

Doubts.

by Adam Sifre

It's dark outside and not much brighter in here. The kitchen light is out and the hallway lights -- both of them -- are those lousy environment-friendly corkscrews that take forever to get going and don't go much of anywhere.

The basement door is open, just a crack. Even in the kitchen's darkness, you can see that. If you open the fridge, maybe there'll be enough light to see more, or maybe it will make everything darker. If you turn around and go upstairs, you can lie down in a nice bed, fall asleep and wake up to a sunny day and forget all this nonsense. Questions that seem a matter of life and death in the small hours on a cold, October night, become silly and forgotten under a mild October sun.

But it isn't a mild, October day.

And you are alone.

And the basement door is never open, not even a crack. Not for weeks now. So you do not go back upstairs and wait for daylight. You step away from the pool poor light and into the dark kitchen.

It's dark, but you can see the door. Three inches. Maybe four. And from that little opening spills more darkness. Darker dark. The basement is filled with a fourscore of nights and they've had plenty of time to ferment since you were last down there.

It's always dry here, so there's no dank smell. No horrible reminders to tickle the nose. But the flavor of dry dust, lime and guilt settles on your tongue and you absently lick your teeth. It's a taste that isn't there, that no one wants, and one that you keep looking for. Like an old toothache that you have to poke to make sure it's still there.

What's done is done.

Take another step. The kitchen is dark but it's not dark. Not cellar dark. You can see well enough. No one is here with you. Of course not. Not anymore. Seventeen years he was with you. Always with you, it seemed. Always talking. Always always always always.

But not now.

Most things can never be undone, did you you know that?

Take another step. Take two. It's just a basement door. A few steps, close it, or open it and turn on the light if that will put your mind at ease. It makes no nevermind. Nothing moves down there. Anything happening in the darkness at the end of those stairs is happening only in your mind. Just the normal fears we all get from time to time. Not that what happened here was normal, no ma'am.

And the basement door *is open*.

Just a crack. Just a crack of night in the night.

You did what you did. The time for being afraid of open doors and dark nights is long past for you. But it's here, nonetheless.

So close the door and come to bed. The door will open from time to time, and unease will seep out like winter chill. But for now, just close the door, come to bed and try to forget.

I will remember. I will remember for the both of us.

