The
Cold, Cold
Shoulder
ANNE SCHRAFF
WARNING:
MATURE CONTENT
PAGETURNERS®

Chapter 1

The big house on Caulfield Lane reminded Cody Walker of his childhood home. An old apple orchard had surrounded his grandmother's three-story house. That comfortable home had sheltered several generations of the Walker family.

The Caulfield house was shabbier. And there was no warmth there. Now Cody lived with eight strangers. Some were college students. Others, like Cody, worked at the new discount department store in town.

At twenty, Cody had already had many jobs. Before working as a clerk, he'd been a tree trimmer. And before that he was a mechanic's helper.

His parents had died when he was a small boy. He was left in his grandmother's care. After his grandmother died, he had spent several years in foster care. When he'd turned eighteen, he was on his own.

Cody didn't make friends easily. But he did hang out with a coworker. Todd Clifford also rented a room in the house where Cody lived. The guys jogged together. Sometimes they went fishing. And they would hang out at one of the local restaurants.

The two young men made fun of the college students. They called them "bookheads." Cody and Todd barely made it through high school. But the truth was that they were envious.

"Did you see Eddie leaving for school this morning?" Cody asked Todd. "I heard him clicking away on his keyboard last night."

Todd shook his head. "No, I didn't. He'll wear out his fingers, though," he said, laughing.

A grouchy middle-aged man owned the big house. His name was Reed Breck. He said he was a widower. His children were grown and gone.

Now, as Cody and Todd walked toward Cody's car, they passed Breck. "Did you happen to see Eddie Paine this morning?" Cody asked. "Maybe he overslept. He'll have a hissy fit if he's late!"

Breck shrugged. "That's his problem. It's not my job to get the tenants up in the morning," he said.

Cody started to back his car out of the driveway. Todd spotted Ashley Root. She was another college student who rented a room. Ashley hurried toward the bus stop.

"Hold up," Todd said to Cody. Then he leaned out the window. "Hey, Ash!" he called out. "Want a lift to school?"

"Yeah, sure," she said. "It beats waiting for the bus."

Todd hopped out. He held the door open

for her. "You go ahead. Take the front seat. I'll get in the back."

Ashley took Todd's place without a word. Cody turned toward her. "Did you see Eddie this morning? He's usually halfway to school by now."

"I don't pay any attention to the slugs who live here," Ashley said. She yawned.

When they'd moved in, both Cody and Todd had noticed Ashley right away. She was gorgeous! But for some reason she seemed to hate guys.

Cody had started to move the car again. But then he suddenly braked. "You know, maybe I'd better check on Eddie. It'll only take a minute," he said. Then he hopped out of the car.

Ashley groaned. "Oh, give me a break!" she said, rolling her eyes.

Cody sprinted back to the house. He went up to Eddie's room. The door was open slightly.

The rumpled bed was empty. Eddie's backpack was on a chair. The only thing amiss in the room was the old-school clock. It had fallen onto the floor. It looked like Eddie had left in a hurry. The time on the clock had stopped at 12:10 a.m.

What had happened? The scene didn't look a bit like Eddie. The guy was a neat freak. Under normal circumstances, his room made Cody feel like a slob. If the fire alarm went off some night, Eddie would clean up before he evacuated. He would never leave a messy bed behind.

Cody was worried. Even though Eddie was a college student, he felt bad for him. The guy was a geek. He seemed pretty lonely. What was going on? Where did he go?

Then, from outside, Cody heard Ashley complaining to Todd. "Where is he? We've got to get going!" Then she started yelling out the car window. "Cody! Come on! What

are you doing? I can't be late for my class. The professor is a witch."

Cody sighed as he glanced around the room one more time. Then he headed out to the car, shaking his head. He couldn't let go of an uneasy feeling. Had something bad happened to Eddie? He got those intuitions sometimes. Mostly he was right.

PAGETURNERS® | SUSPENSE

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Eddie Paine has disappeared! Suspecting foul play, two of his roommates begin to investigate. Why will no one help them? Their landloard brushes off their questions. Others just seem disinterested, until they find the body ...

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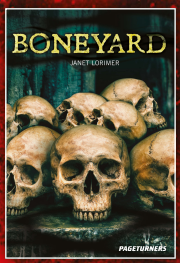

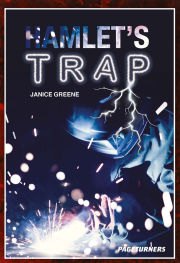

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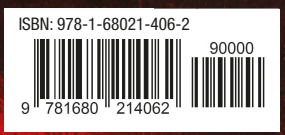

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