

My name is Edward K. Turner, and I'm the author of this book. I know it might seem strange for me to address you, the reader, directly, but there is a last story I'd like to tell you.

It's a personal experience, a nightmare I lived for 10 whole days. Or rather, nights.

How these nightmares came to happen, I am not at liberty to tell you right now. All I can reveal is that specific details were shared with me, and as a consequence, I had to endure a living torment.

Because of a warning I received prior to the first night of the ten nightmares, I knew full well what I was supposed to do. Worse still, I knew the consequences of refusing. I was certainly not looking forward to the experiences I was about to endure.

I first realized that I was indeed burdened with this curse, when I woke up in the middle of the night, startled by a sound outside my window.

Though the lights were turned off, I could still see everything that surrounded me. The night table, the desk, and chair, the closet. That, in and of itself, was strange. It was pitch black, and yet, I could see everything, clear as day.

That was a clear sign that something was wrong. In real life, this wasn't possible. So I must have been dreaming. I dreaded looking toward the window, fearing I'd see that little girl standing just outside.

I closed my eyes tightly and tried to keep myself from freaking out. If I woke myself up from the hellish dream, I would be in big trouble. I needed to know for sure whether I was on the first night of this ten-day nightmare or not.

So, gathering all my courage, I opened my eyes and faced the window. Just as I had suspected, there she was.

The little girl, staring at me through my closed window. Waiting to be allowed inside.

I somehow managed to avoid screaming. I wanted to turn around and pretend I didn't see her, but I knew that my situation would be far direr should I ignore her.

So, slowly, dreading every step, I began approaching the window. I couldn't see her face, but then again, that didn't surprise me. I knew I wouldn't be able to see her features yet. That would come a few nights later.

I stared at the lock on my window. It made me feel safe, knowing it was there. Keeping her out, keeping me in. She couldn't enter without my permission, but we both knew that I had no real choice. She probably could smell my fear. I bet she enjoyed it, even if I would never see her smile.

Breathing in slowly, I placed my hands on the windowpane. I pressed my fingers so hard against the wood that my knuckles turned pale. I was terrified. She would be in there, in my room, my only safe space, with me.

I was going to give her permission to enter my life for another nine days. Still, it was better than the alternative.

My room was beginning to experience the inevitable feeling of being closed-in. Like the walls were closing in on me. Like I would never be able to leave if I didn't open that window.

And so I did, albeit reluctantly. I opened the window and let that demon disguised as a little girl in. Because even if no one told me she was a demon, I felt in my heart that she could be nothing else.

The second the window was open, I woke up. It was morning outside, and the world was safe again. At least for a few more hours, until the sun went down.

I do not consider myself to be a coward, but I have to admit that I struggled to go to sleep that night. I didn't want to face the second, third, fourth, or any other of those nights. I wanted to remain awake forever, but that was ridiculous. Sooner or later, I'd fall asleep and continue with my nightmares.

So I laid down on my bed and closed my eyes. I don't remember when I fell asleep exactly, but when I opened my eyes again, I knew I was dreaming.

Why? Because she was standing by my bedside, sobbing. Her hair hung over her face, dark and impossibly long, covering her features from me. She was small and frail-looking, a small child that should pose no danger to me. And yet, I was terrified of her.

She was muttering something over and over and over again. Before I could actually hear her words, I already knew what she was saying. I knew because I had been warned. I am not able to tell you how, or by whom. Not yet, anyway.

"Please, please, please," She whispered, her voice so soft, so weak. She was pleading with me, and I knew full well what she wanted.

You see, each night carried a simple rule with it. I had to follow each one for ten whole nights. One after the other, until I earned my freedom once again.

The rule for the second night was to allow the little girl to get into my bed with me. She was begging, trembling, and sobbing like she was scared. But I was the one almost petrified by terror.

I somehow managed to roll back on my bed and give her enough space to climb in.

“You can lay down,” I told her, giving her permission to do precisely what I dreaded her doing.

As she began slipping into my bed, I woke up once again. It was morning, I was safe... but not for long.

The third night arrived all too soon, and so did my inevitable slumber. When I woke up in my third nightmare, I closed my eyes so tightly it hurt. I didn't want to open my eyes, because I knew she was there.

Lying by my side, staring at me. I felt the weight of her body making the mattress sink slightly by my side. I felt her slow breathing brushing against my face. The third rule was supposedly easy enough, but I didn't know if I was strong enough to follow it.

Don't scream.

Easy, right?

Well, not really.

I opened my eyes slowly. She was there, alright, lying right in front of me. Her hair, long and messy, was no longer covering her face. I could see her fully now. Her delicate nose, her sunk, pitch-black eyes, her pursed lips. And her skin, god... her skin.

The girl was burnt, horribly so. Her once pale skin was now a bright, angry shade of red, wrinkly, and deformed. She had no eyebrows because they had been devoured by the fire. Her lips, I realized, were not pursed. She had none, not any longer. Just two thin, disgusting lines.

I couldn't scream, even if I wanted to. I wanted to cry for hours. Her face barely looked human any longer. Her stare focused so heavily on me that I felt I could not escape it, no matter how hard I tried.

The following day, my coworkers asked me what was wrong with me. I looked pale and exhausted, they told me. Maybe I was sick? I explained, casually, that I was having trouble falling asleep. It wasn't exactly a lie.

The fourth night arrived unceremoniously, and so did the little girl. She was still lying on my bed beside me. The first part of the night's rule, getting up, came easy to me. I jumped to my feet, away from her.

What a relief I felt, not having her face inches away from my own.