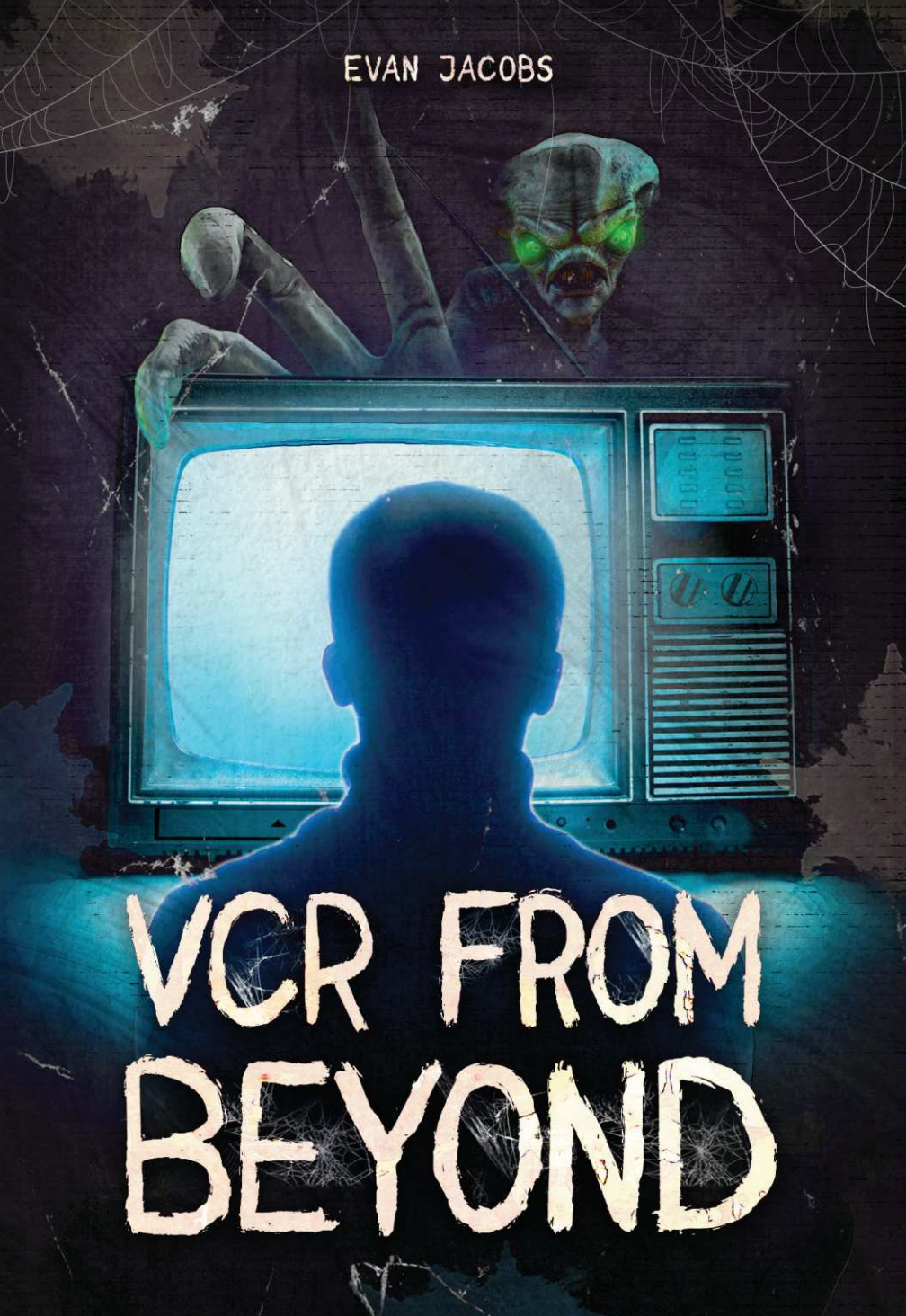
EVAN JACOBS



VCR FROM BEYOND

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.

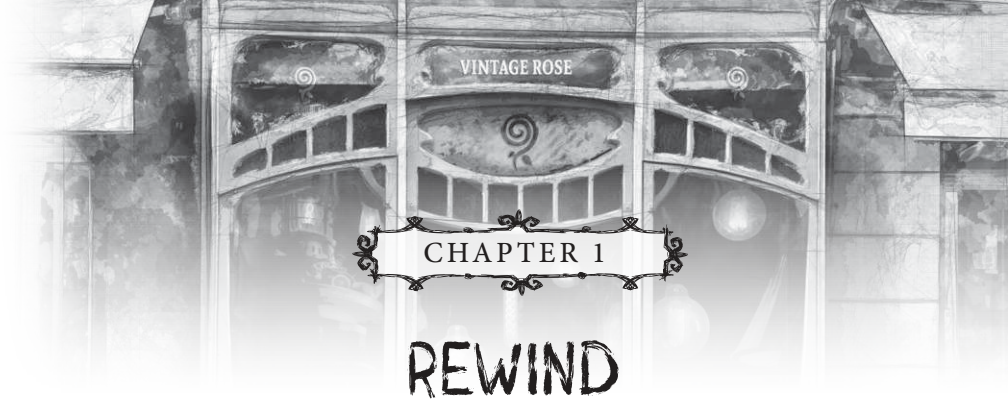
Family members took over the shop. None were quite like Ervin, though. Without his passion, the business began to fail. His sister believed it was cursed.



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

REWIND

Achoo!" The sneeze startles me, and I almost knock over a vase. Across the room, Alex is flipping through a book. A cloud of dust rises from the pages.

"Little Alex," Mark sighs. "What are you doing with that old math book? It doesn't have the answers to tomorrow's quiz! Donovan, can you believe this kid?"

I laugh. It's hard not to. Alex, or Little Alex as we call him, is always doing goofy things. He's a year younger than Mark and me. Little Alex started hanging out with us when he moved to our town four years ago. Mark and I have been friends since first grade. We're in seventh grade now, and Alex is in sixth. Sometimes it's fun to give our younger friend a hard time. He knows we don't mean it.

"All the stuff in here," I giggle. "And Little Alex picks up a math book."

The three of us are at the Vintage Rose Antique Shop. It's a small store in Scarecrow, California, where

we live. An older lady named Rose used to own it, but she died around a year ago. Her family took over the shop. They didn't change it much though. The place is still full of weird old stuff. Sometimes we come here after school to look around.

Kids spending time in an antique store after school might sound strange. But there's nothing else to do in our town. Scarecrow has got to be the most boring place on earth. It's just houses, strip malls, and a few parks. The sun never comes out. Even in the summer, the sky is gray.

I pick up an old watch. A small cloud of dust swirls when I lift it. There's a watch-shaped outline on the dusty shelf.

Mark sneezes. He's checking out a piggy bank that looks like it came from my grandma's house. Everything is thrown together on shelves and barely organized.

All this old stuff gives me the creeps. Most of the people who owned it are probably dead now. The thought makes me shiver. I quickly put the watch down.

Mark and I walk over to where Alex is, in the pass-along section. This is the coolest thing about the store. You can take something for free. Then you're supposed to donate something. It's meant to be a way

for the community to share. We take stuff sometimes. But we've never donated. It doesn't seem like anyone keeps track.

"I thought the book could help me," Alex says. "There's no way I'm going to pass Mr. Harlin's quiz."

Mr. Harlin is a sixth grade math teacher at our school. He's really mean. Mark and I had him last year. We both couldn't stand him. I still passed the class though. Mark didn't. Now he's repeating sixth grade math. It isn't because Mark isn't smart enough. He just never did any work. Alex and Mark have Mr. Harlin for the same period this year.

As we move through the store, I notice a strange smell. It reminds me of roses but not good-smelling ones. This smells like roses that have been in a vase for too long. I guess it only makes sense for a store called Vintage Rose to smell like stale old roses.

A high school kid sits behind the shop's counter. He doesn't pay any attention to us. All he does is stare at his phone.

"This is rad!" Alex says. He picks up a small TV. It has a VCR built into it. Alex pushes the VCR door open with his finger. "Look! There's even a tape in it."

"So what?" Mark says.

"It's only ten dollars."

"That's a rip-off," I say.

"Are you thinking of buying that?" the kid behind the counter asks. He pulls out a thick, ratty-looking blue book and opens it.

"Let's see here," he starts. "That thing came from an estate sale. Someone named Dr. Harry Yates owned it. He was a scientist who tried to create hybrids in his lab. One of his ideas was to mix animals and technology."

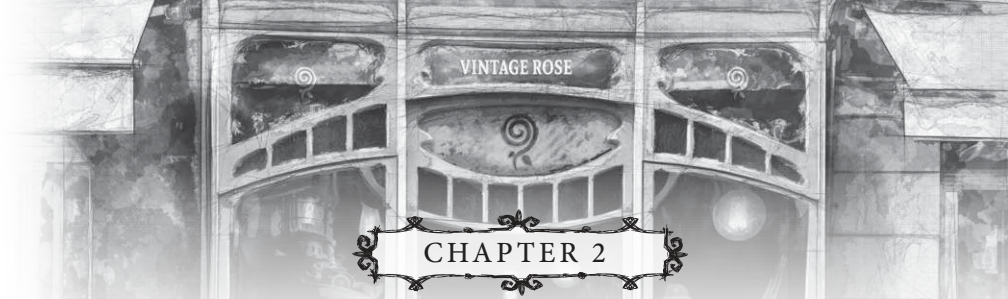
The kid slams the blue book shut. "All right." He finally looks at us. "I'm done playing salesman. You want that thing or not? It's ten dollars. Take it or leave it. And it doesn't have a remote so don't even ask."

"I'll take it!" Alex walks over to the counter. He sets the TV/VCR on top of it. "This thing is legit retro."

"Don't buy that," Mark says. "It's junk. You don't even know if it works. There's no remote—"

"So bring it back," the kid behind the counter snaps. "If it doesn't work, we'll refund you." He glares at Mark. "Keep talking and I'm going to raise the price on your friend."

Alex reaches into his pocket and pulls out a crumpled ten-dollar bill. "Guys," he says. "My grandpa gave me a bunch of movies on VHS, remember? Now I can finally watch them!"



CHAPTER 2

STOKED MODE

"I can't believe you wasted ten dollars, Little Alex," Mark says.

He's still throwing shade on Alex's purchase. I keep my mouth shut. Alex is totally stoked. Mark is right though. That TV/VCR looks ancient.

It's starting to get dark. We walk past some shops. A few of them are closed already. Most places in downtown Scarecrow shut down early.

"Now I can watch that *Star Wars* tape," he says. I've never seen Alex smile so much. "You guys ever see *The Terminator*?"

"You can stream all of that!" Mark says. "Everybody knows VHS tapes are the worst. That's why they made DVDs."

"And those are practically gone now too!" I point to the TV/VCR. "It looks like nobody has used that thing since 1984."

"My DVD player broke," Alex says. "And I don't

have Netflix. My parents said they *might* get me a new phone for Christmas. But they probably can't afford one. It's not like I can watch stuff on my school tablet."

Mark looks at me and snickers.

I feel bad and look away. Alex's family doesn't have a lot of money. They rent a tiny, two-bedroom house. His neighborhood isn't nearly as nice as the one Mark and I live in. All the houses are small and close together. Cars are packed like sardines on the streets and driveways. Some are even on the lawns. Many of the cars are broken down. They sit on blocks and are missing wheels or have big dents in them.

"Look," I say, changing the subject. "Anyone want to go to the school dance?"

We're walking by Scarecrow Middle School. All the windows in the big, white stone building are black. The gym and multipurpose room rise up behind the main building like dark pillars. At night, the place looks sort of like a modern castle. A banner about the fall dance hangs over the building's main doors.

"Heck no!" Mark laughs.

Alex shrugs. "It might be fun."

He's usually not into school events. That's one of the things Mark, Alex, and I have in common. We just don't care much about school. None of us are involved

in activities. After class, we like to play video games or look at memes on our phones. At least that's what Mark and I do. Alex has an old hand-me-down phone that only lets him make calls and send texts. It's pretty useless, but at least he can text us with it.

"Uh, I was joking," I say. Maybe Alex's excitement over his new TV/VCR has made him delusional.

"We should probably head home," Mark says, looking at me.

"No way," Alex says. He holds up the TV/VCR. "You guys are going to help me set this up, right?"

VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

VCR FROM BEYOND

When Alex buys an old TV/VCR at the local antique shop, his friends tease him. But Alex sees something in it that they don't. Then he starts acting strange. Will his friends figure out what's happening to him before it's too late?

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