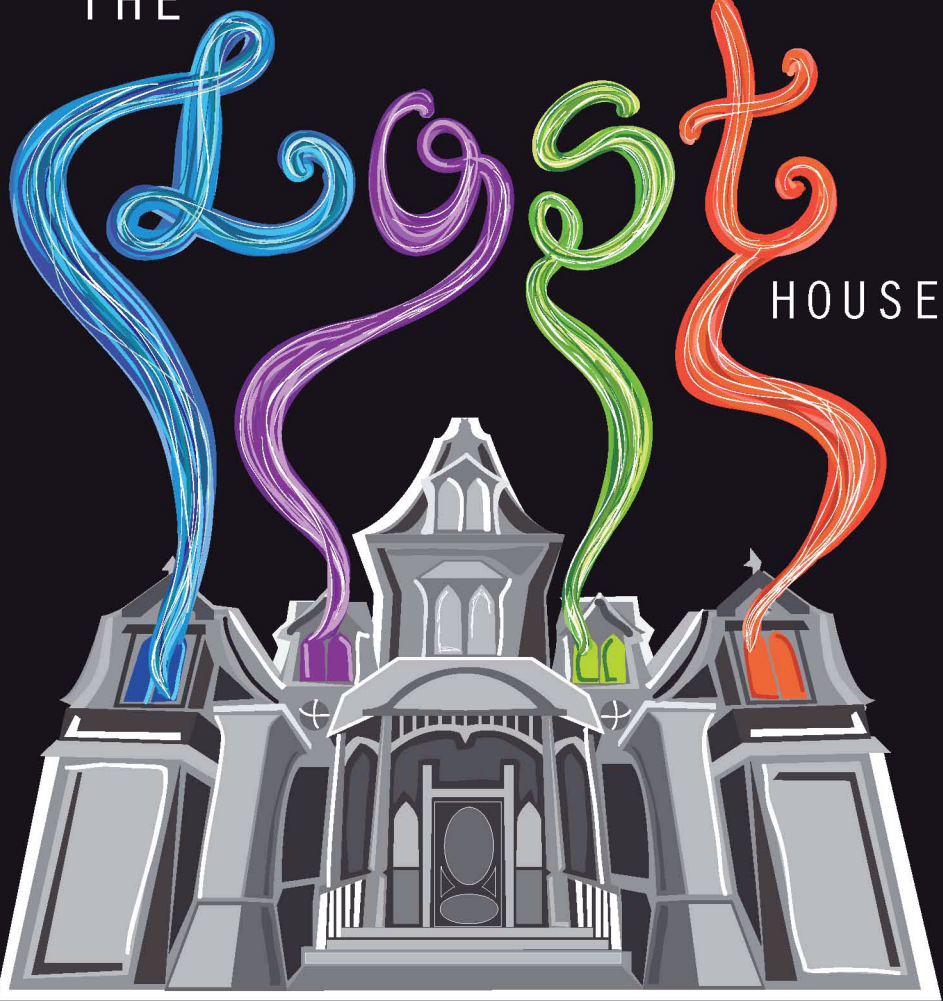


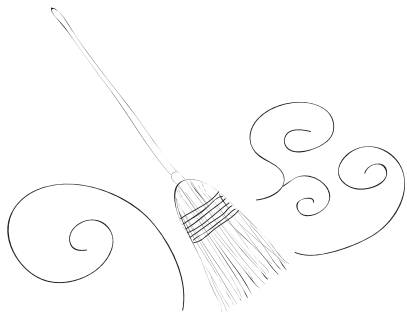
THE



HOUSE

M.G. HIGGINS





Tiggs

Age: 13

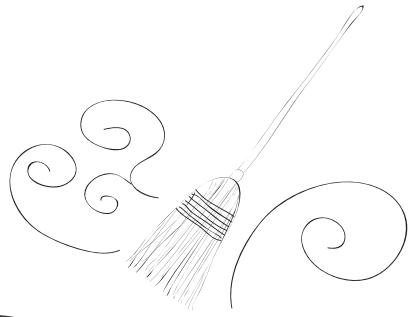
Family Life: just her and her mom

Secret Wish: to win a gold medal in soccer at the Olympics

Favorite Movie: *Bend it Like Beckham*

Best Quality: determination

CHARACTERS



Jess

Age: 13

Family Life: just her and her dad

Career Dream: to be a graphic designer

Favorite Meal: vegetarian spaghetti with a chopped kale salad

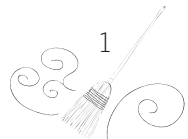
Best Quality: cooperative

1
BROKE

Dreamy Josh Reed. I can't stop thinking about him. That note he gave me in math. It was just a question about homework. But why a note? Why didn't he ask me in person? Is he shy? My heart flutters a little. He's so cute. Does he like me?



A movement catches my eye. The ball is coming! I leap for it. Stretch. My fingertips



skim the leather. The ball sails into the net. Shoot! I get to my feet. Glance at the touchline. Coach Sims shakes her head. She gives me that look. The look that says, *You blew it, Tiggs.*



My head is back in the game. But now it's too late. The match ends. We lose by one point. I walk slowly off the field.

Jess, my best friend, runs up next to me. She punches my arm. "That was a flaming kick. It wasn't your fault."

"Yes it was," I say. Coach Sims always says soccer is a team sport. It takes a team



to win or lose. But I lost this one all by myself.

Coach gives us her usual pep talk. She ends it with, “See you at practice.”

I turn to walk off the field.

“Tiggs,” Coach says.

I take a deep breath. Jess stays with me.

“Sorry, Coach,” I say.

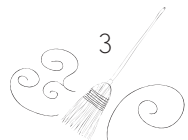
“Do you like being keeper?” she asks.

“Yes.”

“Then you’ve got to find a way to stay focused.”

I’m not sure what to say. She’s right. My mind wanders during games. I don’t know what to do about it.

Coach sighs. “Look. There’s a soccer camp in August. I know the coach. He’s an expert on goal tending. The camp fills up fast. But he owes me a favor. I’m sure I can



get you in.”

“Really?” My mood picks up. I’ve always wanted to go to soccer camp.

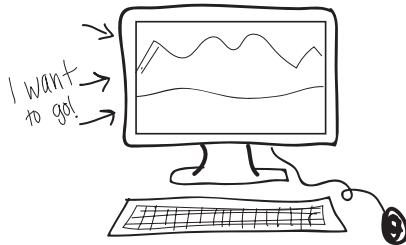
“Can I go too?” Jess asks.

Coach Sims smiles. “I’ll see what I can do.” She gets out her phone. “I’ll text you the web link. Check it out. Talk it over with your parents.”

“Okay. Cool,” I say.

After the match, Jess and I go to my apartment. We look at the website.

“Oh, wow,” Jess says. “It’s an overnight camp. Five days. The coach played on an Olympic team. Then as a pro.”



The photos are beautiful. The camp is held in the mountains. I look over at Jess. I'm sure my smile is as big as hers. Then we open the page with the prices.

"Seven hundred dollars!" we say at the same time.



"No," Mom says after Jess leaves. She's heating leftovers for dinner.

"But ..."

"I'm sorry, Tiggs. I work overtime as it is. I can barely pay the rent. Get some plates out please."

I open the cupboard. I know Mom works hard. It was unfair to ask. But I thought