

## Under the Bed

By Iris Quinn

It was dark. The shadows writhed, the moonlight shivered before disappearing altogether. The bed was cold, the freezing sheets sent goosebumps across my skin. I heard things. Whispers. Footsteps. A breeze danced past me. A knock at my door shook me from my imagination, the faces in the shadows vanished as I dove under the covers.

But a warm light never filtered into the room, my mother's soothing voice never appeared to comfort me. The room got colder as nearly silent footsteps walked around the bed, before coming to an abrupt stop.

I couldn't look up. Couldn't open my eyes. Couldn't feel my fingers. The whispers returned, the terrifying faces appearing even behind my closed eyes. I shook, my body quaking as I willed away the midnight terrors. They didn't listen. It was here. It had finally come to take me away. This diabolical being, claiming yet another life.

Everyone dismissed it as childhood fears. The monster under the bed, the skeletal figure peering down at me from the closet, the shadowed version of myself that I see when looking in the mirror during the darkest hours. Faces in the shadows wearing malicious smiles. Smiles daring me to tell my family, tell them to help me. But they've forgotten the fears of being a child and the things that haunt us. I heard something fall, shattering on the floor of my room, shaking me to my core. It wouldn't scare me. I wouldn't let it.

But I couldn't move. Terror paralyzed me, my breathing became labored. I tried to scream, but only a husky breath managed to escape. I could only lay there, hunched in a tight ball, as I heard it get closer and closer.

The foreboding murmurs began to grow louder, a sudden chorus of disembodied voices echoing throughout the room, filling my ears until I felt as if I could no longer think. Like hypnosis. Unable to stand it any longer, I threw the covers off, sitting up abruptly. But I only screamed once I saw it.

A shadow, with long, spindly fingers, unearthly talons curling up on the side of my mattress, spasming, shaking, as if lost in a macabre, corrupted ecstasy. Its long, thin arms pushed it up until its head appeared, with eyes of hellfire, staring me

through until I felt my insides begin to burn.

I never stopped screaming, becoming lightheaded. I waved my hands, desperate, but my fingers just went through its eternal darkness.

No matter how much I cried and shrieked, no help ever came. No matter how much of a fight I put up, nothing would ever stop the inevitable outcome.

The monster under the bed is real. Every child knows it.