

I crept through the dark house. Lights flickered. I flinched, backing up against the wall. A cold breeze filtered in through a broken window.

I fought the urge to walk towards the staircase, but something pulled me closer until I was standing on the first step. We *never* went up there. As usual, there was the shadow, hiding in the tenebrous hallway. This time felt different. I couldn't figure out why until I realized that the shadow was walking down. I started to back away again, and then, my grandmother's voice broke through the chaos.

"What are you doing?! Don't go up there!"

I blinked, surprised, and turned to her. But now, the familiar warm lighting of the house had returned, everything appearing to be normal. The shadow was back at the top of the steps.

"Hello? Are you okay?" my grandmother said, now worried. She hadn't seen it.

"I'm fine," I said quickly. "I think," I added, unsure.

My father frowned, walking in. "Come on. It's time for bed."

I followed him through the hallways, on the first floor, of course, and to my bedroom.

I awoke to a horrible, noisome smell. Wrinkling my nose, I checked the time and saw that it was just past midnight. Grandma always said not to leave your room during this hour. Though, she'd never clarified why.

Suddenly, a horrible shriek cut through the house, sending goosebumps cascading across my body. I leapt out of bed and ran through the hallway, finding my grandmother fast asleep. I checked my parents room. They were asleep as well. Confused, I turned around to search the rest of the house, only to stop abruptly with a scream.

The human-like shape of a shadow stood directly in front of me. I knew this shape. I had known it all of my childhood. But I'd never seen it anywhere except at the top of the staircase. The dark ripples, the edges of it faded, as if it wasn't even there.

Taking deep breaths, I took a step backward and tripped, falling to the ground, hitting my head on the hard edge of my parents' bed.

I tried standing, my head spinning, ears ringing. It approached faster, taking even steps now. My eyes darted, desperately looking for anything that could get me out of this direful situation, but found nothing. I looked back at my parents, begging for them to wake up. The dizziness grew worse, and I swayed, my vision going black. I felt a breeze go by as my spirit left my body, something darker replacing it.

It was years later that I awoke. I found myself at the top of the staircase, frozen, in the place the shadow had always been. I glanced down and that's when I saw it.

Another young girl, looking up at me.

Petrified, I looked down at my body and saw that it rippled out, the edges faded and shadow-like. I *am* darkness. And shadows. It's who I've always been.