

I had the strangest dream... but it was just like the previous ones I had before for nearly seven years!

It all began a long time ago when I was only three years old.

I dreamt I was standing in a beautiful pasture with many flowers growing everywhere around me, including bumblebees buzzing here and there, taking pollen and nectar from each flower.

As I sat among the flowers, I could hear a brook flowing with water near where I was, as some animals were roaming around the pasture.

It was all beautiful, and the smells coming from the flowers were amazing, including how peaceful everything was!

But... everything soon turned into a nightmare.

A loud gunshot went through the air and immediately caught my attention, causing the animals to instantly run away in panic.

After hearing the gunshot, I immediately jumped to my feet and looked around to see what was getting closer, but I couldn't see who was in my dream.

As I searched around, voices started speaking in different directions, sounding like they were coming from all around me.

The grass and flowers withered into nothing as the voices continued to speak, whispering sounds I don't even understand.

The water flow from the brook had died down too, and something red stained the ground immediately, coating the bottom of my bare feet in red as the voices instantly changed from speaking to unstoppable laughter.

Everything continued to laugh, and things turned red after being soaked until enormous shadows of humans appeared before me.

They looked down at me while I stared up at them in horror, watching as they made disgusted expressions as if they had seen a cockroach.

***“Disgusting.”** one of them spoke after noticing me.*

***“What is that thing?”** another human asked.*

“Get it away from me!”** a third human pointed. **“I don’t want it around me! It could infect me!”

I panicked after noticing the humans standing before me until one of them pushed them away and saw me before giving that awful smile as his eyes were a blood-red color.

“Don’t worry,”** the human spoke as he moved his hands forward. **“I’ll get rid of it for you all and keep it as mine.”

Instantly, I panicked after hearing that last line and turned around, running away from the human as he chased after me.

“Quick, get it, get it!”** a voice shrieked in fear. **“I don’t want it to get into our houses!”

***“EW, EW, SQUISH IT!!!”** another shrieked.*

***“RAT!!!”** another human screamed in fear.*

I continued to panic as I ran for my life, running away from the chasing giant as more appeared from behind, some scientists, others with jars, knives, and other dangerous utensils.

Soon, I was cornered in a corner as they approached me, and one of them reached a hand down towards me, and then I woke up screaming.

Luckily, Mom came over to see what was wrong and heard that I had a bad dream about humans chasing me.

Mom assured me as she held me against her chest, saying, 'Nothing was wrong, and no one would find us in our home, and everything would be perfect.'

She comforted me until I could fall back asleep and did not have that dream of waking up screaming again.

If you wonder why I am mentioning "humans," it is because I am not a human myself.

I am what humans call us 'Borrowers.'

Borrowers are a smaller version of humans but hide in secret from being revealed to the outer world since there are many dangers, and we can put ourselves at more risk by being curious or wanting to harm people.

To survive, we live behind the walls of the houses that humans live in, and we borrow food, water, and other supplies from them.

Getting off track here, now, this is where my story begins with my first encounter with an outsider.

It was in the early morning as the sun rose from the horizon, shining its rays down through a small hole deep within the thick walls of the building.

However, hidden deep within the thick walls of the building was a young, tiny girl.

She has long, straight, medium-hazelnut brown hair with pale skin, with the back of her arms tanned to limestone.

The young girl wore a hand-stitched light blue shirt with long sleeves that reached down to her wrists, along with dark blue pants, and was even barefoot.

A hand-stitched midnight blue backpack with an over-the-top flap was under her head, which served as a pillow.

The young child was in a dream as she groaned, hugging her backpack tighter as she turned her head around.

In her dream, the young child was floating in a pitch-black room and wearing a white hospital gown with white tights.

The young child was confused about why she was wearing the clothes until she heard the familiar laughter.

“Oh, no!” the young girl panicked as she glanced around. “No, no, no, no! Not this again!”

The laughter continued as she glanced around frantically to see where the laughter was coming from as she continued to float around, worried about encountering the creatures.

Eyes suddenly opened and stared back at her as she yelped, curling into a ball as the laughter roared as grins appeared from each nook and cranny of the eyes.

“What’s wrong, Stephanie?” The voices spoke tauntingly as Stephanie, the young girl, continued to stay in a ball as the mouths mouthed the words the apparitions spoke. ***“Don’t you remember us?”***

“No, I don’t want to remember!” Stephanie shrieked in fear. *“Get away from me and get lost!”*

The voices laughed after Stephanie shrieked and something swiped past her, causing her to scream again as she instantly uncurled.

“Oh, that’s priceless!” a painfully familiar voice laughed. ***“You want to get rid of us!”***

Suddenly, a giant human towered over her body as millions of eyes opened around the face as a massive crooked smile with sharp teeth crossed the eye-covered face.

“BUT YOU CAN’T GET RID OF US!” The giant human laughed. ***“YOU’RE MINE TO TOY WITH!”***

Stephanie screamed in fear when the hands with sharp claws almost got close to her as she curled back into a ball and cried, “SOMEONE HELP!”

“Oh, shut up!” a voice barked. ***“No one will come and rescue you, you-”***

Before the voice could finish the sentence, a fist suddenly launched towards the face and completely socked it square in the face.

Stephanie shrieked in fear as she uncurled after witnessing the sudden fist punching the nightmare in the face as she watched.

After being punched in the face, the humanoid nightmare shrieked in pain before disappearing into thin air.

The voices' tone of their voices instantly changed to fear after witnessing that nightmare creature being defeated by two punches before stopping.

Stephanie glanced around in confusion as the grins had disappeared and then watched as all the eyes closed and vanished as well.

Soon, Stephanie was left alone as she was floating in the empty and vast black room, confused about what had just happened.

Suddenly, a shadow towered over her as she froze, thinking that it was another nightmare creature.

She slowly turned around to face the nightmare creature... but paused when she instead encountered a white figure wearing goggles with orange lenses with unique colors.

Stephanie jumped when she saw a different figure floating behind her before jolting again as the figure moved a hand towards her.

Instantly, Stephanie woke up from her dream and unhugged her pillow as she sat up on the ground, breathing heavily as her forehead was covered in sweat.

She has heterochromia eyes, where her right eye is hazelnut brown, and her left eye is an electric blue.

“That... was a little different,” Stephanie mumbled to herself as she placed a hand on her temple.

Her mind went back to the towering figure wearing goggles with orange lenses, wondering who the stranger was.

Half of her hoped it was a Borrower like her, not wanting to be alone wandering through the thick walls of the building.

Ever since she had to leave her previous home because of an incident she dares not speak or remember, Stephanie has lived for seven years, hiding away from humans.

A shudder went down her spine at the thought of encountering a human with that same appearance, not wanting to know what would happen to her if she did.

‘Let’s not remember that, Stephanie,’ Stephanie thought to herself as she shook herself. ‘I need to find some food to eat for breakfast.’

Stephanie stood up and brushed off some dust from her body since she had moved around while asleep before picking up her backpack from the ground.

She put her backpack on her back as she rubbed the back of her neck after it twinged with some pain and glanced around, mumbling to herself, “Which direction leads to the cafeteria?”

Stephanie paused a little as she glanced around at her surroundings to see which direction led to the cafeteria, mumbling to herself as she brought up her mental map.

She moved her finger around thoughtfully as she tried to remember the directions to the cafeteria before finally recognizing since she sleeps near the lunchroom, to be sure of not being lost behind the walls.

‘That’s right!’ Stephanie chuckled to herself as she pinched her nose bridge. ‘How could I have forgotten about that?’

After remembering which direction to head to the cafeteria, Stephanie turned around and walked to the left as she headed towards the lunchroom, walking past wires and nails placed in the walls.

Even though they were troublesome for mice to walk through, Stephanie did not mind this since it was easier for her to escape from them than for them.

Stephanie continued to walk in between the walls as she got around the wires, nails, and cobwebs, slightly uneasy about encountering a spider, but was relieved since most of them only go to darker places.

Soon, Stephanie came across a familiar loose piece of wall and smirked to herself, kneeling down to the small fragment and hooking her fingers between the gaps.

Using her strength, Stephanie carefully pulled the door open just enough to get through, appearing on the other side where she was standing in a long hallway.

Stephanie did not step out immediately but checked if there were no humans around, double-checking her surroundings before stepping out.

After checking her surroundings, Stephanie fully stepped out of the hiding place and closed her entrance with the piece she used.

Once Stephanie had closed the entrance, she turned around to the right and walked down the hallway, hunching a little as she looked at her surroundings and hid from view.

As she walked down the hallway, Stephanie looked at the pictures hung on the walls, seeing various mentors of the *Psychonauts* with their names at the bottom.

The building she is hiding and living in was called the ‘Motherlobe,’ where it is home to an organization called the ‘*Psychonauts*.’

From what Stephanie overheard through the thick walls of the building, *Psychonauts* use their minds to do kinesis, where they can bend reality, water, wind, fire, anything around them by will.

This adds a layer of worry for Stephanie since she has been hiding from them to not be discovered but did not believe in it to not make herself panic.

But it also added another layer of fear since scientists were lurking around in the building who can extract people's brains if they died.

Stephanie shuddered at the thought that the pictures were *alive*, judging by the blank expressions in their eyes and some that were portraits of *scientists*.

More anxiety piled in Stephanie's mind as she looked at each photo of the mentors, feeling their icy gaze looking down at her.

Wanting to get out of the hallway to ignore the feeling, Stephanie sped her walking speed towards the exit before stopping and peeking around a planted pot.

Stephanie peeked around the corner and looked into the cafeteria, seeing that everything was empty and no one was awake.

There were perfectly organized, white, round lunch tables with seats for four, and the janitor cleaned everything, and there was a glass roof that revealed the peach-cream-clouded sky.

'Perfect,' Stephanie thought to herself with a soft sigh. 'It's still early in the morning. I'll take this time to get to the kitchen and see if the cafeteria lady accidentally left the door open.'

Stephanie walked from around where she was hiding and instantly walked over to the kitchen, pausing a little as she stared up at the counter where they serve food.

Stephanie noticed the counter and looked at the options, even looked around to see if there were any other ways to get to where she wanted to go, as her face displayed a thoughtful expression.

After looking at her surroundings, Stephanie decided to use one of the gadgets she had made, wondering if the rope would hold all her weight, but decided to risk it.

Stephanie took her backpack off and placed it down in front of her, untying the handmade miniature rope she had made, and opened her bag.

Reaching into her backpack with her hands, Stephanie rummaged around to look for the gadget she had inside, taking out a few other items she had packed but placing them back.

Soon, Stephanie took out a wrapped piece of handmade rope with a fishing hook tied to the end that looked like a grappling hook.

After removing the grappling hook from her backpack, Stephanie smirked at herself as she stood up to her feet and placed her bag back on her back.

Then Stephanie untied the grappling hook and twirled it on her right side as she aimed to where she was tossing it.

Once Stephanie twirled the grappling hook just enough for her to have a head start, she flung the grappling hook upward and hooked the fishhook on the ledge of the counter.

After giving the grappling hook a few tugs to check if it was on tightly, Stephanie moved one hand up and started climbing on the piece of rope to the top of the counter as her legs curled around the thread beneath her.

As soon as Stephanie reached the top of the counter, Stephanie hooked her fingers on the thin ledge, pausing a little when she felt something metallic and long.

‘Locked.’ Stephanie thought to herself as she sighed. ‘Guess I have to go the other way then.’

Stephanie slid down the rope and landed back on the ground, unhooking her fishing hook from the counter and grabbing it in her hand.

Then Stephanie tied it back into a neat order and hooked it to her side, deciding to use it when she found another way.

Stephanie wandered around the area where the kitchen was as she looked at every nook and cranny, searching for a way into the kitchen.

Soon, Stephanie came across the other side of where the kitchen was for cooks to walk through, seeing the door was locked as well.

‘Darn it,’ Stephanie thought to herself as she huffed. ‘Nothing is unlocked... I guess I have to wait until breakfast is over to wait a moment.’

Stephanie stopped thinking to herself after noticing something, seeing there was another gap on the side of the wall.

Walking over to the gap in the wall with debris covering it slightly, Stephanie moved some remains to the side to look at it, seeing a pathway down to the kitchen.

A smirk appeared on Stephanie's face after noticing a hidden hole in the wall, deciding to use the discovered hole to head towards the kitchen.

Squeezing herself through the hole, Stephanie entered and recovered the entrance with the debris covering it.

She covered the hole with debris and walked down the hallway, looking for any signs of cracks in the wall leading to the kitchen.

As Stephanie continued to walk through the slightly narrow hallway between the walls, she avoided the wires and nails that had been placed into the wood to keep the place together, even being careful of spiders that roamed.

After a few minutes passed as Stephanie walked through the hallway, she soon noticed a light shining through a crack in the wall, causing Stephanie to smile after seeing it.

Stephanie quickly walked over to the hole in the wall and poked her head through, seeing she had finally entered the kitchen.

'Awesome!' Stephanie remarked to herself as she squeezed herself through the hole. 'Breakfast, here I come!'

Once Stephanie appeared in the kitchen, Stephanie searched to see if any of the cafeteria ladies had left out any food by accident.

After having a check, Stephanie went towards where they stored the food, glancing up at the large pantry door.

'Whoa,' Stephanie thought to herself as she stared up at the door. 'That is a large door.'

After thinking to herself, Stephanie glanced at the lock underneath the knob, seeing it was used with a key.

‘If I can use my lock picking skills,’ Stephanie thought to herself. ‘I could open the pantry and sneak in to gather some ingredients to make breakfast.’

Taking the grappling hook off the side of her shirt, Stephanie unwound it and twirled it near her right side, tossing it as it hooked onto the knob of the pantry doorknob.

‘Got it!’ Stephanie smirked to herself as she gave the rope a few tugs.

Then Stephanie climbed up the rope and reached the knob, sitting on the stem with her legs around it.

‘Okay,’ Stephanie thought to herself as she looked at her surroundings. ‘I am sitting on the stem of the door, and all I need to do is to open it to get into the pantry.’

Before Stephanie could mess with the keyhole, Stephanie checked around her surroundings to see if anyone was awake or walking into the kitchen.

Luckily, no one was awake, and Stephanie sighed before taking off her backpack and opening it, reaching inside and searching for something.

Soon, Stephanie took out a ring with handmade wires that looked like paperclips as each one was bent to make weird shapes.

‘Okay,’ Stephanie thought to herself as she glanced over her side. ‘Let’s see if I can reach the keyhole like this.’

Being careful and taking her backpack off to hang it on the knob, Stephanie swung herself upside down while facing the keyhole before inserting the weird-shaped snaps of paperclips into it.

Stephanie fumbled around the keyhole with the snapped paperclips in her hands, trying to get to the coil springs that had the pins down.

Successfully, Stephanie pushes the pins upward and unlocks the door, hearing a click from it after turning the snapped paperclips along with the lock.

‘Perfect!’ Stephanie thought to herself with a smile as she took out her snapped and weirdly shaped paperclips.

Stephanie sat upright and placed the paperclips back into her backpack before climbing down to the ground on her grappling hook.

She grabbed her grappling hook with her hands and tugged the hook, pulling the knob back as the door opened and swung open slightly, just enough for Stephanie to squeeze through.

Once Stephanie had opened the door, Stephanie unhooked the grappling hook from the hook and grabbed it in her hand, hooking it to her shirt in the same spot.

Then Stephanie ran over to the crack between the door and the frame, squeezing herself through and stepping into the pantry.

After Stephanie got herself through, Stephanie looked around at her surroundings, seeing so many ingredients.

Since there were so many ingredients on the shelves, Stephanie could use them to make what she wanted to make for breakfast.

But since her backpack was made of old fabric, Stephanie could not carry a lot and could rip her pack, too.

‘Okay, Stephanie,’ Stephanie thought to herself as she sighed. ‘All I need is to collect what I need, not what I want. That’s the motto that Dad always says whenever I grab too many things that aren’t needed.’

While Stephanie tossed her grappling hook onto one of the shelves near the floor, a memory of her parents popped into her head, causing Stephanie to softly smile.

As Stephanie was gathering some pieces of food, Stephanie’s memories continued to play in her head as she was walking around on the shelf, looking at which ingredient to use for breakfast.

But as she was distracted, the roots of her long, medium hazelnut brown hair started to glow in a beautiful yellow color.

Stephanie was so distracted by her search that she did not notice that her hair was glowing yellow as she collected the ingredients she needed on the shelf.

Just as Stephanie had picked up the last ingredient and placed it into her backpack, which was now the size of an army man’s bag, Stephanie was about to put it back into her bag when she suddenly stopped.

The memories in her head about her parents stopped, and the yellow color instantly faded away, returning her original hair color back.

Did she... hear something?

A bad feeling grew in Stephanie’s stomach as she listened closely to the sounds around her, swearing she had heard something.

A few minutes passed, and nothing happened, letting Stephanie have *some* relief from being so worried.

But that feeling in Stephanie's stomach did not disappear after listening to the surroundings, knowing something *was* happening.

Suddenly, before Stephanie could assure herself she must have misheard something, *footsteps* walked towards the door.

Stephanie instantly stood up to her height as she listened to the footsteps walking over to the door, holding her backpack against her back as she breathed heavily.

But then she realizes something that caused her to jolt as she winced in fear.

She had left the pantry door open!

'Please don't come in here,' Stephanie begged, clutching her backpack against her chest. 'Please don't come in here, please don't come in here, please don-'

"How did the door unlock by itself?" A young male voice *spoke* from the other side of the door, causing Stephanie's heartbeat to pick up.

That sounded like a *human*.

Starting to hyperventilate, Stephanie covered her mouth with a hand out of fear as the door creaked open, watching as someone's shadow walked into the pantry where she was.

Her entire body started to shake from head to toe as she carefully watched as a *pair of legs* walked through the door, almost in slow strides.

Stephanie thought her heart would burst as she watched and listened to the pair of legs walk down the aisle.

How could she have been so careless about leaving the pantry door open?

Stephanie winced at all the thoughts screaming at her in her mind, telling her it was her fault for not being careful about keeping everything to make sure she was not there.

All the thoughts, feelings, and anxiety were making Stephanie's head spin a little, causing a wave of nausea to wash over her body as she leaned against the nearest boxed product.

Everything was spinning around like a merry-go-round as Stephanie tried to keep herself together from panicking, not wanting to make herself more troubled than what she was feeling.

Soon, Stephanie's senses had slightly returned to her after leaning against the boxed produce as she shook her head.

Despite all the stress piling up in her head, her head was still beating a little, but she was still standing on her feet without fainting or passing out.

Suddenly... the box that she was leaning against moved away from her back as she toppled a little but managed to keep her balance.

Stephanie spun around quickly to see what happened to the box when it suddenly moved away from her.

But as soon as she turned around to look, Stephanie instantly froze after looking over.

Standing right in front of her... was a pair of large green eyes... that belong to a *human*.

Stephanie's heart skipped a beat that felt like it instantly went flatline as the human eyes squinted after noticing something else that was not food standing on the shelf before widening after realizing what it was.

“What the...?” That sentence snapped Stephanie out of her shock and went back to reality, remembering she needed to get out of there.

Screaming, Stephanie dropped the backpack she was holding and turned on her heel as fast as she could, running over to the ledge of the shelf.

“Hey, wait!” the human spoke as they stood up to their feet.

Not wanting to turn around to see what was happening, Stephanie continued to run towards the ledge of the shelf, getting ready to reach over to her grappling hook to climb down to the ground.

But before Stephanie could reach over to the grappling hook, the rope accidentally attacked itself around a halfway open container and tugged against her shirt, causing her to trip.

Stephanie yelped as she tripped over her own feet and flicked around, toppling over the ledge of the shelf as her hook was still connected to her shirt.

Suddenly, Stephanie's shirt shredded from the strength of Stephanie's weight and the pulling, finally giving away as Stephanie fell from the shelf.

Without her grappling hook or anything soft that could cushion her, Stephanie was in danger of injuring her body or breaking a limb.

Stephanie screamed again as she was flung to the ground, twisting herself around as she faced the ground, expecting herself to be a flat pancake after the impact.

So Stephanie quickly moved her arms up to her face and closed her eyes, expecting the impact would be swift.

But... she felt nothing except something grabbing the back of her shirt.

Her expression became confused after feeling nothing, and she glanced down at the floor... only to discover it was hovering a few inches away from her face.

“Phew,” the human spoke as Stephanie’s heart picked up speed. “That was a close one.”

Stephanie shrieked in startlement and started squirming around, thinking that the human had grabbed her when she had fallen.

Stephanie moved away from the ground as she tried to reach the surface with her hands frantically, not wanting to be lifted any higher.

“Don’t squirm around too much,” the human spoke as Stephanie started to panic more, feeling like she was on the verge of either passing out or crying. “I can’t hold you properly if you move around like that.”

Not wanting to be dropped to the ground again, Stephanie followed what the human said and whimpered, allowing herself to be lifted from the floor to the stranger’s eye height.

Bravely, Stephanie looked up at the stranger, only to realize it was a much bigger problem than what she was expecting.

The stranger... was a *kid*.

The kid has warm yellow skin, green eyes, and some bits of his hair sticking out of his circus helmet is burgundy.

He wears a mahogany leather bag on his back, an oversized brown jacket over a blue-green turtleneck sweater, faded cuffed pants, large red goggles, brown shoes, and umber leather gloves.

But... despite being a child... children are another worst thing that could happen to a Borrower because of their curiosity and desire to keep things.

Stephanie curled herself into a small ball as she was floating in the air in front of him, jolting a little when she noticed he had his right hand out.

The kid stared at Stephanie with an expression that was a mixture of confusion and curiosity as Stephanie was lifted more to his eyesight, causing Stephanie to feel more worried.

“Who are you?” The kid asked as Stephanie jolted again from the sound of his voice, not expecting children to sound like *this*. “And where are your parents?”

The kid... sees her as a kid too?

The question rambled through Stephanie’s head after the kid asked, staring up at him with a faintly confused expression but still afraid of him.

Before Stephanie could open her mouth to explain who she was and try to convince the kid that she was nothing interesting to collect or keep when they both perked after hearing another pair of footsteps.

“Oh no,” the kid winced as he glanced down at Stephanie with a worried expression. “The cafeteria lady is coming!”

Stephanie remembered she had to leave, so she decided to leave everything behind and leave as soon as possible.

When Stephanie started to squirm to get out of the grasp on the back of her shirt from something, it suddenly lifted her over the kid's shoulder.

At first, Stephanie thought she would be placed back onto the shelf to hide but whimpered when she was instead shoved into the kid's bag.

Stephanie landed on the bottom of the bag with a gentle *thump* before gasping in fear as she scrambled back and placed her back against the side of the sack.

Stephanie could move around in the bag without being crammed with books or other items.

But since a human had *captured* her, it all felt like the walls were closing in on her.

It was all too much for Stephanie, and she began hyperventilating, breathing in and out repeatedly as she glanced around at her surroundings to see if she could find a way out.

She began crying out of fear before collapsing on the bottom of the bag, finally passing out as the stress and fear overwhelmed her.

But after Stephanie passed out from all the overwhelming emotions, Stephanie's long hair was glowing purple.