

Chapter One

The Screams



The witch sprinkled a handful of dried spiderweb into her cauldron and stirred. The flakes of gossamer glittered in the light of the deep orange sunset that crept in through the window.

Dipping a ladle into the swirling mixture, she lifted the potion to her face and inhaled deeply. Suddenly, her nostrils began to twitch and, with a huge sneeze, her nose flew across the room.

“This is never going to work!” complained the small Egyptian mummy as she rubbed at the spot where glue had held the false nose onto her bandages. “This thing just irritates me. And the robes itch, too!”

Luke Watson paused his computer game. “Yes, Cleo, so you keep saying. We’ll see if we can get away with no nose.” He slotted the wireless gamepad back into its charger and turned to the young vampire sitting next to him. “How are you doing?”

“You really want me to wear my cape inside out?” asked Resus Negative.

“Yes,” replied Luke, “so that the blue lining is showing.” He took a short, thin piece of wood from a nearby box and handed it to Resus.

“What’s this?” asked the vampire, tucking his own game controller into his cloak.

“It’s a magic wand,” explained Luke.

“No, it’s not,” said Resus. “It’s a stick. Magic wands are smooth, and they have a star on top.

Like Twinkle the fairy's."

"Just *pretend* it's a magic wand, OK?" Luke said with a groan. "And why don't you have the glasses on?"

Resus held up a pair of small, round glasses. "I still don't understand why a wizard wouldn't just fix his eyesight with a simple spell."

"Incredible!" cried Luke, standing up to pull on his own costume, a black jumpsuit painted with a luminous skeleton pattern. "I spend years trick-or-treating in a trash-bag cape. Then, when I finally meet a real vampire, he manages to suck all the fun out of Halloween!"

"You used to dress up as a vampire?" asked Resus incredulously.

Luke nodded. "I even used to dye my hair. It was really hard keeping the plastic fangs in as I went from door to—"


Resus strode to the window and stared moodily out into the night.

"What's the matter?" asked Luke.

Cleo punched his arm and spoke through clenched teeth. "Pretending to be a vampire? Fake fangs? Ring any bells?"

Luke's expression fell. Since arriving in Scream





Street he'd learned that Resus was unusual: a normal child born to vampire parents. He wore false fangs and dyed his hair black to create the illusion that he was the same as the rest of his family, but it was still a sore point.

"Sorry," said Luke. "I suppose I don't think of you as a normal *or* as a vampire anymore. You're just my friend." Resus remained silent.

"If it's any consolation," Luke continued, "I went as a mummy one year by wrapping myself in toilet paper. It rained cats and dogs and I practically melted!"

Resus turned, beginning to smile. "I bet you were still more graceful than bumble-bandages here."

"How rude!" exclaimed Cleo, pulling the green witch's wig from her head. Snatching up the bubbling pot of liquid, she added, "I might just keep my world-famous lime tea all to myself now!"

Resus made a face. "It's got powdered spider-web in it. What makes you think I wanted any to begin with?"

"Right!" interrupted Luke, grabbing a pair of broomsticks from beside the door. "Take these, and then we're ready to go."

“What are they for?” asked Cleo.

“You don’t want us to sweep up as we go, do you?” asked Resus.

“No,” said Luke patiently, “you fly on them. Or, at least, you pretend to.”

Resus and Cleo shared a glance, trying to contain their giggles. “They think witches and wizards fly about on *cleaning* tools in your world?”

Cleo clamped a broomstick between her legs and raced around the room. “Look at me,” she shouted. “I’m a flying witch!” Resus fell onto the bed laughing.

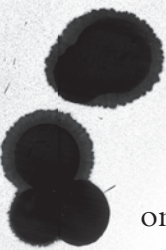
Luke pulled the skeleton mask down over his face to hide his annoyance. Who would ever have thought that Halloween could be such hard work?

Luke marched determinedly along Scream Street in his skeleton costume. Trudging miserably behind were Cleo and Resus, still dressed as witch and wizard.

“I look stupid,” grunted the mummy.

“You’re *supposed* to look stupid!” insisted Luke. “It’s what Halloween’s for.”

Resus sighed. “All right, let’s get this over with.”




“That’s the spirit!”

Suddenly, a sickly green figure lurched out onto the street from a nearby garden, muttering to himself. “This is totally bogus, man! The groove has gone!”

“What’s the matter, Doug?” asked Cleo, recognizing one of Scream Street’s resident zombies.

Doug slouched in their direction. “I’m deep in a bad scene, little dudes.”

Luke blinked at the creature’s vile breath as it filtered through his skeleton mask. “Why, what’s wrong?”



“I had a heavy night with Turf,” explained Doug, “so I settled down for a nap in the bushes. When I woke up just now, I found this. . . .” The zombie turned to reveal that one of his arms was completely missing. Maggots crawled over the pus-filled shoulder. Cleo gagged.

Resus grinned at her. “What’s up with you?” he asked. “I always knew Doug was *’armless!*”

Luke pulled off his mask to get a better look at the wound. It appeared that the limb had simply been torn away, leaving the decaying muscle and

crumbling bone exposed. “This happened while you were asleep?” he asked, unconvinced.

Doug nodded. “Turf got hold of some brain fluid from a South American mathematician. You’ll sleep through anything after a few pints of that stuff!”

“That’s *handy*,” joked Resus.

Cleo elbowed the vampire and smiled at Doug sympathetically. “Who do you think took it?”

“Yeah,” added Resus. “Who should *shoulder* the blame?”

The zombie shrugged, which wasn’t easy to do with an arm missing.



“Do you need us to help you find your arm?” asked Resus, hoping to get out of Luke’s Halloween plans.

“No thanks, little vampire dude. You’re all dressed up, and I’d hate for you to mess up those fine-looking duds!” The zombie gave everyone a mournful high-five with his remaining hand and shuffled away down the street.

Luke pulled his mask back on and turned to Resus and Cleo. “OK,” he said. “Follow me!”

The trio wandered down the street while Luke chose his first target. The tall, misshapen houses met the dark gray clouds that swept across the moon. Dead trees burst from the pavement like hands clawing out of a grave.

Luke’s family had been moved to Scream Street by G.H.O.U.L.—Government Housing of Unusual Life-forms—after he had transformed into a werewolf and attacked a bully at his old school. Life since then had been a seemingly endless quest to locate the relics of the community’s founding fathers to give Luke the power to open a doorway home and finally take his terrified parents back to their own world. Scream Street’s

landlord, Sir Otto Sneer, also wanted the relics for his own purposes—and in fighting to acquire them at every opportunity had turned the quest into a running battle.

Tonight, however, was going to be different. For once, Luke was determined that the search for a way out of Scream Street wouldn't be foremost in his mind. Tonight, he was going to have some fun.

"Here we are," he said with a smile as he led the way up the path to number 2 and knocked on the door. "Watch the master at work."

After a moment, a huge, pulsating mass of mud and slime appeared, sipping from a crystal goblet. Clumps of muck ran down the glass.

"Ugh, children!" gurgled the bog monster. "What do you beasts want?"

"Trick or treat, Mr. Crudley!" cried Luke.

Mr. Crudley took another sip of wine, leaving behind tendrils of green weed. "Trick or what?"

Luke sighed. What *was* it with these people? "Trick or *treat*," he repeated.

"And what does that mean, boy?"

Luke stared up into what he hoped were the



bog monster's eyes. "You have to give us a treat, like a few pieces of candy, or we play a trick on you."

"Who is it?" called a voice from inside the house.

"It's that werewolf child," Mr. Crudley called back over his shoulder. "He says he's going to play a trick on us."

Mrs. Crudley, another pulsating mound of brown gloop, slithered into view beside her husband. "And why would you do that, young man?"

"Actually, I've been meaning to ask you the same thing," admitted Resus. "Halloween is the most romantic night of the year. Why do you want to go around playing tricks on people?"

Luke ripped off his skeleton mask in horror. "*Romantic?*" he asked. "Halloween isn't supposed to be romantic! It's full of monsters!"

"Exactly," gurgled Mr. Crudley, wrapping a sluglike arm around his wife and nibbling affectionately at a lump of soil on her cheek. "It works for me!"

Luke was flabbergasted. "But what about Valentine's Day?"

Cleo shuddered. "Giving one another hearts?"

Creeps me right out! From there, you're only a short step from handing out livers, and then you're in zombie territory."

"I don't believe this," said Luke. "Halloween shouldn't be all romantic and lovey-dovey! It should be scary, and terrifying, and—"

His words were interrupted by a chorus of screams that pierced the night, causing Mr. Crudley to jump and spill wine down his vast, blubbery stomach.

Luke grinned. "It should be like *that!*"

