

Chapter One

The Witch



With a creak that echoed eerily around the deserted tomb, the golden sarcophagus swung open. The hieroglyphics covering its surface glinted in the light of the single flaming torch. A low moan sounded, and slowly, unsteadily, a figure wrapped from head to toe in bandages stumbled forward, arms outstretched. The mummy had been awakened.

The two boys stood rooted to the spot as the mummy lurched into the middle of the tomb. Could the curse be true? Would they be forever hunted by this unstoppable creature, as the legend promised?

Suddenly, the mummy's head spun in their direction, black beetles squirming beneath the bandages that covered its decaying flesh. The boys stared in horror as it opened its mouth and screamed, sending a swarm of ravenous locusts toward them.

Within seconds, the boys were surrounded by the vile insects. They tried to run but were blinded by the thick, buzzing cloud. In their terror, the boys scrambled for the—

Cleo Farr snapped the book closed and glared at the picture of the terrifying mummy on its cover. “That is *not* a children’s book!” she exclaimed, tossing it onto the bed. “Mummies don’t look anything like that, for a start.”

A young vampire, Resus Negative, picked up the book. “*Bandages of Doom* by M. T. Graves,” he read aloud, holding the cover up against Cleo’s face. “I don’t know,” he said with a grin, “there’s quite a resemblance there.”

Cleo jumped indignantly to her feet and

smoothed down the bandages that covered her own body. “One,” she began, “my bandages are clean and ironed. Two, there are no beetles squirming around under them. And three”—Cleo opened her mouth wide to emphasize her point—“I have never screamed out a swarm of locusts in my life!”

“Calm down,” said Resus. “It’s just a book—and an old-fashioned one at that!”

Cleo glowered at her friend. “How would you like it if this M. T. Graves person wrote a book about *vampires* and got it all wrong?”

“He did,” replied Resus, holding up another book, this one featuring a menacing vampire. “*Fangs of Destiny*. It’s the next in the Horror Heights series.” Resus laughed. “No vampire in the world would be seen undead in a cloak like that, and look—the shape of the fangs is all wrong!” He unclipped his own fangs as evidence.

“That doesn’t mean anything,” Cleo retorted. “They’re not *real* vampire fangs!”

Resus bit back a reply. Born as a normal child to true vampire parents, he wore the fake fangs and white face paint along with dyeing his



hair black to help him look like the rest of his family. This deception, although accepted by all his friends, was still a touchy subject.

Cleo took the book from him and examined it. “Do kids really like reading this stuff?”

She and Resus turned to their friend Luke Watson for an answer—but none came. Luke had found the books while packing up his family’s belongings, but now he sat staring at an

old photo album, unaware of the conversation going on behind him.

“What’s that?” Cleo asked.

“*The marriage of Michael Watson and Susan Skipton,*” said Resus, leaning over to read the golden lettering from the cover of the album. “Your mom and dad’s wedding pictures!”

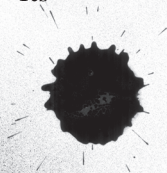
Luke nodded. “They looked so happy back then.”

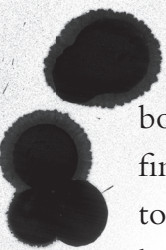
Luke’s family had been moved to Scream Street after he had started transforming into a werewolf. From the very beginning his parents had been terrified of the street’s unusual residents, and Luke couldn’t remember the last time he had seen either of them smile.

Resus and Cleo had been helping him in his quest to find six relics left behind by Scream Street’s founding fathers. Only when he had collected them all would he have the power to open a doorway back to his own world.

“They’ll be happy again soon enough,” Cleo said with a smile, sliding a golden casket from beneath Luke’s bed. “Don’t forget, there’s only one relic left to find.”

Luke placed the photo album back into its






box. “That’s why I want to get this packing finished. Once the doorway is open, I don’t want to waste time racing around gathering up our belongings.”

Resus flipped open the lid of the casket and examined the relics the trio had already located: a vial of witch’s blood, a skeleton’s skull, a mummy’s heart, a zombie’s tongue, and the fang of his own ancestor, Count Negatov. “It’s quite a haul when you see it all together like this,” he said, taking the fang and holding it up against the cover of *Fangs of Destiny*. “See,” he added. “Completely the wrong shape!”

“Where did you get that?” demanded a voice.



Resus carefully replaced Count Negatov’s fang and lifted out the silver copy of *Skipstone’s Tales of Scream Street* that lay among the relics in the casket. The face on the cover of the book was scowling.

“It was tucked away behind the witch’s blood,” said Resus.

“I was not referring to the fang,” replied the face. “I meant that book. It should not be here, in Scream Street!”

Luke took the metallic book from Resus and

stood it up against the wall. “Why not?” he asked Samuel Skipstone, the owner of the face. “What’s wrong with Horror Heights? I know they’re old, but all the kids at my school loved them.”

“They were never meant to leave your world,” insisted Samuel Skipstone.

“So how do you know about them?”

Skipstone sighed. “I know—I mean, I *knew*—the author. He was a friend of mine.”

“You knew M. T. Graves?” exclaimed Cleo. “Well, if you ever see him again . . .”

Skipstone forced a smile. “I rather think that in my current situation, further encounters with fellow scribes are unlikely, don’t you?” The author had spent his natural life researching *Scream Street*, and at the time of his death he had cast a spell to merge his spirit with the pages of his book so that he could continue his work.

Luke grabbed the Horror Heights books and added them to the pile in the box. “Well, soon I’ll be taking them out of *Scream Street* forever.”

“Forever?” whispered Cleo. “You’ll never be back?”

“I’m trying not to think about it,” Luke said, sighing.



“Is that right, Mr. Skipstone?” Cleo asked the author. “Once Luke leaves Scream Street, can he never come back?”

“I am afraid not,” replied the silver face. “The doorway to Luke’s world will remain open only long enough for his wish to be fulfilled. Once he and his family have passed through, it will close behind them for all time.”

Cleo looked at Luke, her eyes filling with tears. “I’ll miss you.”

“Good grief!” groaned Resus. “We’ll both miss him, blubber bandages, but there’s no need to get all sappy about it.” He pulled a handkerchief from his cloak and handed it to her. As he did so, something clattered to the floor: a small dog’s collar. “I’d forgotten I had that,” said the vampire as Luke bent to pick it up.

Luke studied the silver name tag. It was encrusted with dried blood, and a smudge of marker pen obscured the first letter of the name, Fluffy. “This was what the chihuahua was wearing.”

“Chihuahua?” asked Cleo.

“The dog that bit me—bit my werewolf—when it attacked a bully from my old school.”

Luke shuddered as he recalled the moment when he had been about to pounce on the bully and the tiny dog had nipped his ankle. His werewolf had turned to chase after the chihuahua and the bully had escaped, scared but unharmed.

“There’s blood on the collar,” said Cleo. “You didn’t . . .”

Luke shook his head. “I grabbed the dog by the ear with my teeth, but it wriggled out of its collar and ran off. If it hadn’t stopped me, though . . .”

“But it *did* stop you,” Resus pointed out. “The bully got away. The only thing to happen was for you to be moved here—and you can’t say that life in Scream Street has been *all* bad.”

“It’s had its moments,” admitted Luke, managing a smile.

Samuel Skipstone gave a polite cough from the cover of his book. “You are discussing young Master Watson’s departure as though it were happening this minute,” he said. “May I remind you that there is another relic to locate first?”

“You’re right,” said Luke, pushing the boxes aside. “I’ve had enough of packing. Let’s start looking!”

The trio gathered around *Skipstone’s Tales of*

Scream Street, and the book flicked through its handwritten pages, finally stopping at a pantomime script: *Sleeping Ugly*. Before their eyes, the lines of dialogue and stage directions began to fade away to reveal the clue to the location of the final relic.

Suddenly there was a bright orange flash behind them and a witch appeared on top of Luke's box of books, wearing crumpled red-and-yellow robes and clutching a large black sack. Realizing that her hair was on fire, she calmly patted out the flames and beamed at the gaping trio.

"Tress Wunder," she announced. "Now, where do you want this order of quill boxes?"

