

## *The Dream*

**Madalynn McCabe (2020)**

Jolene stalked the empty streets. The wind created music. The further she travelled, the more insistent the wind became, as if it were warning her to go back and to stay away. She ignored it and continued into the ghost town. The music grew louder and more frenzied. But when she turned, there was nothing there. Jolene quickened her pace, becoming less aware of her surroundings.

This was a fatal mistake.

After trudging down a few more streets, the music stopped. Jolene turned and scanned the houses around her. Nothing. When she faced the direction she was heading, she saw blood red eyes.

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Jolene woke, drenched in sweat, clutching her shirt. ‘Why do I keep having these dreams? They always seem so real.’ She sighed as she got up and got ready for the day before her.

Stepping into her favourite café, Jolene clenched her fists when she noticed Raven. She turned away and ordered her latte before sitting down as far away from Raven as possible. She pulled out her phone, headphones, and sketchbook. Putting in her headphones to play music and block the rest of the world, Jolene began drawing as she awaited her daily fix of caffeine. The red eyes of the creature flashed in her mind

A few minutes later, she was pulled from her thoughts by a tap on her shoulder. It was Raven. ‘Your coffee’s going cold,’ she said.

‘Thanks.’

‘How are the attacks?’ Raven asked.

‘They’re—’ Jolene paused. Just last week she had one and there were still scratches on her arm because of it. ‘Not getting any better. Not that it matters to you, considering you’ve caused so many of them.’

The cafe fell silent. It stayed that way for a few minutes. Jolene noticed Raven staring at the drawing in her lap. She shut her sketchbook.

‘Fine, I understand when I’m not wanted, but as an extra precaution, head straight home today.’ She walked away before Jolene had the chance to reply.

Jolene sighed, packed away her stuff, and grabbed her coffee. She trudged to the nearby jetty, taking long sips of coffee. *At least I have a day off. Hopefully, the rest of the day*

*will be better*, she thought. Jolene sat at the end of the jetty, then pulled her sketchbook out, humming along to *Thunderstruck* by ACDC as she drew.

She drew the day away. In what felt like only a few minutes, it went from ten in the morning to three in the afternoon. Noticing the time, Jolene packed up her belongings and discarded her empty coffee cup in the nearby bin. Smiling, as peace and serenity overtook her for the first time in a few months, Jolene began her mindlessly wandering.

A few minutes later, she found herself in an eerily quiet and grey town. She strolled through the town, where every street and house looked the same.

*Great, I'm lost.*

Without warning, the temperature dropped. She tried using her phone for directions, but the screen was black. *Even better, my phones dead. I guess I could ask someone if they know the way out of here.*

Jolene knocked on the door of a nearby house, but nobody answered. She knocked on door after door with no reply.

'Of course, I'm stuck,' she said. *I guess I could retrace my steps, but everything looks the same here.* Jolene looked up from the footpath. For a second, she thought someone was there. She blinked. Whatever was there was gone.

'Great. I'm going crazy. I guess you were right, Raven.' A tear rolled down her cheek. Her thoughts were racing, and the streets were closing in on her. She scratched at her arms, wounds from previous attacks opening. She forced herself to calm down. She felt as though someone was watching her from afar.

She got up from her spot on the ground, and dusting herself off, she meandered, attempting to distract herself. She began fidgeting with the sleeves of her jacket. Her focus darted from building to building. The freezing wind picked up, creating an enchanting melody as it passed between empty buildings. The more she walked, the colder it got. She wrapped her jacket around herself as the tune became panicky, almost screaming at her to go back. But Jolene had no clue which way was back.

The music grew louder, but when she turned, everything stopped.

A shiver went down her spine.

Someone was behind her.

She turned.

Raven's eyes were blood red. 'You were warned,' she said.