

Fearsome Four

The Ghost of the Rickety House

Joseph Jethro



Text copyright © Joseph Jethro

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the author's prior written permission. Such written permission must also be obtained before any part of this publication is stored in a retrieval system.

All characters of this publication are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

First published in Great Britain in 2025

ISBN: 978-1-917452-21-2

josephjethro45@outlook.com

More Titles By Joseph Jethro:

- Fearsome Four: The Zombies of the Moonlit Marshes

Chapter One

'He hit me first!' Umari yelled, jabbing a finger at Ray and spitting in his face.

'No, *you* hit me first!' Ray shot back, his glare sharper than a porcupine's quills.

Abner, their older brother, stood a few steps away, arms folded like a strict teacher. He watched the two quarrel. Shaking his head with an air of exaggerated authority, he announced in his most serious voice, 'You both need a timeout.'

Ray and Umari paused, their eyes locking in a sharp, disapproving stare.

'*Excuse me!*' Ray's tone was sharp as he jabbed an accusing finger at Umari. 'Why do I need a timeout when *he's* the one who started it?'

'Don't act like an idiot, Abner. You're not my mum that you're telling me to stand in timeout!' Umari chimed in, crossing his arms defiantly.

'Don't call me an idiot!' Abner snapped back; his tone didn't sound like a 'wise teacher' anymore; instead, he sounded like an 'angry kid'. 'I'm your big brother, and you must listen to me!'

The argument escalated rapidly into a full-blown shouting match, their voices echoing through the trees and startling nearby birds into flight.

Meanwhile, Sani, the second eldest brother, was busy chasing a squirrel through the meadow. But when he heard the yelling, he couldn't resist investigating. He trotted over just in time to see the chaos escalate.

As Umari gave Abner a hefty shove, Abner's green glasses flew off his face like a startled grasshopper.

The glasses sailed through the air, flipping once, twice - then straight over Sani's head.

'Really?' Sani huffed. 'Are you guys fighting again?' He rolled his eyes and bent down to pick up Abner's glasses, but as his fingers reached for them, he froze mid-motion. The glasses were no longer there.

'Wait...what?' Sani whispered, twisting his head sharply. He turned and scanned the area, but the glasses were nowhere to be found.

'Guys!' he called out, but his brothers were still too busy arguing to notice. 'GUYS!' Sani roared, his voice cutting through their bickering like a thunderclap.

All three brothers stopped mid-argument and turned towards him, blinking like startled owls.

'Where are my glasses?' Abner asked, squinting at the ground.

'That's what I'm trying to tell you!' Sani groaned. 'They were right here a second ago, and now they're gone!'

'There they are!' Umari suddenly shouted, bouncing on his toes and pointing excitedly towards something in the distance.

'Oh no!' Abner moaned, following Umari's gaze. 'That squirrel's got my glasses! GET HIM!'

With a war cry that would've made a knight proud, Abner charged after the squirrel.

'I don't think that was such a great idea,' Ray said, grinning as the squirrel darted off with the glasses clamped in its tiny mouth. It bolted across the meadow, with Abner hot on its heels, and disappeared into a cluster of massive trees that stretched high into the sky.

Sani rolled his eyes, clearly unimpressed, and gestured for the others to follow as he sprinted after Abner.

‘The guy’s completely nuts,’ Ray said with a smirk, trailing behind Sani. ‘Who chases a squirrel? It’s not like the little furball will stop and hand over the glasses.’

‘I never knew squirrels liked glasses,’ Umari said, raising an eyebrow.

‘I mean, seriously, right? It’s bizarre!’ Sani laughed, keeping pace with Abner, who had already barrelled into the dense trees.

‘Oh, no!’ Ray muttered, squeezing his eyes shut. ‘Abner’s gonna run straight into a tree!’

Abner suddenly shrieked as he ran straight into a tree trunk with a loud, cartoonish thud, crumpling to the ground in a dazed heap.

‘Are you okay?’ Sani panted, kneeling beside him.

‘Yeah,’ Abner chuckled weakly, his cheeks red with embarrassment and frustration. ‘If I had my glasses, I don’t think I would’ve run into that stupid tree,’ he grumbled, slowly pulling himself up.

Ray couldn’t contain his grin. ‘Shame on you!’ he sneered.

Sani gave Ray a firm smack on the back of the head. ‘Cut it out, Ray,’ he said, his tone serious. ‘We must find that dumb squirrel and get his glasses back.’ He gazed at the towering trees, scanning for the elusive rodent.

‘This is the eleventh pair of glasses you’ve lost. Mum’s not gonna be happy about this,’ Umari sighed.

‘It’s your fault for pushing me,’ Abner muttered, walking behind Sani.

‘Hey, there it is!’ Umari yelled, pointing at a tree. The group looked up to see the squirrel perched on a branch, wearing Abner’s glasses like a cool dude and casually flicking a peanut into its mouth.

‘Is it just me, or does that creepy rodent look like it’s smirking at us?’ Umari said, raising an eyebrow.

‘Is it just me, or does it look like your eyebrows are about to fly off?’ Ray shot back, smirking.

Sani grinned. ‘Yeah, seriously, bro. Quit raising them like that. They’re almost touching the clouds.’

The group shifted their attention to the squirrel, which flicked a peanut straight at Abner, hitting him square on the nose. ‘Ouch, my nose!’ he yelped, hopping around and rubbing his face.

The squirrel, unbothered, started lobbing peanuts at them. They jumped and dodged, frantically trying to avoid the shower of snacks flying at them.

Suddenly, a hissing whisper slithered through the air, chilling them to the bone. All four of them froze, their breath catching in their throats. The squirrel squealed in fright and darted into a hole in the tree trunk, dropping Abner’s glasses, which clattered to the ground with an eerie echo.

‘W-what w-was that?’ Umari stammered, his voice trembling as he hid behind Sani.

‘It was nothing,’ Abner muttered, bending down to grab his glasses. He quickly put them on and scowled at Umari. ‘It was just the wind or your smelly fart. Now, let’s get back to the meadow before Dad starts asking Mum where in the world we have gone.’

‘Y-yeah, let’s g-get out of here!’ Umari’s voice trembled.

‘Stop it, Umari,’ Abner said firmly, his tone growing more assertive. ‘It was just the wind.’

But before anyone could move, cold, twisted laughter slithered through the air, sending an icy shiver down their spines. The sound was so unnatural and horrifying that it froze them in their tracks.