

Intruders

A short story

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INTRUDERS

Brian arrived home that evening as he always did. Driving around the loop of his street, he made the sharp right into his driveway. The sun had set early. A late autumn night grabbed at him, fatiguing his movements. As he opened the car door he hit the garage opener, allowing himself a few moments for the light inside to touch his car. He grabbed at his aching legs, aiding them in their escape from the confining vehicle. He stood, stopping momentarily to stretch out his cramping back muscles.

Proceeding forth, Brian grabbed his backpack and cold weather paraphernalia. He walked gingerly inside the garage, his eyes weighty from work and little sleep. As he approached the door remote on the wall, he heard a loud thud from inside the house. Brian froze. His eyes roamed the unkempt garage, scanning for the noise's source. His mind rifled through the myriads of causes for the sudden disturbance. But unearthed nothing logical, or reasonable for that matter.

Brian leered at the doorknob now. His mind jolted to the possibilities. "What made that sound?" he thought. "I must be overthinking, I'm tired." Brian opened the door to his house. He entered the short

hallway. The area around him was dim, lit only by the streetlamps, and what little moonlight streamed in through the downstairs curtains. He stepped over the threshold and walked into the laundry room. His ears were on alert. But his body was heavy. Aching rest.

Brian turned the small light on, dropped his backpack on the small bench of the room, and began taking off his boots. A second thud. It sent an instinctual response through Brian. He dropped his foot down, boots partially unlaced. Peering into the inky black family room, stepping slowly, as a soldier in a minefield. His eyes did their best to pick up movement in the shadows. Then he felt a sharp pain across his jaw and another in his gut. Brian doubled over, falling, careening to the floor.

Whatever hit him moved as a rabbit and hit like a boulder. His eyes began to adjust, finally seeing an assailant coming at him. They locked their arms as bullhorns. He could feel his tired muscles refueling with adrenaline. At that moment, still locked in a bout, a second intruder hit him from behind. The blow weakened him for a moment. Instantaneously, the first attacker sprang into action. A beast of great strength, pummeling Brian with fists of stone. His reflexes rapidly dissolve against the insurmountable speed.

The second assailant began throwing objects at Brian. Hard items, soft, and concussive knuckles striking him all over. Brian tossed the first attacker over his shoulder, falling to the floor with a solid whump. He pushed him away with a swift kick, sending the aggressor several feet back; stunning him momentarily. Immediately, Brian was assaulted again. The second assailant climbed on his back, a chimpanzee in a past life, for sure. Taut muscular arms wrapped around his neck like a vice. Brian, searching for a moment to act, whipped around wildly. Brian grabbed the nearest object he could and lobbed it hopelessly, landing on the floor; pointless. The first shadowy figure latched on to

Brian's arms. To his relief, Brian finally shook the choker loose. Down the assailant went. Falling to the floor, almost melting into the stark shadows of the room.

Brian felt like a cornered deer being hunted by wolves. His arms were being thrashed around by a rottweiler of a fighter. His shoulders strained, resisting, holding onto dear life attempting to prevent them from slipping from their sockets. While battling to gain control, he heard shuffling limbs attempting to regain control. At which point, one yelled as a banshee and ran towards Brian like a charging rhino. The beast-like mass struck Brian in the side, folding him as a wet towel, sending him down, down again. The first intruder released his grip and leaped into the air with knees tucked. With Brian still on the ground, the flying rogue knees landed on Brian's back. He winced, gnashing his teeth, releasing a pitiful rogue wail. Pain coursed through his body, his legs felt a twinge of electricity, definitely hit a nerve. That was going to hurt tomorrow, if he survived tonight.

Now, the two assailants combined forces and charged again. With a two-pronged assault, Brian was hit with wild kicks and flying elbows. He crashed to the floor, his head aching and dizzy from the constant blows. Brian began to feel like the end was upon him. His eyes, now adjusting to the darkness, could see blunt objects in their hands. This was surely the end. He could barely fight one of these wild creatures unarmed. He attempted to stand, to give himself better odds of defending himself. The two wouldn't give Brian the opportunity. Both vicious monsters belted out one last war cry, rushing forth with great conviction. Brian felt the blows of both objects strike him in all parts of his body. His legs first, then his stomach and chest, and finally his head. As Brian began to slip into unconsciousness, he could hear the two attackers cackle like starved hyenas, at last scrounging up a meal.

Fear gripped him. His energy evaporated. Wicked maniacal laughter filled the room. The two finished their strikes, stopped, and congratulated each other on a successful ambush. Brian's motionless body lay flat, his muscles catatonic. His breathing had slowed to barely a whisper. Finally, the two looked down, with smiles on their devious faces and said, "Dad, you can come back to life now. We're done playing."

With that, Brian rolled over and stood up quickly. "Good, because I'm exhausted."

The lights came on with a blaze of stars in their eyes, "What are you three doing down here?" Charlotte asked.

"Michael and John were just showing me their fighting skills," Brian said happily.

"Yeah, we knocked him out mom!" said Michael, the seven-year-old.

"We got you, daddy!" John, the four-year-old exclaimed.

"Alright, enough beating on your father, I need him to help me with dinner. Let's go, come on, upstairs," With mom's orders, the two boys and Brian filed upstairs to aid in the nightly cooking ritual. All Brian had to think about now was how he was going to be bested by his two sons tomorrow night, and if he should invest in some football pads... Oh the things you wonder about as a father of boys.