

The Day the Lights Went Out

"There are no more monsters to fear."

That's what they told us. That was the last thing we heard before the world went dark, before the things that had waited for centuries crept out to take back what was theirs.

It's an experience I'll never forget, but many will never have a chance to remember. Even now I can hear the things outside. I pray they don't get in here, that I can hide until the world returns to normal. I don't know what state anything is in anymore. The news broadcasts have stopped altogether. I only heard one anyway. It ended in screams. I've never been more scared. The eclipse wasn't supposed to be a big deal. My friends and I heard the stories and rumors and laughed, like most young adults would. I never imagined there might be some truth to it. I'm afraid I don't have much time to finish this. I have to write as much as I can. If anyone survives, they have to know. It can't happen again.

The news reports of an impending eclipse came in about two weeks ago. We'd all known for a while that one was coming, but what we didn't know is that intense solar flares would begin surging towards the planet at the same time we were getting into position. NASA warned the world that the flares could grow worse. At first they just caused the auroras to extend beyond their normal borders. Mankind viewed this as more of a blessing than anything, until cell towers began failing. At first it was mild interference; you'd have some text messages not go through, and a few more calls than usual would be dropped. A mild annoyance, but no real danger. Then entire cities, states, and even countries found their communication systems collapsing.

Specialists worked around the clock to alleviate the fears and quell the rumors that sprang up and spread like wildfire.

"The world is coming to an end," one headline would say.

"The sun will cook the planet before the eclipse can block the rays," read another, less reliable one.

Thousands of stories like these covered the globe, with everything from government conspiracy to the collapse of the dwarf star that gave us life being named as the cause of our sudden technological trouble. None of us dreamed the truth of what was going on, or what we would have to go through in just a few hours' time.

A press conference was scheduled for the exact minute before the eclipse was to begin, with the President speaking as the eclipse was at its apex, his voice going out to comfort the

masses as the sun disappeared, leaving part of the world in a shadow wider than it had seen in centuries. The president stood on a podium, joined by the head researchers at NASA and countless other individuals who all laid down the facts as they saw them. The solar flares had been only slightly higher in power than one we had seen before, but the effects had largely been amplified by the drought North America was facing, the lack of cloud cover assisting in the potency the radiation had on our delicate electrical systems. I don't know how many besides me saw the look in the scientist's eyes as he uttered these words to those among us who had the ability to watch or listen. My computer, its indicator light flashing relentlessly as I drained the last of its battery to watch these reports in the darkness of my powerless home, a reminder of the advancement's men like him had made in the last 50 years.

He met the president's eye and grimaced, his face showing every ounce of lie he'd just vomited onto an unsuspecting and terrified people. The President came at last, the camera catching the podium and the diminishing sun in the same shot, a feat which surely took weeks to plan, the most minute calculations able to ruin the spooky effect. He strolled to the podium, giving a million-dollar smile to the audience, who seemed to collectively lean forward as if begging him to free them from their own fears and the possibility that something serious was actually happening. I felt the rumble before he spoke. The ground around me seemed to roll within itself, a rush of sound coming from everywhere at once as he opened his mouth.

"These events are not what rumors have told you. Humanity is not in danger. We have no more monsters to fear."

His microphone cut out before the camera did. Darkness seemed to swell all around him as the few lights that remained picked out the faces of those who saw what was coming for them. The moon swallowed the last of the light from the sun as the creature's humanity had forgotten they were afraid of emerged from the shadows to take back what was theirs.

I heard a cacophony of screams from all around me. My computer died as an impossibly beastly figure stepped into the frame of the camera, its eyes seeming to meet mine and seal the fate of everyone around it. In the split second that I saw it, the face became burned into my brain. Huge fangs jutted from its gaping mouth, bloodshot eyes the size of dinner plates dwarfed only by hands that looked big enough to wrap around a full-grown man with no trouble. The thing stood every bit of nine feet tall and looked as if it hadn't seen daylight in centuries.

The screams from outside my house grew louder as I sat there in shock, terrified that the same thing I'd just seen was attacking my neighbors, soon to come searching for me. My fears seemed to be proven correct as I began to hear pounding noises on the walls all around my house. Some of the noises seemed to come from the first floor, as if fists were pounding the doors and windows, but a few resonated through the very room I was sitting in, as if something

even more monstrous than what I'd just seen was searching for me, waiting to taste my flesh with teeth I could only imagine would rip me limb from limb. I leapt up from the desk and ran to my closet, grabbing the shotgun I hadn't touched in years. I loaded it as if I'd handled it only that morning, praying that the five boxes of ammo in front of me would be enough firepower to get me to safety.

A hunter at heart, with a paranoid tendency, I had a pistol by my bed and a large bowie knife under my mattress. I grabbed these and every spare bullet I could find and crammed them in a duffel bag. Running to my kitchen, I packed whatever food and water I could make fit in the pack, dragging a spare case of water bottles behind me down the basement stairs as I locked the door from the inside. The house I live in belonged to my grandfather during the '50s and fortunately had the safehold that I am in now—the same strong room you probably recovered this book from, if I didn't make it. The bomb shelter had three-foot-thick steel walls and a submarine door that was supposed to be able to withstand any blast short of a direct nuclear assault, according to family legend.

I can hear them again. The growls are louder than ever. They're just outside the door now. Oh God. The noise is deafening. How could this have happened? Why did it have to happen? I don't know what to do. I hear claws on the door. How did they find me? What the hell are these things? I hope I'm not the last one. I hope someone can find this. If you do, never give up. Never believe you are safe. Hunt these things down, destroy them. You will never be safe if this can happen again. They're pounding on the door now. The entire room is shaking. Whatever is out there must be huge. I don't know if the door will hold. God have mercy on me. It's bending. The door is bending inward. My guns are fully loaded, but I don't know what good they will do. I will not give up without a fight. The hinges are giving. I can see fur, claws, blood. I can smell the stink. Darkness is creeping in this room as I write. I don't have long now. They've smelled me. I will not go without a fight. Fight. They are here. Oh God, it's hu...