The Nightmare Man

Sally was afraid. What she feared the most was the darkness. Every night she didn't want to go upstairs to bed. Anything to delay going up the stairs. Anything to delay the moment when the light was switched off, plunging her room into darkness.

One moment the room was bright; the next split second and the room was darker than jet. The chair in the corner looked like an old man crouching down, ready to leap at her. The dressing gown on the back of the door was like a thin man, leaning, waiting for her to sleep before he hobbled across the room towards her…

Sally lay in the darkness every night watching the old man and the thin man. Neither of them ever moved but she was sure that when she fell asleep they would be up and wandering round – peering at her sleeping face. But, more than anything, she feared the Nightmare Man.

Sally had seen him once, watching her through the window – a tall, dark shape with two red eyes that glowed. Of course, she had told her mother but she didn't believe her. Since that night Sally made sure that her curtains were tightly pulled together.

The night of the storm, Sally lay in her bed watching the old man and the thin man. Surely, the Nightmare Man wouldn't be out on a night like this? Sally just had to know. Heart thudding, she crept from her bed and peeked through the curtains. There he was, clinging to the window with his twin red eyes staring right at her.

At that very moment the lightning flashed, the Nightmare Man had gone but Sally could see a distant tower, a tower with two red lights. In that moment, as the lightning lit up the night, she realised that the Nightmare Man had not really existed at all. Only in her mind. She laughed aloud…

Her bed seemed warm and cosy. She stared across her room, soon the thin man became a dressing gown and the old man was just a chair with her clothes draped across it, ready for the next morning, ready for the sunlight.