

*"Are you going to sleep tonight?"*

It shouldn't be a question that needed to be asked, yet it was a question Jasper Cavanagh had begun to ask himself every night for a month now. He hadn't slept a minute over three hours in the last seven days.

Like a cold hand reaching in, the wind ruffled through the curtains and sent a chill through the room. On a summer's night as hot as this, it should have been soothingly pleasant, but after the week Jasper had been having, it startled him more than anything.

For the past month, he'd been having a... feeling... like something was following him inside his apartment, looking at him with an icy, menacing stare from every corner of the room. It didn't help that tonight the area was suffering from a power cut. It seemed almost mocking, making fun of him for being on-edge by making the situation just a touch worse.

Jasper squinted over to the one dark corner in his room where the light of the candle on his bedside table didn't quite reach and he frowned. Maybe if he looked more brave, whatever was hiding there might leave him alone?

It wasn't so much some entity or other that he felt watching him, but rather it was a familiar kind of feeling, too human and physical. But the more he looked into the shadowy corner, the more he felt that he was just over-reacting. There couldn't be someone there, surely... could there?

His gaze was broken as a low rumble echoing from outside like the crackle at the end of a dusty record, and his eyes snapped to the curtains. Jasper told himself he wasn't scared of the dark or anything in it, and he certainly wasn't scared of thunder. He blew out the candle by his bedside and wrapped himself in sheets.

Abruptly, a flare of lightning illuminated the room, shining everywhere except that one dark corner.

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His stare fixated on the bedroom ceiling, his chest rising and falling in stuttered bursts, Jasper swallowed the lump in his throat and listened. There seemed to be no sound aside from the steady rainfall and occasional crack of thunder, but not a minute ago, he was sure he heard something.

Knowing that a sound like that couldn't have been his imagination, he slipped out of bed and lit the candle. He snaked over to the door with light in hand and found it ajar, though he could swear he closed it earlier. That same sense of apprehension and dread struck him again, like a piercing cold on the back of his skull, as if when you turned around you'd be faced with something unspeakable.

Jasper didn't believe there could be such thing as a 'monster', so he pulled himself together and gently tip-toed to the living room. He shouldn't be scared, but he couldn't help fear clutching his heart and shaking it every time a floorboard groaned beneath him. He wished he didn't live alone.

At a sudden creak, Jasper reeled around, stunned, but when he tried to find the source of the noise, there was nothing there – not a shadow, not a soul. Maybe it was all just in his head after all. That's what he'd like to believe.

In that moment, another flash of lightning shot through the room. In the second that his eyes caught it, Jasper observed a tall, wide shadow on the floor in front of him, in the shape of a figure.

In that short moment, Jasper knew for certain that it wasn't his own.