

chapter four

**behind
the
door**

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Born from the screams of the first child, Closetland is home to all fear. Inside its walls, the horrors of mankind dwell. They are sins taken flesh, abominations of soul, wretched kingdoms, and their twisted inhabitants. If you know nothing else of this world, know this: every fear, every nightmare, every scary little thought that pops into your head manifests in Closetland.

Ruled by a being known only as the Demagogue, fueled with a long-standing hatred of the innocent, this world captures our thoughts, our dreams, our lives and distorts them into twisted mockeries and obscene caricatures. By his side, the Seven Kings stand, each an aspect of Closetland's decadence given form. No one knows what true power these Kings hold and to look upon them is to witness Evil made flesh. They, their armies, and those that found their way over are the reasons your children should be afraid of the dark. The plots of the Kings have killed good people, destroyed families, and ruined lives. No amount of torment is enough for them. Satisfaction can only come from destroying all innocence. Every ounce of purity is a nail in Closetland's heart. The Demagogue and the world he rules will stop at nothing to end rid the world of innocence. Even if it means destroying every child in the world.

HOW DO THEY GET HERE?

The veil between our world and Closetland is thin and monsters have multiple ways of getting from their home to ours. Below are the most common.

THE CLOSET

The sound stopped as soon as I opened my eyes. I looked around the room but didn't see anything. I closed my eyes but they snapped open when I heard the noise again. Some kind of rattling. My dog poked his head up and jumped off the bed, sniffing around for something.

The noise got louder, and I heard footsteps coming from somewhere. Roscoe must've found something 'cause he started to growl and get all irritated. I mustered up enough courage to turn on the light but I still couldn't see anything out of the ordinary. Roscoe started barking his head off and running around the room. My dad yelled for us to be quiet and all of a sudden the noise stopped. Roscoe was still barking though and I started to get really scared.

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Then another noise crept up, kinda stretchy-sounding. There was some talking too, but I couldn't make out what was being said. It just sounded like mumbling. I drew my knees up to my face, too scared to scream, as the stretchy-sound—it sounded like a really big rubber band that had been stretched really, really tight—got louder and louder and louder. Then the door to my closet flew open and this huge bug-eyed creature came running right at me!

The monster that children should fear most is actually many: The Closet Monster. There is not one Closet Monster but, in fact, millions. Each one unique in size and design, each one with the ability to manipulate children through a variety of means. Physically, one might use its bearish strength or lightning speed to overpower the child and drag them, kicking and screaming, into Closetland. Mentally, some can control the child's thoughts and actions using highly-tuned telepathic powers. Emotionally, a monster might convince the child that it is not some loathsome creature from beyond but a close friend or a family member. Some can disguise their bodies and their voices to appear exactly like someone else. Some can even affect children spiritually, breaking their wills and turning them into subordinate drones.

To get into our world, a Closet Monster can use any door that leads from a small, dark place that no one habitually resides in. Look in your closet. Does that description fit?

The above is the more direct way for monsters to seek out their prey. And while that route is most commonly used by Closet Monsters, any monster can walk that long path up into our world.

THE SECOND SKIN

I was walking home from Brittany's house like I always do after choir practice. I had gone about two or three blocks when the sky made this crackling sound, kinda like radio static but not really. I looked up 'cause I thought it was about to rain — which was weird because it was supposed to be like 85 and sunny all week.

I walked a few more blocks when I noticed that all the houses were now different. I mean they were the same but, well, different. Like Mrs. McAllister's dogs weren't outside—and they are always outside—and there were no cars in any of the driveways. But I didn't really think too much about it until I got half a block from my house and the road stopped being road. It was all dirty and rocky like those trails we had to hike in Nature Girls. I couldn't see my house anywhere. Then I heard these screeching sounds and these big, black birds were everywhere. I mean EVERYWHERE. I freaked and ran back the way I came but the road was totally gone. There was just this trail. Then all the houses started to fade out except for this old cabin-looking place. Then the cabin, it stood up. Just stood right up on these two big sticks and started to run after me.

I swear, I never ran so fast in my life.

There are times that the reality of Closetland overlaps ours. Its influence is so great, that it becomes a second skin, laying itself on top of the world we know. A child may be walking home and see all the houses on his street go grey and dilapidated as a lone, black car crawls to a stop beside him. Or some kids may be camping in the woods and find that the trail back home just goes in a circle, then they hear footsteps crunching toward them. Whenever this happens, a child is alone or in the company of other children but there are never any adults in sight.

It is not known if Closetland is actually invading our world, or if it has just invaded the child's mind. Since there are no witnesses outside of the children this happens to, it can't be said for sure. So how do they get out? Sometimes, what is happening around them fades away. Other times, the children talk of what they had to kill to get out. But most of the time, they never get out.

SHADOWS

Dewey and I were supposed to be home before dark but the park was twenty minutes away on bike and by the time we even noticed the sun was going down, we wouldn't have made it anyway. So we shot a few more hoops before heading out.

Going over the tracks, Dewey's bike threw a flat so we decided to just walk our bikes home. We figured, we could use that as an excuse, y'know? We were going past the plaza on Brigham, near Carnegie, the one by the Jif-E-Mart when Dewey heard this noise, it was kinda like a cat, coming from the alley next to the sandwich shop.

Dewey's looking down there and I come up behind him. Neither of us could see a cat, so Dewey puts his bike down and takes a couple steps in. I told him we should just go, we were gonna get reamed anyway for being late, no need to make it any worse. But Dewey's giving me this "just a sec, I think I see it" line.

He took two more steps in when these hands came out of the freakin' wall. They just grabbed him by his jacket and started dragging Dewey into the shadows. I ran over and reached in to save him but—well, just look at my arm. That's where all these cuts came from. Dewey's leg was still sticking out so I grabbed it but whatever it was on the other end was strong—really strong—and there was no way I could hold on. Then all of a sudden, Dewey was gone. Dragged right into the freakin' darkness.

Another way that the monsters of Closetland make their way over to our world is through absolute darkness. Natural shadows are ready portals for the various boggans and baddies that hunt the innocent. Those that travel this route tread haphazardly as the monster can never be sure where exactly they'll end up or exactly where they will return to. Unlike the intertwining pathways that the Closet Monsters use, shadows just seem to connect with no real rhyme or reason. But for those who hunt strictly for the thrill, the shadows are a reliable, if unpredictable, avenue to use.

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BELIEF

As we touched on in a previous chapter, the power of Belief can not only bring about a child's defense but his downfall as well. This type of Belief is special, as it is not limited to a single child or even a small group of children. This type of Belief comes into play when all those scary little campfire tales get told one too many times or when an urban legend gets told to the wrong impressionable youngster. Whenever a lot of children believe in something—a story, a legend, or even some strange ritual—it can become real. And usually this manifested terror will not rise up in Closetland, but in our world. It will not just be something that kids tell tales about anymore but a living, breathing nightmare.

CROSSING THE DARKNESS

Ashley had found an old doll of her sister's and some of her mom's candles, big ones. Ashley's mom said they were for special occasions only but we didn't know where any others were and, besides, this seemed like a pretty special occasion.

I took out some hairs from a hairbrush of Ashley's sister's I had found and tied it around the doll's hands and feet. Ashley shoved some more down the doll's shirt for good measure, which made the doll look like one of the women in those magazines my brother reads. I told Ashley that and we both giggled a bit. But things got serious again pretty fast.