

She ~~went~~stepped forward to the window, pushed the curtain aside cautiously and looked out onto the veranda. In the wan light, there was nobody to be seen. Marisa was just about to turn away when she noticed ~~a~~some movement in the darkest corner of the veranda. Judging by its size, it could only be ~~some~~an animal that had slunk into that corner. Or a child. This thought ~~had the effect of~~making~~stirred~~ her ~~move~~into action again. Her hand trembled as she groped ~~in the drawer of the commode~~ for the booby pistol she kept ~~there~~in the chest of drawers for just this kind of situation. She moved to the door and pushed her hand under Angus's collar. If someone was lurking around outside she would let go, but she didn't want him to ~~have a~~ fight with an animal or, even worse, attack a child.

She took another deep breath and quickly opened the door.

She could hardly keep control of the bloodhound, who immediately wanted to charge ~~immediately~~ at the corner where she had ~~just~~ seen ~~some~~the movement. Marisa braced her feet firmly on the floor, but even so her slippers slid over the smooth wooden floorboards and she had to use all her ~~force~~strength not to drop the booby pistol. Something bright stood out against the dark brown wood, presumably whatever she had seen from the window. With his nose pressed to the floor, Angus pulled her behind him. After a few steps he ~~stood~~still~~stopped short~~ and growled. ~~The sound went right through her, and she repressed her anxiety with an effort.~~ The sound set her teeth on edge, and she struggled to force back her growing unease.

Angus sniffed at the floor again, and then he turned his head to her and looked at her in apparent confusion, as if he had suddenly lost the ~~trace~~trail that had excited him so much a moment earlier. Marisa took this opportunity to push ~~him~~herself ahead of ~~her~~him.

Cautiously, she approached the corner and found dark ~~spots~~stains on the floor. Careful not to tread on them before she knew what the devil was going on here, she stepped over them. Since whatever was cowering there ~~made no movement~~did not move, nor did it make any attempt to attack her, Marisa crouched down to see it better, but stayed far enough away to be able to jump up if ~~she had to~~need be.