

BY EVAN JACOBS



BIRD OF PREY

A decorative title box with a hand-drawn, ornate border. The border features intricate scrollwork and floral motifs at the corners and midpoints. The background of the page is decorated with faint, light-colored spider webs. The title text is centered within the box.

THE HISTORY OF THE VINTAGE ROSE ANTIQUE SHOP

The story begins with a sorcerer named Ervin Legend. He had a talent for making money. While traveling, Ervin bought items all over the world. He would have called himself a collector. Others might say hoarder. Once he grew tired of things, he sold them for a profit. "One man's junk is another man's treasure," he used to say.

Eventually, Ervin wanted to settle down. His home was in Scarecrow, California. But he needed somewhere to put all of his things. Ervin opened the Vintage Rose Antique Shop in 1912. It was a place to keep his collections. His wife, Visalia, inspired the shop's name. She loved roses and kept them in vases all over the shop. "Roses mask the smell of old things," she would say.

After the shop opened, Ervin kept traveling. He collected pieces to sell from all over. In 1949, Ervin and Visalia went to Cairo, Egypt. While there, the couple disappeared. Nobody knows what happened to them. Some say Ervin's love of sorcery might have been to blame. He may have looked into something he shouldn't have.

Family members took over the shop. None were quite like Ervin, though. Without his passion, the business began to fail. His sister believed it was cursed.



In 1979, the Legends put the shop up for sale. Rose Myers bought it. She was odd, like Ervin. Her passion for old things was like his. "Everything has a story," she would say, with a twinkle in her eye. From a young age, Rose had looked for bargains. She would resell things for a profit. Buying the Vintage Rose was her dream come true. The place was old. It was filled with odd treasures. Plus, Rose was part of the name of the store. It seemed like this was meant to be.

Rose ran the shop for 40 years. When she passed away, it closed. The business had been left to her nephew, Evan Stewart. He was Rose's closest living relative. The Stewart family moved to Scarecrow. They reopened the shop in 2019.

Today, the shop still holds many treasures. Collectors come from all over. Some have purchased these mysterious relics. Are they magical? Do they watch over the store? We may never find out. Or will we?

CHAPTER 1

ROSE

Kendra, maybe history is a subject you're just not good at," my friend Steven says to me. "It's okay. There are plenty of classes that I don't do well in."

He and I walk around Vintage Rose Antique Shop as I gripe about our history teacher. Sometimes Steven and I come to the shop after school. But we rarely buy anything. We just like to look at the many different items in this place. It's packed with paintings, gadgets, lamps, and just about anything old. Some people think the shop smells like dead roses. Steven and I don't notice the smell. Maybe we've gotten used to it.

I pull the chain on an old-fashioned lamp. The light turns off and on. "History is not the problem for me. I did fine in Mr. Morales's history class last year. But now we're in eighth grade with Mrs. Hartsfield. Nothing I do is good enough for her. On our last exam,

she said I needed to be more specific in my answer to the essay question.”

“Did she say what she meant by ‘specific’?” Steven asks.

“I wrote about the right events. But I didn’t include any of the dates. Mrs. Hartsfield wanted me to list those. Dates always mess me up.”

Steven smiles. “Well, dates are kind of important in *history*.”

“Blah, blah.” I lightly push him.

He chuckles and continues examining items on a table.

A few other people are looking around the shop. There is a tall man behind the counter too. He sits close to the cash register. I assume he works here. He’s typing on a laptop.

At the other end of the counter is a bird in a cage. The bird is white with yellow feathers on its head. I think it’s a cockatiel. My cousin has one. But hers is always moving around and making noises. This cockatiel behaves differently. It’s very quiet and doesn’t move much.

I nudge Steven. “Are you going to buy anything?”

“I might,” he says. “We should’ve brought Tabitha.

You two could've shopped for clothes here." Steven starts laughing.

He always says what he thinks is funny. Then he laughs at whatever it is, even if no one else does.

Tabitha is our best friend. She would usually be with us at the shop. But she has been volunteering at the library after school. She teaches art to children there.

"*You* of all people have nothing to say to me about how to dress." I scan Steven's outfit. "Tabitha and I have been trying to get you to change your wardrobe for years."

Steven looks down at his clothes. As always, he's wearing a brightly colored button-down shirt and black jeans. Today, his shirt is fluorescent orange. It's almost blinding.

"There's nothing wrong with how I dress," he says indignantly.

I shake my head. "If you say so."

My clothes are probably not considered stylish either. Usually, I'm self-conscious about how petite I am. I'm not only short, but I'm very slim too. Today, I have on loose-fitting jeans and a big sweatshirt to hopefully make me look larger. The jeans are designer, so I guess that gives me an edge toward being fashionable.

We continue looking around the store. My eyes wander back to the bird. Seeing it makes me feel kind of sad. I think of my cat, Patches. She recently passed away at age 14. My parents got her the year before I was born. Patches would've loved having this bird around. But I bet the bird would not have felt the same about Patches. Imagining their interactions makes me smile.

Patches had been with me my entire life. Sometimes it's hard to be at home now. The house feels so empty without her. My birthday this past summer made it even worse. I turned 13. I was excited to become a teenager. But this was also my first birthday without Patches.

The man behind the counter smiles at me. "Do you like the bird? She's free to anyone who can give her a good home."

"Really?" I inch closer to the bird to get a better look. The closer I get, the whiter the bird seems to become. Even the yellow feathers on her head look brighter.

"Absolutely," the man says. "She's a sweet bird. Her name is Rose. My family and I named her after the shop. We found her outside with an injured wing. Then I took her to a vet. Rose was treated, and now

she's all healed up. I thought she might be someone's pet. But no one has come to claim her. Thankfully, we found a cage for her among all the stuff in here."

Rose's cage looks very old. It's black and has tiny circles and triangles on it. They make a pattern. A silver tray for water is inside. There's another tray for food. Rose stands on a wooden perch.

She and I look at each other. Maybe it's odd, but I feel like we have a connection. Rose has big, black eyes. They look quizzically at me. It's almost like Rose wants to ask me something.

Do you want me to take you home? I think.

Rose nods her head once. It surprises me at first. I hadn't asked my question out loud. Even if I had, how would Rose understand me? Then I remember birds usually move their heads a lot.

I smile at her. *Wow! Perfect timing for a nod, Rose.*

"Are you going to take her?" Steven asks me.

Startled, I jump a little. Steven is standing right next to me.

I wonder how I didn't notice him walking up. "Yeah, I guess so. My parents shouldn't mind."

"Sounds great," the man says. "And if they do mind, you can always bring Rose back. It's no trouble at all." He reaches under the counter. Then he pulls

out a small bag of bird seed and gives it to me. “You’re all set!”

“Thanks!” I hand the bag of seed to Steven so that I can pick up the cage.

He and I start walking to my house. Steven carries the seed and plays on his phone. I hold the cage carefully with both hands, trying to keep it steady.

Rose still hasn’t made any noise. She just gazes at Steven and me and blinks her eyes.

Steven glances at Rose. “That bird is pretty mellow. It was so cool of the guy to give her to you for free.”

I nod. “Right? I think having a pet again is going to be great.”

“Hello, Kendra!” Rose says. Her voice is high-pitched and croaky.

I laugh. “Hi, Rose.”

“She knows your name?” Steven asks. “I don’t think I’ve said it around her yet. Did you?”

“I must have introduced myself to the man at the store.” But I don’t remember doing that.

CHAPTER 2

WELCOME HOME

Kendra,” my mom says after Steven leaves. “Getting a pet is supposed to be a family decision.”

I place the cage on our coffee table. “I know. But the shop gave us everything we need for Rose. And I don’t have Patches anymore. Maybe a new pet will make me feel better.”

My mom, dad, and I all look at Rose. The bird doesn’t make a noise. She sits still on her perch.

I start wondering if she’s listening to us. I’m sure that’s how birds like Rose learn to talk. They probably always listen to people.

“She’s a beautiful bird.” My dad leans closer to Rose’s cage. He examines her.

Rose stares back at him. She seems to observe us as much as we observe her.

My mom and dad were about to go for a walk when I arrived home. Sometimes I go with them. The sidewalks around our house are perfect for long

walks. But I won't be going with my parents today. I need to help Rose get adjusted to her new home.

We live in a nice neighborhood in the small town of Scarecrow, California. The town was founded in the early 1900s. Back then, it was filled with strawberry fields and swamps. Birds were always eating the seeds farmers planted. Then farmers started putting up scarecrows everywhere to stop the birds. That's how the town got its name. It's always overcast here too. But I don't mind the lack of sun. I think going for walks under the gray clouds is relaxing.

"Well?" I finally ask after my parents stare at Rose for a while. "Can I keep her? She already knows my name. Watch this."

I open Rose's cage. Then I extend my finger next to her perch. After a moment, Rose climbs onto my finger. Her clawed feet tickle my skin. She stands on my finger as I move my hand out of the cage. Steven showed me a YouTube video on how to do this. We watched it on our way to my house.

My mom looks concerned. "Kendra, be careful. I don't want her flying around in here."

"She won't do that," I say. "Hi, Rose."

The bird just stares at me with her big, black eyes. She says nothing.

I look at my parents. “Earlier, out of nowhere, Rose said hello to me and then said my name. Maybe she’s just scared now.”

Realizing I’m not impressing anyone, I move Rose back into her cage.

“Hello, Kendra!” Rose says as she steps onto her perch. Her voice seems to have even more of a croak than it did before.

My mom clasps her hands together. “Oh, how cute!”

I smile at my parents. “See? Rose knows my name. It’s like she’s already part of the family.”

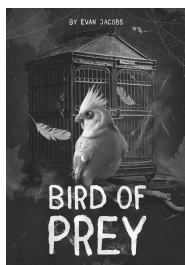
My dad has a huge grin. “That *is* pretty cool, Kendra.”

“Isn’t it?” I gaze at Rose. “She learns so fast.”

My parents look at each other. They know how sad I’ve been since losing Patches. After a moment, my dad shrugs.

“Okay.” My mom smiles at me. “You can keep Rose.”

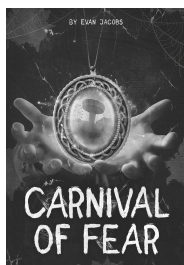
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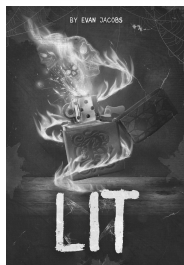
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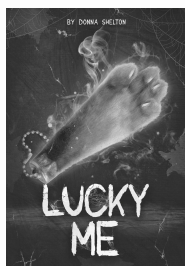
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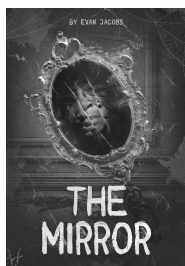
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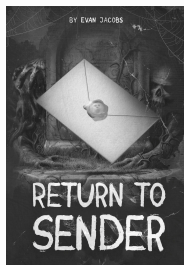
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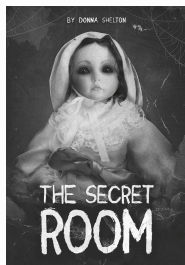
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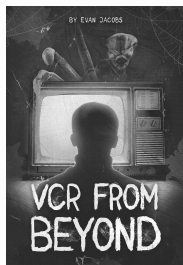
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VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

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Kendra's heart is still healing from the passing of her cherished pet. But while visiting Vintage Rose, she is drawn to a beautiful bird at the shop. Could this be a new beloved pet for Kendra, or will she come to regret taking it home?

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