

You wake up abruptly in a tangle of blankets and pillows. Did the house just shake? You lay silent, hyper-aware of the world. In the back of your brain some primal instinct, the same that sends animals fleeing before a natural disaster, is screaming.

You wait and listen.

Nothing.

It must have been a dream. You get out of bed, feeling unnerved.

The room is a mess of clothes, books, and records. The walls are covered with posters and flyers promoting radical politics and obscure bands. You grab a pair of ripped-at-the-knees black jeans and your favorite CRASS tank top. You look at the clock; 3:00 PM. For once, you're up early.

You stumble out of your room into the dark basement apartment. Your roommates must be out.

You go into the bathroom and sit on the toilet. As you piss, you avoid looking at the black mold coating the wall next to you. You shut your eyes and try not to think of what terrible microbes you are inhaling every moment you sit there. Fucking do-nothing landlord.

A strange smell tickles your nose. It's not any one of the number of funks in the bathroom or the familiar, sweetly stinging odor of weed, crack, or meth.

It's smoke. It's fire. One of your stupid-ass roommates must have left the stove on or tried microwaving a spork again.

You wipe yourself and rush out of the bathroom, but not before sneaking a look in the mirror to make sure your Mohawk is intact. Despite the previous night's slam dancing and debauchery, it stands perfect and proud.

All is fine in the kitchen. Dishes are piled up in the sink and crumbs from previous meals blanket the counters and table. But the stove is turned off and the microwave is intact and there is no sign of a fire, although the harsh smell of smoke is even worse here. It must be coming from outside.