

WHY ME?

HAL AMES



It was 8:00 am, and I was sitting at my desk doing the things I do in the morning. I read my messages in my e-mail, and I read the newspaper to see if there were any new interesting stories. Most of all I like to do the crossword puzzle.

My daughter came into my office to say goodbye as she went to her bus for school. She gave me a hug and a kiss, and I said, “Have a great day!”

I waved at her as she walked out the door to the waiting bus. I was happy the driver picked her up and dropped her off in front of our house. I watch her get on and off every day. Working from home has its advantages.

I took a few minutes to surf the internet for interesting news articles about international events and sports until my wife was ready to leave for work.

I saw her in the hallway, so I went to the door to say, “Good bye” to her as she went out to her car. She blew me a kiss and with a big smile said, “Have a wonderful day honey, see you at six o’clock!”

I returned to my office to prepare for my classes I was going to have later that day.

While I was sitting at my desk, there was a knock at my door. It was a hard knock as if someone was desperate to come in. I looked out the window of my office, and standing at the door was a tall man in a long black overcoat, white shirt, black necktie, and a black hat. To me, he looked like a character from the movie ‘Men in Black’.

Even though he had on nice clothes, his appearance was more like a thug from an

action movie. I got the feeling that he was not at my home for a friendly visit.

He was standing in the cold, rubbing his hands together waiting for me to answer the door. I'm a suspicious person, so I was not too sure about this man. I had never seen him before, and I wasn't sure what he might want.

All this was making me very nervous, so I decided not to open the door. I continued to peek out the window, hiding in a place where he couldn't see me.

While he was standing at my door, another man dressed in the same clothes walked up to my door. The two men talked to each other for a few minutes. I couldn't understand what they were saying. I think it was another language, but whatever they were talking about didn't sound good, especially by the tone of their voices.

I had seen enough movies to recognize when something was not quite right.

One of the men went around to the back of my house. The other man was still standing at my front door waiting for me to answer. I wasn't sure what to do.

I thought to myself, "Should I call the police? Should I get my gun and tell them to leave? Do they want to hurt me?"

Then I heard a noise. It sounded like breaking glass, and then loud crashing sound. I thought I heard someone enter my house. They had broken down my front door.

I ran to my bathroom and closed the door. I sat on the floor and waited with the light turned off. I had no idea what was going on in my house, although I could hear voices and things being broken.

I sat in the darkness of the room like a scared child. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before.

Then I remembered, my gun and my phone were in my bedroom. I couldn't get to them. If left the bathroom, the bad guys would certainly have seen me.

How was I going to get help? People were in my house. Things were being broken and I heard voices. They were searching for something, but I didn't know what it was. If I knew what they wanted, I would have gladly given it to them.

My dog was barking and growling just like I wanted him to do. Then there was the

sound of a gun firing, followed by a yelp. Then silence.

I froze. I thought to myself, “My dog. Why did they have to kill my dog? What about me? Am I next?”

I didn’t know how long I was in the bathroom when suddenly the door flew open. I realize that I had not locked the door. In the doorway, I saw one of the men in black. He was big and he looked mean.

He said to me, in a very strong accent, “Get up, and get out of there. Come with me!”

I did as I was told, stood up and left the bathroom.

He took me to my living room. The room was a mess. Everything was on the floor and broken. The furniture was torn open. My dog was lying on the ground. I surmised he was dead. I guess they are afraid of pit bulls.

I didn’t know what to say or do. I just stood there waiting for them to tell me what they wanted.

While I was standing in the middle of my house, one of them came over to me and pushed me so hard I fell to the ground. I hit the floor with my head and it started to bleed. I held my head to try to stop the bleeding. Then I rolled over and looked up at him.

I asked him, “What are you looking for?”

Instead of answering my question, the man asked, “Where did you hide it?”

I replied in a voice louder than I wanted, “I don’t know what you are talking about!”

He slapped me across the face and then responded, “Shut up or we’ll really hurt you. We’ll find it whether you answer us or not.”

They continued to search my house.

I sat on the floor, leaning up against a wall, and watched my house be torn apart. It wasn’t easy, but it was better than being hurt again.

There were five men in black destroying my house. They were moving fast and talking to each other in a language I didn’t understand. I’m not sure where they were

from.

Every so often, they stopped and looked over at me. I just shrugged my shoulders, not understanding.

Then one of them came over to me. He picked me up by my shirt, and shoved me against the wall. He hit me in the stomach so hard I lost my breath.

I fell to the ground struggling to get some air.

When I was finally able to talk, I asked, “What do you want from me? I haven’t done anything to you.”

One of the men said to me, again in a strong accent, “Shut up or I will really hurt you next time.”

Not wanting to get hurt worse, I sat on the floor against the wall and kept silent.

I watched as they hit the walls with hammers to see if anything was hidden inside them. They removed the lights from the ceiling, they took the plumbing fixtures out of my bathroom, and they dismantled my kitchen. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. They were destroying my home as I watched. There was nothing I could do.

What were they be looking for? I had no idea. What could it be?

Just when I thought it couldn’t get any worse, they put gasoline on the floor and put a match to it. The five men ran out of my house, jumped into a white van and left.

I managed to crawl out the front door before I was burned. The fire was too big for me to put out. The smoke made me cough, so I had to run out to the street as my house went up in flames.

One of my neighbors saw me and tried to help, but it was too late. I sat down on the side of the road and watched my house as the flames jumped out of the roof.

My neighbor had called 911 for the police and fire department to come.

The fire truck arrived, but they couldn’t do anything. My house was burning too hot.

The police came and asked me many questions. They had heard about this kind of thing happening before in other parts of the city, but not to someone like me.

While the house was burning, my wife drove up and jumped out of the car, relieved to see that I was okay.

She was in a panic and asked me, “I heard about the fire on the radio on my way to work. What happened? Why is our house on fire, and what happened to your face?”

I didn’t have an answer for her right then. I gave her a big hug and then we watched as the house collapsed from the flames. There was nothing anyone could do to save it. My house burned to the ground.

It took a while for us to get our lives back together again. With the money from our insurance and help from our family we moved into a newer house in a different part of the city where we thought we would be much safer.

Later I found out some of the men who had destroyed my house had been arrested after they had done the same thing to another house.

The police told me the men were members of a drug cartel in the city.

I asked them if they knew why the men in black had set fire to my house.

The police told me that when they were questioning the men in black, they asked them why they had destroyed my house. They told the police they thought I was a drug dealer who was competing with them.

They told the police they had made a mistake. They had been given the wrong address.”

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. crossword puzzle _____ | a. chairs, tables, sofas |
| 2. desperate _____ | b. toilet, sink, tub |
| 3. furniture _____ | c. used to start a fire |
| 4. shove _____ | d. group, organization |
| 5. hammer _____ | e. eager, impatient |
| 6. plumbing fixture _____ | f. take apart |
| 7. dismantle _____ | g. tool used with nails |
| 8. match (n) _____ | h. word game |
| 9. arrest _____ | i. push very hard |
| 10. cartel _____ | j. put in jail |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. I like to do crossword puzzles. | T / F |
| 2. My daughter was going to work. | T / F |
| 3. The men were wearing red coats. | T / F |
| 4. My house burned to the ground. | T / F |
| 5. I was selling drugs. | T / F |
| 6. My wife was in the house with me. | T / F |
| 7. The men left in a white van. | T / F |
| 8. The fire department went to the wrong house. | T / F |
| 9. Some of the men in black were arrested. | T / F |
| 10. My dog died. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. What do I read in the morning? _____
 - a) book
 - b) magazine
 - c) letters
 - d) newspaper

2. How many men were in my house? _____
 - a) 2
 - b) 5
 - c) 7
 - d) 12

3. What happened to my head? _____
 - a) it started to bleed
 - b) I had a headache
 - c) I was dizzy
 - d) all of the above

4. What did they hit my walls with? _____
 - a) a hammer
 - b) a box
 - c) a phone
 - d) my head

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What was I doing in the morning before the knock on my door?

2. Who did I see at my door?

3. What did I hear breaking?

4. Where did I hide?

5. Where was my gun?

6. Who did I hug and kiss?

7. What happened to my dog?

8. What did the men say when I asked why they were destroying my house?

9. Who called 911?

10. Why did the men destroy my house?
