

His hands trembled for the split-second that his fingers were still exposed. But he refused to let that stop him from tucking the blanket under his pillow. Once it was secure, he slid his hands back down and folded them under his body. He was lying on his stomach, and though it was a little uncomfortable, he didn't care. At least now, he was safe.

After all, every child knows that nothing can get you while you're under the covers.

And right now, what couldn't get him was out there. In his room.

He had been very close to sleep. The night was peaceful, his bed was comfortable, everything was just right. His eyes were just beginning to feel too heavy to stay open. And then it happened. Just like he had heard of it happening.

Two small points of light appeared in the blackness of his closet, just inside the door that was slightly open. Open! How had that happened? He always closed his closet door. But there it was, slightly open, and those two points of light were just the right size and place to be eyes. They only glowed for a second, but he knew he had not imagined it.

All thoughts of sleep fled. He stared at the inky blackness, almost daring whatever evil monster was inside to come out. Then, three tendrils of the darkness seemed to solidify and slide out along the surface of the door. Not far, just enough to push it open. Slowly.

The closet door barely made a sound, and the scared boy almost could believe it wasn't moving until a small creak confirmed it. That was when he had flipped over and buried his small body under the blanket.

Now he tried to ease his breathing and listen. He knew he was safe now, but he didn't want to miss signs that whatever was out there had given up. After several minutes, he started to sweat. It was getting quite stuffy under the blanket. His hand reached for the corner of the blanket, then froze.

He heard it.

At first, just a barely-heard step. Then another, a little louder. Then right next to the bed, he heard another step quite clearly. It was there. He held his breath and tried to stop shivering. Without hearing his own breathing, he suddenly realized that a slower, raspier breathing was right next to his bed.

"Little boy..." His blood ran ice cold. The whisper was so soft that he could barely hear it. Then again, it came. "Little boy..."

His breath came raggedly from his open mouth. He felt a hot tear slide down his cheek. He didn't, couldn't reply.

"Oh, little boy, come out and see me." He shook his head. No words came out, but the motion must have been visible, because he heard a brief, soft laugh. "Aww, what's wrong? Too scared?"

He gulped, tried to say something, but couldn't. He took another deep breath, and this time he managed a whisper. "Go away...you can't hurt me."

"Oh, I can't?" There were more soft footsteps, letting him know it was walking around his bed. "What makes you think that? I can do plenty to hurt you. I can take you into my world, where it's so dark that closing your eyes makes no difference. I can show you things that would make you scream until you went crazy. Or if I get really angry, I can tear your body apart, one piece at a time."

He clenched his fists. "You can't get me while I'm under here. Everybody knows that."

"Everybody knows that," it repeated, continuing its slow walk around his bed. "Hmm, that makes sense, I guess. After all, if everybody says it, that means it's true, right?"

"R-r-right," he stammered, and twisted slowly so he was face-up under the blanket. For a few more moments, the thing in his room said nothing. Then, the moon emerged from behind a cloud, throwing its light onto his bed. He gasped. There was a huge shadow silhouetted against the blanket, and he could see that it was leaning down over him. It whispered again, and he could almost smell its evil breath.

“What if I pulled your blanket away?”

He almost smiled, even through his fear. “You can’t. You can’t...”

His eyes widened as the blanket was suddenly torn away, tossed off into a corner. The thing’s face was barely an inch away from his, and it was so horrifying that he almost couldn’t believe he was seeing it. The worst part was its eyes, which were so black that they seemed to suck light into them, and he couldn’t tear his gaze from them. He felt one of its hands take hold of his wrist as it laughed.

“Wrong.”