

BY DONNA SHELTON

A doll with a white hood and lace dress, set against a dark background with spider webs. The doll has large, dark eyes and a pale complexion. The background is dark and textured, with several spider webs visible. The title 'THE SECRET ROOM' is written in a large, white, distressed font at the bottom of the image.

THE SECRET
ROOM

VINTAGE ROSE
MYSTERIES™

THE SECRET ROOM

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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

BEST DAY EVER

This is the best day ever.

The zit that was haunting me for a week finally disappeared.

I aced my math test. Cramming all night actually paid off.

Then the cast of this year's school play was posted. It's *Romeo and Juliet*. Tons of girls tried out for the part of Juliet. Guess who got it?

That's right—I did!

It seemed like things couldn't get any better. Then I saw who will play Romeo. Teddy English got the part.

I've had a crush on Teddy since third grade. He doesn't know I exist, but I've admired him from afar for five years. Now we're in the play together. This means we will have to practice. Soon, the two of us will be hanging out all the time.

My best friend, Becky, and I talk about it as we walk home from school.

“Teddy is so cute. I’m totally jealous,” Becky says. Then she checks Instagram. That girl is always on her phone. I am too, but not as much as Becky.

“I know. I’m really nervous.”

“You’ll have to exchange phone numbers to rehearse!”

Becky is right. I had not even thought of that. Teddy will finally know I exist! My stomach fills with butterflies. This is so exciting. It’s hard not to scream.

With the biggest smile on my face, I turn to Becky. “Best day ever!” I squeal.

“Oh Tenley, I’ve fallen in love with you,” Becky says. She’s pretending to be Teddy. “Will you marry me?” She grabs my hands and gazes into my eyes. We both laugh.

“Aw, look at this,” a voice calls from behind us.

I know that voice. It makes me cringe. Turning around, we see my brother, Jay. He throws his arms around our shoulders. Becky and I try to walk away, but he pulls us in closer.

Jay is in his third year of high school. He doesn’t seem to have any friends of his own. I think picking on me is his favorite activity. When he isn’t doing that, my brother is locked in his room playing video games. He’s always on his phone too.

“Are you on Instagram?” Jay says, smiling at Becky’s phone. “Want to take a selfie with me?”

“No way!” Becky quickly puts her phone away.

“You two make a cute couple.” He makes kissy noises at us.

“Go away, Jay.” I push his arm off me.

“Yeah, get a life,” Becky says.

“I *do* have a life. Picking on you two.”

“He’s the worst,” I say to Becky, rolling my eyes. Sometimes I wish my brother didn’t exist.

“He’s the worst,” Jay says in a high-pitched voice. He’s pretending to be me. “Wah-wah! My brother is making me cry.”

Becky looks at me. “Sorry. Text me later.” She runs up the driveway to her house.

“Bye, Becky! I’ll miss you!” Jay calls out. Then he turns back to me. “So who’s Teddy? Your boyfriend?”

“No one. You don’t know him.”

“Is he that kid who rides a skateboard everywhere? His sister is in some of my classes.”

“He doesn’t have a sister.”

Actually, he does. But I don’t want Jay to know that.

“I think he does. She sits next to me in math. Tomorrow I’ll let her know how you feel about her brother.”

“Stop! Why do you have to be like that?”

“Like what?”

I run up the street to our house. My brother knows how to ruin a perfect day in no time.

Sample

CHAPTER 2

BAD TO WORSE

Walking into our house, I yell for Dad. Jay is right behind me.

“Sure, go run to Dad,” he says.

“Dad!” I yell again, ignoring him. Then I drop my backpack near the door and walk through the house.

“Daddy’s girl,” Jay mumbles, following me.

I find Dad in the kitchen. He’s talking with Mom at the table. There’s a paper in his hand. Just by looking at them, I can tell something’s wrong. Jay comes in behind me and nudges me as he passes. Then he goes to the fridge.

“What’s wrong?” I ask.

They look startled. I guess they didn’t hear us get home.

“Hi, honey,” Mom says. “Kids, sit down. We need to talk.”

Jay and I join them at the kitchen table.

“I got a letter in the mail,” Dad says. “My Aunt Rose passed away.”

“Who?” Jay says.

“You have an aunt?” I ask.

We’ve never met any Aunt Rose before. This is the first time Dad has mentioned her. I glance at my phone to see if Becky has texted me. She hasn’t.

“We used to be close,” Dad says. “Then life happened.”

I can tell he’s picking his words carefully.

“Are we going to the funeral?” I ask.

“No,” he says. “She didn’t want a funeral.”

“Then what’s in the letter?” Jay asks.

“Aunt Rose left us her house and business.” Dad looks at us. Mom does too. They seem really serious. “She didn’t have any kids of her own. I was her closest living relative.”

“Where did she live?” I ask.

“Scarecrow, California.” Dad pauses. “Look, kids. You know how hard it’s been since we lost our jobs. We’re barely making it. Your mom and I have talked about this. We’re moving.”

Is this a joke? I look at Jay. He looks at me. We both look at Mom and Dad. Are they really talking about moving to a place called Scarecrow?

Three months ago, my parents were both laid off from the big bank where they worked. But they have been searching for new jobs. Mom just had an interview last week. She seemed hopeful about it.

“Are you serious?” I say. “We can’t move! I just got a big role in the school play.”

“I’m sorry,” Mom says. “We have to do this.”

This is unbelievable. Now my best day ever is really ruined.

I stare at Jay, begging him with my eyes to say something. We have to convince them not to do this.

He shrugs. “I’m cool with it.”

My jaw drops. Maybe he would care if he had friends here. But I guess he figures he can pick on me anywhere.

I run to my room and slam the door. Mom hates when we slam doors. But I’m so mad, I don’t care.

After flopping on my bed, I pull out my phone to text Becky.

Tenley

my parents r ruining my life!

Becky

what happened?

Tenley

we're moving

Becky

why?

Tenley

dad's aunt died. she left us her house and business.

Becky

omg tenley! so sorry for your loss 😞

Tenley

didn't know her. doesn't bother me.

Becky

guess you can't be Juliet anymore?

Tenley

no 😞

Becky

dance class now. text me later?

Tenley

k. bye.