

BY DONNA SHELTON

A large, glowing green paw print is the central focus, surrounded by swirling green flames and spider webs. The paw print is positioned diagonally across the frame. The background is dark and textured, with a red liquid-like stain at the bottom. The overall aesthetic is horror-themed.

LUCKY
ME

A decorative title box with a hand-drawn, black ink border. The border features ornate, symmetrical flourishes at the corners and midpoints. The background of the page is filled with faint, light-colored spider webs, some of which are partially obscured by the title box.

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 decorative illustration of a window with a sign that says "VINTAGE ROSE". The window has a central arched section with a spiral design and two side sections with circular designs. The sign is a small rectangular plaque with the words "VINTAGE ROSE" in a serif font. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

CHAPTER 1

NEW DAY

Everything in my life is new. My family just moved over spring break. We're living in a new house in a new city. I have a new neighborhood and a new school. All my clothes are new too. Sometimes I don't even recognize myself. This feels like someone else's life.

At least we stayed in the same state. We moved from Sunnyside, California, to Scarecrow. So far, the cities don't seem that different. Both have shopping centers and parks. I guess the biggest difference is that the houses in Scarecrow are bigger and older. Also, the weather in Scarecrow always seems to be overcast. It wasn't like that in Sunnyside.

My family spent spring break at home, settling into the new house. Most of the time we were unpacking boxes and putting furniture together. I didn't go outside or look for anyone my age to hang out with.

Other than unpacking, I watched movies on Syfy. I'm a Syfy geek and proud of it. It's not something that

makes me a lot of friends. But that's okay. Usually I don't mind being alone.

Now that spring break is over, reality is setting in. I'm going to be the new girl at school. Today is my first day. Part of me is nervous, but another part of me doesn't care.

I grab my backpack. Mom said she put something special inside. All I see is a brown paper bag with my lunch. There's nothing *special* about a sack lunch. Maybe she put money in it so I can buy a hot lunch at school.

After slinging my backpack over my shoulder, I grab my phone. There's no way I could survive without this.

"Bye, Mom!" I shout while heading out the door. Ready or not, here I come.

"Bye, Ana! Have a good day!"

I'm taking the bus to school. Being trapped on a bus with 50 strangers is basically my worst nightmare. It seems like I always get stuck next to a weird kid. But there's no other option. Mom's car is in the shop and Dad is already at work. At least my phone is with me. Social media and my music will keep me company.

At the end of our street, a group of kids stands on the corner. That's where the bus is supposed to pick us

up. A few look at me as I walk toward them. Most are on their phones and don't pay any attention to me. I put in my earbuds, and they all fade away.



CHAPTER 2

MEAN GIRLS

The bus pulls up and screeches to a stop. Its door squeaks open. I let all the other kids go ahead of me. When I step onto the bus, a chunky blond woman in a blue uniform is sitting in the driver's seat. She sees me and smiles.

“Good morning!” She looks like she might jump out of her seat and hug me. “You must be the new student!”

Everyone on the bus is now staring at me. I remove one earbud.

“Yeah, I'm Ana,” I say in a low voice. Hopefully she will get the hint and lower her voice too.

“I'm Barbara,” she says loudly. “It's nice to meet you, sweetheart.”

Sweetheart? Ugh! This lady is too friendly.

I smile and hurry down the aisle. There's an open seat in the back. Tossing my bag down, I duck into it and turn on some music. Lately I've been into the band

Broken Bones. Their newest album plays loudly in my earbuds.

At the next stop, only a few kids get on. Two of them are pretty girls. Everyone moves out of their way to let them through. It must be nice to be so pretty that people move out of your way when you walk. These girls stare at their phones like me, but they aren't using them to hide from people.

When they walk up to me, it seems like they want to sit down. These girls are tall, and their clothes are so cool. Their hair and makeup are perfect. When they smile, their teeth are so white, they almost look fake. Do they really want to sit with *me*?

"Hi. Are you new?" the blond with the brightest teeth asks.

I smile. "Yeah, I just moved here from—"

"We don't care." She waves her hand to silence me. "You're in our seat. Please move."

"Oh."

This is embarrassing. I should have known that they didn't want to sit with me. Suddenly my short brown hair, plain face, T-shirt, and jeans feel so boring.

The closest available seat is next to a boy who is staring out the window. He has his earbuds in too. For a moment, I wonder what he's listening to. Then I

decide it doesn't matter. All I want is for this day to be done. The boy quietly moves over when I plop down next to him.

As the bus lurches forward, I look back at the blond girl as she talks with her friend. Nobody has ever been so politely rude to me before.

The kid next to me now is tall and skinny with black-rimmed glasses. His glasses are so thick and heavy, he keeps having to push them back up on his nose. Like me, the boy is trying to hide behind his phone. Does he even realize I'm sitting here?



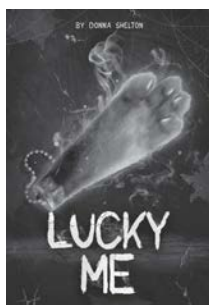
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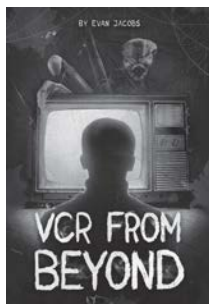
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VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

LUCKY ME

On her first day at a new school, Ana finds a surprise from her mom in her backpack. The good luck charm turns her whole day around. But the lucky object has a dark side too. Can Ana get rid of it before her luck runs out?

 **SADDLEBACK**
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING
www.sdlback.com

LEXILE HL450L

ISBN: 978-1-68021-759-9

