

Chapter 1

In Which Our Heroes Become The Best Of Friends!

This begins, as all good stories do: Once upon a time...

...under the bed, behind the shadows, and beyond the endless Twilight; past the stars that sing, past the winds that whisper secrets, and down below the peaks of mountains where gods play dice with the universe; in a village on the border of the Dream, against the very edge of the Day, in a simple stone house; there, slept a boogeyman.

Few humans have ever seen a boogeyman, and fewer still have survived, but none alive would have recognized one in his native form. He was as tall as ten men, and looked as if someone had taken a handful of the night sky and molded it into a person. His skin was midnight blue, covered in stars that wandered aimlessly across his body, his face sketched out in shining constellations. His hands were wider than shovels, and his arms long enough to reach his knees. His head was as big as a boulder, and his hair was long and white, lying loose around him, a collection of perpetually streaking comets.

His eyes were shut, and his breathing slow. If not for the nebulae that shifted as he inhaled, it would be impossible to tell if he were dead. Very occasionally his stomach grumbled, and only then would he move in his sleep, disturbing galaxies that had settled on his arms and chest.

The window nearest the bed was open, with the curtains pulled back, and on the stand next to it were a collection of glass jars. Each was filled with swirling gas that writhed about, seeking escape, rocking them slightly. Each had the lid balanced on top, tied to thin threads of shadow. The shadows ran out through the window and up, back to the night sky, from where they had been pulled, and they drifted with the breeze.

And that might have been where our story ended, as the wind blew, and the boogeyman slept, and the Day burned, and the caves of the Underhome were left to shadows; as the Deep emptied, and the Twilight faded, and the Dream was left to nightmares.

But *then*...one of the shadows twitched.

And the blue mist in the jar swirled frantically.

And then the shadow *jerked*, and the lid shifted.

And then it jerked *again*, and pulled the lid completely off. The Siren's song was released, and it echoed throughout the room as a shimmering blue cloud. The boogeyman's eyes snapped open, and they blazed with starlight, but then he squeezed them shut. "Oh. Empty night, my *head*." His voice was deep, like the gulf between stars, and strong enough to make the jars tremble. He levered himself into a sitting position and grimaced as he bent his knees over the side of the bed, rubbing his eyes, and ignoring the growling in his stomach.

"Okay, I'm up. I'm up! You can stop." He waved a titanic hand at the song that swirled about his bedroom. "You may depart. Thank you." The song became thankful for a moment, then it billowed out

into the Dream's sky, leaving the boogeyman holding his head.

"Moon and Stars. I feel like I spent a month in the sun." He reached out for the glass of water he had left on the nightstand, but cracked one eye when he picked it up. *Empty? That holds a barrel!* He slumped forward, and flinched as his shoulder protested at the movement.

He worked the offended shoulder. "How long was I asleep?" He looked slowly around the room and started on the other shoulder. "I thought I'd just be out for a week, what happened?" His gaze turned to the lidded bottles and his eyebrows furrowed. *Well, that explains it. None of my traps were tripped. Which doesn't make any sense, someone should have gone to sleep in the last,* he considered the empty water glass, *three months, I suppose?*

His stomach growled and his head pounded. *Well, one problem at a time. I need something for this headache.* He stood and winced as his knees protested, then shuffled his way across his room to the hall, his feet kicking dust off the shimmering slabs of black granite. As he groaned his way down the hall, the flecks of stardust embedded in the walls glowed in response, pulsing brighter when he put a hand to his head or to his stomach.

In the kitchen he tripped and caught himself against a set of massive stone shelves, making the jars in them rattle and dance, and stirred up a cloud of dust that made him sneeze powerfully enough to blow the cobwebs out of the corners. He shook his head and stepped around the cabinet to the corner, where a boogeyman-sized silver pump stood. He worked the lever a few times until water started to flow, then drank two barrels in quick succession, and sipped a third one slowly as he poked through the cupboard. "I know I have some magic beans *somewhere.*"

One hand came out with a jar of glowing red beans, and he swallowed two with some water, then after a moment's thought, swallowed two more. He stood there with his hands on the counter, shimmered briefly red, rubbed the back of his head, and nodded firmly. "Well," he straightened up and squared his shoulders, fixing a look of determination, "that's done. Let's go find something to eat." He winced and grabbed his back, and grumbled as he slouched to inspect the alarms in the bedroom.

Only the one was open, and he picked up the lid. He tightened his hand around the line, and followed it up, behind the night sky, into the Twilight, where he could press his hands to the backs of the shadows. He dropped the thread and ran his hands gently over the shade, and it rippled as whatever was casting it shifted. *Yes. There's definitely someone there.* He closed his eyes and pressed with his fingertips, feeling the subtle shifts as whoever blocked the light moved.

He frowned and spread his hands further apart. *Stars.* He pressed harder, and the border between worlds caressed his fingers. *An adult, by the feel of it. Or a late teenager.* He stepped back, scowling, as the stars shone behind him, and the skin of the night let him go regretfully. *But what happened? This is Amanda's room, she's not more than ten. Where has she been the last few months? And why is someone else in her bed?* His stomach growled again, and he shook his head while limbering up. *An adult will do for now. Enough to keep me going, at least.*

A star exploded in his right knee, and he cringed. *Damn. I'm getting too old for this. Whatever this is.* He kept working his legs, and bounced up and down a few times gently before settling into a crouch on the balls of his feet. He took long, slow steps back and forth, practicing, his old instincts

coming back to him as he slipped smoothly back to the shadow. *Okay. Time to go hunting.*

He pushed his head slowly through the shadow, forcing himself into his meatsuit as he did, wrapping his ethereal form into a body that the Day would tolerate, like squeezing into an old pair of pants. *It's looser. I suppose that's one benefit of nearly starving to death.*

He pushed upward into the shadow beneath the bed, allowing the top of his head into the Day, feeling a rush of warmth as he crossed the border. *No lights on, good.* He paused and strained his ears, but couldn't even hear the sound of breathing. He nodded slightly, and pulled himself into the Day to stand next to the bed.

He was much smaller on this side of the shadows, though he still had to slouch to fit under the ceiling, and his knuckles brushed the floor. He had to lean back to avoid the ceiling fan, pressing himself up against a lilac wall. His hair was still long and white, now tied with a leather thong, and it brushed against posters of cartoon characters as he looked around. His skin, rather than blue and decorated with constellations, was a muddy grayish brown, and his eyes were deep blue, illuminated with silver flecks that drifted aimlessly. He swept his speckled eyes over the human in front of him, sprawled on the young girl's bed against a panorama of unicorns, next to a pink dresser with a lonely cell phone charger snaking across the top.

Well, it's definitely an adult. Starving, by the look of it. Poor thing. The human had ragged black hair, and his pale skin was drawn tight over his face. *I can't even see him breathing.* He was wearing a shirt that had once been white, but was now stained and torn, and his jeans were scuffed and worn. He had on a battered black leather jacket, and his hands were stuffed in his pockets. *He must be deep asleep. That's a blessing, at least.*

The boogeyman started to draw from the sleeper, but there was nothing. *Nothing?* He sent out his mind to search for dreams that should exist. *There should be something!* He closed his eyes and extended his mental grip. *I can pull him into a dream and feed that way. Never tastes quite right, but I guess beggars can't be choosers.* He sent out his thoughts to grab those of the sleeping human.

And for the first time in eons... *That didn't work?* He scrambled trying to find purchase on the mind in front of him. *That can't not work!* But he couldn't; his psychic grasp slipped away from it like he was trying to pick up a glass bottle with wet hands. He stood, his back pressed against the ceiling, and scowled. *That's how it is.* There was only one creature that looked like a human, but had no soul left to dream with. *Well.*

The boogeyman grabbed the vampire by the throat with one hand and pinned him up against the ceiling, then leaned in close to look into his panicked eyes, the silver in his own eyes blazing in fury. The vampire held up his hands in surrender and stared back, his legs dangling.

"Now listen, *vampire*," he growled, and the floorboards vibrated in response. "I've been feeding off this house for *generations*, and I'll stare down the *sunrise* before I let you hurt anyone here. I know you think *you're* the terror of the night, but *I* was the thing that made them fear the dark. Don't tempt me. Now," and he punctuated each word by shaking the vampire, "Get. Out." He dropped it onto the bed and stood back, one hand thrust toward the door.

The vampire sat up slowly, rubbing his throat. "Wow. An *actual* boogeyman." He rolled his head

around. "I didn't think there were any of you left." He pivoted, stood up off the bed, and cocked a grin. "Not like there were a whole lot of your kind around *before* the Apocalypse, but still. Thank heaven for small miracles and all that."

He brushed himself off and bowed slightly. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to trespass. If I'd known you'd claimed this house," the vampire shook his head as he straightened. "I guess I didn't think it mattered anymore." He took a step toward the door. "But we both know that nobody's coming back, so would you be offended if I slept in the basement? It's not like it's any good to you *now*."

The boogeyman thrust out an arm to block the door. "Wait. What did you mean, *before* the Apocalypse? And for that matter, how did you get past the threshold?" He watched as the vampire took a slow step back and glanced at the window. "There hasn't been anybody here in months. There wouldn't have been anyone to invite you in." The boogeyman took a step forward around the end of the bed and tightened his fists. "How did you get in here? *What did you do?*" His voice was loud enough to shake the windows as he took another step forward.

The vampire's outline blurred and a poster of a unicorn could be seen through him, but after a split second his form snapped back into focus and left him with a panicked expression. He backed into a corner and waved his arms wildly. "*Whoa! Whoa*, no, hold on, look, I *didn't do anything*, okay? Look, I will admit, I've been watching this place for a while now." The boogeyman's face tightened, and the vampire finished in a rush, "*Because it was the only place left with a threshold*, okay?"

He licked his lips and continued. "I was - okay, so I *was* hanging around so I could grab someone if they ever came out. You know? For a meal?" He laughed nervously. "I'd settle for a snack, at this point."

The boogeyman growled.

"And it's been weeks and I never saw anything and I was starting to think it was a waste of time and then tonight, just a few hours ago," the vampire shrugged, "The threshold dropped. No idea why. I just thought, well, I thought that probably meant nobody else had claimed the house yet, you know? I was just looking for a safe place to spend the day."

The boogeyman had lowered his fists at this point. *Stars help me, I think he's being honest.* He studied the emaciated vampire. *Maybe he's just too desperate to lie.*

"Don't you realize what it's *like* out there? *All* of the houses are empty now, okay? *All of them.* I just thought...I thought I could rest, you know? I just needed a place to crash for a while. Someplace where I don't have to worry about a goblin opening me up to see how I work. And I don't have the strength anymore to fight a Were for its den." His shoulders slumped. "Please. Just, a couple of days, tops, and I'll move on, all right? I haven't even *smelled* a human in weeks, and that one was so dead I barely managed to choke him down."

The vampire scrubbed his face. "Gods, give me a few more weeks like this and I'll probably go full zombie." He fell to his knees and held up his hands in supplication. "Please. I'm just so hungry. And so tired," he whispered.

The boogeyman stared down at the vampire. *Moon and Stars, maybe it really is the apocalypse. Vampires are all swagger and violence, I've never seen one broken before. What in the Names of the Stars*

is going on out there? “You’re telling the truth?” The walls vibrated.

The vampire nodded vigorously. “I swear it. On my mother’s grave. My father’s grave, too. Fuck it, I’ll swear on a whole cemetery if you want. As near as I can tell, everyone’s dead around here.” He cocked his head. “Well, I mean, not just *here*, everywhere. And I didn’t kill any of them. You can smell my breath if you want.” The vampire pulled open his mouth, pointed at his teeth, and spoke awkwardly. “No blood in weekth, pwomithe.”

“No, that’s,” the boogeyman wrinkled his nose, “fine. Against my better judgment, I think I believe you. You might as well sit down. Is the house really empty?”

“Yeah, first thing I did was check all the rooms. Nobody here but you and me. From the smell of things, they haven’t been here in months.”

“That tracks,” the boogeyman muttered. He took in a deep breath and let it out slowly. “You can stay here for the day. *One*. Day. But then I expect you to move on. You understand?” The vampire nodded so quickly his head was a blur. “And I’m going to need some answers.” The boogeyman backed up and sat down on the floor next to the door - his head still came to near the top of the frame - and the vampire gingerly sat on the edge of the bed, putting them near eye level.

“I’m Sam, by the way,” the vampire said, gesturing at himself.

The boogeyman glared at him.

“What? I’m just being polite.”

The boogeyman grunted. “Carl.”

Sam’s eyebrows shot up. “I thought boogeymen were the most ancient beings in all the Dream, ever since they came striding through the Twilight, blah de blah de blah. Your name’s seriously *Carl*?”

“No,” he snapped. “My *actual* name is a pattern of starlight that’s not visible in the Day. And I doubt you could pronounce it. *You* can call me Carl.”

“Okay, sure. Carl.” Sam reached for a handshake. “Nice to meet you, Carl.” Carl stared at the hand until Sam dropped it.

“Let’s start with ‘before the Apocalypse,’” Carl said, as he folded his arms across his knees. “Were you being literal? How did things get so bad? I was only out for a few months.” He scratched his head. “I think.”

“Oh, man. Okay.” Sam put his hands on his knees and met Carl’s eyes. “So, look: what do you know about what’s been going on recently? In the Day?”

“Not much. Nothing, really. Last time there was anybody here, they were having some really strange dreams. Some kind of ball was chasing everybody. After none of my hunting grounds turned up anything, I decided to just sleep it off, and I’ve been hibernating since. If you hadn’t tripped one of my traps, I’d still be asleep.”

Sam gaped at him. “You *slept* through the *Apocalypse*?”

Carl shifted uncomfortably. “Well, I didn’t know what was going on! All of the kids were gone and I thought it was something like spring break. They’ve always come back, I thought they’d just be gone a few more days, I didn’t think I’d - well,” he rubbed his stomach, “If you hadn’t woken me up, I might have starved to death.”

“Don’t get too excited. We probably still will.” Sam shook his head and gathered himself. “Okay, so, a few months ago, there was this disease. Some new mutant thing. Came out of nowhere, and incredibly deadly to humans. Humans have had plagues before, but not like this. You remember the last one, a couple decades ago?”

“I ate well for years.”

Sam smirked. “Yeah, I’ll bet. I’ll let you guess how much fun it was for me after they closed the bars and I had nowhere to hunt; I had to spend half the time in *Wisconsin*. Nobody deserves that.” He shook his head.

“But anyway. This was kind of like that, but way worse. Like, ninety-nine-percent-mortality-rate, worse. And somehow all the containment measures failed. It wasn’t like last time, this time the humans did everything right, but it didn’t matter. After a couple of weeks, it was *everywhere*, and it ran *rampant*. It took a day for someone to go from a cough to bleeding from the eyes. And the nose. And all the other orifices.

“And then, well, then they started digging burn pits because they didn’t have anywhere to put the bodies, and then the people *digging* the pits died from the Plague and then,” Sam waved a hand, “then every house started looking like this. Empty. Pretty sure the few that survived the Plague froze to death.”

Sam shook his head again. “So. Yeah. Sorry to burst your bubble, but I really didn’t do anything to the people living here. I guess they died from the Plague. Or starvation. Or exposure, I don’t know. But they aren’t in the house, and we both know the threshold would have only dropped if they were dead. For what it’s worth, I’m sorry.” Sam sighed and looked down. “You aren’t wrong, I’m so hungry that I might have killed them, if I started eating. I don’t like to, it makes the blood bitter, but...yeah.” Sam looked back up. “Sorry. I’m rambling. It’s the hunger. Anyway. Wasn’t me.”

Carl rubbed his eyes again and sighed. “Empty Night. This is bad.” *Mother of the Stars. This might actually be the apocalypse.* “Really? Everyone’s dead? *Everyone?*”

“Well, probably not *everyone*. There were rumors of survivors out there, but I haven’t managed to scent any in weeks. And that one was already dead. From what I can tell the Were haven’t found any either,” Sam snorted, “not that they seem to care. They’ve got the run of the place now. And before the networks went down, the news said that cities to the north were mostly spared, for some reason. I heard that Minnesota was safe, and points north, but that’s a long way to go from Mississippi. And I’ve really got no idea if it’s even true.”

Sam dug a cell phone out of his pocket and tossed it onto the bed. “I’d put out some feelers, but the phones haven’t worked for months. No calls, no messages, and no Internet, can’t even dial emergency numbers. At least, not around here. Maybe if we go to the next town over everything’s fine, but I kind of doubt it. As near as I can tell, everyone’s dead. Except us.” Sam kicked the bed with his heel. “And all the other things that go bump in the night.”

Carl grunted. “I’m not going to last a whole lot longer without something to eat.” He looked at the emaciated vampire sitting on the pink frilly bed. “You either.” He thought for a moment. “You think there might be any truth to the rumors? Maybe there’s a camp nearby that you just haven’t found.”

“That’s possible, I guess. But even if that’s the case, if it’s more than a few nights away, I don’t

know if we can make it. And I've got no idea how to find them."

Carl drummed his fingers on the floor. "All right, well, one problem at a time. I can solve the second one. I can find us something to eat, but I need to get a few things out of my house."

"You mean like in a closet or something? I thought we were *in* your house. One of them, anyway."

Carl grinned and stood. "My *other* house. I'll just be a moment."

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Carl took a step toward the bed, and Sam scrambled out of the way. He wrinkled his brow as Carl crawled under the frame, and then kept crawling. Sam poked his head down, and saw that Carl was already half way through the darkness, his legs pushing him further along. *As I unlive and don't breathe! They really can step through the shadows. Here I thought that was a tall tale.* After Carl had vanished completely, some muffled banging and cursing came from the darkness.

Sam frowned, and poked the floor under the bed with his finger, but it just felt like carpet. *Okay, but he crawled through it.* Sam stood back up and scratched his head. "Huh." He made his way out of the bedroom and down the stairs to the first floor. *Okay, so I think the bed would be about...here, right?* He jumped up and prodded the ceiling, but there didn't seem to be any cleverly constructed trap doors, and he put his hands on his hips.

"Huh."

Sam went back upstairs, and leaned against the doorframe while he studied the bed. Eventually, the banging stopped, then there was the sound of footsteps, then Sam saw a gray hand extend from the shadow, followed by the rest of Carl as he crawled out from the darkness with something clenched in his other hand. He sneezed as he emerged, and a cloud of dust flew off of him. Sam waved it away. "You always come out of the Dream that dusty?"

Carl stood up, brushed himself off, and sneezed again, rattling the windows. "Sorry. You know how it is: you keep meaning to clean out the closet and then you turn around a few centuries later and it's mostly dust. We can walk the shadows at will. The dust is less common."

"Still a neat trick. What was under it?"

Carl sat down on the bed, which groaned in fear for its life. "You said you hadn't been able to find a human in weeks, and that one was dead. I assume you've been pretty thorough?"

"Consider me highly motivated."

"Well, then I can definitely help with that." Carl held up a twisted black horn that seemed to pulse in his hand, ringed with ridges of dark bone, and it seemed to moan just on the edge of hearing. "This is a Nightmare call. Summon one of those, get a good grip on it, it'll lead us straight to the nearest humans." Carl beamed with pride.

Sam stared blankly. "Yeah, I don't know what the hell you're talking about."

"You know, a nightmare? Things that make bad dreams? They kind of float through the air?" Carl wagged his hand to demonstrate, and Sam shook his head. "Really?"

Sam shrugged.

"I don't know *what* they teach kids these days."

"I'm nearly two thousand years old, thank you very much."

Carl snorted.

"Whatever, *grandpa*."

"So. A nightmare—as *everyone* knows—" Carl said, as Sam rolled his eyes, "is a small predator that lives in the Dream. They're about a meter long, like a big snake. They have a couple of tentacles, big fangs, glowing red eyes."

"They sound like fun," Sam grunted. "How is one of them going to help?"

"Well, normally, they use those tentacles to pull a sleeper closer to the Dream, if they sense one nearby. They torture them, inflict bad dreams, and grow fat and happy off all that pain. It sustains them, but pain - any kind of pain - also *attracts* them."

"And the horn does what, exactly?"

"It's just a mating call. Nightmares come down to this side to breed. Blow on the horn for a few minutes and one will come along. Shouldn't be a problem."

I'm way too hungry for this shit. Sam slid down the door and ended sitting against it. "So your plan is that we grab a nightmare and it, what, sniffs out some scared people? If it was that easy, I wouldn't be sitting here dying. I'm telling you, there *aren't* any. I've been through every building in town. Twice. And two abandoned fallout shelters. And a couple of caves. And a crashed bus. I used to run a circle fifty miles around every night, and there's *nobody here*." Sam sighed and let his head thump against the door, his eyes shut. "So. What's plan B?"

Carl smiled and shook his gray head, his hair brushing the ceiling. "Oh, no, you don't understand. Nightmares have a *very* good sense of smell. They can track a scared child halfway around the world. If there are *any* humans left, a nightmare can lead us straight there."

Sam perked up. "Oh. Really?"

"Yes. Really."

"Oh." Sam raised his eyebrows. "Oh!" He popped up off the ground and reached for the horn. "They like any song in particular? I ate Louis Armstrong once, I could probably do 'When the Saints Come Marching In.'"

Carl leaned back and held it away from Sam. "No, don't worry about that, I'll be the one blowing it. It takes a little bit of skill, it's not like a normal horn. Who's Louis Armstrong?"

"A jazz musician." Sam folded his arms. "Okay, so what's my part in this plan of yours? If you're going to be all...Horatio Hornblower, what am I doing? Singing backup?"

Carl smiled. "No. I think you're going to need to use this." Carl tossed something silver at Sam, and he jerked out of the way. The mass thudded against the wall and fell to the floor.

Okay, as assassination attempts go, that wasn't a great one. But still. Rude. "You trying to kill me? Weak as I am, that'll burn my hands off." *Is it some kind of rope?* Sam nudged it with his shoe. *A silver rope?*

Carl's eyebrows shot up and he covered his face with one oversized hand. "Oh, Stars. No, I'm

sorry. You can pick it up, it's not actually made of silver." Carl lowered his hand. "Truth be told, I don't know *what* it's really made of. But it's safe. You don't have to worry. I think."

"If this is a trick..."

"I already said I'm sorry! It's not a trick!"

Well, if it is silver, I'm probably losing the finger. Sam extended his pinky to lightly brush against the rope. When it failed to burst into flame, he grunted and poked it more firmly, then picked the rope up, and started turning it over in his hands. *Well, maybe there's some silver in it, because my hands are itching. But I can handle it. Wait. No. That's not silver.* "Carl, what the hell is this thing? The magic's so strong I can feel it *buzzing*. Where did you *get* this?"

Carl shrugged. "I guess you could call it an artifact. It's old magic. Well, old to you anyway."

Sam nodded and went back to examining the coil of rope. It seemed to be made up of finely braided chains, that were themselves made up of finer chains that were all wound together. *It's so intricate, though. Maybe dwarven work?* He ran a finger along it, and he couldn't see the smallest chain. He stared at a strand of chain, and then a link, and then a chain within that. He blackened his eyes to focus, and a link within that was made of even more chains. It shrank down to infinity until focusing on it made his eyes water, and the artifact seemed to be laughing at him.

"Seriously. Where the fuck did you get this? I've never seen *anything* like it, and that's saying something. Did you rob Merlin?" Carl smiled and shook his head. "Bargain with Baba Yaga? Loot Solomon's tomb?" Carl laughed. "Come on, you have to give me *something*."

"No, it's nothing like that. I got it honestly, I did a—well, a favor, for Odin, a long time ago. This was the payment."

Sam looked at the rope, then back at Carl. "So, just to get this straight: you did a favor. For a *god*." Carl nodded. "Which, presumably, was something that the god could not do on his own." Carl nodded again. Sam threw up his hands and looked around the room. "What house did I end up in? Who the fuck are you?"

Carl looked down at the floor, abashed. "Oh, well. You know how it is, you live long enough, you end up with a few trinkets." He cleared his throat. "The important thing is, according to the legends, Gleipnir," he pointed to the rope, "can bind anything. Get a loop around a boogeyman, a dragon, or even one of the gods, and it's bound until the knot is undone by somebody else. The bound can't touch it." He shrugged. "I've never had to try it out. But it should work."

"That is a *serious* object of power you've got there." *Who is this guy?* "That'll definitely come in handy." Sam started tying a knot in the rope. "So you want to blow the horn, and while you've got a nightmare distracted, I should, what, lasso it? Get directions to the nearest buffet?"

"Or we just keep it on the leash and have it lead us like a hound. Either way, it should give us a place to start."

Sam grunted. "If there are even any humans left."

"Well, yes."

"And if we don't starve to death tracking them down."

Carl spread his hands. "It's not a perfect plan. Do you have a better one?"

Sam spun his lasso in a circle, nodded, and coiled Gleipnir at his waist. “Nope. Just been a little pessimistic lately. For *some* reason.”

Carl studied him for a moment. “I understand that,” he said quietly. He stood and winced. “But I think this is the best chance we’ve got. There’s no point in trying until the sun goes back down. Nightmares burn up even faster than we do in the sun.” Carl tried to stretch, but had to stop when his hands ran into opposite walls. “So I am going to get some rest. You probably want to do the same. And tonight, we’ll start fixing all this.”

Carl crawled back under the bed, and Sam bent down. *That’s going to take some getting used to, I think.* After Carl’s feet had vanished, Sam poked the floor a few more times. *Nope. Still nothing.* He put Gleipnir on the floor near the door, and as he stood, he brushed a switch, and jerked as the lights came on.

“Huh.” *They still have power. That’s interesting.* Slowly, Sam smiled. “You know what, yeah, I could eat.” Whistling, he walked out of the room.