

JON LANTERN'S NIGHTMARE

PROLOGUE - THE FIRE

It was a nasty fire. If someone had been watching they wouldn't have noticed anything. At first. But nobody *was* watching. Nobody was there to give the alarm. The fire took hold in the middle of a cold October night. It spread rapidly through the timbers of the old cottage. By the time the flames were obvious the ground floor was ablaze. The blaze lost no time on the staircase, filling the first floor with smoke, threatening the occupants of the two tiny bedrooms. In the first bedroom slept the owners of the cottage, Mr and Mrs Lantern. The other bedroom belonged to their son, Jon. One of the Lanterns had to wake up soon and raise the alarm or they would all be trapped and quickly perish. As it happened, Jon Lantern was to wake first.

Or did Jon just *dream* that he awoke?

Fact: Jon would be for ever changed by *something* that went on that night. Query: then what happened to Jon's parents? If indeed *anything* happened to them?

Fact: Jon's parents *didn't* wake up.

So what did the Lantern parents miss that chilly autumn night? Was it a troubled son, twisting and turning in his sleep in the next door bedroom? Or was it their chance to escape from a choking, charring death in a domestic inferno?

Fact: it was the night of Hallowe'en. Tradition had it that spirits were about at Hallowe'en. Souls were said to be at large.

Fact: the sleep of ordinary people, from infants to old folk, is filled with dreams. Dreams can be affected by outside events. Dreams are linked to the real world.

Since that link is a definite fact, where does the borderline lie? What separates true facts, *real* reality, from fantasy, *imagined* reality? Is the *real* reality of terror, experienced in the quivering flesh, any worse than the *imagined* reality of terror, emerging from the twisted depths of the human mind?

Terror that may be *dreamed*...

Reality... Consciousness... Imagination...

Fantasy... Dream...

NIGHTMARE!