

## Chapter Five – What Lurks in the Darkness

I swung the beam of light up and down and it revealed, bit by bit, the shape of what stood before me. At first I saw a shiny gleam from the smooth white surface. Then there was a reflection from a bright brass handle, and foaming water splashing out the sides.

“It...it can't be...” I whispered.

But as impossible as it might seem, there in the middle of my room was a giant *toilet*, stretching from the floor almost to the ceiling, with big bulging eyes on top and rows of sharp, shark-like teeth sticking out from between the seat and the bowl.

“B...Bigelow?” I called out weakly.

“I'm here, Will,” he answered.

“Bigelow?” I repeated. “I...I have to pee!”

“Not now!” he shouted. “Fight it!”

“I am fighting it!” I protested. “But I really have to go! I drank a whole chocolate-tofu milkshake for dessert! And that stuff just runs right through me!”

“I meant the monster,” Bigelow growled. “Fight it! Use the light!”

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

“You want me to fight a ten foot tall man-eating toilet...with a flashlight?”

“With your bravery!” he urged. “You can do it, Will! I know you have it in you!”

Personally, I was thinking less about having it in me, and more about that toilet having me in it. And believe me, that was not a pretty picture.

“No way!” I shouted, and I backed away from the monster. As I did, it grew even bigger, until it seemed that the walls would split open.

This would have been a very good time for my dad to remember to come in and scold me for that whole ‘messing up the flag’ incident, don't you think? Well, that didn't happen, though how the noise and the rumbling and the shaking floors could go unnoticed by someone who caught me bowling in my room because the falling pins woke him up I'll never know. The point is, no one came, so it was just me, Bigelow, and the monster toilet.

“Don't worry! I know just what to do!” Bigelow shouted, and ran past me and stood right in front of the monster. The monster leaned back and roared, then its jaws came flying forward and with one great snap, Bigelow was gone.

“Oh m-m-my...” I stuttered. “It...It ate him!”

A big grin spread across the toilet as it licked its lips, and then it turned back to me, eyeing me hungrily. I stumbled back as those dripping teeth came at me. The monster growled, and then lunged forward again, snapping at my legs. I dove back, but the monster drew closer, until I was backed up against the wall. With no retreat left, I gazed into the sneering eyes of the monster as its gleaming teeth rose above my head...

Just then, Bigelow sprang out from behind the monster! He hadn't been eaten, but had run past the crashing jaws to my bed, and now he was running back to me, carrying something in his hands.

“Here!” he shouted. “You need this!”

As he shoved it into my arms, I looked down to see what he had brought.

It was my Teddy Bear.

“What's this for?” I shouted, utterly bewildered. “Is he going to grow into a real bear and fight this thing?”

“Hold him!” Bigelow instructed. “Hug him!”

“Hug him? That’s your great idea? You’re telling me to fight for my life with a flashlight and a hug?”

But when you're desperate, you'll try anything, so I gave Teddy a squeeze. He felt so warm! I don't know how, but it soothed me a bit, in spite of the dreadful monster in front of me.

“That's it!” Bigelow shouted. “Now, use the light!”

As I clung tightly to Teddy, I turned back to face the monster. It glared at me with those hungry eyes and then reared back and roared ferociously. Somehow, though its roar struck me like a brick, the monster seemed a bit smaller than a moment ago. I pointed my flashlight right at it. The monster squinted, and squirmed, and then finally screamed as though it had been caught in flame rather than light. And then, amazingly, it began to shrink.

“That's it!” Bigelow shouted. “Don't stop now! You're doing it!”

I held the light steady, and as its fizzy beam rained down on the toilet, the monster kept getting smaller and smaller. When it was down to five feet tall, it began to cower, and then it retreated back toward the bed.

“Don't let it go back under!” Bigelow instructed. “Keep the light between the bed and the monster!”

I did as he told me, and backed the monster up into the corner of the room.

“Well done!” Bigelow exclaimed. “There's no escape now!”

The toilet kept getting smaller until it was only a few inches high. Then the shrinking stopped. It looked like a freaky happy meal toy.

“What happened?” I asked. “Why did it stop shrinking?”

“That's about as small as that one gets,” Bigelow said.

“What? But then how do I get rid of it?”

“You don't,” Bigelow explained. “It will be with you as long as it wants to be.”

“What? You mean this monster could be with me forever?”

Right then I heard a noise: a gurgling, sloshing sound. I looked back at the monster.

“Oh... Oh NO!”

It was growing. In the few seconds it took for me to inhale a shaky breath, it was back to the size of a real, full-size toilet. And what was worse, I still had to pee.

“What good are you?” I shouted at Bigelow. “Look at that! What's to stop it from growing big again and eating me alive while I'm sleeping?”

“Use the RevealeR,” Bigelow said calmly. “What do you see?”

I shivered, but squeezed Teddy even tighter, and then shined the light on the toilet.

“I see a monster,” I said.

“Look again,” he said. “Look harder.”

In spite of my shivering, I gripped the flashlight tightly and moved in closer.

“I see...” I said, “I see...”

In the glow of my Revealer’s light, the eyes and teeth of the monster seemed to melt away.

“...I see a bowl made of clay, with a plastic seat on top and water running through it.”

“That doesn't sound very frightening,” Bigelow said. “Go on. Look deeper.”

Now, normally I prefer not to make a habit of looking at what’s inside a toilet bowl, but this was sort of a special case, so I leaned in for a closer look.

“I see...” I tilted my head and squinted. “...I see an image inside. It looks like a little boy sitting on a toilet, crying for his mommy.”

“Excellent!” Bigelow said. “What else?”

But right then, I stopped and straightened up.

“I don't need to look any more,” I said, stepping back and turning to Bigelow. “I see it now. I finally see everything clearly.”

I turned off the flashlight, but even without its beam washing over the monster, the gurgling sound was gone.

“It was me,” I realized. “When I was three, I had to go to the bathroom in a department store, but the toilet was broken. It kept flushing while I was sitting on it. It was so loud! And I was afraid. Afraid that...”

“...That you would be sucked down the drain.” Bigelow said.

“Yes.”

“Turn the Revealer back on,” Bigelow instructed. “What does the light show you now?”

I turned on the light. Even in the dark, the monster had shrunk back to toy size. I studied it closely.

“What do you see?” Bigelow asked. “Anything that can hurt you?”

“No. I just see clay. Clay, and plastic, and water.”

As I spoke, the monster grew smaller still. When it stopped shrinking this time, it was no bigger than a thimble. I picked it up. It snapped at me and tried to bite my finger, but its teeth were soft, and I didn't even feel it. It was like a dog trying to bite the wheel off a tank. I lifted my hand, with the monster still clinging to my finger with its gummy mouth, and swayed it back and forth.

“What do I do with it?” I asked.

“Put it on the shelf,” Bigelow told me. “Just look at it once in a while, and it will never grow big again.”

I walked over to my bookshelf, slid over a stack of mini-mysteries to make room, and squeezed the monster between the stack and a great big hardcover copy of the Baseball Records Book. The toilet's eyes scanned the huge towers of books surrounding it, and cringed.

“So, that's it?” I asked, wiping my hands together happily. Bigelow gave me a grim look.

“No, I'm afraid not,” he said. I glared at him sourly.

“What? Why not? Did we take care of this monster or not?”

Bigelow scratched his head, doing that Jeannine-like scratch that he did.

“I think,” he whispered, “there are more of them.”

