

Bedtime Story  
*by Joan Black*

OK you rotten kids – you want Grandma to tell you a story? Then get those teeth brushed, hands and faces washed and pajamas on. Snug in your beds? Then let's go ...

This is NOT a “Once upon a time” story. No, this is a story of the here and now, right this very minute in fact. No fidgeting. Be very, very quiet. Listen! Do you hear anything? Of course not – it's night time and the house is still and silent.

WHATWASTHAT? A stair step creaked. But we are up here and there is no-one downstairs. So how come a stair step creaked? Tap, tap on the window – is the wind coming up and starting to howl or is that the scratchings of ghosts wanting to come in here where it is warm and cozy? I hear rustling, scrabbling noises coming from that closet over there ... and do you know why? I'll tell you why. It is the sound of all those Squigglies waking up. There are hundreds, maybe even thousands of Squigglies that spend their days hiding on the top shelf and as the moon comes up they squiggle down and come creeping out from under the door.

The Squigglies are ugly – they have heads like tadpoles and the bodies of spiders with nine hairy legs and they scuttle along sideways. They scridge through that gap under the door and skitter across the carpet to the beds where they scramble up the legs and burrow in among the sheets and blankets looking for their favorite food – tiny pink ears. Especially little girls' ears.

But boys are not safe. Oh no. Out from beneath the beds where they dwell among the smelly sneakers and the dirty socks, slide hordes of Squishes. Did I say the Squigglies were ugly? Well, the Squishes are the ugliest critters in the whole wide world. They are soft and squirty yellow-brown blobs and they burp all the time – they NEVER STOP burping. They ooze their way up onto the beds and crawl into where it is dark and warm looking for TOES! Oh they do enjoy toes! Especially little boys' toes. They slip and slide in and out between toes nibbling, nibbling, nibbling. Chomp, chomp, chomp.

When the Squigglies and the Squishes have nibbled enough ears and toes, they hunt for a place to rest. Places like dark underarms or the soft spot behind a knee or their most favorite place of all – a nice pink belly button. If you try to dislodge them by squirming they will bite and prickle and tickle and your body will twist and turn and jerk until all the bedclothes end up on the floor and you are cold and scared and screaming and ...

Well now, lookee here. Two adorable kids fast asleep and smiling and not a Squiggly or a Squishy anywhere to be seen. Goodnight you little monsters – sleep tight.

Oh Yuk, I think I just stepped on a lost Squishy. Well, I HOPE it was a Squishy and not something the kids dropped on the floor.