

# The Shadows Loft

Many of us have strange and sometimes terrifying experiences growing up, sometimes it's a certain place such as a basement or old cellar that gives us that uneasy feeling of being watched. Other times it's a recurring nightmare or eerie sound that we hear when the world goes dark and we're left alone with our imaginations, most of these can be explained away and fade into nothing more than a mere memory as we grow older. My experience however has never gone away, I have never been able to explain it away or come up with any logical reason as to what happened. It started at a young age, just old enough to remember a few of the fuzzy details and images that haunt my dreams to this day.

I was around five or six years old when I had my first encounter with what I will call "the shadow". Cliche as that might sound I don't know how else to describe it, so bear with me. It was an early weekday morning and I was with my mom at the daycare. She worked there and had the opening shift that particular day so it was just the two of us inside the large single room. She unlocked the door and turned on the lights as normal, making sure to relock the door once we had entered. She set up a kids program on the television for me to watch while she scurried about the building performing her opening duties. I had a banana and yogurt cup on the small children's table in front of me which was one of my favorite parts of our morning ritual. I zoned out and got lost in the show that flashed an array of bright colors and likable characters across the screen, mesmerizing me with all of its dazzle and childlike wonder. My mom continued with her duties and everything was routine as usual, I finished my morning snack and headed for the bathroom where my mom was stocking all the toiletries that you'd expect to find at a daycare. Just as I entered the bathroom I heard a very large thud coming from overhead, my mom stopped what she was doing instantly and stood silent, listening carefully.

"What was that mommy?" I asked her loudly, breaking the silence that filled the air.

"I don't know sweetie, go watch your show and I'll go look." She quickly finished stocking the bathroom and headed towards the narrow stairwell that led up to the loft overhead. I returned to my show not thinking twice about it, in the mind of a young child, there was never anything to worry about as long as your parents are around. Parents are invincible superheroes that can conquer any foe or monster in a young mind, always around to save the day and chase off the monsters that lurk within the shadows and darkest corners of any room.

My mom stood at the base of the stairwell looking up into the black space above, empty and completely still. She listened for just a second before ascending the old creaky stairs, disappearing from my view into the darkness that awaited her above. I had made my way to the base of the stairwell to watch her investigate the strange thud, not daring to go up after her until the lights above flickered on. I waited for the comfort of that soft light to illuminate the space above but it never came. I could hear my mom walking on the boards above, her steps causing the floor to moan as she stumbled around for the light switch, out of nowhere there was another loud thud. This time it came from the opposite side of the loft furthest from the stairwell where my mom was still walking around. Silence followed, I listened carefully for any signs of my mom but it was as if she had vanished. Hesitantly I called out for her up into the black void, the sounds of children laughing in the background from the tv made it all the eerier. There was no answer, I felt alone and scared when suddenly I heard a scream coming from above. I have never

heard my mom's voice filled with so much fear and terror, it was almost unrecognizable to me as I stood there frozen. The scream was hushed abruptly as another loud thud echoed down the stairwell, it sounded as though it came from the top of the stairs now, just out of sight and shrouded by the darkness of the loft.

Petrified I stood there, unsure of what to do and too scared to run, my legs felt like a pool of warm liquid being absorbed by the carpet under my feet. Then I heard a familiar voice calling me from within that dark void, it was my mom calling out to me to come up and join her. Being young and not having a very strong survival instinct I immediately went sprawling up the narrow corridor towards my mom's voice, finding comfort and reassurance in that familiar sound. Upon reaching the top of the stairs I was greeted by an endless void of darkness and dashing shadows, moving figures dancing around out of the corner of my eyes. It was at this point I realized, I fucked up. My mom was nowhere to be found and I was left surrounded by the shadowy figures moving in and out of sight, the toys and other miscellaneous things that had been stored up here now seemed like a fortress for which the darkness hid. To say I was horrified would be an understatement, I could feel the warmth of my urine running down my leg as I lost myself to the realm of shadows. Something caught my eye in the far corner of the low hanging ceiling, something about that specific corner was different from the rest, more substantial.

I focused on the mass that seemed to be hunched up off the floor, almost cowering in the far corner suspended by who knows what. As my eyes were becoming more attuned to the darkness I was able to make out a figure, it was pressed to the rafters of the ceiling and curled up into a ball, hugging onto its knees as though they brought it comfort. Somehow I managed to take a step forward towards the figure, as I did its headshot to the side and its gaze fell upon me. It was my mom, only it wasn't quiet. Her face was whiter than a sheet and her eyes bulged with a blood-red ferocity, her teeth appeared black and decayed as she twisted an unsettling smile in my direction. Again I froze as what used to be my mom began to what can only be described as unfolding her limbs away from her body, and in jerking and almost robotic fashion, this thing lowered itself off the rafters and dropped to the floor below. Landing on all fours it looked up at me slowly, it gave me another disturbing smile before rushing towards me like a spider skittering across the creaking boards.

The next thing I knew I was being shaken, that familiar voice once again calling my name.

"Wake up sweetie." My mom's soothing voice softened in my ear, I opened my eyes and found myself looking up at my mom. The sounds of other children playing filled the air and I quickly realized that I had been dreaming. I sat up on my nap time mat and embraced my mom in the biggest hug I could, relieved that everything was ok. I didn't say anything to anyone about my nightmare, all I wanted to do was forget it and join my friends in playing whatever game it was they were playing. I released my mom from the hug and smiled at her, she patted me on the head and asked if I was ok to which I nodded. I headed over towards the other children who were all playing a game near the base of the stairs. I looked back at my mom again to make sure that she was still there, and as we locked eyes she smiled, her teeth black and decayed.