

## **The Voices: Joy Nason**

They're here. Again. I don't need to hear their silent footfall in the hallway, I can sense in every fibre of my being that they are walking stealthily, searching, looking for me, waiting to pounce. How many are there this time I wonder. One? Two? I could outwit two – at the most. It's too late to hide now, they're getting nearer – I know it. Too late to crawl under the bed to conceal myself from these intruders. I lie motionless, hardly daring to breathe, surely the loud thumping of my heart threatening to burst my ear drums can be heard by my assailants. This time, if they find me, I'll beg them to let me go – I'll do anything they ask. I'm so still, maybe they'll give up, go away, leave me alone.

But no, they're getting closer – right next to my bed now – always those same faceless, nameless beings, who represent to me images from my past. They'll grab me, they'll take me, and I will be powerless to escape their clutches. Then my screaming begins. I scream and scream again, but my voice seems caught in my throat. Is it a silent scream? I don't know, but I must keep crying out for someone to help me, or I will surely die.

The whispers begin. Disembodied voices whisper in my ear: 'Repent, repent, repent of your sins'. I reach into the far recesses of my brain to recall the sins of my past, to confess and repent, lest I be cast into the fiery flames of hell for all eternity. But all is blank.

Then a human voice comes to me through the darkness – it's OK, it's OK, it's OK – over and over, until it reaches my consciousness. Oh my God, not again. It's my long-suffering husband shaking me out of my nightmare. I lunge for the bedside lamp; he begs me not to turn it on – tries to convince me there is no one in the room. I react cautiously, I don't really believe him, there must be someone there, trying to get me, it was so real.

Finally, I say – 'Was it the Voices?' 'Yes', he replies. Then I know it was my recurring nightmare. I close my eyes, praying for sleep to overtake me once more and take away the Voices of doom forever.