

## *SPOOKED: The Family Spook Event*

Add the Prespooks, a Spooked child and a tired family and a Family Spook Event can be a pretty dreadful experience. Lots of other things can start to go wrong in a Family Spook Event. Parents can start arguing, siblings can join in, and everybody can get stressed.

### *Nicholas*

Nicholas was scared of going to bed on his own. His room was next to that of his elder brother, and his parents were at the other end of the house. Nicholas and his brother got along well, but Nicholas had a bad case of the Spooks, and hated bedtime, when the fears came and didn't go away. He had a number of fears. When he heard a noise outside, he felt certain there was someone out in the garden waiting to break in and take him away. When he heard creaks in the passageway he felt certain that the someone had already broken in and was standing outside his room. He was paralysed with fear. He had a little lamp beside his bed, but he would be too scared to move, certain someone would pounce on him. In the dark, these fears were big and very real.

Nicholas's mother Jan was not well able to tolerate anxiety herself. She had been brought up by nervous parents who responded to their many fears about their children by worrying, avoiding leaving their children, and generally allowing scary feelings to run their parenting. Jan was doing a similar thing. Her husband Wayne thought there was something wrong with all this but could not work out what it was. He said that she was a worrier. He said that boys should be tough. This wasn't making much of an impression on mother and son.

What Wayne did not realise was how uncomfortable Jan felt when Nicholas was frightened. Jan had never learned to tolerate her own fears well, and now here was her son, feeling frightened at night. As Nicholas's bedtime approached, Jan started to feel uptight. She reminded Nicholas that it was bedtime. Her voice began to rise. She tried to sound firm.

*You have to go to bed and get some sleep to be a healthy boy, and that's all there is to it, she said. Nicholas reluctantly got into his pyjamas, lip trembling. Jan felt awful. Wayne couldn't stand it any longer.*

*That's right. If only you'd stick to what you say we wouldn't have this problem. You do what you're told Nicholas, and no more of this silly nonsense.*

Nicholas started to get another kind of scary feeling, sensing the stress in both parents. His Spooks were still there and getting bigger by the minute. The dreaded bedtime came. Wayne gave Nicholas a cuddle.

*Now, you be a good boy tonight.*

Mum gave him a kiss.

*Are you sure you have had a drink? Been to the toilet? Tucked in teddy? Right, then there is no need to call out, and we don't want to hear a sound. OK?*

*Yes mum.*

Jan and Wayne leave and the Spooks make their entrance instantly. Nicholas lies in bed, slowly beginning to panic. He hears the dog in the garden. Is it the dog? Why is the dog in that part of the garden? Is there somebody there? His little body begins to slip into panic. His heart pounds and his palms sweat. He hears mum and dad in the lounge room. They are watching TV. They don't sound all

that happy. Mum says something about Nicholas being really upset. Dad says something about mum being stupid. Nicholas feels worse. He tries to go to sleep. He screws up his eyes and waits. Nothing. He's still awake. What's that noise? It's someone trying to open his window. He freezes. He has to do something. He scrambles out of bed. This is awful, he just has to get rid of this fear. He screams out *MUM! MUM!* It doesn't matter that she will be angry. Anything is better than this awful fear. Nothing happens. Wayne is telling Jan that she must not go to Nicholas. Nicholas screams again, losing all control, getting hysterical. Jan comes in, upset from the argument with Wayne. She is tense and angry.

*For heaven's sake, what's the matter?*

*There's a noise. Someone is outside my window.*

By this time Nicholas is sobbing and Jan is bewildered. She looks out the window.

*Look. There is no one there. And the dog would bark if there was. Everything is OK. Just go to sleep. And I'm not coming down again. This is silly.*

Nicholas feels worse as soon as his mother walks out. He still has this Awful Feeling. He gets up to get a drink, and happens to walk through the lounge room where Jan and Wayne are trying to watch television, but feeling too tense to do so. Wayne catches sight of his son.

*Now what is it!*

*I want a drink.*

*Well you had a drink before and you should be in bed.*

Nicholas starts to cry.

*I'm thirsty. (He isn't at all thirsty, he is scared stiff)*

Jan cuts in with:

*For heavens sake he only wants a drink.*

Wayne looks cross and says nothing. Jan gets Nicholas a drink and takes him back to bed. Both parents are tired. It's almost 11pm. They want to get to bed and get some sleep. They turn off the TV. Nicholas calls out:

*Are you going to bed now?*

He was hoping he would be asleep before his parents went to bed. His brother yells at him to shut up and be quiet as now he has woken brother up. Wayne comes down.

*We're going to bed and I don't want to hear another word out of you.*

Wayne was feeling angry, but did not want to resort to smacking Nicholas. Surely if he just sounded angry enough, Nicholas would do as he was told?

Fifteen minutes later, Nicholas is crawling into mother's side of the bed. Father explodes, and smacks Nicholas. Nicholas is hysterical. Jan is in tears. Jan is angry with Wayne and can't think of anything else so she and Nicholas go and sleep in Nicholas' bed. Wayne feels that he is being blamed. Nicholas finally gets rid of the fear because mum is with him, and mother has a sleepless night and wakes up feeling ill and tired. The first thing brother does in the morning is accuse Nicholas of keeping everyone awake all night and calls him a sook. The two boys fight over breakfast and everybody leaves the house feeling exhausted.

And so it goes on in a Family Spook Event.