

Amber slowed as the house came into sight. It stood at the end of a dead end street, and we could tell from the yard that this house appeared spooky. Grass, weeds, and undergrowth surrounded the house. I could see the second story, but not the first floor. The weeds and undergrowth blocked our view.

Amber stopped. "I'm not walking down there. This is close enough for me. Autumn, if you have any sense, you'll not go any closer either."

I did not say a word since I did not want Amber to hear any fear in my voice. I waved at her as I walked very slowly toward the end of the road. I stopped and took in the scene before me. The battered old mailbox sat crooked on the post. The old gate hung by two rusty hinges attached to an iron post and had seen its better days. The iron fence stood about five feet tall and arrows pointed skyward at the top. I scanned the windows on the top floor looking for any signs of life. I could make out thin white curtains on the inside of the windows. I fixed my gaze on one window where I thought I saw movement. I looked for several minutes and dismissed it as just my imagination. When I turned to leave, I'm certain that the curtain in that room moved.

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The gate creaked loudly as I eased it open just enough to slide inside. I could see some trampled grass, which formed a narrow winding trail. I slowly took one step at a time trying to not make a sound. Twigs crunched under my feet as I walked and I made more noise than I wanted. I paused between each step listening for any movement coming from the direction of the house. After what seemed like an eternity, I reached a spot where I could see the outline of the porch railing and the top of the front door.

I stood frozen trying to decide if I should go any further. Suddenly I heard the gate open behind me, and someone walking quickly in my direction. I ran to my right and buried myself in the tall grass. I could now see the porch and stay out of sight at the same time. My heart pounded as the footsteps came up the path beside me and then continued past me. I saw a man walk up the steps onto the porch and place two full grocery sacks on the wooden porch. He lifted the lid on an urn, took out some bills, and put change back into the urn and replaced the lid. He stood for a few minutes looking at the remains of a yard. His gaze went back and forth across my hiding place. I remained motionless except for the rapid beating of my heart. At last he went back down the steps and beyond me on the path. I heard the gate creak as he left.