

I AM NOT SCARED.  
OR AM I?



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Vaelan lay in his bed trying to fall asleep, but he was thirsty and wide awake. He badly needed a drink but was too scared to venture into the kitchen by himself at night, as he was scared of the dark.

Worse yet, he was scared of ghosts too. Though he had never seen any, his imagination, drawing upon all the movies he had seen and stories he had read, had created vivid images of them. They taunted and traumatized him, caused him to have the chills, and just spooked him in general.

His friends only served to fuel his fright. One of them told him, "Vaelan, there is a community well near your house where many specters sleep. I have seen a few."

Vaelan thought to himself, "Would ghosts have large, piercing teeth and pointed claws? Lions have those, but they aren't ghosts." Vaelan wasn't scared of lions, as long as they were inside cages.

"Would ghosts have flaming eyes that spit fire? Or would they have no eyes at all? Which is creepier?"

Vaelan wondered to himself but failed to come up with an answer.

The more he tried not to think about them, the more he thought about them.

Determined to be brave, he pulled himself out of bed and walked to the door of his room as stealthily as he could. His footsteps caused the wooden floor to creak. He hated that noise, for he feared it would wake the ghosts and make them angry, that is, if they actually were around.

He climbed down the stairs in the dark as the lights in the house were all out, but he dared not switch them on. What if an imaginary ghost were to catch hold of his hand?





Right when he was about to cross the large window in the living room, he heard voices - husky and empty. It sounded as if they came from beings from another world. They wafted into the desolate space and surrounded him. His knew his parents were asleep, so he wondered who was talking. Was his mind playing tricks on him? Vaelan's legs trembled. He could hear his heart wildly thumping.

Ba-bump! Ba-bump! Ba-bump!

He shuddered at the prospect of running into spirits, so he had half a mind to rush back upstairs. All he really wanted to do was get a drink of water and go back to sleep.

Mustering more courage, he muttered to himself, "It is ok. These are apparitions. They are not real. At least that's what mom says."

Vaelan slowly turned his head towards the window which was open. The curtain was gently moving in the summer night wind, and Vaelan's eyes widened when he saw the black images of two specters on the curtain. They seemed angry. A chill ran down Vaelan's spine. Were these the ghosts his friends had been talking about?

Petrified, Vaelan stared at the curtain for what seemed an eternity. When he finally came to his senses, he heard, "We'll come back for you tomorrow night."

Then, the two images vanished.

In a couple of minutes, Vaelan heard a loud thud.  
Had the ghosts jumped back into the well?

Vaelan almost swooned in fright. He forgot his thirst altogether and bolted up the stairs, two steps at a time, out running the ghosts behind him.

With beads of sweat trickling down his neck, Vaelan thought of what had happened.

“Don’t they say that ghosts choose the meekest? Didn’t the ghost say it would get him the following night?”

Tired of thinking, Vaelan drifted off to sleep.





In the morning, the sound of sirens woke Vaelan.

He looked out the window and saw police cars. Cops swarmed the neighborhood like ants and were going in and out of all the houses on the street.

Still in his pajamas, Vaelan went downstairs to find his parents. They were talking to a cop. When they were done, Vaelan asked his parents what the buzz was all about.

His dad said, "Many homes on this street were burglarized last night, and the robbers stole jewels and money. They even stole jewels from our own house. The police think two people were involved, and they are looking for them and our stolen valuables," his mother added.



Vaelan listened, stunned. Now it all made sense. The two images he had seen last night weren't ghosts. They were shadows of the thieves. They had dropped their plunder in the community well, and that was what had created the thud. "Silly me," he thought and smiled to himself.

He began telling his parents and the cops what he had heard the night before.

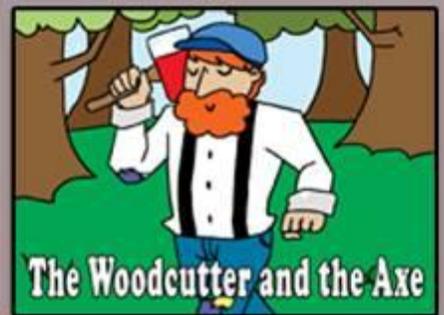
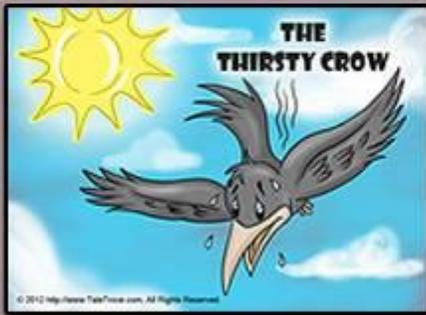
"I can help you catch them, and I can show you where the spoils are," he said as he explained his plan.

That night, the police set a trap for the thieves.

True to their decision the night before, the thieves returned to recover their loot and were caught red-handed. A big sack was recovered from the well, and Vaelan became the local hero for his courage and intelligence.

"Ghosts and darkness are nothing to be afraid of," Vaelan assured himself. "Thieves may be scary, but not ghosts," he chuckled.

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