

The Light

Tamara woke with a start. Through bleary eyes, she glanced across at her alarm clock and waited for the numbers to drift into focus. Ten minutes before midnight. She yawned, stretched and tried to work out what had woken her up. Normally, she could remember if she'd had a bad dream, but this one seemed to have been about a zoo filled with flying shrimp, so there was nothing out of the ordinary there.

Grumbling to herself about how long it would take to get back to sleep, Tamara closed her eyes and tried to find a comfortable position. She knew it would be a lot easier to get to sleep if there wasn't so much light coming from behind her wardrobe. She lay back and considered this for a second. She stared at the ceiling for a moment to gather her thoughts.

Had she really seen the light coming from behind her wardrobe? She glanced up and checked. She lay back down and stared at the ceiling. Yep, there was definitely a halo of flickering yellowish-white light spilling out from behind her wardrobe. It definitely hadn't been there before she went to sleep, it was the kind of thing you'd notice in your bedroom. But there it was now, as clear as anything.

As far as Tamara knew, the only thing behind the wardrobe was the wall and, behind that, Mr and Mrs Glibb's spare bedroom. She couldn't leave it, she knew that much. There was no way she'd be able to get back to sleep now without at least seeing what it was.

Cautiously, she rolled out of bed and slid her feet into her slippers. Being green, fluffy and shaped like the head of a dragon, they weren't exactly what she'd have liked to wear while facing the unknown, but then neither were her pyjamas covered in unicorns. She grabbed the first thing she could get her hands on in case she needed a weapon and proceeded across her bedroom towards the glowing wardrobe.

Like a magician revealing a trick, she whipped open the doors and was faced with the not-too-terrifying sight of her school uniforms, all hung up neatly. So, the light wasn't coming from inside the wardrobe at least. Tamara took a deep breath, held it, and dragged the furniture away from the wall.

"Oh, darn it," said a small impish figure in a put-upon voice, putting down a quill pen that he had been using to write scribbled notes on a scrap of paper. It was covered in smudges, and he was urgently trying to blot up a new one before it spread. He was sat on a small wooden stool behind a small, square desk. His office, if indeed that is what it was, was inside what looked like an elevator. There was even a panel filled with illuminated numbers next to the man's head, but, unlike a regular elevator, there must have been a thousand buttons. Soft music was being piped in through speakers in the ceiling. It had the same tinny quality of elevator music everywhere.

"I'm armed, you know!" Tamara said in what she hoped was a fearsome voice. She waved her weapon in front of her.

"Yes, I can see that," the man said. "Though I'm not sure what you plan to do to me with a stuffed flamingo." Tamara glanced for the first time at the item she'd grabbed and tossed it away angrily. "Anyway," the man continued, "please hurry up. You're late, and we can't afford to waste any more time."