

# Only Shadows

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*Riddles were meant to be a game, ghosts don't exist, and the house on the hill isn't really haunted. But only a fool goes in there alone.*

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# 1 - one

## Only Shadows

No one really understands the meaning of the word alone. At least not until they've been in a building after dark, with no one else but their own shadow for company. The fact of the matter is, when one can see their own face reflected back at them from a window with nothing but black sky behind it, and the only sound in the room is the low rasp of your own breathing, a person can start to imagine things. And what a person imagines is not always pleasant.

You might say it was a cold dark night, and it was, but there was no rain, and the first snowfall of the year had yet to touch the ground. What frightened me most was the lack of light. There was no moon that night, and it was too cloudy for the stars to shine through. The only source of light was that flickering iridescent yellow kind that comes from a near burnt out light bulb.

I could have gone out side, I could have left, but I didn't. They had dared me to go in, and to remain a full night. I knew what this entailed. They would try to scare me. They would howl like wolves, get into the upper floor and walk around so that the floor boards creaked. They would play with the fuse box and make the light bulb flicker on and off, and they would shriek bloody murder long into the night.

What I knew, and they didn't, was the story of the house they had lured me into. Nothing they could do would scare me, but my flesh was already crawling with the goose bumps that came from the mere memory. I'd been told a story long, long ago by my older brother. Jason had a habit of telling me stories just to see how scared I would get. Most of them I had long forgotten, but this one, this one was different. While I couldn't recall the particulars of the tale, I remembered the poem that went with it:

*Hidden deep in the passage of time*

*In a layer where no light doth shine*

*Hidden in dark shrouded unclear*

*Feeding on memories, feelings most dear*

*Hidden in plaster incased in wood*

*Once felt one would run, if only they could*

*Hidden away where no man can find*

*But present still, in a state of mind*

The poem went on in much the same way, but the story I'd been told claimed it could be found: "*In a house atop a tall dark hill*" But more than that I was certain that house was this house, and that was what gave me the chills.

The light bulb above me flickered, and I jumped with a yell. Somewhere I heard titters of laughter. Slightly ashamed of letting my fears get the better of me, I slowly ventured further into the house. There was little use in staying in one place and letting them play with the lights, trying to scare me.

Slowly I made my way across the dust filled floor into what once would have been the kitchen. There was no light in here, and so I was forced to use the flash light they had given me. In all probability it was rigged so that the batteries would give out a few minutes after my turning it on. I didn't care.

The kitchen was old. Cabinet doors were rotting of their hinges; dust coated the flagstone floor so deep that when I took a step I left long, clear, lonely footprints. Further inside was an old fashioned wood stove, and behind it . . . I'm still not entirely sure what was behind it, but it moved and it hissed. I heard the low slow shaking sound that my parents always cautioned against, and instead of moving forward I began to back out.

Once out of the room I felt safer. It was one thing to come in here expecting to be scared; it was an entirely different thing to be bitten by something.

*Thump*. It was soft, so soft I wasn't even sure I'd heard it at first but then . . . *Thump, Thump*. I followed the sound and found myself, in the middle of an abandoned living room full of broken couches and moldy cloth, looking up at the ceiling. *Thump*, It was above me somewhere, and I was determined to find out which one of my friends had been stupid enough to climb through an upstairs window. I had an idea on who it might be, and I had set myself to give him a bit of his own medicine, but then I reached the upstairs landing.

There was a window there. Coated in grime and cracked down the middle, but I turned out the flashlight for a moment, and was able to see what was out side. My friends were all supposed to be camped out there and sure enough there were a couple of tents. But something was wrong. There were too many of them there for there to be any one upstairs. All of them were sitting calmly out side waiting for me to either run out of the house screaming, or . . . I shook my head. I must be imagining, *thump!* But there was no one here but me . . . *Thump!* Surly their stories were only stories!

There was some one else in this house, and I had no idea who. But I squared my shoulders and went

on. *Thump* they, whoever, whatever it was, were still above me, and so with my flashlight on again, small as it was, I began my search for the attic stairs.

I found the stairs hidden in a room that might have once been used for an office. They creaked and for a moment I feared that whoever was above me would hear it, but the muffled *Thump* was still there, although it was not so muffled now. I could clearly hear a person walking around, and my hopes of it being some stray animal were dashed to pieces.

I went up those stairs, even though I feared they would break under my weight, gripping the railing the entire way. *Thump!* I continued forward, turning out the flashlight again and shoving my trembling hands into my pockets. Then I heard it. A low rasping voice whispering as if from all corners of the room:

*Hidden deep outside of time*

*Wandering through riddle and rhyme*

*Hidden and shrouded in the dark*

*Waiting, simply to place its mark*

“Who's there!” my voice sounded high and shrill in my own ears. “Show your self!” Then what ever it was, just laughed; hideous and menacing.

*Hidden in wood incased in stone*

*Waiting patiently for what it would own*

*Hidden in Mysterious past*

*Simply there until the last*

All right, I admit it, I was scared now. And then he stepped out of the shadows, face laughing, full of the smirk I knew so well.

“Do you believe yet?” He asked in that creepy voice.

“Cut the act,” I snapped, “I you weren't family I'd . . .”

“All right,” He said spreading his hands in submission. “But I'm telling you now, I'm not the one who made up that story.”