

42 Night Light

By R. Alan Sheppard

I am awakened, startled by a very loud thud. No sound of breaking glass, no indication of splintering wood, just a quick, resounding thump in the night followed by an ear-piercing wail. My eyes are open, wide, and unfocused. My mind is trying to process the occurrence, challenged to dissect what is happening in the nearly complete darkness of my bedroom.

Is it reality or nightmare?

Desperately, I seek clarity of my senses. I come to grips with the fact that the alarm system is the source of that terrible noise. I've become further aware that the alarm would only sound if a door were opened. Was it the result of wind or has our lock been compromised? Striving to retain a functional measure of calm, I find myself kicking wildly to free myself from a tangled sheet and blanket.

And it is dark. Where is the usual illumination from our night-lights? Is the electricity off?

My feet finally find the floor.

I pass on trying to retrieve the weapon in the night table drawer beside my bed. I opt in favor of putting some distance between the bedroom door and me. I am moving

towards my closet where I have a second pistol stowed. I am confused and dismayed by the amount of time it takes me in the darkness, in a place I thought was so familiar.

My heart is pounding and I am having trouble breathing. I am expecting the locked bedroom door to burst open at any moment.

Where is my wife? My eyes are adjusting to the miniscule amount of streetlight leaking through the edge of the blinds and I make out her image kneeling beside the opposite side of the bed, struggling to get her pistol from a zipper pouch. She has stayed where we agreed would be her "safe spot."

I have to yell to inquire as to whether she has dialed 9-1-1 on her cell phone. She shakes her head to indicate she has not and abandons her efforts to free her pistol in favor of making the call. Her cell phone apparently falls to the floor as she disappears momentarily beneath the edge of the bed to retrieve it.

I am finally leaning out of the closet, peering over the shaking night sights of a Glock 17; now, finally trained on the entrance door. In my haste, I have left my cell phone and flashlight on my night table. We are shaking, shaken, and are both still trying to get a grip on what is happening.

My wife dials 9-1-1 and is asked by the 9-1-1 operator to stay on the line while advising her that a police unit is near.

Communication is strained and repetitive as the alarm is deafening. Our eyes have adjusted to the almost non-existent light source and she moves to



the closet to get behind me. She is asked by the 9-1-1 operator if we have guns in the house, and my wife tells the operator that we are both armed. The operator replies that we must immediately ground our weapons, as officers would be entering the residence within moments. We place our firearms on the floor by our feet and my wife responds when asked for the location of all of the occupants inside the house.

I see flickers of colored lights outside and leave my position of cover and open the locked bedroom door. The front door of our residence that is to the left and slightly down an entrance hallway has been kicked in at the deadbolt, the electricity apparently disabled. The alarm is still screaming, being powered by its back-up battery and I move forward to the control panel to disarm the system.

I keep my hands visible as the entering officers gaze warily at me, pause with guns pointed, and then pass the visibly shaken, pajama-clad