

Chapter 1

Bang! Bang!

The sound of a gunshot had Judy bolting upright in her bed. It was an oddity for her to nap during the day, so she woke up feeling out of sorts and wasn't sure if what she heard was real, or the result of a bad dream. Her heart was beating a mile a minute as she listened for more blasts. When none were heard she began to calm down.

Easing out of bed she headed for the washroom. She turned on the tap and splashed cold water on her face to try to wake up. Her heart still felt heavy so she grabbed a bottle of lavender aroma oil, poured a few droplets on her hand and rubbed it over her heart. Within a few minutes, the tension began to ease and she felt almost normal again.

Leaving the bathroom she decided to go downstairs to see if her mom was home. The house was quiet as she walked from room to room making her wonder if her mother had stepped out. She was about to enter the kitchen when the sound of dogs barking caught her attention, so she walked over to the window. She noticed the mailman making his rounds and wondered what it was about a man in a uniform that made dogs go ballistic. Opening the door she greeted the mailman.

“Hello Mr. Kraemer.”

“Good day Judy.”

He handed her a stack of mail.

“Thank you.”

“You're welcome.”

Mr. Kraemer wasn't a man of many words and usually didn't strike up a conversation. He was pleasant enough; it's just any exchange with him was short and sweet. Then he was on his way.

Judy perused the mail to see if there was anything interesting. The pile was made up mostly of bills, something her mother wouldn't be thrilled with. She was about to step inside when Mr. Croaker called out to her.

“Judy, I need to speak to you about something.” His stern voice bellowed from across the way.

Judy sighed as she walked towards him.

“I would appreciate it if you did something about all those dandelions on your lawn. When it’s windy the seeds blow over and then I get riddled with them,” he griped. “I work hard at keeping my lawn looking nice. I just wish other neighbours would do the same.”

The look in his eyes was wild as he stood glaring at her. Before she had a chance to respond, he turned his back to her and stalked away.

Mr. Croaker was the neighbour from hell. He patrolled the neighbourhood on a daily basis and called city officials regularly to file complaints. To date the city had been called on neighbours watering their lawn outside of their scheduled days, parked cars on lawns instead of driveways, and barking dogs.

Judy, along with many others, loathed living with this crotchety old man. Many agreed that if he wanted quiet living that he should move to a retirement area and get out of the neighbourhood. Life was tough enough as it was and no one needed this guy making it even more unbearable.

Judy stood staring at the yellow weeds on her lawn and knew her neighbour wouldn’t get very far if he lodged a complaint with the city, since they had banned pesticide use. Besides, the parks and schools were riddled with them so they could be the culprits for his weed problem.

Going back inside, she began the search for her mother.

“Mom,” Judy called out.

When there was no answer, she headed for the kitchen since it was the only room left that she hadn’t searched. She was about to enter when the phone rang. Walking over to the table she picked up the receiver.

“Hello.”

“Hi I’m Heather. I’m doing a short television survey and wondered if you would care to participate?”

Judy agreed and in the next few minutes informed the woman of her TV viewing preferences. It was surprisingly short and in no time Judy hung up.

As she turned to head for the kitchen, the doorbell rang. A strange feeling came over her as she walked to the door. Every time she went in search of her mother something stopped her. Opening the door she found a neatly dressed old man with a Bible in his hands.

“Hi, I’m Vernon and I’m here to talk to you about God.”

Inwardly Judy groaned.

“Judgment day is coming and all the sinners will be banished to the

bowels of hell while all believers in God will be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven.”

“Look, I respect your beliefs, but I personally don’t believe in such things.”

“Well you should,” he said strongly.

Judy shrugged. “I guess.”

“You guess?” The man’s voice raised an octave. “You should be preparing yourself for the end.”

“That sounds pretty doom and gloomish,” Judy commented.

A wild look came over his eyes similar to the one she saw in Mr. Croaker’s a few minutes ago.

He waved a finger at her. “Bad things are going to happen if you don’t believe.”

Judy told the man to have a nice day before shutting the door. She tried to shake off the feeling that he was trying to warn her of impending doom as she searched for her mother. His words echoed throughout her brain and seemed to come to life when she entered the kitchen and saw the disarray. Chairs were strewn, smashed dishes lay on the counter and something red was smeared over the floor. Her heart constricted as she followed the red path that lead to her mother lying in a pool of blood barely alive.

“Mom!” Judy screamed.

The sound of a shot blasted through the room striking her mother dead. Judy stared in horror as more blood oozed from her mother’s lifeless body. Anger welled up inside as she turned around and saw a woman holding a gun. All she could see was the greenish tint of her eyes and nothing else. Without thinking, she lunged forwards, knocking the gun out of her hand. They rolled around in a scuffle. The woman was strong, too strong for her. Suddenly she was standing directly above Judy, with the gun pointed at her.

Judy noticed the crazed look in the woman’s eyes. She knew it was going to be difficult to make an easy get away so she had to act fast. Swiftly she rolled to one side, scrambled to her feet and headed towards the door. The woman caught up and grabbed her from behind. Judy twisted and fought against her, but couldn’t escape.

Fear ripped through her when the gun was rammed against her chest. Judy fought with all her might to try and knock it away, but was unable

to stop the assault. She began to pray when she felt the bullet enter. Blood began oozing out of her chest.

“No! Oh God no!” Judy screamed.

“Judy?”

“No!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“Judy!”

Judy looked down at her chest and then around the room. There was no blood or crazed woman only her husband looking at her with concern.

“I’m alive! I’m alive!” Judy whispered.

“That must have been some nightmare,” Ren commented.

“It was horrible.”

“You’ve been having a lot of those lately,” he said with concern.

Judy nodded in agreement. She looked down at her chest again and started to rub it. It was strange, but she could still feel a dull ache there.

“Are you all right?”

“I’m fine,” she lied.

She wasn’t though, as it felt like she was caught somewhere between reality and the dream. Judy shook her head hoping to clear this void she felt trapped in. Ren noticed his wife’s dazed look and quickly pulled her to him. After a few seconds of being in his arms, she began feeling more like herself.

“Do you want to talk about it?” he asked cautiously.

“Not now. I’m too tired.”

Ren tilted her chin and forced her to look at him.

“I’m worried about you Jude.”

“I’m all right,” she smiled weakly.

Ren gave her a doubtful look.

“Really,” she insisted. “I’m just going to get a drink of water and then I’ll be right back.”

“Don’t take too long,” he ordered.

“I won’t,” she promised.

Judy got up and headed for the bathroom. She closed the door and began taking deep breaths hoping to regain a sense of calmness. With every breath she felt her body begin to relax, until her mind started to replay the nightmare all over again.

As the images flashed before her, Judy had a sense of déjà vu. Her old dreams had been resurfacing for a while now, but tonight’s was

different. This time it showed a woman with only green eyes, void of any other facial features. A feeling of dread washed over her.

Heading towards the sink she turned the tap on and splashed water over her face. Reaching for a glass, she filled it with water and took a sip. As she replaced it back in the holder, she caught her reflection in the mirror and scanned over her image, stopping at her eyes. They looked tired, not surprisingly since she wasn't getting any sleep lately.

As she headed back to bed, she hoped to get some badly needed rest. A feeling of exhaustion washed over her when her head hit the pillow. Judy prayed for the nightmares to stop. *God, please let me have nice dreams for a change, maybe even some erotic ones.* As she finally dozed off, her last thoughts were that she was probably going to burn in hell for that request.

“Wake up! Wake up! It's ti..i...i...i.me to Wake up!!!!”, chimed from the clock radio.

“Blasted thing!” Judy cursed it as she reached over to shut it off. She turned to see if Ren was awake and noticed he was still sleeping.

“Why do you have that thing so loud?” she asked while shaking him. When there was no movement she yelled, “Ren are you awake?”

Still nothing.

“Get up will you,” Judy ordered. “Your alarm went off.”

“Uh-huh,” Ren muttered.

Judy was utterly exhausted and was in no mood for this. She shook him harder again and thought if this doesn't work she'd pour cold water over him, ice cold water. She was imagining the expression on his face as it hit him when he finally opened his eyes.

“All right, I'm awake already,” he said as he stretched and got out of bed.

“I can never figure out why you don't hear the radio. You have it turned up so loud.”

“Maybe it's because I hate getting up this early.”

“And you think I like it? I wake up to blaring music that almost gives me a heart attack. Then I have to shake you to death to get you conscious. It sure makes my day,” Judy said sarcastically.

“Oh go back to bed grumpy,” Ren said playfully as he kissed her cheek and got out of bed.

Judy muttered a few choice words under her breath as he started towards the bathroom. She snuggled under the covers and began tossing and turning, trying to find a comfortable spot.

Ren watched his wife with concern. She had been having a succession of bad dreams lately that made her edgy and quiet. When he tried to talk to her about them, she would clam up and change the subject. He was becoming worried.

He felt compelled to stay home with her rather than go to work. The thought of leaving her alone right now bothered him, but he realized he had an appointment first thing this morning and probably couldn't get out of it. Reaching for the staff timetable sheet on the dresser he wondered if there was someone else that could take it.

Ren had landed his dream job at Brawny Gym. Within the six months since he began working there, his clientele base had built up tremendously. This was partly due to his skills as a personal trainer, as well as Brawny's good reputation. One of the benefits of working at the gym was the staff. Everyone was great and more than willing to help each other out. Another perk was Ren's flexible hours that allowed him to come and go as he pleased. Unfortunately, today wasn't the case.

After reviewing the sheet, he realized there was no one that could take over for him. Grabbing some clothes he headed for the bathroom, took a speed shower, shaved and got dressed. When he entered the bedroom, he noticed Judy didn't seem restless anymore. This made him feel a bit better knowing she appeared calmer. He gave her a kiss and was surprised when her eyes fluttered open.

“Are you going?” she asked sleepily.

“Yes,” he whispered. “I'll try to get home early.”

She nodded her head in response as her eyes began to close. Judy heard him in the kitchen and then moments later the front door closing just before she drifted off.

Ren's drive to work was stressful. At one time leaving this early made for an easy drive, as there was hardly any traffic on the roads. Lately, however, that wasn't the case. Here it was 6:30 a.m. and he was facing a traffic jam already where tempers flared and nasty hand gestures were commonplace. Ren sighed as he sipped on a protein shake. The

tension and weariness he was feeling wasn't solely due to the traffic, it was also because of Judy.

When he finally reached the gym, he had ten minutes to spare giving him enough time to review his client's profile. Opening the file, he noticed only a first name was given. There was no surname, address or phone number listed. Scanning down the page he noted the woman's age, she appeared to be in good health, exercised regularly and had requested Ren for her first consultation. A strange feeling came over him as he read on. After a few moments, he shook this emotion away and laughed at his so called premonition, chalking it up to his wife's influence.

When his client finally showed up, Ren however, was shocked to realize his insight was right on the mark. The woman happened to be someone from his past. A person he would prefer to leave there.

"Ren!" she said sweetly giving him a hug. "It's nice to see you."

"Sonya, it's been a long time," he answered back, not returning her hug.

"Yes it has. How is Judy?" she asked.

"She's great," Ren lied.

"I'm glad. We'll have to get together and talk about old times."

As Sonya babbled on about how she missed Judy and should call her, Ren tried to figure a way out of this consultation. He realized there was no one else available, so he drew on his professionalism to help him get through it.

The hour with Sonya was hell. Ren had to assist her in everything. When they used free weights, she expressed that she couldn't get the form right, so he would have to hold her arms in place. Doing circuit exercises was no different. On every machine, Ren had to move her body in the right position. Never before did he have to provide this much assistance to a client. When he tried to encourage her to workout on her own, she'd drop a weight on the floor, or use the machines improperly. Ren wondered if her lack of skill was genuine or just an act. He wouldn't put it past her to fake it.

When their time was up, Ren was relieved. Sonya expressed interest in coming back for another appointment, but Ren recommended taking a beginner weight training course instead. At first she objected, but he eventually convinced her otherwise.

After she left, a feeling of dread washed over him. He was

wondering what he was going to say to Judy when her friend Hope walked in.

“Hi Ren,” she said cheerfully.

A twinge of panic came over him. He didn't want Hope to see Sonya and alert Judy.

“You're here early.”

“I'm always here at this time,” she said giving him a weird look.

Ren looked at the clock on the wall nervously.

Hope stared intently at him. “You all right?”

Ren expressed concern about Judy, explaining how she just quit her job and about her nightmares. He figured she would assume his mood was due to his wife, which for the most part was true. Thankfully she didn't realize it was because of Sonya. They discussed Judy until Hope had to leave for her aerobics class. After she left, Sonya appeared.

“I signed up for the beginners program, as you requested. I'm looking forward to taking it.

“That's great,” he said.

“Well I should be going. Say hi to Judy for me.”

Ren felt terrible. How was he going to tell Judy about Sonya?

Hours later, Judy awoke to the noise of nails clicking on the vinyl flooring. The rhythmic sound of someone pacing began to stir her awake. When it finally stopped, she felt the mattress slightly sink, a wet nose rub up against her hand and the slight heaviness of a body rest at her side.

Judy moaned. “I can take the hint, I'm getting up.”

Sam, her dog, licked her face and started wagging its tail, but would not move.

“I love you too girl.” she said. “But, you have to get off of me.”

She looked at Sam as if this explanation was sufficient enough for her to move. The dog however, didn't budge. They stared at each other for a few seconds until Judy gently pushed her off and got up.

The grandfather clock chimed 8 o'clock. Judy realized it was going to be one of those rushed mornings, as she made her way to her son's room. Jay was still sleeping when she entered. She was about to wake him, but stopped. He looked so adorable with his ruffled blonde hair

sweeping across his forehead and his dark lashes resting over closed baby blue eyes. In his arms were his favourite stuffed animals, Twinkles and Red.

Too many, Jay appeared to be just a normal nine year-old boy, but he was so much more. His gentle and caring ways along with his intelligence gave one the impression that he was an old soul. Judy credited his soft demeanour to his psychic abilities. These tendencies first appeared when he was a toddler. Now that he was older, they seemed to be getting stronger. Recently, he was able to feel the subtle energies around him, as well as see and sense spirits or shadows, as Jay called them.

At first she was concerned about this, as she too had these abilities and remembers feeling overwhelmed by them when she was young. It didn't help that no one could ever explain what was happening to her and half the time didn't believe her. Most people chalked it up to a child with an over active imagination, except her mother. She always believed in her, but unfortunately her father didn't. Over the years she tried desperately to ignore this, but it would not go away. Unfortunately, she grew up feeling like she was different and didn't belong. When Jay's abilities began to intensify, she decided it was time to explain to her son what being a clairvoyant meant, hoping he would understand this. To her surprise, Jay was quite confident and unafraid of it whereas Judy, at times, felt just the opposite.

Jay stirred and opened his eyes. "Hi Mom" he said smiling up at her.

"Hi sweetie, it's time to get up and get ready for school."

Jay got out of bed and gave his mom a hug before heading towards the bathroom. Judy was making his bed when he came back in his room and got dressed. She sensed a pair of eyes on her and stopped what she was doing. She turned around and noticed her son staring intently at her.

"What's wrong Mom?"

"Nothing, I'm fine."

"You feel funny."

"I'm just tired."

She hoped this explanation would be sufficient, but obviously it wasn't. Jay suddenly jumped onto his bed to look her straight in the eyes. A wave of gentle energy drifted through her, making her feel like he was trying to look into the very depths of her soul to figure out what was

going on.

“Jay what are you doing? You are going to be late for school.”

Jay didn't say anything, but kept probing. After a few moments, he leaned over and gave her a kiss.

“You'll get your answers soon. I know you will Mom,” Jay said confidently.

He left the room, leaving a stunned Judy staring at his back. When she regained her composure, she headed downstairs. The sound of cupboards banging and dishes clanging could be heard when she got closer to the kitchen. When she entered, she saw Jay grabbing a cereal bowl and the milk from the refrigerator before sitting down at the table to prepare his breakfast.

“I could have gotten you something to eat,” Judy said.

“Thanks, but I am getting older you know and can do things myself,” Jay advised.

“I think you're growing up too quickly,” Judy muttered.

Jay looked up from his bowl of cereal. “Did you say something mom?”

“Nothing at all,” she said as she got her own breakfast.

Judy got Jay to school in time, which amazed her. Mrs. Bright, his teacher, was surprised to see her when she dropped Jay off at his classroom.

“Have a day off today Mrs. Storm?” Mrs. Bright asked cheerfully.

“Not exactly, I'm no longer working.”

“Oh,” Mrs. Bright hesitated. “Sorry to hear that”.

Judy could detect a hint of disapproval in her voice.

“Did you get laid off?” she asked.

“No.”

“Did you get fired?” Mrs. Bright looked dismayed.

“No.”

“What happened?”

“I quit,” Judy announced.

“You quit!” Mrs. Bright said with a critical tone in her voice.

Judy was only half listening. She was too focused on the way her eyes looked when she said the word quit. They seemed to bulge out and make her look like a fly. One that Judy was about to swat if she didn't shut up and mind her own business.

“Yes. I quit!” Judy said sternly.

“What are you going to do now?”

This lady was relentless. *Maybe I should tell her I am going to become a stripper*, she mused.

“I am not sure. Maybe you should give me your home number and I’ll call and let you know,” Judy said sarcastically. Mrs. Bright was about to say something when the sound of children arguing caused her to turn her attention to them. Thank God, Judy thought as she turned to give her son a kiss.

“Mom! Not in front of my friends,” Jay whispered as he dodged his mother.

“I’m sorry. It’s hard to turn off that mother thing you know.”

“Well try, okay! It’s embarrassing,” Jay said.

“Have a good day and remember....” Jay had already entered his classroom while Judy was still talking. “I put pizza money in your backpack,” she said to the air.

Boy has he learned the art of ignoring his mother. I can’t wait until the teenage years, she thought as she headed towards the door. Outside she noticed other mothers standing in a group talking. Judy turned around and went the other way. She didn’t want to have to face another conversation about her lack of employment.

As she drove home, she made a vow not to let other people’s opinions bother her so much. Her new pledge was about to be tested when she noticed her neighbour, Mrs. Finney, working in her flower garden. Mrs. Finney turned as she heard Judy’s car door slam. She started saying something, but Judy couldn’t hear her.

“Pardon me, Mrs. Finney,” Judy said as she walked towards the front door.

“Not working today dear?” she yelled.

Here we go again, Judy thought. She definitely didn’t want to talk to Mrs. Finney. She was from the old school where one was thankful to have a job and stayed working at the same place until they retired. She had lived through the Depression, so her view on life was still based on those difficult times.

“No,” Judy said scrambling to find her house key.

Mrs. Finney said something else, but Judy still couldn’t hear so she waved and told her to have a nice day. As she unlocked the door, she was

greeted by the sound of her phone ringing.

“I heard you quit your job.” It was her friend Hope.

“Yes I did and don’t go giving me a lecture either. I am in no mood,” she cautioned.

“Hey don’t get so defensive! I was calling to find out what happened.”

“How did you find out anyway?” she asked, roaming through her purse for cigarettes then stopped after she realized she quit.

“Damn,” she said.

“What’s wrong?” Hope asked.

“What do you mean, what’s wrong?”

“You just said damn.”

“Sorry. I was looking for a cigarette, but forgot I quit,” Judy moaned easing herself onto the floor.

“It was the best thing for you.”

“Maybe I will just pour myself a drink.”

“You quit that too,” Hope reminded her.

“Double damn.” Judy frowned. “I am seriously considering starting those habits again.”

“I won’t let you,” Hope warned.

Judy knew Hope would stop her. She was her best friend and had been for years. She acted like a mother at times, driving her nuts, but she knew she meant well. They were very close and knew everything that went on in their lives. Through the good times and the bad they were there for each other.

“How did you find out?” Judy asked again.

“I saw Ren at the gym this morning and he told me.”

“Oh”

“Tell me what happened Jude.”

Judy explained how they increased her workload, but not her pay. Then to top it off, a fight broke out between an employee and their boss. The police were called and both were escorted away.

“Did you apply for social assistance?” Hope asked.

“Yes. Ren convinced me that I should, reminding me that this insurance comes off every pay and is owed to me,” she sighed. “I know he’s right, but I hate dealing with government agencies. They make you feel like you don’t deserve the money. Then to top it all off, they tell you

as you're filling out the application that giving false information is fraud and punishable by law. It's ironic how they want "we the people" to be honest, yet the government doesn't seem to be."

"Did you behave yourself?" Hope dreaded asking.

"I never gave them any grief if that's what you're asking."

"Ren seemed okay with this," Hope remarked.

"He didn't feel it was safe for me to work there anymore."

"He's right you know," she agreed. "You hear it all the time on the news, some disgruntled employee goes on a shooting rampage at his work."

"I know."

"So what are you going to do now?" Hope asked.

"Become a stripper. Do you know how much those ladies make?" Judy replied jokingly.

"A lot," Hope said. "The only problem is you'll need bigger boobs."

"No I don't," she protested. "I got it all figured out. I would get boobs made to mould perfectly to my skin so they appear real. Then when I'm completely naked I'll rip them off and throw them in the crowd to some poor schmuck."

"Euuuw," Hope said.

"I have no doubt some guy would take them home. They'd probably even take them to bed and cuddle them like a teddy bear," Judy commented.

Hope laughed. "The only problem is that Ren wouldn't let you go into that profession."

"I ran the idea by him and he told me to polish up on my dancing."

"Well at least he's being supportive," Hope laughed. "But if the stripper thing doesn't pan out what else do you want to do?"

"Maybe I could be a superhero," Judy replied dreamily. "I've always wanted to wear one of those cool outfits."

"Again, another job that requires boobs," Hope commented.

"I could stuff," Judy said.

"That's blasphemy. A superhero never stuffs," Hope said.

"What's the deal with big boobs?" Judy said. "I'd rather have a man look at my eyes."

"Most men don't care about your eyes. All they want is something they can look at and grab onto."

“Why, when they’re always grabbing themselves. What more could they possibly want?”

“Boobs!”

Judy actually enjoyed being at home instead of working. The only annoying part was the number of phone calls she received during the day. They ranged from charities asking for money, long distance companies trying to sell their packages, or real estate agents asking if you wanted to put your house on the market. It was frustrating, especially since she was trying to look for a job. As she scanned the paper her heart sank. Same old jobs, same old pay, same old bull shit. The only job that had great pay potential was the Exotic Dancer. Her prior conversation with Hope was all in jest, yet in the recesses of her mind there was some contemplation going on there. The only problem was, she didn’t have what it took, plus the thought of men watching her take off her clothes was creeping her out.

Putting the paper down, she headed for the computer and decided to search on the Internet. After scanning through employment listings, she found one position that looked promising and e-mailed her résumé. She received an immediate reply, asking her to come in tomorrow for an interview, which she accepted. After an hour of surfing, she got up from her desk to stretch the kinks out of her body. Her stomach started to growl so she headed for the kitchen to make a sandwich. The phone rang while she was eating.

“Hi Jude. How was your morning?”

“Fine Ren. I have a job interview tomorrow,” she informed him while munching on her food.

“That’s great. Right?” he questioned.

Judy had been jumping from one job to another lately, so he wasn’t sure anymore.

“Hopefully,” she replied. “How is your day?”

Ren hesitated, wondering if he should tell her about Sonya. After a deliberation, he opted not to.

“Slow,” he said, adding, “One of my clients cancelled so I’ll be home early.”

“What time?” Judy asked.

“Around three o’clock. Did you want me to pick up Jay?”

“Could you? I was going to take a nap to try and catch up on my sleep,” she said, grateful for the break.

“You do that.”

“Thanks, I owe you one.”

“I’ll collect later. You can count on that,” he said with heat in his voice.

Judy smiled as she hung up the phone and headed for her bedroom. When she got there, she pulled the curtains closed, got undressed and climbed into bed. Thoughts of strawberries and whipped cream filled her head. She envisioned Ren covering the secret places he loved to touch with the berries. Next, he placed whipped cream on top of them then tantalized her as he ate every one, trying to get to the treasures underneath. When he got to the last strawberry, she fell asleep.

Chapter 2

Judy woke up hours later, still feeling tired and anxious. She had a succession of dreams, all of the green-eyed woman, causing her to have a restless sleep. Glancing at the clock, she noted the time. Ren and Jay would be home soon and she didn't want them to see her like this. She tried to act like everything was okay when they arrived, but it didn't work. Jay had sensed something was wrong at school while Ren looked on with concern. Judy was glad when Sam diverted the attention away from her by greeting them in her usual way, with a crotch and butt sniff.

"Why does she have to do that?" Ren grumbled waving her away.

"People shake hands, dogs sniff," Judy explained.

"Well, it gets annoying," Ren grumbled covering himself.

Jay on the other hand didn't seem to mind. He was on the floor giggling while Sam sniffed and licked his face. A knock at the door had Sam ready to greet her next victim. Jay's friend Dillon stood there with a skateboard in his hand.

"Hi Mrs. Storm," Dillon said. "Can Jay come out and play?"

Before Judy could answer, Jay was beside her admiring Dillon's skateboard.

"Wow, is that ever nice. Have you tried it out yet?"

"Just on the way over here."

Jay looked up at his mom. "Can I go skate boarding?"

Judy hesitated. She wasn't a fan of skateboards, but Ren's parents bought their grandson one for Christmas, so what was she supposed to do.

Jay stood impatiently waiting for an answer.

"Please mom, can I? I'll be careful, I promise."

Judy reluctantly agreed and told him to be home by 5:30 for supper. Jay grabbed his coat and skateboard and was out the door in a flash.

In a way she was glad Dillon came over. Not that she wanted them to skateboard, but at least it distracted Jay from tuning into her feelings.

Now, she just had Ren to deal with. Bracing herself she turned towards her husband and noticed him intently watching her.

“Jude, I’m worried about you.” He looked troubled.

She sighed. “I know.”

“Do you think talking to someone will help?”

“No, but I think a lobotomy might,” she said sarcastically.

“Stop joking! I’m serious,” he implored. “You’ve had several nightmares lately that leave you emotionally drained. It’s even affecting you when you’re awake.”

His comment made tears well up in her eyes. Ren reached over and took her in his arms. When she seemed calmer, he guided her into the kitchen. She watched as he filled the kettle with water and brought out herbal tea. While he busied himself, she sat back admiring him. At thirty-three he was in great shape. His tight fitting shirt emphasized his well-defined pecs and a washboard stomach. She watched the muscles in his arms flex as he tore open the package of tea and remembered the feeling of strength in them when he held her. His pants were loose fitting, but underneath were strong sculpted muscles. As he poured her tea, her eyes travelled up to his face. His hair was dark brown and shoulder length. His jaw was square, his nose thin and he had gorgeous brown eyes that were covered with long dark lashes, like Jay’s.

Judy, on the other hand, was a petite woman, no more than 115 pounds. She had long wavy reddish brown hair, big blue eyes, a small nose and fine features, like Jay. Her body was well proportioned, and with Ren’s guidance, becoming more muscle toned.

“Here you go Jude,” Ren said handing her the cup. “This always makes you feel better.”

Judy took a sip and felt the warmth seep through her, while Ren sat patiently waiting for her to talk. He didn’t want to push her, yet needed to know about the dreams and why they seemed to take so much out of her. Judy watched him while she drank her tea and sensed his curiosity and concern. She really didn’t want to talk about it, but realized she couldn’t run from this anymore it wasn’t fair to Ren.

Taking a deep breath she began recounting her latest dreams of the green-eyed woman. When Judy was finished they sat in silence. Ren felt desperate to help, but didn’t know what to do. Judy looked at him and knew exactly what he was thinking. Reaching for his hand she took it in

hers.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get through this. Even Jay is confident.”

Ren gave her a questioning look. “What do you mean Jay is confident?”

“He looked me straight in the eyes and said so,” she said.

“Don’t you hate when he does that?” he cringed.

She took another sip of her tea before answering. “Yes and no. I think he’s just trying to help.”

Ren and Judy continued talking while they made supper. She explained her theories about the dreams, as well as told him about the onslaught of new psychic abilities she seemed to suddenly possess. She felt like she was being pulled into some kind of mystic world and because of this her anxiety escalated, causing her to experience more nightmares. Most of the dreams focused on her mother’s murder, while others seemed to play on her paranoia. She knew she should talk to someone about it, but fear stopped her from doing so.

Ren was glad that she finally confided in him. He was relieved to know what was going on, yet a feeling of unsettledness lay in the pit of his stomach. When Judy’s clairvoyance was heightened, it usually meant something was about to happen. A part of him was puzzled that her abilities wouldn’t give her some insight into this matter. He also wondered why she didn’t confide in her uncle since he too was clairvoyant. He posed this question to her.

“I think I’m too close to the situation causing my abilities to shut down,” she said chopping up vegetables for the salad. “As far as telling my uncle, I chose not to because he gets upset when I rehash my mother’s murder.”

She leaned past him to get the salad spinner, poured the vegetables in and spun the mixture until most of the moisture was in the bottom bowl. She took the lid off, poured it into a large glass bowl and handed this to Ren then continued.

“It’s ironic how my abilities are more focused when I am helping others in their time of need. Now I am in need and they disappear,” she sighed.

“I don’t think they disappeared,” Ren said placing the bowl on the kitchen table. “I think your problem is that you have a major attitude.”

“Very funny!” Judy made a face, grabbed a piece of carrot and threw

it at him. The carrot bounced off Ren and fell to the floor. This prompted Sam to go and investigate. She sniffed it at first, picked it up, dropped it, then picked it up again and started chewing. After a few seconds she stopped, spit it out and walked over to lie down beside Judy. Ren bent down and threw it in the garbage. He shook his head as he wiped off his hands.

“I see you have influenced the dog. She has an attitude too.”

Judy was about to throw another vegetable at him when Ren swiftly caught her wrists and pulled her into his arms.

“You’re so tense,” he whispered into her ear. “I think I know what you need.”

“And what’s that?”

“An orgasm.”

Judy felt the heat rush through her as Ren pushed her hair back and began kissing her neck, while lifting up her top to caress her flesh. His mouth felt hot and wet on her skin, as he traced a path from her neck to her mouth. When he reached her lips, he held her in a kiss. Their need for each other was strong. So strong they were unaware of their son standing there watching them.

“That’s disgusting!!”

Ren jumped and quickly moved away while Judy tucked her top back in her pants.

“Why do parents do that kind of stuff?” Jay asked making a face.

Ren cleared his throat, “Because we love each other.”

Jay cringed at the thought. “I’m never going to do that when I’m older. That’s gross.”

Ren was about to inform him that in time he’ll think differently, but realized at his age he really wasn’t into the boy/girl stuff, so he just dropped it.

Jay soon forgot about his parent’s one-on-one action to work on his homework and Judy and Ren went back to finishing the supper preparations. After they were done eating, and everything was cleaned up, they took Sam out for her nightly walk.

They passed a park along the way and decided to stop so that both Jay and Sam could play. Sam pulled at her leash eager to investigate the small forest ahead. Ren let her go and she went bounding towards the trees, stopping to sniff and pee on every one. Eventually, she came

sauntering back, dropped a stick by Ren's feet and began barking.

"All right, all right. I get the hint."

Ren picked it up and gave it a toss. Sam raced to get it and within seconds returned, assuming the same position. Jay soon joined in trying to beat the dog to the stick. Ren threw the stick and both Sam and Jay raced for it.

When everyone was finally worn out, they headed home. Jay got a quick snack and then was herded off to bed, where he promptly fell asleep. Judy was getting ready to leave Jay's room when Ren popped his head in.

"Jay's asleep already?" Ren was surprised as normally Jay was talking up a storm at bedtime.

"He was tired," she whispered.

Judy was about to close Jay's door when the sound of loud snoring caught her attention. The noise was coming from Sam who was passed out beside Jay's bed.

"It seems like someone else is pretty tired too," she said smiling.

"I think I have found a way to guarantee some sleep around here. Every night I'll have Jay and Sam chase a stick," Ren said.

Judy laughed softly and started towards their bedroom. Ren was following closely behind watching her hips sway as she walked. He moved down to her butt noticing its firmness then let his eyes stray to her long shapely legs. Judy sensed his eyes on her so she turned around and noticed the hunger there.

"God you are beautiful," he said in a husky voice.

He bent his head forward and kissed her. It was a gentle one that just brushed her lips. He continued teasing her with feather-like kisses, as he eased her into the bedroom and onto the bed. When he found her breasts, he gently caressed them then moved his hands downwards where he parted her legs. Judy closed her eyes as his finger entered her, moving into her until she was moaning and moving with him. She withered this way and that, taking in all he had to give her until she shuddered and felt the ripple of pleasure flow throughout her body. Judy gasped when his fingers were replaced with his tongue as it teased and tantalized her. Judy could feel the pressure building up and then felt the pleasure of its release. Just as exhaustion began to seep in, he rolled on top and entered her. They rocked back and forth as pleasure flowed within them until

they finally exploded.

Having back-to-back orgasms left Judy feeling utterly exhausted. She was almost asleep when she heard Ren whisper in her ear. “I think you’ll have a great sleep now.”

And she did.

Chapter 3

“How have you been sleeping?” Hope asked handing Judy a muffin.

“Not great, until last night,” Judy said.

“Why what happened last night?”

“I had multiple orgasms.”

Hope choked on her muffin.

“Thanks for sharing.” She scowled at her.

“Well you asked,” Judy said innocently.

“What about the nightmares?” Hope asked trying to change the subject.

They ate muffins and drank tea while Judy told her about her dreams. Hope grabbed her notebook and began writing down the details. She believed that keeping a log of Judy’s dreams was important.

“I have reserved some books at the library on dreams. They should be in...” Hope reached for her calendar checking the dates. “In a few days, I’ll read them and tell you what I find out.”

“Okay detective.”

Hope glared at her.

“I’m sorry,” Judy apologized.

Kidding aside, Judy really did appreciate her efforts. Hope had always been there for her, and vice versa. Even when Judy’s clairvoyant abilities began to resurface, Hope never doubted nor questioned this. In fact, she was so intrigued that she read every book and article on the subject and whenever she was around Judy’s uncle she would talk to him endlessly about his psychic abilities.

Judy was thankful that she had Hope, as well as Ren and her uncle Will who understood what she went through. Not many people believed in her clairvoyance, so Judy never openly discussed this with anyone.

Judy looked at her watch. “I better get going or I’ll be late for my interview.”

She got up, grabbed her coat and purse and headed for the door.

Hope shouted out to her as she was leaving.

“Call me later.”

The traffic was busy, but flowing smoothly and quickly. Judy felt like she was always in a race whenever she drove on the highway. It wasn't until she passed construction signs, that the traffic slowed down and actually drove the speed limit. She was just getting used to driving this new pace when she noticed vehicles up ahead putting on their brake lights. Judy eased on her brakes and began crawling along with the other cars. Once she was out of the construction zone, the drivers resumed their normal racing speed. Thankfully she got to her destination with time to spare.

Her interview was with a business in the downtown core of the city. Kitshener was a mid size, once German, city with a population that was quickly on the rise. Many different ethnic groups came to live here over the years, but even with its melting pot of cultures, Kitshener still remained a German town with its heritage intact.

Judy had lived here her whole life and had watched, with unsettledness, the growing pains the city had gone through. Some of it was good, some bad. At times she wished it would remain the small peaceful town it once had been.

The one thing about living here was it was difficult to get around, especially for a person like Judy who was directionally challenged. The zigzag-like lay out of the roads left travelling very confusing and difficult. Certain roads may be deemed east, but in actuality they were southeast. For most people, especially newcomers, they relied on landmarks to get to where they were going instead of referring to compass directions. People often wondered why the roads were not mapped out in a grid-like pattern, like most of the surrounding cities, but it appeared that the settlers developed roads based on waterways and landscape. When they settled on a piece of land, and had to get from one area to another, they just made a road, which was not necessarily in a straight line.

It had been awhile since she had been downtown and it amazed her how much things had changed. At one time the downtown was home to the drug lords, prostitutes and strip joints, just one of the negative consequences of a city in the midst of urban sprawl. Now, it was full of professional buildings, banks and a market. The politicians really cleaned

it up like they said they would.

She passed a business called The Love Connection. On the front of the window was a sign that said, “Need a date? We’ll help you find your mate.” Right beside it was the business she was looking for, “All Smiles Photography Studio”.

The owner, Martha Quinn, greeted her when she entered. She was a tall, thin brunette who always smiled. In fact, throughout the whole interview she had one permanently glued to her face, making Judy wonder if she was for real.

Martha gave her a tour of the studio, letting her watch a photo shoot with a small child. It amazed Judy how the photographer could make even the shyest of children smile. It seemed to take a lot of skill, patience and creativity to achieve the best picture.

“In no time at all, you’ll be a fully fledged photographer too,” Martha commented joyfully.

I could do this. I love children and am a big kid myself so maybe I found a job that I will actually like, Judy thought. The more Martha explained what the job entailed the more interested she became. Until a sudden nagging feeling that all was not right in photography land came over her. Judy tried to tune into her feelings to find out what was going on, but got sidetracked when Martha started asking questions.

An hour later, Martha offered her the job and Judy accepted, however, something inside her was setting off warning signals.

Judy was the first one home and was greeted by Sam with the customary butt and crotch sniff. As she stood in the hallway warding off the dog’s welcoming, an unsettled feeling came over her. She realized this was due to her new job, a job she probably shouldn’t have taken. She sighed as she headed for the den.

When Ren came home, sounds of music drifted through the house. Over the years he got to know how Judy was feeling by the music she played. Based on what he was hearing he concluded that the interview hadn’t gone well. He followed the music to the den where he found Judy sitting by the bay window. Her arms were wrapped around bent knees and she was absently staring out the window.

“Well? How did it go today?” he asked reluctantly.

Judy turned to look at him and sighed. “I got the job.”

“Boy, you seem really enthused,” he said sarcastically. “I knew something was up when I heard your choice of music.”

Judy told Ren about the job and also about Martha.

“She’s hiding something,” Judy said.

“Why did you accept the position then? You know when your intuition tells you something is wrong, then something usually is!”

“We need the money,” she replied flatly.

Ren shook his head. Here we go again, he thought.

“Judy, I wish you wouldn’t do this. Why don’t you hold out for a job you like instead of taking the first one offered to you? You know you usually quit ”

“How am I supposed to know what I like? Life doesn’t offer you a chance to go after what you want when you have bills to pay and have a child to take care of,” Judy sighed. “Besides, this job pays well, offers a good benefit package and we could use both of those right now.”

“I hear what you’re saying, but face it, you want more than a good paying job with great benefits. You want to make a living doing something that you like.”

“We have very little money and a lot of expenses for me to hold out for something I like,” she shot back.

“We’ll get by we always do, so stop worrying.”

“I’m trying to, but it’s not easy with all the bills piling up.”

“I get paid next week.”

“They’re due now.”

“They’ll just have to wait.”

“I don’t like doing that.”

“Neither do I, but that’s all we can do.”

Ren felt like he was playing a verbal tennis match with Judy. She served him with a worry thought, he returned with a solution, she shot back another worry and he returned with yet another solution. Ren watched as Judy paced. He could tell her mind was working non-stop, trying to figure out a comfortable solution.

“Jude, calm down. Everything will be all right,” he said reassuringly.

“Yeah, yeah,” she replied.

He couldn’t stand watching her pace anymore, so he took her by the

hand and made her sit on the couch beside him.

“You’re impossible to reason with when you’re like this. What do I need to do to make you stop worrying?” he asked.

“Just shoot me! Then my brain will stop.”

“Where’s the gun?” he said teasingly.

Judy glared at him.

“I have a better idea,” Ren said.

Gently he knocked her down, pinning her on the couch in a wrestling hold. She struggled to get up, but he was too strong for her.

“Are you going to quit worrying?” he asked.

“Let me up,” Judy whimpered.

“Not until you agree to stop this nonsense.”

“All right already,” Judy whined.

Ren got up and pulled Judy in his arms.

“You should be banned from watching wrestling,” Judy said rubbing her arms. “It seems to be influencing you.”

“No way, it teaches me all about submission holds.” He smiled wickedly at her. “Besides, I like it when you submit to me.”

Judy threw a pillow at him. “Wrestling definitely has to go.”

“Over my dead body,” Ren replied.

“That can be arranged.”

“You’d miss me too much. Who else would tease and wrestle you and be there for you.” He paused as a smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. “And give you the pleasure that I do.”

His words touched on something deep within her. Even though they were just fooling around, both physically and verbally, she realized what he said was true. They had been married for ten years now and the longer they were together the closer they got. They were best friends and no matter what happened they supported one another.

Judy began feeling better after their tussle. She was enjoying a quiet evening with her “boys”, as she fondly referred to her husband and son, until Ren had to leave. He forgot his planner at work and had to go pick it up. He was about to head out the door when Jay asked if he could tag along. Ren hesitated at first, not wanting to leave Judy alone, but she convinced him that she would be all right.

When they were gone, Judy decided to start reading the new novel she had just bought. She went over to the bookshelf and found it wasn’t

there.

“Where did I put the darn thing?” she asked herself.

While looking around for her book, her breathing suddenly became short and stifled. Something is wrong she thought. She stopped her search to tune into her feelings and find out what was going on. Images of twisted metal and Ren and Jay covered with blood flashed in her mind.

“Oh no!” Judy cried. “They are going to be in an accident.”

She ran to the phone to call Ren’s cell, but got his voice mail. Judy began to pace. *What can I do to warn them?* Suddenly a vision of Jay came to mind.

“That’s it”, she said to Sam, who followed her every step. “I’ll try to send him a message telepathically.”

Judy recently became aware that she and Jay could communicate telepathically. She only experienced this type of communication once before. It happened many years ago when her mother was dying. After her death, Judy never had it happen again, until now. It freaked her out but Jay, of course, thought it was cool.

For some reason, they couldn’t do this all the time. Judy figured their emotions got in the way stopping the communication. Right now she needed to get the message to Jay, so she tried to remain calm and focused.

She said a prayer and then took a couple of deep breaths. When she felt ready, she pictured Jay in the car. Scenes of the accident crept in her mind, but she pushed them aside. She focused on her son and told him to tell his Dad not to take the expressway, as an accident was about to happen. She kept saying this in her head over and over again hoping that he got it.

After a few minutes of continuously repeating this, she felt utterly exhausted. She tried Ren’s cellphone again, but the machine was still picking up. Judy tried to remain calm, but couldn’t. She grabbed the phone and dialled her uncle’s number. He was better at detaching from his emotions so his psychic abilities stayed intact. The sound of a busy signal rang in her ears.

“Damn!” she yelled.

She tried again in haste to reach him, but was unable to. Feeling scared and helpless she went into the living room, sank down onto the

couch and stared anxiously out the window, willing Ren's car to pull into the driveway. She leaned her head against the backrest, closed her eyes and prayed for Ren and Jay's safe return.

Judy's eyes flew open when she heard a loud knocking sound. Sam barked and ran to the door with Judy following quickly behind. She reached for Sam's collar and opened the door. Standing before her were two police officers. One was an older man about forty. He was tall, solidly built and had black hair with grey streaks throughout, giving it a salt and pepper look. His eyes were deep green with tiny lines that surrounded the edges. When he looked at her, Judy noted they seemed distant, probably caused by years of seeing too much suffering. A younger officer stood beside him. He was shorter and broader with buzz cut hair. His solemn expression made Judy feel uncomfortable.

They didn't enter right away since Sam was growling, trying to determine if they were friend or foe. The older man slowly put his hand out and the dog stopped growling to sniff it then moved around to his crotch.

"Sorry about that," Judy apologized pulling Sam away.

"Are you Mrs. Storm?" the older officer asked.

"Yes," she answered quietly.

"I'm Officer Bender and this is Officer Fenelli," he said pointing to the young man. "May we come in?"

She nodded her head and then stepped aside to let them in. Judy's stomach began to churn as she watched both men. Officer Bender ran a hand nervously through his hair and began to speak.

"Your husband and son were involved in a terrible accident." He hesitated before continuing, "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but they're dead."

Judy's ears were ringing and she felt faint. She stood frozen, not believing what was said.

"No! It's not true. Ren and Jay are on their way home," she said reaching for a chair to sit down.

The younger officer grabbed her arm gently to guide her.

"We are so sorry Mrs. Storm."

Judy felt ill.

"Mrs. Storm, we need you to come with us to identify their bodies," she heard Officer Bender say.

Judy shook her head trying to clear the dreadful images that were coming to mind. *No they're wrong*, she thought. *I'm going to go find them*. She stood up getting ready to leave, took a few steps then crashed to the floor.

Officer Fenelli was beside her within seconds. "Mrs. Storm, are you all right? Mrs. Storm...." he shook her gently.

Officer Bender quickly joined him. He bent down to gently pick her up and then set her on the chair. Reaching for a tissue, he handed it to her to wipe the tears rolling down her face.

"Can we call anyone for you?"

Judy stared blankly at him. She knew she should phone someone, but couldn't remember anyone's name. Her brain wasn't working.

Officer Bender knew she was in shock as he had seen this reaction many times over the years. He went to grab her coat and motioned for Officer Fenelli to help him. Gently they lifted Judy up and placed her in the coat before guiding her outside to their car.

On the drive over to the hospital, no one spoke. When they arrived, Officer Fenelli stayed at the front desk to speak with the nurses while Officer Bender lead her to the morgue. A man wearing a white lab coat greeted them. He nodded his head in acknowledgement at the officer then gave Judy a sympathetic look before introducing himself. Officer Bender told Judy to stay right there as he walked into an office with the man. She heard the sound of hushed voices and knew their conversation wasn't meant for her to hear. Within a short time, both men appeared and lead Judy into another room.

The room was vast in size and very aseptic. There was a wall of mid-sized metal doors straight ahead and to her left was an examining table. On the wall, was a cupboard filled with containers and beside them were various medical instruments. She assumed their use was for performing autopsies. The thought of this made her stomach churn. She became even more nauseous when they walked straight ahead to the set of metal doors. The man opened the door and pulled a table out.

On it was a white sheet covering a body. Judy's heart pounded wildly when he pulled the cover off to reveal Ren. Feeling dazed, she stood looking down at him. Slowly she reached out to touch him, but when her hands met the coldness of his skin she jerked them away. Reality began to sink in and she felt sick. Her mind was so fixated on

Ren that she didn't notice the other door being opened behind her. The man gently turned her around. Judy gasped when she saw Jay's little body lying on the table.

"No!" she cried.

Officer Bender reached for Judy, but she stumbled back.

"Get away from me!" she screamed.

She ran for the door but Officer Bender caught up with her.

"I know this is hard, but you have to accept the fact they are gone."

The room began to spin as she tried to walk. The last thing she remembered was Officer Bender grabbing her just before she fainted.