

The Door

(A Short Story by T. U.-P.)

As a thick blanket of darkness outstretches itself over the hazy City of Shoresby, the sun blinks one last time before its fatigued rays dip once again under the West horizon. Soon the valley grows dark and the trees shudder with the passing of a slight north wind. Timed like the emergence of bats leaving their dank cave at sundown, a dizzying contingent of white robes moving in unison with the dull glow of Templar torches exits an abandoned rail tunnel, making their way to a giant makeshift bonfire pit at Grove Lookout. Soon after, five hooded and robed militiamen exit the tunnel carrying a large wooden cross doused in kerosene for a nightly ghoulish spectacle. As the mass of eerie white slowly begins to file around and settle into their positions overlooking Shaw Valley, a newly robed acolyte still unadorned with a hood, marches close to the fire pit as the large cross is placed in an upright orientation facing the metropolis to the South.

Soon, the master of ceremonies, distinguished from the others with a black robe and hood with red trim addresses the gathered hordes.

“The Templars are divided! We need to trust one another and work with all of the separate Klans!” He says authoritatively with a thick southerner’s accent. “Tonight we welcome a new member to the Kloak Society, pending of course on the outcome of a special Holy War mission we have for him later tonight!” He says aloud as the crowd grows anxious in anticipation of the night’s blazing festivities.

“Send ‘im out into the world, Klan House Speaker!” A loud voice hollers from the throng of robed and hooded white forming a semi-circle around the bonfire pit.

“INITIATE! INITIATE! INITIATE!” The large rabble begins to chant in unison with increasing volume.

A few moments later, a tall and stocky Klan mercenary dressed like an executioner with his dark brown hood, lowers his torch into the fire pit which with a chain reaction flaming domino effect, spreads fiery licks to a long kerosene doused wick, igniting the giant cross that pierces the darkness with bright yellow and orange intersecting fire.

“LET THE BEAST BE WITH US!” The master of ceremonies shouts aloud to the fascinated crowd, still awe-struck by the arsonist spectacle of staged combustion.

“KLOAK! KLOAK! KLOAK!” The hordes chant louder and louder.

“Before we bring Sir Kamelot into our world of cloaks and chivalry, the Templar Holy War creed must be uttered along with the pledge of the Kloak Society... Please repeat the following words...” The master of ceremonies enunciates loudly.

After repeating a series of pugilistic utterances, the Klan acolyte bows his head toward the giant bonfire as a new white hood is placed over his head and shoulders.

“Now go forth into the night and fulfill your mission!” The master of ceremonies shouts aloud as the crowd cheers in demonic unity.

Instants later, the newly hood-adorned Klansman leaves the bonfire ceremony alone, heading in the direction of the distant skyline of downtown Shoresby, separated from Grove Lookout by a dense mass of urban Carolean forest.

Located in a forested residential enclave of the Rosewood District, freelance writer and journalist Rebecca Wordsworth tosses and turns for yet another sleepless night. Armed with only a notepad and a cellular phone resting on a small table next to her bed, she begins again to sense the almost spectral presence of a mysterious stalker lurking somewhere in the nightly distance, threatening to infringe on her privacy and suddenly make a violent approach to enter the confines of her small Victorian home, located on an isolated cul-de-sac street. Determined to stay alive in her state of insomnia, she begins the jot down how she feels in a makeshift bedside diary full of feedback from strange nightly beasts and zombies.

“Night Seven—Whoever or whatever it is, I think they mean business tonight... It’s like a strange rabid creature was sent from Hades himself to lurk and stalk from the depths of Shaw Valley all the way to my hood in quiet Rosewood, knowing even my street and address... I’ve picked up my phone at least thirty times the last few nights wondering and rehearsing what I would tell the cops in a 9-1-1 call...”

Fighting off her extreme fatigue as she continues to have her energy sapped from her like an almost drained human battery, she senses more scary feedback from the strange and turbulent ghostly presence, as it makes even more of an intrusive approach toward the front door of her home. Not confident that the police would believe her delirious rant over an emergency call, Rebecca decides instead to call her best friend Molly in a last attempt to deter the fearsome home invading presence.

“Hello... Who is this? It’s 2am...” A quiet woman’s voice says in a sleepy tone.

“Sorry Molly... It’s Rebecca... I didn’t know who else to call... I’ve had severe insomnia the last week and I think I’m at the end of my rope...”

“Are you in a mental health crisis Rebecca? You should talk to a doctor and maybe get some meds to sleep better...”

“Well... I am losing it, but it’s kind of like what French existentialist writer Sartre would say. I mean that ‘hell is others’...”

“You mean you’re feeling paranoid or something?”

“No... Well... I mean... I think there’s something out there trying to kill me.”

No sooner than those words are uttered, Rebecca gets out of her bedroom with the phone by her side, concerned that the ominous presence is directly outside. Still clutching her talking portal in the palm of her hand, she anxiously walks down the stairs toward the front door.

“Becca... Are you still there? Maybe you should give the police a call...” Her friend says, worried by the sudden abnormal silence on the other end.

Standing on the last step of the staircase and facing the front door, Rebecca suddenly sees the tall triangular profile of a strange and sinister being through the frosted glass of the upper door glazing. Holding her breath and praying inside that the creepy presence will suddenly decide to scurry away into the night, all of her attention is now focused on the doorknob and the letterbox slot belonging to the lone narrow protective barrier to her small hearth. Suddenly, the terrified writer gasps as the chilling presence knocks three times on the upper door panel.

“Ahhhhh!!! STAY AWAY YOU CREEP! You’re trespassing and I have the police on the line!” Rebecca shouts at the hooded predator standing a mere seven feet away from her on the opposite side of the door. After a prolonged and suspenseful silence, the stalker victim stands in disbelief as a long set of male fingers push a small note through the letterbox slot. Still paralyzed with fear, she focuses her stare on the handwritten note which lands face-up on her tiled floor.

“*We ARE the POLICE!*” The note reads in deranged red cursive writing. Backing away from the door, Rebecca drops her phone and rushes up the steps to her bedroom. After calming her thoughts and realizing she may need her phone should things escalate any more within the home, she makes her way cautiously back toward the top of the staircase, opting to wait and observe from an elevated perch. After waiting about five minutes in a state of paralysis and angst, she is suddenly reassured and revived by the flashing of red and blue police strobes penetrating through the small windows of her home’s front façade. Moments later, she climbs down the stairs to grab her phone and feels relieved that her friend Molly reached out to first responders on her behalf.

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