

Two people sat in the small dinghy, neither of them speaking a word as they rowed away from the beach and further into the sea. They only paused when they were so far out they could no longer see land, or anyone else for that matter.

"Do you think this is far enough?" The woman asked. Her companion nodded and both of them stopped rowing.

Gloved hands fumbling, the woman reached inside her bag and removed a gemstone. Slightly smaller than a tennis ball and perfectly spherical, its smooth dark surface almost looked like it was glowing unnaturally in the bright summer sun. She turned to her companion, who was wearing a balaclava which covered most of his face.

"I'm starting to have second thoughts. What if this doesn't work?" She said. The man shrugged and removed his balaclava, since there was no need for it all the way out where nobody could see them.

"Then... we're screwed. But... we need to do something... or we're screwed anyway." He said, his swollen, oversized tongue making every word a struggle.

"I suppose. But I've got a bad feeling about this."

"Let's... just get it... over with. That thing... caused all this... I know it. We need... to get rid of it." The woman nodded and raised the gem. He was right. This stone had been the cause of all of all that had happened; if they got rid of it maybe things would finally return to normal.

With all her strength, she hurled it as far as she could. The pair watched as it arced through the air and landed with a splash, sinking immediately into the depths. Silently, the woman reached for the oars and began rowing them back to shore, leaving that deadly stone lying lost forever at the bottom of the sea. Or so they hoped.

That night the two of them went to bed together, but neither of them slept. Doubts and worries about what they had done filled their heads and made sleep impossible. At about 2AM, the man went downstairs to get a drink of water. When he returned upstairs, his face was pale and he was shaking.

"Ih didn wor," he said, frustrated at his inability to pronounce words. "The thadows are bah."

The woman looked at him and saw that his mouth had become even more contorted. His tongue was now too long to fit in his mouth. Speaking normally was almost impossible. Terrified, she ripped off her gloves and stared at her fingers. Or rather, at the long skeletal claws that used to be her fingers. They had grown at least half an inch in length since she had last looked, and her fingertips were now deadly points. Trembling, she picked up one of her gloves and looked at it. There were five holes where her fingers had grown and torn through the fabric. Fighting back tears, she threw them to the ground, noticing that the veins in her wrist had turned black, extremely visible against skin which seemed to be getting paler by the hour.

"The shadows? You know they can't hurt us. But look... the change has sped up." She raised her hands so he could see.

"Yeh, I NOTHITHED!" He said, gesturing at his mouth with a hand that was newly covered in a fuzz of short, dark grey fur. "Buh yuh nee ta come fee..." He beckoned her out the room. She cautiously followed, scared about what she might see. As they walked downstairs he turned and placed a finger to his lips, urging her to be quiet. He did not have to tell her twice.

Silently, they walked towards the kitchen, staying close to the wall. Before they went in, the man stopped and gestured for the woman to peer into the dark room. Cautiously, she peeked around the door. A massive dark shape was moving around inside, knocking objects off shelves due to its bulk. Quietly, the two of them retreated.

"It's tangible?!" She hissed when she was sure the thing wouldn't hear them. "It was knocking things off the shelves!"

"Ahho." She turned to him, unable to decipher what he had just said and stepped backwards in shock. His tongue had grown still further, and the fur had begun to spread along his wrist.

"Oh my god..." she placed a hand on his shoulder, gathering her strength. An eerie wail rose from the kitchen and they both looked back at the pitch black room and the creature that lurked within.

"We need to get out of here," she said firmly. He nodded, and they both headed silently towards the front door.