

# Lenny's Dreams 5 — 'The Missile Silo'

By B. C. Bamber

Lenny arrived at a large house. He stood on an embankment looking down over it. He could see people moving around the house. It was an old people's home, which was also being used as a women's refuge. Lenny was dressed in black, and knowing why he was there, he nervously waited, getting his act together before beginning his approach. Inside was a man who was beating and abusing the women. Lenny had got there though instinct, feeling that the suffering inside this house was unbearable. He could hear the calls and cries of the people inside. Then he appeared. A large man. The owner. He spotted him. Lenny was gripped with fear as he considered what he was about to do. One of the women came out and ran to him. The owner knew who Lenny was. How powerful he was. He didn't know that he was terrified. He'd have to blag it. Pretend not to be afraid, while he sorted this mess out. This man had been trying to hide what Lenny could plainly see. The man went inside the house, and as Lenny walked towards him he came back out with a bag and disappeared, round the back through a field into trees behind the building.

The house kept changing as he walked towards it. One minute it was an old house, the next a giant missile silo, holding large ballistic missiles, painted in primary colours. Each step he took, the change occurred, from country house to silo, and back to country house, until he arrived at the front door. The women came to thank him and they were all free. He left, without Lenny having to confront the owner at all. Lenny's reputation had done the hard work for him.

When he woke he was at his parent's house he felt disoriented and not entirely sure where he was. He looked around for a sign as to where he was and slowly woke up, recognising his old bedroom, with the curtains that had been in that room for many years.

Lenny spent that morning with his father. Lenny sat right at the edge of the kitchen chair, his arms leaning on his knees, his head staring down at the floor. His father stood over him, his son obviously very unhappy; and not a great deal he could do to help him. Given the good news of Luke's imminent return from America, his father asked him why he was so down. Her new American husband had been relocated to England. Surely this was all he asked for. To be reunited with his son after six years apart? Lenny didn't answer his father straight away, but after a pause he spoke.

'That bastard isn't coming with Sarah'. He looked up at him. 'Sarah's coming home with Luke and he's staying put.' His father lent forward keenly, sensing a plot. He too had his misgivings about the man. 'He's a crook, a liar and she doesn't trust him any more than I do.'

'Lenny; I don't trust the man. That's not just because of Luke. He took her and your son away from you and then swans around as if nothing happened.'

'Why did you let him come here then? It's your house.'

'Your mother wants everyone to be friends. She cannot stand being away from Luke and...its better the devil you know I suppose.' He shrugged. 'Anyway, why are you so sure? What do you know that you haven't told us?' Another pause. Should he tell him what he had seen? No. He'll dismiss it.

'Oh, nothing like that. Just a feeling. I don't think he's a crook. I wish he was and then we'd have reason to insist that Sarah leaves him. No. Just wishful thinking.' Lenny smiled and his father looked back, a look in his eye. That's all the justice his family will do to Lenny's talents.

A look. A glint in their eye, mostly a look of worry and concern. But he did know something. His dreams, as with other dreams had told him that this man was going to be gone out of his life, her life and Luke's life, at some point in the future. He hoped that it would come true and quickly.

Sarah and Luke arrived before her husband. Something had happened. Lenny could see it in her face as soon as he laid eyes on her. She looked like she was about cry, but she didn't. They settled in to her mother's house, and started to move things round. She had not yet begun to sort through all of her mother's things and this was the perfect opportunity. But as she sorted through it became clear that some clothes were missing. Clothes which Sarah knew should have been there, worn by her mother before she got ill. Sarah had bought them for her. It was impossible for them to have gone anywhere else.

'You're frantic Sarah. Just calm down.' She was turning the house upside down. 'Perhaps she got rid of them at the last minute, before she went into hospital?'

'That's impossible. How could she have done anything? I didn't come back to England until after she died, and...' she trailed off, holding her finger in between her teeth, looking down and around her, as if the answer was on the floor of the living room. 'All of her clothes should be here.' She shrugged and sat down.

The phone rang and it was him. Lenny left the room and went into the bathroom for a while to think. They were getting closer and closer. The fact that they'd slept together last time she was in England has never been mentioned. Perhaps it was a one off. Comfort sex. It made things complicated. And what about these clothes? Perhaps this husband of hers is a cross dresser? He smiled to himself. Then he realised it wasn't funny. Sarah called for him. She was off the phone and focused again on sorting things out. The clothes issue had been resolved for now. Or at least put off for another time. The arrival of her husband was just days away and there was nothing he could do about it.

He left before it got dark, to avoid getting too close to her. It was too hard. She was married. He went home to his flat. He was agitated, pacing up and down, unable to concentrate. He finally went to bed just past midnight, and lay awake. No matter how hard he thought about Sarah and Luke, he couldn't make sense of his feelings or construct an easy way to get back with her. She didn't trust him. He lay awake until three in the morning having already got up once or twice to watch television, drink tea and smoke. This was usually enough to help him sleep. But by time four, five, then six o'clock came round he began to accept he wasn't going to sleep. But within twenty minutes of deciding he would have to stay up for the entire night he drifted off. And this is what he saw.

He was in a darkened room, with no furniture or decorations. He was in the corner, crouched on the floor. The only source of light in the room was up above him to the far right, in the corner. The light lit up the room, enough for him to see that it was made of red brick, and through the hole he could see someone adding bricks to the room, closing him in, each brick cutting out a little more light, and as the last brick went in the person shutting him in looked down into the room, blankly as if they could not see anything at all. The eyes glazed over, unable to fix on any object. The face was Sarah's. Then she was gone, as if she no idea he was in there. Strangely he never protested. He allowed it to happen.

The following day he walked up to his father's house to borrow the car again and then drove to Sarah's. When he arrived there was no-one around. They hadn't arranged anything for today, and waited in the car for a while. He peered through the window of the front room, then the kitchen.

There was no-one in sight. He waited twenty minutes and left, returning to his parents with the car, then he went home. For the rest of the day he rang her on her mobile and the home telephone but there was no reply at all. Worried he began to ring people who knew her, until eventually he began so concerned that he rang her husband in America. He answered the phone.

‘Yeah, this is Lenny, have you heard from Sarah today?’

‘Look buddy, its four a.m. in the morning, I don’t know anyone called Lenny. Are you sure you got the right number?’

‘Of course I’m sure. If you’re playing me up...’ Lenny immediately got annoyed.

‘Yeah I’m playing you up Lenny. But it is late. I haven’t heard from her.’

‘I haven’t seen her all day.’

‘Right. She doesn’t tell you everything you know.’

‘Ok. I’m sorry I bothered you.’

‘That’s ok.’ The phone went down, and he thought for a while. He checked his watch. It was nine o’clock. She was going to shut him out. That’s what the dream was saying. Why would she move back to England and then shut him out? Is it because she slept with him the last time she was here? He waited until eleven before trying one more time and she answered straight away.

‘Where have you been?’ he asked.

‘I.’ A pause. ‘I haven’t a clue. I’ve been asleep. Where’s Luke? Hang on’. Lenny could hear her walking up stairs and opening a door. Then it closed again. He was asleep. ‘What time is it?’

‘Eleven.’

‘Oh. We crashed out at nine. We stayed up late, then we went out early this morning. By the time we got back we were both exhausted.’

‘You didn’t answer my question.’ Lenny reminded her.

‘We went to look at houses. We’re not staying here.’

‘Oh, that’s the first I’ve heard.’ Lenny sat up. Were they going to move away already?

‘I’m not happy living here. I want to sell. It reminds me too much of mum.’ He listened.

‘Look, ring me tomorrow. Perhaps we can meet up. I’ll bring Luke.’

‘Yeah. Ok.’ The phone went dead, and he held it for a while, before putting it down.

They met at the entrance of a coffee shop in town and got a drink, and she told him about how she thought her husband was delaying coming over.

‘The whole affair thing again. Have you got any evidence that this is true?’ She looked down, before answering.

‘No.’ she said. Luke listened.

Lenny threw himself back against the chair, moving his coffee cup around with his hand. ‘You think he’s delaying so that he can have time with, whoever he’s seeing?’

‘Yes. I also think that he’s made up the whole transfer thing. He’s not got a job here at all.’

‘Again. Have you got proof?’ She reached into her bag and retrieved a data search from Companies House and another from the equivalent in America. ‘There’s no record of his company having opened a branch here. I checked his documentation as well. I’ve searched everything.’ She started to cry. ‘I’m being dumped.’ Lenny felt himself get angry. ‘This is how he does it. Just manipulates me,’ she paused to wipe her eyes, and looked up, to hide her embarrassment, move it from her face.

Lenny was shocked. If this was true, it was a heartless move from any perspective. No man with a conscience would do such a thing. He looked at Luke. Lenny was unsure whether he was

paying attention or not. He looked back at Sarah. They sat quietly. Lenny just didn't know what to say. He was choked up.

Days past and then weeks, and Sarah's husband didn't show up. Sarah of course became more and more convinced that she had been dumped. He didn't return her calls very quickly at all. Sometimes he took over a week to reply. He watched as she slowly faded from her normal confidence into self doubt.

Eventually Lenny rang him. Someone answered the phone; an older male. He asked for him. The man barked at him, that he was unavailable.

'There is a woman here, his wife. She's extremely upset.' Lenny explained. 'He won't answer her calls, or return her messages. Where is he?' He wasn't going to get fobbed off.

'Who are you?' the older man asked.

'A friend of Sarah's; Luke's father.' Lenny replied.

'I'm Henry's father. This really isn't a good time.'

'Not a good time! He'll have to ring her at some point.'

'I'll tell him.' The voice at the other end of the phone went suddenly softer. 'He's here, but he's busy.' Lenny could feel some presence at the other end of the phone. As if he was there trying to get his father to get rid of him.

'I'll ring back.' Lenny suggested.

'Please do.' Came the reply.

Another few weeks passed and Sarah didn't mention him once. She slowly got more cheerful and more focused on him and Luke as time passed. He stayed over once or twice a week and their relationship grew warm and relaxed for the first time in years. But something was wrong. Something Lenny had been aware of but couldn't articulate. His parents, Sarah, Luke; all of them. They stopped talking about Sarah's husband. One day he went to see his father and they had one of their heart to heart chats. He mentioned Sarah's husband to him.

'What?' his father said, craning his ear.

'Sarah. Her husband. The man she went to America for.' He looked frightened and stayed silent. Lenny quickly responded to the signs. 'Am I ill again?'

He nodded slowly, 'Yes, I think you are.'

'Right. What I just said. It made no sense.'

He shook his head 'no'.

'We'll keep this to ourselves right?'

'Yeah. I think that's best.'

Lenny went home as soon as he could, and walked into the front room to try and find the company searches Sarah had done, or a plane ticket or anything to confirm this event. Had it all been a dream? Reality doesn't just suddenly change. After a frantic search he sat himself on the couch and smiled. He would have to keep this to himself. Later when Sarah and Luke were asleep he came down to make a drink and switched on the news. He paid little attention to it, until a name came up. It was him. He lent in looking closer. He was in an orange prisoners suit, chained hand and foot. He turned it up to listen.

'Mohammed Al Kahid, aka Henry Peterson, after living in Afghanistan for the last four years, an American citizen by birth, has been captured fighting for the Taleban.' He studied his face. A face he'd seen a hundred times. He then realised that there was a photo of him, that he'd seen Sarah with, she took with her on trips. He couldn't find it. He checked an envelope stuffed with photos of Sarah and Luke and Sarah's mum. There was no record of him anywhere. Then on the

last photo, dated 1998, there he was. A passenger on a cruise liner, with a drink in his hand. Sarah was stood next to her father, mother and her friend from university and couple of American tourists and in the middle of the tourists Henry was smiling into the camera, his eyes red from the camera flash. It was enough to send anyone mad. He rushed upstairs and checked on Luke and then Sarah, not believing what was happening. Everything had ended. He checked on each photo and saw her and Luke on holiday without him. He saw himself in his father's back yard, when he had been on leave from hospital and again in a small bed-sit he'd lived in, when Sarah had visited him. Everything had changed. There was no marriage or American husband. He could hardly believe, wondering if he was just looking at photo's with Henry removed. But he saw what he saw. Henry Peterson, Al Qeida operative and traitor to his own country, being hauled off for interrogation and trial. He was grinning from ear to ear. He wished he could wake Sarah up and tell her. He'd have to wait until tomorrow.

He slept soundly, but woke up early. At breakfast, the subject was not in his head at all. It was as if the change was encroaching on him as well. As if some strange object had corroded from within him and disappeared into thin air. Like a fading dream, struggling to stay real in his mind. It could be as little as twenty-four hours before all the events had gone completely, deleted from the universe, as if they had never existed.

The past had only visited them. Passed through like the road train, throwing up dust and noise and then quickly as the dust settled, everything had returned to normal. The roaring unstoppable passage of life, changing its direction to avoid something, or to create something new. A higher force controlling it all, and in between, Lenny just happened to be able to see it pass. Perhaps Lenny wasn't supposed to see anything at all? Alone in his view he could have been witnessing an everyday event. In any case his link between these two lives had been severed and Lenny's life returned to him in tact. No harm done.