

# THE KADAVERWOMAN

For some reason, They hated Her.

Sometimes, they made it a point to shout insults at Her, as She passed through the streets. Sometimes, they went so far as to threaten Her. Mothers instinctively clung to their children, and Crowds dispersed and grew hushed when She was near. They all knew who She was. Hopefully, They had seen Her only on Television. There are a few unlucky souls, though, that had been unfortunate enough to have to open their homes to Her in the middle of the night. . . .it was almost like letting Death into your home.

Sometimes, they made jokes about Her. Sometimes, they'd call Her names. They would call Her 'The Corpse', 'Cadaver-girl' or else, most disparagingly, 'The Bloodhound-Broad'. She didn't mind the nicknames, though. She didn't particularly *like* them, but people had been calling Her those things for so long that She practically answered to them. Her real name was no longer a part of Her. As far as She knew, no one remembered Her real name, anyway.

*Cadaver-girl. Corpse.* Her appearance no more suggested life than Her nicknames did. She looked every bit the living *corpse* – Her hair was now a faded, brittle-looking colour that was merely a remnant of the brilliant brown it once had been, years ago. Her complexion rivaled that of the Pallas Athena that sat in the foyer of Her apartment. She never seemed to smile – which was a pity, because She really *was* beautiful.

Every morning, She woke up at exactly 6.11, even without an alarm-clock. (She would set the alarm for 6.20, though, just in case. She knew from experience that nothing is ever certain.) Then, She would stay lying down, motionlessly for a few minutes, recounting and reliving the dreams that She had had the previous night; then, She'd spend another half-hour writing down Her dreams in great detail, in the little black journal that She kept, hidden under Her pillow.

Next, came the usual morning rituals that just about everyone follows, though She spent only a moment to brush

Her hair out – just long enough so that She didn't look *completely* ridiculous.

At eight o'clock, She would get ready to leave for work, with a small paper bag for Her lunch in one hand, and a small knapsack which held Her work things in the other.

If She didn't get sidetracked on Her walk to work (Which She often did,) She would arrive at the Police Station somewhere around 8.45, giving Her about fifteen minutes to sit on the steps, and think.

Even though She usually kept Her eyes peacefully shut when She did this, She could still feel She cold looks that people who truly knew what She did sometimes gave Her as they entered the building.

When at last it was time for Her to report for work, things weren't any better for Her; at the Police Station, *people* were nearly unavoidable. Worse; everyone knew what She was.

Maya, one of the receptionists working the phones in the lobby, was usually the only one who would acknowledge Her presence with something positive.

'Hey, C.D.,' Maya would say as She glided past. Even though Maya used Her nickname when addressing Her, She could tell it was meant to be some sort of compliment.

She would echo a pitiful 'Hey,' to Maya, and then continue on Her way.

She worked on the Third Floor of the Department, and, instead of taking the Elevator like the others, She would take the stairs. ('What a weirdo,' They would whisper, as they boarded that super-sized dumbwaiter of theirs, but years later, when they were fat and lazy, who would be whispering then?)

Finally came the thing She dreaded all morning – Her office.

The Third floor was chiefly devoted to homicide detectives, and interrogation rooms and such, and yet, She wasn't a detective. Besides; detectives were much respected in the city, much less in the Department.

No, the reason why people seemed to hate Her – the reason why people laughed at Her, and called Her names, and insulted Her is that She was a Cadaver dog.

(Or at least, that's what the *others* in Her field were called, but they were somewhere miles away being cared for by people who *appreciated* them.)

Instead of making Her work there, on Her first day, the captain emptied an old desk for Her on the third floor, with the other detectives, perhaps so She wouldn't feel so distant. Or maybe he only did it out of pity. Whatever the

reason was, She worked on the third floor of the Department, and hated every moment of it.

For one thing, the room was much too loud – telephones rang every few seconds. People shouted out orders, left and right. Suspects declared their innocence over and over, as if on the ninety-ninth time something would change.

One day, on the Sixteenth of May, the noise had become so intolerable that She had half a mind to go up to the Captain and request that She be relocated – but only *half* a mind.

On that fretfully noisy day, She decided to have Her lunch outside, right on the steps of the Police Department. Her lunch, as always, was only a simple vegetarian sandwich, and a bottle of mineral water. She took a few bites of Her sandwich, and sipped a bit of Her water, as people entered and exited the building, giving Her brief, quizzical looks as they went on their way.

After She had enough to eat, She put Her trash in the brown paper bag, closed Her eyes, and began to think . . . .  
(thinking calmed Her, you see)

Instantaneously, grotesque images of a five-year-old boy – Jimmie Sanderson – lying dead and huddled in the basement of his neighbour's house flooded Her mind.

Killed by a man who had an unhealthy attraction with him, Jimmie Sanderson lay, half covered in a pink-and-green blanket, his body barely recognizable, and reeking of decomposition.

She had been the unlucky one to find him.

Two days earlier, after Jimmie was reported missing by his Mother, Detectives Stormie Bland and Max Borrester were interviewing the surrounding residents and persons of interest. She had been asked to tag-along as well – sometimes Her 'talents' proved useful in interviews as well; She could detect a lie faster and far more accurate than any polygraph; from Her, nothing was hidden.

The other Detectives would sometimes take advantage of this, often to no avail.

The boy's killer had made the mistake of inviting Her into his home, along with the detectives – She saw his attempts to clean the blood from the floor of the living-room, and smelled the body – as strong and pungent as wild onion – almost as soon as She entered. The other detectives didn't suspect anything, though, until, when the Neighbour went to go get his 'alibi', She informed them.

'Are you sure? 100 per-cent sure?' Max had asked Her.

'Yes,' She said, Her voice barely above a whisper. She couldn't help that; it happened for some reason whenever Max spoke to Her – those seldom, few times.

'Just like a Cadaver-dog, aren't you?' Detective Bland commented, as the EMS gurneyed Jimmie's body away. Stormie grinned, and reached over to clasp hands with Max, who was staring at Jimmie solemnly. Another victim, gone. And yet, the difficult part hadn't begun; now, someone was going to have to inform Jimmie's mother, and that somebody always 'happened' to always be Her.

That evening, the black detective's car – a Sedan - drove up to Mrs. Sanderson's house. Mr. Sanderson's husband had left her almost immediately after he discovered that She was pregnant.

Detective Borrester drew a short breath, and with utmost inner strength, rang the doorbell. Seconds later, Mrs. Sanderson opened the door. Mrs. Sanderson's body looked far too old and frail for her age, but when she saw the detectives on her porch, she beamed with a sort of renewed vigour. Then, Mrs. Sanderson's eyes fell upon Her, ((I may have to make Mrs. Sanderson into Mr. Sanderson, just to keep the confusion factor down)) and her smile shattered. There was a moment of awkward silence, as Mrs. Sanderson pieced together the information before her.

'May we come in?' Detective Borrester finally asked. Mrs. Sanderson nodded.

'Of course.'

What followed next was typical; Max told her that she should sit down, and she did so. And then came the bad news.

As She told Mrs. Sanderson about her son, She began to sob at first, then regained her composure just long enough to yell for them to go. Before they went, Detective Borrester placed his business card on the table.

Though Her face never quite showed it, She mourned every single victim She discovered, especially Jimmie Sanderson.

The men She mourned the quickest, women She mourned longer – but it was children what weighed the heaviest upon Her mind, and took the longest to forget, their sweet, innocent faces, robbed of their lives right at the dawn of it. She was certain that Jimmie's memory would be with her for quite a while.

'Hey Corpse!' said a voice, hurling Her from the safety of Her thoughts back into the real world. When she opened her eyes, none other than Detectives Borrester and Bland were standing in front of her. Detective Borrester was

escorting a gruffy-looking man in handcuffs – a new suspect.

'Falling asleep on us, mutt?' said Bland, chuckling to herself. Borrester's suspect also began to laugh at this, until Max kned him sharply in the back.

'Shut up,' he told the suspect. Then, he turned to Her. He smiled, and explained: 'Little punk was trying to run away . . . actually, we were just coming to find you. I need a favour.

'What kind of favour?' she asked, softly.

'This guy doesn't seem to want to talk,' Bland interjected. 'I was thinking maybe you could help us sniff out the truth . . . that *is* what you do, isn't it?'

She flinched. Of all the people who hated her, Detective Bland was probably the most pronounced.

'So what do you say?' Said Borrester, ignoring Bland. 'Want to sit in on this one?'

She nodded, suddenly unable to speak.

'Come on,' he said, holding out his hand to help Her up. When She took it, She nearly fainted.

*[END OF PART I of III]*