

BY EVAN JACOBS



THE UNKNOWN PORTAL

A decorative title box with a black, ornate border featuring scrollwork and floral motifs. The text inside is centered and reads "THE HISTORY OF THE VINTAGE ROSE ANTIQUE SHOP". The background of the page is white with faint, light-colored spider webs scattered across it.

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?

A black and white illustration of a storefront for 'Vintage Rose'. The shop has a large arched window with a decorative frame. Above the window, the words 'VINTAGE ROSE' are written in a stylized font. The window itself is divided into several panes, some of which contain decorative elements like a spiral. The overall style is reminiscent of a classic, perhaps Art Deco or similar, architectural illustration.

VINTAGE ROSE

CHAPTER 1

HOME

Vintage Rose Antique Shop is packed with customers. My parents decided to have a big sale today. They do that whenever there's an overflow of inventory.

Over time, many people have come to the shop to sell their old items. This makes the inventory grow. There was already too much stuff here when my parents took over the business. That was thanks to my dad's aunt Rose leaving Vintage Rose to him when she died. She was somewhat of a hoarder. But she was also organized. My great-aunt tried to record every one of her shop's items in a ledger. Since we've been here, items just never stop coming. We often run out of space.

My brother and I are supposed to be working at the front counter. That frees up my parents to help customers throughout the shop. Unfortunately, my brother likes to do as little work as possible. Jay is a junior in high school, and I'm only a seventh grader. But I think I'm way more mature and responsible

than he is. Most of the time, he's just outright rude. Thankfully, he does have his cool moments. I just wish they weren't so rare.

Jay brushes off a polite, elderly woman who has just asked him where to locate an item. "It's somewhere in the back." He takes a bite of his meatball sandwich. But it's not even his lunch break.

"Can you please show me?" The woman's voice sounds tight. Jay's rudeness seems to be chipping away at her politeness.

Unbothered, my brother stuffs some chips in his mouth. "I'm kind of busy."

The woman gapes.

"Jay!" I snap.

Still chewing, he eyes me. "What, Twig?"

My name is Tenley. Jay knows how much I hate when he calls me Twig. I used to be skinny when I was younger. Jay has always been a bigger guy, so I probably seemed microscopic to him. That's why he started calling me Twig. Now I'm not as small. But Jay still calls me that.

"Help her!" I hiss. "And don't forget to fix the window latch too. You told Mom and Dad you would do it."

This old shop came to us needing many repairs. There's a window that opens and closes with the turn of a latch. But the latch is broken, so the window doesn't close completely. Sometimes, when it rains, water leaks into the shop. My parents were going to call a professional to fix the window. Then, for some reason, Jay said he could fix it. But that was over a month ago.

Jay makes a face. "Fine." He leaves his spot behind the counter and turns to the woman. "What were you asking about again?"

They walk away. I continue ringing up people's purchases.

It's interesting how my family learned about this shop. My mom, brother, and I had never even heard my great-aunt Rose until after she'd passed. But my dad showed us some pictures of her. He said that he was very close to her when he was young. I guess that's why she left him the shop. She also gave him her house here in Scarecrow, California. We moved in after leaving Chicago.

Living in the small town of Scarecrow has been a huge adjustment for all of us. Coming from a big city to this strange little place was wild. I think it might be the only area in California that doesn't get any sun. It's

always overcast here. But the timing was great for my parents. Both had been out of work for a few months when they learned of the shop.

Vintage Rose is full of just about everything. There's even a Pass-Along Section where people can take something for free. But they're encouraged to leave something in return. When I first walked in Vintage Rose, I thought it smelled terrible. It was like dead roses. Now I don't even notice the smell anymore.

I ring up what seems like countless customers. Items are flying off the shelves. But there's so much stuff in here, the shop still looks cluttered. The place is very loud today too with all the customers. My dad likes to play jazz music in the shop, but I can't hear it at all now.

"Hey, Tenley." Jay returns with the woman. "Ring her up. I'm hungry." He goes back to his meatball sandwich.

"You're ridiculous," I mumble as he passes me. Then I smile at the woman. "What a beautiful purchase."

The woman smiles back at me. She holds an old tea kettle. It's white and decorated with red roses.

After she leaves, no one else approaches the counter.

Finally, I think. A break. Jay is going to get it from me for being so lazy.

“This place is just how I remember it,” someone with a shaky, crackling voice says.

I turn and see a very old man. Most of his head is bald. But he has long, gray hair around the sides and back that’s tied in a ponytail. He wears a dark blue three-piece suit and a matching bowtie. His gaunt frame makes him look sickly. The man smiles at me with a mouthful of pointy, gray teeth.

“My name is Boris Stine,” he says.

I smile. “Welcome, Mr. Stine. Can I help you with anything?”

Boris looks around. “It’s just wonderful being here. Xavier Stine was my father. He designed this shop.”

A black and white illustration of a shop window. The window has a decorative archway with a central circular motif. Above the archway, the words "VINTAGE ROSE" are written in a stylized font. The window is flanked by stone pillars and has a decorative border. The interior of the shop is visible through the glass, showing shelves and a hanging light fixture.

VINTAGE ROSE

CHAPTER 2

BY DESIGN

My smile grows wider. “Really?” I love learning history. That includes this shop’s history too.

I know that Vintage Rose first opened in 1912. A man named Ervin Legend created it. He loved collecting things from all over the world. Rumor has it that he sometimes practiced sorcery. But I’m not sure I believe that part. In the 1940s, he and his wife mysteriously disappeared while visiting Cairo, Egypt. Others took over the shop, but the business eventually started failing. Then my great-aunt bought it in 1979. Rose made it thrive again. She owned and operated the shop until she passed away. I’m excited to learn more facts from Boris.

He nods. “I wasn’t around when the plans for Vintage Rose were drawn up. That happened some years before I was born.” Boris continues looking around the shop in awe. “As a boy, I used to spend most of my free time here. I’d walk around gawking at

anything and everything. All of it was so fascinating. This place was like my second home.”

Jay comes closer as Boris talks. That’s surprising. It’s not a video game, loud music, or food. My brother rarely pays attention to anything besides those. But he seems interested in what Boris is saying.

Boris reaches into his coat pocket. “Look at this.” He pulls out a folded piece of paper. It probably used to be white. Now it’s yellowed and looks brittle. “My father made this sketch of the shop before he drafted the design. When I was ten, he gave the sketch to me. I think he knew how much I loved this place.” Then Boris unfolds the worn paper on the counter.

The sketch shows a square, and the shop’s layout is inside. I see where the front counter and all the aisles are drawn. Toward the back of the sketch is a set of stairs leading down into the basement.

Jay stares at the sketch. “Nothing has changed at all.”

“Yeah.” I look up. It’s great that no customers are approaching the counter right now. This allows me to focus on listening to Boris.

He flashes a smile. His pointy teeth seem even bigger than before. “Do you mind if I look around?”

“You got five bucks?” Jay asks. “For ten, I’ll give you a private tour.”

“Jay!” I cut in. “Don’t be silly. People look around here all the time. And this man’s dad designed the place.” Then I turn to Boris. “We definitely do not charge anything for just looking around. And we don’t give private tours either.”

“Whatever.” Jay returns to his food.

I shake my head. “Don’t worry about him, Mr. Stine. You can look around for as long as you’d like. Maybe when things calm down in here, you can meet my parents too. They’re helping people right now.”

“Thank you, miss.” Boris reaches into his pocket. He hands me a shiny quarter. “I do feel that I should give you something though. Please forgive me for not having more money on me. Getting another look at this shop after all these years is priceless.”

I try to hand the coin back to Boris. “It’s fine. You don’t have to give me anything.”

He walks away. I don’t know what to do, so I just put the quarter in my pocket.

Customers start approaching the counter. I return to the register.

Jay pauses before taking another bite of his sandwich. “Hey, Twig. Is that old guy trying to go into the basement?”

“What?” I look up from the register.

Boris has made his way over to the basement door. He slowly opens it and starts heading down the stairs.

Jay puts down his sandwich. “We’ve got to stop him! That dude is too old to take those stairs. I’m not getting sued for him falling!”

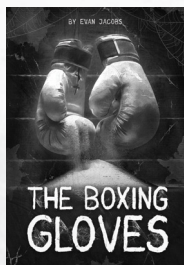
VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES



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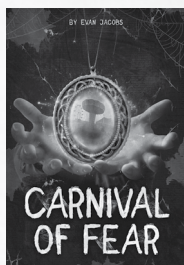
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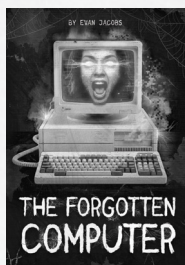
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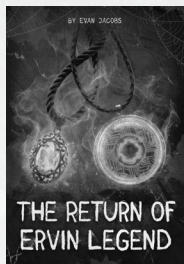
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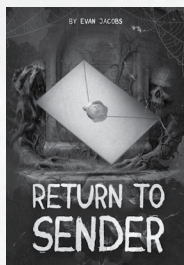
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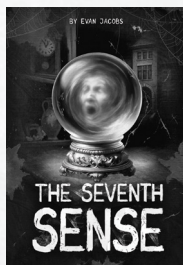
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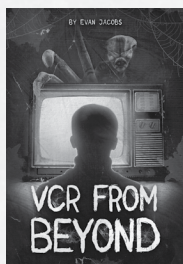
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VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

THE UNKNOWN PORTAL

Tenley was expecting her day to be busier than usual at her family's antique shop. But when a strange visitor disappears into the shop's basement, the day becomes a lot more than what Tenley bargained for. Suddenly, she and her brother are flung into the past with no clue on how to get back. Will they figure out a way to return to the present before they run out of time?

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