

Not a Ghost Story

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When I was a child and living in China, my grandmother used to take me to the village where her uncle's family lived. The village was very small and poor and, consequently, didn't have any electricity, so at night it would be very dark.

The villagers were so poor that they didn't have any bathrooms in their houses. If a person needed to relieve himself, he would need to walk for five minutes, a walk which would take him past a cemetery, to get to the town bathroom, but we wouldn't mind.

One night I didn't feel well and I thought that I had perhaps eaten some bad food so I took some medicine and went to sleep. In the middle of the night, though, I woke up and still didn't feel well so I took a candle to light my way as I walked to the town bathroom.

Outside it was very dark. I couldn't see the moon, and the wind was making the trees shake, thus creating a frightening sound. I felt scared but I continued on.

When I was walking past the cemetery, I heard some sounds as if people were talking. I remembered that the villagers had told me a story about ghosts. My heart almost stopped beating. I couldn't breathe.

As I got closer to the public bathroom, I saw two shadows, one taller and the other shorter. I thought to myself that I was seeing the ghosts. I shouted and cried out. A minute later, my neighbor and her daughter appeared in front of me. They asked me what had happened and I told them that I had seen two ghosts.

Then they started laughing; the 'ghosts' had been my two neighbors!

Memory is peculiar. To this day, even though I know in my head that the shadows and sounds on that dark night years ago were only produced by my living and breathing neighbors, some dark nights still recreate for me the fears and sensations of that local legend.

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