



What I Can't See

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Note: This excerpt is from novel-in-progress, *What I Can't See*, about a college student who discovers the meaning behind her strange nightmares and reveals the dark past her parents tried to keep hidden.

I threw my coat onto the bed and turned on the television. I studied my face in the mirror to see just how tired I actually looked. My hair was frizzy and I had really bad dark circles underneath my eyes, my eyeliner was smeared and it looked as if I hadn't used lip balm in ten years. To top it off, my clothes were soaked from the snow outside.

I went to the bathroom to draw a tub of water. Once I saw steam rise from the water I stripped down and entered the hot liquid. My muscles relaxed all at once; suddenly I felt so fatigued; I closed my eyes and leaned my head back.

Somewhere between my head going underneath the water and the end of my dream, I came to my senses. I must have been in for a long time since the water turned cold. I stepped out of the tub and noticed as I reached for the towel my fingers looked like raisins.

So much for taking a bath, I thought to myself as I glanced in the mirror. My hair was still frizzy and my eyeliner still smudged, I'd gotten so tired I forgot to actually wash up. Oh well.

I turned the TV off as I climbed into bed. As soon as my head hit the pillow I was passed out.

“Mommy?” the little girl called out. She was walking down a long dark hallway in her pink nightgown. “Mommy?” She called out again. I felt badly for her; I wanted to reach out and give her a hug, to let her know that whatever was wrong, it would be all right soon. As soon as I thought that I could tell I was placed in the scene too.

The child started running. “Mommy! Mommy!” She began to scream, I followed to where she was running.

“Wait! Stop!” I tried to scream but my mouth wouldn’t utter a sound. The faster I ran the further the distance was between the child and me. This seemed to go on for hours and hours, as if this was a movie running in a loop.

The little girl screaming, my heaving breathing and a faint cry seemed to be coming from every corner. I looked down at myself and noticed that I was wearing a thin white nightgown. This was definitely not my choice of clothing.

And what was that smell? Something stunk like mildew and rotten eggs.

Suddenly, I noticed where I was. The walls were built of stone and the floor I was running on was dusty and slightly damp. The high ceiling had multiple chandeliers; some candles had burned down completely or were almost out. I looked in the child’s direction again but she wasn’t there. I stopped.

“Hello?” I called. I was answered with a short giggle. I whirled around but nobody was there. “Little girl? Where are you?”

A soft childlike voice sounded in my ear. “Come and find me,” it whispered and laughed again.

I began running in the last direction I had seen the little girl go when I came upon a large brass door. It must have been eight times bigger than me. I tried to shove it open but it wouldn’t budge. I looked up and saw a massive gold door knocker. How in the world was I going to reach that? Standing on my tiptoes definitely would not help. I balled my hands into fists and started banging on the door as hard as I could. Nothing happened.

I leaned my back against the wall and slid down it until I reached the floor. I started tracing patterns in the dust on the floor when I heard, what I assumed was the little girl, giggle. I looked up and found the child standing over me.

“You found me!” She laughed.

I threw my blankets off me and checked the time. It was three in the morning. I pressed my palm to my cheek. What was that dream supposed to be? I shrugged my shoulders and groggily rolled over onto my right side. I don't recall going to sleep again. All I know is that I woke up forty-five minutes late for my second class. I grabbed my school bag and shoes and ran out the door, feeling as if the little girl were watching.