

Shower Curtain

By Reaper

It was time for Marie to go to bed, at least if she wanted to have enough energy to make it through the next work day at her job. Having to be on her feet all day, taking orders and servicing customers all while wearing a smile was a grueling experience which required a lot of energy. For Marie, this meant that she absolutely had to get a good nights sleep. Marie had a problem however that always manifested when she had to go to bed: she was terribly afraid of the dark.

Marie's fear of the dark had stemmed from night terrors she'd experienced as a child. She would wake up in a cold sweat, overwhelmed with terror. Often she couldn't even remember the dream that had caused her to be so afraid, but the terror would stay with her and she would scream for her parents until they rushed in. But one thing her night terrors all had in common was that she would wake up in the dark, where virtually any horror you could imagine could be lurking just out of sight.

Marie's night terrors had ended in childhood, but her fear of the dark had persisted and it brought it's own form of terror when it became time to turn off the lights and go to bed. Marie had tried a number of times to simply fall asleep with the lights on, but each time she found herself unable to drift off to sleep if there was a light on in her room. She had ultimately resorted to night lights which cast enough illumination for her to see but not enough to dispel her fears entirely.

When Marie became older, in addition to sleeping with night lights, she would check her house every night before bed with the lights on to make sure there was nothing in it that could hurt her. Now that she lived alone in her small rental home, she would always make sure she had a kitchen knife or some other weapon with her when she performed her inspection. She had considered buying a gun, but she had never liked the idea of firearms and had decided against purchasing one.

Now, as part of getting ready for bed, Marie grabbed her best kitchen knife, and proceeded to do her check. She went from room to room, turning on the lights and inspecting every corner that she wasn't able to see into. She checked the closets thoroughly, checked behind her washer and dryer, and even checked under her bed as though she were still six years old; afraid of monsters. Tonight her search turned up nothing, as her search had every other night of her life.

Exhausted, Marie returned to her bedroom, changed into her nightgown and got ready to turn in for the night. Something still weighed on her mind though, keeping her from feeling safe. She went over the places she'd thought about looking. She had checked the garage, she had set her burglar alarm, she had checked the basement all over. She should feel safe, but still she just didn't for some reason.

Finally, unable to come up with anything that she might have left undone, Marie climbed into bed and settled down for the night. Sleep didn't come easily even then. It never had for Marie. The night was cloudy taking away even the light from the moon. The wind was blowing hard as well, rustling the trees and whistling around the eaves of her home. Marie hated windy or stormy nights most of all. The wind would make it hard to hear sounds around her home and her house would creak at odd intervals. In Marie's mind, each creak or scraping of branches against the house siding was a killer with an ax.

Marie understood that she was being foolish. She lived in a safe country town. Her neighborhood was safe and as far as she knew there hadn't been any violent crimes committed anywhere near where she lived in many years. She didn't have any violent exes who were stalking her and she couldn't think of anyone who might wish her harm. But her fear that someone was always lurking in the dark or around the corner was just something she'd never been able to shake, even now that she was a fully grown adult.

Marie was almost asleep when she jerked awake, realizing that she had forgotten to check behind the shower curtain in her bathroom. Marie cursed, angry at herself for having forgotten to check. She remembered she had been in the bathroom, but couldn't remember the shower curtain.

“Maybe I left it open, so it didn't register in my mind that I needed to check it”, Marie thought to herself. But Marie couldn't recall if she'd made that mental distinction. She didn't remember the shower curtain at all when she'd looked in the bathroom one way or the other. Now she was faced with the prospect of getting up from her warm bed and walking through the cold, drafty house to the bathroom just so she could check to see if the shower curtain was closed, and then check behind it if it was.

Marie debated internally on what to do. She knew in her heart that even if she had forgotten to check the shower curtain, there was nothing behind it anyway. There never had been on any of the other times she'd checked and she'd been telling herself for years now that her having to check everything before going to bed was childish and stupid.

Marie also couldn't help but feel that if she were ever going to get over this constant need to check everything, she would have to do it in baby steps. Declining to check tonight when she was already so warm and tired would certainly be a baby step.

Finally, Marie decided not to check the shower curtain. She almost hoped that the next day when she went in to shower she would find it closed. She would have finally taken a first step in breaking out of her routine of having to check everything and would be on her way to living a normal anxiety-free life.

Marie gave over to sleep and she drifted off despite the wind and darkness outside. Inside her bathroom meanwhile, the closed shower curtain that Marie had indeed forgotten to check fluttered slightly as if moved by a very light breeze. Then the shower curtain pulled back and opened. A man, clad all in black, stepped out of the shower. His boots making light thumps on the tiles. He then left the bathroom and made his way to Marie's bedroom, unsheathing his knife.

Tonight, of all nights, Marie should have checked behind her shower curtain.