

The Death Of Matilda Brew
(Canvas Carvers Book 1)

Excerpt #1

"That day it rained," I began, almost too terrified to ask. "Did he come then? Did he see you the day you died?" Deep down, I knew I shouldn't have asked, but I couldn't help myself. Matilda stared at me, a cloud of suspicion floating between us.

"He did, but it was too late," she spoke. Her lips pressed together.

I opened my mouth to respond just as a loud series of knocks and scratches sounded right outside, in the hallway. Sounds of fingernails clawing *my own door* left me stunned. The door rattled violently! Vibrations from the walls shook Matilda's mirror, and I ran to it, as a loud howl then a guttural scream sounded in the hallway. I looked at Matilda, whose eyes were full of fear and uncertainty.

"What was *that*?" she whispered, her voice quivering. I took the mirror down quickly, and pressed it to my chest. Terrified, I leaned my head to the door and waited.

The screaming subsided. Heavy footsteps trampled close to the door, and then moved away slightly. A muffled voice spoke, but my ears couldn't make out what the voice said. The footsteps

resumed, loudly at first, then fading. At last, a door somewhere down the hallway slammed, and Matilda and I breathed out a sigh of relief.

The unsettling ruckus was over, but the unknown cause of it left me petrified. I couldn't move. Paralyzed with fear, I could scarcely breath.

How much more of this could I take? There were twists and turns at every corner, and my poor mind had been jolted all day! The strange event, I convinced myself, was just another instance of the peculiar occurrences at this absurd hotel. I would simply have to accept that.

Still, I felt there was a logical explanation for the sounds at my door. *There had to be*. No human was capable of making those terrible sounds. What exactly was concealed within the rooms of this hotel? I shuddered.

Back home, we learned that answers to any problem could be found everywhere. Nothing was a mystery and no miracles were ever witnessed. The small town boy was desperate for answers and plausible explanations - but what if there were *none*? Could I accept that some events just happened for no reason at all?

I couldn't. If I wanted to sleep that night, I knew that finding someone who could shed some light on the event would be the only way to calm my shattered nerves.

"I'm going to go find Patch. Maybe, he can tell me where those wails came from," I said, trying to appear as brave as I could. Watching Matilda as she wrapped her arms around herself with worry, I hesitated before placing the mirror back on the wall.

"This place gets stranger by the minute," she whispered, and tremor of fear consumed me. She was right. I kept reminding myself, however, that hotel was a place accepted and *even cherished* by all the people who resided in it. *There was nothing to fear within its walls*, I recited in my mind. "Go, and leave me here," Matilda spoke, interrupting my inner deliberation. Quickly, I dismissed her command.

"Impossible! I *won't* leave you. It's too dangerous!" Desperately, I tried to justify my reason for not wanting to part from her, but she rolled her eyes at me. I continued. "Did you not just hear what was outside the door?" Matilda sighed.

"They can't do *me* much harm, can they?" she replied, and my shoulders slumped. She was right, and I was once again foolishly reminded of the unfortunate situation we found ourselves in. But suppose this *thing*, this *monstrosity* was of *another world*. Could it not harm Matilda then? I shrugged off the idea. My mind was taking me to far off places, and simultaneously toying with my sanity. There *was* a logical explanation, I believed. Cautiously, I placed the mirror on the wall. I knew Matilda would be fine but I wished she was coming along, too.

"I'll be back soon. Don't do anything exciting without me!" I quipped, and Matilda crossed her arms.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about that!" she chuckled, and, with that, I left the room.

The hallway was empty. I breathed a sigh of relief, secretly glad I found myself alone on the fifth floor. Apprehensively, I made my way down the hallway, one step, then two....

It didn't take long before my eyes were drawn to the walls of the long, winding corridor.

Outstretched gashes ran along the wallpaper! Slashes ripped and split through the vertical stripes on both sides of the hallway. Those markings, those terrible gashes, had not been there before! The hacked wallpaper could have been produced by none other than the creature I heard at my door!

Lost in my own thoughts, I grazed the torn paper with trembling hands. The creature who mauled the wallpaper was vicious and wicked, so why was it kept in such a beautiful place? Why was such a beast, who clawed its way through the hotel, living among us - and not living in a cage faraway?

One step at a time, I realized I was close to the moving machine. A part of me half expected to see a ghost - or some flying monster - whiz past, creating even more havoc. I was on high alert, as I fell further into the realization that *nothing* was what it appeared at the Larouche Hotel.

Ghosts. Death predictors. Dancers. Vagrants. *Monsters*. This place was *nothing* like Howell Village.