

CRASH! I land on the cold, hard wooden floor. Lightning flashes through the glass front door. Thunder follows almost immediately. I scan my surroundings. My old house. The one Bob sold to me for almost nothing. Tall and lanky, he was a living scarecrow—or at least I thought. I push myself up from the floor.

I spot the locked room, wires and fluorescent lights spilling from beneath the door. I remember what Bob told me about it.

“That locked door stays locked, Daniel”

“Why?” I asked.

No reply.

I check if my things are still here and open the bedroom door. *Good—all my stuff is here*, I think. My gaze lands on my parents’ picture. It . The fire. Screams. Sirens. Crying. *Forget it*. I wipe my face with my sleeve and leave the room.

The lights and heating stop. Darkness wraps around me. *Great. A powercut*. Fortunately, Bob showed me how to fix the power. The power company doesn’t know about the circuit board. They say it’s too old, for all they know. It’s like this house is frozen in time.

I feel around the door. Cold metal and wood touch my hand. I open the door and wait for a lightning flash to navigate my way. “There’s one,” I mumble. I see the kitchen door just in time. *BANG!* Thunder crashes. I open the kitchen door and search for the torch. Something warm, like skin, brushes against my arm. My heart races. *What the—* I swing my fists in the air. *Nothing*. I sigh in relief and keep looking for the torch.

Pain shoots through my toe as I hit it against the counter corner. Lightning flashes. A tall, lanky figure stands in the kitchen, its gaze never shifting from me. My instincts kick in. *I think I’m seeing things*, I vaguely convince myself. My eyes spot the torch. I reach for it and turn it on. It flickers for a bit before fully turning on. I use it to navigate my way to the living room. I spot the keys to the fuse room. I grab it and head outside.

Cold, stinging water droplets pelt me as I scurry along to the fuse room. I take a right and at the corner of my eye, I see the tall, lanky figure again. It accurately resembles Bob—his lanky build and red suit that never suited him. A shiver runs down my spine. I wave my torch around to make sure nothing is watching me. *I must be paranoid*. I head straight through the side of the house and take a left. There it is. The fuse room. My keys jingle as I scramble for the right one. I find it and unlock the door.

I need to flick the green switches. That’s all.

I flick the first one.

A faint, horrible whirring starts up from the locked room.

I try to ignore it.

Click! Two more switches down. But the whirring only gets louder.

My hands tremble.

I flick two more switches, which only leaves one switch left.
Now the whirring is too loud to dismiss. *I need to check that.*

I wonder about the locked room, with all its wires dangling out and fluorescent lights. It looked like something from a sci-fi movie.

As I try to comprehend what is happening, the whirring grows louder and louder. I reach to flick the last switch, but a thin, pale finger flicks it. The whirring stops. Silence.

The world around me dissolves into nothingness. I fall forever.

Suddenly, I'm in the hallway, right in front of the locked door. *Don't open that door.* A force shoves me forward to the door. I stumble but get back up. I run back. The door swings open before I can escape. A ferocious wind tugs me forward. I frantically grab the door frame. It comes with me. I try to scream, but nothing comes out. Memories flood me.

My parents.

Buying this house.

I shouldn't have bought this house.

The last thing I see is Bob.

His grin, dark and menacing.

"Again, Daniel?" he asks sarcastically.

Then it clicks.

The time machine.

He trapped me.

Then the door shuts.

Some time later

"Fantastic purchase!" says Bob. Daniel is excited to move into his first house.

"That locked door stays locked though," says Bob. A subtle sense of familiarity stirs in Daniel.

"Why?" he asks.

No reply.

CRASH! Daniel lands on the cold, hard wooden floor.