

*'It's Christmas Time, no need to be afraid, at Christmas time we live in light and we banish shade.'*  
The original and the best version of *'Do they know it's Christmas?'*

The words stuck in Chris' head. Only the part about banishing shade though. He told himself that shade would never really be banished – he interpreted this as evil will always lurk in the shadows. Maybe it was that he liked watching horror films over the festive period and scare himself, maybe it was this recurring dream that he had, in which he was walking in the field at the bottom of the road terrified at the creaking sound of the trees blowing in the wind, and trying desperately to get away from them for fear of being chased! It is anyone's guess why he liked being scared over and over – everyone has their escape, he told himself.

The only time he got really frightened was when he was left all alone in the house one year while his Mum and sister, and his Mum's ex-boyfriend's family went on a skiing holiday. He felt there was a presence in the house, felt that he wasn't alone, that he was being watched. Apart from a couple of friends taking him out for dinner, or just popping in for a chat, he was flying solo. He didn't normally get frightened, but this time was different, it didn't help that a few days earlier he had watched the TV movie of *The Shining*.

He loved Stephen King, he was Chris' favourite horror writer. He remembers watching the original film with Jack Nicholson, especially the *'Here's Johnny'* part. But he had recently discovered the TV movie – even though it was 3 and a half hours long, it was still his favourite version. Steven Weber, who played Jack in this adaptation, which apparently King preferred, was menacing in his own way.

He enjoyed slightly scary, sometimes downright weird, TV shows too. His favourite was *Tales from the Crypt* with its memorable opening sequence of an old candlelit spooky looking mansion, the door creaking open and the camera panning down an ancient spiral staircase lit by gothic looking candles and gargoyles, finally opening the door to a room with an infestation of cobwebs and there sat the presenter of the show, a skeleton! The skeleton introduced the stories which were macabre tales of everything spooky, from apparitions, ghouls and goblins, to things that go bump in the night.

Obviously, he knew that the books Stephen King wrote, and the stories featured in *Tales from the Crypt* were fiction, and because of that, the characters wouldn't come to life and harm him in any way. Yes, crime and horrific events happened, unfortunately it was part of life, but he tried not to think about that too much!

Because it was the period between Christmas and New Year, the majority of people had taken the week off work, there were more people around than normal, which, now his family had gone away, he was quite grateful for. He quite liked being alone, but he was also a very sociable person, so getting out and about was very important for him, especially since he worked from home. He liked to go for a walk every day, with Bob, his faithful canine companion, to accompany him. They either went over to the shops, or had a walk around the less muddy parts of the village. However, as New Year approached, he found himself staying in more due to snow. The snow was falling quite heavily, which reminded him of the film *'Home Alone'*. He was hoping that he wouldn't be visited by two men trying their hardest to enter the house!

It was starting to get dark, although it was a clear and crisp night, that meant a full moon. He loved the way the moon shone down on the rooms of a dark house on nights like this, almost like

crescents of light were being created. They were beautiful, but sometimes eerie. He also liked looking out onto his back garden on moonlit nights, because the moon shone in the same places that the sun shone down on during the day.

He watched some television, played some games on the computer and then made himself something to eat. He didn't want to watch a horror film tonight as he was alone and was a bit scared by the light of the silvery moon. He decided to watch a comedy series, one of his favourites, *Cheers*, and the very good, but underrated American cop show, *Nash Bridges*.

He put the kettle on and took a cup of tea and a Pop Tart up to bed and snuggled under the covers, sitting up to watch another of the favourite detective shows, *Monk*.

Nodding off, he turned the light out and went to sleep. About an hour into his slumber, he was woken up by a sound. He went downstairs and found one of his two Jack Russell's very noisily ruffling his bed up, as if he was hiding from someone or something. He put him back to bed, told him to go to sleep, and gave both of them a biscuit. He didn't hear a peep from them until the following morning.

It was New Year's Eve; he went through his normal routine – breakfast, a dog walk, watching television, playing computer games, reading, and doing puzzles, oh, and looking at the paper.

He thought New Year was a bit of a letdown after Christmas; he invited some friends round, they spent the evening chatting, playing games, eating and drinking, and generally making merry. They all did the conga around the cul-de-sac to see the New Year in, then came back and did some more eating and drinking, until they all passed out, either through drinking too much, eating too much, or just through sheer tiredness.

A New Year! No work, no study, just a lazy day. He loved his time alone, shame it can't happen all over again...