

It was around 1:05am, when I realized it was going to be another restless night. It was a work night, so I tried to go to bed early, but my mind had other plans for that evening. My area was under tornado watch, the heavy winds were knocking around the windchimes on the balcony. I liked the windchimes, their sounds were soothing and they helped me relax, but tonight they were a force to interrupt my slumber. The chimes sat a bit too close to the door, so every so often I could hear the loud slam as the steel hit the glass. Any moment of drowsiness that fell upon me was interrupted by the loud bangs of the chimes. Pretty soon it became the only thing I could focus on, trying to guess when the next slam would occur. I don't know how much time passed before I noticed the banging had changed slightly. It became easier and easier to guess when the next strike would happen. This was not the random swings of the wind anymore, this had a rhythm. At first, it blended in with the chimes, before replacing it entirely. *Tap...tap...tap*. This was no longer a force of nature, someone, or something, was out there, beckoning me to come to the door. Once the realization set in, my anxiety took over, locking me to my bed. My initial reaction was to ignore it, out of a fear of what it could be at this hour and the frustration of having to deal with interruptions while I'm trying to sleep. I even tried putting some music on, all in an attempt to focus on anything that wasn't the door. *Tap...tap...tap*. The more I ignored it the more my fear grew. It seemed to bounce around in my head more and more. *Tap...tap...tap*. My mind raced at what it could be. Was it a person? how would they get on the balcony? I didn't act out, I never made enemies that would torment me in the middle of the night. An animal? No, an animal wouldn't be able to keep the rhythm. As my head raced with possibilities, the tapping grew louder. *TAP...TAP...TAP*. Whatever was outside, it was getting restless. It wanted to come in, but every fiber of my being did not want to move. To move meant to confront the unknown, the greatest fear known to man. My imagination started to run wild, creating creatures you would find straight out of a horror movie. They started to fill in the blanks, which only deepened my fear. The tapping was getting faster. *TAP, TAP, TAP*. I was at my limit, if I didn't do something now my mind would never let me relax again. I inched my way

out of bed, taking my time to make my way to the wall, where I slithered against it until reaching the edge of the door. *TAP, tap...tap*. The tapping stopped, it knew I was there. Anxiety overtook me once more, petrifying me to the wall, trying to become as small as possible. *If I let this in, if I let it see me, it will spell my demise*. Despite my legs being stapled to the floor, I mustered enough courage to get a slight view of the door. The only thing I could make out was a finger, although it felt wrong to call it that. The falange was crusty, covered in mold and pale as snow. There were cracks all over it, and what looked to be ooze coming from where the nail was supposed to be. The tapping had left a stain on the glass, one I wasn't sure would come out. It grew impatient, pulling its finger back and slapping the door with its palm. *BANG...BANG...BANG*. The hand moved too fast for me to get a good look, but it left more splatters on the door. I couldn't hide anymore, it was now or never. I jolted upward, shoved the door open, and steeled myself as best I could for what would come next. The next thing I remember before fading to black was a wave of red painting the walls of my room. It was blood... my blood.