

BY EVAN JACOBS



THE RETURN OF ERVIN LEGEND

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 window for 'Vintage Rose'. The window has a decorative arch with a central spiral design. The text 'VINTAGE ROSE' is written in a serif font above the arch. Below the arch, there is a decorative banner with the text 'CHAPTER 1'. At the bottom of the page, the word 'LONER' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The background of the window shows a dimly lit interior with a lamp and some furniture.

VINTAGE ROSE

CHAPTER 1

LONER

The school day is over and I'm walking home. But for some reason, I decide to stop at Vintage Rose Antique Shop. There's no real reason for me to go there. I just have nothing better to do with my time.

A while ago, I brought my three younger sisters here. I usually have to take care of them. My parents work multiple jobs. They're hardly ever home. One day, I asked them why they both have more than one job.

My mom said, "Mari, your dad and I love you and your sisters very much. We want you to have all that you need. But that costs money. Our jobs help."

Then my dad patted my short black hair. "That's right, honey. And we've got to keep a roof over your heads. Rent increases every year."

My family and I live in a two-bedroom apartment. I share a room with my sisters, Lily, Mia, and Luna. They are nine, eight, and seven years old, respectively.

I'm 13 and in eighth grade. Being the oldest, my parents rely on me to help out at home. They also want me to set a good example for my sisters.

Honestly, I think I'm a terrible example. I let my sisters have all the screen time they want. All I do is draw sketches and watch anime on an old tablet. My sisters share the tablet with me. They use it way more often than I do. But I have my school tablet too. If I'm not doodling or watching anime, then I'm doing homework. Maybe getting my homework done is setting a good example.

My social life is basically nonexistent. But I don't mind. People annoy me sometimes. A girl named Tenley is my only friend. That makes her my best friend, I guess. Her family owns Vintage Rose. She and I met at school last year in seventh grade. Before we became friends, I was a complete loner. Others at school seemed to accept that. They still do. No one talks to me except for Tenley.

I open the Vintage Rose door. Small bells on it jingle. Tenley's dad sits at the counter. He's flipping through the shop's big blue book. It has a ratty cloth cover. A while ago, Tenley told me that it came with the shop when her dad took ownership. His Aunt Rose

used to own the store. She had willed Vintage Rose to him, so he inherited it when she died.

Tenley's aunt used the book to log every item in the shop that she could. Then she wrote a brief history of each item too. Now Tenley's family uses the book to tell customers more about their purchases. Any new items sold to the shop are also logged in there.

I see Tenley at the register. It's nice that she's here. But I really don't like talking. When Tenley notices me, I know she's going to say hi. Then I'll have to say something back. But a great thing about Tenley is that she knows how I feel about talking. Maybe she won't say much.

Tenley waves at me. "Hey, Mari!"

I slide my black-rimmed glasses up the bridge of my nose. "Hi." Then I flash a quick smile and start looking around the shop.

It's filled with all kinds of old gadgets, paintings, and books. I think some sort of every possible thing is sold here. The items look very old. Some of them are dusty. Vintage Rose is kind of dark inside too.

Then there's the smell. I have no idea why it always smells so weird in here. It reminds me of dead flowers.

On top of all that, Tenley told me this shop has secrets. Items from Vintage Rose have led to some very strange occurrences. Not many people know this. I think it's only Tenley, her brother, and one of Tenley's other friends. Her parents don't even know. That has always intrigued me.

Last year, I went through a weird encounter linked to this shop. Thankfully, I wasn't alone. Tenley and her brother were with me. It was wild to say the least. For some reason, I'm still drawn to this place.

I grip the straps of my backpack. It's always heavy. All my books and supplies for school are in it. Wearing it makes me feel good. Having so much of my stuff with me is comforting.

My eyes wander to the shop's pass-along section. Everything there has been donated. It can be taken for free. But Tenley's family asks that takers leave a donation in return.

Something there sparks my curiosity. It looks like a book with no cover. I go pick it up and flip through it. All the pages are blank.

A thought hits me. *Is this a sketchbook?*

That would be awesome. Even if it's not, I could use it that way. Suddenly, I feel a burst of excitement.

Drawing on a tablet is fine. But it's not quite like working on paper. I've always wanted a sketchbook.

"You know that's free, right?" Tenley asks.

She stands beside me. Tenley holds an opened bag of potato chips. I didn't even notice her walk up.

"Oh, yeah," I say. "I'd like to take it. But I don't have anything to give in return right now. Can I bring something tomorrow?"

"Don't worry about it." Tenley glances at the book. "Is that a sketchbook?"

Knowing that someone else sees it the way I do makes me smile. "I think so."

"Nice." Tenley holds out her bag. "You want some chips?"

My stomach grumbles. "Thank you." I take a chip. "Thanks for the sketchbook too."

CHAPTER 2

USED?

It's the next morning. My eyes slowly open to the sound of giggling. A faint blue light glows in the darkness. I look over to see my sisters using our tablet. Then I check the time on my cell phone. It's 6:16 a.m.

I close my eyes again. "Why are all of you still in here? Go to the living room."

Our parents have already left for work. My sisters know the weekday routine. They always wake up early. Usually, they go to the living room to watch TV. That's where they use the tablet while I'm sleeping. I don't get up until 6:45. But every once in a while, my sisters stay in our room. Maybe they do this to test me. They want to see how upset I'll get.

Mia and Luna have left their bunk beds. All three girls are piled on Lily's bed. I really wish her bed wasn't so close to mine.

“Don’t tap the screen,” Mia says to Luna.

“I won’t!” Luna cries.

“Here, I’ll hold it.” Lily takes the tablet.

They completely ignore me. Now I know this is a test. Yelling is the only way to get them to listen. But I’m too tired for that right now. I just cover my head with my pillow. Maybe I can block out their noise.

It doesn’t work. I can still hear my sisters bickering.

Eventually, I sit up. I put on my glasses. Drawing will make me feel better.

I think about getting my school tablet. Then I flip on the room’s light. The sketchbook is where I left it yesterday. This changes my mind about the tablet.

For a moment, I stare at the first page of the sketchbook. It makes me so happy to have real paper. I start thumbing through the blank pages.

Then something stops me. *Was that a sketch?*

I quickly open to a page. It’s in the middle of the book. A detailed drawing is on it in black ink. Every page I turn to after that one shows a different sketch.

A design of all circles and triangles is the first sketch. The next page shows an old rotary-dial phone. After that, there’s a drawing of what looks like a

portrait. But the man in the portrait is missing his nose and eyes. There are just dark sockets in those places.

That's kind of cool looking. But how did I miss these yesterday?

Then I turn the page. Now there's a sketch of numerous skinny, black creatures with huge, round eyes. There seems to be liquid dripping off their bodies. I'm not sure if it's water or something else. The next page might be the strangest of the drawings. It looks like a rabbit's foot. But its claws are elongated and sharp.

I glare at my sisters. *No way. What am I thinking? None of them would draw stuff like this.*

These odd sketches make me want to see more. The next one is of a doll wearing a hood and a lace dress. Curly black hair sticks out from under the doll's hood. There's some sort of writing on the hood too. Dark, creepy-looking eyes are drawn on the doll's face. They seem to stare at me.

There's one more sketch after that. It looks like a large medallion. The object is hanging from a rope.

The sketches are so detailed and realistic. But I don't want a used sketchbook. This means even

a free one. It feels wrong throwing the book away. Ripping out pages doesn't feel right either. Someone worked hard on the sketches. I'll just return the book to the shop after school.

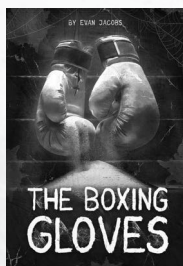
VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES



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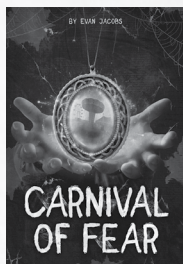
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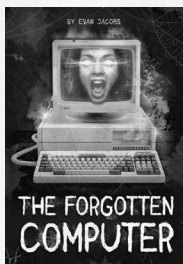
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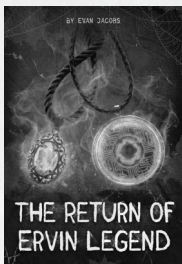
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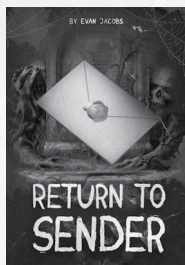
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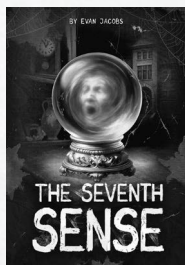
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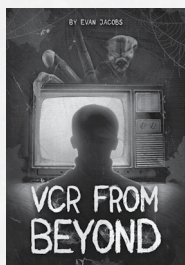
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VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

THE RETURN OF ERVIN LEGEND

As a dedicated introvert, Mari lives a simple life of doing homework, drawing anime, and avoiding drama. But everything changes when she obtains a weird sketchbook, unearthing a mystery that has been building for decades. Soon Mari joins a team of unexpected friends in a battle between the past and the future. Will Mari find the courage to leave simplicity behind if it means saving her town from the clutches of terror and destruction?

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