

The Man Who Was Afraid of Nothing

Native American (Sioux)

ONCE UPON A TIME, four ghosts sat together. They were laughing and talking, when one of them told of a mortal man he had heard of. “I hear he isn’t afraid of anything. Not even us!”

“I’ll bet I could scare him,” said one ghost.

“Let’s make a bet,” said another ghost. “Whoever can scare him the most wins.” They bet their horses on it.

The next day, the man came walking by. The ghosts showed themselves to him as skeletons.

“Hello,” said the ghost, making an eerie noise.

“Hello, sir,” said the man. “Please move. You’re in my way.”

“Not so fast. We haven’t played a game yet!”

“Huh?”

“The hoop-and-stick game. If you lose, you become a skeleton like me!”

The young man laughed. He grabbed at the skeleton and bent it into a big circle. Then, he took one of the skeleton’s bones and rolled the skeleton down the street.

“Well, I guess I won this round,” said the man when he was done. “Wanna play some ball next?” he said, taking the skeleton’s skull and kicking it around like a ball.

“Ow, stop!” cried the skull. “I’m getting a headache.

“You sure? I want to give you a fair chance here.”

“Stop, stop, stop!” the skull pleaded.

“Well, OK. Good game, stranger,” said the man, and he walked on.

A little further down the road he ran into the second ghost, also made up to look like a skeleton. “Let’s dance,” he said.

“Great idea!” said the young man. “But we will need music first. How can we make it...? Oh, wait, I have just the thing!” he said, taking the ghost’s thighbone, beating his skull like a drum.

“Stop, please!” cried the skeleton. “I’m getting a headache.”

“For a ghost, you’re sure scared of me,” he said.

Next, he came upon the third ghost. “Now, this is just getting silly,” he said. “Didn’t I meet you earlier?”

“No, those were my friends. They want to dance and play games; I am here to fight. Let’s wrestle,” he said. “If I win, you become a skeleton like me.”

The young man rolled his eyes. “I am not much in the mood for wrestling. I feel like sledding!” He grabbed the skeleton’s ribcage and slid down a hill.

“Ouch, stop! That hurts!”

“Oh, see, you’re just like your friends,” said the young man. “You talk a good game, but in the end, you’re not that tough.”

Lastly, he came upon the chief ghost, riding on his ghost horse and casting a long, dark shadow on the ground in front of the man. For the first time, the young man got a little chill standing in his presence.

“Hello,” he said solemnly. “Come with me. I am going to take you away to another world, where you will become a skeleton like me.”

At first, he was a little frightened and didn’t know what to do. But then, he had an idea. He began to pretend to be a ghost, making spooky moaning noises and moving slowly. “Your friend at the head of the trail, he already got me! And now... now I’m coming for YOU!”

The chief ghost was terrified! He tried to run away, but the man, seeing that his trick worked, grabbed at the horse’s bridle and stole it from him. He hopped on and rode back into town. When the villagers saw the ghostly horse coming, they screamed and fled in terror!

Later on that day, he met up with some friends. They sat around talking and laughing, and the man began to brag about how he scared all four ghosts away. “You should have seen them. Every single one ran away in fright!”

Just then, a tiny spider descended from the ceiling and grazed his arm. The man froze. Then, he screamed! “Get it off! Oh, I HATE spiders!” he flew up from his seat, running wildly around the room, shaking his arm to try and get rid of it. His friends just laughed and laughed.



