

BY EVAN JACOBS



# CALL WAITING

# VINTAGE ROSE MYSTERIES

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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

## RING, RING

Tenley looks up at the ceiling. “It’s weird that we can’t hear the rain down here,” she says.

“Well,” I say. “We *are* underground.”

She smiles. “You’re right, smart guy.”

Tenley and I are in the basement of her parents’ store, the Vintage Rose Antique Shop. We’re supposed to be organizing it. I had no idea how much stuff was down here, though. Now I’m starting to regret volunteering to help.

“Tenley,” I say, picking up a board game that is definitely older than me. “Where did all this junk come from?”

She sighs. “My dad’s Aunt Rose. She owned this place and left it to us when she died. That’s why we moved to Scarecrow, remember? Anyway, I think my great aunt was a hoarder.”

“What makes you think that?” I laugh.

We both look around the basement. This place is

textbook creepy. There's a creaky staircase leading down to it. The only light comes from a bare bulb in the ceiling. You have to pull a string to turn it on. Furniture and stacks of old boxes cover the floor. Ancient toys and books line the shelves. Cobwebs hang off everything.

The weirdest part is the smell. I swear the whole place smells like dead roses, even upstairs.

"We don't have to finish today, Ryan," Tenley says. "My parents just want us to start organizing this stuff. They keep getting new things to sell all the time. The store is getting crowded."

"It seems past crowded. So . . . where do we start?"

Tenley walks over to some metal shelves at the back of the room. They are filled with cleaning supplies. She pulls out two pairs of yellow rubber gloves.

"We should wear these," she says, tossing a pair of gloves to me. "I've seen rats down here."

"Oh, great," I mumble, starting to move boxes.

We begin to organize the mess. It's not really clear what we're doing. Tenley seems to be moving everything to the middle of the basement. I follow her lead.

After a few minutes, we're sweating. The rain has made it musty down here. I wipe my forehead with my sleeve.

Tenley pulls off her sweatshirt. It's red and says



Scarecrow Middle School on it. That's where we go. My friend Jen introduced us there last year. When Tenley first came to our school, Jen was her class buddy. For a while, the three of us hung out together. But we haven't seen Jen much lately.

"You think Jen misses us?" Tenley asks.

A chill runs down my spine. Not only are we in a spooky basement, but it seems like Tenley is reading my mind.

"She'll come back," I say. "Jen just got busy. That happens with her sometimes."

"Whatever."

Tenley thinks Jen dropped us on purpose. She's still bummed about it.

All I know is that Jen got really into ballet. Her big sister was taking classes, so Jen started going too. She has class every day after school now. Tenley thinks it's an unhealthy obsession.

"Thanks for helping me today," Tenley says. "I'd never be able to do all this on my own."

"No problem," I say. "We were going to hang out anyway. And where else would I be able to find a knitted toilet paper cover?"

Tenley laughs as I hold up the pink cylinder made of yarn.

“Plus, you’ll be done quicker if I help.”

“That’s the truth,” she says.

*Ring! Ring!*

A phone is ringing. It’s not one of ours, though. This sounds like an old-fashioned phone.

Tenley and I look at each other.

“Did you change your ringtone?” she asks.

“No. Do your parents have an old phone down here?”

Tenley shakes her head. Her expression changes. She looks nervous.

The ringing continues.

I walk around the basement, trying to figure out where the ringing is coming from. As I get closer to the back wall, it gets louder. A black curtain hangs over the wall. Strange symbols are painted on the curtain in white.

“Don’t move that—,” Tenley starts.

Her warning is too late. I’ve already pulled back the curtain. Behind it, there’s a door with a huge padlock on it.

*Ring! Ring!*

I look down and see an old black phone on the ground. It looks like the type of phone I’ve seen in black-and-white TV shows. A silver dial catches the



light. White numbers form a circle on it and go from one to nine. There's a zero after the nine too. On top, there's a handset.

The phone continues to ring.

Sample

## CHAPTER 2

## "I'M HOME"

Should I answer it?" I ask.

"No," Tenley says. "I've never seen that thing before." There is no smile on her face. She seems genuinely scared.

"Why can't I pick it up?"

"Because . . ." Tenley looks at the phone. She seems transfixed. "I said not to."

The ringing continues. We stare at the phone. It feels like this goes on forever.

After a few minutes, I look at Tenley and smile slightly. My friend can get overly serious sometimes. But usually I can make her laugh.

An idea comes to me.

I pick up the phone.

"Ryan!" Tenley scowls at me. "I said *no!*"

I put the receiver to my ear.

"Hello?" I squawk in a high-pitched voice. This is

my impression of Lucy from *Lucy Loudmouth*. It's one of Tenley's favorite shows.

"Hi, toots!" a voice says loudly. We can both hear it through the receiver. "I'm home to see you!"

"Hang up," Tenley whispers. Then she grabs the receiver out of my hand and puts it back on the cradle.

"I told you not to answer it, Ryan!"

Suddenly, we hear a creaking noise. It's coming from the stairs. Heavy footsteps move down them.

Fear rises in my throat. Who's coming down to the basement?

We turn around to look.

It's just Jay, Tenley's brother. His face is glued to his phone as he walks down the stairs. He stops on the last step.

"This place is still a mess," Jay says, looking around. "Why?"

"We're working on it!" Tenley snaps. "You're not our boss."

"Actually, Mom and Dad just left. When they're gone, I *am* the boss."

"Oh, big whoop!" Tenley says. "What are you going to do? Fire us?"

"Just get back to work," Jay says. "You're not getting paid to mess around."

He starts walking back up the stairs.

“Wait,” I call after him. “We’re getting paid?”

He turns and looks at me. “You? Sorry, no. Twig gets an allowance. She can pay you if she wants.”

Tenley rolls her eyes. Her brother loves to tease her with that nickname. “Let’s finish organizing this place,” she says. “Then we can get out of here.”

I help Tenley stack more boxes in the middle of the basement. Neither of us says anything.

“So who do you think that was on the phone?” I finally ask.

Tenley doesn’t respond. It’s clear she doesn’t want to talk about it.

Secretly, I hope the phone will ring again. Even though it’s weird, I think it’s kind of cool too.

We continue to organize for the rest of the afternoon, but the phone stays silent.

Later, I’m walking home. Luckily the rain has stopped. The wind is picking up, though. It’s getting dark too. I zip my coat and shove my hands in my pockets.

Tenley asked if I wanted her mom to drive me home. I chose to walk. Some people my age don’t like being out when it gets dark. It doesn’t bother me. What is there to be afraid of? In some ways, the town is more

peaceful in the dark. The way the streetlights reflect off the puddles is pretty.

It's a lot colder now. I should have worn gloves and a hat. Rumor has it there's a big storm moving toward Scarecrow. My mom said it could be the worst one in 75 years.

I don't believe it. Weather predictions are never right. The storm won't be that bad. People love to worry about stuff like this, though. It gives them something to do.

All I hope is that the internet doesn't go out. That happened once during a storm. At school, we had to use our textbooks instead of our tablets for the whole day. My parents said that's what they always did in school. It must have been so boring.

On my walk, I pass a small row of shops. There's a pay phone at the end of them. I've never noticed it before. The black receiver rests on a silver cradle. Having a pay phone here is so odd. Why would anybody use one nowadays? Everyone has cell phones.

Suddenly, the phone starts to ring.

I stop and stare at it.

What are the odds that I would hear two ancient phones ringing in one day?

I decide not to answer this one.