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The Basement

I just can’t shake the feeling that I am forgetting something. I feel like I have everything I need for this weekend; however, this strange, distant thought keeps trying to emerge from the depths of my subconscious. Oh well, I just need to shake it off because I bet it is nothing anyways! I knock on the dark, wooden door, adjusting my duffel bag to higher up on my shoulder. I hear footsteps approaching and hear the door unlocking as my good friend Bethany opens the door, a smile adorning her soft, porcelain features.

“Hey Sara! Jesus, I have literally gone through the house like six times, making sure everything is where it should be and that I don’t forget anything. This conference is going to be the death of me, are you sure you still want to do this?” Bethany inquires, looking at me with wide, anxious eyes.

“Of course, B. You have one cat and an endless supply of wine, I’m pretty sure I can manage to hold down the fort for three days,” I say with an intentional smirk.

“I know, I don’t doubt it!” She sighs, as she picks up her suitcase, “You know me, always overthinking everything. Anyways, there is food in the fridge, Missy’s food is under the counter, and you can stay in my room down the hall. Thank you so much, you’re the best!” She squeezes me with a big hug and a smile and then pulls away and looks directly at me. In the blink of an eye, her demeanor changes, from her cheerful and scattered self, to a serious and shadier version of my best friend. “Sara, there is one thing. I need you to promise me you won’t go into the basement. At all, like even if you think you hear something,” she pauses, as a result of me instantly starting to laugh and shit, because obviously she is just trying to scare me before she leaves! How original, Bethany. “Sara, I’m not messing with you. I mean it,” I just as quickly stop laughing, it isn’t funny anymore. She turns into her light self again, “Bye girly, see ya in three days!” I couldn’t even respond after that, I just attempt to smile and wave as she leaves through the door. Her last comment really kind of sketched me out. Like is she trying to tell me her house is haunted or something? Jesus Sara, you’re being insane! I make a small, nervous laugh for my own benefit as I try to focus on something else.

I walk past the living room, taking in the warm, relaxing set up of chocolate-colored, leather couch sectionals, a large screen TV, and a glossy coffee table with a decorative bowl in the middle. I then turn the corner past the upstairs bathroom as I enter into Bethany’s room. Her signature pale, banana-yellow and light gray themed room is perfectly clean, complete with fresh linen and, sure enough, a bottle of my favorite wine lying on the bed with a pink ribbon tied around it. I laugh and smile, shaking my head. She knows me too well. I unpack my belongings and head back out to the living room. I see Missy curled up on the couch, so I decide to join her. I pour myself a hefty glass and reach for the remote. I finally decide on some Law and Order, I curl up on the couch, stroking Missy’s soft, black fur and begin thinking about what Bethany had said. For some unknown reason, the thought of the basement will not leave my mind. I just want to know what is down there. An episode and two (or so) more glasses later, I start to get sleepy, and my crazy, curious thoughts about the basement slowly blur, turning muddy as I start to doze off.

My eyes fly open as I hear a scream. My heart instantly reacts, my blood curdling through my veins and my chest thudding. I sit quietly, inwardly cursing, waiting to hear the scream again. Silence. No, that was definitely not the TV. I quickly glance at my phone. Three hours have passed since I fell asleep. Two texts and a voicemail appear; I will check that later. My instincts now aroused, my mind is sharp, racing in fact, and I am ready to find out what the hell is going on. I tiptoe toward the old basement door. The stairwell seems to stretch out forever, and the door seems to be beckoning me, luring me into the pit of the beast. I swallow the big ball of dread that has made its residence in my chest. This deep, agonizing feeling of suspense and horror is weighing heavy on my every barefoot step. I have never been more terrified in my life, yet something is pulling me toward this door. This inexplicable, magnetic energy radiating from the basement is pulling me in, guiding my shaky steps. As soon as I arrive at the bottom of the stairwell, I take a deep, painful breath to steady myself and I outstretch my arm, inching toward the knob.

I feel a sudden chill that runs straight through my bones as my fingertips graze the cool metal of the knob. The knob slowly turns underneath my grip, and that lingering dread is now heightened as the door is—BANG! a loud door-shaking movement erupts from the other side. Raw instinct driven by horror moves my shell of a body up those stairs, not turning back, as I run directly into Bethany’s room. Goosebumps cover my entire body, and I am shaking in fear as I search for a weapon of sorts. Her door is locked but I cannot peel my eyes away from the door, waiting for whatever horror that awaits me to show its face. What was that?? There is no way I imagined that. Someone or something is on the other side of that door, something was banging on the door…Suspense and adrenaline race through my body as I wait restlessly, just standing there, heart racing and hands shaking, waiting for it to come for me. It never does. After about five minutes of standing statue-still in front of the door like a mental case, I decide I need to do something.

I pull my phone out of my pocket, and I immediately dial Bethany’s phone number. “Hello, you have reached Bethany Weston, sorry I cannot get to the phone right now, please leave a message-BEEP,” I sigh as I hear the voicemail but I continue anyways, “B, call me as soon as you get this. I’m freaking out. There is something in that basement…something evil, I can feel it. You are going to think I’m insane but there is really something in there…call me back ASAP!” I hang up after leaving a panicked, nonsensical message. I stay in that locked bedroom, agonizing more and more as the minutes, hours, drag on. Nothing ever made a noise for the rest of the night, not even Missy. Finally, as the peachy pink sunrise slices through the thick, blue night sky, I decide it is time to leave the bedroom. You can do this, Sara. Come on, there is nothing out there. My sleep deprived, hungry mind was pounding as I ever so slowly open the door. I peek into the living room, the morning sun coating the entire room in a soft glow. Nothing. I see Missy on the marble, kitchen counter, licking herself. I sigh as pure relief surges through my tired body. I quickly walk to the kitchen and turn on every single light. I decide to move on with my day and ignore the fact that what happened last night was not a dream. I turn on some good ol’ Bon Jovi to start off my day. I’m a sucker for good rock. My conscious slowly relaxes as I heat up the stove and start singing along.

After a relaxing, incident-free day of savory French toast, bold coffee, and two loads of laundry for my dear friend, I decide that I would like to take a short nap while it is still light out. Bethany never called me back. All I got was a text around 2 P.M. saying “You’re being paranoid, ease up on the wine. Just don’t worry. And don’t go down there! TTYL”. Thanks, man. That made me feel sooo much better. I decide to open my other two texts from last night. One was from my boyfriend, Chris. All it said was “Hey what’s going on?” Not wanting to respond, considering that we were fighting, I check my other text. It was my mother and it says “Where are you? Worried, call me XOXO” But she is always worried, the voicemail is from her as well. I decide to call her tonight. Oh well, I just now realize how unproductive I have been all day, as I examine myself in the bathroom mirror before my nap. Gray, baggy sweat pants, a snug, black tank top and a curly, blond mess of a bun adorn my unshowered, unmakeuped self. I sigh, and decide I will shower after my nap. I head back toward the soft, cool couch as it beckons me to lie down. I curl up on the couch, thoughts of monsters and ghosts tinting the edges of my mind as I drift into unconsciousness. I dream vividly of monsters with no faces, clawing at my ankles with sharp, long claws as I run through a red mist, my vision gone and no idea as how to escape this nightmare.

I gasp awake and sit up, covered in a thin layer of clammy fear and heart pounding through my chest. I close my eyes and lie back down, sighing as I realize it was all a dream. I open my eyes again instantly, and am horrified at the living nightmare before me. A shadowy, life-size figure lingers several feet above me on the ceiling. My heart stops and my breath catches in my throat. I squeeze my eyes shut and open, instantaneously, it is gone. What is going on?! Is this a work of my imagination? Is the house haunted? I can’t help the feeling that I am being watched, that eyes lingering in the shadows are watching my every move, waiting to pounce. I can’t handle this anymore. I pull out my phone and call Chris, the feeling of defeat being overpowered by feelings of fear.

“Hello, Sara?” I listen as I hear the deep, familiar voice shaking me into reality and out of this nightmare.   
 “Hey Chris. I’m sorry about what’s been going on between us but I seriously need you right now,” I attempt to calmly say, and failing as my voice is shaky.

“Wait, what’s going on? Is something wrong? Where are you right now?” He starts peppering me with questions.

“Look, I can’t really explain right now over the phone. Can you just come to Bethany’s? She lives on Central, we came here a couple weeks ago, remember?”

“Yeah, I remember. I’ll head there now.”

“Thank you so much, Chris. See ya in a few,” I say as I hang up. I feel a lot better knowing that Chris is coming to stay here. Maybe all this craziness is just an illusion and it will end with his arrival.

I decide to go look for Missy, considering I have not seen her since before my nap. I feel like moving around will keep my mind preoccupied. I begin walking toward the hallway when I hear a faint “meow” I cock my head at an angle, and I slowly turn around. “Meooww” I hear it again. It sounds like it is coming from the basement. There is no way, the door is shut, she can’t even get in there by herself! HA! This is crazy. This is not real, this can’t be real, I keep telling myself as I slowly, step by step, get closer and closer to the entrance of the stairs. I pause at the head of the stairs. I hear scratches on the other side of the door. How did a cat open a door and get stuck on the other side? Damn it, I am going to have to open that door. Nothing bad can happen to me, right?

I creep down the stairs, not wanting to replay last night’s events, I move even slower than I did before. It was all in my head. I reach that awful door. I take one last deep breath, pray for strength, and I turn the knob quickly. Nothing happened. I see nothing but darkness in front of me, which causes me to jump when Missy pounced through my legs up the stairs. I feel pretty relieved. It wasn’t even real last night! I start to shut the door again when I hear a faint moan. I stop dead in my tracks. I hear it again, like someone is in pain. “What the hell?” I mumble quietly to myself as I reach for a light. A florescent light turns on, and through its flickering light it reveals a young girl, hiding in the corner, her back facing me. “Hello? Are you okay?” I ask in a quiet, quaking voice.

“Please, help me,” she says in a scratchy, trembling tone. She has a bag over her head and she looks to be bound. What is going on? Why is she down here? Who put her down here? Who is she? A million questions are racing through my mind as I rush to aid her. The feeling of dread is completely encompassing my body and mind as my shaky, terrified hands clumsily untie her hands. She reaches up to pull off her bag, revealing matted down blond hair streaked with blood. I also notice her clothes are torn and bloodied as well. She turns around and I lose the remaining ounce of my sanity. I look into not a stranger’s eyes, but my own. I am looking into my own face, a scratched and pale face, but nonetheless mine.

“No, no, no…this isn’t real,” I start backing away slowly. She just stares at me. No show of any emotion. I back up into a wall. No it isn’t a wall.

“You shouldn’t have gone in the basement, Sara,” I hear a familiar voice behind me. I feel hands squeezing my arms as I turn around rapidly.

“Chris?!” I say in utter confusion and terror. He has this murderous look in his eyes that I have never seen before.

“I tried to warn you, Sara. Why wouldn’t you listen? You understand why you have to die now, don’t you?” I attempt to swallow my fear, and the inevitable tears I feel burning in my throat. It was Bethany. She must have appeared behind the girl when I was looking at Chris. Behind me. The other me just stood there, staring at me.

“Bethany, you too? What is going on here? Who is she and why does she look like me?! What is going on!? Please, you don’t have to do this,” I beg, my voice breaking as Chris’s grip tightens.

“She is you, Sara. Which is why you have to die.”

The beeping of the monitors is slowly increasing. The therapy was working. It had to be. It is the only way to help fix Sara, Mrs. Truitt keeps telling herself. She sits there wringing her hands and watches her beautiful, fragile daughter deal with a hell she knew nothing about, through a medically induced coma. The door creaks open.

“Mrs. Truitt, I hate to inform you, but I cannot tell you if the therapy is positively proving to be effective or not. Once Sara eliminates all of the multiple personalities within her subconscious, we will be able to bring her out of the coma, because only at that stage of time do we believe she will not be harmful to herself or others,” Dr. Bracken explains, “however, that will not excuse her from serving her sentence in here.”

“But Doctor, it’s not her fault! She is sick, it was never her fault!” Mrs. Truitt exclaims through her tears.

“Ma’am, I cannot fully explain it either, but if it helps, in my opinion “Chris” murdered that girl, not Sara. But since “Chris” is part of the creation of her conscious, she has to be the one to pay the price in the end.”