

## And Things That Go Bump In the Night

by Anna Love

Camping with my dad in his tipi is something I look forward to every summer. The memories we have created from my earliest recollections to present day are some of the best I have. Camping is something we each thoroughly enjoy, though two things that prove difficult for me are 1) I hate bugs, especially spiders, and 2) I am slightly afraid of the dark. Well, not the dark itself, just the scary things I imagine hiding in the dark waiting to pounce on me.

On one unforgettable night, I'm pretty sure I had Mother Nature rolling with laughter. I bet when she saw me hop out of the jeep and douse myself in a can of bug spray, she thought, "Ah ha, now here is someone I can mess with!" My Dad, who seems to be one with nature is never bothered by all the little insects and critters (or the big ones either, as far as that goes). Me, I don't really mind them...as long as they stay far away from me. But all the bug spray in the world doesn't do much good when you're trying to sleep and the world is alive with creepy crawling things.

Camping in a tipi is far different from camping in a tent. First of all there is no floor but the natural floor of the forest; pinecones, dirt, twigs and anything else that happens to be there. In the middle of the floor is a small fire pit with a bed on each side, Dad's covered in furs. Second of all, there are no completely enclosed walls or zippers or anything separating you from nature. There is only an outer wall and an inner wall with a couple of inches between them that wrap around the tipi poles: a cozy little home in the middle of the woods.

As I settled in for the night I looked around the tipi. By the soft light of the oil lantern I could see written on the walls the dates of all my dad's camping adventures that he has had in the tipi, including all the ones that I have been on: a reminder of the many good memories that we have shared. Also written on the canvas near the door is an ancient prayer. A strange prayer, but apt for camping, it reads,

"From ghoulies and ghosties  
And long-leggety beasties  
And things that go bump in the night,  
Good Lord, deliver us."

I lay in bed, listening to my dad tell my favorite story of his pet fish, Johnny Walker. Part way through the story, his voice changed and I looked up to see what was going on and saw him looking at a spot a few feet above my head. I asked him what was wrong and he said, "Nothing" and continued his story. Nervous now, I slowly looked up, and to my horror saw a

large spider dangling above my head. Yelping, I rolled around in my sleeping bag, trying to escape the slowly descending spider.

You always hear, “Spiders are more afraid of you than you are of them.” Not this spider! I was definitely more scared of her and she was on a mission to exploit that fear. With her eight hairy legs she dropped onto my air mattress and scurried around a bit before coming to a stop at the head of the bed with her beady little red eyes staring me down. Holding my shoe like a hammer I tried to squish her, but she was too fast for me. She scuttled off into the twigs and grass next to my bed and I lost site of her. As I continued to study the spot where she disappeared Dad finished telling his tale. Giving me a grin and a wink, he pulled the fur of some large critter over his head and promptly went to sleep. I couldn’t see the spider any more but I imagined those beady red eyes watching from the shadows. Turning out the oil lamp, I lay back down uneasily waiting for sleep or the spider to claim me.

Sleep must have found me first for it was some time later that my eyes popped open. “Whazzat!?” Out in the surrounding forest I heard cracking sounds. Something was moving through the trees. It seemed to be getting louder. Now I could hear footsteps, definitely getting closer. Dad was snoring softly under his furs, oblivious to long leggety beasties going bump in the night.

I didn’t move or make a sound as the noises came nearer. The footsteps entered camp, now accompanied by sniffs and snorts. I imagined whatever was walking through camp was surprised to find us there and wasn’t at all happy about it. Trying to remain calm and not panic, I huddled in my sleeping bag pretending to be asleep. What difference I thought that would make to whatever was out there I’m not sure. It was at this moment that red-eyed spider made her move. As I lay there motionless something I thought was a piece of hair, fell on my face. Stealthily reaching up to brush it aside, I found something big and hairy resting there. Breaking out in a cold sweat I flicked my hand, sending the spider flying. I sat bolt upright and grabbed my flashlight, determined to find that awful spider. With the light on, I saw the beady red eyes of the spider under the prayer about “things that go bump in the night.” Outside in the blackness was an ominous silence. The footsteps had stopped just outside. Trapped between the malevolent spider inside the tipi and the unknown beast lurking outside, I whispered, “Good Lord, deliver us!”