

## The Walk to the House

With a darkening sky rumbling above my, I hurried along the road, my collar pulled tight to my chin. Ahead of me, about twenty paces away, a dark, foreboding house stood, its garden surrounded by a blistered picket fence. The only visible entrance was a gnarled metal gate which hung, not quite closed, on decaying hinges.

Drawn by a seemingly external force, I found myself pulled from my concentration and was soon transfixed. Even with the wind whistling above my head, the sound of the creaking hinges pierced my ears. I just had to investigate. Stepping cautiously forwards, I reached the entranceway and placed a quivering hand onto the bird's head that adorned the top of the gate. With a squeak of resistance, the passageway to the house opened, revealing a cobbled pathway that snaked towards the shadowy porch.

Placing my foot tentatively onto the path, I stepped slowly forward. The front garden around my overflowed with frenzy. Either side of me, the long grass reached upwards as though threatening to drag me down. Caught as if by strong arms, objects lay trapped within the undergrowth: a broken chair, a moth-eaten teddy bear, even an overturned slide. They all seemed to call out with their own terrifying past, their own terrifying story.

Reaching the porch, I stepped up onto the wooden plank of the first step and felt it sag under my weight. Before me now, closer than ever, the imposing door of the house greeted me. The knocker, which I would have had to stretch for to reach, consisted of a thick metal ring resting between the jaws of a lion. The eyes glared at me, lifeless but somehow full of sinister meaning. With a short, sharp intake of breath, I leaned forward and gripped meekly to the door handle. It was cold to the touch; it too was lifeless.

As the handle turned, the door slipped open, revealing a slim crack of darkness. Letting go of the door, I stood fearfully at the threshold. I dared not move. Then, as though called from within, I found the courage to enter. Almost instantly a coldness met me, reaching through my skin. My heartbeat quickened. My breath shortened. My eyes widened. The darkness around me was utter and complete.

Then, with a slow creep like the rising of an other-worldly sun, a light began to emanate from the landing above. Its dull beams reached out like the branches of a dying tree. With its source out of view, I crept towards the stairs, my curiosity overriding my fear. Step after wary step, I climbed. With each creak and crack of the boards beneath my feet, I got closer and closer. With a final step onto the landing, I turned my head in the direction of the light. My face contorted into an expression of terror and hopelessness. My time had come.