

It had been hours since lights out but I could not yet find sleep. The sounds of the hospital were so unusual and new that I struggled to rest. Periodic spats of coughing echoed through the halls. Someone nearby cried out, then there was murmuring as a nurse spoke with them. The smells of medicine mingled with the freshness of the cool night air coming through the windows.

I couldn't help but think of my family. Were they sleeping? Were they missing me at all? I certainly missed them already, even my father. I imagined the children smiling, playing in the garden, working hard at their chores but happy. I refused to think about any other possibility.

I was right on the brink of falling fully asleep when a strange scraping noise broke through my daze. I fought consciousness at first, unsure it wasn't just a typical sound for the hospital. I thought maybe it was a gurney passing by in the hall, or a nurse moving stealthily through on rounds.

When the sound came again, it was so loud and so close to my head that I came fully awake with a jolt. My heart began pounding and my lungs instantly constricted against the shock. I thought for a moment I would begin coughing, but somehow the urge passed. I strained to hear the noise again, my gaze darting around the darkness, desperately trying to put a logical explanation to the scraping.

Unsure of how my body would react, I nonetheless decided to slip out of bed and try to figure out the source of the noise. I knew I couldn't rest until I figured it out. As I sat up and swung my legs over the edge of the bed, the shadows on the wall before me first darkened, then *scampered* toward the doorway.

I froze. It was as if the shadows themselves were moving, but then I realized it was still very dark in the room and that only one small section of deepest blackness had traveled. I shook my head, convinced that I was still woozy from the blood work and tests earlier in the day. There was no way the shadows were alive and in motion.

I stayed riveted in the same spot for what seemed like an hour, but was probably only ten or so minutes. The shadows behaved perfectly normally in that time, further convincing me that I was merely overtired and seeing things.

I finally pulled my legs back onto the bed, exhausted beyond measure.

Commented [TL1]: Why avoid contractions? A kid would use them. Avoiding them gives everything a very professional tone.

Commented [TL2]: Who? This makes it sound like they're not related to her and that she doesn't consider herself one of them. Should be "my brothers and sister" or whatever the case may be.

Commented [TL3]: Oooo this really pulls me into the story

Commented [TL4]: We know she's not sure, based on everything else you're showing.

Commented [TL5]: Here we have the beginnings of her voice peeking through.

Commented [TL6]: But again this becomes more formal and too old for her.