

Walking into the lobby Shelby considered stopping and taking a break before climbing the stairs up to her apartment. Due to the lack of power the sliding door had been pushed out giving anyone access to the building. Having seen the building mood of the mob on the street she reconsidered and made for the stairs. Anyone with half a brain and enough experience to have seen news footage of any large city after a prolonged power outage could guess what might happen.

Just as in her office building, someone had blocked the fire doors open to let light in. As she started climbing she added to the plans that had been forming in her head. Sitting and waiting for help to come simply didn't appeal to her cynical nature. The authorities were likely going to be occupied, even if they had the capacity to move about the city. From what she'd seen on her way to the apartment she seriously doubted they were going to be a factor. No doubt the vast majority of the people she had passed on the street had entertained the same thoughts.

Eight flights of stairs later she passed through the fire door and into the hallway that led to her apartment. After nearly two years living there she still thought of it only as an apartment and not a home. Her live in, and the father of her unborn child, she was beginning to think even less of. Still, it was the one place she had to go in situations like this. Even if it was just a first step in her plans.

She already had her keys to the apartment out when she reached her floor. Someone had left glow sticks on each floor so people could see their way up the stairs. In three steps down the hall she was forced to slow and start feeling her way. At the elevator she started counting the doors on the right of the hall. At her apartment it took several seconds to get the key in the lock. On opening the door to bright light she saw that Tony had already arrived and had the blinds up.

Locking the door behind her Shelby kicked off her heels before moved to the couch and sat. She had the impression it was going to be some time before she put on another pair of shoes not made for walking. Tony had simply sat at the window and watched her. His face showed confusion and concern, but Shelby didn't think much of that concern was for her, or their baby. She couldn't find any surprise in her own reaction when he turned back to the window without speaking.

She sat for several minutes letting the ache in her legs and feet fade to the background. When she was ready Shelby stood and walked to the kitchen. Tony turned at the sound of the faucet sucking air when she'd turned the taps on. As she stood thinking of alternatives he finally spoke.

"There's no water. The pressures gone."

Shelby shut the faucet off and turned to the bedroom. Inside she packed a few durable clothes in her gym bag, the one with a carry strap and then changed clothes. She would have loved to take a shower to wash away the smell of sweat and the sticky feeling on her skin but that was out of the question. Dressed for travel by foot she came out to the living room and looked at the man she had lived with for the past two years. Just that morning she would have said he was the man she shared a future with. Now, she couldn't bring herself to make that statement even in her mind.

He was focused on something down on the street. Beyond him she could still see the weaves and ripples in the air outside the apartment. "I'm leaving. It's not going to be safe in the city after nightfall."

"We should wait here, until help arrives." Tony said. He hadn't bothered to glance at her.

Shelby moved to the kitchen and started adding a few things to her bag. She couldn't define the reason she felt this was more than just a simple power outage. It was more intuitive, perhaps boosted by being exposed to a sudden extra sense but she was certain a fundamental change had come to the world. She felt she owed Tony at least one attempt. "There's not going to be any help, unless they arrive on foot."

"It's not safe out there."

"It's only going to get worse after dark, and if you didn't notice the front doors are wide open."

He finally turned to her. His face said more about his character than she'd ever wanted to know. "There are things out there." He said with fear dominating his voice enough to make him sound like a child.

"There's enough daylight to cross the 90 bridge and make it to Mercer Island. We can stay there for the night and move on tomorrow."

She watched him close his eyes and shake his head as if the gesture would make everything okay. He repeated "It's not safe out there."

As if to prove his point a shadow passed across the window he was sitting at. He looked up to scan the sky and after a second stood and backed away from the window. He stopped three paces from the window and looked back at Shelby. There was genuine fear in his eyes. Shaking his head he said with more conviction than he'd ever said anything "I'm not leaving. There are things out there."

Shelby turned and walked to the door. As she was unlocking the deadbolt Tony repeated "There are things out there, it's not safe."

Pausing with the door open to a dark hallway Shelby observed "With all the fire doors blocked open we're in a chimney just waiting for a fire." Looking back at the man she had once thought she'd fallen in love with Shelby saw another man in his place. She stepping out to the hall and closed the door.

Making her way out was easier than the way to the apartment. She just had to keep moving toward the faint light provided by the open fire door. Moving toward the next goal had always been the defining motivation of her life. She had little idea of the size of the goal she was about to be given