

THREAD COUNT



Chapter One

I remember where I was the day they came.

It was a brisk fall day, under a grey washed sky. The lawns along the street were covered in dead leaves and the wind rustled through the jagged branches of the lifeless trees.

The image is burned into my mind because of what that typical fall day was accompanied by.

It had all started a few weeks earlier at the house on the end of the street with The Patersons. They had just come home from a vacation far away, typical of them, the upper middle class couple; but the strangest thing was how much weight Mr. Paterson had lost along the way. Mrs. Paterson too, a thin woman on a regular day, was stick thin, eyes completely hollow.

We should have known then. We should have suspected.

As the days went by after they got home, nobody saw The Patersons. After a few days, the neighbourhood saw police show up to their door.

News cameras arrived, which I thought a bit odd. I guess Mr. Paterson had been someone important, back when the meaning of that word meant something else entirely.

Anyway, the police revealed that the couple were nowhere to be found; vanished without a trace. All that remained was a pile of clothes in the living room sat in front of the television.

One of the Officers, Hamilton I think he was called, was tasked with gathering evidence.

The night he went in there I could've sworn I heard screams but, being just a child, nobody would have believed me.

The next day, more news cameras and more police.

Again, no trace of The Patersons...or of Hamilton. Nothing but clothes lying in the middle of the floor.

The neighbourhood grew paranoid after that. Everyone steered clear of The Paterson place.

That is, until the first week of school ended.

Every kid and their brother wanted to go to the “death house.” Just for giggles. Just to prove they weren't chicken shit. Word spread around and it came out there would be a huge house party there on Friday night.

Everyone who was everyone at the high school was invited. Which is why I wasn't. But I didn't want to go anyway. Not

just because they weren't my type of people, but because that house scared the shit out of me.

Friday night came and I remember watching the crowd of kids journey over there. The crowd was too big for the police to handle, and besides that, a good number of kids had parents on the force who encouraged that sort of thing.

It was around midnight when the loud thumping bassline that had been shaking my windows suddenly stopped. The whole street went silent.

I guess the adults figured the party had been shut down and decided to get some sleep instead of investigating.

In the morning, that grey covered morning, we saw what had happened at the party.

Out there on the lawn, scattered everywhere were the clothes of all the kids who had attended.

An enormous pile of clothes, just sitting there; waiting. Watching.

Not a single person survived that night at The Patersons, and that was the day we found out why.

As the rest of the street stood by the end of the driveway, we witnessed that pile of clothes, getting bigger, blown closer together by the wind.

I wish I had said something, but at the time I didn't know.

I wasn't sure.

I couldn't believe it.

Because that day...

There was no wind...

Chapter Two

The crowd had gathered outside of the Paterson house, dumbfounded at the sight of it all, and worse by the implications. The house had already been the sight of several disappearances, but this was certainly far worse than they could have imagined.

Among the piles of clothing, small glimpses of the kids who wore them could be seen strewn about.

A bedazzled jean jacket with the name “Lizzie” on the back that had once belonged to Elizabeth Jerkins was now lying there on the ground. She was such a nice girl. In public. The bedazzled jacket did a good job of convincing the adults anyway. But her online campaigns of cyber bullying said something else. Still, she didn’t deserve to disappear like that.

The red and yellow letterman jacket of Jacob Hinkley was on top of a pile of various polo shirts, each worn by “The Squad” he used to hangout with. You would think that as a huge football jock he would be the school bully towering over everyone, but honestly, he couldn’t have been a nicer guy. Sure he would bow to peer pressure on occasion, but he still told people off when they were being assholes.

Then I noticed the ripped green hooded army jacket of Julia Mitchell, next to the thigh high studded leather boots she

wore. Despite how progressive our school was, that girl still had it hard. She clearly reacted to the world as someone who had experienced something awful.

But nothing could be as awful as what had happened that day.

It was The Hinkleys, Jake's mom and step-Dad, who broke from the crowd first. They ran towards the jacket that their son wore, Mike Hinkley sinking to his knees and beginning to sob, while his wife Katherine kneeled beside him, rubbing his back while she rested her head on his shoulders.

Then The Jerkins ran towards the pile. The held up her jean jacket and the began sifting through the clothes underneath it as though somehow their daughter would be hiding beneath it.

No one ran in for Julia's clothes. I thought about it. I had had a huge crush on her for so long, but this wasn't really the time or place to make that public.

More and more of the parents ran onto the driveway, throwing clothes out of the away as they dug uselessly to find their children. The police and the media finally arrived to the sight of hundreds of screaming and sobbing parents.

Lieutenant Hampton arrived with two or three squad cars and ordered his men to close off the area and get the parents

out of there before they contaminated the crime scene. As the officers stepped onto the driveway, preparing to grab the distraught parents, the scene was interrupted by shouting from The Hinkleys.

“Jacob! It’s Jacob!”

Everyone turned to look, but Jake was nowhere to be found. Instead, it appeared as though the left sleeve of Jacob’s letterman jacket was touching the chest of Mike Hinkley. It was if an invisible puppet string was lifting it, bobbing it up and down on Mr. Hinkley’s chest.

Hampton told one of his officers to go get them out of here. An officer approached and reached down to grab Mike’s shoulder, but Mike shoved him off.

“Jake! Jake it’s me! It’s us! It’s your parents! PLEASE!”

As the officer looked over Mike’s shoulder, Jacob Hinkley’s letterman jacket went limp.

“Jake? Jacob? JACOB!”

Mike clutched the jacket to his face, tears streaming down his cheeks onto the yellow leather sleeves.

The officer finally managed to lift him to his feet and began escorting him away as Mrs. Hinkley tried to console her husband.

As the day went on, officers escorted each of the parents, along with their children's empty clothes, down to the station. Every now and then though, a sleeve or a pant leg would move in such a way that would make one of the parents cry out as though it was their own child reaching out to them.

As the hours passed, the pile grew smaller, until all the articles of clothing had been accounted for.

All of it, except for Julia's.

Lieutenant Hampton approached the pile of Julia's clothes, then looked over at me. He saw me staring at them, then raised his hand before shouting over:

“Hey! Lemme talk to you for a minute.”

I stood there, still staring at her clothes for a moment before looking up at him. He walked over, pulling up on the back of his pants as he did.

“Calvin, right?”

“Uhh. Yes. Yes sir.”

“Well, Calvin, I’m Officer Hampton. Well Lieutenant Hampton.”

“I know. I uhh... saw you at an assembly at school.”

“Is that right? Well, I wanted to ask you a few questions.”

“Umm. Okay.”

“Do you know whose clothes those are?”

“Uhh. Julia Mitchell sir. She uhh. She was a girl at my school.”

“I see. She a friend of yours.”

“Uhh. No, no. She uhh— I just knew her.”

“I see,” he said, his eyes lowering a bit, before a small, soft smile came onto his face.

“Well, this Julia. Do you know why she was here last night?”

“Uhh. Yeah she uh... a bunch of the kids from school wanted to throw a party at the house. I think she uhh... just wanted to have fun.”

“And you didn’t go?”

“No I uhh. I didn’t go.”

“Well, why the hell not?”

“I wasn’t invited.”

“Ahh. I see..” He sighed. “Well, I suppose that might not have been a bad thing.”

Hampton looked back at the house. He gritted his teeth for a bit, lowered his gaze to Julia’s clothes then looked back to me.

“Listen, do you know why the kids decided to have a party here of all places?”

“I think they wanted to have a party here cause of... cause of what happened.”

“Cause of what happened?”

“Well yeah. Kids were calling it the “Death House.” They wanted to show they weren’t scared by throwing a party there.”

Hampton sighed. “Yeah... that checks out.”

He shook his head and from under his breath I could just make out him saying “Jesus fucking Christ.”

“Alright, well thanks Calvin. Can I call on you if I have any more questions?”

“Sh-sure thing.”

“Thanks. Now if you don’t mind, we gotta look into some stuff. So if you can head on out of here that would be appreciated.”

“Uhh... yeah for sure.”

“Thank you. Go get some rest. We’ll try to look for your—for Julia.”

He walked back towards Julia’s clothes that were still splayed out on the driveway. I started walking home, glancing back at that house, the house where it all started. But then, and I still don’t really know why, I decided that I wanted to go for a walk in the woods behind the neighbourhood.

I think if I’m honest with myself, it was because I wanted to visit the last place I had talked to Julia. Back before we grew into teenagers. Back when we used to sword fight with tree branches. Back to the tree where I carved our names, like a huge dork.

As I walked through the forest, I looked up at the evening sky and the black silhouettes of the tree branches that cut through the purples and the pinks of the setting sun. It was

late enough now that there were sections of black far above me, dotted with stars far out in the distance of the universe.

As I looked out there, I remembered back to when we were kids, staying out late, looking up at the stars and wondering what was out there. I remember feeling so small back then looking up at the massiveness of space.

Now I felt the same. Small. Insignificant.

As I walked towards our tree, I was so lost in thought that I didn't even notice the footsteps running towards me.

I didn't notice anything until I was tackled to the ground, by a terrified, and completely naked Julia...

Chapter Three

“I don’t know why I even bothered going to that stupid party. I figured it was better than sitting alone at home while my parents were out God knows where.

Still, even as I walked up to The Paterson house, the loud music pounding against the door and the sound of drunken idiots laughing inside, I hesitated. That hesitation did not become all that alleviated when I opened the door either.

Inside it was filled with people, some I recognized, some I didn’t. I think there were kids from all over, not just our school, who were there to party in the “death house.” Honestly that was my main motivation for going. I couldn’t let the “cool kids” come off as braver than I was in the face of the strange and unusual.

So in I went.

I walked into the...foyer? Wasn’t much more than a floor mat and a standing coat rack with a bunch of coats and jackets. I took mine off and hung it up on there before I even noticed the huge armchair where everyone else had stacked their stuff.

I walked passed the opening into the closed off kitchen just to look around. Apart from the kitchen, the floor was open concept. The dining room had been cleared out of all

furniture except for a shitty folding table that was being used for beer pong. Two guys I didn't recognize were playing against Sarah Himberg and Lizzie Jerkins.

The living room was just behind the dining room and it had a few couches bordering what had now been turned into a huge dance floor. Someone had hooked YouTube up on the big television in there where they had a playlist going of party music. Two guys were having a dance off on the rug in front of the TV while a bunch of guys sat on the couches.

I didn't see any girls in the living room, or a place to sit, and I certainly wasn't a fan of Lizzie or Sarah, so I went to look in the kitchen just to make sure there was at least some female presence here that I could turn to for help in case any of the guys got creepy.

Of course I walked into the kitchen and saw Manoli Sardeen, one of my least favourite humans, chatting with a girl who I later found out was called Clarissa. Dark lipstick, several piercings, all under fire engine red in her hair. What a lovely sight.

I thought to myself: just another reason for me to hate Manoli. Getting to know a girl I would've liked to get to know.

Guess I'll never get to know more about her now.

I made eye contact with her and she smiled at me.

I walked over, ignoring Manoli, and said:

“Oh my god! I love your piercings!”

“Thank you! I love yours!”

“Oh. *You* came.” Manoli responded, rolling his eyes.

“Well of course I did? What self respecting goth girl wouldn’t show up to a party at the death house?” I said, towering over him in my boots.

“Ooo, the death house!” Clarissa responded. “Like that movie *Monster House*, only not a huge disappointment.”

“Hey! That movie rocked!” A voice piped up from behind us.

There was Jake Hinkley in his “trademark” letterman jacket, sitting at a small table blowing smoke out of a bong through the kitchen window.

“Totally underrated movie! A giant house that eats people. A bunch of neighbourhood kids who have to fight it on their own using shenanigans. Huge explosions at the end! A cinematic masterpiece!”

“The fuck are you people talking about?” Manoli piped up, visibly annoyed.

“Monster House. It’s a movie. Some angry old dude lives in a house, turns out the house is alive because his wife died and her spirit possessed it. Starts eating the neighbourhood kids after he dies. All the TV trailers stole the music from Beetlejuice. Is none of this ringing a bell?” I pestered him, shooting glances over at Clarissa who was still smiling back.

Manoli just looked mad.

“Of course a fuckin’ weirdo like you would know a movie like that.”

“I mean, in this kitchen you’re the only one who doesn’t know the movie, so... I think that makes you the weirdo.” Clarissa pointed out.

Manoli then got all flummoxed, stuttered about us being bitches and then stormed out as we laughed.

“Ahh, don’t mind him. He just needs to lighten up.” Jake said, blowing more smoke out.

I went over to the big pile of booze on the kitchen counter and grabbed a red solo cup.

“Want anything?” I asked Clarissa.

“Whatever you recommend.”

“Wanna get white girl wasted on Blue Curacao?”

“Uhh, actually I prefer a bottle of something. Easier to keep a hand over the top of it.”

“Ooo yeah, good point. Wouldn’t want lil miss priss trying anything with our drinks.”

“Ha! Exactly. Although I think I could still take him even if he drugged me.”

“Ugh, I don’t wanna take anything of his.”

“Oh gross! Not what I meant!”

“Ya wanna have some of these Smirnoffs then?”

“Fuck yeah! Let’s do it!”

“Man, hearing about that shit is bumming me out. Sorry you ladies gotta go through that. Imma peace out so you can get your drink on without worrying about this dude tryin’ nothin either.”

Jake grabbed his bong, did a small curtsy to us and then made his way out into the living room. In the door frame he

looked back and said: “Also, he or any other dude give you grief, you lemme know. I got your backs.” He paused. “Though you ladies probably know how to throw down.” He grinned, winked his very glazed eye, and headed out.

I passed a bottle to Clarissa as we finally introduced ourselves, and began our journey to getting shittered.

I don’t know how long we hung out in that kitchen for, but it was a while. She was amazing. Liked the same music as me, laughed at my jokes, and wasn’t shy about dirty stuff.

Even though I was plastered though, I was still too shy to kiss her. I mean, when I like a guy I usually don’t have to worry about the ramifications of getting rejected, but from a girl? I’m still living that one down.

But she was down to hangout with me all night anyway, and eventually we decided to stumble out of the kitchen to check out the rest of the house together.

I remember we came out and made our first stop at the beer pong table, where new players had taken over since Lizzie and Sarah had left. I honestly couldn’t tell you if I knew who the people were or not. I was a little preoccupied and plenty drunk.

There was an Asian guy I remember thinking was cute. He had a preppy haircut and an earring and he was really good

at getting the shots in. He kept doing weird trick shots like off the kitchen wall or off of a beer bottle that would make everyone shout when they made it in. His partner was a tan skinned guy. I remember whispering to Clarissa about him because his beard was hilariously sad.

The other team had a girl with long braids who kept making jokes about her not living up to basketball stereotypes as she continued to miss every shot she took, and a chubby girl with short cropped hair who kept winking at Clarissa and I before making her shot. Forward, but not my type.

At one point, the girl with the braids made her throw and it completely missed the table, soared over the cups and bounced under one of the couches in the living room.

Clarissa and I laughed and figured it was about time to explore the rest of the house. As we were leaving the Asian guy went to get the ball. We passed the dance floor where Jake was dancing in the middle of the floor as everyone cheered him on. Kid could fucking dance. Maybe it was the weed.

As we drunkenly walked towards the basement entrance at the back of the house, I remember hearing the Asian guy from down behind the couch shouting:

“Holy fuck! Look at this rancid fucking sock under here! Hey, since those girls didn’t want you, maybe this’ll do!”

“Oh fuck you!” Shouted the short haired girl.

I giggled to myself as we headed down into the basement.

It was a decent sized room down there covered in carpet, with a small couch against the wall across from a small television set and two doors off to the side; one for laundry and the other a closet. In the middle of the room, Lizzie, Sarah, Manoli, Teddy Laflamme, and some other people I never got the names of, were sat in a circle with a bottle in the middle.

“Well, what kind of perverted debauchery do we have here?” Clarissa asked excitedly.

“We’re about to play Seven Minutes in Heaven!” Said Sarah.

“Yeah, but no gay shit, so you can’t play.” Manoli screeched at me.

“Speak for yourself asshole” said Teddy, taking a huge swig from his beer and smooching his lips at Manoli.

“Screw you man! If it lands on me, I’m not doing that. Only time I’m getting into that closet is if it’s with a girl.”

“Sure you’re not already in the closet?” Teddy snickered.

“Fuck you!”

“Well, we’re girls, so I guess we can play then.” Clarissa said before looking at me.

I took a sip of my drink, shrugged my shoulders and said “Fuck it. Let’s do it.”

We took our shoes off before walking onto the carpet where I sat down between Clarissa and Teddy. He and I never really hung out outside of school but we got along well enough when we interacted. The few times we talked he seemed to get me. He was out and proud and didn’t give a fuck about it. Makes me feel even worse about what happened to him.

“Well Manoli, since you’re so eager and you now have two more... “willing” prospects, why don’t you spin and see who’s unfortunate enough to be stuck in the closet with you?” Teddy said.

“Man, fuck you. I’m not goin’ first. With my luck it’ll land on her ugly ass.” He said, gesturing at me.

“Fine. Pussy.” Teddy said. “Well how about you then Julia? Wanna give ‘er a spin?”

I paused and let out a loud belch. Clarissa laughed her ass off as Manoli scowled.

“Well, given how appealing and lady like that was, I’m sure everyone’s eager to spend quality time with me now so I guess I’ll go first.” I reached for the bottle, twisted my wrist and let it fly.

Now, I had pretty good odds for that spin. Plenty of cute guys. Plenty of cute girls. I was really hoping for Clarissa though; and hell, at least I liked Teddy.

But luck, obviously, wasn’t on my, or anyone else’s side that night. So it’s no surprise that when it stopped spinning it was pointing at that shitty douche canoe Manoli goddamn Sardeen. The asshole who routinely called me fat all throughout my eating disorder. The asshole who made fun of me for having shitty parents. The fucking asshole who was...

Just a big fucking asshole.

“Fuck that!” He shouted.

“Yeah I’d like to request a do over.”

“Nope. Those are the rules. And you’re technically a girl so you have to do it.” Chimed in Lizzie; Sarah snickering into her shoulder.

Fuckin’ bitches.

“Fine.” I said coldly. “Let’s get this over with.”

Manoli scowled then made his way over to the closet, got in, and pushed passed the clothes hung up inside of it. I got up and looked at Clarissa one last time, wishing the bottle had spun differently. Sarah went over to the door and held it open, prepared to close it behind us as Lizzie said “Don’t forget, you have to stay in there for seven whole minutes!”

Again: Fuckin’ bitches.

I got in and threw some of the coats out from inside so we could at least have some room. I shoved them into Lizzie’s arms, walked in, and then they closed the door behind me. I stood there in the dark. The light from under the door provided just enough visibility to see the dimensions of the closet and the asshole’s face in front of me.

“Well, you better make this worth it for me, so how about a nice handjo—“

I grabbed him by the throat and pinned him against the wall of the closet. The light was just bright enough to see his stupid face go wide eyed in terror.

“Listen you little fuck. I hate you. You hate me. So we are gonna sit here for seven minutes and do **NOTHING**. If you put so much as a hand on me, I swear **TO GOD**, I will beat the living shit out of you. I will leave you a broken man. I will leave that pitiful thing between your legs a mangled mess that a starving dog wouldn’t look twice at, and I will tell everyone

that I did it because you tried to assault me. You will then forever be known as the huge fuckin creep who got beaten up and castrated by a girl because he tried to rape her. Do you understand me?”

He struggled to let out a coherent sound. As he struggled to speak he finally managed a nod.

“Good. Now sit there and shut hell up.”

I let him go and as he slumped back into the wall, engulfed by the coats, he clutched his throat as he wheezed. He definitely wanted to call me a bitch, but he was smart enough to keep that to himself.

We sat there as the minutes passed. He started to go quiet as I turned to look up at the ceiling of the closet. The music from upstairs continued to shake the house. I thought that the dancing must have been getting super intense because the whole ceiling started to shake as I heard people upstairs jumping and screaming. Then from outside the door, I thought I heard a few thuds as the muffled conversation turned to muffled yelling.

Then, before I could shout and ask what was going on, I felt that little asshole, after just putting the fear of God into him, touch my ass.

I was livid. I whipped around and shouted “Did you just touch my fucking—”

But he hadn’t. I know he hadn’t. I froze when I looked at him.

His face in the shadows was still gasping for air; his hand at his throat. But it wasn’t because of what I had done. It was because of the dark green coat hanging in the closet that had its sleeves wrapped around his throat.

I stood there horrified. After a few moments I somehow pulled myself together and I rushed to try and pull the sleeves off of him. As I pulled at them, the sleeves extended, the threads of the fabric suddenly spreading apart like fingers and latching onto his shirt, coursing like veins as they did. His shirt started to shake like a wave of cotton and then it suddenly fastened itself to his skin and began to compress him.

I pulled at the sleeves with no result then I tried to tear his shirt off. When I pulled at his shirt, I heard a wet tearing sound as I tugged. Tears streamed down his face as he silently screamed in the dark. Thick blood suddenly soaked his shirt as it continued to press deeper and deeper into his chest. His eyes began to bulge and I saw his entire chest begin to cave in on itself.

I backed up in horror as I saw the bottom of his shirt spread apart like the sleeves and fasten onto the waist of his pants. The pant legs then constricted around him and I watched as his legs began to shrivel.

I started screaming for help and I went for the door; but as I turned the handle, I felt something touch me from behind again. My hand still on the doorknob, I turned around to see the raised sleeves of a dark red cardigan just before it lunged at my face. I dodged it and swung the door open, hitting the cardigan and Manoli in the process. I fell out of the door, and turned around to see the cardigan leap at me, sleeves spread out like a spider pouncing.

Once it had landed on me, I pushed it away as much as I could. The threads of the fabric started to separate and posed to strike, weakening the grip of the sleeves enough that I could finally manage to shove it off of me. I threw it back into the closet and shut the door, still able to hear Manoli struggling to get free. I turned around to scream for help, but...

I was too late. They had already started.

They had already started... to feed.”

Chapter Four

“I leaned my back against the closet door, still sat on the floor trying to keep the creatures inside from getting to me. But the image in front of me was just as horrific as what lay in there.

I could see Lizzie Jerkin’s legs spasming while her bedazzled jean jacket was trying to inhale her entire face. Her arms lay limp beside her, having given up on fighting back. Sarah seemed to have fared better; if you can call it that. Her shirt was completely torn off, and her pants were thrown away near her ankles, but all over her body were enormous chunks of torn off flesh. A large gash near her neck was still spurting out blood as she looked up at the ceiling and her body jerked its last few moments of life.

I couldn’t find Teddy. Only his blood soaked turtleneck and black skinny jeans were there, were joined with a small rack’s worth of clothes from the other party guests feeding on the other party goers off in the corner. Judging from the blood soaked handprints, it looked like they tried to escape through the basement window, but it was too small for them to get out.

Then I turned towards the staircase; towards safety; towards her.

Clarissa was partway up the stairs, her arm outstretched, clinging to the hand rail as her black shredded tank top,

fabric separated into vicious tentacles, was strangling her as it tried to eat her back. As I looked over at her, the door behind me began to shake as all that was inside the closet began trying to get out. The door began to shake louder and louder, and the clothes feasting in the corner suddenly stopped to look over at me. There were no eyes but I know they were looking at me. They slowly turned and the fabrics of their various “bodies” began to break apart into loose threads that started to interweave and fasten to each other creating a bigger, more terrifying creature. I knew I had to move.

I ran towards Clarissa and started tearing at her shirt. I could still hear her breathing as I yanked at it, the sound of tearing underneath followed by her strained grunts of pain. I looked behind me and saw the creature continuing to form up as it started to crawl towards me. I wiped the sweat from my eyes and turned back to keep pulling, only to see Clarissa’s shirt had detached its fibres. It grasped onto the sleeve of my shirt and started pulsating. I tore it off of me, but I was too late. I felt my shirt go taut and I could feel tiny shards of what must have been teeth start to spew out from the inside of it and dig into me skin. I tore at my shirt and it tightened its grip, constricting against me. I finally managed to rip it off with a forceful tug and throw it behind me, but as I threw it I felt a sharp tear on my shoulder. As the air hit it, I screamed as I looked over to see an enormous chunk ripped out of my shoulder, exposing the muscle underneath it. I grabbed it on reflex and groaned through my teeth as my hand came into contact. As I did, I heard a thud in front of me.

Clarissa had collapsed forward. I went back to trying to tear off her shirt, slapping away it's threads as they tried to attack me, but...

It was too late.

I looked down at Clarissa's eyes and the light had disappeared. Those gorgeous hazel eyes had turned to glass, and her hand finally let go of the railing and slumped down lifelessly onto the stairs. I closed my eyes tight, and felt my tears begin to form, adding painfully to the sweat already in my eyes. I didn't have time to grieve though. The closet door burst open and I turned around to see the clothes slithering out of it, while the newly formed creature, this abomination of clothing, had crawled over to the base of the stairs. With two disassembled sleeves, it sent flying several tightly woven threads around my ankles and up my calves before tightening and beginning to drag me down towards it. Several neck holes of the various shirts had opened up and conjoined in such a way to create a gaping mouth that appeared to have rows upon rows of jagged teeth inside of it. I grabbed onto the railing and held on as tightly as I could, but the creature was so strong. I held on for as long as I could, as the threads around my legs began to pulsate.

I looked down at Clarissa and knew what I had to do.

With one free hand I grabbed Clarissa's shoulder and hoisted her upright as the clothes on her body continued to feed. Once she was upright, I pulled back with all my might and threw her body backwards and onto the pile of clothes. The threads around my legs unravelled, as the creature fell apart under Clarissa's weight, the various articles loosening apart before breaking into their individual pieces as they hit the ground. My leg was free, but I could feel my pant legs beginning to tighten.

I climbed up the stairs a bit away, and jiggled my pants off as I did, finally managing to tear them off of me. As they fell in a heap at the bottom of the stairs, for good measure I ripped my underwear and bra off and threw them down behind the creature. I turned back one last time as I watched Clarissa's fire engine hair disappear underneath the pile of ravenous clothing.

I ran up the stairs to the doorway of the basement and shut the door behind me before looking to see if I could find any help, but to my horror, the main floor had been infested as well. The coats that all been thrown about haphazardly onto the couches near the front foyer had become an enormous mound of pulsating clothes intermixed with the grasping hands and the still kicking feet of the party goers. The beer pong table was broken in half, and amid the break was what little remained of that cute asian boy, who was slowly being consumed by his light grey T-shirt and dark wash jeans. In the middle of the dance floor, two severed hands, bones

jutting out and blood dripping down them, were each clasped to a sleeve from Jake Hinkley's Letterman Jacket. The top of his curly haired head was all I could see underneath it. Beside him, two polo shirts were feasting on the owners of the hands, alongside a small gathering of socks and boxer briefs. The front entrance was entirely blocked by the mound of writhing clothes and I didn't have a clear path to the kitchen to go through the window or the to the back porch to go through the screen door.

I was trapped.

Then I saw it. A door right across and to the left from the basement entrance. I must have missed it on my way down. I ran towards it and as I opened it up I saw that it was a bathroom. I hurried inside, praying that there was a window I could get out through. Once inside, I turned around and saw what I needed: a window just above the bathtub.

But then, I saw Teddy, lying in the bathtub naked and covered in blood.

He was leaned up against the tiled wall, one knee raised up, the other leg outstretched, while he looked up at the window. His breathing was heavy. As I walked over, I looked down and noticed that the porcelain of the tub was covered in a stream of blood that was flowing down towards the drain. He glanced over at me without moving his head and just let out a soft chuckle before looking forward. I leaned down and knelt

beside him outside of the tub. All over his body he was covered in bite marks. The worst of it seemed to be gushing out of his chest. As I looked at him, I heard a loud noise from just outside the door. His eyes darted over to it before looking back at me and nodding slightly up towards the window.

“Go.” He whispered. “I can’t climb that without bleeding out.”

I looked at him as tears began to swell. He smiled as he gazed forward.

“It was my chest binder. Took a huge chunk out of my tits.” He chuckled.

I looked at him, confused.

“I started wearing it before I switched to your school.”

I looked down, and noticed him cross his legs. He caught my gaze.

“No peeking.” He chuckled.

His chuckle was greeted immediately by an enormous bang at the door. He looked over and grimaced.

“You have to get out of here. I’m not gonna make it, but you can.” I started looking around for ways to move him, but he grabbed my arm.

“It’s okay Julia. Really, I kind of prefer this. This means I get to die like a man.” He chuckled.

I looked down at him, tears still swelling. I put my hand on his shoulder and nodded at him. I climbed over him and opened the window. The door to the bathroom started to break apart, and I looked back to see the wood splinter and a loose thread slither through. I stuck my head a part of the way out the window, before looking down at him one last time.

“Thanks for being cool Julia. I hope you stay cool.”

The door began to smash apart as I pushed my way out of the window. I fell out of it and landed on my ass onto a huge pile of dead leaves before sliding down the hillside at the back of the house. I looked back up at the open window and heard Teddy triumphantly yell, “Fuck you, you Vogue catalogue rejects!” before I heard the smashing of the glass and porcelain.

I looked away and started running; straight into the woods. It was dark and I had no idea where I was going. I just kept running until I was too tired to run. I finally found an old familiar bench deep in the woods near that tree from when

we were younger. I hid underneath it, covered myself in leaves to stay warm and looked out for any signs of movement until I passed out from exhaustion.

When I woke up, I didn't know what to do. How was I going to fight those things. How was I going to tell anyone what happened? I was a drunk, naked, teenaged girl, with a reputation for being weird, who just saw all of her friends get eaten by carnivorous clothes. I was tired and I was so fucking scared. I thought I would wait until nightfall to sneak back home and avoid any eyes on me. Then, when I saw you through the trees, I thought you might be one of those creatures or that you were being attacked by them. So I tackled you.

And well...you know the rest""

Julia looked down at the floor of my bedroom. She took a deep breath in after she finished her story. We sat there in silence for a while, sat across from each other, completely naked, cross legged in the dark. Any clothing in the room had been thrown into my closet and locked up for good measure. Even the blankets, just in case.

She sat there for a few moments, breaking the silence with a snuffle.

“You don't believe me do you?”

I kept staring at the ground.

“It’s fine.” She said through her tears. “I wouldn’t believe me either.”

I kept staring off. I was thinking back to the day The Patersons got home. The stories about their clothes being all that was left behind. About Officer Hamilton disappearing. Only his clothes were left. The way Jake Hinkley’s parents started screaming that their son’s jacket was moving. How other parents started to think the same.

All that was left were their clothes...

I looked up at her. She sniffled and looked back at me.

“I can’t say I believe you.” I said.

She inhaled, ready to cry.

“Yet.”

She let out a short sob, sighed and calmed herself. She sniffled and nodded.

“Okay.” She said weakly.

“But I think that what we need to do, is call the police station. Right now.”

She sniffled. “That’s probably a good idea.”

I pulled out my phone and called 911.

“We’re sorry. All of our operators are currently busy. Please stay on the line and help will be with you shortly.”

“Must be busy with all of the phone calls from the parents.”

Julia sniffled. Then suddenly her eyes went wide and she looked up at me.

“Calvin. What happened to the clothes that were at The Paterson House?”

“The parents took them down to—“

“The police station!?”

I looked at her and my eyes started to widen.

“We’re sorry. All of our operators are currently busy. Please stay on the line—“

I looked up at her realizing what she thought was happening.

“We have to get to the police station! Now!” She shouted as she shot upright.

“Okay, okay. We’ll drive over and see what’s going on. But shouldn’t we put something on fire—“

“No! We can’t risk it! We’ll put the heater on in your parent’s car. Now let’s move!”

We went downstairs, careful not to wake up my parents, slipped outside and got into the car. I put on the heater and backed out of the driveway. On the way to the police station, we tried to call them again.

We got the same message again and again, until it was drowned out by the sound of a blaring emergency siren, like a neighbourhood dinner bell, that blasted out across the whole of the town.

Chapter Five

““I was sitting in the locker room just scrolling on my phone. My Dad was in there telling me that he was on his way to The Paterson house.

“One headphone out at all times young lady. This is a police station. It’s very dangerous.”

I rolled my eyes at him.

“I know Dad. I just saw a bunch of angry, insecure, middle-aged men out there with guns strapped to their hips.”

“Oh that’s how it is huh?”

“Yeah that’s how it is.” I told him.

He was about to go on his usual spiel that I had heard a thousand times when he looked down at his shoe. He had stepped on this purple, white, polka-dotted tie laying on the floor.

“What the hell is this doing here?”

“I dunno. Maybe your boys brought it in for questioning. A crime against fashion maybe?”

He laughed.

“Young lady. Your sass is not appreciated.”

“I’d say it’s under-appreciated.”

Then he held up the tie, and just rotated it in the air then after looking at it for a bit he was like: “This is kind of a crime against fashion...Real fu— real freakin’ ugly. So what should the sentence be for this criminal accoutrement?”

“Why ask me?”

“You got a part time job. You pay taxes. I am but a humble civil servant at your beck and call m’lady.”

I laughed.

“Well... the crime is pretty egregious.” I remember saying. “Capital Punishment for sure.”

“Oh snap!” He said. “How blood thirsty of you!”

“Just takin’ after your colleagues I guess.”

He didn’t appreciate that, but he humoured me.

“Well. To death then little tie. I’m sorry that my daughter is so cold hearted.”

Then he threw it in the trash cart by the door.

“I’m off to The Paterson house. You any idea what happened there?”

I said: “A party I think, but I was in my room all last night, remember?”

“Ahh yes. Engaging in the much more mature activity of watching cartoons.”

“Anime.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Lines drawn on a page that move. Whatever. Well, I’m off to check things out. That house sure has everyone freaked out. I love you baby girl.”

“Love you too Dad.”

A couple hours went by. I sat in the locker room watching videos on my phone. Kind of got into a hyper-focus. There’s this abridged series I like on there that’s really funny about—

...

I guess it’s not important.

Anyway, I was watching my videos, and then all of a sudden I heard a sound; a clatter? Next to the door.

The mop on the garbage cart thing had fallen over. It startled me, but I didn't think too much of it. Figured maybe it had been balancing there awhile and the air had shifted just right.

I went to turn back to my video for maybe a second, when I saw it in the middle of the floor in the corner of my eye.

The tie.

That stupid purple tie with the polka dots.

It was in the middle of the floor. The MIDDLE of the floor.

I was shook. I don't do drugs. I don't drink. But I thought I must've gotten dosed or something.

I stared at this thing in the middle of the floor for honestly, way too long, but after I went to put my phone down, I looked away for a second and then it...

Well it fu— it freaking moved!

I saw it move! It looked like it filled up with air or something. I thought maybe a creepy bug or a mouse something was in it, so I jumped up off of the bench.

I tried to slowly creep around it and it just kept... breathing...

I looked around the room. I didn't know what to do. It was between me and the mop which I figured would make a good weapon.

I was planning my strategy of attack, when the locker room door opened and my Dad walked in.

“Young lady we got a bit of a situation—“

And then... this tie.

This... THIS FUCKING TIE!

It turned and growled at him! It turned around and snarled at my Dad before letting out this awful shriek and jumping at him!

It went straight for my Dad's neck but he dodged and it hit him in the shoulder instead and started...biting him!

He started pulling at it as he moved further into the locker room. I went to grab the mop but then he just screamed:

“Get this fucking thing off of me!

I expected officers to come pouring in, but nobody did!

I went to grab him, but the thing bit into him and my Dad fell back into the lockers, hit the back of his head and fell to the ground.

I went for the mop, and for a second I thought I heard someone yelling out in the waiting area, but I couldn't hear it for long because my Dad let out this horrible scream! When I turned around, the tie had broken into a bunch of strands and started...

Well it looked like it was trying to...infect? My Dad's Hat!

That stupid park ranger hat he always wore!

My Dad started to stand up as he pulled at the tie, when suddenly, the strap on his hat tightened around his neck and I saw the brim fasten to his forehead!

Then while he's fighting his hat, the tie breaks apart into more threads and these pointed... arms? Start stabbing at my Daddy's eyes!!!

He screamed and I ran over to him, grabbed the stupid tie, ripped it away and threw it on the floor; but when I did that, it... it...

It took my Daddy's eyes with it! I heard this horrible squishy pop! And when I looked down I saw this tie with my Dad's brown eyes skewered to two of its sharp threaded arms!

I looked back at my Dad's face and his eyes were hollowed out, just black holes and blood was pouring out of them. He screamed even louder, but it was cut off by the strand of his hat. He ran forward, but the tie managed to slither over and bite his ankle. He falls forward into the door to the waiting and that's when I saw what was happening in the rest of the station.

It was fucking chaos!

I saw a man getting eaten by a Hawaiian shirt! I saw a woman holding onto a desk as her skirt was slowly eating its way up her torso. This punk kid from school, his detached head was on the ground and his studded choker was covered in blood and chewing on his cheek.

I saw a Tweed Jacket pommeling, like punching Mr. Quinn from Math, in the face!

I saw a guy who was fighting with a plaid cutoff shirt that was ripping into his bare chest run by as he was chased by a pair of jean shorts!

Then, as I stood there in awe of all of this, stuff happening I suddenly hear this THUD, THUD, THUD.

Walking into the frame of the door, fused together, is this enormous... thing... made up of police uniforms and bullet proof vests. It was like a Golem of police clothes, complete with a giant hat made up melded together police hats.

It lumbered towards the front of the station, shaking the floor with each step and for a moment, I was so terrified that nothing else existed.

At least... until I heard him scream.

I looked down and saw my Dad finally managing to pull his hat off. That stupid brown hat that made him look like a cartoon character. It was soaked in blood and I'm pretty sure I saw tufts of hair and scalp falling out of it.

Sure enough, when I saw the top of my Dad's head, his hair was pretty well all gone and his scalp was covered in blood. In a few spots I could see his skull.

He let out a huge wail and that's when that huge thing stopped just outside of the locker room. It stopped and turned its...body? Before it took two steps forward towards my Dad and then just...looked down...

I don't know how, it didn't have eyes or anything, but it like... it was looking at him. It was looking at my Dad! My Dad who was sitting there screaming!

My Dad kept wailing as it tilted its... head? A bit to the side. It just watched my Dad screaming on the ground, this massive THING. It was like it was studying him.

Then my Dad crumpled to the ground and started to crawl forward.

The overhanging lights in the station were pretty well blotted out by the shadow of this huge monstrosity that was just standing there... looking down at my Dad.

Then...as my Dad reached its feet...

It happened.

It...descended on him.

I saw this creature raise its arms with speed I didn't know possible. As the arms were raised, all of the clothes, the police shirts and the bullet proof vests and the gun belts and all the clothes just all burst into these long strands of wound together thread that looked like tentacles. Sharp ended tentacles.

I couldn't tell you how many there were. It could have been a million for all I know. A million tentacles of interwoven thread, so tightly wound at the ends they could pierce silence.

I saw them shoot down and THROUGH my Dad.

...

My... my Daddy.

...

I saw those threads shoot through my Dad, all over his body. His arms spread and shot out to the sides and he was lifted up to his knees.

I heard him manage to let out this HORRIBLE whimper.

All of the threads had shot through—STABBED THROUGH—his body, but he was still alive.

Then I saw this big tentacle, this big woven together thread, bigger than all the others, slowly swim or slither towards him.

It moved like a wave over to my Dad's face, and the pointed end... stopped in front of it and I heard my Dad let out another whimper.

The end of this tentacle of fabric, writhed over to my Dad's face and I swear TO GOD...

I heard it WHISPER SOMETHING!

I know that sounds crazy, but so does CLOTHES FUCKING KILLING PEOPLE!!!

...

I don't what they said.

I was too far away.

All I know is... frozen still, after what felt like forever... their “conversation” ended, when that big fucking tentacle pulled itself back before shooting straight forward and bursting its way through my Dad— MY DADDY’S THROAT!!!””

Amber burst into tears. The rest of the room went silent. The school gym was full of people all staring up at her recounting what had happened at the police station.

I saw Mr. Hinkley, Jake’s step-dad, put his arm on her shoulder. She turned around and crumbled into his bare chest.

After a few moments she wiped her face and turned back to face everyone.

“I’m okay. I’m okay.” She said.

“I watched my Daddy die. I wanted to stay with him but I had to get out. So I ran back towards the back entrance. The tie turned around and chased after me but I managed to slam the door as it lunged at me.

When I turned around I saw Mr. Hinkley. Mr. Hinkley had been out having a smoke when he got attacked. I saw him naked and covered in cuts and bruises, but he was alive.

His wife was inside when everything went down. We don’t know what happened to her.”

Mr. Hinkley stared off into the distance. His wife had been wearing a business skirt that day. She was one of the many who died at the station that day.

“”He looked at me and said “You need to get out of those clothes NOW! These things are alive!”

I looked over and he had started a fire and I saw a pile of his clothes in there. They were... God they were screaming!

I took mine off and threw them in the fire. Mine didn’t scream, but I felt a lot safer not having them on.”

Amber paused. She looked... weary. I can’t imagine what she was feeling.

After a few minutes of silence, Me. Hinkley stepped forward.

“Look. This all sounds crazy, but we were there. These things are alive and they can turn your clothes into one of them.

I don’t know how. I don’t know why. But this is happening.

This is our situation.

Which means...

Right now... Everyone NEEDS to take off all of their clothes. And we need to burn all of them.””

They both stood up completely naked staring at the rest of the crowd.

Julia and I had been standing at the back of the entrance to the gym the whole time. Julia of course, was naked too.

Amber looked over and saw her.

“Julia. You— you’re—”

“I saw them too.”

The small crowd in the gym turned around.

“I was at The Paterson House Party. I’m... I’m the only one who made it out.”

I looked around the room. A few others were up at the front, who had taken all of their clothes off. A few of them looked like patrolmen, but a few I didn’t recognize.

“They’re right. These things are alive and they’re deadly. They... they killed my friend. They killed everyone at the party.”

“We all have to take off our clothes and burn them.” Amber shouted.

She was met with silence. The small crowd of people gathered were in shock from the testimony. There was Amber, Mr. Hinkley, Julia, and several other community members, fully naked, covered in blood, cuts, and bruises, standing up at the front of the gym.

Then after a short pause, the small crowd, as I feared they would...

Burst into laughter.