In a village nestled between misty hills, a solitary girl named Elara often wandered the fields, her voice a mischievous echo. She delighted in weaving tales of phantom creatures, her words painting shadows where none existed. One sweltering afternoon, as the sun baked the earth, Elara climbed to the ridge overlooking the farmland and cried, "Shadow beast! Shadow beast! It stalks the wheat!" The weary farmers, their hands calloused from tilling, paused their labor. They exchanged glances, then hurried uphill, their breaths ragged. When they reached her, Elara clutched her sides, laughing until tears streaked her cheeks. "No beast here," she gasped. "Just a jest!" The farmers, their trust frayed, descended in silence, their scythes glinting like reproach.

Days later, Elara repeated her cry. The farmers, though reluctant, ascended again, their boots dragging through dust. This time, Elara’s laughter rang sharper, colder. "Fools," she taunted, "you’ll never learn!" One farmer, a grizzled man named Jorin, stepped forward. "Girl," he warned, voice thick with exhaustion, "when real danger comes, no one will heed your song." They returned to their work, leaving Elara alone, her smirk fading into a frown.

That night, the wind howled like a living thing. Elara, huddled by a bonfire, felt a prickle on her neck. She spun—there, in the wheat’s edge, a silhouette taller than a man, its eyes twin embers. Panic clawed her throat. She screamed, "Shadow beast! Help! Help!" Her voice cracked, desperate, but the farmers, now wary of her cries, did not stir. The creature lunged, its claws slicing through the dark. Elara’s final cry was swallowed by the wind.