The droplets started slowly with small pellets of water falling from the sky. Claude walked almost aimlessly across the pavement of the sidewalk. He thought it was going to rain and that would be it, but soon lightning flashed and thunder rumbled. The rain came pouring down, Claude had to put up his hood to stop his locs from getting wet. The street was barren, no house lights were on, no people were out, there weren't even any animals. Claude thought of the barrenness, it represented his life quite well. But as soon as the thought came he shut it down, thinking like that was unoriginal and stupidly cringe. 'Imagine being such a loser' he thought bitterly, 'Imagine thinking that'. The rain berated the top of Claude's hoodie, seeping into it. He would most definitely have to use the hairdryer to dry his hair again. Claude looked up from the ground and saw the street name. It was Sitgreeves, he was only one turn around a building away from his house. Claude then felt an odd sense of dread filling his being, it wasn't often that this happened. But it still made Claude feel worried about what was to come.

Now he was standing in front of his door, Claude's face was contorted with unease and his hands shook. If his mother was home then his day would be ruined, he hadn't done well in school today and God knows what she'll do if she finds out. Claude reaches out and turns the knob, the first thing he hears is Jamie's wailing. His younger sister immediately runs to the door and confronts Claude.

"Claude! Tell Marcus to stop being a dummy and give me a turn on the computer!" She shouted, feet stomping against the hallway's tile. Claude berated her about calling people names, she was only ten but was still such a troublemaker. Claude sighed, there wasn't much he could do about Marcus not sharing. It's not like Claude's older brother would listen to him, he was barely even in his life. Jamie stomped off after Claude didn't help her. He felt only a bit guilty, it wasn't like it was a life or death situation.

The stairs were as rickety as ever, the barren wood of the steps would've jabbed splinters into Claude's feet if he didn't have his trusty Mario socks on. They were the only pair of socks he could stand to wear, the others were much too rough on his feet.

Reaching the top of the stairs, Claude didn't spare a single glance to the other rooms as he made a beeline for his own. He couldn't stand this house and he never could. The only bearable part of this room was Claude's own room. It wasn't much, just a bed tucked into a corner and a desk of small proportion. There were plenty of posters, most of them were from horror movies or rom coms. Claude shambled over to the bed and collapsed onto it. He could just hope Nadhia didn't call him while he was asleep, Claude's girlfriend didn't take too kindly to being ignored even if Claude was unconscious. Claude had received a message from his Aunt earlier about how if he ever needed a place to stay then to come over. It made him feel safe, like he had a safety net if something ever went wrong. As Claude drifted off he thought of his Aunt. He dreamed of being with his Aunt and away from his current, Nadhia-filled life.

The second Claude woke up he knew something was wrong and the moment he checked his phone his suspicions were confirmed. Six thirty was long gone and eight o' clock was right around the corner. Claude started shaking, his eyes watering. He slowly got his body to work and got off the bed. The casual street clothes he was wearing would have to do, not a second could be wasted.

Claude yanked his bag off of the floor, phone nearly falling out, and hurried down the stairs. He practically broke down the door when he ran out into the cold November night. He jogged down the street his house was attached to, stressed out of his mind. Where could he go? He couldn't hide because Nadhia would find him, she always did. Claude was so paranoid he didn't fully

register being yanked into an alleyway by a gloved hand.

"Why'd you run off? I was so worried, Claude," Nahida's voice grabbed Claude out of his daze and sent him into a frenzy. This wasn't good, what would she do? Claude couldn't stop shaking, fingers rattling with anxiety. "Uhm, I'm so sorry Nadhia, I , ahh, should've woken up earlier,"

Nadhia didn't take too kindly to the response, following up her obvious irritation with a raised hand. Claude's eyes widened and his mouth shook. Nadhia had never hit him before, she never needed to. Her words were enough to put Claude in a state of horror, enough to make him shake. As her open palm sped towards Calude's face he remembered his Aunt. He remembered her message, her warm hugs and her gentle smile. In that moment Claude started shaking even more, but not from worry or fear, from anger and rage at Nadhia from putting him in this situation. For worrying his Aunt and making her lose sleep.

Claude shoved Nadhia as hard as he could before she could make contact. For a moment, Claude stood there in disbelief of himself. That had been easy, it was like a dam of relief just flooding over him that he had been able to stand up for himself. But as soon as he saw Nahdia's furious face he knew he had to run. Claude darted out of the alleyway, high on adrenaline, and to the only place he felt safe, the only place Nadhia wouldn't find him. His Aunt's house. Calude ran up the street, eyes frantically scanning for St. Louis Street. When he finally made it to the address Claude banged on the door frantically. He could hear his aunt rushing towards the door, worried. When she opened the door, Claude collapsed into her arms. She immediately hugged him as soon as she recognized who he was. After a solid ten seconds they looked at each other.

Claude's wet eyes met his Aunt's warm ones, and he knew it would be okay.