

The boogeyman series

PART 1

Coastal summer. Of course, it was humid and hot as hell. The only good things about that summer were the holidays and IPL. Those were the times, me and my parents used to fall asleep in front of the TV after finishing the match(well, my mother was always a fast sleeper so it was me and dad cheering most of the time)

April 30th

The match got over and we went to sleep. Since the bedrooms were unbearable cooking pots, me and my family had to sleep in the living room the past few weeks. I had sleeping issues even back then. I just kept thinking about the homework which I didn't finish and fell asleep.

At unknown time

I woke up abruptly from my dream and saw it was still dark outside. The old Nokia keypad cellphone showed 3:02 am. I was pissed obviously. I changed my side towards the window for the cool breeze and tried my best to sleep.

That's when I heard it.

Somebody is cleaning the side yard where all our cashew trees are. Since it was not possible for anyone to be on our grounds at that ungodly hour, I concluded it was my neighbor's dog. After 5 minutes I knew in my core it was not the dog.\

As any teenager, stupidly I woke up and peered into the dark abyss through the window. I could see nothing. But to my surprise, I was able to hear the broomstick sound crystal clear. I waited for 60 whole seconds to understand this unexplainable phenomenon. I was disappointed and came back to my bed that was laid on the floor. Another failed try. Sleep was not nearly in the same town as I was. Now the cleaning sound was hitting my ears the way waves hit the shore on the full moon.

AND IT STOPPED !!!!

I was relieved. I even told myself that I was dreaming. Half a minute of silence broke by a thud. And another. And another. This time it was more clear and I knew I was hearing footsteps. Somebody was out there. But why would anyone clean it !? The intensity of the footsteps reduced but I was sure the reason whoever this was, playing with me was circling my house to get to the main door.

AND THEY DID

The knock was faint but was enough to give me chills. What was happening !? Then came another knock. With my unusual hearing skills, I could guarantee you, that it was almost at the bottom of the door. A cat may be !? That's ridiculous.

Knock grew stronger, louder, and more frequent. The urge to open the door and confront this thug inside me was solid. I looked at our inverter. It was no wonder that the scheduled power cut was still going on and my dad had disconnected the battery to save some charge. I laughed at myself for not noticing the actual reason I woke up was because I was soaking in my sweat. Now don't say gross. We all had been there. Why couldn't I hear knocking anymore?

JUSHHHHHHHH !!!!

I started to sweat for a different reason. Someone turned on our garden tap. I made up my mind to jump across the room because I didn't wanna disturb my sleeping angel (My mother uses weird words to swear) and see for myself who this vampire is. Bugging people when they are asleep. The electricity came back almost at the same time the pipes were dragged outside.

See, we usually keep watering pipes next to our compound wall. We used to use it every other day to water the flower plants. And surprisingly I recognized the sound of dragging. Call me "Bluffy" but I know my hearing skills in my core. With the running fan over my head, I got the patience to think and reason this strange occurrence. There is no way anybody would be interested in watering the plants and cleaning the yard. We have had workers but they were done with their work and paid for.

The watering went on for the next 15 minutes or maybe more. I can't be sure as I drowsed off after a few minutes.

May 1

It is my birthday month. I was all ready to have a blast. Not every day you will turn 15. To be honest, I don't care for birthdays. The only thing I want is Jamoon and my mother prepares it for every birthday. I never celebrated with cakes or parties and I liked it this way. Now I am almost 25 and I still prefer a birthday text over a call, my mother's Jamoon over a cake, and a beach day over a party.

The experience I encountered the day before was bugging me. I told everything to my father over breakfast. You wouldn't know but my father has insomnia and refuses to go to the clinic for a check-up. I guessed he was awake last night when the knocking happened. My dad used to sleep next to the door so he MUST have heard it too. To my luck, he was sure that he couldn't sleep till 4 but shockingly he didn't hear any knock or watering sounds.

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE !!!!

It bugged me. A LOT! I was one of the bravest people I knew. I never reason anything if not

with logic. The only conclusion I settled for was that I was dreaming. I couldn't let it go but there was no other explanation.

Later that night

Me and my dad watched another match that day and went to sleep around 12.30 am. I entered my dreamland very easily that day.

I was seeing only darkness. The ceiling fan was making its ksk-ksk-ksk noise as always. I am no longer asleep. My ear was grasping another familiar sound. Someone was cleaning the cashew yard again.

DEE, YOU ARE JUST DREAMING !!! TRY TO SLEEP

Whatever happened last night was happening again. FREAKING EXACTLY THE SAME! The only difference is that I didn't bother at the knocking at all.

May 2

My dad asked how I slept. Nice of him but he asks that every day. Extra nice of him then. I told him about the noises. Lucky me, he didn't hear it at all. My mother blamed my horror books. Well, she is not completely wrong. That story is for another day.

Later that night, followed by many other nights, the same series of sounds reached my ears. I had learned to ignore this bullshit. Very difficult for my curious nature on top of it. But I did.

May 6

I don't remember any of it now. I have no photos either. I am gonna go ahead and say "My birthday was amazing" 😊

Hated the summer but I was enjoying my free time reading encyclopedia

May 27

Opening your eyes at 7 is a real torture believe me. Shush! morning people. It is difficult for a few people like me. But I had a job today. To clean my room and prepare for school reopening, waking up early was indeed necessary.

My parents were having breakfast in the dining room. They were clearly whispering. I don't usually eavesdrop but they mentioned my name. I tried to concentrate while my brain searched Google how to function.

The conversation happened in my mother tongue. I will translate it for you guys.

" No no. She should know"

"She will be bothered by it. You know her. She won't stop"

"But we took an oath that we never lie to her, remember"

"It's for her own good"

My dad's voice was more than a whisper this time " GOD knows what that creature is. Why is it bugging us? Knocking is creepy enough. What's with the watering? I let her believe that it was in her dream you know"

THE BOOGEYMAN 🗿

PART 2

October 8, 2022

At 10.45 pm

" Did you clean the kitchen island and the sink?? Please keep the kitchen clean, will ya?" my mom's worried voice came through the speaker.

" Of course I will" my voice was loud but she didn't hear me. With the running water and cell phone being 2 feet away, I knew that already. I stopped doing the dishes and held my Motorola cellphone with my wet hands. I didn't care for that ugly useless device anyway.

"I said, I will take care of everything" my voice tired already.

" Don't forget the milk". She yawned the whole sentence.

"Mom, you are exhausted. Just go to sleep. And tell Dad I said good night. I don't"

"SHIT! I am throwing this device." muttering to myself I checked my wifi. 3 green lights and a single red light. It wasn't monsoon. Where the cable got disconnected was a mystery to solve. A mystery and a whole day job for my cable operator.

Being in a small village comes with pros and cons. I don't have a cellphone network at my place. The OFC with a landline is all I have. The speed is surprisingly good for this setup though. I work my 9-5 job seamlessly with the old wifi. But when it's gone, I get disconnected from the whole world. My landline doesn't work if there are no 4-happy green lights on my modem.

But the home is amidst a lush green nature. Clean air, and plenty of water. Away from the crowd. Part of a happy small village. I love that.

All my plans were crushed. You see, I had been waiting for this night for a long time. I was gonna binge watch "Stranger Things" for the 4th time. Even my midnight snacks were ready. I had a few more chores to finish to reach my dream night out.

"Okay!!! we just have to watch recorded "GOT" now. I hate this place" I yelled to no one in particular. I think my router took it personally. He deserved it by the way.

The whole house grew darker suddenly. A cricket was chirping in the distance. No sound other than

SCRATCHING

I would have neglected it, if it wasn't for the sound coming from under the bed. 2 seconds later the sound found its new source. The back of my NECK

That morning

They left around 7 am with the driver. Dad wasn't fully comfy and neither was my mom. But this check-up was damn important. Dad had an open heart surgery in August that year. They were about to leave for the city when I woke up. All my to-dos were already in our WhatsApp group. I said goodbye and went back to sleep.

I can't breathe. Water everywhere. I thrashed vigorously while keeping my nose above the water. I could see him. I stopped. I didn't know this man. My blurry vision made it even worse.

"HELP MEEEE !!!" my scream was an echo to my own ears. Nobody was going to save me.

I poured water into my favorite glass. My hands were still slippery from the sweat. It had been years since I had a nightmare. I needed a bath. The time was 10 am already. I had a big TO-DO starting from cleaning to cooking to watering the coconut tree.

At 11 pm

Won't lie. I was scared. I walked one tiny step at a time, not turning back to the sound. I had to reach my inverter so that I could connect the batteries. You know how spiritual people talk about "LIGHT". This is what they meant. A light to save you from danger. I was almost in the living room now.

That's when it hit me. A THOUGHT. I have a cellphone. I can just turn on the flash. I am not sure if you folks know, Motorola has this amazing feature. You could just shake it twice horizontally, and the flashlight comes to life. 2 more shakes to turn it off. Pretty neat right. My g72 came to the rescue.

It took me only a fraction of a second. I connected the batteries, still not turning back. The sound was more of a breathing rather than scratching now. It didn't feel so close either.

Every bulb was lit. Made my mind to look back.

No one was there. Just me. ALONE. With a creepy sound.

At 7.45 pm

"Adding to my TBR, right away".

My grinning face was looking devilish due to the screen light. I was almost done with my walking in the garden when Emily Fox suggested all her favorite books.

Someone moved in my peripheral sight. Should be my neighbor coming to check up on me. At least that's what I thought at first. The footsteps stopped. I called her out loudly.

"MAAADEVIIIII, WHAT UPPP ??? "

My neighbor is our maid too and honestly, she is kinda close to me and we tease each other a lot. A LOT !

She didn't reply. "DID YOU BRING FISH CURRY FOR ME ???" I laughed at my own joke. (I

am a vegetarian. She tells me all the time about how she will replace my potato curry with something meat in it)

She started cleaning the yard. I was confused. Since I was at the front of the house, I had to circle it to get to her. The sound stopped when I was at our well. I called her again. This time she replied.

But from her HOUSE !!

I ran over to my side yard. My forehead had a few sweat drops settled already. I had no idea why it all felt so

so predictable.

My brain flooded with all the memories I was trying to suppress for years. My head felt dizzy. I was able to feel my heart pumping inside my ribcage faster than usual.

At 11.15 pm

With no signal and reserved electricity, I was helpless. I wanted to scream. It would do no good though. All my tasks were done by 11.30pm. I turned my cozy lights on. Not because I wanted the vibe but to save some current. Lit a few candles.(oh! don't judge me. I like to pretend as if I am a writer from the 1950s) I opened my journal to write about every discomfort I faced that day while "Game of Thrones" title song played in the background.

"tu-tu tu-du-tu-tu tu-du tu-tu" I hummed along with it. My voice was rasp. Clearing my throat didn't change that. I paused the video. The rasping wasn't mine at all. It was coming from somewhere else. Definitely inside the house.

I was scared and devastated.

"What do you WAAAAANT!???"

I was foolish to even wait for a response but I did. Desperately wanted to believe this was all a prank. I badly expected my nephew to show up and laugh at my face. My empty house mocked me in response.

After thinking for 3 minutes straight, I was done getting scared. I went to grab the hammer from the toolkit. I had to keep some backup if it was an intruder(even though I knew no one else apart from me was present)

I went into my parent's bedroom. I grabbed the hammer and was about to turn away. A shadowy figure was standing in front of me.

I don't remember what happened for the next 2 seconds other than my shriek reaching the whole village. I had to stop when I realized I was looking at my own reflection in the long mirror.

I was going insane.

2 things happened immediately after this crazy experience.

1. someone knocked on my door
2. someone opened a window

As it turned out, my maid heard my scream and came to check up on me. She knocked on my door.

Her cat was in my kitchen apparently and it tried to go out while making a noise of opening the window.

I was ashamed. I wiped my sob before opening the door. She offered me to sleep in the hall if I was scared. I boldly lied to her.

“It was a frog. You know how I feel about them. It just popped out of the window. See, I am closing every window now”

She knew I was lying through my teeth.

“Just call me if you are afraid okay ?”

Before going back. she gave me one last glance. Not me. She started at my TV. She peered through it if I am accurate.

“What is it?” my question eager.

“Ummm nothing. just an illusion”. She slowly started walking.

I kept watching her. “Please come back. I am scared to death. Something is happening.” Those words never came out loud.

At 8.30 pm

I don't usually turn on the TV but I had the freedom to watch YT on a big screen. I searched for the remote. I sat on the couch. Comfy. That's when I noticed. My reflection was different. I look elongated.

I am very sure that my limb is not that tall. I have watched my reflection many times that day and it was different each time. I thought my sight was the issue. I had even added “ophthalmologist visit” to my to-do.

Maybe my eyes weren't the problem at all.

At 12 am

With the hammer on the table and a knife next to me, I decided to sleep.

At unknown time

I woke up with a headache. I felt hard to breathe. It was truly shocking how I was able to sleep at 12 !! That's like 7pm for me usually. That's when I am most active and my energy spikes. A faint smile on my face was washed away the moment I heard scratching under the bed again.

Here is the thing guys !! I don't sleep with my door open ever. Like any other day, I had locked it. My main door is closed. All the windows too. Even if I scream, nobody will hear it.

The only thing I could do was to ignore all my senses and chant Hanuman Chalisa. I know the shlokas by heart but unfortunately, I am an atheist. As I am looking back to that day, I am immensely enjoying the moral dilemma I was in. (I enjoy my own traumas. I am rare and I know it. Read further)

I ignored it for a good 10 minutes. I tried remembering my mother's voice. I can't wait to see her ” I told you so” face tomorrow. She begged me to go with them. I was stubborn and

selfish and made her take care of Dad all by herself. I felt like I was an awful daughter. (clarification: I am not. The only thing I care about in the whole world is them)

I wanted to cry. I wanted to hug my mom. I wanted to hear her weird swears. I wanted to fight with Dad. I wanted to put a hairband on his head (it's my way of peace offering after we fight). My thoughts went to the darker side. What if they found me dead the next day? What if there were monsters and I was facing one of them. I don't want my flesh to be eaten ewwww.

The scratching stopped. I knew better. It wouldn't stop there. I had the sixth somehow. I was facing the wall when the footsteps were too near. I closed my eyes shut. So tightly that some of my eyelashes fell off. It was all quiet 2 seconds later.

I waited for something to happen.

30 minutes later

No creepy noises whatsoever. Sleep wasn't coming either. I can't quite describe the discomfort. I looked at the time on my cellphone. Squinting my eyes wasn't easy.

3:02 am.

4 hours till sunrise.

"uggghhhhhh !" A low moan departed my mouth. Maybe changing the side would help.

WAS A WRONG CHOICE !!!

As soon as I faced my closed door, I was looking at the shadowy figure. Almost 7 feet tall. Lean.

Its eyes were glinting. I can still remember those silver eyes staring right at me.

BOOGEYMAN WAS HERE

I don't think I breathed at all. I couldn't scream. I couldn't move.

I was still as dead. The time stopped. I am pretty sure I lost all my senses. I had to do something. Truth between you and me, I didn't have the guts to pick up my hammer. I was horrified. Whatever this creature was, it was gonna end my life.

I don't remember how long I looked at it. Is it too early to call it "him" ??

A small hope. Something flickered in the corner of my mind. If he was planning on killing me, he would have already. He had better chances. Also if I was gonna die, I didn't wanna die on my bed like a coward.

I pushed myself up so fast. The biggest light in my room came to life. I was impressed with my stunt. Don't get me wrong. When you are alone and nobody can hear you, with a large monstrous creature looking right at you, even switching on the light is a big deal. First-hand experience.

He disappeared. Like he didn't exist at all. Just to make sure, I checked under the bed, behind my cupboard. Nothing was there other than dust and a cute spider.

I kept the lights on till the morning.

October 9, 2022

My parents arrived at 2pm. I was so relieved.

“What happened to the network ?? I was talking to you and you just went off the grid” My mother sat down at the table.

“Oh, that! Wifi wasn’t working” I served only a pinch of pickle. She can’t handle spice.

My father interrupted us. ” How did you sleep ?”

I could see he was hungry “Look. I prepared your favorite sambar”

His face was unreadable. “okay! But how did you sleep last night ?”

I served myself and sat next to them. “Honestly, not so good.” I couldn’t lie to him.

“I couldn’t sleep either. I had this awful nightmare. I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn’t get myself back to sleep”

I was shocked. Does my father have sleep difficulties? Yes.
Does he usually get a nightmare? Never

“You ?? Nightmare?? Hahaha. Do tell.” I was all ears.

“Well, in my dream, you were sleeping peacefully. Facing your door like you rarely do.”

He paused for a second. My mom gave him a nod.

“Well someone was watching you. Not a person. It was a long gray shadow. Moving slightly. Creepy whitish eyes. I felt awful in my....”.

“silver eyes, Appa”

“what? ”

I didn’t know what to say. “Dee, think of something” My brain started creating stories.

“It’s from the story I told you the other day. Shadow figure, silver eyes, hovers over the bed.”

“I don’t remember it” he got confused. His face was a question mark.

Good job, me.

“Of course you did. It’s the power of subconscious mind. You were worried that I was alone and the story I told you just popped into your head. That’s all it is. Eat fast. Gonna get cold. Wasn’t easy to prepare.”

I never told him the truth.

PART 3

February 2023

“I missed you so much “. My granny opened her arms and embraced me tightly.

“Likewise, Aayi” I cooed. Most of my worries just go away when I hug her. She is my second mother to be honest.

“How is the marriage preparation going? ” my mouth was stuffed with a laddu before I could even finish the sentence.

“How is it?? Specially prepared for the celebration.”. She continued before I answered the question. It was truly yummy.

“Your uncle is all stressed. With lots going on, he is barely having time to eat and sleep these days”.

Speak of the devil. My uncle entered the room. I think he heard us.

“You are coming 3 days before the wedding right ??” his question was more of a suspicion. He continued “It’s his marriage. You can’t say no to your favorite cousin, can you ??”

I was hesitant to say anything. My voice was low. ” Actually.....”

He interrupted me with his authoritative deep voice ” Come on !!! You guys are inseparable. He is gonna be crushed”.

I chuckled at that. Yes, we indeed were inseparable. Even our birthdays are the same. We used to celebrate it together with homemade Jamoon and 7 good hours of vintage video games. Those were the good times. But truth be told, we didn’t speak to each other anymore. No reason. Just don’t communicate at all. I didn’t dare to tell my uncle that.

“That’s what I was about to say. I will reach home on the morning of the ceremony. I am going on a trip to Pondicherry, mava. It’s a solo trip. I waited months for that”

Nobody spoke for a minute.

The silence broke when my aunt entered the room with hot khashaya (It’s milk with homemade cumin powder). I wasn’t sure whether my uncle was upset with my announcement but he indeed left the room to continue his work on the farm.

After talking to everyone for more than 30 minutes, I decided to take a stroll in the family farm.

In my place, February is the month when the weather is pleasant. Neither cold nor hot. Sun was eager to set, I felt. A cool breeze hit me in the face. A murder of crows flew across the blue sky, going back to their home after a busy food-hunting day. These are moments I cherish and adore. Millions of places on earth, I would still choose my village.

“What are you smiling about?”

I jolted at the familiar sound. My uncle was cleaning his mower with extreme patience.

“I am just enjoying my time here.”

His confused eyes met mine. "Meaning?"

"I can't settle here. My job is in the city," I said while walking towards him.

He shook his head with a snort. "You guys are brainwashed to think like that. It's your decision where you want to live and what you want to do"

I knew this. Yet I failed to defend my argument. He didn't mind my absent response.

Once he finished his work. He asked me if I wanted to visit the family Gudi (Gudi = a small temple specifically built for local gods). Being an atheist, I said "Maybe another time"

He walked me home while explaining his new technique to grow pepper better. I listened keenly even though I had no idea about growing and farming.

I gave my granny a goodbye hug. It was 7.15 pm when I left their home in the hope of reaching my house before 7.30. (It's barely a 7 minutes walk so that seemed easy)

A distant croak didn't bother me as I plugged my earphones and opened my pre-travel to-do.

"pack all the dress" check

"Keep a heal for fun occasion" check

"medicines" of course !!!

I saw it. The shadowy figure that haunted me for months. Here I was dealing with PTSD and the boogeyman had plans for me still.

I stopped walking. I opened my mouth hoping my scream would reach a home nearby. But the figure I thought I saw wasn't there at all. Maybe I was hallucinating.

At that moment I remembered something. A story. A story that could answer my questions. I ran; I ran like I was chased by Indominus-rex in the Jurassic World movie.

I reached my granny's house in 2 minutes. Words were not leaving my mouth as I panted at the door with my bent backbone.

My uncle's worried gaze greeted me when I stood straight. "What happened? Are you okay?"

My voice rasped, "I will be once you answer my questions".

I gulped a whole glass of water in one go. The whole family gathered around in a jiff. They had more questions for me than I had for them at this moment. I knew I should start talking.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to panic you, folks. I just..... "

I turned to my uncle. " I just wanted to hear that old folklore you told me years ago. About the gudi in the farm"

"Now??" his irritation was clear in his voice.

"yes, please"

He agreed.

“About 200 years ago the king here was supporting Jains and fulfilled their wish of having Gudis. The place we inherited now was once belong to one of the Jain sadhus. I have been told that the reason we grow good crops is a result of the sadhu’s blessing back then.

When my grandfather was working in the field one day, digging the holes for new plants, he hit a rock. At least that’s what he thought at first. When they took it out of the ground, it turned out to be a sculpture of a Jina (jain deity). After this, we had built the gudi and did the pratishthapana (consecration). Again this is what I have heard my grandpa say.

A few years ago when I heard a call from the field one early morning. I assumed someone was stealing our areca nut. I grabbed the torch in a hurry and ran. I was still sleepy when an empty field greeted me.

I heard a faint walking sound but couldn’t see anything. I waited for 2 more minutes before returning. A few seconds after I started to walk towards the house I noticed something in my peripheral sight. I didn’t dare look directly at it. I tried my best to keep my pace steady and reached home. Later aayi told us that it was a Jina, who had been protecting our crops for ages. Neither did I know what I saw nor knew what to believe.”

My aayi interrupted him and started narrating her experience. “ I for a reason know it was The Jina. Your grandfather saw it when we were young. ”. She resumed her preparation of pan.

“How does it look like, the Jina I mean.” I was unable to stop shaking my legs.

“It was such a long time ago but as far as I remember it didn’t particularly have a body. It looks like a man. A tall man.”

My uncle added to it immediately “ I think it was as long as 7-8 feet. It was hovering. Like a black blob. But I can’t be sure. I didn’t take a good look as I told.”

“And one more thing. Sadhu’s younger son stayed here to look after the land while his older son relocated near the temple so that he could maintain the pooja and rituals easily. Funny thing, it was almost near to your house is currently situated. Word on the street is that he conducted a ceremony to do a Jina pratishthapana at the new place. But that land wasn’t much fruitful I guess. No crops were grown anyway. But his family was protected well enough. Their home was the only building that wasn’t demolished when the cyclone happened. People can make up stories. It might not be true.” My granny uttered while rubbing her nose bridge.

My uncle laughed abruptly “ Remember how your house almost collapsed when the slab was finished. ?“

I did remember that.

“Nothing happened to anyone so who knows, it could still be protecting the house and people over there” he started chewing a pan.

I stopped breathing for a second.

Why are you interested in that gudi suddenly ?? Why did you run back ?? My aayis voice reached my ears.

I wasn't sure whether I wanted to talk about my crazy imagination. (I wanted to call it so because the only other explanation is to believe in supernatural creatures.)

"I..... Actually...." I failed to answer.

Knowing me, my granny asked me to sit next to her and asked me to tell the truth.

I was hesitant in the beginning but I told EVERYTHING.

Nobody spoke for a minute. My uncle cleared his throat.

This thing you saw, was it a tall black shadowy man ??

I nodded

You saw it today on the road.? He added a follow-up question

I think I did. I am not sure.

My granny slowly held my hand and told me " You were alone last year and you saw it in your room. If it was an evil creature, don't you think it could have done something bad ??"

I thought about it.

Whatever I had experienced had a pattern

I heard a cleaning sound and, a watering sound as if someone wanted to keep the land healthy

I saw it in my room but I was unharmed.

Maybe I understood it all wrong.

My thought process was cut off by my uncle " Back in 2010, while building your house we didn't find any sculpture in your place. But that doesn't mean nothing was there. Think of it as a blessing. You and your family, house included are protected. Even though we can't comprehend the power or nature of this thing, all it did was to look after. Today you were going alone in the dark. Maybe you hallucinated it or it was the protection you needed."

I wished I was dreaming. Unfortunately, everything I was hearing or thinking was real.

"let me drop you to your home. It's already late." I obeyed my uncle.

I never saw it ever in my life again (till now at least.)
