

Survivor

By Hannah McIntosh

The body can survive three minutes without air, three hours without shelter, three days without water, and three weeks without food. However, it is usually the mind that gives up first.

My dad is a survivalist. He believes in always being prepared for the worst. Last night marked 48 hours since he was supposed to return home from a solo expedition. Tonight, I will send out a signal. Sitting at his office desk, maps of the forests pinned to his walls, I pull out my two-way radio transmitter. I type out the message in morse code ... -.-. . .-.-. "safe?" I send it on loop.

Lying in bed with the radio on my nightstand, I wait for a response. The wind moans and howls. The shutters slam against my window and the curtains billow with a gust of biting air. I jump up and force my window shut. Just then, my radio shrieks - an incoming message! I rip through my desk to find a pencil and a piece of paper. More morse code. I jot it down and quickly decipher it to be a radio channel: 35.0400.

I tumble downstairs, fling open the door to my dad's office, and flip three switches on his ham radio. I match frequencies with the one in the message.

Silence? No, static. An open receiving line! I pick up the microphone, "Hello? Is anyone there? Over." More static. "Hello? Is anyone there? Over." This time a diabolical scream erupts on the other end. Dad? My stomach churns, I bite back bile in my throat. "Hello? Dad?" A gurgle, a cough, then one word, "Hide." The frequency goes dead.

Lightning roars outside as a storm brews. I run upstairs, grab my radio, throw on my shoes and head for the back door. Zipping up my jacket, I take my panic bag and open the door to the darkness. Rain pelts my skin. It's 30 paces north and 20 paces west to reach the safe room. I make a break for it. Inside, I flip on the hydroelectric lights and the incandescent bulbs buzz in their sockets. I set up my radio transmitter and wait.

That's what I was taught to do. Wait.

I listen to the foreboding silence.

BANG! Some *thing* is trying to get in. It starts wailing a bloodcurdling melody. One I recognize as a song my dad composed for me. Dad. I go towards the door. The banging increases. Dread envelops every muscle in my body. Skeletal fractures appear across the door, spreading like a savage disease. The rotten stench hits me first, leeching through the cracks and invading my senses. The thing outside cries unnaturally. I peer through a crack with my back glued to the wall. My heart hammers in my chest. I see him: brutally mangled, fingers bent back, bone exposed, rain caressing open nerves, scarlet streams flowing from numerous lacerations. He throws his body at the door mindlessly.

I open it.