

# **THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT**

**by Patricia Anne Kehoe**

*(from Vincent's World One)*

Above, it was Halloween night. Here, Below, the children called it, '*scare the adults and get some candy*' night!

Vincent waited eagerly, impatiently, for the other children to return from Above. On this one night of the year, Father allowed, with their parents' consent, all children to go Above to '*trick or treat*.' But, he first extracted a promise that they go **ONLY** to '*Helpers*' to do this. But, as '*mean*' as it made Father feel, he could not allow Vincent to accompany them; it was far too dangrous for him to take a chance on being truly '*seen*'. He still considered everything Above a threat to his younger son's safety. Nothing could persuade him to change his mind, even Devin's pleas and promises to watch over him, or the other children's cries of "Awww, come **ON**, Father, please let Vincent come with us? Just this **ONCE?**"

Vincent had remained quiet at the exchange of talk between the boys and Father. He wanted very badly to go, to be '*one of the boys*,' but even at the tender age of 7, knew his father, and with the knowing, realized the finality of an '**absolutely not!**' when he heard it.

This was the end of the discussion; Vincent wanted to beg to be allowed to go, but would never do this; it was not his nature, would never be, had never been. He was the '*quiet one*,' the '*follower*,' his older brother Devin, the '*instigator*,' as Father sometimes called him, somewhat unfairly, but **USUALLY** right on target!

Devin and Vincent were as night and day. Dev the unruly one; the one who jumped into '*adventures*' with both feet; never seeming to care about the consequences! Vincent was the careful one. The one who usually watched, mulled things over first, and then decidd if a prank was really worth Father's wrath should he hear of it!

Of course, Vincent wasn't perfect - yet! Many, many times he and Dev both had been banished to their room for a stunt or dangerous escapade that incurred their father's anger if or when he found them out. Vincent grinned. What he and Dev had planned for later on tonight would have sent Father into apoplexy.

This night had been very carefully worked on for a month, very carefully thought through for a boy of 7 and one of 9. But, the waiting to **DO IT** was making Vincent fidget with excitement. **WHERE** in heck was Dev? He had promised to be back by 9:30 pm and it was already almost 10 o'clock! Finally, he heard the jumbled talk of his friends' voices approaching the Chamber he shared with his brother. They all ran in clutching sacks of loot from the 'raid' Above. Devin ran to Vincent and dumped a bag of the 'treasure' onto the bed.

"Look what we got, Vin! We can really stuff our faces tonight."

'All the Helpers' had been indeed very generous! The other children joined the conversation. "Wish you coulda' come with us, Vincent, It's not fair. We got some stuff for you, too!"

And with this, added to the pile of candy and things already on the bed. Poking one long fingernail through the pile, Vincent smiled. There was lots of candy, some fruit, and evn a few nickels and dimes. What a haul!

He sighed deeply, it still didn't make up for not being allowed to go, but it **WAS** nice of his friends to share what they had with him. All the children here shared what they had with each other; it was the unspoken law here Below. If one had two toys, one was given to a boy or girl that had none. This wasn't questioned; as all of them had been on either the giving or receiving end of this arrangement at one time or another. Father was very pleased that the children all got along as a rule. Oh, there were times..... but for the most part, he was very proud of how they behaved. The children, as well as the adults, called Jacob Wells 'Father'. They used it as a title of love and deep respect for this man who helped 'found' the home of safety they all lived in, here Below.

\*\*\*\*

Devin had begun to encourage the others to leave, he **HAD** to talk to Vincent alone; there were final plans to be made for tonight's adventure Above! As they ate the candy, the boys spoke in whispers and went over their secret plans for the midnight 'excursion'.

\*\*\*\*

The whole idea had come about at dinner a week ago. One of the 'Helpers' named Louis was talking to Father of an old, abandoned house. He and his brothers had found some cast off furniture and dishes, etc. there. Would they be useful to him?

Father exclaimed, "Yes! Of course! We find a use for everything down here. Can you use any help getting things down? We have man who will be glad to give you a hand."

"No, my brothers and I can do it. But, not **TONIGHT!** **THAT** place is really 'spooky'. I have heard rumors someone was actually killed in there years ago; some say the place is 'haunted!'"

Father scoffed at this statement, "Ha! Haunted indeed! What utter nonsense. Aren't you a bit old to believe in ghosts, Louis?"

"Well,..... I thought I was until one night last month. Walking by that old place, I **KNOW** I saw a light in the attic, and heard some **REALLY** weird sounds coming out of that place! I'm not gonna push my luck up there this close to Halloween, no way! Besides, I can see better what's there in the

daylight."

Father smiled at his friend's last statement. "*SURE* you can, Louis. Of course."

\*\*\*\*

Devin and Vincent had been sitting very near the adults, and had overheard the entire conversation. They began poking each other in the ribs. They both had the same idea in the same instant! Dev whispered to Vincent, "A haunted house and real close. Wanna go?"

"Yes."

"Shhhhhhh, Father will hear us. Meet me later, in our room."

"Yeah, okay."

So began the plans that tonight would find Devin and Vincent Above at midnight; on their way to what unknown.....? They planned on taking two flashlights borrowed from other boys with them. Although Vincent saw like a 'cat' in the dark, Devin didn't; he wanted light. Devin thought himself really too 'old' to believe in ghosts; but Vin seemed really excited at the idea of the going Above, and to give his younger brother a change in his 'routine', Dev would have done just about anything. Vin was his brother, and tho' Devin would die before admitting it aloud, he loved Vincent; felt a protectiveness and responsibility towards him that, even with all his young years, knew would never change. Oh sure, they had fights, as all brothers did, but not truly fair ones! Although Devin was older and had quite a 'mouth', Vincent was just as tall, much stronger, and could usually shut it for him, when necessary.

\*\*\*\*

11:30 pm came and finally was gone. "Pssst, Vincent, you ready?"

"Where's ya flashlight?"

"Shhhhh, right here. Quiet, you'll wake someone up."

With great stealth, he and Vincent began the trek Above. Taking care to avoid the posted sentries, they carried their shoes slung over their shoulders, wincing when a sharp rock on the tunnel floor reminded them how foolish this was! Finally, they reached the steel ladder that led them directly up and across the street from the house. The 'Helper' Louis had told Father the 34th street exit was how to 'go out'..... this was it! Not nearly as adept as Vincent in climbing, Dev led the way slowly up the rungs with Vincent poking at him now and then to 'MOVE FASTER.'

"You poke me one more time, Vincent, and you're gonna EAT this damn flashlight..... I'm doing the best I can. We all can't move like you, ya know?"

"Sorry, Devin."

"Yeah, Sure!"

With combined effort, the boys finally succeeded in lifting the heavy grate that separated them from the street Above. Slipping through the opening they had created, they then knelt and pushed the grate back into place with a loud 'clank'. Devin looked around.

"It sure is dark. Look, Across the street. That must be it!"

Vincent followed Devin's pointing finger with his eyes and was suddenly a little scared. The place really *DID* look eerie; the bare, dark windows seemed like a face, with giant black eyes, the large door looked like a mouth, and the curved stone steps, like an evil grin. He wondered to himself if he *REALLY* wanted to do this?

"Vincent, you ready?"

Vincent gulped out, "I guess so."

And they crossed the street and looked for the easiest way to get inside. And the quickest. It was getting cold, and their plans had *NOT* included jackets. Finding no way in at the front, they crept quietly around to the back of the house, looking for a window to climb into. Trying several as they tiptoed along, suddenly Devin's foot struck the lid of a trashcan; sending it sliding along in front of them clanging and scraping along the ground as it did. Hissing and meowing, a cat jumped from the can straight into Devin's startled face. He jumped, yelled, and almost landed on Vincent's shoulders in fright. "Jeez..... *WHAT* was that?"

"Just a stupid cat. Let go of my *neck*, Devin, you're choking me! What's the matter, *SCARED?*"

Devin was indignant; Him. Scared..... *NEVER!* "Nah, it just..... just surprised me, that's all!" Seeing Vincent's grin at this statement, he repeated, "I wasn't scared, Vin!"

"Then how come you're still shaking?"

"Cuz, I'm cold."

"Sure!"

Changing the subject, Devin pulled his brother towards a window, "I think this one is open, let's try it."

Prying and pushing, they finally succeeded in getting the window open enough to see down into the cellar. A musty smell came up from the gloom, dank and laden with dust. Devin seemed oblivious to the odors, but Vincent's more sensitive nostrils weren't!

"*PHEW*, what a smell." He held his nostrils shut tightly against the offending odor. This gave his voice a funny '*twangy*' sound as he spoke. "Who's gonna go first?"

Devin replied, "Me, I guess. I'm the oldest!"

He was a bit disheartened at Vincent's agreement to this fact, "Yes, so you tell me all the time! Well, *GO AHEAD!*"

As he slowly lowered himself down through the open window, Dev said a little shakily, "Here goes nothing." Feeling underneath him a box, Devin lowered one foot, found the box sturdy beneath it, and dropped to it with a small sigh of relief. He had not wanted to let go of the window frame until he *KNEW* what he was going to be landing on. "Okay, Vincent, there's a box to stand on, come down. Vincent? Come *ON*."

Mirroring his older brother's movements, Vincent lowered himself quickly, and landed with a '*thud*' at Devin's side. His added weight made the crate creak in complaint, and it collapsed beneath them.

With a yowl of surprise and fright, the two boys found themselves flat on the cellar floor. Devin began searching with one hand for the light he had dropped from the falling through the crate. "Where the hell is it?" Just as his hand closed around it, Vincent's flashlight lit up what the boys were sitting on. Two inches from Devin's face, an evil toothy grimace of a bear grinned menacingly back at him.

With a cry of "YIPES," Devin was on his feet even quicker than his younger, more agile brother. They stood huddled closely and just stared..... As Devin wiped the dirt from his face, he scoffed, "It's just an old bearskin rug. That's all, Vincent. Its just an old rug." When he still had no reply, he turned to look at his young brother. Vincent's face was fierce; he looked ready to attack the *'thing'* that had frightened them so! One hand was raised..... and curved in defense, the look on Vincent's face was something to behold. A low growl was rising from his throat as Devin starte to shake him by the shoulder. "VINCENT..... It's okay. It's just a stupid old rug. Relax, will ya?"

Seeing the tension leave his body, Devin shook his head in wonder. Vin was only 7, but ready to defend his brother from harm at any cost to his own safety. "Thanks, Vincent."

"Huh? For what?"

"Oh nothing. Just thanks."

Putting one arm around Vincent's shoulder, Devin started leading him towards the stairway his flashlight brought into focus. Old and wooden, it creaked under them as they began slowly going up towards the first floor of the house. As the creak turned almost to a groaning sound, Devin stopped still in his tracks. "Hey, this time, *YOU* o first!"

Shooting him a look of braveness he did *NOT* feel, Vincent took over the lead, grudgingly; praying silently that, "Please, let this door be locked." He was swiftly losing the thrill of any further exploration of this place fast! When the door opened readily at his touch, he muttered, "Oh, damn" under his breath, and at Devin's nudge, started inside the house.

As Devin peered over his shoulder, his light touched over the gloomy living room before them. Old furniture covered with sheets looked to their eyes like sitting ghouls, waiting to clasp them if they got too close. A chandelier hung directly in the center of the room; to the left an old piano stood as though forgotten, holding to itself memories of the music from happier tomes. Cobwebs were everywhere. Vincent suddenly sneezed, and Devin nearly jumped out of his skin at the loud sound in the quiet, spooky room.

Turning to face his brother, he said, "Thanks a lot, you scared the hell out of me. Come on!"

Almost dragging Vincent at his side, they now stood directly in the center of the room beneath the chandelier, which suddenly quivered and tinkled above their heads!

The sound made Vincent's skin goose-bump. "What made that thing *MOVE*? I don't like the feelings I'm starting to get from this room, Devin. Not one bit! Let's leave, huh? Before something else....." The words froze unspoken in his throat, and they looked with gaping mouths towards the staircase directly in front of them!

A high pitched faraway voice called out slowly, "Whooooo are..... you.....? What..... do..... you..... want .....*HERE*? Get..... away..... while you still..... can!"

Without realizing it, Vin and Dev were clinging to each other in absolute terror, face to face, totally now; as the wits were frightened from them. They felt unable to move; their legs felt like they were encased in cement.

"Vincent? Did you *HEAR*.....?"

"*YES*. And I'm getting out of here, *NOW!*" Dev didn't answer his pleas to "*RUN!*" Vincent shone his light into his brother's face; it was quickly draining stark white and his eyes were almost popping out of his head in complete panic.

Dev whispered in a quivering voice, "Look..... over..... there! Oh, hell!"

Turning, Vincent followed Dev's pointing finger with a sideways look and yelled, "*Devin, it's a ghost!*"

A misty, gray form was floating down the stairway towards them.....right *AT* them. Now totally beyond sensible thought, they ran to escape the spectre as it reached the bottom of the stairs.

Vincent ran around to the left and behind a high couch, and covered his eyes, praying this was all just a nightmare; praying to wake up..... fast.

Devin ran to the right end of the same couch, and fell sprawling over his brother's huddled body with a scream of fright. "*Yow! Vincent, is that you? It better be you; you've scared the..... the crap out of me!*"

All he got in response was the sound of Vincent's teeth, chattering in terror. Slowly, they peeked up over the top of the high velvet couch; they saw the stairway was now empty..... where had the '*thing*' gone to? As they rested their chins on the top of the couch, across from them one of the sheets covering a large chair began to rise..... slowly..... outlined high at its sides could be seen the shadowy arm of..... something..... pointing one finger towards the front door.

In the same voice he and Dev heard earlier, '*It*' spoke, "Get .....*OUT!*"

Suddenly, the front door creaked open and they ran..... they ran so fast dust rose from the floor, and cobwebs, unseen, unnoticed, clung to their faces. Trying to squeeze through the door together, they were aware of nothing but a need to get the hell out of this place..... and fast! Finally tumbling in a heap together at the bottom of the stairs, they jumped up, held hands, and ran for home, and safety, for their lives, as if all the hounds of Hell were chasing them every step of the way, and snapping at their heels!

\*\*\*\*

Inside the house, Father and Louis held onto each other and roared in paroxysms of laughter.

"Well, Father, I don't think they'll be sneaking out again real soon. Your idea of giving them a '*special Halloween*' was an..... an inspiration!"

"Yes," Father agreed, "It did '*seem*' to make up to Vincent especially, not being allowed to go Above with the others, did it not? I must compliment you on that voice, Louis. If I hadn't know it was you talking, I would have probably had cardiac arrest myself."

"Ah, but you, Father. When you rose up out of that chair, I had to stuff my fist into my mouth to keep from roaring at the look on those boys' faces as they saw the '*ghost*'. What will you say to them when

you see them Below tomorrow morning at breakfast?"

"Say? Why, nothing. Why should I have anything '*special*' to say? I was sleeping when they arrived back, weren't you at your home, doing the same?"

"Yeah, right. Will you ever tell them what we did to them, those poor kids! Did we overdo it, do you suppose?"

"No, I don't think we did, but still, I'll probably *NEVER* dare to tell them. The waiting for them to '*get me*' will drive me crazy!"

"Oh Louis, don't forget to return that bearskin rug to your brother, will you? And thank him for making sure only that *ONE WINDOW* would open, and rigging that crate to collapse as he did! That was a stroke of genius! And I cannot get over how you got that '*thing*' to float down the stairway as you did. It was truly eerie watching it through the small slits I had to cut into the sheet. I congratulate you on that one, my man!"

Louis looked puzzled. "The stairway? What about the stairway? Wasn't that you with a rigged wire or something; pulling that gray thing along?"

Father stared at Louis, mouth agape as he shook his head back and forth; speechless for a moment. Then looking to the left, the right, and behind him, Father managed a strangled sentence.

"*THAT wasn't ME!* I assumed you had thought of it at the last moment. You did, didn't you?"

Louis was as white as the sheet Father was holding. "No, Father. I had nothing to do with it. *LET'S GET THE HELL out of here .... FAST!*" And they did, *extremely* fast!

\*\*\*\*

Peering in at the boys a while later, Father knew they were not really sleeping, but only pretending to be. The fake snore from Devin and Vincent's quaking covers gave them away. He smiled, then turned and sighed. This adventure had been quite an ordeal, all in all. He wondered, a trifle guiltily, if the boys would sleep at *ALL* tonight. For that matter, if they would ever sleep again! He whispered to himself as he turned to go to bed, "goodnight, my sons. I love you both. Devin? Will you perhaps be staying a bit closer to home nights for a while, hmmm? Vincent? My small, brave, little boy. *HAPPY HALLOWEEN!*"

END