

'You can all come out now. They've gone. Well, at least I think they have'. Hilary said to their family as they cowered in a makeshift underground bunker. An eerie silence descended on the house before words were spoken. 'Mum, they were scary,' her daughter Carolyn said, visibly shaken. 'Does anyone know what or who they were? They looked like mutants but acted like normal burglars, because they were taking stuff.' Hilary and Carolyn got free of the ropes and knots that the 'beings' or whatever they were, tied them up with and gradually walked upstairs, afraid that one, or some of them, might still be there. It was dark, except maybe a few shards of moonlight bouncing off the floor, coming through the kitchen window. Not wanting to attract attention, they left the house in darkness for a few minutes until they were satisfied that there was no one in the house.

It was Halloween. The leaves that had fallen off the trees were crisp and crunchy underfoot. It was pleasantly warm for the time of year, but there was a distinct chill in the air when dusk came. Ever since the great storm of a few days ago the small town of Bleakbrook was living up to its name. Nothing had been the same, which may explain why those burglars looked like mutants, they may have been normal people, the storm may have changed them. They will never know, but this they did know – Bleakbrook used to be a lot friendlier than it is now.

On the night of the burglary, Carolyn was Skyping her boyfriend in her room, and Hilary and Richard were just dozing off in bed. They froze in panic when they heard strange noises from downstairs, then coming up the stairs, and called Carolyn in a very loud voice that there were burglars in the house. She did her best to make sure the mutants stayed on the other side of her bedroom door!

After the whole family had made sure the house had been exterminated from mutant burglars, they went back to bed. Because of what happened that evening, the house took on an eerie persona, but apart from the odd rustle of trees outside that made them jump a bit, nothing scarier happened that night.

The following morning they went to survey the damage, expecting the valuable contents of their home to be gone. But, nothing had changed. Everything was where it was before, nothing out of place, the computers and the television were still taking pride of place in the living room, and Hilary and Richard's cars were still in the drive.

Had this been a dream?

Questions went around in their heads. Why would mutants burgle a home without taking anything? It didn't make sense. But after the storm, nothing made sense.

They both got dressed and had some breakfast and went to work. Carolyn was on school holidays so she had a lie-in, and then she got up, Skyped her boyfriend and got ready for the day ahead. She had a part-time job at a local store and even though it didn't pay as much as she'd like, she quite liked it and she gave Hilary and Richard some rent too.

Carolyn had a cup of tea and watched some daytime television before starting her shift, which today started at two o'clock. *Strange But True* was on, the show from yesteryear that featured true stories of the supernatural kind. Carolyn didn't normally watch shows on The Sci-fi channel, but something transfixed her today. Her family were being featured. Initially, she thought she was hallucinating, but then she looked again – it was definitely them!

She turned the TV off. 'How, how...' she heard herself say, as if asking a question to someone else. She was confused. She couldn't see any kind of recording device, no big and bulky equipment, just them, when the mutants came to get them.

Like Hilary and Richard, Carolyn wondered if all of this was a dream. Maybe it was something, or someone, telling her subconscious that Bleakbrook had now changed, and not for the better. There was something strange about the whole thing.

At 3.30, after having got changed into her work clothes, Carolyn went to work at her place of work, The Shady Anvil Nano Store. Things around here had sure changed, there was hardly anyone about – what had happened?

Carolyn started her shift as normal. She looked at her watch, a little bit early at 3.55 but being early showed willing.

It was normally extremely busy when she arrived for her shift, but there were very few customers, and the ones she did see looked very strange. They looked quite shifty and scary, a bit like those mutants she caught a glimpse of the night before. But they behaved like ordinary people. It was the strangest thing.

After she had finished her shift, she took a cab home, as she was a bit scared to walk in the darkness. She gave the taxi driver some money and opened the door to the house. Carolyn was rather tense, even going into her own home. 'Mum, Dad, the strangest thing happened at the store today...' No reaction. 'Mum, Dad, talk to me.'

Mutant voices could be heard as they turned round. 'We know that darling. Now, don't be afraid...' Carolyn shakily uttered, 'But... but you were fine last night...'

Was the storm to blame?