

CHAPTER 1

SPARE KNICKERS

As the sun rose in the Kingdom of the Dark, the creatures of Nocturnia were all getting ready for bed; all apart from one little vampire and her pet pumpkin, Squashy.

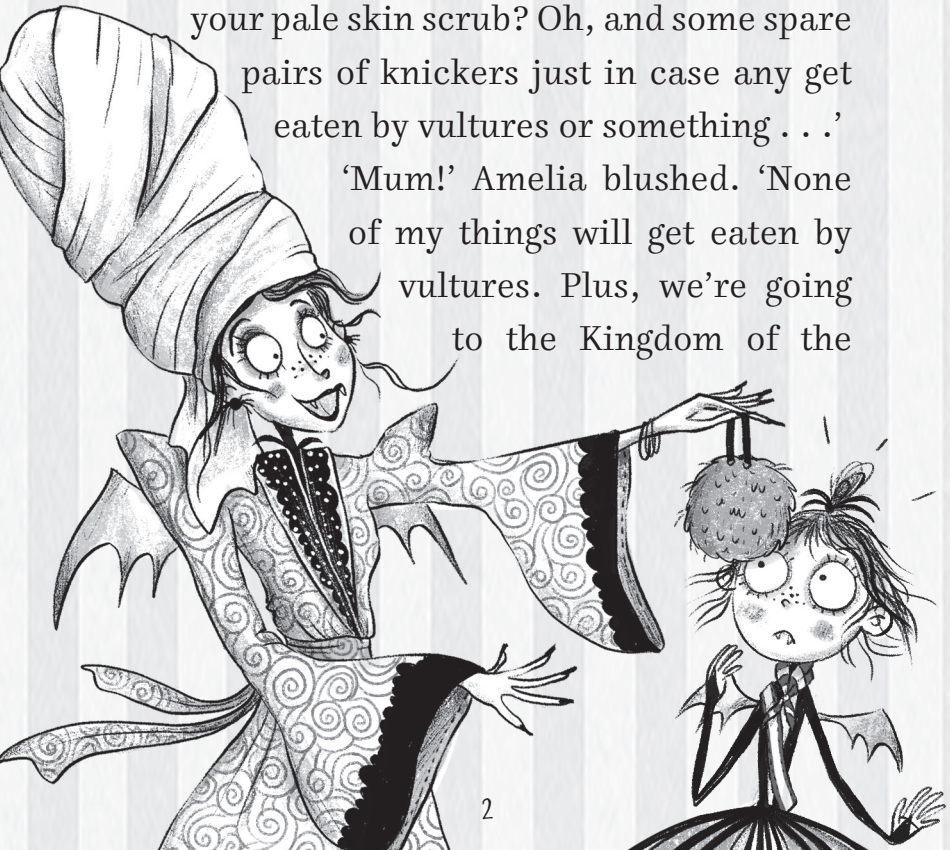
'*Muuuum*!' Amelia Fang called down the spiral staircase of the Fang Mansion. 'Have you seen my pumpkin backpack? I need it for the Rainbow Rangers camping trip, and I have to be in Central Nocturnia Graveyard in ten minutes to meet everyone!'

Suddenly a yellow door halfway down the corridor burst open – Countess Frivoleeta, a beautiful vampiress with VERY tall hair appeared. She was wearing a long sparkly

dressing gown with HUGE shoulder pads and high-heeled fluffy slippers.

'Darkling!' she oozed scooping Amelia up in her arms. 'I can't believe you're going away for the *whole* half-moon holiday!' She kissed Amelia three times on each cheek, leaving behind shiny black lipstick marks. 'Now, did you remember your fang polish? How about your pale skin scrub? Oh, and some spare pairs of knickers just in case any get eaten by vultures or something . . .'

'Mum!' Amelia blushed. 'None of my things will get eaten by vultures. Plus, we're going to the Kingdom of the



Light. You don't really get any vultures over there. But I really do need to find my pumpkin backpack or I won't be able to pack a spare pair of *anything*.'

The countess pondered for a moment and then disappeared into her bedroom. A few seconds later, she emerged from another room further along the corridor. The doors of the Fang Mansion were rather unusual; they moved around whenever they pleased and Amelia was lucky if her bedroom was behind the same door for more than a few weeks at a time. Some doors disappeared, new ones appeared and you never knew quite where you were going to end up!

'You can use *this* bag if you like? It's one of my favourites!' said the countess stroking a spiky clutch bag which looked like a flattened hedgehog. Amelia was unsure she'd fit her hand inside it let alone a week's worth of

camping essentials. As Amelia tried to figure out a way to let her mother down gently, her dad appeared from the bathroom with a crossword puzzled tucked under one arm.

'Ah! My favourite sausage sizzler!' said Count Drake the Third when he saw Amelia. 'You must be excited to escape organ practice for a whole week!' He winked mischievously.

Countess Frivoleeta glared at her husband. 'Drake my most dreadful flabbergaster, Amelia will be catching up with her organ practice after the half-moon holiday, won't you, darkling?"

Amelia sighed. 'Yeess, Mum.'

The Fang Mansion Grimfather clock chimed causing Amelia to shriek.

'It's already 5am! *I'm going to be late*!' she said, running along the corridor. 'Where's my backpack?!'

Squashy bounced around in circles,

waggling his stalk and squeaking in shared panic.

'Do you mean *this* backpack, young Amelia?' came a familiar voice from the bottom of the stairs.

Wooo, the Fang family's ghost butler and the most respected ghost butler in the Kingdom of the Dark, floated up towards them holding a round orange bag.

'Oh Wooo!' said Amelia, running over to him. 'You're the best!'

'I found it in the basement being cradled by a bogeyman. He'd adopted it as his pet.' Wooo turned to the count and countess. 'I'm afraid the bogeyman infestation is getting worse. We'll need to move them on quickly otherwise they'll start to take over the whole house. They'll wear *all* your clothes, Countess, and then rip them up. *For fun*.'

Countess Frivoleeta looked as though she



might faint, and her left eyeball was spinning around so quickly it was dangerously close to falling out.

'It's okay, my dearest little pus-fart. We'll sort it.' Count Drake nodded at Woo and took a deep breath. 'I'll call the Bogey Busters tonight.'

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With her pumpkin backpack filled to the brim, a few spare pairs of knickers, JUST IN CASE, and a very bouncy Squashy, Amelia kissed her mum and dad goodbye. She was so nervous, her tummy felt full of fluttering vampire moths. She'd never been away from home for this long before without her parents; not even when she ventured to Glitteropolis to find Tangine's mum.

Countess Frivoleeta straightened Amelia's

Rainbow Rangers sash. 'I expect this will be FULL of badges by the time you return.' The countess smiled. 'You're going to have the *best* time.'

'I hope so!' said Amelia. 'I'll miss you and dad though.'

'Oh, you'll forget all about missing us when you're having fun with your friends, my little toe-stopper,' said Amelia's mum. 'You won't want to come home!'

'And don't go eating anything you shouldn't,' said Count Drake.

Amelia giggled. 'Don't worry, Dad. I won't. Plus, our Ranger leaders, Ricky and Graham, will be looking after us the whole time.'

'Well, you take care, my little pimple-popper.' Her dad smiled and gave Amelia a squeeze. He opened a vine-covered door that revealed misty Central Nocturnia Graveyard.

'Right then,' said Amelia. 'My very first camping trip! This is going to be the best half-moon holiday ever!' and with a wide-eyed Squashy tucked under one arm, she stepped into the gloomy haze.

