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“Would you quit trying to scare me? Just go to sleep, will you?”

It was my twin brother, Adrian.

Here it was, the middle of the night, and he was standing at the door of my bedroom, scolding me for doing something – even though I was half asleep!

“What are you talking about?” I asked groggily. I was angry. It was late, and I didn’t appreciate being awakened at such an hour. Even if it was summer, and even if I *did* get to sleep in a little.

“You,” he hissed. He was mad! “Quit walking by my door and making noises!”

Huh? What was he talking about?

“I’m not walking by your door,” I said,

yawning.

What would make him think such a thing? I had been sleeping. I'm not going to wake up in the middle of the night just to try and scare him!

"I heard you walk by my door," he continued, wagging a pointed finger in my direction. "*Again*. Just like last night."

It was hard to see him in the dark. He was just a dark shape that was standing in my doorway.

"You're crazy," I said. "I've been *sleeping!*"

"Yeah, well knock it off or I'm going to tell Mom and Dad."

Fine. Let him tell Mom and Dad. I was telling him the truth . . . I've been sleeping. Besides . . . why would I waste my time trying to scare Adrian in the middle of the night? It's easy enough to scare him during the day.

My name is Alexis, but everyone calls me Alex. I'm twelve. My brother Adrian and I are twins. Not identical twins, but fraternal twins. He's a boy, I'm a girl. And, if I do say so myself,

I was given a few more brains than my brother. Of course, he disagrees with me, but that just shows how wrong he can be.

I have lived in Petoskey my whole life. It's great here! I mean, since I haven't lived anywhere else, I guess I can't really say if there's anyplace better, but I sure do like Petoskey. It's a small city in northwest lower Michigan, right next to Lake Michigan. It's beautiful! There are lots of pretty beaches and forests and all kinds of things to do.

My favorite thing to do in the whole world is swim. I love swimming! I swim in pools, in the lake—anyplace where there is water! Adrian doesn't like the water as much as I do, but he likes going to the beach. We don't live very far from the Petoskey State Park, so he and I walk there a lot.

Last year, Mom and Dad started looking for a new house. They said that the one we lived in had become too small, and that we all needed more space. They said that I would get a bigger bedroom!

THAT would be great! I mean . . . I liked

the house that we were living in at the time . . . but Mom and Dad were right—it *was* kind of small.

Anyway, when Mom and Dad said that they had found a new house for us, I was really excited – until I saw it.

It was an *old* house!

An old farmhouse, to be exact. It sat in the middle of a field, cold and alone, and it looked like it had been empty for years! When Mom and Dad asked what we thought about it, I told them that I thought it was falling apart. It was true! Shingles had fallen off the roof, and there were holes through the walls. Who on earth could live in a house like that? It was a wreck – and Mom and Dad agreed!

But they said that if it was fixed up right, it would be beautiful once again. I didn't see how then, but *now* I do!

Mom and Dad bought the house and we spent last summer working on it. There was a lot of work that we had to do. Adrian and I helped with some of it. Mostly, we just hauled all of the old junk out to the big dumpster.

But Mom and Dad were right! After we fixed it up, it sure was beautiful. All of the rooms have hardwood floors and high ceilings. And lots and lots of room! Mom and Dad said that they wanted to make the house look just like it did when it was first built – way back in 1897!

Wow! We were going to live in a house that was over one hundred years old!

There was only one problem, and it was a big one: GHOSTS!

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Now . . . before you think that I'm really weird or something, let me tell you . . . I had never believed in ghosts before . . . but I sure do now!

Here's what happened:

One night not long after we moved in, I was sleeping in my bedroom. Mom and Dad said I could decorate it any way that I wanted. My bedroom is really neat . . . I have paintings and pictures of horses on the walls. I even have a poster of a horse on my ceiling! I really like horses.

Anyway, I went to bed early, before anyone else. I was tired! I had been swimming most of the day, and then my friend Stacey and I went horseback riding. Stacey lives a couple

miles away. They have a farm and a few horses. Dad says that we might get horses some day. I hope so.

I was tired when I got home, so I went to bed early. It was so early that the sun was still up.

The problem was, when I woke up, it was *dark*. I couldn't get back to sleep. The clock next to my bed said that it was almost four in the morning – but I was wide awake!

And I was thirsty. So I got up to get a glass of water.

Living in an old home is cool. But it can be spooky sometimes, too. When you walk on the old wood floor, it creaks and moans. Sometimes the house makes noises in the night. It was a bit scary the first couple nights, but I got used to it.

As I walked down the stairs, the steps creaked beneath my feet. Nothing unusual.

But when I got to the bottom of the stairs, the creaking sound continued!

I just stood there, looking up at the darkened staircase. I could hear the steps

squeak, just like someone was walking on them . . . but there was no one there! I was terrified, but I was too afraid to even move.

Suddenly the squeaking stopped. The house got really quiet. Still, I was too afraid to move. I don't know how long I stood there in my nightgown, frozen to the floor, watching. Shadows loomed out at me like dark animals, waiting to attack.

After some time, I got up the courage to walk to the kitchen. In our kitchen we have a small stove light that stays on all the time. It gives off enough light to see pretty good in the dark.

I got a glass of water and gulped it down. When I sat it back on the counter, I noticed something strange.

*All of the cupboard doors in the kitchen had opened!* Not just a little bit, but all the way open! I knew that they were closed when I first walked into the kitchen.

So . . . I closed all of them. There were twelve cupboard doors that had opened. I stood there for a moment, looking at them, wondering

if they would open up again.

They didn't.

Whew. That was too freaky.

I just left the kitchen and went back to bed. I was a little nervous going back up the stairs, thinking that I might hear the strange creaking on the steps again. I didn't, and I was glad. I crawled back into bed and finally was able to fall asleep.

When I awoke in the morning, the sun was already up. Birds were singing in the yard, and I heard an airplane buzzing high in the sky. I threw on my sweats and an old T-shirt, and went downstairs. Mom was in the kitchen.

"Hi Sweets," she said, kissing me on the cheek as I sat down on a stool. Mom has called me 'Sweets' for as long as I can remember.

"Good morning," I yawned. "Is there any juice left?"

Mom reached into the fridge and pulled out a pitcher. There was just enough orange juice left to fill a glass.

"Finish that up and I'll make some more. Your father and your brother will be up soon,

and they'll want some."

She poured a glass and I sipped it. It was cold and sweet and tangy.

"Oh," she said, opening the freezer. She pulled out a can of frozen orange juice and ran it under hot water in the sink. "Did you get up and come downstairs last night?" she asked.

"Mm-hmm," I muttered, sipping on the glass of orange juice and nodding my head.

"I thought so. What on earth were you looking for?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, putting the empty glass down on the counter.

"The cupboard doors, of course. *All of them were open when I got up this morning.*"

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Later that day, I told my brother about the cupboards.

“That’s really weird,” he said.

I couldn’t figure out how those cupboard doors opened. It was like they opened all by themselves! I thought that maybe I just *dreamed* that I closed them when I got up to get a glass of water. At least, that’s what I tried to tell myself.

But I wasn’t really scared. I was sure that there had to be some reason. What that reason was, I didn’t know.

Nothing happened the next night or the night after that. Actually, a few nights went by before something else happened. Something that scared the daylights out of me!

I had almost forgotten about the cupboard incident. Late one night I got up again to get a glass of water. I was sleepy and the house was dark. No one else was awake.

But when I got to the kitchen, there was already a glass of water poured! It even had ice in it. It sat right on the counter in plain view.

Freaky!

I didn't know if I should drink it or not. But no one else was awake. How a glass of ice water was poured in the middle of the night was a mystery.

So I drank it. It was icy-cold and good. I kept expecting Mom or Dad or Adrian to come into the room and ask me why I drank their water, but they never did.

After I finished it, I poured the ice into the sink, then set the glass onto the counter. It was still very late (or early, depending on how you looked at it) and I wanted to hop back into my warm bed.

I reached for the glass to place it in the dishwasher. Mom's real strict about that. If we use a dish or a glass, rinse it off and put it in the

dishwasher, pronto. I reached for the glass.

It was full!

The glass sat on the counter, *filled with water and ice!*

Had I done it and forgot about it?

No, I hadn't. I was sure.

I looked in the sink. The ice was still there from when I had emptied the glass.

That freaked me out. I didn't even stay long enough to empty the glass and put it in the dishwasher. I'd explain to Mom in the morning. Right now I just wanted to curl up in bed and pull the sheets over my head!

I left the kitchen and tip-toed up the stairs. The steps cried out and protested beneath my bare feet. Then I remembered the other night, when the steps had continued to creak, even when there was no one there. When I reached the top of the stairs I stopped, expecting the stairs to keep squeaking. They didn't, and I was glad.

My bedroom door was open, and bright moonlight lit up the floor. My window was open and the night air was warm and fresh. I

could hear thousands of crickets chiming in the field. It was the only sound I heard, and I had grown attached to the gentle whirring of the insects. The sound of crickets meant that it was time for sleep.

I felt better, I guess, hearing the crickets, and my fear left me. There had to be some explanation about the glass, I told myself. There *had* to be. Maybe Mom or Dad had left the glass out before they went to bed. Maybe they even left it for me. I would ask them in the morning. That didn't explain how the glass got re-filled, but there had to be some logical reason for that, too.

There *had* to be.

I stood for a moment looking out the open window. The field was glowing in the moonlight. It was beautiful.

When I turned to crawl back into bed, I caught my reflection in the mirror, and what I saw made me cold with fright.

There was someone else in the mirror! I could see the dark reflection of someone—or something—standing behind me!



“Ohhh!” I screamed.

Actually, I didn't really scream. I think I was too afraid! It sounded more like a loud drawing in of breath. Both of my hands flew up, covering my open mouth.

I spun.

It was Adrian!

I should have known! He was standing in my doorway in his pajamas.

“Geez,” he snickered. “You sure get spooked easy!”

“That was *not* funny!” I scolded. And it wasn't.

“I wasn't trying to scare you,” he said. “I heard a noise and I got up to see what it was. It

was just you.”

“I got up to get a glass of water,” I explained coldly. “Is that illegal in my own home?” I was still shaking from the scare, and I was angry.

Then he did something that I couldn’t believe! He apologized! Adrian *actually* apologized!

“Gosh, I’m sorry about that, Al,” he said. “I really didn’t mean to.”

“That’s okay,” I said. “It’s just that . . . well, there’s a couple weird things that have been going on.”

“Like the glass of water?” he asked.

He knew!

“How did you – was that *you*? Did you put the glass of water there?”

He shook his head from side to side. “Not me, Alex,” he said. “But I’ve seen it a couple times. I go to get a glass of water, and it’s already waiting. Then, after I drink it –”

“ – it fills itself back up again,” I said. He nodded in agreement. “And I suppose you’ve seen the cupboards too, huh?”

"Yes," I whispered. "They open and close by themselves."

Adrian shifted in the doorway.

"Gosh Al," he said quietly. "Do you think the house is . . . *haunted*? Do you think we live in a haunted house?"

"No way," I said. "There's no such thing as ghosts."

"But how do we explain the water glass filling up all by itself? And the cupboards opening by themselves? Something really weird is going on in this house, Alex. *Really* weird."

A chill snaked along my spine like a tiny mouse scurrying up and down my back. It was the way Adrian had said those two words:

*Really weird.*

He was right. There was something really weird going on, that was for sure.

But what?

"Remember a few nights ago?" he asked me. "Remember when I came to your bedroom and told you to stop trying to scare me?"

I nodded.

"Well, I heard something that night. Like

footsteps. Up and down the stairs and across the hall. It was just like someone was walking on the floor, only no one was there. That's why I thought you did it."

"It wasn't me," I whispered.

"I know that now . . . because now I hear the footsteps almost every night."

I shuddered. "I've heard them too," I said. "A couple of nights ago when I went down to the kitchen. When I got to the bottom of the stairs, the steps kept squeaking like there was someone walking on them."

We were silent for a moment, listening to the chorus of crickets drifting through the open window. The drapes fluttered softly in the gentle breeze, and the field was aglow by the light of the moon.

"What do we do?" I asked.

"Beats me," Adrian replied. "But it sure is freaking me out. I wish it would stop."

"Maybe if we asked it to go away, it would," I offered.

"*What* would?" Adrian wondered aloud. "We don't even know what—or who—this is."

We don't—"

"*Sssshh!*" I whispered, placing a finger to my lips. "*I just heard something!*"

He stopped talking, and we listened.

Nothing. Just crickets.

Listening . . . .

"What did you hear?" Adrian whispered, leaning toward me so he wouldn't have to raise his voice any higher than he needed. "I don't—"

But he stopped short of his sentence.

*Creeaaaakkkkk . . . kkkk . . . eeaakkkkk.*

Adrian's eyes grew to the size of golf balls! I guess mine probably did, too.

*Creaak . . . Creeeeeeeeee . . . eeeeeek . . . .*

It was louder. Whatever it was, it was coming closer. It was coming up the steps!

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