

Conjuring The Infinite

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EXTRACT – CHAPTER 1

SETH KEVORKIAN RIP

The Funeral

The funeral of Seth Kevorkian was plodding along nicely until the solemn mood was devastated by a hideous scream.

The teenage residents of The Cottage watched with amusement as the source of the scream, a drunk, stumbled towards them with bulging eyes and mad flapping arms.

They hadn't expected *this* to happen at the funeral.

"Something's wrong with him," Lily announced, her flair for sarcasm in full flow.

Then as an afterthought she added:

"I hope it's something lethal."

Lily Myers was the youngest employee stationed at The Cottage. Despite her relative inexperience in the field of psychology, she constantly found herself being called upon by the others to enter into these sorts of situations. Nobody moved, not even Mother, except to send Lily 'the glare.' The glare was a silent command Lily knew only too well; this was her cue to do something before circumstances spiralled helplessly out of control.

There was a purposeful stride in Lily's step as she walked away from the cluster of mourners. She crossed the cemetery with ease, reaching the screaming tramp in less than twelve footsteps. By her fifth footstep, Lily realised she recognised the man.

Coryn, one of the teenage housemates from The Cottage, watched events unfolding with interest. She uttered a silent prayer that the altercation would end violently for Lily.

Perhaps the tramp could slap her across the face or give her a punt up the posterior. As long as the tramp did something...anything...to ruffle Lily's precious composure, that was fine with Coryn. She had nursed a violent dislike for the glamorous and bossy psychologist since the day Lily first arrived at The Cottage.

(Although Coryn didn't know it, her illogical dislike of Lily stemmed from bad experiences with other psychologists. It was a residue she couldn't clean from her mind.)

A whisper in Coryn's ear forced her attention away from the confrontation.

"Is she crazy?" Jack's voice said in awe. "She's actually squaring up to that dude!"

"That's because she's totally amazing." Coryn's words oozed with disdain.

The assembled teenagers and care workers watched and waited for the big bang.

Lily wasn't afraid of the noisy vagrant. She was standing in a public area with plenty of witnesses, so the man would keep his distance unless he was mentally unbalanced. As a psychologist and employee at The Cottage, Lily had been taught to handle potentially explosive situations such as this, and her training certainly came in useful when dealing with people with emotional problems. She had also been hit with a few chairs in her time, which built up a kind of resistance to intimidating behaviour.

"What's wrong with you, Sam?" Lily asked in a soothing tone of voice, incidentally the same tone of voice she used when speaking to her cat Mr. Twiddles.

The name of the man causing the noise was Sam Carrickstone. The local townsfolk called him Soldier Sam because of his dirty brown army clothes. A strange, lost soul who drifted about town vainly trying to get people to pay attention to him, Sam wore nothing but army gear despite never having served in the army in his life. His clothes hadn't been washed in some time, a fact the cool breeze did nothing to disguise.

Lily felt physically ill due to the tangy odour of sweat and curry, but she quickly controlled her disgust and studied Sam with an objective unhurried gaze. She was distinctly unimpressed with the results of her flash assessment.

Soldier Sam's brown teeth bared themselves in a pained grin. His eyes, also brown, were full of unknown fright. His trembling hands ran through his greasy brown hair over and over again. Everything about Soldier Sam was brown and unremarkable. Lily would never have noticed him skulking around the graveyard if he hadn't started his outrageous screaming fits. In her professional opinion, Sam was suffering some kind of terrible mental assault. He had clearly

suffered a mental breakdown, but he was also trying to get a message across, something that he couldn't say aloud because the words couldn't get past his screams.

"He's gone to Bournemouth," Soldier Sam finally said.

In the near distance, Coryn was straining to hear Soldier Sam's voice.

"What is he shouting?" Coryn asked the others. She couldn't understand him, because his speech was slurred. It sounded to Coryn like he was either drunk or on medication. Or both, she thought with amusement.

"He just mentioned Bournemouth," said Julee knowledgeably. Julee was one of the other residents of The Cottage and at fifteen years old was the same age as Jack.

Coryn flashed a look of mild dislike at Julee. Like Julee, she always seemed to get things right. Everything came effortlessly to Julee, and she always looked great no matter what happened; she even looked insufferably prim after brawling with the mean girls at school. Coryn, conscious of both her weight and unremarkable face, loathed Julee for many reasons, but the vital motivation for her dislike was a secret suspicion that Jack fancied Julee. Julee, however, either didn't know of Jack's interest in her or worse...she didn't care.

In the eyes of Coryn, this was the worst crime Julee could ever commit.

"Bournemouth?" Jack looked over at Julee with a bewitched smile.

"Bournemouth is hell."

Only Jack questioned Julee's rather odd explanation.

"How do you know that?" He laughed, despite himself.

"Someone told me," Julee replied, squinting at the grave in front of them. Jack, immediately aware who had told Julee about Bournemouth, said nothing more.

Regardless of the small distance between them, the group could see Soldier Sam was struggling to say something to a visibly indifferent Lily. At this point, Jack suddenly realised that he too knew the strange man standing in the near distance.

"What is wrong with you, Sam?" Lily really wanted to move this on. It was getting late and she didn't want to spend a full afternoon hanging about in a graveyard with a group of gawking teenagers.

"The eyes of the sky have opened," Soldier Sam snarled.

Lily automatically recoiled from the poison delivered in the strange words. Her head was already full of other troubles, mostly those from The Cottage, and a few from her personal life. Soldier Sam's cryptically creepy commentary was the last thing she wanted or needed to hear right now.

"Please..." Soldier Sam said pleadingly, "Seth's gone to Bournemouth!"

"I'm sure he has," Lily cooed gently, "it's probably really nice this time of year."

She couldn't think what else she could say, so she fell back on her training, eagerly agreeing with Sam's every word. Failure to do so might have resulted in more screaming and Lily didn't want another scene made at the service.

"I don't want to go." Soldier Sam's body was racked with dreadful sobbing. "He's going to come and get me and take me away."

"Take you away where?" Lily asked cautiously.

"He wants to take us all to Bournemouth!" Soldier Sam cried out.

Then the dreadful screaming started up again with a renewed intensity. Lily looked back at everybody surrounding the coffin; some seemed jittery and restless, whilst others appeared rather amused. She shrugged at them, her way of admitting defeat.

Two men, presumably the graveyard official and a co-worker, came over and hauled Sam away from Lily. The crowd from The Cottage, now satisfied they were safe from harm, quickly made their way towards her for an explanation.

The main service for Seth was over. All that remained was for everybody was to go home and remember Seth in their own personal way.

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," Coryn said bitterly as she left the graveyard.

There were seven visitors from The Cottage at the funeral. Three of them were the teenaged residents, while the other four — including Lily and Mother — came from staff.

A small coach had been provided by the local council at little expense, so seven passengers was a good small number to keep costs down further. The group headed towards the bus as soon as the funeral ended, all desperately wanting to get far away from the graveyard and further away from crazy Soldier Sam.

But Soldier Sam had plans of his own. The cluster of teenagers and Cottage staff had scarcely climbed into the modest bus when Sam suddenly appeared out of nowhere. He roared and gestured menacingly at everybody.

His hands were soaked in bright red blood. He smeared them against the windows of the coach. Then a mighty torment wracked his body and he started slamming his bloody hands against the glass with enough strength to crinkle the panes with cracks.

Lily's training hadn't prepared her for this level of insanity, so she backed away open-mouthed in horror. The others followed when they realised even the usually unflappable,

permanently unflustered Lily was frightened.

"Get the hell away from us!" Julee cried out. "We're calling the police!"

Jack, the tallest teenager at the funeral, eventually decided that enough was enough. Bolstered by the thought of gaining Julee's admiration, he jumped out of the bus and pushed Sam away with real fury. It was a savage and sudden burst of violence from a teenage boy known for his impulsive rages.

"Remember me?" Jack whispered under his breath, out of the hearing of the others.

Soldier Sam did indeed recognise Jack from an earlier encounter. As a result, Jack's intervention was enough to scare him off. Sam turned and ran away down the road, his screams quickly fading into the distance.

Jack sighed with relief. Nobody knew what had taken place between him and Soldier Sam; only Seth knew what happened that day, but he was no longer in a position to tell the others.

Instead of dwelling on the past, Jack turned his attention to the others. He carefully studied the bloody palm prints dripping on the windows of the bus.

"It isn't blood," a relieved Jack informed Mother, "it's just red paint!"

Coryn was the first to see the enormous red words on the wall of the church. She read the message but she didn't understand the meaning. Nobody did. As the bus pulled out of the church car park, the words suddenly appeared before the window of the driver's seat so every passenger had to read them just as Soldier Sam intended:

SETH KEVORKIAN HAS GONE TO BOURNEMOUTH!

This was nonsense though. Everybody on the bus knew Seth was dead, even if the painted wall scrawl said otherwise. His own grandmother had identified his body two weeks ago. He had been shot in the chest at close range by a gun nobody could find.

Seth wasn't anywhere else except deep in the ground.