CHAPTER 1



Halloween

The graveyard was still and deathly quiet. Only the hoot of a solitary owl could be heard in the distance. The moon was full, its light casting a milky glow over the ancient gravestones and magnificent mausoleums.

It came from below, a grey insipid wisp that grew in stature with every second, until finally its form settled into the shape of a tall man wearing a black cloak and top hat. The spectre floated off the ground, as if walking on air. His face was dark and menacing, eyes red with fury. From his open mouth thousands of insects took flight. He was looking for something: his next victim.

In life, this ghostly being had been a serial killer, a cruel murderer who preyed on the weak and innocent. Now the ghostly figure roamed the graveyard, searching for someone, anyone, to kill. But that wasn't possible. Unbeknown to him, he was dead; his destiny, his torture, was to roam this place for eternity.

He glided between the headstones looking all about him.

Sniffing the air, he seemed to have caught a scent. *What was it? Male? No . . . Female? Ah . . . both!*

Spying round the edge of a huge monolith, he saw them: three young people riding bicycles. The spirit grinned and smacked his lips. Tonight, they would be his.

As the three unsuspecting cyclists came closer, the demented ghost rushed towards them, arms out, eyes wide with rage. He heard their screams but could not seem to catch them. Enraged, he stopped, shaking with violent anger, watching them as they pedalled furiously away out of his reach. Maybe next time, he thought, as he made his long way back to his own pitiful unmarked grave.



Eve Proud, Tom Lake and Clovis Gayle's voices were shrill with nervous excitement. The three friends stood astride their bikes, looking wildly at each other, trying to catch their breath.

'What the hell was that?' screamed Eve, her eyes wild and cheeks flushed.

'I know, right! Was it real? It *seemed* real,' said Tom, looking behind him to check they were safe.

'Let me get this straight in my head. Did you just see what I saw? A tall man wearing a top hat?' said Eve, running her hands through her short blonde hair.

'Yes, I definitely saw him! And before you ask, Clovis, it *wasn't* a guy in a fancy-dress costume. It was a ghost! I *know*

it was.' Tom glared at Clovis, who out of the three of them, was the most rational. Sometimes Clovis's insistence on logical explanations annoyed Tom, who was a total believer in the supernatural.

'I wasn't about to say that, Tom. I was actually going to agree with you. It could have been a memory being played out in front of us or . . .' Clovis continued in a whisper '. . . a man in a fancy-dress costume.'

'Oh, c'mon, Clovis, you saw it, it had red eyes, for God's sake!' Tom was becoming very impatient and more than a little frustrated with his friend.

'I can't deny it was very strange and it certainly scared me,' said Clovis, pushing his glasses back up the bridge of his nose.

'Well, whatever it was, it scared me to death,' said Eve. 'I don't think I've screamed that loud since we went on that horrendous ride at Thorpe Park. Come on, let's get out of here before it comes back. I don't think I'll sleep at all tonight.'

As the three friends pedalled out of the cemetery, Tom and Clovis were still arguing.



It was Friday the thirty-first of October, Halloween, and St Saviour's High School in East London was fully invested in the celebrations. Pumpkins lined the corridors, cardboard bats and spiders dangled from every classroom ceiling, and

even a few of the teachers were wearing some very colourful costumes.

Eve, Tom and Clovis were in the last lesson of the day and quite enjoying it. Mr Mason, their history teacher, was reading from an old book about the Pagans and the origins of Halloween.

The teacher could tell by the look on some of his students' faces that the bell was about to ring. Eyes were glued to the clock on the wall. Any minute now, he thought.

Suddenly the loud clatter of the bell echoed through the classroom, and chairs scraped back, chatter and laughter erupting between friends.

'All right, guys, don't forget,' shouted Mr Mason above the din, 'I want five hundred words on Paganism and how it has impacted on our culture today. And I want it in my inbox first thing Monday morning.'

Everyone seemingly ignored him as they rampaged at high speed out of the classroom. However, Clovis hung back. He wanted to ask the teacher some more questions in private.

Clovis liked nothing more than research and spent most of his free time, when he wasn't with Eve and Tom, finding things out on the internet. He even designed apps and had his own blog, all under a secret name. The last thing Clovis wanted was his classmates to know what he really was: a nerd. He thought he seemed weird enough already; he was six feet tall, wore thick black-rimmed glasses, and had a name that was old-fashioned — although according to his mum,

it was an honour to be named after his great-grandfather and he shouldn't be ashamed of it. To top it all off, he had a very soft voice. But Clovis had big dreams. One day he was going to become an inventor. He was going to invent things that would change the world.

His mum, Claudette, came from a respectable Jamaican family and wanted Clovis to do well at school. But she also wanted him to be happy and fit in. So, to please his mum, Clovis did just that. Or at least, he *tried* to fit in. Of course, Tom and Eve knew what a nerd he really was and they loved him for it. But he wanted to keep it a secret from everyone else.

After asking Mr Mason which websites he would recommend for further reading and discussing the similarity of Pagan festivals to Christian ones, Clovis left the classroom happy, and made his way out of the building to where Eve and Tom were waiting patiently for him.

'You ready, then?' asked Eve. Her black biker jacket was fastened up tightly and a scarf was wrapped snugly round her neck.

Tom was tapping his football from foot to foot and counting aloud: 'Thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six . . .'

Clovis barged his friend and kicked the ball away and the two teenagers wrestled each other.

'Guys!' shouted Eve, her impatience getting the better of her. 'C'mon, you both coming to mine later? Remember we're doing the *thing* tonight?' she added under her breath.

Tom and Clovis stopped messing about instantly.

'Yep,' said Clovis. 'Absolutely. I'm so intrigued.'

'Me too,' whispered Tom. 'But, I don't mind admitting, I'm a bit nervous about it now, especially after what we saw in the cemetery last night.'

'I've been thinking a lot about that,' said Clovis, 'and I think it was definitely someone dressed up, trying to scare us.'

'Yeah,' said Tom, 'I hate to admit it, but I think you might be right. It was just *too* good. The red eyes ruined it, really.'

'It was a great prank though,' said Eve. 'I totally believed it, nearly gave me a heart attack.'

'Hey guys,' whispered Clovis. He leaned into his friends, not wanting anyone else to overhear what he was about to say. 'I know we want to scare ourselves tonight because it's Halloween, but do we *really* want to be messing with a ouija board? I mean, you know I look for the logic in things but I did my research last night and there's enough evidence out there to suggest that a ouija board really *does* act as some kind of portal to talk to dead people, and not always nice ones at that.'

'Are you kidding me?' hissed back Tom. 'You were the one who said it was all rubbish and that we should try it to prove that! It was *your* idea after watching that documentary on haunted houses. You said it would be fun and something for Halloween.'

'And,' pitched in Eve, '*quote*, "Seeing is believing." I've spent ages finding a board and the spooky location.'

'All right, I give in,' said Clovis, holding his hands up in surrender. 'We take the board with us tonight. But don't blame me if we get more than we bargained for.'

CHAPTER 2



An Inventor and a Bulldog

The three friends began the short walk back towards their homes. They all lived close to each other; Tom and Clovis since they were babies and Eve since she moved in with her uncle five years ago.

Tom lived with his mum and dad in a small house on the estate behind Eve and Clovis. Clovis lived with his mum and nineteen-year-old brother Jahmeel in one of the high-rise flats next to Eve's house.

Eve lived with her Uncle Rufus in a strange old twisted building that dated back to the fifteen-hundreds. With it being so old and having such historical importance to the community, the council could not demolish it, so when they constructed more properties, they just built around the old house instead.

The ancient building *did* look out of place, comical almost: a tall twisted black and white Tudor house that over the centuries had buckled and bent. The uneven windows looked out across the street towards huge high-rise flats that had seen better days. The little historical house that once would

have been surrounded by farmland was now squashed between two more ugly high-rise flats. However, the quirky little home suited its residents perfectly.

Uncle Rufus was a little eccentric, a university professor by day and an inventor by night. Eve would often go to bed listening to the noises coming from his attic. Old jazz music softly filled the house, accompanied by the sounds of urgent hammering and sawing, mixed with some very loud rude words. The attic was his sanctuary, a place where he could research, invent new equipment and just be alone with his thoughts. Uncle Rufus loved the room at the top of the old house and didn't let anyone in except his British bulldog, Boris.

Of course, Clovis thought Uncle Rufus was a legend and had tried in vain to get access to the famous attic many times. What was he making up there? Eve would often report back to Clovis and Tom about some of the apparatus she saw her uncle carrying up the winding staircase. One day he brought home a trombone, a space hopper and a large copper bath, and Eve and her friends all sat at the top of the stairs listening to every sound they heard and trying to guess what he was making. They never did find out.

Now Eve clicked the front gate shut and walked up the stone steps. She put her key in the ancient lock and pushed open the heavy front door. As usual, Boris didn't move, but just lay there with his eyes half open, watching Eve take off her jacket. His little excuse for a tail wiggled as Eve stroked him.

'How's my lovely boy, then? I missed you today.'

Boris acknowledged Eve by licking her face and farting.

'Nice! Wow . . . that *stinks*.' Eve held her nose and walked up the long hallway, past photos of her mum, dad and her aunt Jess. Memories of happier times when they were all alive.

Five years earlier her parents and her aunt had been tragically killed in a train crash. Eve's mum and dad had died instantly, but Eve's aunt, Uncle Rufus's wife, had remained in a coma for three months until late one night she unexpectedly and sadly died too.

Uncle Rufus had always been a happy person and had been close to his sister, Eve's mum, so after the accident it was decided that Eve should go and live with him. He'd been good to her and helped her through those first few dreadful months when the pain of losing her parents was so raw and overwhelming. However, after Aunt Jess died, Uncle Rufus seemed to change. It was as if a light had gone out inside him. Although still loving and caring towards Eve, he seemed to have shut everyone else out of his life. Only Eve and his work seemed to matter and now he seemed to spend more and more time in his attic.

Eve set about making dinner for herself and her uncle. She knew it was unlikely that he'd have eaten anything all day. He just got so involved in his work, he forgot to eat. So, she scrambled eggs and buttered toast, then served it out onto two plates and put one of them on a tray with a napkin,

cutlery and a glass of water. She took the tray up the creaking staircase to her uncle, round and round. Boris panted behind her. The poor dog hated those stairs, but Eve also knew he would go through anything to get to his master. Once at the top, she knocked on the attic door and called softly, 'Uncle, your dinner. I've brought it up for you.'

A clattering noise came from within the room followed by soft footsteps. Slowly the door creaked open and a pair of old-fashioned spectacles adorning a handsome, middle-aged face peered through the gap.

'Oh, how lovely, Eve! I'm famished. I would join you but . . . It's just I'm *so* close to finishing a project. I don't want to lose my momentum.' He put his hands out and took the tray from her.

'Good day?' he asked, opening the door a little wider with his foot so as to allow Boris in.

'Yep, it was OK I suppose . . . Er, Uncle, is it all right if I go out trick-or-treating with Tom and Clovis later?'

'Of course, of course, but make sure you're not back too late. You know how I worry.'

'Thanks, Unc, I promise.' Eve kissed her uncle's thin face and closed the door.

He was a kind man, Eve thought, and she loved him dearly, being the only family she had left. She wouldn't do anything to upset him and she *did* feel uncomfortable about lying to him, but she and her friends had been looking forward to this night for ages.

Clovis had been the one to introduce them to the world of the paranormal. Eve and Tom hadn't realised that ghost hunting was something you could actually do. Millions of people around the world went off in search of ghosts, Clovis had told them, and these people had all sorts of special equipment to capture paranormal activity when they spent the night in some very creepy places. Eve and Tom had watched the programmes and internet clips that Clovis had told them about. Instantly Eve had been transfixed, and along with her two friends had been fascinated by the idea of trying a ghost hunt themselves. Tonight was to be their first ghost hunt. After last night's excitement in the cemetery, she was keener than ever for their Halloween adventure to begin.

Taking two steps at a time, Eve rushed into the kitchen, bolted her dinner down and then ran back up the stairs into her bedroom where she began to pack her rucksack: three torches, a night-vision camera, and a ouija board. She'd bought the board on the internet and the details and planning for tonight had mostly been her idea, even down to the spooky location. A few days ago, she had unexpectedly stumbled across a drawing of a house, a map and some notes left on the kitchen table. Normally her uncle never left his university work lying around, but on that particular morning he had left in a hurry and must have accidently forgotten the notes. They were for some sort of social history project, Eve figured, but as her uncle was a professor of science, not

history, Eve wasn't sure why he had them. Anyway, according to the unfamiliar handwriting, the house was in Epping Forest and abandoned. It looked quite spooky from the picture and there were some footnotes about it being haunted. Eve had made a copy of the information and decided then and there that this would be the perfect location for their first ghost hunt. She hoped it would be a night to remember.