

Sample of Chapter 1

The stories of where I have been are things that I can never speak about. The hollow place where my heart once existed is waiting for you. Erase these memories. I'm sure I'm replaceable, because why haven't you come back for me?

As I paused in my writing about storms and relationships, the mailman pulled up to the curb and placed something in my mailbox, so I set my journal down. As I rose and headed toward the door, I briefly checked the hallway mirror before proceeding outside. Reflected back are large eyes, brunette hair, and a serious expression with lines forming on my forehead. I touched the image. Who hurt you?

With a frown, I put on my dark shades and walked outside to retrieve my bills. There is a small gravel walkway leading to the tree-lined street. My mailbox is located about 30 feet at the bottom of my driveway, so it is a quick trip down the gentle slope, but I never look up. For some reason, I feel like I will fall. It has been this way for years. I'm not sure why.

Panic, terror grew inside of me. At that moment, I feared that I might get dizzy or seize up. With trepidation, my gaze stayed on the lawn and the driveway, which is covered by coarse gravel and dry leaves still leftover from last Autumn. My shoes crunch over them. It helped me feel grounded and close to the earth. For a sense of protection, my fingers tense around the metal object in my pocket, ready to pull it out at a moment's notice. What would a simple weapon do to help me from the ordeals that I face?

I told the pretend monster above me, “Perhaps, you circle me like a shark. I imagined you swimming above me, slowly nearing as if to bite. I’m transfixed, unable to move. Do I even bother to escape? I left the shallows long ago. Now I’m in the deep and at your mercy.”

Don’t look up.

Why am I so scared of what is above me, I wonder? Am I in danger? When did all of this start? Facing these questions becomes too much. I need to comfort that space inside that gets no rest, yet remains ignored, because I’m not ready to delve any deeper. There is always tomorrow.

With nothing bad happening, despite my fears, I collected my bills and headed back home, safe in my own little world, where I quickly returned to my craft. Like many artists, I collect the shadows of my life. They fuel my creativity and make it all worth it. I want to exorcize the troubles from my past. By doing so, I hope to recognize the beauty amid the scars. I held up my arms and touched the jagged white lines. Each one had a tale to tell.

I returned to my favorite spot to do some brainstorming. When I began to jot down some words about my inner turmoil, I heard a noise that caused me to freeze, so I proceeded to check it out. Maybe something fell over. I continued to walk down the hall to see. Very slowly, I moved across the creaky floor. My eyes darted in every corner, but I didn’t discover anything out of the ordinary. I’m sure it was nothing.

Relieved, I headed to my living room, a place where I can tell all my secrets too. These walls hold them in for me. With my furniture a mix of green and blue, the atmosphere

is serene, so I decide to take a break from writing. I need something light to calm me or to distract me from my worries. Mindless entertainment might work.

While settling down and scrolling for a show to watch, I saw a show about Koty Majors. That was a name I had heard over the years, as well as controversy associated with him. A middle-aged man, he appeared vulnerable and worn down by pressure in the UFO community. I knew I shouldn't trust him, but after all of these years watching him online I had a false sense that I knew him. Maybe I wanted to know him. But it would be foolish to trust him. He played mind games. People like him would destroy me. So why do I feel a connection to him? *You don't mean nothing at all to me.*

But his intense eyes captivated me. I wanted them to see me and to know that I'm telling the truth. Why did I think that he'd care or even believe me? Who else would? That last question kind of ached. I struggled with unanswered questions. I spent ten minutes watching the episode, but it didn't really grab my attention.

Maybe it was momentary insanity or a whim, but I looked him up online. After a brief search, I found a profile that seemed like his, though it could have been fake. The picture was from his younger days. I'm sure he was more gray now, though I liked the distinguished look, so I snooped some more. What could I learn about him? His posts were mostly about politics, and his opinions kind of annoyed me. We'd have nothing in common. But I had nobody else, so I only saw what I wanted to see.

Those heartfelt eyes promised sincerity, but surely he dealt with a lot of hoaxers. Any message of mine might get lost in the slush. Should I tempt fate? I already knew that answer - No. Nope. Never.

That thought talked some sense into me, but after a glass of wine, I felt lost in an ocean of uncertainty with no buoy to cling to. I strolled around my house, caught in a moment of loneliness. The small room appeared larger than usual. Will one of these Shadows come into the Light and reveal the truth?

“What do I have to lose?” I whispered, while mulling over things I might say to him.

Are aliens real? If so, can he validate the horrors that followed my bloodline? Can he make it end? Don’t you want to break me? That remained to be answered.

After nervously staring at my keyboard, I put together a brief message, wondering if I would get a response. That alone both terrified and excited me. For a moment, I daydreamed about him becoming a friend or even something more. Maybe this loneliness egged me on. I imagined us walking in my yard and even looking up at the sky; something that I haven’t been able to do in years. Why did I think that he could help me with that? After another sip of bitter wine, I didn’t care for an answer. I was ready for anything.

This is what I composed after several tries:

Subject: Interest in UFO Phenomena

Dear Koty,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Neve Wells, and I'm fascinated by the study of unidentified flying objects and extraterrestrial phenomena. A while ago, I came across your work and was truly impressed by your extensive research and insightful findings over the years.

While I must admit I'm a bit nervous about reaching out to you, my curiosity has won over. I'm particularly interested in learning more about alien contact and would love to hear your thoughts on it. If I'm to be blunt, I kind of really need some advice, but I'm not ready to say more about that right now. Reach out if you are available to talk, though I understand if you are too busy. I'm sure that you must get bombarded with messages like mine, and I'm just one of many. But I'm willing to make the attempt and will leave the ball in your court.

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your expertise with curious minds like mine. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Neve Wells

After a moment of hesitation, I hit the send button and instantly regretted it. Images of Koty receiving it played out in my mind. I imagined him making an annoyed face or chuckling while reading it, as if to belittle me. His dark, expressive eyes would label me a fool. After all, he must receive hundreds of letters. Many of them might be hoaxes. This caused a bit of panic as well as sorrow to well up. A part of me needed him to hear me out, but I kind of doubted

that. At least, I tried, I thought. I gave it a chance. I put in ear buds to drown out any worries.

“I’m sure he won’t answer,” I reassured myself, which kind of gave me a sense of relief, while also singing along with a song on the radio. “*But you. You are not allowed. You are uninvited.*”

Feeling less anxious, I went on to busy myself with chores so that I didn’t think about my rash move. That only lasted so long. To keep my mind off him, I threw in a load of laundry in my washer down in the damp basement and then checked my fridge for a snack. Not the must-have silver, my appliances were mismatched, but functional. My small kitchen had the basics, but the bright yellow walls kept my mood from souring. Unfortunately, that didn’t help the rumble in my gut. Neither did the sparse contents.

With nothing to inspire me, I plopped down on my comfy couch and ordered a pizza. A shop around the corner from my house offered delivery. But waiting for it reminded me that I also desired a response from Koty, which might be too good to be true. *Oh, well, at least food was a sure thing.* I told myself it was only polite to respond, so perhaps he would, even if a minor celebrity. Maybe he had a big ego. Most TV personalities did. Then again, he might want to feed it and would use me to do so.

With growing curiosity, I quickly checked my messages. Just in case. Wait! Several new ones came in. I got a notice about an upcoming bill payment and also an ad from Amazon. Just as my frown widened, something else caught my eye. To my surprise, there was even a reply from Koty Majors in my inbox. My mouth fell open. That name

caught me off guard. He actually answered my message! Upon seeing that, I immediately froze. Two opposing emotions battled. My blood pressure must have risen. My cheeks felt warm. Anxiety set in. Oh, no! What have I done? I opened a door and who knows where that might lead. Surely, disappointment was imminent.

You are uninvited.

Maybe I should delete it before reading it. This way, I didn't have to risk any disappointment. In hindsight, I realized that maybe I shouldn't have put myself on his radar. That could cause potential problems for me. He might do an op against me or at least play mind games. How would I even know? Okay. I'm probably being paranoid, but I opened the door to that possibility and now must face the consequences; whatever they may be. I let out a deep sigh. I might be in over my head. I'm going to drown. These thoughts needed to be halted, but how?

Jumping to my feet, I paced back and forth on the faded beige rug. Worry took over. How can I pull myself together? *Breathe, Neve, breathe*, I told myself.

No. I can't do this. I can't talk to him.

After mentally wearing myself down, I realized that I didn't even read what he had to say. Trying to dial back my nerves a bit, I sat back down on a cushion and pulled the laptop closer. The soft light from my corner lamp readied the truth. Feeling my skin redden even more, I dared to face the message. My finger hesitated to click on it and I closed my green eyes. After a deep breath, I opened them and then dared to face the message. This is what it said:

Dear Neve,

Thank you for reaching out to me. I do get a lot of messages, but your approach seems sincere and so I'd like to hear more. There have been many people in your situation and it helps to turn to someone in our Community for support. Don't worry about my passing judgment. I promise that I will keep an open mind, so feel free to share what is weighing you down. Talking is a good way to unload it.

I'm here when you are ready. From experience, I know that it isn't easy, so stay in touch and I'll see if I can be of help.

Yours Truly,
Koty

Exhaling, I thought about his words for a moment. I read them several times. Maybe my worries had been unfounded. I can be melodramatic. Besides, I sure could use a friend and his words lured me in. Biting my lip, I pondered replying. With my stomach growling, I chose to postpone the thought. Eating pizza became my priority. This connection happened so fast and I needed to process it all.

While pondering how to proceed, I waited by my large window, keeping a look-out for the delivery driver on my quiet neighborhood street. I lived on a dead-end by the rushing river, with mountains rising in the distance. My gaze rarely settled on them, though. I tend to admire the wild flowers or the nearby birds playing in the bronze birdbath. I like to think of my garden as a private paradise.

Moments later, a bored teenager in a blue and maroon uniform popped out of his Kia, carrying a pizza box, and he headed to my cottage, which was surrounded by a stone fence with an archway leading to the oak door. Though small, my white house suited me just fine. Understated, like me, it sat in the background on this quiet gravel street. I was told that some of my neighbors thought the property was vacant, because they never saw anybody. Because I hired someone to cut my grass and do general upkeep, I didn't think my old house looked too bad. Sure, it might have some peeling paint, but it was otherwise in good repair and certainly inhabited.

After greeting him, I quickly tipped the kid and took the box inside. Taking a seat at my round table for two, I took a bite of the crunchy pizza and washed it down with a soda while planning my reply. To be honest, I daydreamed a bit about it. I think I expected too much from him. I guess I was needing my empty spaces to be filled, and I imagined this UFO personality becoming interested in me. What would he find? I'm in my thirties with dark hair and piercing green eyes. Having stayed out of the sun for so long, my skin is my favorite feature and I like to think that I look well for my age. I tend to like tunics and leggings. Maybe that is the artist in me, and though I prefer black and brown, I do like to add a splash of color with my make-up or with a pretty scarf for contrast. Though simple, it represents my style.

What about him, this man named Koty? From what I can gather from his shows about UFOs, Koty is in his late fifties and an intellectual. Because he used to work for the

government, he is somewhat of a mystery. Though he liked to come off as sincere, he seemed to squint at times, as if he was trying to mask what he'd really like to say. I'm sure he was a master manipulator, but something about him still intrigued me. There was a soulful expression in his eyes that touched me. If there is anything real about him, I'd love to find it. Yes, I'm sure that I'm a fool, but I had a crush on him for quite a while. Not usually my type, he was a bit stern like me and cautious, but his neat appearance and solid composure kind of grew on me. The mystery of him lured me in and made me take notice of his complicated depths, which might mesh with mine.

Something compelled me to pull a worn journal off the bookshelf. Inside the blue cover were the chaotic ramblings of my ill mother, who claimed to have been visited by aliens. The handwriting appeared frantic with its quick and messy strokes. I tried to make sense of it all on several occasions.

In one passage, my mother wrote:

On a quiet Sunday, I was sleeping soundly. My world had been safe and sane. Then that day, it all changed. Appearing at the side of my bed arrived three pale figuresWhat did they want with me? I prayed that they weren't real, but the terror coursing through me jolted me into an awake nightmare. I couldn't scream, though I wanted to.

My favorite seafoam green sheets were pulled tight around me as I tried to make sense of this horror. I closed my eyes, hoping to erase them when I opened them again. No such luck. I stayed

frozen in fear until I blacked out. Then I later awoke, questioning the reality of it all.

I thought I might have imagined it. For years, I resisted any thought about them. But it happened again....

Late one night, I had fallen asleep on my couch on a particularly hot day. It looked like flashes of light outside my window from lightning. I usually like summer storms. But to my horror, the next flash lit up my dark room enough to realize that I wasn't alone. A being stood half-hidden between the entrance of my living room and the kitchen. My jaw dropped and I tried to scream. When nothing came out, I jumped up to run away, but my body fell down as if my muscles didn't work and I found myself sliding in its direction against my will.

After reading that, I closed the notebook. My lungs hurt for some reason. I didn't want to read anymore tonight. My nerves couldn't take it. But I still wondered. Was there any truth to her experiences, which I once dismissed? Should I have listened to her back then? Guilt weighed me down. I probably failed her. I was all she had. I think I am ready to face this now. I'm not sure why. But would I get sucked into a world that I couldn't escape, like my mother? These events broke her. I think we both wanted to forget.

The tale she told was a little hard to swallow. It spoke about unwanted visitors who would come and speak to her. With large black eyes and pale skin, they sounded like monsters. I tried to make sense of it. But that meant facing my own vague memories and that proved to be difficult. It almost made me paranoid, because I could have sworn that a man with a hat, and who was wearing a trenchcoat, took a stroll down my street, stopped and looked directly into the

window where I happened to be sitting. The attention made me glance his way. With shaved hair and robotic movements, he seemed odd. Who was he and should I be alarmed? Before I could react, he disappeared around the corner.

Wondering if Koty could help me make sense of my mother's experiences, I scanned some of the pages. I need answers! Maybe I needed him to listen for once and face this nightmare with me. In fact, he might allay my fears and tell me that it was all a delusion. I'd be okay with that. Then I could put all of this behind me, including my own cloudy experiences.

When I got the courage, I wrote back to him a couple of days later. This is what I said:

Dear Koty,

Thank you for your fast reply. I've seen you on the UFO circuit for years. For some reason, I felt like you might listen to me. If not you, I doubt there is anyone else who would take me seriously, so I'll give it a try.

I realize that you get a lot of crank messages and hoaxes, so I hope that you give me a chance to prove my sincerity. I'm not looking for attention or to get rich from my story, which is a cruel lie that is perpetuated, as most experiencers just want somebody to listen to them and to take them seriously. Instead, we too often get ridiculed or face harassment to keep us quiet. So if you read any further, keep that in mind. After all, my story isn't easy to share. In fact, I'm quite petrified. But here it goes:

Ever since I was young, I've dealt with the UFO phenomenon. And so has my mother. Yes, I admit that she was mentally ill at times. But that doesn't dismiss what happened to us. The fall-out was more a result of the stress and fear that accompanied what occurred in the recesses of our minds. Plus, not being believed. That can take a toll.

I'm enclosing a few pages of her journal as a file. Add it to your research if you wish or dismiss it. It really happened. That is all I have to say.

Thank you for your time. If you wish, I'd like your thoughts.

Sincerely,
Neve Wells

This is what I thought to myself:

I don't want to trust or fall in love with you. I admit that I had a bit of a crush at one time, though I realized that that had no place in my real life. I don't want to become deluded...like my mother. That hurts to say. It was bad enough that my own frantic dreams consumed me. I sometimes wake up with sadness welling up inside of me, because I have all of this desire that has no place to go. The bed feels too big and the covers tangled up from my restlessness.