Michelle took a deep breath, gripped her turnip lantern tightly with her left hand, and raised her right, ready to knock. Hearing a noise behind her, she turned towards the gate where Nikki and Claire were giggling nervously. She wished she hadn't accepted their dare, but it was too late to back out now.

Turning back to the shabby and peeling door, she lifted the knocker and let it clatter against the wood, making a noise that reverberated through the night.

She waited.

At first, nothing.

Then, a light in the hallway.

There was a scuffling behind her, and Michelle turned once again to see Nikki and Claire racing down the street, their bin bag costumes rustling as they ran.

The porch light came on, and Michelle heard the sound of the door being unlocked from the inside. It was too much: she turned and ran, but her own bin bag costume betrayed her, and she fell on the path, her pointy hat flying off her head, and her lantern rolling over, candle extinguished, and coming to rest on its side in front of her face, still grinning.

"Oh dear", Michelle heard. "What do we have here? Poor thing". Petrified with terror, she squeezed her eyes shut before realising that the voice sounded kind, even friendly. She opened her eyes slowly and turned to look up at a little old lady, white-haired and wrinkle-faced, wearing a shapeless purple cardigan and looking quizzically down as Michelle gazed up at her.

The lady held out her hand and Michelle, not knowing what else to do, took it and scrambled up, careful not to pull the old lady over as she did so. She picked up her hat and lantern, not wanting to look at the person whose evening she'd disturbed.

"I'm so sorry for bothering you", she mumbled. "I'll go home now."

"Don't worry, my pet," said the lady in a warm voice. "You haven't disturbed me at all."

Reassured, Michelle looked up at her - but that was a mistake.

The old lady's kindly smile continued to expand, growing wider and wider and even more full of sharp teeth that seemed to increase in size as she looked on in horror. "She has the same smile as my turnip lantern," thought Michelle in the split second before the creature lunged forward and everything went black.