

Bedbugs

SERIALIZED



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

...THE BOGEYMEN PLAY

That night, unaware of any change in his bedroom, Scotty Snot slept peacefully. But underneath his bed, the Boogeyman snickered the way Boogeymen snicker when they are about to do something particularly nasty. He sang, “Yes, sirree! Yes, sirree! No more bedbugs to pester me!”

When the floorboards snapped, Scotty’s eyes shot open. He lay perfectly still, listening. A sound came from the foot of his bed.

Bump bump bumpity bump. Bump bump bumpity bump.

“Bumps in the night,” Scotty said under his breath. “Storybooks say that bumps in the night are not a good thing.”

Bump bump bumpity bump. Bump bump bumpity bump.

Scotty pulled his covers over his head. Oh, how he wished he could run to someone for comfort. But he knew his parents would say, “Do not be silly, Scott, and go back to bed.”

Meanwhile, the Boogeyman slunk from under Scotty’s bed. Unseen, he raised the bottom of Scotty’s blanket and ever so lightly tickled the soles of the little boy’s feet.

This Boogeyman, like all Boogeymen, was an expert tickler. In no time, Scotty was squirming like a worm. “I mustn’t laugh out loud!” he said. “Father would be angry!”

Tears filled his eyes. He kicked his feet and pounded the mattress with his fists.

“Oh, no! I can’t stand it!” he said. “But I must keep quiet! Oh no! Uncle!”

Still, the Boogeyman kept tickling. At last, Scotty’s mouth opened wide and out poured a bellyful of *ho-ho’s*, *ha-ha’s*, and *hee-hee-hee’s*. The laughter echoed through the halls of the great mansion.

Soon, the bedroom door flew open. In stomped Wilmot Snot dressed in splendid silk pajamas. The Boogeyman must have shot under the bed, for Scotty instantly stopped laughing.

“What’s gotten into you, Scott?” said Mr. Snot. “You forgot that you’re a Snot. If this happens again, you’ll get a swat.”

Scotty had no reply. He only lay there praying the mysterious tickling would not return.

Moments later, down the marble hallway, Wilmot Snot lay awake in his great, brass bed.

“What rot! My son was squawking like a crackpot,” he told himself. “That’s how a Snoot or a Snob might act, but not a Snot.”

Little did Wilmot Scott know, but at that moment, the Boogeyman under *his* bed began to sing, “*Yes, sirree! Yes, sirree! No more bedbugs to pester me!*”

Soon, a new soft, deep sound -- *Bump bump bumpity bump* — floated through the vast bedroom.



In no time, Wilmot’s feet tickled. He bit his upper lip and clenched his fists. “I will not snicker,” he said. “I am a Snot, and a Snot does not lose control.”

But this Boogeyman was even a better tickler than Scotty’s. His fingers flitted over Mr. Snot’s soles like a

puppy's tongue.

Mr. Snot held his breath. His face turned red. He pounded the mattress. His face turned blue. He gnawed on his pillow, and his face turned red.

"A Snot does not laugh!" he said, as his face turned purple. "He does not. He does not."

But the tickling was too much. After another torturous minute, Mr. Wilmot Snot, for the first time in his life, let out a tremendous, "Haa! Haa!"

Next to him, Lottie Snot, who wore white cream on her face and large curlers in her hair, glared at her husband.

"Wilmot!" she huffed. "*What* do you find so funny?"

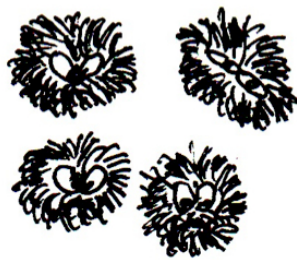
As Lottie spoke, the Boogeyman began tickling her feet as well. Within seconds, she burst out laughing. "Hee! Heeeeeeeeeee!"

"Haa! Haaaaaaaaa!" Mr. Snot kept on.

Word spread quickly around the mansion. In no time, all one hundred Boogeymen under all one hundred beds knew the game for tonight.

"Boogie-woogie!" some shouted.

"Party time!" shouted others.



The place went wild. The Boogeymen were at their tickling best. Laughter spurted from the upstairs rooms of the houseguests. Laughter pealed from the downstairs chambers of the maids and butlers. Room after elegant room rang with merriment.

All this while, outside on the big back lawn, the bedbugs sat chatting with the lightning bugs. Small yellow lights flashed everywhere. When the sound of laughter reached the bugs, they knew

the Boogeymen were up to their old tricks.

It would take weeks for the Bug-Off Bug Spray to air out of the Snot mansion. Until then, the bedbugs could only hope that Wilmot Snot, Lottie Snot, and young Scotty Snot were living happily ever after.

Irene wrinkled her nose. “Bedbugs, I don’t believe a word of that story,” she said. “And I certainly don’t believe there’s a Boogeyman under *my* bed.”

To prove her point, she leaned over the edge of the mattress.

“Wait! Hold it! Whoa, Irene!” cried the bedbugs, clinging to her pajama tops.

With her braids sweeping the floor, Irene peered under the bed. “Told you so, bedbugs,” she said. “There’s no Boogeyman under here.”

But even as she spoke, *Bump bump bumpity bump. Bump bump bumpity bump.*

Then--*Plop!*--Irene’s pillow fell upon her head. The girl sat bolt upright.

“Say, how did that happen?” she asked.

The bedbugs only stood there whistling.