





A Creepy Creature Comes to Visit



can remember desperately wishing my life would get more exciting. We all do, right? Every week's the same: school – homework – brush your teeth – go to bed. It's even worse when you have four brothers and sisters moaning at you and hogging the TV. But if I'd got the chance to pick *how* things would get more exciting, I'd have chosen owning a pool with a water slide or winning a lifetime's supply of free pizza.

I wouldn't have picked seeing freaky things in the middle of the night and discovering a whole creepy world that most people don't know about. Trust me: no one needs excitement like that.

The first time I saw something weird was one

Wednesday at midnight when the clock at Grimdean House woke me up. As it finished striking twelve, I heard growling outside. Drawing back the curtain, I saw a creature with angry eyes and brown spines scratching round our front garden. It gave me this strange shiver that ran right from my shoulders to my feet. The creature was small – less than half my size – but it looked mean, like a goblin crossed with a porcupine.

The odd thing was that when my little sister, Annie, woke up and crept over to the window, she didn't notice it. The creature had spotted us though. It stared back with evil, piercing eyes, before vanishing into a bush. I got the feeling it didn't like us very much but I told myself not to panic. As long as it stayed out there we were fine. Why would a spiny thing want to come inside anyway?

I was standing in the kitchen a couple of days later when the same shiver ran through me. I stared round quickly. Was the creature inside? I didn't want to see it, but believing it was here and *not* being able to see it was worse.

Everything looked normal – the dented kitchen table, the wooden cupboards and the pile of washing-up next to the sink. My sister Sammie was

standing by the oven stirring gravy, her wavy hair pinned back with a clip. My elder brother, Ben, was sitting at the table with earphones in. Annie was colouring a picture and my younger brother, Josh, was trying to pinch the crayons from her. Nothing else moved. If there was a creature here, it was pretty well hidden.

I ducked to look under the table. Then I peered behind the door and checked the dark corner beside the washing machine. Nothing.

“Robyn, what are you doing?” Sammie banged the saucepan with her wooden spoon.

“Nothing,” I said.

Having so many brothers and sisters basically sucks. What sucks even more is being number three out of the five of us – being smack in the middle, like the meat in a sandwich. The older ones – Sammie and Ben – get to do cool stuff that I’m not allowed to, like go to the teen rollerblading night at the sports centre. The younger ones – Josh and Annie – are totally spoilt.

I just get moaned at by everybody, AND I have to share a room with Annie because we’re the two youngest girls (even though I’m eleven and she’s six). That’s what it’s like in the Silver family – everyone talks at once, and if you don’t sit down fast enough

for dinner most of the food's gone before you've even picked up your knife and fork.

"Robyn!" Sammie rolled her eyes at me. "Get the cutlery out, and the table mats. Hurry up!"

"In a minute." I scanned the kitchen and shivered again. I still couldn't see it. Maybe it was somewhere outside. Maybe I was just cold and my shiver had nothing to do with any creature.

I pulled the drawer open, grabbing a handful of cutlery. Then I opened the cupboard and reached for the mats. Suddenly, something growled. An angry blur of spikes and claws leapt out of the cupboard, and I jerked backwards so fast that masses of knives, forks and spoons flew out of my hand and scattered all over the floor.

The brown spiny thing bared its sharp teeth. It was the same creature I'd seen outside at night, although close up it looked even wilder and spikier. It smelt totally disgusting, like the stink of bad drains. Pouncing on to my left foot, the creature sank its teeth into my bunny slipper, which luckily for me was well-padded with fluff.

I kicked out, shaking the thing off my foot. It crouched on the floor, still growling.

"Robyn!" snapped Sammie. "What are you

doing? You'll wake up Mum. You know she went to bed with a headache."

"What? I couldn't help it! This thing jumped out at me." I looked round for something to use as a weapon. Why weren't they helping me? Did they *want* me to be eaten by a goblin-porcupine? "Er . . . guys! I need some help here!"

"Why?" Ben raised one eyebrow. "Did you see a mouse? There's no need to go crazy. It won't hurt you."

It was my turn to stare. A mouse!

"I want to see the mouse!" Annie said excitedly. "Can you catch it, Robyn, and then I can keep it as a pet?"

"It's not a mouse!" I pointed at the spiny thing which was running up the wall. It dashed across the ceiling and hung upside down, as if its feet were glued there. It was the freakiest thing I'd ever seen.

"I'm sure she was adopted," Sammie said to no one in particular. "I cannot be related to someone so stupid."

"Can't you see it? It's there!" I was still pointing.

Sammie ignored me. Ben, Josh and Annie stared at the ceiling, the same puzzled look on their faces.

"Is it a spider?" Ben said.

A horrible frozen feeling grew inside my

stomach. They really couldn't see it. None of them. What was going on?

The creature growled and a blob of spittle fell from its mouth to the floor. I had to get this weird thing out of here fast.

"What's going on?" Mum came in wearing her dressing gown.

"See! You woke her up," Sammie hissed at me.

"No, I was already awake," Mum smiled peaceably. "I was reading actually."

Sammie shot me a black look. "You *disturbed* her."

Usually I would have glared back, but the creature on the ceiling was distracting me.

"Nothing to worry about. We just had a Robyn-shaped disaster." Ben, who'd started picking up the cutlery, slapped me on the shoulder and nearly sent me flying. It was a family joke, the Robyn-disaster thing. I didn't make *that* much mess. Not really.

"Robyn won't catch the mouse for me." Annie frowned and stuck her thumb in her mouth.

While she wasn't looking, Josh took her last crayon and went to watch TV.

"A mouse?" Mum looked alarmed.

I glanced at the spiny thing – it was still stuck to the ceiling, but at least it wasn't moving any

more. What was I supposed to tell them? If they couldn't see it then they'd never believe me. "It's not a mouse," I told her. "I thought I saw something, but it was nothing."

Mum smiled and went to check the pie in the oven. I helped Ben pick up the last of the knives and forks, but then the creature started creeping across the ceiling. I'd have to be quick if I wanted to catch it and get it out of the house. Soon Mum would dish up the pie and the "hordes would descend", as Dad described our mealtimes.

Grabbing the broom from the cupboard under the stairs, I climbed on a chair and swiped at the creature. If I could get it down off the ceiling then maybe I could drive it out the door.

"What are you *doing*?" Sammie said in her best tone of loathing.

Mum turned round. "Robyn, what's the broom for?"

"I'm getting rid of a cobweb." I prodded at the creature. "I'll only be a minute."

The thing's eyes bulged with fury. It bit into the broom handle, making a loud crunching sound. I looked round, certain my family would have heard, but they didn't react.

The creature hurled itself at me, spikes bristling.

I waved the broom wildly and hit it in mid-air. It yowled and spiralled away from me, landing on the table with a *thunk*.

“Robyn, are you kung-fu fighting the cobweb?” Mum asked me.

The spiny thing turned in her direction and scrunched up its body as if getting ready to launch. I jumped from the chair to the table, stumbling to my knees. At least I was between Mum and the creature.

“Hell-oo, I’m home!” The back door swung open and my dad stood there in his blue overalls. He works as a maintenance man for the town council.

The creature scampered across Annie’s picture and I dived at it, afraid for my little sister. Its teeth fastened on to my hand. A burning pain shot through my skin and I yelped and dropped the broom. I saw my dad’s confused expression but there was no time to explain. I had to get rid of this monster before it hurt someone else.

I grabbed the broom again and swung it like a baseball bat. It smacked into the creature, sending it flying off the table. It gave one final growl and then darted straight past my dad’s legs, through the open door and out into the darkness.

Dad didn’t even blink.

I jumped off the table, holding my hand to my chest, and slammed the door shut behind it.

“It’s welcome to the madhouse, is it?” Dad pulled off his shoes. “Great acrobatics, Robyn.”

“Yeah, sorry! Just getting rid of a cobweb.” I ran into the hallway before anyone could ask me any more questions.

I leant against the side of the stairs, my hand trembling. A bead of blood was sitting, round and crimson on my skin, so I ran upstairs to wash it off. My hand felt sore but that wasn’t the main thing that bothered me.

Something no one else could see had hurt me.

That ruined my last hope – the hope that I was imagining everything; the hope that I’d dreamt the creature up in the middle of the night.

It meant the spiny thing was real.