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It is only when the yowling begins that she starts from her stupor and looks toward the door. She blinks the television light from her eyes and gets to her feet. She drops the empty noodle cup into the garbage can as she walks over the once-plush carpet toward the front door. Lisa paws at the gas-station bag on the end table and pulls a small can of tuna from inside it.

The cat had been quite vocal the previous evening as well, but no amount of encouraging words, endearments, promises of scratches or pspsp's had coaxed the creature into the open. It simply stayed out of sight and bawled pitifully. Lisa hadn't spent much time around cats in her adult life; her only experience came from the neighborhood stray that had left dead birds on their front walk and yowled at all hours of the night until someone eventually threw a rock to shut it up. This cat didn't sound like that.

At the door, she flicks on the feeble porch light and peers again through the peephole into the dim evening beyond. After checking from every angle, she concludes there's likely no one lurking just out of sight and unlatches the chain, turns the bolt. A moment's hesitation and she looks through the peephole just once more before opening the door with her weight planted, ready to force it shut against an unseen assailant. But, of course, there is no one.

The cat wails insistently from the low bushes just beyond her meager illumination. Lisa uses her body to prop open the door and crouches to call to it. The weathered wooden boards creak underfoot and the woman sets her face in a reproachful look as though the porch itself begrudged her quick cooked carbs. Squatting carefully with her rear on the heels of her bare feet, Lisa begins to lever open the small can.

As she cracks the tin, the cat yowls again, startlingly loud and directly beside her left knee. Lisa loses her balance, landing on her backside and the porch lets out another creak of

protest. There is no cat in sight and while she is certain the sound came from her left, she peers between the (near-to-splintering) boards beneath her, seeking some movement, some shift of shadow in the six inch space between the ground and the porch. But nothing moves and nothing appears. A brush of cobweb floats unseen against her thigh and she slaps at it violently, feeling suddenly vulnerable splayed outside her home in the darkening evening.

She is pushing herself to her feet when the door suddenly blows inward behind her. A light breeze brushes by her face as she stares through the doorway into her empty house. The cat entirely abandoned, Lisa hurriedly enters her home, shuts and locks and latches the door then rests her head against it, breathing harder than the exertions warrant.

Even the familiar shelter of her home unnerves her in the growing darkness. She sets the tuna can upon the end table and flicks on the living room light. Her furniture is scarce, the room open and empty and even with illumination from the dusty yellow overhead light, there is something wrong about it. She rubs her arms in a gesture of self-comfort and shakes her head, annoyed for getting herself worked up over nothing.

Lisa turns to the couch but when the cat yowls again, loud and insistent, her chest tightens and she feels the tiny hairs on her arms stand stiffly. It does not come from beyond the wooden door or the sun-cracked siding walls. The sound is within and imminent and there is no cat.

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