

Killer Stalks

by Reaper

Halloween was one of Taylor's favorite holidays. She loved everything about fall in general but Halloween had been the part of fall she looked forward to the most. Taylor loved the candy, decorations, and general festivities but most of all she loved the magic that for one night you could transform yourself into whatever you wanted to be. She could be an evil witch, a fairy tale princess, or her favorite singer.

Taylor who was an avid horror fan also loved the thrills and chills that came with Halloween from the various haunted houses and scary tricks played by some of the neighbors, to the slew of horror films that always came out that time of year. In fact it was an October tradition for Taylor to watch a scary movie every night starting on the first of the month and going up until Halloween night so that the big night would be even spookier.

Taylor's love of Halloween wasn't shared with her friends Kristy and Alison although her other friend Steve was at the very least a horror movie fan. Kristy and Alison didn't find anywhere near as much fun in being scared as Taylor did and Steve tended to think Halloween was in his words "kids stuff".

When Taylor got a flier in the mail with the announcement that the Anderson farm would be putting together a Halloween celebration, she knew she had to go to that farm on Halloween night. Looking over the flier she ticked off the various events that the farm would be staging which included a haunted house, a haunted hayride, and a cornfield maze of terror. The event would easily be her creepiest Halloween adventure ever.

Taylor wasted no time in seeking out Steve who, as she predicted, shared her enthusiasm about the event. This was the kind of Halloween stuff he was into and together Steve and Taylor managed to convince Kristy and Alison to go with them.

That Halloween night, Taylor had decided to go as a black cat. She had gone all out on the costume complete with a sleek black dress and a fashioned tail. She also wore a headband with black cat ears. The effect of the costume pleased Taylor immensely, capturing the essence of a black cat while still making her look sexy and appealing.

When Steve picked her up to bring her to the farm she was pleased to see his eyes widen and follow her closely as she got into the car.

"Wow, that's some outfit." he said.

"Aw, thank you!" Taylor exclaimed carefully repositioning the tail as she got into the passenger side. "Are you going to pick up Alison and Kristy too?"

"Alison's dad is bringing them, they called me about an hour ago and said they would meet us there." Steve replied.

The Anderson farm was a large farm near the edge of town and had corn fields that spanned over a mile. When Steve pulled into the lot it was clear to Taylor that she had made a good choice in spending Halloween here. There were rides, popcorn stands, cotton candy, games, it was like a carnival!

"Alison, Kristy!" Taylor yelled when she saw her two friends. Both had a cup of hot apple cider in their hands. Alison was dressed as a princess in a sparkly blue gown, Kristy had smeared fake blood around her mouth and mascara around her eyes and come as a zombie.

"Hey Taylor! Hi Steve! What are you supposed to be?" she asked looking at Steve who was dressed in a black suit and tie with dark sunglasses.

"I'm one of the 'Men in Black'" he said.

"What's that?" asked Kristy who looked slightly confused.

“You know, one of those government guys who comes around after an alien spaceship crashes and threatens the locals not to tell anyone anything.” Steve said shrugging. “I thought it would be a laugh.”

“Where should we go first?” Taylor asked beaming at her friends.

“Let's do the haunted house first.” said Steve who was looking at the farm barn which had been converted into a spook house.

“Sounds good to me, how about you guys?” Taylor asked.

Alison and Kristy agreed to go in, though Alison looked a little wary. Of her three friends Alison was the one who liked being scared the least. People jumping out at her and startling her was never her idea of a fun time.

The haunted house was as much fun as Taylor imagined it would be. She screamed loudly as farm employees dressed as ghosts and ghouls jumped out at her or when loud horns blared suddenly. There were lots of spooky decorations and dark areas where she could feel cotton like spider webs brush her face as she walked through.

By the time they exited Taylor was having the time of her life but Alison looked like she'd had enough of the scary part of what the farm had to offer.

“Want to go into the corn maze of terror next?” Taylor asked.

“Oh please, I don't want to! Can't we play some of the games or something instead?” Alison whined.

“I'm with Alison on that one”, Steve said. “Look at the line for the corn maze, we'll be standing in it for an hour before we can go in.”

“Yeah, okay, games it is” Taylor agreed.

Alison cheered up considerably at this aspect of the farms Halloween celebrations. They'd gone on a number of the rides and eaten their fill on hot dogs, cotton candy, popcorn, and candy apples. All around the fair staff and volunteers dressed in costume handed out candy or invited them to play games or participate in spooky challenges.

Taylor and Steve were the only two brave enough to go on the Zombie Hayride. This was a tractor pulled ride that took people around the farm where volunteers dressed as zombies jumped out and chased after the wagon. Alison and Kristy instead had chosen to toast marshmallows by open fire pits that were set up for people to warm themselves by.

Before long the four friends found that it was past eleven and the farm would be shutting down festivities at midnight.

“Wow, this was a lot of fun. I hope they do this again next year.” Steve exclaimed.

“We still haven't done the cornfield of terror.” Taylor pointed out.

“Can we sit that one out too?” Kristy asked.

“You guys are such chickens. What's the point of coming to a Halloween party if you're not even going to do anything scary?” Taylor demanded rounding on her two friends.

“Look, we don't like being scared like you do.” Alison said a little angrily. “It's not like we're stopping you from having your fun, why do you want to drag us along if we don't want to go?”

“It's just not the same without you two. Come on, it'll only take a few minutes and I promise if you come with me through it this time I'll never ask you to do anything scary with me again.” Taylor said to Kristy.

“Yeah, until next time”, Alison muttered.

“The line is shorter now, I'm up for it,” Steve said smiling. “Don't worry, I'll protect you guys from anything that's in there. Just make sure you don't lose your cool and go hitting anyone or they'll throw us off the farm.”

“Big deal”, Alison murmured. “It's almost time to leave anyway.” Still she followed her friends towards the entrance to the corn maze.

When it got to be their turn to enter the maze they were let in with a group of about a dozen

people. The announcer, a short fat man with a rather bushy mustache, gave them a rundown that they had been hearing all evening.

“Welcome to the Corn Maze of Terror.” he exclaimed in a booming commanding voice. “We ask that you follow the rules on this sign,” he pointed towards a cartoon figurine of a smiling ear of corn holding a list of rules. “If any of you decide that our maze is too scary there are sissy exits that you may take. Ask any of our staff and they can direct you to one. Any questions?”

Nobody said anything, though Taylor seriously hoped Alison and Kristy weren't going to chicken out and make them leave the maze early.

“Lastly, even though it's on the sign, I want to emphasize to you that nobody in the maze will grab you or touch you. If you feel any of our staff have touched you please let us know. We also ask that you do not touch, kick, hit, or otherwise try to injure our staff.” announced the man at the maze entrance. “If you are ready, step into our maze and be prepared for the scare of your lives!”

Obediently, Taylor followed the group into the maze. This was indeed one of the creepiest things she had done at the farm. The corn maze wasn't so much a maze as a winding trail that had been cut through the corn with various obstacles placed in the path that you had to climb through. Each had aspects similar to the haunted house including people who jumped out at you, blasts of wind, startling noises, and flashing lights.

The lights that lit the maze were not evenly spaced so that some parts of the trail were thrown into shadows. Inevitably there was somebody lurking in the darkness who lunged out suddenly causing everyone to scream. Their group had some warning by hearing the screams issuing from groups around them.

Taylor noticed that Alison was starting to show signs of weakening. She hung back behind the group and seemed constantly close to tears. Every time someone jumped out she screamed shrilly and begged them to leave her alone.

At a turn there was a long stretch of pathway ahead with no lights at all and even Taylor found herself fighting a bit of fear not being able to see what lay in wait hiding in the stalks of corn. Alison stopped dead in the path.

“I can't! I can't do it. I want to leave now!” she spoke with terrified eyes.

Kristy was walking further ahead clutching tightly onto Steve's arm. She had taken to shutting her eyes and gritting her teeth as they continued their march through the maze. This left Taylor to try and comfort and encourage Alison.

“Come on, the end of the maze can't be much farther ahead. Then we can go home I promise.” said Taylor hoping to give Alison a reason to keep going. But Alison only shook her head again.

“I can't. I'm sorry, but I just can't take anymore,” she said.

“Hey hold up you guys!” Taylor called to Kristy and Steve who stopped and waited. “I'll tell you what. Why don't I walk a few feet ahead of you and anyone who jumps out will jump out at me. That way you'll get plenty of warning and you won't be scared.” Taylor told Alison reassuringly.

Alison, biting her knuckle, nodded and Taylor began walking slowly but deliberately through the darkened area. She wasn't afraid herself of anything that might jump out of the corn. She was even expecting it, but she was afraid that Alison was going to force an early exit. Taylor was amazed when she began to enter into the light again and nobody had tried to scare them.

“Well there you have it, nobody was even there. Are you okay Alison?” she asked turning around.

But Alison was no longer behind her. Doubling back she searched the darkened trail but could not see Alison anywhere.

“Alison!” Taylor called out wondering vaguely if Alison was trying to play a trick on her. It wasn't like Alison to do something like that but Taylor wouldn't be surprised she'd felt a bit of revenge was in order. “Alison where are you?”

After a few moments in which nobody answered, Taylor ran ahead and caught up with Kristy

and Steve.

"I've lost Alison in the maze," she said breathlessly to a surprised Steve.

"But, how did you do that? This maze isn't the kind you can get lost in," Steve said perplexed.

"I don't know," Taylor said. "She was following right behind me through that dark part of the maze, and when I turned around she wasn't there."

"Maybe she went back and tried to find one of the exits," Kristy offered with a small hint of jealousy at the idea.

"Maybe she's trying to play a prank on you to scare you back," Steve said flashing another grin.

"I don't know, I don't like this. Alison was so scared coming through there I can't see her going off by herself even to find an exit. She doesn't really joke around like that either and even if she did this is going a bit too far."

"Okay, lets go back and look for her then." Steve said. "If she did somehow wander off the path she can't be far."

The three friends turned back into the darkened section of the maze calling out Alison's name but got no reply. After about a minute Steve decided that the time for action was at hand.

"Okay, stay here" he said, "I'm going to see if I can find one of the staff and let them know what's going on. Maybe they can help us look for her."

Steve turned around to move back towards the lit area again but had gone no more than a few steps when he found his way blocked by a tall man dressed as a scarecrow with a sign saying "Killer Stalks" written across blood spattered overalls. In his left hand he carried a sharp scythe.

"Oh geez!" Steve gave a start at the scarecrow. "That was good, I think you scared me more than anyone else in here tonight. Listen, our friend got lost around here somehow. Could you go and let someone in charge know so they can help us find her?" Steve asked.

The scarecrow did not reply but took several deliberate steps towards Steve and then grabbed him roughly by the arm and began to drag him forward.

"Hey, what are you doing?" Steve exclaimed in surprise. "You work here don't you? You're not supposed to grab or touch any of us! I'm going to tell--"

But Taylor never heard the rest of what Steve intended to say. The huge scarecrow had taken his scythe jammed it into Steve's stomach, and jerked the scythe upward with a sickening ripping sound. Steve's angry face slipped into a look of shocked surprise as Kristy began to scream. Taylor could hear Steve's blood pouring out onto the dark ground.

With surprising speed and strength the scarecrow withdrew the sharp blade and plunged it again into Steve's neck this time slashing his throat open. Steve's body went limp but the scarecrow easily held him up, then turning he dragged Steve's bloody corpse back into the corn next to the maze and vanished from sight.

For the first time that night Taylor felt real terror, she felt it spread in a freezing wave up her legs and arms and into her chest. Kristy's screams became strangely muted to Taylor's ears and she fought the urge to pass out. After a moment or two the feeling passed leaving her shaky and terrified, unable to comprehend what she had just seen.

Kristy was now sitting on the trail clutching her knees and rocking back and forth on the ground, her eyes wide with terror.

"Kristy", Taylor began feeling tears sting her eyes. "We have to get out of here. I need you to move."

Kristy didn't even seem to hear what Taylor had said. She continued to whimper and rock on the trail. Taylor then heard voices coming up the trail. Another group of people was moving their way. She had to warn them about the killer and maybe they could help Kristy.

As the group came upon them Taylor called out causing the leading members to jump and a couple of girls behind them screamed.

"There's a killer in the cornfield," she shouted as Kristy continued to rock back and forth. "Help

me get my friend out of here. He just murdered one of my friends and he may be coming back!”

The group started moving past Taylor and Kristy, some of the guys leading the group were laughing.

“Man this really is the creepiest maze ever. You guys are doing a really good job!” she heard one of them say.

“I'm serious, please help us! I need to get my friend out of this maze!” Taylor yelled after them, but the group was already walking around the bend and in a few more moments they were gone.

Taylor couldn't believe this situation was happening. Now her only hope lay in somehow being able to calm Kristy down and get her moving again. She began shaking her petrified friend and finally resorted to striking her hard across the face. That got through and Kristy looked into her eyes with fear but also with some semblance of comprehension.

“Kristy, we have to get out of here! I need you to move now!” Taylor yelled into her friend face.

Kristy nodded weakly and began to get up from the damp ground. Leaning on Taylor for support they began walking back toward the lit area again. Then with terrifying speed the scarecrow lunged out of the corn and uttered a deep inarticulate yell as he charged at the two girls. It sounded closer to a deep inhuman growl. He struck both girls grabbing hold of Kristy and sending Taylor flying backwards into the corn.

Taylor could do nothing as Kristy gave a long piercing scream that was suddenly cut short. She could hear the scarecrow grunting and a now familiar ripping and rendering sound as the blade tore through her friend's flesh. There was nothing she could do for Kristy now. Taylor fled through the corn as the killer threw Kristy's body over his shoulder and took off after her.

Screaming Taylor leaped through the stalks of corn moving away from the maze. She could hear the maniac who had killed her friends moving behind her but he was carrying the added weight of her dead friend. Taylor, who had always been a fast runner, was able to lose her attacker in the dark field.

Taylor stopped and lay close to the ground keeping silent. She heard the dull thud as something was dropped to the ground and then she could hear the scarecrow moving in the field near her. For one chilling moment it seemed like he was right on top of her, but then he moved on. When Taylor could no longer hear movement close by, she slowly got to her feet and began to move swiftly and as silently as possible back towards the lit area of the Halloween party.

It was then that she came across the clearing in the corn. Stretched out in rows were at least twenty bodies all slashed and bloody. She didn't know any of the other dead people laying in front of her but her eyes fell upon the lifeless body of Steve who had sworn he would protect them in the maze not even twenty minutes before. Laying next to him was the body of her friend Alison, her throat so badly cut open that she had nearly been beheaded.

With a strangled cry, Taylor fled in a full out run into the corn towards the lit area of the field. A tiny part of her brain not overwhelmed with fear was able to tell her why she hadn't gotten any warnings. The truth of it was she probably had. She just took the various final screams of the scarecrow's victims to be other people in the maze!

After what seemed like a lifetime Taylor broke out of the corn having bypassed the rest of the maze completely and ran out onto the clear farmland where the Halloween party was just now wrapping up for the evening. Seeking out the man who had let them into the maze, she found him taking down the corn cob cartoon that was used to display the maze rules and ran over to him.

“The maze is closed for the night. You'll have to come back next year.” Taylor heard him say as she ran breathlessly towards him.

“Please help me! There's a killer in the maze!” Taylor cried out falling to her knees at the man's feet.

“A killer in the.. what are you talking about girl? Everything in the maze was fake, nobody in there would hurt you.”

Taylor gulped and sobbed. “Please, you have to call the police. Three of my friends were just

killed by somebody in the maze. Please call the police! Please!”

Taylor knew she sounded hysterical, but the man who operated the maze seemed at least to be taking her seriously.

“Okay, miss. I'll tell you what. You wait here while I go into the residence and phone the police okay?”

“No!” Taylor cried, “Please let me come with you. Don't leave me alone.”

“I'm not allowed to let anyone in the residence miss. No matter what's happened. But I'll tell you what. I'll have Joe stay with you. He works here too, he's the farm mechanic. Trust me he'd be able to protect you from whoever hurt you much more than I could.”

“Okay”, Taylor said starting to cry again. “Just please hurry!” Taylor then put her hands over her eyes and gave way to her wracking sobs.

“Hey Joe”, Taylor heard the man say.

“What's up Eric?” answered another man who was just out of sight.

“I have a girl here who's had a really bad scare. It's probably nothing but I'm gonna call the police anyway for her just to make sure. Can you watch over her. Make sure nothing happens to her?” asked Eric.

“Sure, be happy to.” grunted Joe and Taylor heard him walk over to where the man named Eric was standing.

“There, you'll be safe now.” Eric said. “I'll be back in a few minutes too once I've phoned the police.”

Taylor wiped her eyes, “Thank you, sir” she said.

After Eric had left, Taylor began to find a little strength and started getting to her feet still trying to wipe the tears out of her eyes.

“Easy girl”, she heard Joe say.

“I'm okay, I think I can stand.” Taylor said turning to face Joe for the first time.

Then a jolt of icy terror went through Taylor's spine like an electric shock. There standing before her was the scarecrow who had killed her friends.

“And to think, I thought I'd lost you.” she heard the scarecrow say.

Taylor couldn't move or speak as a powerful arm came down around her shoulders and began to lead her off back into the corn.