

Caleb's Children:

Tameer's Journal

“Potions [said he] have a great efficacy in confounding right and wrong, but are not able to invert the condition of human nature; I will persecute you with curses; and execrating detestation is not to be expiated by any victim. Moreover, when doomed to death I shall have expired, I will attend you as a nocturnal fury; and, a ghost, I will attack your faces with my hooked talons (for such is the power of those divinities, the Manes), and, brooding upon your restless breasts, I will deprive you of repose by terror. The mob, from village to village, assaulting you on every side with stones, shall demolish you filthy hags. Finally, the wolves and Esquiline vultures shall scatter abroad your unburied limbs. Nor shall this spectacle escape the observation of my parents, who, alas! must survive me.”¹

-Horace, 1st Century BC.

¹ Witches Mangling a Boy. Horace. 1st Century BC. <http://www.authorama.com/works-of-horace-5.html>

Prologue

“You’re right,” Tameer responds. “It took me a while to see that. The doctor said I can come home tomorrow.” He covets the corded phone. Who determines sanity anyway? Abbey was real. We had a daughter. We had a daughter. Why doesn’t anyone remember them? Why can’t I remember my daughter’s name? Tameer pretends to listen, calculating his response. “That’s right, three months, six days and nine hours— Nine hours when I leave, I mean. Well I—I—you know...” He sighs, and presses himself closer to the wall. “Yeah, promethazine— Really? — Yea, Seroquel, Lithium and Xanax.” Tameer glances over his shoulder.

Ramos sits with his knees pressed to his chest. His bulging eyes, small pupils and disheveled. Ramos’ upper lip is partially chewed off. God only knows what his life was like, or what lead him to the asylum. Whatever the case maybe, Ramos is where he belongs.

Tameer smiles. The last two months taught him not to anger men incapable of speech. “Ramos? What’s going on, buddy?”

His apron and fuzzy slippers are drenched in sweat. “Bla-Ha-heh-ha-ha!” Ramos squeals. “Ate. She ate. Face. Face. Face!” He rocks violently, then clasps his hands together. Ramos’ grin gives Tameer goosebumps.

Tameer breaks eye contact. He examines his laminated bracelet. There’s a shadow lurking in the room. “Yeah, Sabine. Thanks,” Tameer responds into the phone. He clears his throat. “So what. It’s a courtesy to me. I don’t want to tell him— Wha—What do you mean why? —Why? Because I can’t lose my jo—I’m telling you, I don’t be— Yeah, so the fu—”

“Hey,” Chester, a formidable guard, interrupts. He rolls his newspaper, waiting for an opportunity to express his dominance without repercussions. “Calm down, Mr. Odev. Tomorrow afternoon, right?” Chester smirks. “You don’t want to extend your stay.”

“Look, Sabine, I gotta go. Just be here before 9 am, please—Yeah. Ok. Ok—Thank you.” He places the rotary phone on its carriage. Tameer fingers through a bookshelf. There’s gotta be something here to pass the time. He pulls a white book with a man painted on the cover. “Forrest Gump. I can’t wait to see the movie when I get out of here,” he mutters. Tameer shuffles back to his bed: an old, worn mattress on metal frame with frayed sheets. He tries to push Abigail from his mind. The lights in his room flicker. Rotten eggs and burning rubber attack Tameer’s nostrils. His body stiffens. “Hey!” he tries to scream, but he’s paralyzed. It’s happening again. The shadows are coming.

Chapter 1: The Beginning

“Jesus, they didn’t have the courtesy to wash your shit? You got sweat stains all over the collar, T,” Sabine says, examining Tameer’s patchy beard and frizzy hair. “You look like a corpse. They been feedin’ you in there?” She smiles at him. Her dark hair is slicked back. The tropical scent of her shampoo is a welcomed change from the stench of the asylum. “I told Ash you left for Iran, in case you were wondering. With everything that’s evolved out there, he was worried. Ash’s a good friend, T.— The kind of friend you don’t lie to.”

“I know.” Tameer sighs. “I can’t let him know about this. Not right now,” he says, staring out the window. Should I mention the sleep paralysis? He glances at Sabine. We’re not even ten minutes down the road. She won’t understand. “Thanks for that, Sabine. I don’t know what I would have done if you didn’t have my back.”

“Hey, as long as you’re good, and you’re not going to fistfight with your neighbors about a wife that doesn’t ex—”

“Tha— doesn’t exist. Yeah. Sorry. Continue,” Tameer interrupts casually. I know she existed. Why would I still have her ring? I remember that day clearly... The little man... Caleb.

“Anyway, before I was so rudely interrupted, you can’t just pick fights with cats over people that don’t exist, T. I know you do mad shit with those movies and sometimes the stress gets to you, but you know sometimes you have your episodes.” Sabine sips from a tall thermos. An inscription on the rim reads Bad Motherfucker. “You like it?” She asks winking at Tameer.

“Yea, it’s pretty fly. Who made it for you?”

“Nobody. We got a premiere of Tarantino’s new flick. Sam and John were both there. They gave us these,” she says fidgeting for a gold zippo. “Zed’s dead, baby. Zed’s dead.” Sabine giggles. “You can keep the lighter. Ash got you some sour and a fat sack of kush. Hope you don’t mind, but I made myself at home in your apartment.”

“Was anything out of place?”

“Nah,” Sabine responds casually. She smirks. “Your neighbor *Kal* took care of the place. I reached out to him just like you asked. He’s cool, but I think he’s a little off.”

“It’s like that sometimes. Kal’s a cool kid. He likes to keep to himself.”

“Yeah. Most drug dealers do,” Sabine inserts. “I mean, hey, he might be cool, but it doesn’t mean you shouldn’t be a little more discerning of you allow into your life, especially if they have access to your house,” she replies. Sabine flicks her left blinker. “I could have handled more of your affairs, you know.”

“Yeah, you could have,” he responds, absently. Tameer rubs his wedding ring. How could Abigail just vanish? It was Sabine who introduced us. Why doesn’t she remember my wife? Maybe I am crazy. Maybe she was never re—no. Absolutely not. I’m not crazy. My daughter was real. I don’t need to remember her name to know that. My wife, Abigail, was real... They were both real. “That’s pretty foul,” Tameer says.

“What, me handling your affairs, T? We’re practically family, man. What’s—”

“Kal. That boy isn't a drug dealer. He was born into his money.” Tameer sighs. “It's fucked up that's the first thing comes into your mind when you see someone dark doin' well.”

“Hmmp. Ok.” Sabine shrugs. She parks in front of a high rise on 5th avenue.

“Mr. Odev! Welcome home. Please, allow me,” the valet says. Sabine hands him the keys. “Long time, no see, sir. How was Iran?”

“How do you think?” Tameer responds, making the man uneasy. He smiles. “I'm just kidding, Chad. It was alright. It was a good learning experience.”

“Delighted to hear that, sir,” the valet responds.

Tameer and Sabine walk inside. They head to the elevator. Tameer presses his floor.

“Whoa! Hold it!” A hand prevents the doors from closing. “Holy shit! As I live and breathe! Tameer, what's up? How was the trip? Bring back any barani or baklava?”

“Not this time, kid,” Tameer responds with a firm handshake and an embrace. “Good to see you, Kal. You look to be in high spirits. Everything on the up and up?” Tameer smiles. The elevator begins going up. He glances at Sabine, who hasn't stopped checking Kal out since they boarded the elevator. He nudges her. She blushes and giggles quietly.

“Yeah, you know,” Kal begins, obliviously. “I’m just doing god’s work. Changing lives and what not.” He stares into space; Sabine examines his apparel.

“That’s the hustle, ain’t it?” Sabine asks, subtly. The elevator stops at Tameer’s loft.

“Shit, forgot to put in my floor,” Kal says, nonchalantly. He is embarrassed. “Well, it wa—”

“Don’t trip, Kal. Come on in,” Tameer interrupts. “Let me fix you a drink, or some food. It’s the least I can do after... you know.” He unlocks his door. Kal nods and follows Sabine into Tameer’s home. “It’s nice to be home.” He sighs. Tameer faces Kal. “About the other day—it’s not every day I go off the rails.”

“Understandable. I mean you seemed really convinced about Abbey and Camari,” Kal says, indifferent. He shrugs. “All I know is I got hit in the face. Maybe the new movie you’re involved with is working you too hard.”

Tameer’s neck hairs perk up. How did Kal remember Camari’s name? How— “Let me take that,” Tameer says, grabbing Kal’s coat. Perhaps it was just a coincidence. Most men remember why they get punched in the face; why would Kal forget? It’s probably nothing, but why does it feel so violating? Tameer hangs Kal’s coat as Sabine heads to the kitchen.

“Drinks are in order fellas!” She calls out. “Whiskey, vodka, or some beer?” Bottles clank softly.

“Moscow mule for me,” Kal replies. He hasn’t aged a day since Tameer met him.

“Does your hair ever grow, Kal?” Tameer asks, laughing. “Have a seat. Make yourself comfortable.” He takes a deep breath and sits on his couch. “You never look different.”

“What can I say, Tameer, the grace of god keeps me focused. I get a cut every Sunday and I can’t grow facial hair.” Kal laughs. “Thanks,” he says when Sabine hands him a drink. “Smooth. Needs a little more kick, Sabine. But, not bad. Not bad.” He glances at Tameer. “I was a little concerned when I heard about your trip. With things heating up there...”

“Yea, it’s unfortunate. Reagan and Bush really messed things up out there.” Tameer and Kal discuss politics, religion and NAFTA². Several drinks later, Sabine falls asleep on the couch while the two men strike up conspiracy theories.

“You know, that flight—the one that took off in 1986...” Kal begins. He sips his mule, unfazed by the fact that it is his fourth glass. “The flight that exploded with the seven astronauts—rumor is, there’s a Global Government Alliance³. The crew didn’t actually die. The GGA, if it exists, sent them across the cosmos to find us a new planet.”

² NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement. It set the foundation for US economic collapse, and outsourcing. Official government site, with full text of the NA Free Trade Agreement: <https://www.nafta-sec-alena.org/Home/Texts-of-the-Agreement/North-American-Free-Trade-Agreement>

³ This is a pretty footnote. Inconspicuous, innocent and unassuming, in its own *Glass* box. *cough*

“Don’t start with that shit. What’s next? Nibiru’s going to collide with us at the turn of the millennium?⁴” Tameer scoffs. He chases a Xanax with a beer. “Maybe we should wear tinfoil hats to keep the government out.”

“You think it’s funny?”

“Don’t you?” Tameer asks casually.

“Well, you have a wife and daughter no one remembers. If you could believe that, you could believe this.” Kal laughs hysterically. Tameer’s intoxicated face is unamused. “Sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“It’s all good. Maybe 20 years from now, I’ll think the same thing and people will be perpetuating those bullshit conspiracies so their lives have more meaning.” The Xanax hits. Tameer sits next to Sabine. “Maybe, the little—yawn—man will... take my... life.” He nods off into his own thoughts; coherent enough to know Kal is there, and just incoherent enough to see the tall shadow man standing by the elevator. Tameer tries to talk. Nothing comes out. His vision blurs. The phantom comes into focus. It’s a man. His skin is glass with universes underneath. His pupils are unnaturally blue. “Life—the little—man...” Tameer utters faintly.

Kal grabs his coat. He looks at the shadow man then glances at Tameer, whose eyes struggle to stay open. “Caleb has plans for you, Tameer H. Odev,” Kal says. He boards the elevator. “You mentioned Aemon,” he asks, turning to the entity.

⁴ Nibiru aka Planet X details: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nibiru_cataclysm ; <http://www.crystalinks.com/nibiru.html> ;

The shadow being's incomprehensible response vibrates the loft.

“Let’s go,” Kal responds, staring at nothing.