

walk down the stairs, the creaking of the wooden steps being the only noise other than the low roar of the rain and the occasional thunderclap.

Creak, creak, creak...

Were there always so many steps to get to the bottom? When I finally got to the bottom of the stairs the roar of the rain had faded away into nothing. Hopefully the fact that I couldn't hear the rain down here meant it was passing by. I began to head in the direction of my emergency lights, annoyed at myself for not getting them out before the storm and for leaving my cell phone upstairs. I figured the cell service would be out, but at least those have a built-in flashlight. That would have made finding the lamps and fuel much quicker and easier. It was then I noticed that something was in the basement.

I don't remember what it looked like or what kind of sounds it made. In fact, I don't even remember running away. As soon as I encountered it, my body was filled with something I had never experienced before: in an instant I was dripping in a cold sweat, and shaking as my body filled with a unexpected terror. Just a second ago I was hoping the basement hadn't flooded, but now there was only one thing my brain and body could comprehend, and it was that I needed to run away as fast as possible. In that moment nothing else mattered. If I didn't move, I knew I was going to die.

When I reached the top of the stairway, I slammed it shut and leaned against it, panting heavily. The roar of the rain was back, but I could tell that it was gradually fading from what it was before I went downstairs. Or maybe it was just my rapid heartbeat blocking out the sound. It was still pitch black in the house, but now I was able to look around and see, maybe my eyes had finally adjusted; maybe my fear had made my pupils dilate more than they were before. I didn't care, I was just glad to be able to see. Until I

looked around. It was the same house I had seen my whole life, but it was... different.

I could see that part of the reason it was so dark was that the windows were boarded up. A layer of dust coated the walls and floor, and that was all that was there. None of the furniture or pictures remained. Shelves were empty, the TV and recliner were no longer in the living room, visible through a half-open door at the end of the hall.

I locked the basement door and took a small, cautious step forward and immediately winced. I looked down and cursed again. In my rush I had apparently dropped my mug and stepped on one of the pieces; just like I knew would happen. It wasn't a deep cut and was barely bleeding, but it hurt now that my adrenaline was fading. What had I been so scared of before? I must be extra jumpy from my lack of sleep this week. The basement was mostly just storage, nothing could get in there. I was just about to turn back around to get the lamps again when I felt it: the fear was coming back. I couldn't remember what the thing in the basement was, just that I had to get away.

I could feel that this thing was right behind the door, and that it wanted me. I immediately broke into a sprint to the kitchen window since it was the closest way out of there. I didn't care where I ended up as long as I was away from here. The pain in my foot was inconsequential now and I ignored it as I ran. I didn't even notice the small trail of blood following wherever I went. There were no other emotions than fear. I had to escape.

It was no good, the kitchen window was boarded up too tightly to squeeze through. Changing plans, I hurried towards the front door at the opposite end of the house, making sure to cut through the living room to avoid the basement, but that was also boarded up. I