

# The Myriad

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This is the story of 342 Boatman Drive and the Myriad family that lived there. It is a beautiful home in a quiet neighborhood, with lovely green grass, and wonderfully welcoming neighbors. The Myriads were the quintessential definition of a modern American family. Two hard working parents and three wonderfully pleasant children. While the Myriads might have been up to speed on the modern amenities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century their home was the picture of tradition and history. The marvelous two-storied, red bricked house was in the Myriad family for several generations.

You would expect a home as old as this would need a lot of love and attention. The love of course was there. The family simply adored their home, but maintenance was not what one might expect. In the Myriad household, there wasn't very many rules. The parents were not overly strict on much, nor would you have considered them overly protective either of the house or the children. But of course, in every home there are rules that must not be broken. Rules that are meant to be followed, lest there be harsh penalties. Maybe even one rule that is truly and urgently enforced. In the Myriad household, that rule that was passed down from one generation to the next was: "No going downstairs at night."

This wasn't an extremely hard rule to obey. Of course, most would be glad to follow the rule, given the overly creepy feeling dark staircases give off. Yet there has been a few in the past that were born with a slightly more curious demeanor than some of their other relatives, but that first creak, the first squeak, that sharp sound that pierced the silence of the night, sent shivers down the spine and sent everyone back to bed.

Every night when the clock struck nine the parents of the Myriad family set about locking the doors and turning off the lights. One by one, shutting them off as they moved closer to the steps of the staircase. Flipping that last switch, they moved with a sense of urgency up the stairs.

Not exactly running, but moving as though the darkness might solidify around them and trap them forever.

Mom and Dad might've taken a breath at the top of the stairs and then make one last round checking on the children. After they would peek into the rooms confirming that they were all fast asleep, they retired to their room at the end of the hall. As their door shut and the light from their room no longer spilled into the hallway a small face peeked out from the room closest to the stairs. A young girl, in a pink gown with dark brown hair stood awake in her room when she should have been sleeping. Peeking ever so slightly, the door ajar ever so lightly, she counted the seconds as they passed.

When at last she reached sixty seconds she opened her door fully. Jocelyn Myriad, youngest daughter of the Myriad family, was a bright girl. Great scores in school, well-liked by her classmates and teachers, and was very active in school activities. She was a good child and loved her family very much. But every night, one minute after the house went silent, there she was at the top of the stairs. Standing there she peered into the darkness and wondered.

Every second she stood there her curiosity grew. The house was dark, all the lights were turned off, but the bottom of the stairs was darker. No moonlight or street lamps shined through the windows; nothing penetrated the inky blackness that has settled at the bottom of the stairs. So, she stared, she pondered, and she imagined exploring the ever-present carpet of darkness.

What is down there? What secrets does it hide? *Why is it forbidden?* She stood there waiting. The ticking of the clock at the foot of the stairs could be heard throughout the house. Tick, tock, tick, tock the clock confessed. She followed the sounds, felt the thrumming of her heart beat in time with the clock, thump thump, it pulled her deeper into herself, thump thump,

she heard the call of the darkness, thump thump, she felt the tensing of her muscles in her legs. The tendons contracted, the muscles tightened, the floor board creaked.

The sound jarred her, a coldness gripped at her heart and a chill ran down her spine. Suddenly the darkness at the bottom of the stairs loomed over her. The once silent and tranquil sea of black felt alive and restless. No longer was it calling out softly, instead it very nearly screamed its horrible stillness throughout the house and all through her body. She reacted before she could think and stepped back. The feel of the cold wood against her feet spurred her backwards into her room. Keeping her eyes on the darkness till the last second as she shut her door and locked it.

The one rule that is never spoken nor is it ever discussed, but ever vigilantly is it enforced. Merely by staring into the night does the rule scream loudly into the minds of the Myriad family.

The next day Mom and Dad went out to run errands. It was a Saturday so the children were left at home with Franklin, the oldest of the three, being left in charge. Walking downstairs in the sunlit home Jocelyn checked for anything amiss. The furniture was untouched, the kitchen looked spotless, and the clock continued to tick tock along in the consistent manner that it should.

“Don’t look too hard, or you might find something you don’t want to find,” said Franklin coming down the stairs after her. He startled Jocelyn and she jumped back up the staircase clutching her chest. “Hahaha, sorry Lyn, I didn’t mean to scare you that badly.”

“I wasn’t scared Franklin you only snuck up on me is all.”

“Ok well in any case I’m still sorry. Now go and wake your sister, Mom and Dad said I should make breakfast for everyone. So, go grab her and then come help me after you’ve both washed up.”

Nothing was wrong, nothing was amiss, but still she felt the darkness. There just under the floorboards she knew that it waited. She felt it writhe under her feet, and she lost herself in her curiosity. Every day she scoured the house. The sunlight acted as her guardian and her protector as she searched for clues. Every night she watched the darkness. No longer did she attempt a step, but she watched it and it watched her.

One night she had decided. She would wake-up early and watch the sunlight chase it away. She would follow it to where it lived and she would trap the darkness into whatever hole it crawled out from. She waited, the clock struck at six in the morning. She got out of bed, she knew the sun would rise soon and she needed to be there for the moment the first rays touched down.

Tick tock, her heart started pumping, tick tock, she urged the time fly faster, tick tock, she could bear it no longer, tick tock, she took a step forward. The darkness screamed at her again, but she would not listen, tick tock. Her heart jumped into her throat as took another step, tick tock. The darkness lunged at her, called to her, screamed its hellish chorus at her, tick tock. She clutched at her heart, tick, just then the sun broke through. The darkness ran, it writhed and peeled away from the floor around the shining beams of sun that blasted through the open window.

She watched it, eyes never blinking, followed it quickening its retreat. There at the back of her house, in the corner of the room she caught a glimpse of whatever it was. The slither of a

limb, the snap of a joint, the turn of a head, and the gleam of its eyes. The eyes that bore into her, the eyes that smiled at her, the eyes that belonged to nothing of goodness. There in the corner of the dining room, at the back of the house, there they disappeared.

She had found it, she felt it in her heart, she gripped at her chest. Was it fear she felt? Maybe excitement? No, she knew what she felt, it was dread. Adrenalin pumped in her veins and she knew that what she saw was never meant to be seen. She stood there frozen in the realization that she had almost walked to her death a minute ago. Unaware of the steps behind her.

Her father grabbed her by her shoulders and spun her around. “Did you let it touch you? DID YOU TOUCH IT?!” he screamed at her. His face pale and full of fear.

She could only stare at him. The look in her eyes was like those of a person on the edge of a cliff and something was pushing her to jump. There on the stairs her father held onto her, waiting for her to say something. All she could muster was, “I saw it.”

There, at that moment, her father ceased to be. Death was in those three little words, and he froze. He wasn't merely standing there in front of her. No, his blood had frozen in his veins, all color fled from his face, and he was chilled to the bone.

“Dad, what do I do?” she stared into her father's eyes. Her own pleading for some answer to escape his lips. She grabbed at his hands holding her and shook him, “Dad! What do I do?!”

At her scream, he finally snapped back. Like blinking away a terrible dream, he let go of her shoulders and turned back up the stairs, “Gather your things. We're leaving today.”

The Myriad family was leaving their ancestral home. Franklin and Jessica were confused, worried, and afraid. “What do you mean we're leaving? We can't go I've got school still, and

what the heck is wrong with Jocelyn?” Questions, irrelevant questions, ignorant questions. The children all knew of the one rule in the house, but only Jocelyn now knew why. Despite the protest and the pleas for answers the family packed. They loaded up their car with whatever they could fit and they set off.

Desperate to create some distance between themselves and the house, Mom and Dad took turns driving. Neither of them willing to stop moving at night. The older children slowly switched over from fearful to frustrated. They were tired of driving all night and most of the day. They were tired of dirty truck stops and the few hours of sleep they got at the cheapest motels. They protested for a full night’s rest for once.

Both their father and Jocelyn did not share their frustrations. They would do anything to keep moving. But one morning their mother finally spoke up, “Sweetheart, we’ve been driving for days now. Surely we’ve come far enough that we could at least stop for one night.”

Looking behind them in the mirror and then looking to his wife he released a breath as if he had holding it since that morning he found Jocelyn on the stairs, “maybe you’re right. I think... just maybe.”

At the thought of stopping Jocelyn panicked. She grabbed at her father, “no, no, no, we can’t. Please let’s just go one more day, one more mile, please?!”

“Jocelyn no, your mother is right. We’ll be fine. We’re in an entirely different state now. Don’t worry,” her father said. Although the look in his eyes still showed doubt. That afternoon they pulled into the nearest motel they could find. It was a cheap place, hardline telephones, large box T.V.s and scratchy sheets. Compared to sleeping in the car for another night it was heaven for the rest of the family.

Jocelyn grabbed every flashlight, cellphone, and candle she could find in all their luggage. That night she settled into the bathtub, candles lit, a couple of flashlights pointed towards the ceiling, the lights of the bathroom were on as well lastly, she placed her family's cellphones with their flashlights on as well around the edge of the bathtub.

There she laid. Her eyelids betrayed her and grew heavy. The darkness that came with every blink frightened her, but sleep covered her like cold, heavy blanket. Soon she began to doze off into slumber, till finally she fell asleep. No dreams of monsters came to her, no visions of darkness enveloping her, nothing stirred in her mind, because the monster had never left.

First the bathroom lights flickered. The buzz and pop of electricity vanished from the bulb in the ceiling. Then one by one the flashlights began to dim until they petered out entirely. The cellphone's batteries drained away and the light went with them. Then the candles, with their flickering light, danced wildly in the stale air of the closed off bathroom. Three candles that burned brightly at first began to die out.

One died out, and the darkness crept in. Another goes out, and the darkness looms over her. The last holds out and Jocelyn springs up staring face to face with the eyes from the corner. She breathes in to scream and the final candle goes out. No scream is heard in the small motel room. No sounds escape the small confined bathroom. No one leaves that room ever again.

After that night to motel posts a new sign at the front window. "Under no circumstances will anyone enter room 342 after 9 p.m." This motel only has one rule that must be followed. So, should you ever find yourself at the Myriad Motel. Remember to always follow that one rule.