

The House on Maple Street

Stephen King

Although she was only five, and the youngest of the Bradbury children, Melissa had very sharp eyes and it wasn't really surprising that she was the first to discover something strange had happened to the house on Maple Street while the Bradbury family spent the summer in England.

She ran and found her older brother, Brian, and told him something was wrong upstairs, on the third floor. She said she would show him, but not until he swore not to tell *anyone* what she had found. Brian swore, knowing it was their stepfather Lissa was afraid of... In fact, all of the Bradbury children had become rather wary of their mother's second husband.

It would probably turn out to be nothing, anyway, but Brian was delighted to be back home and willing enough to humor his baby sister (Brian was two full years older), at least for awhile; he followed her down the third-floor hallway without so much as a murmur of argument, and he only pulled her braids—he called these braid-pulls “emergency stops”—once.

They had to tiptoe past Lew's study, which was the only finished-off room up here, because Lew was inside, unpacking his notebooks and papers and muttering in an ill-tempered way. Brian's thoughts had actually turned to what might be on TV tonight—he was looking forward to a pig-out on good old American cable after three months of BBC and ITV—when they reached the end of the hall.

What he saw beyond the tip of his little sister's pointing finger drove all thoughts of television from Brian Bradbury's mind.

“Now swear again!” Lissa whispered. “Never tell *anyone*, Daddy Lew or *anyone*, or hope to die!”

“Hope to die,” Brian agreed..

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... It *was* a half-hour before he told his big sister, Laurie, who was unpacking in her room. Laurie was possessive of her room as only an eleven-year-old girl can be, and she gave Brian the very dickens for coming in without knocking, even though she was completely dressed.

“Sorry,” Brian said, “but I gotta show you something. It's *very* weird.”