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The Knowing

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Cold sweat beaded across my cold skin. I could still hear them even from my hiding spot. Curled up and cowering on my closet floor with the door closed. I live alone but it doesn't matter. The noises just don't stop. I hear them 24/7. Voices, the voices in my head are sometimes loud and sometimes they are merely a whisper. It depends on who's voice it is.

Since my thirtieth birthday two weeks ago, I had gone out the night before and was at the club drinking, at midnight my friends sang happy birthday, we had more drinks. A normal twenty-nine-year-old. I went home and passed out, in my living room on my sofa. I woke up to voices. At first, I thought I had left the tv on, then thought it was my neighbour's tv. I checked my phone and saw that my mom had called at 5:02 in the morning, when I was born, she sang happy birthday to me.

Feeling a little hung over I stumbled into the bathroom where I brushed my teeth and splashed water on my face. Staring at myself in the mirror, I could hear Jane, my neighbor whispering about dinner and having to run errands she didn't want to do.

She sounded like she was in the room. I turned around expecting to see her there, but no one. I was alone in my bathroom but could hear Jane as if she was standing beside me. How? Why?

I banged on the wall and shouted, "Shut up Jane!"

Jane paused, then continued mumbling something.

I crawled into the shower and let the water wash away the previous night's remains. It was a fun night. My friends were always so supportive and loving. They were family to me. We were supposed to meet for my birthday brunch. I was up early enough to take my time in the shower and just enjoy life's pleasures.

Standing in front of my mirror I slipped on a cute mini skirt and silk blouse. Pulling my hair back and sweeping it up into a messy bun, I let a couple strands hang out. I admired how I looked. Still rocking the super model look.

Grabbing my purse and slipping my heels on at the door I stepped out into the hallway and locked my apartment door. Walking over to the elevator I heard my neighbor coming up behind me. It was Jane. I called for the elevator as she had caught up to me.

"Good morning, Lucy."

"Good morning, Jane."

'God could that skirt be any shorter,' Jane's disdain was apparent.

"I'm sorry what?" I asked. Pretty sure she didn't just say that.

"Nothing. I just said good morning."

Looking at her as the elevator slid open. We stepped on.

'Probably still hung over from last night, bet that's the same outfit she wore.'

I could hear her words but was looking at her and her mouth had not moved. What kind of witchcraft was this.

'Surprised she doesn't have a man hanging off her arm this morning. What does she think she's 20? My mother would kill me if I had worn anything like that when I was younger. These young women have no self-respect.'

I wanted to say something, but I couldn't open my mouth. Jane just stood there with a pleasant smile on her face and then the doors slid open.

"Have a great day, Lucy." She stepped off, crossed the lobby and out of the front door.

I slowly followed. What had just happened? And then I stepped outside, and the voices came at me like a wave. I chalked it up to noises in the city. It was very busy. I hustled down the street and hopped on the bus. It was a few stops I got off deep in thought and headed over to our favorite restaurant.

I entered the place was busy, but our favorite booth was empty. I sat down and waved to the waitress. I was the first one there and ordered coffee. Again, I noticed that the waitress thought I looked like movie star, and my blouse was revealing.

Lisa came in first, saw me and waved. She came over and gave me a hug. *'You smell great!'*

"You too," I replied.

She smiled and sat down across from me. "Guess we are the early birds."

I nodded.

Just then Karen and Chrissy came in and found us.

We ordered drinks and food. Karen began telling us about a guy she met last night.

Lisa sipped her coffee and rolled her eyes. *'Here we go again, why don't you tell them the truth you stole that man off me. You couldn't get a man on your own, you must swoop in like a vulture and take them off your friends. Vulture Karen beware of her claws as she swoops in, bitch.'*

Sitting there I sipped my coffee and then heard Chrissy's thoughts. 'I wonder how many calories there are in this coffee? Maybe I shouldn't drink too much of it. God, I need to lose 14 pounds. I'm such a cow. Who is Karen talking about? Just smile and nod.'

"Then I kicked him out, had a shower and arrived here."

"Damn girl, that's crazy," Lisa laughed. 'Crazy that he even stayed the night.'

"So, birthday girl, do you want to go shopping after brunch?" Karen smiled at her.

'Damn, she can't even afford rent. Lucy needs to get her man's credit card, at least one of her men to start putting up. She has so many, damn girl, just pick one.' Lisa smiled. 'Is that my blouse, she's wearing my blouse I think?'

Swallowing and nodding, slowly sipping my coffee. Watching Lisa who just smiled at me.

'Great trying on clothes! That is what I need to remind me of how fat I am. Damn Lucy is looking a little pudgy too. Should she really be eating those pancakes?' Pressing her lips together. 'Too many calories. Not getting any younger. Heard cellulite sneaks up on you when you hit the big three zero.'

The next hour was excruciating, my friends were shallow bitches who only liked hanging out with me because we got free drinks, food and into clubs. I made my excuses after we ate and headed over to my mom's house. She wasn't home, and from there I stopped at the park and sat on a bench for ten minutes. I couldn't take it. I kept hearing people's thoughts; I disappeared back to my apartment.

The following day was even worse; I went to work and was completely crushed to find that I didn't have anyone I could rely on at work who thought highly of me. It was more of the same. Hearing people's thoughts. I couldn't turn it off. It was like someone had turned on a facet

and the water kept running wild. No filter, no way of slowing it down. There are some things that we don't need to know. What people really think, the thoughts we keep to ourselves and should be kept private.

Laying on the cold wooden floor of my closet. Tears streaming down my face and into my hairline. I can't get them to shut up. I can't shut people out.

There was someone knocking at my door. I could hear the knocking but couldn't separate the thoughts to know who was there. It was an ocean of thoughts that lingered and taunted me.

I heard footsteps, whoever was knocking maybe they came in. The only person who had a key was my mom and the landlord, Jimmy.

"Lucy?" a familiar voice called to me.

It was Jimmy. He came into my bedroom and found me in the closet.

"Lucy!" he wiped my tears off my face, but a new onslaught replaced them.

I could hear his thoughts. He thought I was having a breakdown. In a way he wasn't wrong.

Three days later I laid in a hospital bed, alone in the room. The voices in the hallway were a dull mumble. The doctors finally understood what I was hearing but couldn't explain it either. They ran every test under the sun and there was no reason or cause for this condition.

A very distinguished looking man walked into my room; he wasn't a doctor or medical staff of any kind. He looked like he walked off the pages of a man's magazine or from a spy movie. He was dressed all in black, wearing sunglasses to hide his eyes.

"Miss Lucy Maple?"

I nodded. Then noticed I couldn't hear his thoughts. That caught my attention. He seemed to have noticed because his mouth twitched into a knowing smile.

“I’m here to offer you an opportunity of a lifetime.”

“I’m nobody. What could you offer me?”

“Well,” he turned and locked the door to my room then walked over to my bed and pulled up a chair.

“I can’t hear your thoughts,” I blurted out.

“I know.”

“How are you doing that?”

“I think this moment marks a pivotal moment in your life. I’m about to make you an offer you won’t be able to refuse.”

“I’m listening.”

“I want you to know there are others like you, you’re not alone.”

“Right.”

“I work for the CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. We heard about your condition and would like you to come work for us. We are offering you a job as a screener.”

“Screener?”

He grinned, “Are you interested?”

“Maybe.”

He handed me a knitted hat and motioned for me to put it on. I slipped it over my head and noticed the world around me went silent. I could hear my own thoughts. The muffling beyond the door, in the hospital hallways disappeared.

“How?”

“Are you accepting my offer?” he grinned.

I nodded my head, yes.

“Good, let’s get you out of here and we can begin.”