

On The Catwalk

by Chris Rose

I can't believe I'm here. Only a few hours ago, I was walking down the catwalk, feeling the flashes from the cameras and the eyes of the people watching me, keeping cool, doing my stuff...and now I'm here. I'm in jail.

My name is Carrie Brown. I was a famous model. Now I'm a famous criminal. I'm going to tell you the story of how I got here, and I'm going to tell you why I'm innocent. But please, give me a bit of time. Right now, I'm scared. And cold.

This all seems like a terrible nightmare. I'm sure that I'm going to wake up in a minute and find myself at home in my nice white bed. I've waited a long time now, though, and I still haven't woken up. I'm only eighteen years old, scared, cold, and in jail.

It's a long story, so maybe it's best if I start from the beginning. I was never very good at school. I wasn't stupid, I just wasn't interested in any of the subjects, and I didn't like the teachers. I didn't have many friends. I think the others were jealous of me because I was always taller and more beautiful. My best friend then was my mum, and she still is. She was always close to me, and she always helped me. The only other person who really helped me was Helga Olin. And now Helga's dead.

When I was sixteen, I went on holiday to France with my mum. She had lots of friends there, and we went nearly every summer. I used to lie on the beach all day in Cannes or Nice, watching all the rich and beautiful people. In the evenings we went to elegant parties in the big houses on the Riviera, or sometimes on board yachts. It was at one of these parties that I met Max for the first time.

At that time, Max was only a photographer. He took fashion photographs for lots of European magazines. I saw him talking to Mum. He was tall and elegant, but had a relaxed look. He was wearing an open-necked shirt without a tie, and he hadn't had a shave.

"Carrie, this is Max," Mum introduced him to me. "He's a photographer. He says he wants to take some photos of you. He thinks you could be a model."

Of course, at the time I was delighted. Now I realise that meeting Max was probably the biggest mistake I ever made.

Max took some pictures of me wearing casual clothes on the beach at St. Juan-les-Pins and sold them to a French fashion magazine. A few days later, a chain of Italian shops asked me to do a 'shoot' for them. I remember at the time I didn't even know what a 'shoot' was.

"It's just the word they use to mean a collection of photos!" explained Max. "Don't worry, I'm not going to shoot you!"

It all happened so quickly. It was only two years ago, but it seems like a lifetime. When I think of all the things that have happened in the last two years. I remember doing the shoot for the Italians as if it was yesterday. We went to Rome and we took pictures around the Trevi Fountain and in Piazza di Spagna. It was so romantic. That evening, we went to eat in a restaurant and Max offered to be my manager.

"A manager!" I said. "I don't need a manager. I'm a person, not a business!"

"Listen," replied Max. "You are going to be very famous, and you need somebody to take care of your money for you. You shouldn't worry about money when you're still so young. You should just have a good time. Enjoy yourself while you can!"

Because I was still too young, Mum signed the contract for me. Max became my manager. I think Max was a really good manager because after I had signed the contract, everything exploded. I was travelling all the time. In one week I went from Paris to New York to Tokyo and then back to Paris. I never saw our house – I lived in hotels. We always went to eat in restaurants, but I couldn't eat what I wanted. When Max and Mum ate dim sum, pasta, sushi or steak, I just had some salad and a bottle of mineral water.

I was photographed all the time. At the beginning I did pictures for magazines. All types of clothes: from swimming costumes to expensive silk evening gowns to jeans. I think the high point was when I was on the cover of *Vogue*. They took a picture of me wearing a great big diamond necklace and earrings, and holding a beautiful grey cat. It was a fantastic photo. Mum put the cover of the magazine in a frame and put it on the wall at home. I don't know now if I'll ever see it again.

It was after the *Vogue* front cover that I started to get offers from the really big names. Gucci, Dior, Armani and Versace all asked me to model their new spring, summer, autumn or winter collections. The shows were frightening at the beginning. Then I met Helga – Max introduced me to her. She was already a famous model and a good friend of Max. Helga was probably my only friend in the world of modelling. She was a bit older than me, and had a lot more experience. She helped me when I was nervous or frightened before one of the big catwalk shows.

Even though the shows were scary, I felt excited when I walked out from behind a curtain onto the long catwalk. I walked along the catwalk and felt everybody's eyes looking at me. I heard their voices talking about me as I turned around and walked back up the catwalk. I felt the flashing lights of their cameras all around me. I remember that I wore sunglasses all the time, because there were always the lights of the cameras flashing in my eyes.

To tell you the truth, I don't know if I was happy or not. Everything seemed to happen too quickly for me to enjoy it. And then there was the other problem. Drugs. There, I've said it. A lot of people say there are no drugs in the world of modelling, but I told you I was going to tell the truth. And that's the truth. It's sad, but it's true – a lot of the other girls in my profession have taken or still take drugs. Models have to stay awake for twenty-four hours a day sometimes – photo shoots, catwalk shows, interviews, travel. Some of the girls take drugs to help them feel happy - or just to stay awake! It's a real problem in modelling. I have never taken any drugs. I don't even smoke or drink alcohol. I look after my body and my looks very carefully. This is the truth – but now the police don't believe me.

Unfortunately, Helga had a problem with drugs. We were in New York to do the show for the new Armando Farucci collection. Helga had just flown in from Berlin. She looked a bit tired but I thought she was OK. She gave me and Max a kiss and said "Hi!" to us both.

Everything went really well. It was quite a small show, and there were only four models, including Helga and myself. After the show finished, the other girls said they were going to a party and asked us to go with them. Helga said thanks, but no, she was feeling a bit tired. I decided to stay with her. I went to call my mum and Max, and left Helga in the dressing room.

I was only out of the room for a few minutes. When I came back, Helga was lying in a chair with her eyes closed. For a moment, I thought she was asleep, but only for a moment. She felt cold when I touched her. I touched her wrist and there was no pulse. I don't really remember what happened next. I remember screaming. I remember crying. I remember that an ambulance arrived, but that it was too late.

Yes, it certainly was a terrible shock when I found Helga Olin's body. And it was an even bigger shock when I found myself being arrested for her murder. Two policemen came to our hotel room. They said to my mum that they just wanted to ask a few questions.

"OK, Miss Logan, unfortunately there are a few details about Miss Olin's death that aren't clear," said the first policeman. "It seems that Miss Olin died of a drug overdose," continued the second one, "but no drugs of any type were found on her person, or in her belongings. There was no trace of any type of drug in the dressing room where you found her body." "Miss Logan, we want you to tell us the truth," said the first policeman. "Did you ever see Helga Olin taking drugs of any kind?"

"No, I didn't." It was the truth. I knew that Helga sometimes used drugs, but I had never seen her doing it.

"Miss Logan, I'm going to ask you another serious question now. I want you to be honest with us. Have you ever taken drugs of any kind?"

"No, I have not," I replied. Again, it was the truth.

"Well," continued the policeman, "would you please explain to us why we found over two hundred grams of pure cocaine in the pocket of the dress you were wearing this evening?"

Of course, I couldn't answer. The policeman said that they needed to ask some more questions, and that I had to go to the police station with them. When we arrived at the police station, I was formally charged with 'supplying drugs' and 'involuntary homicide' – that means they thought I had given or sold the drugs to Helga, and that she died when she took them. My mother called a lawyer and told me not to say anything. She also tried to phone Max, but Max had disappeared.

Now it's night outside. I can see the sky getting dark. I'm still cold and I'm still scared. I can't sleep. But I've been thinking. I've been thinking a lot. Even though it's dark outside, some things in my head are now clear. Very clear.

Max has disappeared. Max was a good friend of Helga. Why has Max disappeared at this moment? It's not a good moment to disappear. I don't think that Max killed Helga. But I think that he gave her the drugs which killed her. My problem now is that I must prove it. There will be a trial. It will be long and difficult and frightening. Maybe I'll go to prison. Sooner or later, Max is going to pay for this.

It's morning now. A policeman has come to take me out of the jail cell. We are going to the court. As we walk out of the police station, hundreds of cameras are flashing, all taking pictures of me. It's just like being on the catwalk again.

THE END