled, thinking it was cute how the young boy had a crush on her.

She was still watching the two silhouettes playing, having a good time when her mother interrupted her, "Carol, I told you to get back here."

Carol ignored her mother, still thinking about Matthew. He would be fifteen in a month. She was impressed with his knowledge of computers and electronics. He was quite the genius when he helped her with one of her tablets or a smart phone. His dreams came true when she asked him to help set up her new computer, teaching her about the different software and apps.

It was his love for these things that made Carol intrigued about how it all worked. It wasn't the computer part she was interested in, but how things were engineered. How did planes fly or how did motors run? It was all very interesting and a new world of learning opened up in front of her. That's how she decided to focus on engineering for her major.

Carol would be seventeen soon, just before school started again. Her intelligence was higher than grad school level. She had spent her days around older kids most of the time. After school she spent her evenings in some special college prep courses. She hardly had time to be with kids her own age. She didn't even realize how she had grown into a young woman.

It was her intelligence, though, that got in the way most of the time. She was named smartest kid in New Jersey. It all started her freshman year in high school. Just

one day, she had what they called a photographic memory and became an absolute genius. No one could explain it. Her father called it a “phenomena”. School became too easy, so they pushed her through classes, but now, life in general, began to get boring.

“Carol,” her mom repeated.

Time to go, mamma dear. See you later.

Carol pretended not to hear her mother. She walked over to the chain-link fence, gripping it with her hands. She stood idle for a moment, watching the two boys playing in the hose. She thought about the emptiness she suddenly felt inside. This had been happening to her lately. It would come and go as it pleased. At first she figured it was her age and that everyone felt empty from time to time, but now she was sure this felt different from anything she had ever heard of. It was a hollow feeling that she could never fill. She even called it “The Hollow.” It was her own personal darkness, this strange feeling she couldn’t quite understand. The one thing, however, she knew it wanted to grow.

Carol used all her strength to lift herself up and over the fence. She landed perfectly on her feet. The boys didn’t turn to look while she approached.

“Hey guys, whatcha doin?”

Tommy and Matthew Conner were still playing in the hose. Matthew, the oldest brother, turned his attention immediately to Carol. He stood tall and firm, pushing out his chest. His blue eyes shined for a moment in the sun, and then he smiled at her.

She loved his smile. His teeth shined white and his eyes were excited. Her heart skipped for a brief moment, putting a pause in her steps. She tilted her head slightly.

What is this feeling?

She blinked it away, giving a cheerful smile back. She didn’t understand the butterflies she had just felt down in her stomach. The strange feeling of something new in her body made her tense. Unsure of what to do, she began to fight back her own crush.

“Nothin. It’s just so hot already today,” Matthew said. “Want to join in?”

“Maybe later.”

Carol sat down on the bench by the picnic table, taking out a hair tie. She pulled at her long black hair, tying it up in a bun. She exposed her neck to the summer sun and

to Matthew. He watched her intently. She saw his eyes studying her. He pressed his lips together. His eyes filled with questions that only she could answer.

“What did you do to your mom today?” He asked.

Carol gave a short giggle, “I told her tu autem datum optimum”

“What does that mean?”

“You’re the best mom in Latin. She thought I was cursing at her in some foreign language. My poor mom,” Carol shook her head and sighed, “the things I put her through.”

Carol was fluent in Latin. She could speak French and Spanish too. Italian was next on her list. It drove her parents crazy to hear her speak in odd tongues.

“Why do you do it? Don’t you love her?”

Carol giggled. He was still so innocent. Not like the other guys she was around. He was still learning how things worked, but Carol had it all figured out. She was going to stay ahead of the game. She wasn’t going to be taken advantage of. She was going to call all the shots. As soon as she was eighteen, at least, she was going to get out from her parents nagging grip.

“I do, but she makes it too easy for me.”

She watched Tommy spray Matthew with the hose, appearing to try to get his big brothers attention. Matthew only put up his hand for a moment. He shot a glance over his shoulder.

Matthew turned back to Carol, “what’s it like knowing you never have to go to school again? I mean high school and not dealing with teachers and homework. That’s gotta be great?”

It was then Carol realized she would be done with College before Matthew even finished High School. She looked to the ground, suddenly feeling like she was missing out on something. She waited a moment before she answered.

“I’ll still go to school, but it will be college. Every school in the country wants me and all I have to do is pick.”

“Wow, that’s cool Carol. You’re lucky.”

She didn’t feel lucky. It felt like a burden. Then there was this hollow feeling. Everyday it felt like she knew more and craved more. Not just things she would learn in

books or from teachers, but how life moves and feels. She could sense things now. She could feel the tension coming off Matthew as they spoke. His hormone levels were high and his passion for her grew with every second.

Her own heart rate started to increase while feeling the boy's emotions. She could almost read his mind while their eyes were locked. There was a peaceful silence as they gazed at each other. A young love seemed to be brewing. She couldn't help but smile and feel a little lost.

"Carol and Matthew sitting in a tree! K-i-s-s-i-n-g..." Tommy began his chant, disturbing their moment.

Matthew blushed, and then went to go after his brother. Tommy shot water from the hose. The continuous stream of water missed its target and landed upon Carol's chest. Her pink shirt was drench, clinging to her body. It wasn't a see-through, but wrapped around her not leaving much to the imagination.

Carol froze from the chill in the water. Her eyes went wide. She stretched out her hands to her sides, shivering from the cold that ran through her chest.

Tommy threw the hose down, running inside, but Matthew; he just stared at Carol's breasts while they peeked behind her shirt. His cheeks were flushed. He seemed to stagger as he stepped slowly towards her.

Carol saw where his eyes were. She smiled, realizing that he probably has never seen a girl's boob before. She wanted him to look. It made her feel good that he was. If he wanted to, she would probably let him touch them.

Carol smiled at Matthew when she got up from the bench. She stepped towards him. Matthew swallowed hard, stepping back to keep his distance. Carol glanced down, noticing he had been aroused. Matthew gasped, putting his hands quickly over his bathing suit. Carol watched him turn, and then awkwardly run into the house. Her first instinct was to let him go. She figured he felt embarrassed and maybe he needed to settle down.

See ya later Matt. Sorry you got excited.

She then realized she was actually curious about what had happened to him. Maybe she should go and see if he was okay. She could tell him that he shouldn't be embarrassed about feeling excited over her breasts popping out of her shirt.

It's completely natural. Yeah, for his sake. I'll just make sure he's okay.

She hurried to the back door. She hesitated not sure if it was the right thing to do. She wasn't sure what state he might be in. He might want to be alone. She took a deep breath and went inside.

She stood, looking up the stairs. She knew he wouldn't have gone up that way. Her instincts told her he went down into the finished basement. It had a nice little sitting room with couches and a television. She had been over a few times to watch movies, but that had been it up until now.

"Matt?" Carol whispered, and then snuck down.

She found Matthew scared stiff. She wasn't sure of what to do or say when she saw him. He was staring at the floor with puppy eyes. She crept towards him, tilting her head, trying to see what his reaction was when he caught sight of her.

He shifted nervously in his seat. He put his hands to his eyes. His cheeks still held red and his skin was covered with goose bumps. She gently took the seat next to him holding her hands on her lap.

"It's ok Matt. I'm not mad at you."

She scooted her butt closer to him. She glanced down to see that he was still aroused. Her mind went to work, wondering what she could do with him. She suddenly felt a little dirty at the thoughts dancing around in her head, but her eyes didn't leave their target.

Stop it. Get it out of your head. We can't. Not yet.

She tried to get a look into his eyes, but his head was still buried in his hands.

"Bet you never kissed a girl, have you?"

Matthew slowly lifted his head from his hands. She had gotten his attention. He gave a peek over to her, and then shook his head like he had a nervous twitch. She could tell by the look in his eyes he was about to explode.

Easy does it. Let's take it slow. Breathe a little. This will be your first kiss too.

She had no experience in the love department. She was always caught up in her studies and never cared to try dating. Her parents wouldn't have aloud it anyway so she never bothered. But now. This instance. She wished she had some experience instead of the porno she snuck from her father's closet. She was amazed at some of the things those

women could do and the sounds they made. She wasn't sure if she could imitate those things. He probably couldn't do any of the things those men did either. She wasn't even sure she wanted to go that far just yet.

Stay focused. It's just a kiss.

Her mind and heart raced. Excitement was showing through her wet shirt. She leaned in, nose to nose. She couldn't control her breathing. It stuttered as she tried to speak.

"Doo... you... want to try it?"

He blinked. She could tell he was still excited by the way he adjusted himself. She wanted him to kiss her; to be his first kiss, maybe the first for other things too, but for now a kiss would be suffice.

Who knows? Maybe we will fall in love, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

"Really?" he said.

"Yes"

She wanted to be gentle. She needed to enjoy this moment for as long as she could. She leaned in to kiss him. Matthew tensed up. His lips tightening and his eyes were wide. Carol felt awkward so she pulled back. She huffed, feeling a little impatient. She put her hand on his bare knee. His body shivered under her hand. She could feel the goose bumps form on his leg. He took a deep breath and held it.

"Relax." She told him.

He released his breath slowly, and then nodded. Their eyes fixed on each other. Carol wanted to melt into him. She felt a tingle go through her stomach.

This is good. I like this.

She leaned in again, sliding her hand up his inner thigh. She barely got half way and only just touched his lips when his body jerked. The overwhelming feeling was too much for his young body. He moaned and it sounded like he couldn't catch his breath. It only lasted a few seconds then his body went limp.

"Matt?"

She giggled, realizing what had just happened. She had read about boys and even men having premature episodes. She nudged his leg. Matthew's body slid to the side, lifeless. She frowned, but also felt flattered.

She watched him for a while, waiting for him to move again. She wasn't sure how long it was when she realized he was sleeping. She decided not to disturb him and got up from the couch.

She smiled down at him trying to see their future together. The summer had just begun. She was sure they would have a lot of fun together. She was going to be his girlfriend, hoping that someday they would have similar experiences along the way.

Maybe they would last a little longer next time.

Carol leaned in and kissed his forehead. She touched his cheek and her heart felt warm from the touch. This was going to be her happy place. This moment. This view of him being at peace. So quiet and innocent.

“Je t’aime. My sweet boy.”

The Hollow

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