

fantastic

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WISH IT AWAY

BY FRANK FREEMAN

Dr. Lenko was a psychiatrist and proud of it, but he did not think that made him an ascan for anybody's old phobia.

I'M AFRAID I must ask you again," said Dr. Lenko, "to state as clearly as you can the nature of this disturbance. I do not fully grasp your problem. . . ."

Mervin Hinkley opened his lips to speak, but before any words came, he jerked his head around and with panic-streaked eyes searched the corner of the psychiatrist's comfortably furnished office. "Well," replied Mervin haltingly, "it's hard to describe. But I've got to get away from it, Dr. Lenko . . . I've got to get away from it."

Doctor Lenko leaned back in his brown leather chair and impatiently shuffled through a drift of papers. His search stopped when he picked out a small, folded letter. Turning again to Mervin, he spoke. "You tell me in this letter that you are plagued by an apparition of some sort. I should like to know more about it."

Mervin pushed his thin fingers through a scanty thatch of faded brown hair. "It's not an apparition! It's real! I see it every night at ten o'clock!" He leaned forward in his chair, his frantic gray eyes pleading with the doctor to accept this persuasion.

Dr. Lenko smiled. "Then what is it, Mr. Hinkley?"

Mervin came to his feet and shouted, "It's round, with scales on its face and it's got two big red eyes." He looked quickly about the room as though the description of his alleged nightly visitor might have called the thing into his presence. Then he sat down uneasily, staring at Dr. Lenko and vigorously rubbing his hands together.

"The solution to your case," said Dr. Lenko calmly, "is, I'm quite sure, relatively simple."

"What is the solution?"

"Wish it away, Mr. Hinkley."



Wish it away." Dr. Lenko lifted himself from his leather resting place and strode around the desk to stand before Mervin.

"Do you think it's that easy?" Mervin asked.

"It may not be easy, but it's a psychologically sound method of eliminating such annoying mental visitations. You must convince yourself that you do not believe in this thing, this round, scaly-faced creature with the red eyes. Tell it, mentally, to leave. Tell it to move on. Persuade yourself that you shall have nothing to do with it. In time it won't exist. It all depends upon the conscious power which you are able to apply to your will." Dr. Lenko sat down.

"Wish it away. Maybe it would work. Besides, how can you tell until you try it? Tonight. No harm in that. Give it a try."

Mervin's face flexed and curved as his mind turned over the doctor's suggestion, then he moved from the chair and walked to the door. Looking over his shoulder, he said, "I don't know what will happen, Dr. Lenko, but I'll do as you said. I'll . . . I'll wish it away from me."

"Good."

The door closed.

For Dr. Lenko, the evening was one of those long stacks of echoing hours that lead to an early bedtime as the easiest way

out of the monotony of being awake. As he lay in bed, hazily meditating upon the virtues and drawbacks of peering into people's minds, the telephone on his bedstand jangled.

Greeted by a disinterested hello, the voice on the other end announced, excitedly, "Dr. Lenko, this is Mervin Hinkley. I had to call you. That thing. . . ."

Dr. Lenko looked at his watch and noted it was fifteen minutes past Hinkley's witching hour. "What about it?" He readied himself to deliver a psychiatric treatment by remote control.

"It worked," Mervin cackled. "I wished it away, Doctor. It's a quarter past ten and I haven't seen a sign of it. Isn't that wonderful?"

"Wonderful," yawned Dr. Lenko. "Call on me if you ever need me again, Mr. Hinkley." He ended a potentially long conversation by easing the phone onto its cradle. Then, as if to escape from the Mervin Hinkleys and their collective problems, he burrowed into the woolen covers and wooed sleep.

But sleep did not come. Instead, a stirring at the foot of the bed. Dr. Lenko opened his eyes. The thing was round, with scales on its face, and big red eyes.

Dr. Lenko said, "Whu-whu —"

The thing seemed apologetic. It said, "Mervin sent me. I hope it's all right."