

NIGHT OF THE LIVING TED

EXTRACT

There was only a minute until midnight – one minute left of Halloween – and she still couldn't get to sleep. She hated not being able to sleep. It usually meant she was cranky all the next day, and she didn't want to be cranky on Dad's birthday.

As the final few moments of Halloween drained away, Lisa Marie yawned, shut her eyes tight and cuddled Henrietta, her new bear. Even dressed as a witch, the teddy looked adorable. Not like Vernon's bear. For a soft toy, it had been terrifying, and Vernon had actually seemed quite proud of it right up until the point he'd tossed it into his bedroom and made Lisa Marie promise never to tell anyone he'd made it.

Henrietta felt oddly warm, like a hot-water bottle, as Lisa Marie snuggled her in close.

And then, with just one second to go until midnight, Lisa Marie finally drifted off to sleep, blissfully unaware of the horrors she was about to encounter.

THUMP.

Lisa Marie flicked open her eyes, but otherwise didn't move a muscle. She was facing the clock on her bedside table, and saw that its hands now pointed to quarter past twelve. She'd been asleep for only fifteen minutes, so why had she woken up?

THUMP.

Her breath caught at the back of her throat. Something was in the room with her, moving around. Usually, Lisa Marie was a sensible girl, but right there and then, she could think only one thing: monsters!

She shut her eyes so tightly that she could see colours dancing behind them, and hugged Henrietta harder than ever. Or at least she tried to, but the teddy was no longer in her arms. The witch bear must've fallen out of bed while Lisa Marie had been asleep.

THUMP.

This time, she felt the bed itself shake. She gave a little gasp of shock as her duvet began to move. Someone was pulling it down towards the bottom of the bed!

Quickly, Lisa Marie sat upright. She opened her mouth to scream, but her throat was blocked by terror, and no sound came out. She gaped down at the end of the bed, unsure what she'd see in the glow of her nightlight, but fearing it would be something terrible.

Instead, what she saw was ... nothing at all. Everything looked just as it had done before she'd fallen asleep. The neat stack of clothes. The chess board. The alphabetically arranged bookshelves. Her room was just her room, with not a monster in sight.

Lisa Marie shook herself – she was being silly. Monsters weren't real, everyone knew that. And yet something had pulled down her duvet.

There was nothing else for it – she had to go and investigate. If she was going to be able to get back to sleep, she had to get up and check the end of her bed.

“There’s nothing there,” she whispered to herself as she took her glasses from the bedside table and slipped them on. She swung her bare feet down on to the floor, her heart thudding in her chest like a bass drum.

B-BOOM. B-BOOM. B-BOOM.

Clenching her hands into tight, sweaty fists, Lisa Marie tiptoed to the bottom of her bed, and cautiously peered down at the floor. A familiar figure lay limply on the floor, smiling up at her.

“Henrietta,” Lisa Marie whispered, the word coming out like a giggle of relief. She bent down and scooped up the bear. “How did you get so far out of bed?”

Henrietta’s green face suddenly twisted into an angry snarl. “How d’you think?” she growled. The witch bear brought its tiny broomstick up and whacked Lisa Marie on the head with the wooden end. “I flew, stupid!”



Startled, Lisa Marie released her grip on the bear. Henrietta dropped to the floor and quickly shot under the bed, out of sight.

Lisa Marie stood there, frozen in shock. Common sense told her she had to be dreaming, but the bruise she could feel forming on her forehead told her she was very much awake. There was only one way to know for sure which was correct.

Slowly, she bent down and peered into the darkness beneath the wooden bed frame. She could see another stack of books, a marble and the roller skates she'd been looking for all week, but there was no sign of Henrietta. Maybe this *was* a dream, after all.