

## FELLHAVEN PREVIEW: BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

ROUGH DRAFT

In all the times I imagined my own murder, not once did I predict that the man standing over me would look so panicked about it. Or that he'd be a teenager. Or that he'd be so bloody gorgeous.

But here we are.

I know, I know. Those statements raise some questions. The first one, I hope, being *'Holy crap, Chels, are you okay?'* The answer to that, of course, being *'Nope, I am definitely dying. Please call an ambulance and all of the police.'*

The second question, I guess, is probably *'How many times have you imagined your own murder? Seems a bit weird. Is it some kind of fetish?'* And to that, I say, *'I'm a sixteen-year-old who listens to true crime podcasts most nights before bed, so... a lot.'* I don't think it's a fetish, though. I mean, it's not like I get off on the thought of being murdered. It's not even fun. I guess I can admit now that a part of me considered it training for the real thing. So that if a man ever did come at me with murder in his eyes, I'd be ready for it. I'd react. I'd survive.

I let out a breath of laughter, which sounds sort of like a moan.

Did I mention that dying hurts?

Because holy smegging shirtballs does it sting.

*'Shh!'* My murderer hisses. Which is pretty bloody rude, all things considering. He seems to realise this, though, because he adds, *'Sorry. I know you're having a rough night, but they're still chasing us and it's going to be much easier to get away if you don't cackle like a mad witch.'*

Okay, now *I* have some questions.

Namely, who the smeg are *they*?

And why should I be doing him any favours when I'm going to die either way?

The world sways. I realise with a start that we're no longer in the park I *thought* we were going to make out in, but running through town. I'm hanging over his shoulder, body jostling hard with every step he takes.

When did *that* happen? Did I pass out?

I don't know why I sound surprised. He did rip my neck open.

Geez, I really thought I'd have more profound thoughts than this when I was dying.

I haven't even thought about my parents yet.

Or my best friend, who probably thinks I'm still coming back to the party.

I think of her meeting my eyes across Leena Javed's sitting room as I made for the front door hand in hand with the hot guy from the next town over, the way she held up both thumbs and mouthed *'Get it!'* with a giant grin.

Oh, great. Now I'm dying *and* crying.

Which means I'm also sniffing and choking, because I don't have the strength to move my arms and wipe my face.

'Shh, shh, shh,' my murderer says again, though he sounds less arsey about it this time. 'It's okay. You're okay. You'll be okay. I think.'

Comforting words, guy. Thanks for that.

The ground beneath us moves faster than it should. This twiggy kid with the angel face can really run. At least my blood will lead the police dogs to my body. I can't see it fall, but with a neck wound there must be plenty of it. My parents will have someone to bury. They'll be spared decades of wondering.

'Nearly there,' my murderer says in a tone that seems like it's supposed to be comforting, even though everyone knows that the second location the murderer takes you to is where all the torturing happens. 'I think we lost them.'

'Bully for you,' I mutter through a mouth full of blood. I don't think he hears me. I don't think the words even form.

He stops suddenly. I hear footsteps. The jangle of keys. Someone's coming!

I kick my legs and throw my head back in a scream. 'Help me! *Help me!*'

But my legs don't move and the only sound that leaves my lips is a long, soft rasp of air. The footsteps move within three feet of us and don't even falter. Then they're moving away.

And then they're gone.

My murderer starts moving again. Slower this time, into a well-lit area. I hear a key scrape in a lock. A door opens, and then closes. I see crappy beige carpet. Crappy white tiles. Hear the crinkling of plastic. And then I'm tossed onto bed covered in what I guess is one of those nasty old shower curtains.

My murderer appears over me. His shoulder-length blonde curls are matted with my blood. The lower half of his face is, too. How the smeg did that happen? Was he *eating* me?

'I'm so, so sorry about this,' he says, brown eyes flared wide. There's the panic again. 'But it's going to be okay. I promise. Just... stay there.'

I let my head fall to the side, watching him as he scrambles to pick up the receiver of an old, corded phone and punches the buttons.

I don't understand what's happening. I don't try. A hot, tight pain like nothing I've ever felt before has taken hold of my chest. I think my heart's stopping. The end must be close.

'It's Cad Thomas,' my murderer says urgently as someone picks up the line. 'I'm at the Easy Inn Express in Coventry. I've accidentally turned someone. Yeah, I know, I know, I know. But I need help. Like, right effing now. Please. She's freaking out and I'm freaking out and I don't know what to say to her.'

The devil grips my heart in both hands and squeezes. Or at least, that's what it feels like. I gasp, but no air comes. Only blood. Only fire.

'Chelsea?' My murderer is back at my side. He touches my cheek. His canine teeth look so sharp at this angle. He tilts my head so that I'm looking into his pale eyes. 'Chelsea, look at me. I know it hurts like hell, but it's not the end, okay? It's not the end.'

Dad told me not to kiss any boys who didn't deserve me.

Mum told me not to leave the party until she came to pick me up.

My favourite podcast told me not to get murdered.

I wish I'd listened.