Chapter Four

**The Meaning of Dreams**

 “HE SAID WHAT?!” Shawn had roared later that rainy day, “AND YOU GUYS WERE WHERE?!”

 “I don’t know, like I said the last eleven times you asked.” Kenny and Shawn were at the island in the kitchen; Shawn drinking a Scotch on the rocks and Kenny was having his second cup of pumpkin spice coffee. The two sat across from each other, sipping on their drinks with every pause, while Shawn had a small laptop open in front of him and Kenny scanned the *Oakland* *Tribune*.

 “You may not know where you were but you damn well remember what he said!”

 “Look, I’m just as confused as you are. I go to sleep over there, he’s in my dream and I wake up back in my bed and it’s like he never moved in. You saw the house. Empty.” Kenny got up and pulled out a prepackaged platter of vegetables out the fridge, “All I remember him saying was that I was going to get this special power from some war that’s been lasting a lifetime.”

 “The one Bush started according to Junior? Good luck with that.”

 “You don’t believe he started it?” Kenny sat back down and cracked open the platter that they both shared.

 “I believe it has been going on longer than Bush, it’s just that he fucked it up like an idiot. But don’t change the subject!” Shawn had retrieved a bottle of ranch to dip the broccoli in.

 “Actually, you did.” Kenny popped a baby carrot in his mouth as his friend cut his eyes. A small *ding* was heard from the laptop and Shawn rapidly typed.

 “Well, I don’t see much out of the ordinary on him. Andre Archer, right?”

 “Middle name Christian. Builds bridges. Loves hummingbirds for some reason.”

 Shawn typed some more.

 “He isn’t even listed as the buyer of the house across the street.”

 “Oh lord.”

 “Get this, no one has been since the last owner.”

 They each took a sip of their drink and lightly sighed. Shawn kept looking up information on his secret program he had installed himself on his own birthday last year. Kenny joked that was why he can never stay in a relationship. Till this day, the only person Shawn has not looked up is Kenny.

 “*Really*? Or is this a ploy to get something from me?”

 “Dingbat, I’m serious. I never saw the need to look you up since, come on now, I kind of know everything about you already.”

 “That’s a little scary. You know they say those closest to you are the first to murder you. Where’s your gun?”

 “Kenny, shut up.”

 They both smirked. Silence fell over them for a few moments before another *ding* broke into it. Kenny flipped towards the classified section as Shawn began talking again.

 “So, do you feel rested at least?”

 That made Kenny look up with a surprised expression.

 “Actually, I do. Well, he was right about the tea maybe he was right about saying I had bound powers. I wonder…” Kenny stretched out his hand and concentrated on Shawn’s cup with intense pressure to bring it to him using telekinesis. His friend raised an eyebrow over his laptop.

 “Stop that. You look constipated.”

 Kenny exhaled deeply and lowered his arm in defeat with the pitter pat of typing softly in the air. He returned to the newspaper as a small hummingbird buzzed by the kitchen window but before he could say anything, Shawn slammed his laptop shut with a sly expression etched on his face.

 “You want to have some fun?”

 Kenny returned the look with a questionable one.

 “Depends on your definition of fun.”

 The sly expression grew wider and he disappeared into his room.

 Moments later Shawn went barging into the corporate office of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, his badge out and Kenny at his heel. Both of them wet from the rain. He bellowed loudly and firmly so no one made a mistake about what he yelled. He demanded to see someone in charge immediately and a few people scrambled in the same direction towards the back as the other employees just remained frozen.

 A short stubby man, half bald with coke bottle glasses and a brown hair piece, waddled toward Shawn, who was still extending his badge.

 “I’m Vince, the general manager. How may I help you gentlemen?” Vince had a nasal voice that made Shawn frown each time he spoke.

 “I’m Special Agent Shawn Harris with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Division. This is Doctor Tenders with Cedars-Sinai down in Los Angeles,”

 Kenny half waved and avoided eye contact but Shawn steadily shook Vince’s hand and pocketed his badge beside his holstered gun.

 “What seems to be the problem?” Vince got a crack of worry in his question, when he broke off the shake.

 “An employee of yours has been out of the country recently and we need to examine his office for any known deadly outbreak he used in a recent murder.”

 “Deadly outbreak?! Murder? Do-do we need to evacuate?”

 “There’s no need to be alarmed, sir, but just for safety measures I would have to ask that you and your employees go down to the lobby area until we are sure nothing is contaminated.”

 “Who-who is the employee?”

 Shawn took out a small pad out his jacket pocket and flipped it open to a random spot. Kenny saw that there were small doodles of planets and stars on the page.

 “Archer, Andre C.”

 “Oh, yes-yes-yes. Come.” Vince motioned everyone to go downstairs and he led Shawn and Kenny around the corner to a tucked away dark office.

 “He hasn’t been in today or yesterday as was scheduled. No call or anything. He’s new but his reputation proceeded him from Pennsylvania. They hired him on the spot. And-”

 “Thank you, sir. Please, we need to examine the room quickly.” Shawn pushed Vince out and slammed the door. The lights automatically cut on and the office looked like no one hardly worked here. There was a black metallic desk with a cheap looking swivel chair in the middle of the room and three filing cabinets behind it. Kenny was amazed everything went off without a hitch, to which Shawn waved him away.

 “I’m an original gangster in this piece. Okay, now use your ‘*powers*’ to find something worth looking for.”

 Kenny cut his eyes and walked over to the desk.

 They began looking in drawers and cabinets but only found loose pens and scratch pieces of paper. No sign Christian even started work. The top of the desk was bare, no files in the cabinets, no office supplies in the desk and no trash in the waste basket. Kenny collapsed in the swivel chair and slowly spun around in thought.

 “None of this makes any sense, you know that right?”

 Shawn sat on top of the desk and agreed.

 “Maybe he will show up again.”

 “So I am not crazy, he does exist. But how the hell did he just disappear off the face of the earth like-” Kenny stopped dead in his thought and swivel while his eyes widen, “What if he died during that blast in the cave?”

 “What blast?”

 “We had found cover from that acid rain, remember?”

 “You never told me about a blast!”

 Kenny smacked his lips.

 “That’s how I woke up, remember??”

 “Oh,”

 “Anyways, Christian said that for me everything was real. What if the blast killed him?”

 Shawn softly slapped Kenny in the face.

 “Get a grip, if he was dead like that wouldn’t everything about him fade away?”

 “I don’t know,” Kenny frowned, “I’m just as new as you are to this. What if he’s stuck on that other plane?”

 “You guys were on a plane?”

 “No, simpleton, like a dream plane or spiritual plane. Something like that.”

 “Nerd.”

 Kenny rolled his eyes and began looking in the desk again, hoping he missed something the first few times with Shawn looking over at it. The longest drawer was completely empty and the two side drawers only housed a few stray colored pens. In complete frustration, Kenny slammed the longest drawer shut, felt a spark escape his body and the drawer cracked back open. Shawn immediately stuck his fingers in and opened it further. He saw a small string that blended in with black mesh and pulled at it.

 A small silver pendant glittered in their shocked faces; it was in the shape of a flying hummingbird. Under it was a torn parchment with the words ‘*I’m Safe. Don’t look*.’ scribbled on it.

 “I believe your man is still alive.” Shawn said in awe, “Let’s go grab a burrito since we aren’t looking anymore.”

 The chilling, rainy evening came quick as they returned home from eating Mexican food. Kenny was still laughing at the look on everyone’s face when they thought there was an actual virus. But he loved his adventures with Shawn a lot, who did a raspberry with his tongue and changed the subject to Kenny’s future which started with school. Or getting a job. A decision hasn’t been made yet.

 His older brother Malcolm was giving him an allowance directly into a military account to eat and stay well until he got on his feet but that was going to end at some point. They talked about this well into the night, in front of the fire, before Shawn retired to sleep. Kenny was scared to sleep but knew eventually he would have to give in. But not now.

 Until he debated with himself in front of the fire about living in that recurring freaky dream. He decided that he would stay up as long as he could, bought caffeine pills from the corner store, briefly thought of Christian and then downed two makings of coffee. During this energy high, he finally went through his boxes. After he undressed to his Snoopy boxers, he sat the ‘*Important’* ones on the bed and sorted through the ones marked clothes first.

 He had forgotten he had his jean jacket out in California and made a vow to wear it in the morning. Other articles of clothing got hung up lazily with the box being eventually pushed into a corner in the closet. The next set of boxes were the ‘*Misc*.’ ones. Kenny sat on the floor in a pretzel shape and fumbled through each box.

 Some had earrings, large crystals bought from a novelty shop or random baseball cards. Others he rummaged through had old ticket stubs, candle stick holders, a portable DVD player and computer games. Once he had sorted through all the boxes or hid them in the closet to scan at a future date, he hopped on the bed and began to sift through the ‘*Important’* boxes.

 There he found his social security card, birth certificate and a family portrait that was knocked a skewed in the wooden frame. After the position was fixed, Kenny stared at his family in a heavy sigh. He looked most like his mother, everyone would say. He saw it in this picture with a smiling, tall and hefty woman wrapped in a white ankle length dress and a huge feathery hat of the same material. She has her arms around his frowning younger brother, Martin, who favored their father more: short hair and thick eyebrows.

 His father never smiled as far as he can remember. He was never warm but was always strict and it showed in every picture that man took. His face was old and wrinkled with lines of years of frowning. The only time he smiled was when his sons were born according to his mother. Kenny stood between the two parents, unsure of what to do while his older brother, Malcolm in a backwards military Barret, was hugged around their father’s shoulder, laughing hysterically. He favored no one and always joked he was adopted. It was always like that for every family photo they took.

 He sat the picture on the window seal and noticed the time was almost three in the morning from the wedged digital clock. That’s when he felt the crash coming, tossed the boxes on the floor and crawled into bed. But with all the caffeine to tire his body out, Kenny didn’t dream at all that night, fell asleep thinking of his protector and slept until the late morning.

 After his morning shower and coffee, he decided to get his mind off of Christian for a while after taking one last look at the crumpled up parchment with ‘*I’m Safe. Don’t Look*.’ written on it from his jean pocket. The clouds still lingered but no rain was forecasted till later that night, so Kenny took a stroll toward Emeryville in a khaki outfit accompanied by the jean jacket. Once he arrived on Bay Street, he sat in Barnes and Noble to eat and read.

 Today’s book of choice was “*The Salmarillion*” by J.R.R. Tolkien and was accompanied by a tall green tea latte and a blueberry muffin. Hours had passed by before Kenny found a good place to stop and figure out the next part of his day. He needed to stop by Berkeley City College and sign up for late classes so that’s where he stood up to head but was startled by a familiar baritone voice calling his name.

 “Ken? Ken, is that really you?”

 Kenny turned around cautiously as his heart began to race. He was thankful for a nearly empty café and faster it beat against his chest until it was hard to breath and if his eyes were failing him, and he doubts they were, William Harrell stood a little far off towering against the fiction books section. A small smile was across his face but Kenny was stuck in shock, horrified but mystified all the same. He tried to run away but his feet had rooted to the ground at William’s voice and familiar body. He still worked out while being a personal trainer, still played football in his spare time and still found time to be stylish with muscle shirts. He always wore his chain strapped leather boots with everything he wore.

 He was still a look of dark chocolate perfection, with perfectly straight teeth and twinkling silver eyes. As he extended his hand, Kenny flinched a little, still unsure of what was going on.

 “You forgot who I am?”

 “Of-of course not. I was just, um, not expected to, um, you know, see you here.”

 “Same here. But good thing anyways, I was hoping to find you.”

 Kenny wasn’t able to compute the last words fully until William walked closer and spoke softer.

 “I’m sorry for leaving you, I know now that I was a fool. Is there any way you could forgive me? I truly do love you, Ken.” His breath was minty fresh and his aroma was over powering of Axe body spray. The ocean breeze scent.

 “Ten months,” Kenny murmured low and unsteadily, “Ten months I lived without you knowing that you were gone off with someone else. And you want me to just forgive you?”

 Kenny couldn’t catch his breath before William grabbed his hands, pulled him closer and smiled. It was like a shiver and spell washed over his entire body from being close to William again.

 “Of course I forgive you, Willie.” And he sprung into a hug, “I missed you so much.”

 “Yeah, me too.” He pushed Kenny back a little, “Where were you about to head out to before I stopped you?”

 “I was just about to head over to Berkeley to sign up for school.”

 “Let me take you.” William extended his arm that Kenny happily took. They stayed together until Kenny was finally signed up to start classes the following week and William began parting. Kenny persuading him to go to the hills and sit and watch the sun set. As soon as the sun vanished over the horizon, they had sex in the back of the black Ford Explorer.

 And every day for the next five days until that following Sunday when Shawn pounded on Kenny’s bedroom door, interrupting another sex session.

 “I’m sick of this shit! You guys can’t shut up for one fucking day without screwing?”

 Kenny swung the door open, with his boxers on inside out and backwards, and William peering from under the covers.

 “Look, just plug in your headset like I do with you.”

 “Or you can stop being a tramp for one minute and let me sleep.”

 “Hello, Shawn.” William called but Shawn ignored him and glared at Kenny.

 “I hate you a little more every minute.”

 “Talk to you later,” Kenny kissed as he locked the door behind him and crawled back into bed with William.

 “He’s still not talking to me?”

 Kenny laid against his lover’s solid broad chest.

 “You did leave me in a nasty way. I don’t think he’s as easily forgiving as I am.”

 William kissed Kenny softly.

 “I can’t tell you how sorry I am to have just left you like that.”

 “Can we stop talking about it, please? It’s over and in the past. You’re back now.”

 “Yes, I am.”

 “But why are you back?”

 William explained that when he left and moved in with the other guy, one day he came home and dude was dead. So since they both were big time into drugs and gangs, he went into hiding and there he remained until all the killers were caught. And the first thing he did was find Kenny, which wasn’t hard since all he talked about was coming back to Oakland. Kenny suppressed an uneasy feeling of disbelief that bubbled in his stomach and chose instead to hug William tighter.

 “I lived in Minnesota and they called me Bryan Baltimore.”

 “Good to meet you, Bryan.” Kenny giggled as William tickled him lightly. He missed this feeling and spending it with someone he knew and loved. When he looked into William’s silver eyes, they twinkled magically and his smile was very warming. It felt like a feeling of bliss rippled through him at the same time.

 “I missed you a lot, Willie.”

 “I know you did, Ken.” William hugged his lover tighter as well, “I never stopped thinking about you the entire time.”

 The two laid in silence and moonlight before drifting off to sleep together as William started snoring gently. That night the only dream Kenny had was one where he was in the middle of complete darkness.

 Nothing else but darkness. No sound. No light. Not even a flicker of starlight. He felt sadness, anger and loneliness so badly that reluctantly he sat down, stretched out on his back and waited for the dream to end. He began crying uncontrollably and hugging himself for comfort. Words wouldn’t escape his mouth so he just wished for it to end and end soon. The pain was too much to bear.

 Sadness overwhelmed him and just as he sniffed hard, a bright glowing blade appeared beside him, eerie whispering voices telling him to kill himself. And just when he reached for the handle of the blade, he woke up in an empty bed still glittering in the moonlight. He obliviously turned over, wiped his eyes and fell back into a dreamless sleep.

 Flowers had been placed around the room when Kenny woke up early the next morning and a small card was taped to his bathroom door with a rose underneath. It was another rainy day to which Kenny knew was going to be a crappy one but hopefully with the romantic gesture, his luck would change. The card simply read;

 *Went to take care of business. Be back before dinner. I hope you like the flowers.*

Kenny smiled and smelled the rose which was freshly picked and still had a deep natural aroma to it. It made him think of the early days when they were happy together and hoped to everything that it would repeat again. And last this time.

 Just as he was smelling the third bouquet of tiger lilies, his cell phone sang Germany’s anthem from under the bed.

 “Hey, Teddy.”

 “I thought you were coming with me to get tested or did the dick make you forget things too?”

 “Oh, you heard?” Kenny sighed as placed the rose in with the middle of a vase of white cup shaped clematis.

 “The whole East Bay heard you! Plus, Shawn hates William with a passion. Can’t keep his trap shut.”

 “I know, but anyways, I don’t remember setting a time to meet you at the clinic.” Kenny had ventured into his golden bathroom and fixing his toothbrush for use.

 “Last Friday I texted you about meeting today at the Berkeley Free Clinic to which you replied, and I have it here, a simple one word ‘*Okay’*. When are you coming?”

 “I just need to get ready and I will meet you there,” Kenny turned on the sink, “Durant and what?”

 “Close to Telegraph. Just call me when you are close.”

 A little under the hour did it take Kenny to get dressed and meet his friend in front of a school building turned miscellaneous use, painted red only on the bottom half. There was a small line that had formed with about a dozen young adults and Teddy at the front, with tight jeans and a ‘*Hilary for President*’ V-neck shirt. He was standing nervously until he saw Kenny approaching, in a black and white sweat suit with matching shoes and slouchy beanie. Teddy hugged him in a panic as the doors were unlocked and they all piled in to the receptionist who passed out clipboards and pens. Once they filled out the forms and returned them, the waiting game started. Teddy fidgeted with magazines next to him as Kenny thought happily of the last few days.

 “You know you are going to be fine,” Kenny reassured, patting Teddy’s shaking leg.

 “How can you be so sure?”

 “It’s just a feeling I have.” He smiled.

 “Theodore Mathis!” a short plump nurse crackled from a slightly ajar door to their left. Kenny pushed him up and assured him again that it was all going to be fine. And then his name was called and he got blood taken from his left arm and told to come back in a week for his results.

 Then again it wouldn’t take that long. But only two days passed before Kenny got a call to come into the office, immediately.

 It was very urgent.