

THE
GHOST HUNTER
CHRONICLES



THE
HOUSE
IN THE
WOODS

YVETTE FIELDING

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Look out for more chilling reads in the
Ghost Hunter Chronicles series!

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For You

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 accidentally 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.

CHAPTER 3



Happy Families and Lies

Tom opened his front door and placed his football on top of the shoe rack. He took off his blazer and hung his backpack on the coat hook. His mum came into the cramped hallway drying her hands on a tea towel.

Angela Lake, or ‘Ange’ as her friends called her, was a frazzled and nervous woman, who spent all hours of the day running around after her husband Dan – or so it seemed to Tom.

‘Quick, get in the kitchen, I’ve made you sausage, egg and chips for dinner. Eat it up sharpish, like, or your dad will ’ave ’em.’

Tom kissed his mum on the cheek and crept silently past the open doorway of the front room where his dad sat in an old threadbare armchair watching the horse racing on TV. He was eating a sausage sandwich and seemed unaware of the brown sauce that dripped down his large wobbly chin.

‘Oi!’ Dad shouted. ‘Come ’ere, don’t go creeping about. Did ya get me paper?’

Tom took a deep breath and stepped into the small room.

Damp clothes hung on the radiators, causing condensation to run down the windows. The old mantel clock above the electric fire struck four. Dad wiped his chin and cleaned his greasy fingers on his dirty white T-shirt.

‘Here,’ said Tom, tossing the rolled-up newspaper, which landed with a slap on his dad’s large thighs. Dad grunted and took another bite out of his sandwich.

Tom couldn’t stand this man, and he hated the way he treated his mum. One day he would get out of this tiny house, taking his mum with him. It wouldn’t bother him if he never saw his deadbeat dad again.

Tom rushed his dinner down, then sneaked upstairs, changed into his jeans, pulled a thick jumper over his head and crept down again.

He slipped silently past his dad, who was now snoring, his head back with his mouth wide open.

‘Mum, I’m off out with Eve and Clovis. We’re just going trick-or-treating.’ He hated lying to her, but he didn’t think he was really doing anything wrong. He was just going on a little adventure with his best mates and he knew that his dad would never let him go.

‘Don’t be late, love. You know how he gets if you come in late.’

‘I won’t, Mum. I’ll see you later.’ He hugged her then tiptoed quietly out of the house, grabbing his coat and bike.



Clovis knew he was going to be late getting to Eve's as he hadn't even got home and changed yet. Finding the lift had broken down *again*, he'd started the arduous task of climbing the ten flights of stairs to his flat. After what seemed an age, he sighed a heavy sigh of relief as he eventually stepped onto his floor. It was a good job he didn't live on the fifteenth floor, that didn't even bear thinking about.

He passed neighbours chatting and little children playing, and he couldn't help but smile as he got closer to his front door because the smell of Mum's cooking was amazing – and his stomach rumbled in agreement. Her cooking was just the best and Eve and Tom were always asking to come over, especially when they knew she was cooking her famous jerk chicken. Clovis shut the door behind him and heard music playing in the front room. Taking his coat off, he popped his head around the corner and was amazed at the sight before him.

His older brother Jahmeel was dancing in the middle of the room, completely unaware that Clovis had come in. Jahmeel always fancied himself as a bit of a star, but in reality, Clovis thought he looked like someone desperate for the toilet. He tried not to laugh but the scene was too funny and he failed dismally, snorting through his nose.

Jahmeel jumped. 'Bloody hell! You scared me!'

'You scared *me*,' laughed Clovis. 'I thought you were having some sort of fit.'

‘Ha, ha,’ said Jahmeel, turning down the music. ‘How was school?’

‘It was good, actually,’ said Clovis, taking his glasses off and cleaning them on his jumper.

‘Oh, yeah, why? Got a girlfriend yet?’ Jahmeel loved to tease his younger brother.

‘Nope, but I’ve got a really interesting homework piece to write about Pagans. Fascinating, did you know, for example—’

‘Come on, Einstein,’ interrupted Jahmeel, ‘Mum’s been cooking all day. We’ve been waiting for you so we can eat.’ Jahmeel loved his brother, but sometimes he wished he could just relax and chill out.

The kitchen was steamed up, and a large bowl of different-coloured vegetables swam in a delicious-smelling sauce; potatoes and curries sat in little side dishes.

Claudette Gayle believed in feeding her boys well, because if they were well-fed their brains could work harder. Her two sons were her proudest achievement and she doted on their every need, but she was no pushover. Claudette was in charge of her household and her boys knew it.

‘Mum, this looks amazing!’ said Clovis. He folded his long lean legs under the small table.

Claudette looked proudly at the feast set before them. The boys piled their plates high and tucked in.

‘Mum, remember I’m going out tonight, you said I could,’ said Clovis as he dished more scrumptious stew onto his plate.

‘Yes, I remember. Are you with Eve and Tom?’

‘Yeah, trick-or-treating.’ Clovis kept his head down. If his mum or brother saw his face, they would know he was lying.

‘I said you could go. But don’t be out too late. And make sure your phone is charged,’ said Claudette.

‘Where are you going?’ asked Jahmeel, chasing a juicy pepper round his plate.

‘Oh, you know just round the estate.’ Clovis kept stabbing at his food, not daring to look up.

‘I want you in by ten o’clock at the latest, you hear me, Clovis?’ Claudette’s voice was sharp and stern.

Clovis finally looked up, glad that his glasses had steamed up so his family couldn’t see his eyes. If they knew he was getting the tube to Epping Forest, they would go mad.

‘Great, thanks, Mum.’ Clovis smiled and continued to shovel food into his lying mouth.

CHAPTER 4



A Haunted House and a Call for Help

The streetlights shone down on the puddled pavements, making everything glow a vibrant golden orange, while the damp streets reflected fireworks exploding in the night sky, transforming the deprived concrete tenements and highlighting the trick-or-treaters who knocked on doors hoping for another handful of sweets.

The three friends were all standing outside Eve's house with their bikes. Clovis and Tom were bundled up in their thick winter coats and both wore beanie hats, determined to keep the cold weather out. Eve insisted her black biker jacket would keep her warm, but the two boys knew she would be sniffling by the end of the night.

'Have you got everything?' asked Tom, his breath swirling and disappearing into the cold night air.

'Yes, a torch each, one camera, and the board,' answered Eve.

'Right then, let's go!' said Clovis, pushing down on his pedal and setting off at a fast pace. After a five-minute bike ride, they arrived at Whitechapel tube station and were just

in time to catch the train. They loaded their bikes on and were lucky enough to find seats next to each other.

‘What did you tell your mum?’ Eve asked Clovis. They all knew he couldn’t lie to save his life.

‘I said what you told me to say, that we’re trick-or-treating,’ said Clovis.

‘Did she believe you?’

‘I think so.’

‘I can’t wait,’ whispered Tom. ‘I’ve always wanted to try a Ouija board. But I’m a bit worried now about what you said, Clovis. What if something evil *does* come through? What if something follows us home?’

‘Don’t be daft,’ whispered back Eve. ‘We’ll be all right. Nothing happens to the people on the ghost-hunting documentaries, does it? Chances are it won’t even work, it’s just going to be a laugh. Your problem is you watch too many horror movies.’

‘Yeah, she’s right, those movies scramble your brain, make you imagine all sorts of weird stuff.’ Clovis was about to begin a speech on how the brain reacts to certain images and noise stimuli, but the others knew their friend well and were not in the mood for one of his long-winded scientific ramblings.

Tom cut in quickly before Clovis could get going. ‘Want one?’ he asked, handing packs of cheese and onion crisps to his friends.

The train rumbled and screeched on for forty-five minutes. Eve, Tom and Clovis chattered happily about their day and

what they hoped to experience later. They watched as Halloween party-goers got on and off the train, and they laughed and nudged each other as they saw Frankenstein's monster trying to kiss a zombie, who in turn was attempting to take a drink from a bottle. She failed dismally, spilling it all over the floor and causing a fairy to slip and be picked up by a small hairy gorilla. The mood was a happy one, everyone celebrating much too loudly.

'Next stop,' said Eve, standing up and stumbling slightly as the train jolted abruptly. They all stood in the train carriage watching their reflections as the backdrop of the inky blackness rushed by.

At last the train began to slow down and jerked to a stop. The doors slid open to reveal the station sign *Loughton*, then the tannoy speaker reminded its passengers to 'mind the gap'. Weaving in and out of the party-goers and commuters, Eve, Tom and Clovis pushed their bikes along the Victorian tunnel system until eventually they were standing outside in the cold October air. Now just a short bike ride to Epping Forest, where their adventure really could begin.

The old house apparently stood right in the middle of the forest, alone, derelict and dilapidated; a former shell of what once would have been a beautiful cottage.

The friends sped towards it through the dark forest, chatting and shouting to each other in excitement. They had been riding for ten minutes when Eve suddenly put her brakes on and rummaged in her backpack, pulling out a piece

of paper. 'According to Uncle Rufus's notes and sketches, it should be around here somewhere.'

'Well, I can't see anything but trees,' said Tom.

'Yes, but if nobody knows about this place, it's not going to be in plain sight, is it? It will be hidden behind trees or bushes or something,' suggested Clovis.

They put their bikes down, pointing their torches and searching frantically for a clue as to where the house could be.

'There!' Eve shouted eventually, pointing to a clearing in the trees. Everyone came to a stop and followed Eve's torchlight. 'A chimney, I'm sure of it. Can you see it?' Eve's voice was at a whisper, the boys could tell she was excited.

'OK. But are we really sure about this?' asked Clovis, who was by now a little nervous himself. Not only had he lied to his mum and his brother about where he was going, which was bad enough, but if they knew he was about to enter a creepy old house in the middle of Epping Forest to use a Ouija board, they would both completely flip out.

'YES!' shouted Eve over her shoulder, and Clovis muttered to himself as he followed his friends through the thick bracken towards the looming old dilapidated house.

Close up, the house was bigger than the three friends had been expecting and from what they could make out by torchlight, it would once have been an impressive gamekeeper's cottage. But now part of the roof had caved in and the trees and ivy had begun to possess the large front room. Perched high on the building, demonic stone gargoyles sat, crouched

as if about to jump on any unsuspecting guests. The gargoyles' tongues protruded out of their beaky mouths, showing their displeasure with anyone who happened to be paying a visit.

'Very charming, I'm sure,' said Eve as her torch lit up a gargoyle who seemed to be staring straight at her.

'Shall we go in then?' asked Tom.

'After you,' Clovis said, moving aside to let his best friend go first.

'No, after *you*,' replied Tom, a smile spreading across his face.

'Oh, for God's sake you two,' said Eve, pushing past them. 'I'll go first, you idiots. Anyone would think you were *scared*.' She then began to do an impression of a chicken, clucking and flapping her arms about.

All of a sudden, a fox cried out and the flutter of a bird moving in a nearby tree made them all scream.

'It's all right, it's all right, only the wildlife,' laughed Clovis, who was trying to relax a bit by thinking logical thoughts.

Once inside, the group decided to base themselves in what would once have been the living room. Now, old lager cans, rubbish, rubble and wood littered the floor. It was cold, and the room smelled of mould and damp.

In no time, Eve had set up the night-vision camera on a small tripod in the corner, making sure that the whole room was in shot.

'Never mind the dead, do you think *we'll* be all right?

I mean, what if we come across someone alive?’ asked Tom, as he began to clear a space for them to sit down. ‘What if somebody is living rough in here?’

‘Well it doesn’t look like anyone’s been here for a very long time,’ said Eve. ‘Look, this newspaper is over fifteen years old. I think we’ll be OK.’

‘Right,’ said Tom. ‘Put the Ouija board here in the middle. Leave your torch on, Eve, and let’s promise each other that no one pushes the glass.’

‘We’d be a bit stupid to do that,’ said Clovis. ‘It’s taken us ages to get here. That’s a lot of time wasted for one of us to just mess about.’

‘All right, point taken. I was just saying . . .’ pouted Tom.

‘Right, let’s do this,’ whispered Eve, ‘before we talk ourselves out of it.’ Rubbing her cold hands together, her eyes sparkled with excitement in the torchlight. She couldn’t believe they were actually about to do this. If her uncle Rufus found out, he would be so disappointed in her, but he *wasn’t* going to find out, surely. This was their secret and as long as no one said a word, there would be no need for any of their parents to know.

The little drinking glass was set upside down in the centre of the board. The alphabet letters curved across the middle and numbers sat in a line running along the bottom. One word was written on each of the four corners: *Yes* and *No* at either end of the bottom, and *Hello* and *Goodbye* at either end of the top.

‘OK, so who wants to ask it a question?’ giggled Tom nervously.

‘I will,’ said Clovis. His face was serious as he bent forward and placed his finger on the upturned glass. The others followed his lead.

‘Is anybody there?’ Clovis’s voice was firm and steady. His glasses had fallen to the end of his nose and his brow was furrowed in deep concentration.

Eve and Tom looked at each other, excited yet scared at the same time.

‘Is there anybody there? If there is, move the glass.’ Clovis’s voice was getting louder, more commanding. Suddenly, the glass jumped.

‘Whoa!’ cried Tom, snatching his finger away.

‘What the hell!’ shouted Eve.

‘Put your fingers back on, I’m sure this is just micro-muscular movement. It’s just our energies making it move. Don’t worry, it’s fine.’

Clovis had a calming effect on his friends.

‘How come you seem to know so much about all this?’ asked Eve.

‘You know me,’ replied Clovis, looking a little embarrassed. ‘I did my research, that’s all.’

‘Go on then, keep talking. It’s working, whatever you’re doing,’ said Tom, staring hard at the board.

All of a sudden a huge bang exploded above them. It sounded as though something had fallen onto the floor upstairs.

‘Oh my God, what the hell was that?’ shouted Eve, jumping to her feet. ‘Maybe we should go. I don’t think this was such a good idea.’

‘Don’t be daft, Eve, it’s just the wind,’ said Clovis, pulling on her arm to get her to sit down again.

Sure enough, as if on cue, a gust of wind suddenly howled through the old building, and the trees could now be heard to creak and moan. And then a *tap, tap, tap* noise came from behind them.

‘What’s that?’ Tom screamed, twisting his body round to look behind him. He clicked his torch on and scanned the room.

Eve sprang up again like a nervous cat and shrieked, ‘Tom, for God’s sake . . . you’re scaring the crap out of me.’

‘Look, guys, will you both get a grip,’ said Clovis. ‘It’s a tree branch tapping on the window. Remember there’s usually a logical explanation to most things.’

Eve and Tom sighed out in relief. Clovis grabbed Eve’s hands again and pulled her back once more to the Ouija board.

‘You’re right, sorry, guys,’ laughed Eve. ‘OK, Clovis, ask again.’

Clovis cleared his throat and began to call out again to any spirits who might be around. And once more, slowly but surely, the glass began to move.

‘Oh, my God! It’s moving!’ whispered Tom.

‘Keep it together, guys,’ said Clovis calmly. ‘Don’t break the circle. Can you tell us your name?’ he asked the board.

‘If this glass spells a name out, I think I will die,’ whispered Tom.

The glass began to move more steadily now, round and round in a circle. The noise it made scraping along the wooden board was one of the creepiest sounds Tom had ever heard. Then just as suddenly as the glass had started to move, it stopped.

The wind outside was getting louder, the trees bent and groaning. Eve shivered in the dark room; her face was illuminated by the soft glow of the torchlight.

‘Shall we leave?’ she asked. ‘I don’t mind admitting it, I’m really scared now. This is way spookier than I imagined.’

‘We can’t go yet,’ moaned Tom. ‘We’ve only just got started.’

‘It’s all right, Eve,’ said Clovis. ‘Nothing bad is going to happen. This is just a piece of wood, remember. I don’t think it’s going to summon up the Devil.’

‘But you said sometimes evil ghosts can come through.’

‘Yes, I know I said that, but really we’ve got no reason to believe that an evil dead person is trying to speak to us, have we?’

They still had their fingers on the glass, and all of them screamed as it suddenly began to move again. But none of them let go. This time the glass moved towards the alphabet. One by one it rolled over the letters, stopping at different ones in turn, then moving to another. First an *H*, then an *E*, followed by an *L* and a *P*.

‘*HELP ME*,’ spelled out Clovis.

Tom and Eve took big gulps and looked nervously at each other.

‘Who are you? Tell us your name,’ demanded Clovis.

The glass started to glide across the board once more.

‘*C . . . O . . . M . . . E T . . . O M . . . E*,’ spelled out Eve. Again, the letters were making sense.

‘Where? Where shall we find you?’ Eve’s voice was very quiet, not quite believing what she was witnessing.

The glass moved again; this time it was much quicker. Jerky violent thrusts shunted it at high speed across the board, as if whoever they were talking to was in a hurry, desperate to get the information out.

The glass spelled out the word *BELOW*.

‘Below?’ queried Tom, looking at his friends in confusion. ‘What does that mean?’

The glass moved slower now, rolling over the letters to spell out the word *PLEASE*. It picked up speed and moved over more letters: *DON’T GO*. Then it began to slide across the board as if in anger. It went so fast, the friends had trouble keeping their fingers on top of it. They pressed down hard but it seemed to have a life of its own, and without warning the glass flew off the board, violently spun through the air and smashed against the wall.

Suddenly the banging noises started again from above. Eve, Tom and Clovis stood up and held onto each other, terrified.

As if things couldn't get any more frightening, Tom now pointed upwards to the ceiling. The noise was beginning to sound like steady, heavy footsteps echoing through the empty house: slow, menacing and precise.

'Someone's up there,' whispered Tom in a shaky voice.

'Shush!' said Eve, looking upwards.

They all fixed their eyes onto the ceiling and followed the noise with pointed fingers. It seemed to be going towards the top of the stairs.

'I'll go and check. It could be anything,' said Clovis.

The footsteps continued, then a disturbing dragging noise could be heard.

'Are you mad?' hissed Tom.

'We need to check that no one is up there, playing tricks on us,' insisted Clovis.

'And what if there is?' replied Tom.

'Yeah, what then?' said Eve.

'We have to check. If we don't, we'll never know if someone human is messing with us, or whether there's the possibility that this place is actually haunted.'

Tom and Eve knew that Clovis was right and that he wouldn't give up until he got his way and explored all possibilities.

With a sigh, Tom agreed. 'I can't believe we are about to do this.'

'Neither can I,' said Eve. 'I suppose you're right, though.'

Clovis led the way slowly up the crumbling staircase. Eve

followed in the middle as she didn't want to be at the back and Tom brought up the rear with the camera.

Clovis's torch lit the narrow staircase, revealing more rubbish, creeping ivy and cobwebs. Turning right, they shuffled into the doorway of the room they had heard the noises coming from.

'Well there's no one in *here*,' said Tom, panning the night-vision camera all around the room.

'And it would be very difficult for anyone to walk about up here, as there don't seem to be many floorboards left,' said Clovis.

Tom let out a sigh. 'I just don't know what to make of it all.'

'I know, me neither, but we all heard those noises. They were definitely footsteps,' said Eve, shivering and hugging herself.

'Well, it's confused me,' said Clovis. 'I just don't understand—'

But as he was about to start one of his scientific monologues, he was interrupted by a man's raised whisper that growled throughout the house.

'HELP ME!'

All three friends screamed and ran as quickly as they could down the stairs, pushing past each other, all trying to be the first out and gain as much distance between themselves and whatever had called out.

'Quick, get out. Get out!' screamed Eve.

In the confusion and panic, Tom and Clovis fell over each other, and both landed hard at the foot of the stairs.

‘Ow, Clovis, watch where you’re going. Quick, grab the board and let’s get out of here!’ cried Tom.

Clovis grabbed their stuff and they ran to their bikes. Once on them, they rode as fast as their legs could pedal. Only when they reached the tube station did they stop to catch their breaths. And no one said a word until they were back on the train, where they whispered quietly to each other, running through what they had all just encountered, each of them trying to process what they had witnessed.

They arrived back at Whitechapel just before ten o’clock, relieved, tired and confused. ‘We say nothing to anybody about this.’ Eve glared at her two friends. They were all standing outside Eve’s house.

‘Agreed, I need to get some sleep. And I need to analyse what happened,’ said Clovis.

‘Let’s meet tomorrow. You guys come here; we’ll have the house to ourselves. Uncle Rufus is out for lunch at the university,’ said Eve.

‘OK, great,’ said Tom. ‘I’ve got football training in the morning, so I’ll come straight over after that. We need to watch the footage back.’

‘Remember not a word,’ said Eve. ‘Wow! What a night. See you tomorrow and, guys . . . Happy Halloween!’