

Clouds ominously shadowed the moon, hiding a dark shape slinking towards the sleeping town. It had been years since he'd been this way. What would he find? Would they remember? Would they recoil from him? Could he face the challenges his presence would certainly bring?

Every step closer raised new questions and reasons for fear. Had anything changed? He was so eager to see them, but apprehensive. Still, he knew that this was the right time. He had stayed away long enough. His eyes never turned aside as he passed the cemetery with the grave that bore his name (not knowing his father lay beside it). They needed to know the truth. They would have to listen. He would make them.

Finally, he reached the front gate of the old familiar house he'd sworn never to return to. Even in the darkness it was the same, short of the car he'd driven off in. They'd found it badly burned but with him missing.

Thinking twice about entering unannounced, he rang the bell. After a few heart-pounding minutes, a light came on. A soft-faced old woman answered through the screen door.

"Y-yes, may I help you?"

"Mom, it's me.

She gasped.