

# Lucinda at the Window

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Reading from a different angle.  
California, USA

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## Chapter One

Lucinda stood at her window and watched the sun set at the edge of the yards. The hues of yellow at the horizon swelled into red and orange, but quickly died away, fading into a rather sickly green before the dark night sky overtook them. Lucinda shifted her weight back and forth, impatient with the small panes of glass that made up her bedroom window.

She could see her reflection piecemeal. Here a pane of red hair tinged with blonde, there a face with a small nose and blue eyes the shape of almonds, and over there a seashell ear and thin lips. Her body was an apparition of white. The dim light washed the color from her pale blue dress. She might have been considered pretty if she looked her age and not ten years older. She generally wore her hair up in a severe bun and a dress without a bustle that hadn't been fashionable in years. Society smiled on her because of her family name, but Lucinda would most likely remain a Harris all her life. It didn't matter, she told herself. Her good standing among her peers was enough.

There would be no moon tonight. Lucinda turned away from the window to light a candle, or two or three, before the gloom enveloped the room. She hated it here, particularly at night. The darkness made her uncomfortable. Not frightened, just merely uncomfortable. In the year nineteen-hundred-and-one, darkness was not something to be scared of.

In the daylight, the chamber was bare and sparse, like the countryside around the house. No pictures hung on the walls and only one smallish rug lay on the floor. Without a proper dressing room, a table with a mirror and chair were placed in one corner with the wardrobe and bed occupying two others. The last corner remained bare.

At night, the room took on sinister qualities. The shadows hung thick in the corners and were reluctant to be banished by candlelight.

Lucinda hadn't slept an entire night through since she arrived at the Manor. The room was drafty. The current of air snaked its way through the room no matter what the weather was outside and made it impossible to keep the fireplace lit.

Lucinda caught her reflection in the silver gilt mirror over the dressing table. The candlelight made her face look unnaturally pale, almost dead. Her eyes were startling. They were black voids with slight pinpoints of light where the candles reflected on their moistness. As she watched, the pinpoints winked out, leaving nothingness.

A wind rose in the room, chilling Lucinda. She shook herself, forced herself to look away from the mirror. She turned to the window. The draft was particularly wild, but the trees outside did not move. Even leafless, the tree branches should sway and shudder in such weather.

A figure stood in the middle of the yard, dead center to Lucinda's room on the third floor. She could see no details. He was a black silhouette. The man was too short to be any of the Manor's guests and too well built to be the servant boy. Women overran the Manor with only a few men in attendance. *One would think the accommodations would be better with so many women. Of course, most of them are tedious...*

The man did not move. Lucinda could swear that his head was tilted upward, his eyeless stare aimed straight at her. No, not eyeless. Sparks, pinpoints of light like the ones that had disappeared from Lucinda's reflection, found their way into the man's nothingness face. Lucinda took a step back. He was looking at her, leering at her. He could certainly see her in the window because of the candlelight. She would just put them out.

The man raised his hand as if holding a wineglass, toasting Lucinda. The wind blasted against Lucinda and surrounded her. She tried to break free but couldn't. Her muscles strained; she should have moved but didn't. The wind wavered and wrapped around her throat. Icy fingers dug into her warm neck. Lucinda tried to scream, tried to flail, panic rising within her. The hand at her throat tightened.

*What hand?* She couldn't see a hand! It tightened, cutting off circulation and the ability to breathe, and pushed her away from the window and across the room. In a fraction of a second, a much shorter time than it would have taken her to walk or even run, the backs of Lucinda's thighs brushed against the bed. The last thing Lucinda Harris saw was two pinpoints of light.