

CHAPTER 1

The street light cast an eerie glow as Lacy's heels echoed through the empty streets. She wrapped her arms around her thin frame trying to control the shivers. It had been three years of hell working at the 50's diner. Bikers and truckers were their main customers and from Lacy's experience they were the dredges of society. She gently rubbed her bruised ass and grimaced.

A loud clatter in a nearby alley caused Lacy to jump and her heels slipped in a puddle. Her arms flailed as her body began to slide towards the towering lamp post. As her arm and the post made contact she cursed, "I can't wait till I have enough money for a car."

A large park loomed ahead and she braced herself for the worst part of the journey. Orange and brown leaves lay scattered along the path and crunched as she entered. Skeleton arms reached down trying to scrape the back of her neck. Lacy swung her head back and forth trying to walk calmly dodging the lowest hanging branches. The town really needed to trim these; it was dangerous when someone was there during dark. The branches seemed to blend into the night until some unsuspecting victim wandered in at their own peril.

The noise reverberating around Lacy didn't instill any courage into already shivering body. It seemed like ages before Lacy stepped into the street and sighed in relief. Only a few more blocks and she would reach the safety of her house. Pumpkins and skeletons peered down at her from houses and trees as she ran by. Once in a while a motion sensor would activate and an ear piercing scream scared the crap out of her. Halloween was the worst holiday in Lacy's opinion and the sooner it was over the better.

Her earliest memories of Halloween were of Jack her oldest brother stealing her candy and trying to scare her. If she woke up with nightmares he just laughed and celebrated attaining his goal, tormenting his little sister. For most of her childhood Lacy's relationship with Jack was marred from those experiences. It was just lately that they had started to communicate and become family again.

Her roommates were the ones that loved to hand out candy to the excited children. She had to admit some of the kids brought a smile, when Lacy ventured into the living room to watch. Lacy felt her muscles start to loosen as a few other people wandered into her view. It was usually safer in numbers.

Lacy had made a deal with her roommates, decorations were allowed outside but nothing could touch inside. She knew it was a ridiculous fear but nothing could stop it as the smothering feeling overcame her as she stepped through the hanging spider webs. Lacy was grateful the girls had shown

some restraint. There were no gruesome or horror objects obstructing her path to the door. Their yard was pretty tame compared to some neighbours.

Music could be heard through the door and she laughed when Ariel's voice belted out the words.

"This is new." Lacy said bending down to pick up a striped box. She gave it a little shake hearing something hit the sides. There was no card to indicate who the receiver was. Lacy balanced the box while trying to reach into her pocket for keys. She squeaked as the box tipped over and plummeted to the ground with a thump.

"Damn. Hopefully it wasn't breakable. Hey Girls!" Lacy tried yelling over the music. Ariel and Samantha, Sam for short were dancing and singing in the living room. All three girls had grown up together and agreed living together was the best outcome of their friendship. Lacy couldn't help laughing as she watched.

"Is anyone expecting a package?" she asked holding up the box.

Ariel reached over and turned down the volume shaking her head. "Where was it?" she asked.

"On the porch."

"Well open it!" Sam said excitedly.

"Are you sure?" Lacy said eyeing the box suspiciously. "Who could this be from?"

The girls crowded around Lacy talking all at once.

"Fine, fine." Lacy said pushing past them carrying the box into the kitchen and setting it on the counter. She reached into a drawer pulling out a pair of scissors and cut the tape. As Lacy wiggled the lid up a smell wafted towards them.

"Oh gross, what is that?" Ariel demanded.

Lacy scrunched her nose as the lid came free and they all peered in. She screamed and backed up holding a hand over her heart. A dead mouse, it better be dead, stared out at them.

"Well look at that." Sam said with a giggle.

"It's not funny!" Lacy screeched.

The girls tried to hold in their grins.

"One of the guys was probably just trying to scare us. Don't let them know it worked." Ariel said.

"That was real cruel I'm going to my room." Lacy stomped out of the kitchen. This was turning out to be just like her childhood, no wonder she hated Halloween.

CHAPTER 2

Lacy tossed and turned as she tried to sleep. A scraping on her window made her jump out of bed. *What the hell could that be?* Lacy thought as she slowly pulled the curtain back just enough to peek through. It was pitch black and the only thing she could see was shadows. A sharp finger shot out of the dark and Lacy squealed dropping the curtain. She looked back out and groaned in disgust, it was a tree branch. She would be calling tomorrow to get that trimmed.

Lacy climbed back into bed pulling her blanket up over her head. She really wished every little thing didn't make her jump, but it seemed to be wired into her DNA. She was drifting off when another noise shattered the quiet.

Would this night never end? It was probably the girls downstairs. The music had turned down while the branch had been knocking. A scream came from below along with a thump. They better not be trying to scare her. Lacy thought grabbing her house coat. Her door opened with a screech and she winced as she stepped through. It was dark downstairs, the T.V was playing quietly. There were no other noises filtering up. Lacy was getting nervous and she tip toed closer to the banister and peered down. No movement, so she proceeded downstairs trying to avoid the squeaky steps. At the bottom step Lacy sighed in relief glancing into the living room. She clamped her hand across her mouth in horror, Ariel lay on the floor her head at an unusual angle. What the hell was going on? Lacy whipped her head around at the sound of footsteps. Where was Sam? Was that her? Lacy walked towards the noise dread filling her. Maybe she shouldn't be doing this, should she run? This is stupid, but she continued. The kitchen was ahead, a light shining under the door. She hesitated before pushing gently on the door. This time she couldn't stop the scream from bursting forth. Sam was prompt up in a kitchen chair, her throat cut. Lacy glanced wildly around looking for the intruder. Who could have done this? Why? Were they responsible for the package?

A hand snaked around the door and closed over Lacy's mouth yanking her against a hard body. A warm breath feathered across her cheek as a voice whispered, "Well, well look what we have here." Lacy tried yelling but his fingers held back the scream. Her struggles were useless, he was too strong.

Lacy woke up in a trunk and started screaming until she was hoarse. The movement of the vehicle would throw her body against the side making her wince. As they came to a stop she couldn't stop the terror from filling her body. What was going to happen to her? She peered into the darkness looking for a weapon but the trunk was empty. Lacy held her breath hoping for a miracle and the lid

swung up. Her captor wore a mask and all Lacy could make out was a man with broad shoulders and a stomach to match. He pulled her out by the arms and set her down facing a large house. Lacy gazed around at her surroundings while the man shut the lid.

They were on the edge of the city on one of the acreages. A long winding drive way was behind her and a walk way was in front. He still hadn't said a word and Lacy demanded, "Where are we? What are you going to do to me?"

The man just grunted and clamped a firm grip on her arm as he pushed her to the waiting house. Towering trees surrounded the house and lights twinkled in most of the windows. Lacy heard a dog bark somewhere from within and couldn't control the shiver that ran down her spine. She struggled briefly and the man barked "No!" and wrenched her body closer to him. Lacy blinked back the tears and stumbled up the steps towards the waiting door. The door swung open and Lacy was pushed in, to the shouts of "Surprise!"

Shock paralyzed Lacy as she stared at Sam and Ariel grinning in front of her and a large crowd behind.

"No, no it's not possible." Lacy said in horror tears streaming down her face. She whips her head around and glares at the man behind. He had taken off his mask and a familiar face grinned back.

"Happy Halloween." He said.

The huge gash across Ariel's neck was very well applied; even up close it looked real. Lacy wasn't sure how Sam had broken her neck but she was great now. Lacy could feel the anger rise and knew if she didn't leave words would be said. She looked once more at her friends, turned around and walked out.

Ariel and Sam raced after Lacy and caught up at the bottom of the stairs.

"Come on Lacy where are you going?"

"Anywhere but here!" Lacy swiped her tears away. "You're supposed to be my friends."

"We're sorry Lacy. We wanted you to have some fun at Halloween time. There's a party inside. Come on." Ariel coaxed.

"You think having me see you dead and put in a trunk would be fun?"

"We're sorry, please. We were trying to get you in the spirit." Sam chimed in.

Both girls latched onto either side of Lacy and started propelling her towards the house.

"I am still really mad at you!" Lacy said as they dragged her towards the waiting music.