

### Three Break-Ins

The first time Laurie's home was broken into, the police were called.

It had been nearly a year since Laurie's roommate Kelly had broken up with Craig. There were rumors going around that since the breakup, Craig had started drinking a lot. He'd lost his job. He'd started smoking crack. Nobody knew what he'd do next. Laurie was impressed. She'd never been able to drive a boy to such extremes.

Around nine o'clock that night, Craig called for the first time. Kelly didn't want to talk to him, but he kept calling. When their other roommate, Anna, urged her to leave the phone off the hook, he started buzzing their apartment. He then alternated between the cell phone in his right hand and the buzzer under his left index finger. When that got him nowhere, he stood in the middle of Broadway and yelled up to her.

Laurie sat on her bed, watching him from the window. She rested her palms against the cool glass, her fingers splayed. The pavement under Craig's feet shimmered. He raised his arms up, tilted his head back and called Kelly's name. The dry cleaner's window behind him gave a hazy reflection of a streetlight. Laurie pressed her forehead against the glass and sighed.

Anna, who had to get up the earliest in the morning became fed up with the disruptions around 10:30. That's when they decided to call the cops. By the time the police showed up, Craig had disappeared. The girls gave a report and reassured the police that, yes, they would press charges if he were found.

What they didn't know is that as they were giving their statements, Craig was climbing over the fence in the alley behind their apartment building. As they were

reassuring the police, he was taking the back steps two at a time. And as they said good-bye, he was pulling himself over the top floor door frame and onto their deck. They also didn't know that they had forgotten to lock the sliding door.

Laurie stood in Kelly's doorway trying to comfort her. "Just try and get some sleep." The words had just come out of her mouth when she turned. And there stood Craig.

He nodded to her then turned to Kelly. "Baby, I just need to talk."

Laurie, confused and excited, walked back toward her bedroom. Anna had taken that same instant to check on how Kelly was holding up and they ran into each other in the hall.

Laurie's hands grasped Anna's shoulders to keep her from walking further. "He's in the apartment."

Anna looked down the hall and then at Laurie who nodded.

"He's in the apartment. Call the police."

Anna rushed back to her room and closed the door. She told Laurie later that she had taken the phone with her into her bathroom, locked the door, and made the call sitting under the sink.

Laurie continued walking to her room. Once she reached it, though, she had the thought that if the rumors were true, there was no telling what Craig might do. There would be little she could do to stop him, but she knew she should at least be there to try.

Kelly and Craig were sitting on the bed, quite comfortably, talking. Craig looked desperate, pathetic, as if he'd just learned his childhood dog had died during the night. As Laurie approached, he picked up the phone. He set the receiver back in its place and looked up.

"Man, you called the cops on me? Their gonna get me for breaking and entering."

Laurie stood in the doorway attempting to make her five foot two frame look imposing.

Kelly whispered, "You should've thought of that before."

Craig cradled his head in his hands. "Can I please have five minutes alone with Kelly?"

Kelly nodded her consent to Laurie who moved silently away from the doorway. She waited about thirty seconds and peeked in.

Craig shook his head. He whispered something to Kelly, tried to touch her face with his fingertips, but she pulled away. His hand hovered in the air for a moment before falling. He shrugged and stood. He walked past Laurie as if she weren't even there and walked straight out the front door and down the steps. She followed him out and watched from the landing.

Kelly ran after him, stopping at the top of the stairs. "Craig?"

He stopped and looked up at her.

"Where do you think you're going?"

He laughed, shaking his head. "You want me to wait for the cops?"

Laurie went back to her room to watch from the window. It amazed her that after almost a year, Craig was still in love with Kelly. That's obviously what it was, after all. Love. Pure and simple.

Laurie laid in bed that night with an empty feeling in her stomach. Once she thought she was going to be sick and made her way through the darkness to kneel in front of the toilet. Eventually she stumbled back to bed and slept heavily.

Nearly an hour late, Laurie woke the next morning and rushed to work.

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The second time Laurie's home was broken into, there was no need to call for help.

When Kelly got a new job out of state, and Anna decided to move in with her boyfriend, Laurie rented her own studio apartment. She enjoyed the privacy, but missed

the conversation and entertainment her two roommates had provided. So she introduced herself to a man, Don, who was standing next to her under the bus shelter.

She had been sleeping with Don for about a month. The sex was incredible. Passionate. Intense. Savage. And afterwards, they both lay, breathing heavily, their sweat seeping into her futon. When she had to go out of town on business, she thought little about giving him a set of keys so he could water her plants. But she never asked for them back. And he never offered them.

One night, during a phone conversation Laurie playfully accused him of using her for sex. "Maybe I'll just have to stop sleeping with you to be sure."

"Then maybe I'll just have to break into your apartment one night and molest you."

Laurie's eyes closed slightly. Her mouthed pulled back at the corners. "Really?"

"Would you like that?"

"Hmmm. I guess you'll just have to try it to find out."

He tried.

She heard the key in the lock and sat upright, listening closely, forgetting for the moment that Don had threatened to break in. She heard the door open, close. She saw nobody in the dim streetlight that penetrated her window shades. She held her breath. Her entire body was tense. There were no more sounds. No shadows. Nothing. Her fingers pressed into the futon. She took a long, silent breath. She moved slightly, craning her neck so she could see around the corner to the door.

The shadow was tall, slender, moving its way slowly into the apartment. Laurie relaxed as she realized who it was, but she played the game.

"Who's there?"

He continued moving toward her, undressing as he did.

“Who’s there?” Laurie pulled the sheet up around her, backed herself up against the wall.

He climbed into the futon, pulled her body against his, rubbing against her.

He pulled the sheet away, quickly pulled off her clothes and slammed into her.

A couple of times, Don managed to sneak into the apartment without waking her. Soon, however, Laurie could sense his presence in her sleep. She would wake up before he even got the key in the lock. Sighing, she would turn away from the door to hide her wakefulness and pretend to be startled when he touched her. It was the same every time, and every time she would get to work late the next day.

She dreamt occasionally about that night Craig broke in. He was always out in the street in her dreams, his arms spread out calling up to Kelly. But he would be calling Laurie’s name in the dream. And it was always raining. Sometimes his face was replaced with Don’s. Sometimes it was the face of someone she didn’t know. But she would always be there, at the window, looking down at him and wanting to throw open the window and tell him to come up to her.

The intervals between Don’s late night visits increased. She only saw him once every three or four weeks. When she woke up in the darkness and heard the key, she would stare out the window, searching the street-lit pavement. She didn’t bother with the role playing anymore. Neither did he, for that matter.

One afternoon, Laurie picked up the phone and called her landlord. “I lost my keys,” she said. “Can I get the locks on my door changed?”

By the time she returned from work that night, there was a new set of keys waiting for her.

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And the last time was an unsuccessful attempt at breaking into Laurie’s home.

Laurie woke up at 2:45 in the morning. She heard the familiar sound of the key in the lock. She sat up, held her breath, listened closely. The key was pulled out, tried again. Perhaps a different key. A third time she heard that rustling of the key teeth in the doorknob’s lock. Silence. She leaned, the heels of her palms pulling at the cool cotton fitted sheet behind her. She heard a car drive by. She waited.

Laurie swung her legs out of the futon and walked to the door. She pressed her palms against it. Standing on her toes, she looked through the peephole, adjusting her head so she could see a little bit down the empty hall each way.

She leaned against the wall. She let her body slide down and sat there, waiting. She wrapped her arms around her folded legs and rested her chin between her knees. She rested her temple against a knee. She closed her eyes. She looked at the phone. She stood. She pressed a button on the intercom that allowed her to hear what was happening down on the street—nothing. She closed her eyes again and pressed her forehead against the door, looked out the peephole one more time and finally returned to the futon.

Laurie couldn’t sleep that night. At five she turned on the television and watched the early morning newscast. A few miles away, in Old Town, there had been reports that a man was breaking into women’s apartments and robbing them, taking not only valuables, but also undergarments. Because there had been no signs of forced entry in any of the cases, women in that neighborhood were frantically changing the locks on their doors.

Laurie sighed and looked out the window. It was raining. The street glistened. A streetlight was reflected in the windows of the building across the street. She changed the channel to a children’s cartoon, showered, and got ready for an early day at work.

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