

BY EVAN JACOBS

A lit Zippo lighter with a flaming skull. The lighter is brass with an ornate, engraved design on the front. The lid is open and textured. Bright orange and yellow flames erupt from the top of the lighter, where a glowing skull is visible. The background is dark with spider webs and a wooden surface at the bottom.

LIT



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

ALONE

“Why do you have to be so mean, Danny?” Natalie Tran asks me.

“Why do you have to be weird?” I reply.

“You’re so rude all the time,” she says.

“You’re so *weird* all the time.” I can’t help laughing.

We’re in the school lunchroom. Natalie and her friends are frustrated. They’re all mad at me. I don’t blame them. I’ve been teasing them constantly.

In English class, Natalie and I started arguing. She always tries to impress the teacher. It’s annoying. That’s why I kicked the back of her chair. I had hoped that would make her stop talking. Instead, she talked more. Natalie told the teacher what I’d done.

Then I called Natalie a liar. This made her really angry. Class ended. She and her friends stormed off. But I followed them to lunch. I started making fun of them. Now they’re all yelling at me.

Other students see this. Some look up from their

phones and tablets. Everyone is on Natalie's side. I feel like the whole school is against me.

A girl rolls her eyes. "You're always starting something, Danny."

"This is why you don't have friends," another student says.

"You're going to get it one day!" a boy shouts.

People have been saying this stuff to me all my life. I don't think I'm *that* bad. Honestly, I feel like I'm just a huge target. I've always been taller and heavier than other students. That makes me stand out. It causes problems for me too.

Do I start arguments? Yes. But people do dumb stuff. It's hard not to point that out. Natalie does not have to answer every question in class. Why do other students always brag about what they have? No one wants to hear how perfect their lives are.

Another student in the lunchroom speaks up. "This is why you're always sent to Mr. Alfaro's class."

That class is for students who have trouble. Some of them cause problems. People say that's why I fit in there. Others in his class just have a hard time learning. I'm not one of his students. But teachers send me to his class to do my work sometimes. I can't stand it. Mr. Alfaro is really strict.

“I’m out of here,” I tell everyone around me.

Today, I had wanted to eat in the lunchroom. Instead, I’ll now go to a place where no one will bother me. I’m glad I was able to at least get my lunch.

I walk out to the field at Scarecrow Middle School. This school is terrible. It’s a big, white stone building with large windows. Two more useless buildings are in the back. One is a gym. The other is a multipurpose room. A track and a large field are behind those. The field is where I’m headed.

All I want is to be alone. I walk far onto the field.

Then I look up at the dark, overcast sky. This may be the only good thing about the town of Scarecrow, California. It’s always overcast. Usually, the temperatures are cool, but not quite cold. That’s just the way I like it.

Still, Scarecrow is a dumb name. Who would call a town that? I heard that some farmers had a problem with birds eating their seeds. This was ages ago. They put up scarecrows everywhere to keep the birds away. Back then, this town was nothing but strawberry fields and swamps. Maybe it should’ve stayed that way.

I pull my hood farther down on my head. This gray hoodie is my favorite. It’s comfortable, and I can get dressed in less than a minute. That’s why I wear it every day.

Sitting in the grass, I open my lunch. It is two jumbo raviolis. Italian food is the worst unless it's pizza. I'm hungry though. Maybe the raviolis won't taste so bad if I eat them fast.

As I start eating, I see a girl who I can't stand. It's Tenley. She's with her friend Ryan. They look kind of funny walking on the track. Tenley wears a black hoodie. Ryan has a black T-shirt on. Both are wearing blue jeans.

When I have a thought, I usually just blurt it out. I don't take time to think about whether I should say it or not.

"Look at the twinsies!" I smile.

Tenley shakes her head. She never talks to me. I remember when she first moved to town in seventh grade. We talked a little. But it was only because she was mad at me for messing with her.

I probably shouldn't be teasing her and Ryan. Oh, well, it's too late now.

"Be quiet, Shingles!" Ryan snaps. "Are you out here all alone because nobody wants to get your rash?"

Instantly, I'm filled with rage. It's like a fire has ignited inside me. This is the same feeling I get when I argue with people. The spark is always there. Insults I give and receive keep the fire burning.

“Shut your mouth!” I shout. “I don’t have shingles!”

I hate when people call me Shingles. My body gets rashes sometimes. They itch badly. But they’re caused by eczema. Besides, I haven’t had a breakout in a while.

“Just stop, Danny!” Tenley shouts back. “It’s not about whether you have shingles. You make people mad. No one wants to be around you because you’re a jerk to everybody.”

“She’s right,” Ryan says. “Have fun being alone. Forever!”

He and Tenley walk away.

I’m so mad. My first thought is to throw my food at them.

Don’t do that, I tell myself. You’re too hungry.

More than anything, I’m hurt. Feeling that way makes me even angrier.

Ryan is right. I’m alone, and I probably *will* be this way forever.

A black and white illustration of a shop window. The window has a decorative arch at the top with a central circular motif. Above the arch, the words "VINTAGE ROSE" are written in a stylized font. The window is divided into several panes, some of which contain various objects like a clock and a vase. The overall style is reminiscent of a classic illustration or a book cover design.

VINTAGE ROSE

CHAPTER 2

LIGHTER

It's after school. I'm following Tenley and Ryan. I don't know where they're going. But I try not to get too close. If they see me, my plan will be ruined.

What they said at lunch really made me mad. I've got to get revenge.

They're in Scarecrow Plaza now. I see them pass a few stores. Then they go inside that silly Vintage Rose Antique Shop. Tenley's parents own it.

The shop is a junkyard. It's filled with old stuff that nobody wants. I would probably laugh if the place burned to the ground. That shop is ridiculous.

I walk up to it. Then I look inside. All I see is too much stuff everywhere. There's not much light in there either. It's hard to see where Tenley and Ryan are.

Maybe I'll just wait for them to come out. Then I'm going to get them.

A few seconds pass. I have zero patience. Waiting for something is the hardest thing for me to do. Finally, I just go inside.

Bells on the door jingle as I walk in. I look around for Tenley and Ryan. But all I see are old clocks, jars, paintings, and other junk.

Vintage Rose also has a weird smell. I can't quite place it. It's like a mix of sweet and sour. Maybe all the old stuff in here makes the shop smell funny.

"Do you need something?" someone asks.

I turn around. It's a guy who looks like he's in high school. He seems annoyed.

"I'm looking for Tenley and her dumb . . . and her friend Ryan."

The guy shrugs. "I don't know where they are. So are you here to buy anything? Or to cause trouble?"

I'm not sure what to say.

The guy scowls. "Hello? What's your deal?"

"I'm just looking for them."

"Well, they're not here. Look somewhere else." He starts playing on his phone.

I think about arguing with him. If I do, we could get in a fight. *Don't do anything. This guy is in charge here. He could call the police on me or something.*

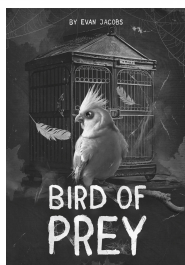
I'm fuming, but I decide to leave. First, I didn't get to do anything to Tenley and Ryan. It looked like they came in here. Maybe they didn't though. Second, I'm being kicked out of Vintage Rose. I didn't even want to be here in the first place.

As I walk to the door, something catches my eye. It's a brown lighter. A design is embossed on it.

Just take it! I think. *Coming inside this shop shouldn't be a total waste of time.*

Discreetly, I grab the lighter and put it in the pocket of my hoodie.

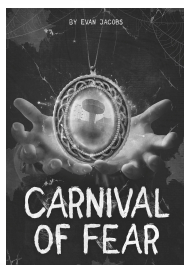
VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES



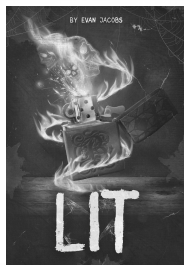
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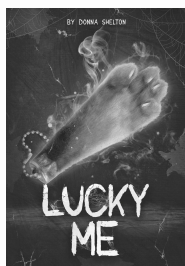
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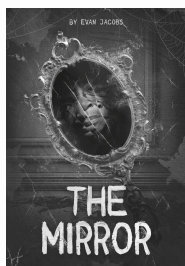
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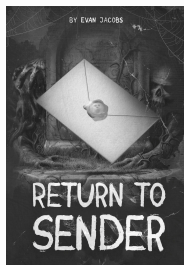
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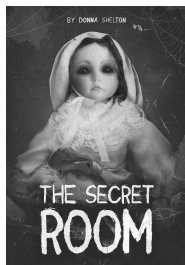
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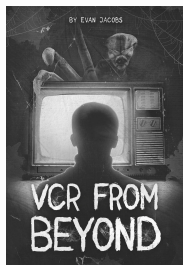
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VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

LIT

Danny is known as the bully of Scarecrow Middle School, but there is more to his story. With no friends, life can be hard. When Danny makes a discovery that brings him to a turning point, will it improve his situation or make everything worse?

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