

SOUNDS OF TOMORROW

BY DREW BANKSTON

FREE CHAPTER

©2024 DREW BANKSTON

CHAPTER 1

GOODBYE



"I'm so excited for today! The martial arts demo is a great way to raise money for neglected and abused children. I hope it's a huge success and we can raise as much money as possible for such an important cause. I've been practicing hard for this and know I will do fantastic," Jessi said to herself in the mirror.

She slipped into her all-black uniform and tied the black belt around her waist. She looked in the mirror and smiled.

"You don't look too bad in black," she chuckled to herself and grabbed her workout bag.

She ran down the stairs and tossed her bag toward the front door. It slid across the floor and stopped with a slight bump just to the right of the door frame. "Strike!" Jessi shouted and did a little dance.

The smell of bacon sizzling in the kitchen made her stomach growl and grumble. She trotted into the kitchen, where her mom put the last few pieces of bacon on the paper towel-covered plate.

"Good morning, Jess," her mom said.

Jessi sat at the table. "Morning! Breakfast smells amazing! Thanks for getting up to make it."

"Of course! My girl has to have energy for her big day!"

Jessi blushed. "It's not *my* big day, mom. It's just a demo in the park. Besides, I'm seventeen years old now. I probably don't even need breakfast anymore."

"Breakfast is good for you at any age," her mom said, cracking some eggs into the frying pan. They sizzled as they hit the hot surface. "It may not be your special day, but today, you can show off your amazing black belt skills," her mom said as she stirred the eggs in the pan to scramble them.

Most of her friends at school knew the Jessi, who was a quiet and easygoing teenager. Few knew the Jessi, who had studied for seven years to become a black belt in Kung Fu. She looked at it as her secret life. A few of her friends knew, but they were the ones who joined her and shared in this other life away from the routine and mundane.

"Is most of your class attending the demo today?" Jessi's mom scooped some eggs onto Jessi's waiting plate.

"I think so," Jessi responded, shoveling a forkful of eggs into her mouth, followed by a bite of bacon. "Are you and Dad coming?" Jessi spoke through the mouthful of food.

"We wouldn't miss it, sweetheart," her mom said. "We're both so proud of you. Are you sure you don't want us to drive you?" Jessi's mom already knew the answer. What seventeen-year-old would want to show up to an event in her parent's car?

"Thanks, but I'll ride the bus with the rest of the school. How about if I ride home with you, though?"

"That sounds good." Jessi's mom grew quiet.

"Everything ok?" Jessi asked and gulped down some milk.

"Everything's fine. Just promise me you'll be careful."

Jessi stopped eating, a forkful of eggs halfway to her mouth. "I'm always careful," she said. "You know that."

I do," her mom said, "but I just have a funny feeling about today. You know how much I hate it when I get these feelings."

"Yeah, I do," Jessi said, trying as hard as she could not to roll her eyes. "And before you say anything, I know about Grandma Vicci and her premonitions. Everything will be fine."

Jessi's mom walked over to her and placed her hand on Jessi's shoulder. "It's a mother's prerogative to be able to worry about her child," she said. "So whether I have a good reason, a bad reason, or no reason at all, I'm allowed to worry about you."

Jessi looked up and said, "And I appreciate it. But I'll be fine. Today will be fine. I'm going to have fun with my friends. I'll be careful, and nothing bad will happen. In fact, I feel like this will be an amazing day! I have so much energy and am in such a good mood. Nothing is going to make this a bad day, Mom!"

Jessi's mom wrapped her in a big hug, kissed her on the top of the head, and walked back to the stove. "Did you want me to drive you to the school?"

"It's a beautiful day out. I think I'll walk. It'll help me digest this wonderful breakfast you made me. I don't want to be too full when the demo starts."

"Ok. We'll see you at the demo then. I love you."

Jessi stood up from the table and walked over to her mom, giving her a big hug. "I love you too!" She exited the kitchen and hollered, "See you at the demo!"

She hurried to the front door, grabbed her workout bag, and headed outside. As she quickly walked down the street, she turned back to see her mother standing inside the house, watching her through the window. Even though she couldn't clearly see her face, she imagined her mother looking worried.