



THE VERY **BAD** **DREAM**

QUICKREADS

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Valerie Monroe had never had such a bad dream in her life! Maybe it had something to do with the scary stuff she'd been studying in her criminal justice class. Or maybe she'd eaten some bad food at dinner on her Saturday night date with her boyfriend, Clay Turman.

On Sunday, at the beach with Clay, Valerie talked about the dream. "All day it's been replaying in my mind like a horror movie. And the worst part of it is that you were in it!"

Clay nibbled on his hot dog sandwich. "Forget it," he said. "I don't obsess on stuff like that."

"But, Clay—in my dream, you were carrying this burlap sack with a *body* inside!

You had a pick with you so you could bury it. I actually watched you bury a body in Cougar Canyon!” Valerie groaned.

“How do you know there was a body in the bag?” Clay asked off-handedly.

“Oh, Clay—I saw the blood! And the shape looked just like a body,” Valerie said in a shaky whisper.

“*Ewww!*” Clay laughed in a silly, teasing way.

“Come on, Clay, don’t joke about it! It isn’t funny. Why would I have had such a horrible dream?” Valerie asked.

Clay shrugged. “Who knows where dreams come from? It might have been the calamari we had at Rocky’s Fish House. Mixing squid with booze will do it every time,” he chuckled.

Clay was a tall, good-looking guy with lots of friends, many of them girls. He was considered a real hunk. That’s why Valerie felt flattered when he’d asked her out a few months ago. Since then they had been dating regularly.



After Valerie got home on Sunday, she told her roommate, Amy Faulk, about the nightmare. Amy shook her head and said, “Has to be all that gory stuff you’re learning in college. It must be seeping into your dreams.”

“But, Amy, do you think dreams like that *mean* anything?” Valerie asked. “It all seemed so *real!*”

Amy continued painting her toenails. Without looking up, she said, “I read once that dreams are usually based on stuff that already happened. But I’ve also heard that dreams sometimes tell us about the future.”

Valerie flipped on the evening news. The city council was arguing about whether or not to build a new ball park. Then the lady news anchor’s face turned grim. “Now, here’s the latest on the body that was discovered early this morning in Cougar Canyon.”

Valerie felt the room darken. She gripped the arms of her chair. “Amy!” she screamed.

“Don’t freak out,” Amy cried, rushing over to Valerie. “Can’t you see what happened? This explains everything! You got home from your date with Clay after midnight, right? You must have turned on the radio and heard them talking about the body in Cougar Canyon. Then you fell asleep and just *dreamed* it, girl!”

Valerie felt weak with relief. “Of course!” she cried. “I just incorporated poor Clay into the dream. Then I forgot that I’d heard it on the radio.”

“Look!” Amy said. “Your scream made me mess up my toenail polish. Now I have to start all over again!”

After a day or so, the name of the victim in Cougar Canyon came out. It was a 22-year-old waitress named Bonnie Lewis. She was single, living just a few blocks from the apartment Valerie and Amy shared.

The next morning Valerie looked at the dead girl’s picture in the paper. “Look, Amy. She was pretty. She sorta looks like me, doesn’t she?”

“She and her boyfriend probably had a big argument, and he lost his head and killed her,” Amy surmised.

In her criminal justice class the next day, Valerie started talking about the murder with a classmate, Brad Duncan. Brad was entering the police academy in the fall.

“Want to hear something weird?” Valerie began. Then she started telling Brad all about her strange dream.

“Wow, that *is* weird!” Brad agreed.

As Valerie glanced at the newspaper article, she noticed that Bonnie Lewis had worked at Sammy’s Pancake House. “Hey, I’ve eaten there,” Valerie said. “It’s right across from the muffler shop where my boyfriend works. I wonder if Bonnie ever waited on me when I was there.”

After class, Valerie began to brood about the bad dream again. Clay worked across the street from Sammy’s. Had he known Bonnie Lewis?

Valerie drove over to the muffler shop and saw Clay working on a pickup truck. When he

saw her come in, he looked up and grinned. “Hey, babe, what’re you doing here?”

Valerie was clutching the newspaper article about the murdered girl. “Clay, that girl they found murdered in Cougar Canyon—she worked at Sammy’s, right across the street.” Valerie held up the photo of Bonnie. “Did you ever see her over there?”

The smile disappeared from Clay’s face. He seemed annoyed. “What is this with you, Val? You still harping on that stupid dream? Look—I never saw the chick before, okay?”

Rocky Penn, another man who worked in the muffler shop, heard the conversation and walked over. He smirked and said, “I remember that girl. You should too, Clay. When you tried to hit on her, she put you down.”

Laughing as if he’d just told a good joke, Rocky went back to his work. Clay’s eyes went hard, and he glared at the other man’s back with naked hatred.



As Valerie walked back to her Escort, Clay followed her. “Hey, Valerie, I’m sorry I was kinda rude just now. But your dream is getting on my nerves. And Rocky never misses a chance to stick it to me. I’m having a really bad day.”

“Yeah, sure,” Valerie said.

Valerie stopped at a coffee shop to think. On Saturday night, she and Clay had gone to dinner and then on to a couple of nightclubs. Usually, she drank only moderately—and she *thought* she was doing that on Saturday. But by the time she’d gotten home she was wobbly on her feet! In fact, Clay had to hold her up until she got inside her apartment.

Valerie remembered dashing cold water on her face to sober up and then going to bed. Obviously, she must have heard about the dead girl while listening to the radio and then dreamed about her.

Valerie had another cup of black coffee. Every time she thought about the bad dream,

it gave her fresh chills. The scene was so realistic!

That evening, Valerie had a movie date with Clay. She didn't feel much like going, but she didn't want to stand him up, either. When Clay showed up at her apartment, he said, "I talked to the police today."

Valerie stiffened. "Really, Clay? How come?" she said.

"They're questioning all the guys who even remotely knew that Lewis woman. I guess she must have waited on me a couple times," Clay said. He cleared his throat and said, "Rocky lied, Valerie. I never hit on her. Uh—you haven't talked to the cops, have you?" he asked with obvious nervousness.

"Why should I?" Valerie asked in surprise.

"Oh, you know—to tell them that stupid dream stuff," Clay said.

Valerie shook her head. "But that reminds me, Clay. How come I seemed to get so drunk that night? I don't remember having very many drinks."

Clay looked surprised and amused. "Oh,

yeah, you were really going for those martinis, babe.” He grinned at her. “Don’t you remember *anything* about Saturday night?”

“Not much,” Valerie said. “Just that I felt really drunk when we were coming home.”

“Well, just forget about it, Val. It’s all over now,” Clay said. “Let’s go out now and enjoy the movie.”

“Sure,” Valerie said, but for some reason she had the shivers. Why did Clay seem so anxious about her memories of Saturday night?



“**A**my,” Valerie said to her roommate after she came home from the movie date, “was I really smashed when I got home Saturday night?”

Amy raised her eyebrows. “Kinda. And your smarty boyfriend was really upset.” Amy had never liked Clay Turman. She didn’t trust him.

“Amy, what if it *wasn’t* a dream?” Valerie asked in a shaky voice. “What if I was asleep