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Kes tahab saada kummituseks?

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“Who Wants to Be a Ghost?”

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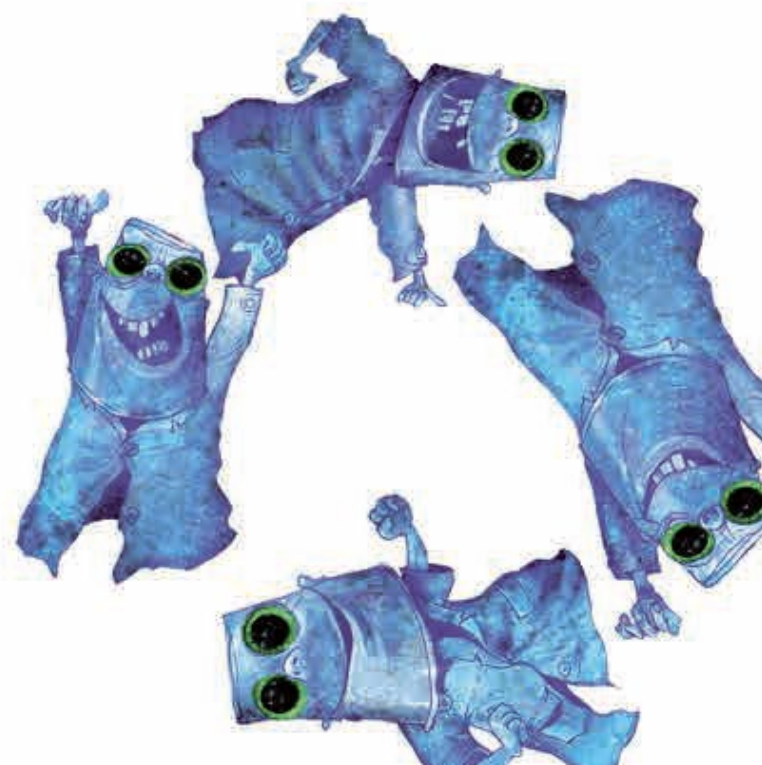
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Storybook, fiction

Age: 8+

Eight-year-old Peeter and his parents live in an old building. Their apartment is nice, except for the fact that the hot water always runs out. So, Peeter's dad decides to cheer up his family by installing a new shower cubicle. He has to drill a hole in the bathroom wall in order to run new pipes up from the basement. Since the cubicle covers up the hole, Peeter's dad decides not to patch it up for the time being. Everyone is delighted by the warm water, until strange things start happening at home.



Reading sample

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A couple days later, Dad read in the newspaper that the children's hospital was holding a charity drive.

"There are many children in the hospital who are very sick and might never make it home again," Dad read aloud to Mom and Peter. "One day, doctors asked the children what would help to make life at the hospital better. The children had many different wishes. One wanted a book, one asked for a smartphone, and one wished for a talking doll. Yet one boy's greatest wish is to meet a real ghost. The hospital was able to grant the wishes of all the children except for the boy who wanted to meet a ghost, for obvious reasons."

"Well, how about that!" he exclaimed.

"I think that's very unfair," said Mom. "Everyone except that one little boy got their wishes granted. And what do they mean by 'for obvious reasons'? What are those obvious reasons?"

"I suspect I know. They don't believe that ghosts really exist," said Dad.

"Oh, those silly doctors," Mom sighed. "Have them come to visit and we'll show them who exists and who doesn't!"

"What if we went to the hospital instead?" Peter suggested. "We'll wait until it gets dark and then go to that boy's hospital room. We'll show him we do exist, and that way his greatest wish will be fulfilled!"

"That's a great idea," Dad said. "I'm going to watch the news first and then, we'll get going."

When ten o'clock rolled around, Mom, Dad, and Peter were all under the shower cubicle. Little Ghost was snoring on the couch like an old locomotive.

"Wake up, we're going to haunt the hospital," Dad said, nudging him.

Little Ghost groggily opened his eyes.

"Is somebody there too healthy and we have to scare



them sick again?" he asked hopefully. "I can haunt all kinds of illnesses into people. Would you like me to show you? I can haunt lice onto your heads or give you the trots right here."

"Little Ghost, please stop making silly jokes—this is very serious," Mom scolded. "There's a little boy there who is very sick, and his greatest wish is to see ghosts."

"In that case, we're just the right ghosts for him to see!" Little Ghost said confidently.

Once all the lights in the children's hospital had been switched off, the four ghosts drifted through the door with a soft hiss. All the children were already asleep, as they were very sick indeed.

"I wonder which one of them wanted to see ghosts?" asked Dad.

"Let's find out," Mom said. She went to the first bed, gently touched the boy's shoulder, and asked: "Do you want to see ghosts?"

"No," he murmured through his sleep. "I just want to get better."

In the next bed was a little girl with her arms wrapped around a big doll.

"That's the talking doll," said Peter. "She's not the right one, either."

Dad went to the third bed. The boy sleeping there had many tubes coming out of his nose and mouth, and on the wall next to the bed was a big computer that was helping to keep him alive. He was the sickest child in the ward.

"Would you like to meet some ghosts?" Peter asked him in a whisper.

The boy's eyes slowly fluttered open.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"We are those ghosts!" Peter replied. "Would you like us to haunt here a bit?"

A very faint smile appeared on the boy's exhausted face.

"Sure I would," he said softly. "Nobody else believed you exist, but I do."

Peter, Dad, and Little Ghost started haunting the bed while Mom stood by a table nearby, reading what the doctors had written about the children's conditions. She could understand the things they wrote because before she had become a ghost, she worked as a school nurse.

"These children really are dreadfully ill," Mom sighed. "Unfortunately, our country doesn't have the medicine that could make them well again."

"Does it exist somewhere else?" Peter asked.

The sick boy had drifted back to sleep, delighted that his dream had come true. He seemed to be having difficulty breathing and Mom knew he hadn't much longer to live.

"I could check and see if I had a laptop," she said.

"Well, why didn't you say so!" Dad said and disappeared. A second later, there was a brand-new laptop on the table. Mom opened it and started typing.

"The medicine is in a lab in Australia," she finally announced. "They're looking for patients to test a brand-new treatment."

"But Australia is so far away!" Peter groaned.

"Show me where to find Australia and where that lab is, too," Little Ghost requested. After staring at the screen for a while, he vanished. About ten minutes later, he reappeared carrying a small package.

"We can go now," he said. "It's up to the doctors from here on out."

Chapter Seventeen, In Which Haunting Doesn't Go so Well

When the sick children's doctor came in to work the next morning, she found the small package on her desk and inspected it carefully. Written on its side was something in Latin, with her name and the hospital's address penned neatly below.

"What on earth could this be?" she wondered, calling the other doctors into her office. They had no clue, either. When they opened the box, they saw it contained medicine and instructions for how to use it.

"I'll search to see what this is, just in case," the doctor decided. What she found was the same Australian lab that Little Ghost had visited the previous night.

"It's a brand-new treatment," the doctor finally announced. "And it's the exact one that our sick children need! Still, I have no idea how it ended up here."

The doctor took a deep breath and called Australia.

"I'd like to thank you for this new medicine," she said after the man answering on the opposite side of the world had introduced himself. "But could you tell me how it ended up on my desk?"

After a long pause, the Australian answered: "You came to pick it up yourself from our lab yesterday morning."

"Oh," the doctor said, perplexed. "Right. Of course, sure, if you say so. I suppose I must have. My apologies."

The doctor hung up, took two more deep breaths, and then started giving orders.

"All the children in this ward, the sickest ones we have, must start receiving this medicine at once. They're to take it every morning and evening for three days straight."

The other doctors did as she said and one week later, all the kids were able to get out of their beds—even the boy who everyone thought would never get up again! Two weeks after that, they were all released from the hospital, because each was as fit as a fiddle.

“Well, that haunting sure went well,” Dad said a few weeks later after reading in the newspaper that a new treatment had been tested for the first time ever in their country and had cured all the gravely ill children.

“That reminds me—we haven’t gone out haunting in a very long time,” Mom remarked. “I’m really itching to haunt again, even just a little.”

“I believe that’s entirely possible, but first: where and whom could we haunt?” Dad asked.

“Let’s go to the zoo!” Peter proposed. “People sure don’t believe in ghosts, but maybe animals do.”

“Yes, that’s quite a clever idea,” Dad agreed.

As usual, Mom, Dad, and Peter went into the bathroom one by one and disappeared under the shower cubicle. Waiting for them there was their good friend Little Ghost.

“What are you up to today?” he asked.

“Today, we’re going to the zoo,” Mom replied. “It’ll be fascinating to find out what the animals think of ghosts.”

“Great idea!” Little Ghost chirped.

So, they set off with ghostly smiles on their faces. The four ghosts were rather easy to spot, since it was already dark outside. People still out and about at that late hour just saw four average-sized dogs trotting towards the zoo—the ghosts had turned themselves into canines, just to be safe! That way, they wouldn’t attract too much attention. Just to be as dog-like as he could, Peter stopped next to a big rock or a lamp post every few meters and gave it a squirt.

The ghosts decided to haunt the elephants first. Even though the zoo had been closed for several hours, there was still a crowd of people moving about. Matt the zoo director had arranged a tour to show visitors

what animals do at night after people have gone to sleep. The group included adults and kids alike.

Director Matt and his zoo-goers came to the elephant pen at the very same moment that the ghosts slipped in to haunt the giant trunk-swinging animals.

“Now, look closely,” Matt said. “Those big gray creatures are the largest animals in our zoo—the elephants.”

The gray elephants were rather hard to make out in the darkness—especially since the real elephants had already gone inside for the night, and the ones the director was asking visitors to look at closely weren’t real elephants at all! They were the ghosts in elephant form! Well, to be fair, they were ghosts who had almost taken elephant shapes. Specifically, Peter had wanted to find out what elephants might think of being approached by something that looked like an elephant but had six legs.

Peter waved his trunk majestically and took a slow, stately step towards the people behind the fence.

“Elephants are very powerful creatures,” continued the director. “They are several meters tall and can way up to a few tons.”

Everyone was fascinated by the huge animals. Then, one little boy who was in the first grade and already knew how to count asked a very silly question.

“Does having six legs make elephants so heavy?”

“Six legs?” laughed the zoo director. “There are no six-legged elephants! Elephants have four legs, just like other animals.”

“Well, this one sure has six,” the boy’s grandfather said, coming to his defense. “I counted them myself.”

The zoo director laughed even louder but decided to count the elephant’s legs too, just in case. There really were six.

“That’s impossible,” he murmured, scratching the back of his head. Yet the situation soon turned even wilder, because next to the six-legged elephant appeared a second which did have four legs, but also three trunks. Then came another which looked

just like an ordinary elephant but had ears as big as airplane wings and could fly. And then came a fourth elephant which was ordinary in every respect, except for the fact that it wasn't much bigger than a cat. The last walked up to the others, looked cheerily out at the crowd, and said: "Meow!"

The zoo director was the first to faint, after which a few women and an old man followed. The children were thrilled, however, as they used their phones to take pictures of the unusual elephants and send them to all their friends online.



Chapter Eighteen, In Which a Botched Haunting Is Made Right

Thus, the ghosts had been unable to find out what real elephants thought of them because while they were busy haunting the zoo director and the late-night tour group, the elephants themselves were fast asleep in their building.

As the zoo director had fallen when he fainted, the visitors immediately called for an ambulance that rushed him to the hospital. There, he was revived with two shots and then sent home to rest.

When the director returned to work the next morning, he couldn't believe his eyes: the zoo was already packed, and thousands of people were crowding around the elephant pen.

"We want to see the six-legged elephant!" some of them cried.

"Where's the elephant with three trunks?" others asked.

"I want to ride the flying elephant!" one voice demanded.

Director Matt stood before the crowd and explained: "Six-legged elephants don't exist, and neither are there any with three trunks. And there definitely aren't flying elephants, because they would be far too heavy to stay aloft. On top of that, elephants don't have wings. You might as well just go back home!"

One older gentleman pulled that morning's newspaper out of his pocket and showed the director a big front-page picture. In the foreground was Director Matt himself, and right across from him on the other side of the fence was a giant gray creature that looked like an elephant but was standing on six legs.

"I don't know what you're talking about," the director mumbled. "I'm exhausted from all of this; I'm going home to rest a little. No, scratch that—I'm retiring."

The ghosts wracked their brains trying to figure out how to make up for their blunder, because they

realized that last night's zoo haunt hadn't exactly been a success.

"Let's go to where the director lives and scare him silly," Little Ghost proposed. "I could turn into a flying elephant again, twirl around his head, and scream as loud as I can. That'd be a blast!"

"Not under any circumstances," Dad said sternly. "We've made his life hard enough as it is, so now we need to fix our mistake."

"If a fire was to break out at his house, then we could help him put out the flames," said Little Ghost. "I could make it catch just a teensy bit on fire, and then we'd all rush to put it out. That way, we could make up for haunting the zoo."

"Where do you get such foolish ideas?" Mom gasped. "You're almost a grown-up ghost and you still want to get into all kinds of trouble. We have to come up with something else. Something sensible. Something that would be useful to him."

"Let's go scope it out!" Dad suggested. "We'll creep into his house and see if there's anything we can do to make him feel better."

Once again, the ghosts had to sit and wait until it was dark, because they couldn't haunt in broad daylight.

As soon as night arrived, the ghosts set off. Dad had meanwhile found out that the director lived in a little house on the edge of town.

"How should we haunt him?" Little Ghost asked. "If I'm not allowed to shout in his ear, then you three will have to think up something better."

"We're not sure yet," Dad replied. "But we'll certainly find a way to help. Like by tidying up a little, for example."

"Good idea!" Little Ghost exclaimed. "I'll turn into a vacuum cleaner and will vacuum the rug. And when the director comes in to see who on earth is doing it, I'll turn into a flying elephant and scream right in his ear. That'd be terrific!"

Mom just sighed.

Translated by Adam Cullen

