

Time Speaker

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Sample Chapter (1st Ed)

Part Two, Chapter Three, Scene One

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The Year of our Founder 3010

In the city of Marakan, the country of Arana

The planet Shadow,

In orbit around the star Beta Five

Cassandra had spent three happy hours next-door helping Mr. Tyrell put the last touches into his garden. When it had gotten too dark to see, he gave her a hot chocolate with marshmallows and told her old hunting stories. Then, later than she'd intended, her empty stomach told her it was time to go home to her mother.

The feeling of danger hadn't come to her until she walked into the dark kitchen. Her mother wasn't there and it didn't look like there was any dinner waiting either. The only light came through the sitting room door, which was adjacent to the kitchen-dining room. The door was open only a crack, but through it she sensed an overwhelming danger. She stood in the dark, her eyes wide with fear and body absolutely motionless. She willed herself to have the courage to look into the sitting room and find out what was happening.

"Where is Cassie?"

Fear jumped up at her and she flinched. That was His voice—her father's voice. Its cold rage frightened her so much that suddenly it was difficult to even breathe.

"She's not here and you're not going to get her!" Her mother's voice was broken and strained.

Taking a deep breath, Cassandra looked into the sitting room, and then moved her face back into the safety of the darkness. Her light blue eyes widened as she realized what she'd just seen. Her mother was on the floor with her long blond hair held roughly in his fist and he was standing over her menacingly. He was probably twice her mother's size and a giant to Cassandra. The fear in her reached another level and she started to tremble with it. For a moment her mind was blank with terror.

"She's mine, Gwen. You'll tell me or you will die!"

Cassandra knew she had to do something. He would kill her mother if she did nothing, of that she was completely sure. But what could she do? He was much bigger than her, and stronger. There

was a clicking sound. Cassandra knew that sound, it was the sound a gun made when it was ready to shoot. She remembered hearing it once when he had been so drunk for a moment he thought she was someone else. That had been the longest minute in her life with his gun in her face and him yelling. That noise meant that her mother was just about to be shot. Taking a breath, she realized she just had to be brave. Brave for her mother.

Pushing the door wide with her arm and trying very hard not to show her fear she glared at him. “You leave my mother alone! I don’t want to come with you, I want to stay with her!”

He turned around to face her, his eyes the color of ice. Rage horribly contorted the rest of his square face. He let go of her mother’s hair and she dropped to the ground.

He pointed the gun at Cassandra. “You don’t know what you want! You’re only twelve. You’re coming back home with me.” His voice was crazy. Maybe he was drunk again.

She stood in front of him trembling and shaking her head. “No.”

“Come here, Cassie. Now!”

She took a step towards him even as she was shaking her head.

“Run, Cass! Run! Get help!” Her mother screamed from the floor.

He kicked her mother very hard and Cassandra flinched. She felt frightened and unsure. She wanted desperately to help her mother, but she knew she was physically unable.

Her mother curled up from his kick, but looked up at Cassandra, her deep blue eyes were strong and calm.

“*Run, Cassandra. Do as I say!*” Her mother’s mental voice was a cool blue in her head.

Cassandra stepped back in slight shock, they only ever talked that way if it was really important. Tears fell from her eyes. She took one last look at her mother and then turned to run for the door.

Back in the sitting room, her father roared. “No! She’s getting away you *a’kena!*”*

Running out of the side door, across her lawn and passing the kitchen and dining room windows, she focused on Mr. Tyrell’s front door. As she reached his fence there was the sound of a gunshot. She stumbled in fear at that sound and knew even though she didn’t want to that he had just killed her mother. She got to Mr. Tyrell’s front door and hit it as hard as she could. The tears were running freely down her face now and her sobbing was making her breath come out in ragged gasps. The door opened and she fell. The old man caught her and lifted her up into his arms. Faded green eyes looked at her, puzzled.

“What’s wrong Cass? You’re trembling, what’s happened?”

“He... he has a... gun!” She sobbed.

The old man’s eyes widened and he quickly closed and bolted the door.

“M... Mom... still there...” The sobbing got worse and she leaned into him for comfort. He wrapped his arms around her and rubbed her back, but it didn’t ease the horrible feeling inside her.

With her in his arms, he walked through the kitchen into his small hallway. “Cass, I need you to call the police.”

He gently set her down on a stool next to the phone. “I know you’re frightened, but I need to get my rifle out. Here.” He handed the phone to her, dialed the number and turned to the hallway cupboard. He brought out an old rifle. She could tell it was old because it had a strap on it that was faded and cracked, and areas of the dark wood handle were rubbed smooth from use.

There was a voice on the phone and she put the receiver to her ear. “Hello? What is your emergency?”

She struggled to stop her sobbing so she could speak. “He...He’s got a gun... he... he’s shot my mom...”

Cassandra flinched as another gunshot fired and there was the sound of something wooden smashing. Mr. Tyrell ran from the hallway and out of sight. “He’s here! He’ll get me!” She dropped the phone and ran for the back door. As she opened it there was another shot. Pausing a moment, she listened. Her heartbeat thudded loudly in her ears.

“Cassie, where are you? You are going to get such a beating when I find you!”

She whimpered and ran out into Mr. Tyrell’s huge garden. There were four small metal sheds in among the rows of green and she ran for the one furthest from the back door. She was sitting in the darkest corner of the shed behind a shelf before its door closed. Sitting in the darkness she desperately tried to be quiet. Her hand whipped up to her mouth to stifle her whimpering.

The back door of the house slammed and she heard some swearing.

“Cassie! Come out, right now! The longer it takes for me to find you the more it’s going to hurt!” She curled up with her arms wrapped around her legs and face buried in her knees. A shed door opened and then slammed shut.

“Cassie, get out here now.” There was nowhere to go, it was only a matter of time before he found her, but she couldn’t move through the crippling the fear and despair. Another shed door opened, there was a pause and then it slammed shut.

“Get out here! I’m not playing hide and seek with you!”

There was suddenly shouting, she was too frightened to hear any words and then there were the sounds of many gunshots. The silence that followed was deafening.

Her shed door opened, a light hit her face and she screamed with all her might.

“Hey, hey, hey, little girl, hey, it’s OK.” She took a breath and there was a man in a police uniform and bullet-proof vest standing in the doorway. “My name is Rob. You’re safe now, see, I’m with the police.”

Her bottom lip flickered in her fear as she looked at the man. Her fear was so close to making her scream again, but then his words sunk into her mind. Big safe arms reached around the shelving and lifted her up. She rested her head on his shoulder and the tears started again.

* *A'kena* is a replacement word for "bitch", which essentially translates as "a non-living thing". Suffix shift changes the gender, A'kenaan is male and A'ken is either androgen or gender neutral like "they".